

**FAITH REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH**

**SUNDAY SCHOOL**

**CURRICULUM PROJECT ©**

**\*\* Fours and Fives, Year I \*\***

**Robert C. Walton, Editor**

## **CREDITS**

All Scripture quotations in this curriculum are taken from the HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

# **FAITH AT WORK**

**by Laura Sweet**

**Fours and Fives  
Year 1  
Quarter 1**



**Fours and Fives**  
**Year 1**  
**Quarter 1**

# **INTRODUCTION -**

# **FAITH AT WORK**

Welcome to the first quarter for the Fours and Fives! This quarter will have a longer introduction than most because it will explain the basic lesson procedures that we will use in our lessons. If you choose to begin with another quarter, you will find that they will refer you back to this introduction for necessary background information.

Four and five year olds are a wonderful and challenging group to teach. You may well be the first real “teacher” for many of these students. You will find a wide range of social, emotional and learning skills within these age groups, as well as differences in their motor skills and physical development. Your youngest students may find it challenging just to sit through a ten-minute Bible story. Your older students may be eager to join in the telling of a familiar story - or supply extra details that they have learned at home.

Because of their varied abilities, we will try to meet the needs of most of your students. We will offer a number of activities to keep the interest of your youngest students and to make Sunday School a fun experience. We will also be stretching the minds of some of your older students, laying a foundation of both Bible stories and doctrinal truth that can be built upon in later years. Not every student will grasp every concept every Sunday. But as time goes on, more and more students will pick up more and more truth as they learn to listen and participate.

Although it will vary a little from week to week, our teaching will take place within three different sections of the class: the Focus Activity, the Story Area, and the Project/Activity.

## **Focus Activity**

Every week we will begin the class with a focus activity to engage the students’ interest in the subject matter of the morning and help them make a comfortable transition into the Sunday School class. Some of your students may be shy, especially at first, or have difficulty separating from their parents. The Focus Activity tends to be informal, relaxed and fun. Some weeks your students will have so much fun they will be reluctant to leave the activity! When this happens, reassure them that they can go back to the activity once you finish your Bible story and project. As your students get used to the routine, they will know that promptness to the story area means more time for the project, and play afterwards!

## Story Area

Designate one place in your classroom as the “story area” and explain to your students that this is where we sit and listen to the teacher. It can be a short table, a circle of chairs, or a comfortable rug. It may be helpful to “assign” certain places for the students to sit every week, so they don’t struggle over who sits next to whom or sit nearly on top of one another. The teaching segment of our lessons takes place in the story area - we go over our memory verses, review past lessons, and hear our Bible story. Sometimes there may be an action rhyme or a song to sing (a list of suggested songs for this quarter follows at the end of the Introduction).

You will find the Bible story written out in each lesson. This is meant to be used as a guide as you retell the story from the Bible. Feel free to add details, etc., as you adapt the lesson to your class. We suggest that you use flannelgraph or pictures to help illustrate the stories, if you have them. Most teachers who have been teaching for awhile have these kinds of supplies on hand. If not, you will find a large assortment at most Christian bookstores.

## Project/Activity

We use our projects and activities to reinforce the main points of the lesson. Sometimes there will be worksheets to photocopy for the students, sometimes there will be art projects, and sometimes there will be a physical activity - or all three combined! As you work with the students, talk to them about the story and ask them questions: “Why did Gideon put out the fleece?” “How did Samson kill the lion?” “Do you think Naomi was glad that Ruth stayed with her?” Often we can correct any misunderstandings, or restate the most important parts of the story as we work on the projects together.

We assume you will have some common supplies in your classroom - scissors, glue sticks, crayons, markers, construction paper and tape. In addition, the following supplies will be used in one or more of the lessons this quarter - red yarn or red ribbon (1 small piece per child); cardboard toilet paper rolls or paper towel rolls (1 per person); paper cups (optional); light cardboard or poster board; plain white paper plates; a skein of brown or black yarn; old magazines (women’s magazines work best).

## Suggested Songs

Every Sunday School is different; some gather the children from all the age levels to sing together, while others sing alone in their classrooms. While these lessons do not have a specific “singing time,” you may wish to sing some of the suggested songs, either during the circle time or at the end of class. Choruses work best for this age group, but fours and fives are also capable of learning a hymn or two by heart. And young children love to join in the singing in regular church if they know the words of the song. Don’t be afraid to attempt it!

Choruses: *My God is So Great; The B-I-B-L-E; Our God is an Awesome God; God is So Good; Come Bless the Lord; I Will Sing of the Mercies of the Lord Forever; What a Mighty God We Serve!*

Hymns (Either chorus, or first verse and chorus): *To God Be The Glory* (#667 in Trinity Hymnal); *Faith Is The Victory*

# **RAHAB AND THE SPIES**

## **Joshua 2**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show students that we must have faith in God to be saved.

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 1:7a** - “Be strong and very courageous.” (We will learn the entire verse in the next four weeks.)

### **Lesson Background**

Be sure to read through all the quarter’s introductory material. We are calling this quarter “Faith at Work” because the stories from Joshua, Judges and Ruth emphasize over and over again the importance of faith in God’s children. Our lessons will show that faith in God brings salvation, victory and freedom, while unbelief brings misery, defeat and captivity.

This week we are introducing the book of Joshua and some of its major characters. Our main emphasis will be on Rahab’s faith in the great God of Israel and why that leads her to protect the two spies. In Hebrews we read, “By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient” (Hebrews 11:31). It is Rahab’s faith that ultimately saves her and her family from the destruction of Jericho and makes them a part of the children of God forever.

## Lesson Procedure

For this week's lesson you will need the following - a small object to hide (see Focus Activity); flannelgraph or pictures to illustrate story (optional); photocopies of worksheet; small pieces of red yarn or red ribbon; crayons.

### 1. Focus Activity

As the children come into the classroom, get them involved in hiding and finding an object (the object itself isn't important; it can be a small doll, a Bible, a hymnal, etc. Just make sure it's something small enough to hide but not too small to find). You can begin by hiding the object and having the children look for it. Then have the students take turns hiding the object. Try to give everyone a turn, and praise both hiders and seekers alike.

"Sometimes it's hard to find something that's hidden, isn't it? Have you ever played hide and seek? Sometimes it's really hard to hide a whole person! In our Bible story today, we're going to hear about a woman who had to hide two men in order to save their lives! Let's sit down in our story area so we can talk about that."

### 2. Action Rhyme

Get children seated in their story area and engage them in listening with songs and their memory verse (see the Introduction). If you like, this would be a good time to introduce the following action rhyme:

"One, Two (Show two fingers)  
Two men go  
Out to spy on Jericho.

"One, Two (Show two fingers)  
Two brave spies,  
Spies that Rahab meets and hides. (Hide two fingers with other hand)

"One, Two (Show two fingers)  
Two men down  
Down the wall without a sound." (Say last verse very softly)

Repeat this rhyme a couple of times, and children will join in - especially in the "One, Two" part. We will use this rhyme with the next two lessons as well for review purposes.

### 3. Bible Story (from Joshua 2)

God's people were finally ready to move into the land God had promised them! For forty years they had wandered in the wilderness, but those days were over. Now the whole nation of Israel was camped at the Jordan River, waiting to cross over the river and enter the Promised Land. It was a beautiful place - a land flowing with milk and honey.

Joshua was the leader of God's people. God told him it was almost time to enter the Promised Land. But the land across the river was filled with God's enemies - people who hated the



Lord and did not want the Israelites to move there. Joshua knew that he and the people would have to fight God's enemies for the land. And the very first battle would be at the city of Jericho!

Jericho was a great city. It was surrounded by strong walls - walls that had kept it safe from all other armies. It was also a very wicked city. Joshua decided to send spies to Jericho. Do you know what a spy is (get answers from students)? A spy is someone who secretly watches the enemy without letting anyone know who he really is. Joshua sent two brave men to spy on Jericho.

The two spies came to Jericho and were admitted into the city. They saw that the walls of Jericho were high and strong. They met a woman named Rahab, who lived in the city, and stayed in her home.

But even though the spies had been careful, someone found out who they were and what they were doing! He told the king of Jericho that spies from Israel had come to the city, and that they had been seen with Rahab. The king sent a message to Rahab telling her to give up the men who were in her house.

What would Rahab do? If she gave up the spies, the king of Jericho would surely kill them. If she didn't, and he found out, she could be killed! Rahab was a wicked woman, living in a wicked city - but she had heard about the God of Israel. She had heard how the Lord had brought His people out of Egypt and given them victory over all their enemies.

Quickly she took the two spies to the roof of her house and hid them under some stalks of flax. She told the king's men that the two spies had been in her home, but they had left before nightfall. "Go after them quickly," she said. "You may catch up with them" (verse 5). The king's men left, and the spies were saved!

After the danger passed, Rahab went to the roof to speak to the spies. "I know the Lord has given this land to you," she told them, "so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you" (verse 9). Rahab believed that the God of Israel was the true God of heaven and earth. She had faith that God would give Jericho into Israel's hands - even though it had strong walls for protection.

Rahab asked the men to show kindness to her and her family. She had saved their lives; now she wanted them to promise to save her life and the lives of her loved ones when they would come to fight Jericho. The men promised her that she would be safe because she had protected them.

Rahab's house was part of the city wall. She let down a long rope from her window and the spies climbed down. Now they were outside of the city walls. Rahab told them to hide in the hills for three days so the king's men would not find them. Then they could safely return to Joshua and God's people.

The two spies told Rahab to tie a red cord in her window. When the day of battle came, they would look for that red cord. They promised Rahab that everyone in her house would be safe as long as the cord was in the window and the people stayed inside the house. Then the two spies left. When they returned to Joshua, they told him everything that had happened. "The Lord has surely given the whole land into our hands," they said. "All the people are melting in fear because of us" (verse 24).

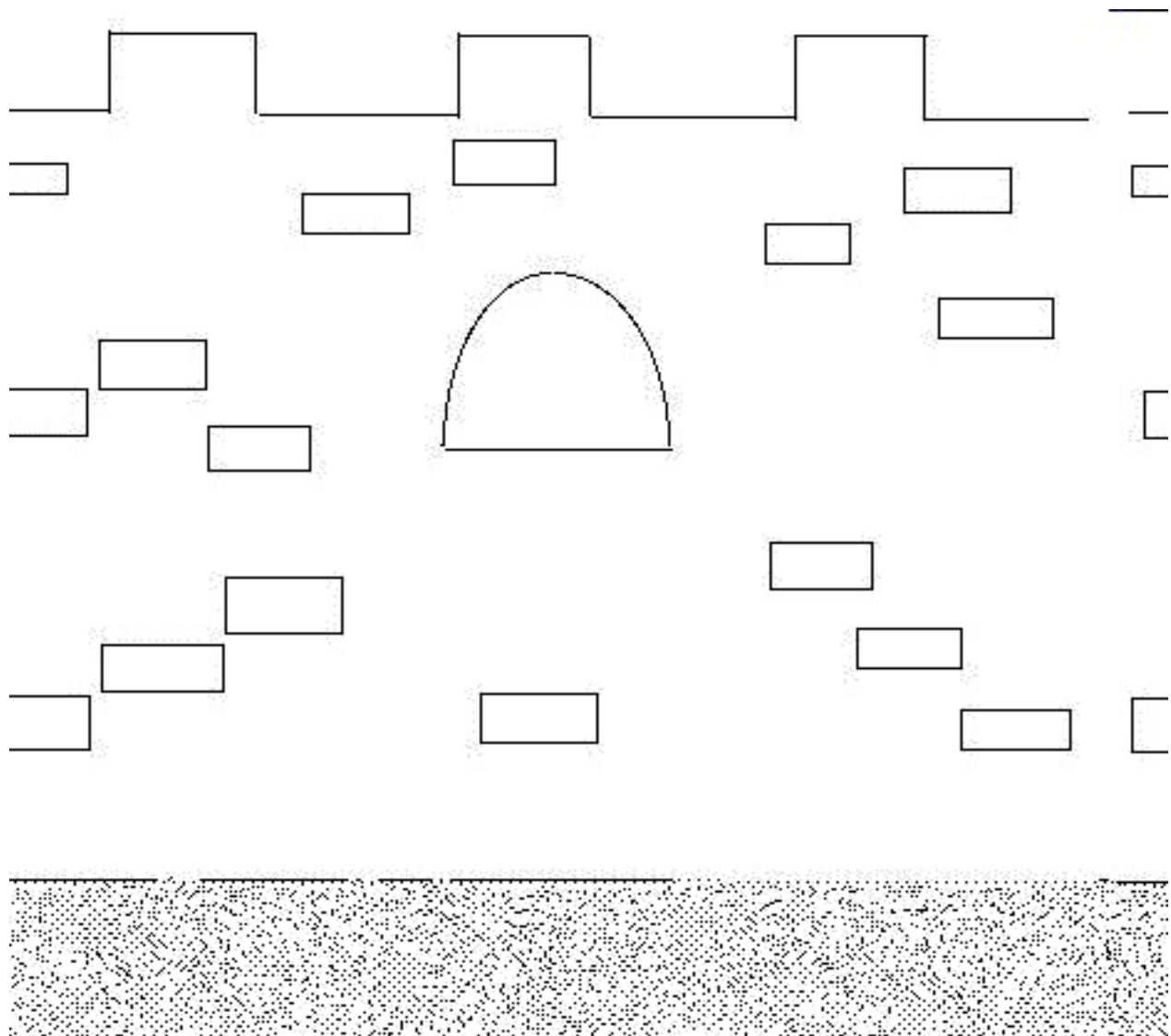
Rahab had faith in God, didn't she? She believed the things she had heard about the God of Israel. She was sure that He would give the city of Jericho to His people. Because she believed this, she protected the spies and made an agreement with them. We'll see in a couple of weeks that Rahab's faith saved her and saved her family. God was pleased with what she did, and she and her family were kept safe in the battle of Jericho.

Having faith in God is the only way that anyone is ever saved. It's the only way ever to please God. God's Word says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). As we learn more stories about Joshua and God's people, we'll talk more about faith, too.

## **Worksheet**

Hand out photocopies of the worksheet to all of your students. You can use red yarn or red ribbon to represent the red cord that Rahab tied in the window. As your students work, review the lesson with them, and remind them that Rahab's faith in God would save her and her family in the battle of Jericho.

Color the wall. Draw Rahab in the window. Glue a red cord in the window.





# **CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER**

## **Joshua 3-4**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show that true faith follows where God leads.

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 1:7a-b** - “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you.”

### **Lesson Background**

In his book, *Overcoming Life's Difficulties: Learning From the Book of Joshua*, Peter Jeffery writes, “So God brought them to the Jordan and left them there for three days looking at the river in flood. There were no bridges; they had no boats and no idea of how to cross. Why did God do this? Was it not to teach them yet again that he was their only hope?” (p. 45).

Joshua and the people of Israel were about to begin a great campaign of conquest. They had to learn to trust that God was with them, God was for them, and God was leading them. Crossing the Jordan was a test of that faith. There was no way for Israel to cross the Jordan except through miraculous means. As the priests stepped into the water by faith, and the people followed, they saw God working in their midst. He held back the waters of the Jordan, allowing all the people to cross. Joshua told the people that this was evidence that the living God was among them and that He would certainly drive out before them the people of Canaan (Joshua 3:10). The Israelites began the conquest of Canaan with a faith that followed wherever God would lead!

## Lesson Procedure

For this week's lesson you will need the following: a large pan filled with water and a towel; flannelgraph or pictures to illustrate story (optional); photocopies of worksheet; small pieces of construction paper of various colors; scissors; glue.

### 1. Focus Activity

Take a large rectangular cake pan (at least 13x9 inch or larger) and fill it with a shallow amount of water (no more than one-half inch deep.) You will want to put a good, thick towel underneath it for occasional spillovers. As your children enter the classroom, invite them to try to part the water in the pan - leaving some dry area on the bottom. They can use their hands, spoons, spatulas, even plastic blocks. Of course, no matter what they try, the water will come swirling around, and fill all the space in the pan again.

If some of your students guess that your lesson is about Moses and the Red Sea, tell them that the lesson is about Joshua. But something happened to Joshua and the people of Israel that was like the parting of the Red Sea. That's what our lesson is about today; let's go to our story area to learn more.

In the story area, go over your memory verse and remind the students of last week's lesson. You may wish to use the "One, Two" action rhyme to help them review. Remind them that God's people are being led by Joshua, and they're getting ready to enter the Promised Land.

### 2. Bible Story (from Joshua 3-4)

Joshua and God's people were ready to move into the Promised Land! All they had to do was cross the Jordan River and they would finally be there. They had waited forty long years to claim the land as their own country. Now it was about to come true.

But as Joshua and the people came to the river, they saw that crossing it would not be easy. It was springtime, and the snow from the mountains had melted and flooded the river! It was a very deep river now - a very wide river. There was no bridge for the people to cross. The water was too wild and fast for them to swim.

How would they get across? For three days they camped along the side of the river. The river was impossible for them to cross. But nothing is impossible for God! He knew the people had to learn to trust Him and to follow Him everywhere. He knew they had to have faith in Him, or else they could never fight their enemies in the Promised Land. God wanted to show the people that He was with them and that He would always take care of them. He wanted their faith in Him to grow.

Joshua told the people to get ready to move, for the next day they would see great things! When the day came, he told the priests to take up the Ark of the Covenant, which was kept in God's tabernacle, and pass on ahead of the people. The priests, carrying the Ark, would be the first to cross the river, and all of the people - the men, women, boys and girls - and all of their possessions would follow.

Joshua stood before them and spoke: “This is how you will know that the living God is among you!” he told the people (Joshua 3:10). He told them that the priests would carry the Ark, and step into the Jordan River. As soon as they set foot in the river, the Lord would stop the flow of water and they would cross over on dry ground.

Now the people understood! They had heard from their parents how God had used Moses to part the Red Sea when His people were running away from the Egyptians. They had heard about it - but most of them were too young to remember it. Now God would stop the river’s waters for them so that they could cross into the Promised Land.

The priests obeyed the Lord’s command. They carried the Ark of the Covenant to the water’s edge and then stepped into the river. As soon as their feet touched the water, the river started to dry up! The Lord stopped the water upstream - it began to pile up in a heap many miles away. Now there was dry ground for God’s people to cross.

The priests took the Ark and stood in the middle of the riverbed. They would have to stand there, holding the Ark, until all of the people crossed. Very quickly, the families began to move. They could not be afraid that the waters would come back and cover them. They had to trust that God would hold the river back and keep them safe until all the people crossed over.

It took a long time for everyone to cross because there were so many Israelites, but they all made it over before the end of the day. Finally everyone was safe on the other side! They had trusted God to get them into the Promised Land, and now they were there! But the priests were still holding the Ark in the middle of the riverbed.

Joshua called twelve chosen men and told each of them to pick up a stone from the middle of where the river used to be. They took twelve stones and set them together as a monument on the other side of the river. The stones were piled on top of each other. They would be a reminder to all who saw them that God had stopped the waters of the Jordan River so His people could cross over.

Now the priests could come to the shore as well. As soon as their feet touched the other side of the river, the waters of the Jordan River came back. Once again it was a deep, wide river! Now only the stones from the riverbed were left to remind them of what God had done.

God’s people learned something about faith that day. They learned to trust God, that He was with them and would protect them. But it wasn’t enough just to believe that. No, they had to follow where the Lord would lead them. They had to cross over the Jordan and not fear that the waters would come back and cover them up. True faith follows wherever God leads.

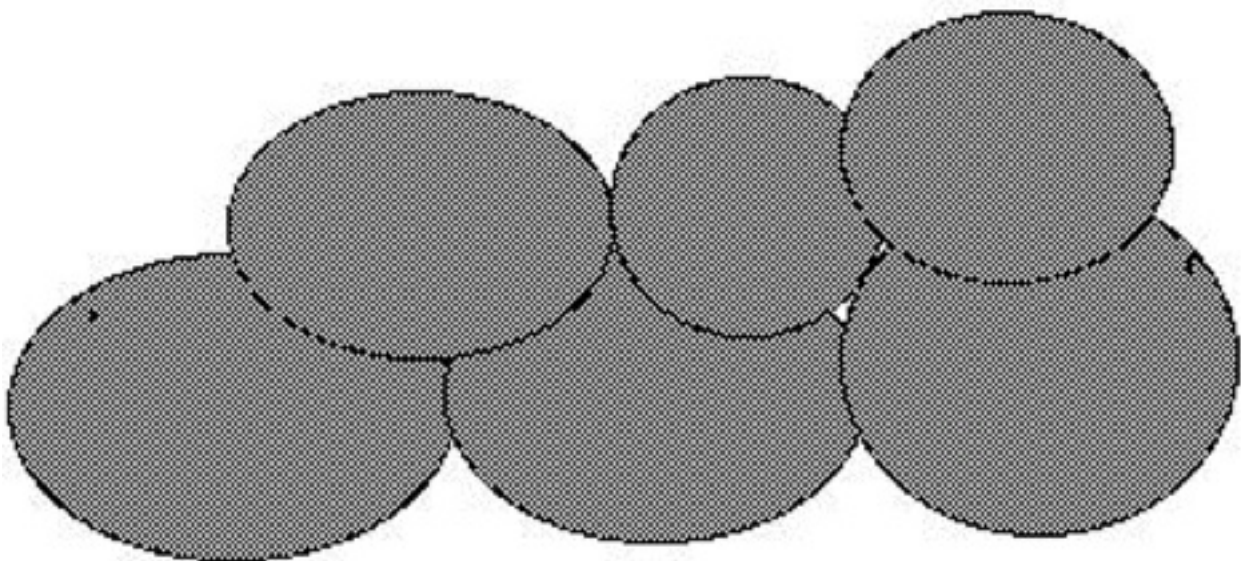
## **Worksheet**

Hand out photocopies of the worksheet to all of your students. Six of the stones in the monument have been drawn; the students are to add six more to the pile. These can be cut from scraps of construction paper into rough “stone” shapes and then glued onto the monument in any manner they would like. Let them be creative! Note: if you have mostly fours, or students who struggle with scissors, you can cut out some stone shapes before class for your students to use. Many fours and fives will be proud to show you how well they can count out twelve stones. Let them do so, and help those who are less sure of their numbers.





**A monument is something we build to remember something important in the past. Joshua and God's people used twelve stones to build a monument. Below are six stones. Add six more to the pile.**





# **THE BATTLE OF JERICHO**

## **Joshua 5-6**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show our students that God rewards true faith.

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 1:7a-c** - “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left.”

### **Lesson Background**

Everyone wants to be on the winning side! Even preschoolers love the feeling of winning a board game or a race with Daddy or a simple guessing game. Joshua and the people of Israel are about to win their first battle in the Promised Land - but not in the usual way that battles are won. This very strange battle is won entirely by faith and the power of God. The Israelites believe what God says, they obey His directions, and He rewards them by bringing down Jericho’s walls.

Please do not get frustrated if, at this point, there seems to be little application of the lesson material. We are working on establishing a concept of *faith* in our students. Faith is a complex idea; it involves believing, trusting, and acting on that belief and trust in obedience. We will continue to develop these ideas for the next few lessons. Once we have given the children some understanding of what faith is, we will have more practical applications in the second half of the quarter.

## Lesson Procedure

For this week's lesson you will need the following: some wooden or plastic blocks (call a student's family if you don't have these in your church or household); flannelgraph or pictures to illustrate story (optional); cardboard toilet paper rolls or paper towel rolls (1 per student); paper cups (optional); construction paper to cover cardboard rolls.

### 1. Focus Activity

Have students join you in building a block "wall" as they enter the classroom. See how high they can build it before it topples over; make sure all of the children can have a turn adding something to the wall. Once everyone has contributed, choose a child to knock the wall over.

"What a noise our wall made when it came down! And what a mess! Can you imagine what it would be like if a real wall came tumbling down? Help me pick up these blocks and put them away; I have an exciting story to tell you about Joshua and the day the walls came tumbling down!"

In the story area, you may wish to review the "One, Two" action rhyme, since we will be talking about Rahab again this week. Also, go over your memory verse as a class.

"Our memory verse is from the book of Joshua; it's what the Lord said to Joshua as he began to lead God's people. God wanted Joshua to be strong and very courageous and to have faith in His Word. Joshua is going to need all those things as he leads God's people into the battle of Jericho!"

### 2. Bible Story (from Joshua 5 and 6)

God's people were in the Promised Land! They had crossed the Jordan River together as God held back the waters, and now it was time to fight for the land. Their first battle would be against the wicked city of Jericho.

Joshua went out to look at Jericho. It was a very strong city. It was surrounded by high walls for protection. Everyone in the city was shut up inside the walls, and no one went in or out. How could God's people defeat such a place?

As Joshua was looking at Jericho, he suddenly saw a man standing in front of him with a sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us, or for our enemies?"

"Neither," said the man, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." The commander of the Lord's army! Joshua fell with his face to the ground. He was told to take off his sandals because he was standing on holy ground.

The Lord gave instructions to Joshua and told him how he and the people must fight the battle of Jericho. They would not win the city with their strength or their swords. They would win the battle by faith! The Lord Himself would bring down the walls of Jericho if the people would obey His directions.

The battle would take seven days. On the first day all the fighting men would march around the city. The priests would carry the Ark of the Covenant in front of the men. They would march

around the city walls in silence except for the trumpets the priests would blow as they marched. They were to march around the city one time and then return to their camp!

On the second day, the army did the same thing again. The priests led the way, blowing on their trumpets, as the fighting men walked around the city. They walked around one time and then went back to their camp.

This was repeated for four more days! Every day the army marched around the city one time, and then went home. What did the people of Jericho think about this? How could marching around the city bring the walls of Jericho down?

Perhaps the people of Jericho felt quite safe, protected by their city's strong wall. But one woman knew that the Lord would destroy Jericho! That woman was Rahab - the one who hid the spies. The spies had promised to keep her safe, and all of her loved ones, if she tied a red cord to her window and kept everyone inside her house. Rahab obeyed their instructions. She knew strong walls could not defeat the Lord.

Finally, the seventh day came. Joshua and the army came out once again to march around Jericho. But this time they didn't just march around the city once. No, on this day they went around the city seven times. Can you count to seven with me? (Count with your students.)

After the seventh time around, the priests sounded a long trumpet blast. "Shout!" commanded Joshua, "For the Lord has given you the city!" He told the soldiers to be careful not to take anything from the city for themselves, because everything was to be devoted to the Lord. And he told them to save Rahab and her family because she had hidden the spies.

After the trumpet blast, and the shout of the people, the strong walls around Jericho collapsed! They fell to the ground; the Lord Himself destroyed the city walls. Now the army was able to run straight into the city. Only Rahab and her family were saved, because she had trusted the Lord. The rest of the city was destroyed just as God commanded.

God's people won the battle of Jericho because they had faith in God. They believed He would give them the city even though it was surrounded by strong walls. They obeyed His commands even though it seemed a strange thing to march around a city so many times. They had faith in God's promise, and God rewarded them by giving them the city. And He rewarded Rahab for her faith, too, by keeping her and her family safe.

God rewards true faith. When we believe what He says and do what He tells us to do, He will bless us in many ways. We can trust Him always to keep His promises to us.

### **3. Project/Activity**

This is a story that begs to be acted out! Begin by having the children make their own "horns," and then use them as you march around Jericho.

The horns can be as simple or as elaborate as you like, depending on the age of your students and how much time you have. The simplest horn is just a cardboard toilet paper roll or paper towel roll covered with construction paper. If you have more time, the toilet paper roll fits nicely into the bottom of a paper bathroom cup for a more realistic horn shape.

Once your “horns” are completed, pick an area of the room to be Jericho (it can be your circle area, or the table where you sit, or a group of chairs placed in a circle). You can act out all seven days of the battle, if you have time, or you can act out just the seventh day. Have the students count aloud the number of times you go around Jericho. On the seventh time around, announce “Shout! For the Lord has given you the city!” Then have the students cheer and sound their trumpets. You can be sure the children who participate in this will remember the story of Jericho next week when you review!

## **Worksheet**

The student activity takes the place of a worksheet in this week’s lesson.

# **THE SIN OF ACHAN**

## **Joshua 7**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show students that true faith obeys God's commands.

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 1:7** - "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go."

### **Lesson Background**

Faith and obedience go hand in hand! James speaks of Abraham and his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, and writes: "Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did" (James 2:21-22).

Obedience is a necessary part of true faith. Noah could have believed that God was going to send a flood, but if he hadn't obeyed and built the ark, he would have perished! In our story this week, Achan perishes because he doesn't obey God's very clear command to leave the spoil of Jericho untouched. In fact, his disobedience brings about the deaths of a number of God's people. It's not enough just to say you believe what God says; your actions will show whether you have true faith or not.

This week's lesson will also review the other lessons we have had from the book of Joshua - especially the worksheet. Joshua and Rahab stand in sharp contrast to Achan. They believed and obeyed God and were rewarded for their faith. Let us pray that our students will follow their path as we warn them of the sin of Achan.

## Lesson Procedure

For this week's lesson you will need the following: flannelgraph or pictures to illustrate story (optional); photocopies of worksheets; crayons.

### 1. Focus Activity

Begin class with a listening and obeying game. "I would like to play a game with you this morning that will show us how well you listen and obey. When I say 'Teacher says' before a command, I want you to obey me. But if I don't say 'Teacher says' first, don't obey the command. Do you think you can do that?" It will take a few rounds for your students to catch on to the rules of this modified "Simon Says" game, but once they do they will love it. Give them simple commands, like "Teacher says, touch your toes" or "Teacher says, stretch your arms." If a student misses, it isn't necessary to have him sit down or leave the game. Simply point out that he missed, then continue. We're not after a winner; we're trying to make a point about listening and obeying.

"You are all very good at listening and obeying! But our story today is about a man who did not obey God's clear commands. He brought a lot of trouble, both to God's people and to himself. Let's go to our story area so we can learn about him." [Note: your students may be reluctant to leave the game. Let them know that there may be time afterwards to play some more if they can settle down quickly to hear the story. If not, we will play the game again in a future lesson.]

In your story area, go over your memory verse (most should know at least part of it by now), and then review last week's lesson on the battle of Jericho. (An easy way to review is to ask the students questions: How many times did God's people march around Jericho? What happened to the city walls? Who was saved from the city?) Now you are ready to begin this week's lesson.

### 2. Bible Story (from Joshua 7)

God fought the battle of Jericho for His people. He brought down the city's walls. And He protected the soldiers and kept them from harm. Jericho was a strong city, but not strong enough to defeat the Lord.

Joshua told the soldiers what God had commanded about Jericho. Some valuables would be taken into the Lord's treasury, but everything else was to be destroyed. Joshua warned the men not to take anything from Jericho for themselves. The entire city was to be devoted to God and then burned by fire.

But one soldier, a man named Achan, did not obey God's command. He knew he was not supposed to take anything from Jericho. But Achan saw a fancy robe that he just had to have. And he found some silver and a wedge of gold. Achan was a greedy man. He took those things from Jericho and hid them inside his tent. He buried the silver underneath the tent. He thought that no one would ever know that he had disobeyed God and taken those things.

Joshua didn't know that Achan had disobeyed God - but God knew! He sees everything we do, doesn't He? And He knows all things. But Joshua thought that all the soldiers had obeyed God's commands. He thought the Lord was still with them and would still fight their battles.



The next battle to be fought was at the city of Ai. Joshua sent spies to the city, and they came back with a good report. “Not all the people will have to go up against Ai. Send two or three thousand men to take it ... for only a few men are there.” That sounded like a good plan to Joshua. He did not send his whole army to fight Ai. He believed the Lord would give them the victory with a smaller group of soldiers.

But the Lord was not with the army at all! He was displeased with Achan’s disobedience, and so he did not help Joshua’s soldiers. The few men of Ai chased the Israelite army away. Thirty-six of the soldiers were killed. The army came back in disgrace and defeat.

Joshua was heartbroken! He didn’t understand why God had not blessed them in the battle. After all, the Lord had promised to be with His people and to fight for them. Why had things gone so terribly wrong? Joshua and the leaders of God’s people fell on their faces before the Ark of the Lord and prayed.

The Lord spoke to Joshua. He told him that someone in Israel had sinned and had taken things from Jericho to keep for himself. That is why God had not been with the army, and why they were defeated. Because of this man, thirty-six soldiers had lost their lives. The Lord told Joshua that because of his sin, this man would have to be destroyed along with the things he had taken.

The next morning all of God’s people were gathered together. Joshua told them that someone in the camp had sinned and would have to pay for his disobedience. Still, Achan did not repent. Tribe by tribe, family by family the people came up, until the Lord showed Joshua that Achan was the man who had taken things from Jericho!

Now Achan had to face what he had done. He told Joshua that he knew he had sinned. He told him about the beautiful robe and the silver and gold. But it was too late. Achan paid for his sin with his own life, and he and the things he had stolen were destroyed by fire.

That was a very sad day for all of God’s people. But they learned the importance of believing and obeying God in all things. It wasn’t enough just to say that they were trusting God. No - true faith obeys what God says. If the Lord was to be the God of Israel, His people would have to listen and obey His voice.

The next time Joshua and the army went against the city of Ai, God gave them the victory! They were able to win the battle because the Lord was with them again. He blessed His people because they trusted Him and because they obeyed His commands. We need to learn to trust and obey as well. [Note: if your class is learning the hymn *Trust and Obey* or its chorus, you may wish to close the lesson by singing this together.]

## Worksheet

You will need to work on this worksheet together as a class. Read the description on the left side and the directions for the students to follow; you may wish to do a sample worksheet to show them as you explain the directions. Then proceed to the next description. Discuss how Joshua’s and Rahab’s obedience brought happiness and blessing, while Achan’s disobedience brought sadness and death.

Since this week’s worksheet is fairly simple, you may have time to play the listening and obeying game. For variety, you might ask one or more of your students to take turns being the leader.

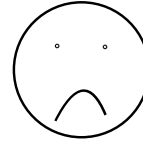
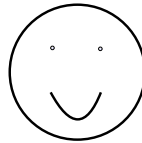


## JOSHUA, RAHAB, AND ACHAN

### JOSHUA

Joshua had true faith in God. He obeyed God's commands in the battle of Jericho. God brought down Jericho's strong walls. God blessed Joshua!

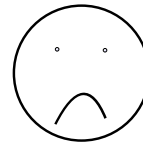
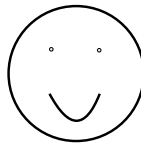
**Color the happy face yellow. Cross out the sad face.**



### RAHAB

Rahab had true faith in God. She hid the spies. She kept her family safe, and became part of God's people. God blessed Rahab.

**Color the happy face yellow. Cross out the sad face.**



### ACHAN

Achan did not have true faith. He disobeyed God, and took things from Jericho. Achan brought trouble on God's people, and on himself.

**Color the sad face blue. Cross out the happy face.**





# **DEBORAH AND BARAK**

## **Judges 4-5**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show students that faith drives away fear.

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 1:7** - "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go."

### **Lesson Background**

This week we will review the many things we have learned about true faith and begin to apply these things to our students' lives. Many of the children in your Sunday School class will be able to relate to Barak's fear of the enemy. While they have not faced swords and chariots, your students will be able to tell you of their own daily fears - fear of the dark, fear of monsters, fear of being separated from Mommy or Daddy. Those fears are every bit as intimidating to them as the fears we face in our own lives. Let's point our students to the God who has promised to be with us and to deliver us from all our fears (Psalm 34:4).

While the narrative of the battle is found in Judges 4, some of the details of the Canaanite oppression and the flood that wiped out Sisera's troops are actually found in Deborah's song in Judges 5. Make sure you read both chapters in preparation for the lesson.

Also, this week's project will take a little preparation time since you will need to cut out the shield shapes ahead of time, one per person. The shield shapes needn't be large - about six inches long is fine. Poster board will be easier to cut than cardboard, and will still be strong enough to retain its shape when it is held.

## Lesson Procedure

For this week's lesson you will need the following: paper and crayons for focus activity; flannelgraph or pictures to illustrate story (optional); light cardboard or poster board (enough to make one small shield per child); crayons, markers, stickers, glitter pens, or other craft items to decorate shields.

### 1. Focus Activity

Have crayons and paper out for your students to make some "nighttime" pictures. These can be pictures of their room at night, or the night sky, or an outdoor picture of the nighttime. (You may wish to be working on one as they enter, as an example. Also, be sure to have lots of black and deep purple crayons for the kids to use.) As they color, ask your students about their nighttime rituals: Do they read stories before bedtime? Do they pray? Do they have a night light? Also ask them if they are ever afraid of the dark. Allow them to talk and share their stories.

"We know that there isn't anything to be afraid of in the dark, don't we? Your bedroom is just the same, whether the light is on or not. But sometimes we get scared. Maybe we get scared at night, or maybe when we have a babysitter, or maybe at other times. But when we have faith in God, we know He is always with us and we don't need to be afraid! Our Bible story is about a woman who knew that! Let's finish up our pictures and go to our story area." If some children are reluctant to leave their pictures, tell them they can finish them after the lesson.

In the story area, have the children review their memory verse (this is the last week for Joshua 1:7). Remind them that God wanted Joshua to be brave and courageous so he could lead God's people. Joshua knew that if he had faith in God and obeyed His commands, God would bless him and fight for His people.

"We've talked a lot about faith the last few weeks, haven't we? We've said that faith is believing what God says is true. It is trusting that God will take care of us. And true faith obeys God's commands and does what He wants us to do. When we have true faith, we don't need to be afraid of bad things because we know that God will take care of us. Let's listen to our story to find out about Deborah, a brave mother of Israel, and how she helped a man named Barak to be brave, too."

### 2. Bible Story (from Judges 4 and 5)

God helped Joshua and his people conquer the Promised Land, and all the people settled in to make their homes and raise their families. God had certainly blessed them! But it wasn't long before the people began to forget about the Lord and His commands. As the years went by, some of the people fell into wicked ways. Some even worshiped idols. They stopped honoring the Lord and His Word.

God still loved His people, and He wouldn't give up on them. He allowed other nations to come and punish His people so that they would return to Him. Once, He allowed another king to take over the land of Israel. This king had a general named Sisera, who treated the people cruelly. Sisera's army had nine hundred iron chariots, and he used them to make God's people miserable. The people were no longer safe from fear and harm. They had to do whatever Sisera and his king told them to do. It was a very bad time, and it lasted for twenty years.

But there was one woman in Israel who had not forgotten about the Lord! Her name was Deborah. She was a prophetess, and she spoke the Lord's words to the people. All the people knew that Deborah was a wise, godly woman. When there were arguments or fights, they would come to her and she would help them to settle their differences. Deborah wasn't a queen or a general - she was a wife and mother. But she loved the Lord, and God blessed her and used her.

One day, Deborah called for a man named Barak to come and see her. When he arrived, she told him that the time had come for God's people to fight Sisera and his army and his nine hundred chariots. She told Barak that he was to lead God's army, and that the Lord had promised that he would defeat Sisera! God's army would win, and they would be free from Sisera and his king.

But Barak was afraid. He knew that Sisera's army was very strong. He knew that they could only win if the Lord would fight for them. He wanted to make sure that God's blessing would be on the army.

Barak said to Deborah, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." He refused to fight Sisera unless Deborah joined him.

What would Deborah do? She wasn't a soldier - she was a wife and mother. But Deborah wasn't afraid! "Very well," Deborah said, "I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will hand Sisera over to a woman."

The day of the battle arrived. Barak, with Deborah by his side, brought the army to Mount Tabor. Sisera's army was in the valley below. Sisera had gathered his men and his chariots and waited for Barak and his soldiers to come down and fight.

But God was fighting from heaven for His people that day! He sent down so much rain that the river in the valley began to flood. Sisera's chariots got caught in the mud - they couldn't move! The chariots were no good at all, and the soldiers abandoned them. Barak and his men chased them and caught them. With God's help, they won the battle and destroyed the enemy.

Sisera could see that his army was losing. He was scared! He decided to run away and hide. He ran to a friend's camp - but even among his friends he had enemies! Instead of dying with honor on the battlefield, Sisera was killed by a woman while he was hiding in her tent.

God's people had a great victory that day! When the battle was over, Deborah and Barak led a song of praise to the Lord. The people had put their faith in God, and He had delivered them from all their fears!

Deborah was brave, wasn't she? And she helped Barak to be brave, too. But the God whom Deborah trusted is the same God who cares for us! Whenever we are afraid, we need to remember who God is. And we can ask Him to help us and protect us. He is a great God, isn't He? Let's thank Him now for who He is, and for always being with us (lead in prayer).

### **3. Project**

Explain that Barak’s soldiers used shields to protect them from spears and other weapons. “God’s word says that faith is like a shield; it protects us from fear and from sin. Today we’re going to make ‘shields of faith’ to remember Deborah and Barak and their faith.”

Give each child a cut-out shield and allow them to decorate them as they wish. You can provide crayons, markers, stickers, glitter pens, or anything else you might have on hand for them to use. If you like, you can write “SHIELD OF FAITH” on each shield. You could also tape a piece of construction paper to the back for the children to use as a handle.

During the project time, any students who did not finish their “nighttime” pictures may do so. Because of the project, there will not be a worksheet with this lesson.



**SHIELD PATTERN**





# **GIDEON'S CALL**

## **Judges 6**

### **Lesson Aim**

To encourage students to have faith even when they don't understand.

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 1:8a** - "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth..."

### **Lesson Background**

Has there ever been a hero quite like Gideon? In his book, *Even in Darkness*, Gordon J. Keddie writes: "He seems very much to be one of us. He was hesitant. He had little evident ambition. He had almost to be dragged into the job by the Lord. Surely this is a testimony, all the more, to the patience and the mercy of God." Was Gideon afraid? Certainly. Was he confused? Definitely. Did he try to wiggle out of God's call? Maybe. Yet despite his confusion, his second-guessing, his requesting of "signs," etc., we see God's infinite patience. He does not rebuke Gideon in his weakness, but encourages him, strengthens him and, in the end, uses him for His own glorious purpose.

As we talk about Gideon and his confusion this week, we want to encourage our students to trust God even when they are confused. We don't have to know all the answers - in fact, we cannot. Thankfully, this kind of faith is easier for children than it is for grown-ups. It's the kind of faith we are all commanded to have: "And he said, 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven'" (Matthew 18:3).

## Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: puzzles (for individuals or the group); construction paper; glue or glue sticks; shapes cut from construction paper - circles (1 per child), squares (1 per child) and small rectangles (4 per child - see illustration in project section of lesson); flannelgraph or picture illustrating story (optional).

### 1. Focus Activity

Have out either a group of puzzles for your students to work on or one large one you can work on together (make sure it's one you can finish in five or ten minutes as a group). When you finish the puzzle, admire it together! "When a puzzle is in pieces, it's hard to tell what the picture is, isn't it? When grown-ups don't understand something, they say it is a 'puzzle.' That means they aren't sure how things will end up or what the final result will look like.

"Our story today is about a man who was very 'puzzled' about what God was doing. He didn't know he was an important 'piece' to God's plan. Let's go to our story area to find out more about him."

### 2. Bible Story (from Judges 6)

After God saved His people from Sisera's army and his nine hundred chariots, the land had peace for forty years. But once again God's people forgot about their Lord. They began to worship idols, like the false god Baal. They did many wicked things. Because of their sin, the Lord allowed their enemies, the Midianites, to take over the land. He did this because He wanted His people to be sorry for their sins and return to Him.

For seven years the Midianites made the lives of God's people miserable! They would come in and steal all of the food! They took their sheep and cattle and donkeys. There were so many Midianites that they couldn't be counted! God's people began to hide in the mountains, in caves and shelters, to keep safe from the Midianites.

God's people cried out to Him, and so the angel of the Lord came to speak to a man named Gideon. Gideon was trying to thresh wheat in secret so the Midianites wouldn't see him. He knew if he was caught, the Midianites would take the wheat away - the way they stole everything else.

The angel of the Lord spoke to Gideon. "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior," he said.

Gideon didn't understand his words. He wasn't a mighty warrior! And he didn't think the Lord was with him at all! "But sir," he said, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?"

Then the angel of the Lord told Gideon that God had chosen him to fight the Midianites. Gideon would lead the people into battle, and God would save them from their enemies!

But Gideon didn't understand this, either! He was "puzzled," wasn't he? How could he lead God's people against their enemies? "But Lord," he asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." Gideon thought there must be some kind of mistake!

But there was no mistake! The Lord promised to be with Gideon. But Gideon was still puzzled. “If it is really you I am talking to,” he said to the angel of the Lord, “please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before you.” The angel of the Lord promised to wait, and Gideon prepared an offering of meat, bread and broth.

The angel of the Lord told Gideon to put the offering on a rock, and then he touched it with the tip of his staff. Fire came up out of the rock and ate up all the meat and the bread! Then the angel of the Lord disappeared, and Gideon realized that his message was from God Himself!

Later that same night, the Lord spoke again to Gideon. Gideon’s own father had built an altar to the false god, Baal. The Lord wanted Gideon to tear that altar down and build the right kind of altar - an altar to the true God of Israel. Gideon knew if he destroyed Baal’s altar, his family and the people of his town would be angry because they worshiped Baal. So Gideon obeyed the Lord, but he did it at night. He and ten of his servants tore down Baal’s altar and built an altar to the Lord God. They offered Him a sacrifice there.

In the morning, the men of the town were so angry that they wanted to kill Gideon. But the Lord protected him and kept him safe. Gideon was filled with the Spirit of the Lord and he summoned the men of Israel together to fight the Midianites. The Midianites also gathered together and brought their armies into the land of Israel.

The time for battle was drawing near. But once again, Gideon was unsure. What if he had misunderstood what God had told him? What if God wasn’t really going to save His people from the Midianites? Gideon’s faith was not very strong; he decided to test God to see if he really could trust Him.

Gideon put a wool fleece, or lambskin, on the threshing floor ground. He prayed to the Lord, “If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you have said.” Gideon went to bed, and in the morning he went to look at the fleece. Normally, if there was dew in the morning, it would have been on both the ground and the fleece. But the ground was dry, and Gideon could squeeze out a whole bowlful of water out of the fleece. God had heard his prayer!

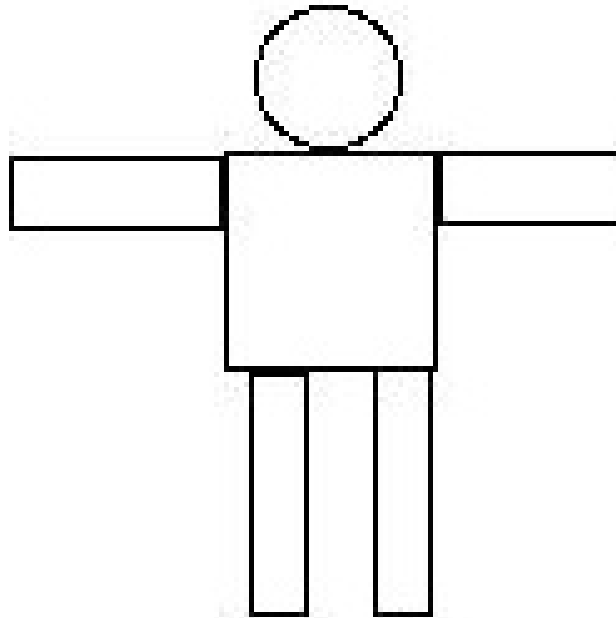
But still Gideon was unsure! He put the fleece out a second night and asked God to keep the fleece dry and cover the ground with dew. God was patient and kind to Gideon. The next morning, the fleece was dry and the ground was wet. Once again, God had answered his prayer.

Gideon still didn’t know what God was going to do, but God was helping his faith to grow strong. He helped Gideon to see that, even though he may not understand everything, he could still trust the Lord. Sometimes things happen to us that we don’t understand. Maybe we know someone who is sick or hurt. Maybe a friend has to move away. Sometimes we feel sad.

We need to remember that we are each a part of “God’s puzzle.” We may not be able to tell how things will end, but God has a plan! And we are a part of it! Next week we will find out about God’s plan for Gideon and how he became a mighty warrior.

### 3. Project

We're going to make a "Gideon Puzzle-Man" this week to remember the puzzled Gideon. Give each student a circle, a square, four rectangles, and a piece of construction paper. Show the students how to assemble the pieces so they look like a man as pictured below.



Students should glue the shapes to the construction paper to make their "Gideons." Some of your older students may wish to add a face, hands, feet or other details to their pictures, which is fine. You may wish to have these features on a sample project to inspire their creativity. As your students work, review this week's lesson with them, reminding them that Gideon was puzzled, but God was helping his faith to grow strong.

# **GIDEON'S VICTORY**

## **Judges 7**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show students that our faith is in a great God.

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 1:8a-b** - "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night ..."

### **Lesson Background**

We have seen last week that our hero, Gideon, was very much an ordinary man. He had doubts, he had fears, he had confusion. This week we will focus on the greatness of our God and how He was able to use a man like Gideon and a mere 300 soldiers to rout the entire Midianite army.

As Christians, we can live by faith because our faith is in a great God! That's what made the difference for Gideon - and what makes the difference for us. After all, you can have all the faith in the world, but if the object of your faith is unworthy, what hope do you really have? We can have faith in the promises of God because we know the Promiser is faithful. We can trust the Word of God because we know it is trustworthy. And we can expect great things from God because our God is very great!

Let's emphasize the greatness of God to our students this week. If you sing songs before the story time, choose some that remind us of this, such as *My God Is So Great*, or *Our God Is An Awesome God*. As young children delight in the strength of their daddies, let us delight in the strength and greatness of our Lord.

## Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: flannelgraph or picture illustrating story (optional); photocopies of worksheet (one per child); crayons.

### 1. Focus Activity

Lead students in a game of “Follow the Leader.” Explain that they need to follow you, single file, and imitate what you are doing. You can march, flap your arms like a bird, hop on one foot, or anything else that comes to mind. If you like, you can choose students to take turns being the leader once they understand the object of the game.

“We call this game ‘Follow the Leader’ because one person leads everyone else, and we need to follow what he or she is doing. We’ve been talking about some great leaders of God’s people, like Joshua, Deborah, Barak and Gideon. This week we’re going to talk about how Gideon led God’s people into battle. But God was the real leader, wasn’t He? Gideon learns to follow His directions - even though they seem very strange! Let’s go to our story area to find out more.”

In the story area, go over the memory verse; you will want to explain that to “meditate” is to really think about something. Also, review last week’s lesson about Gideon. Remind the students that the Midianites were stealing food and making the lives of God’s people miserable. Talk about Gideon’s call, his confusion, and how God was patient with him and answered his prayers about the fleece.

### 2. Bible Story (from Judges 7)

The time had come for Gideon to lead God’s people into battle against the Midianites! Many men came to Gideon from different parts of Israel. Soon there were thirty-two thousand men altogether, ready to fight the enemy.

But God told Gideon that there were too many soldiers! He wanted His people to trust Him in the battle, not their soldiers. Some of the men would have to go home. Gideon spoke to the soldiers. He said that any man who was afraid to fight should leave the army. Most of the soldiers were afraid, so they left. Now only ten thousand remained to fight the Midianites.

But that was still too many men! If Israel won the battle with ten thousand soldiers, they would think the army had saved them, not God. The Lord told Gideon to take the men to the water for a drink. He told Gideon to choose the men who cupped their hands for a drink of water. Those who knelt down for a drink were sent back.

Now only three hundred soldiers were left. How could three hundred men fight thousands and thousands of Midianites? But the Lord promised Gideon that He would fight for Israel. He would give Gideon the victory with these few men and destroy the Midianites.

During the night the Lord spoke to Gideon: “If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah and listen to what they are saying.” Gideon and his servant quietly sneaked into the enemy’s camp. There were thousands of people there; even their camels were too many to count.



No one recognized Gideon; he was able to hear two of the men talking. One man said to his friend, "I had a dream. A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed."

His friend said, "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands."

Gideon heard what they said, and he worshiped God. The Lord had allowed him to hear this to help his faith grow. Gideon may have had only three hundred men, but He had the Lord God on his side. God is so great - He doesn't need soldiers or weapons to win a battle. He can do anything He wants!

Now Gideon was ready to fight the battle! He went back to his camp and called the men together. Gideon divided the men into three groups. He gave each man a trumpet, an empty jar, and a torch inside the jars. "Watch me," he told the men. "Follow my lead. When I get to the edge of the camp, do exactly as I do. When I and all who are with me blow our trumpets, then from all around the camp blow yours and shout, 'For the Lord and for Gideon.'"

While the Midianites slept, Gideon and his men crept up to their camp. They took their places around the camp. Suddenly, the silence of the night was broken by a trumpet sound and the sound of a crash! Gideon had blown his trumpet and smashed his jar. When his soldiers heard that, they blew on their trumpets and smashed their jars. "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" they shouted. The torches that were hidden in the jars now lit up the night.

What a terrible noise they made! The Midianites awoke to the trumpet blares and the crashing sounds. They saw the torches surrounding their camp and thought that thousands of soldiers were there to fight against them! The Lord caused them to be scared and confused. They began to fight and kill each other.

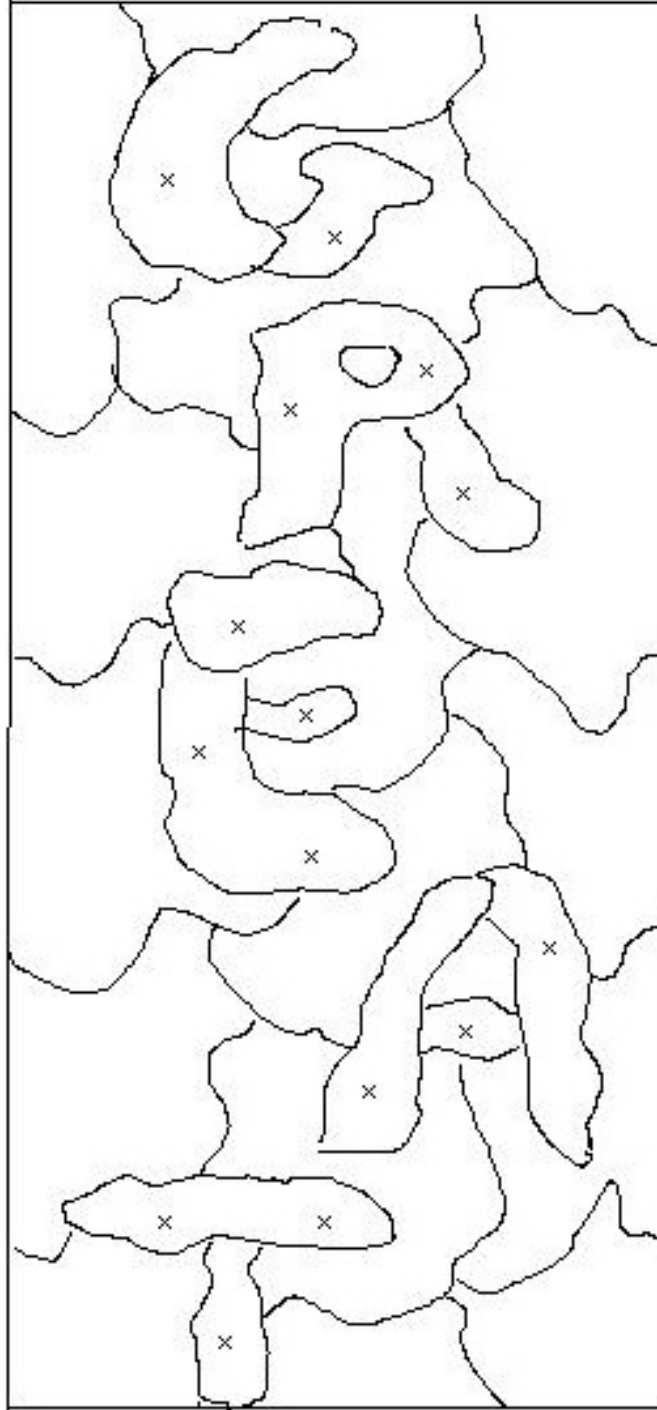
Soon Gideon and his men had the Midianites on the run! They chased their enemy throughout the night. Other Israelites came to join the fight. That day God's people defeated their enemies. God gave them the victory. They didn't win because they had the most soldiers or the greatest army. They won because the God of Israel is a great God! He can do anything He wants to do, can't He? He has all power.

Our faith is in a great God. We know that nothing is too hard for Him to do. That's why we can come to Him in prayer and ask Him for help. That's why we can trust that He is always able to take care of us. I'm glad we worship a great God, aren't you? Let's pray together to Him right now (lead in prayer).

## **Worksheet**

Pass out a photocopy of the worksheet to each child. Explain that they should color all the shapes with "X's" blue, and all the other shapes red. When they are done, read the word and the sentence below the puzzle for them. Most of your fours and fives will need you to write the word "GREAT" in the space provided. [Note: Each child will need a photo of himself for the project for lesson 9. Send a note home this week to ask parents to send one in with their child. (This will give an extra week to remind those parents who forget!)]





GOD IS VERY \_\_\_\_\_!



# **ABIMELECH**

## **Judges 9**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show students that our faith is in a just God.

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 1:8** - “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.”

### **Lesson Background**

Despite his faults, Gideon’s life had the right general direction. When the Israelites desired to make him king and to make his family a royal dynasty, he declined, saying, “The Lord will rule over you” (Judges 8:23). He even named his illegitimate son “Abimelech,” which means “My Father(God) is King.” Unfortunately, Abimelech did not share his father’s lack of ambition. Instead, he sought the position of king and received it - for a very short while. The result was his own destruction and the destruction of his followers.

While some details are necessary to the story, we will not focus on the more sordid or violent aspects of Abimelech’s life. Instead, we will look at Jotham’s parable of the trees and how they chose the worthless thornbush to rule over them. And we will show God’s justice that punished Abimelech and the people of Shechem. We can assure our students that our God is a just God who will make all things right one day. We can have faith that He will not allow evil men to have the final victory.

## Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: a snack to share (see Focus Activity); green construction paper; glue sticks; photocopies of the “Trees Poem.”

### 1. Focus Activity

Bring a snack to share with your students - one that can be divided equally among them. It can be small cheese crackers, little candies, gummy bears, etc. As students come into the class, give each one an equal amount - for example, five small cheese crackers per child. Tell them that each child will get the same amount and have them help you count them out (give them just enough to eat right then, or else give them a baggie to take the treat home.)

“We gave everyone the same amount of snack to be fair to everyone, didn’t we? It wouldn’t be fair if Annie got ten crackers and Justin only got one. When we count the crackers out, we know everyone will get the same amount.

“We like things to be fair, don’t we? Everyone should play by the same rules and take turns and share, and then we would get along so much better! But some people don’t obey the rules, do they? Some people break God’s laws, and they don’t think that God cares at all! Does God care when people break His laws or hurt other people? Will He let them get away with that? Our story today talks about that; let’s go to our story area to find out.”

In the story area, go over the memory verse and review the past two lessons about Gideon.

### 2. Bible Story (from Judges 9)

After Gideon led the battle against the Midianites and won, he was a great hero to all of the people. They wanted to make Gideon the king of the land! But Gideon knew that would be wrong. “I will not rule over you, nor will my son rule over you,” Gideon said. “The Lord will rule over you.” Gideon knew that the Lord was Israel’s true king - not he.

Gideon had many wives and he had many children. He had over seventy sons! While he was alive, the land had peace for forty years. But after Gideon died, the people soon forgot about the Lord. Once again they began to worship idols.

One of Gideon’s sons was named Abimelech. He lived in the city of Shechem, where his mother’s family all lived. Shechem was an evil city where the people worshiped the god Baal. Now Abimelech’s father, Gideon, didn’t want to be king - but Abimelech was different! He very much wanted to be king! He went to the people of Shechem and told them of his plan.

“Which is better for you,” he asked them, “to have all seventy of Gideon’s sons rule over you, or just one man? Remember, I am your flesh and blood.” Then he told them of his evil plan; Abimelech wanted to kill all of his brothers, and then he would become the king of Shechem!

The people of Shechem listened to Abimelech. They agreed to his wicked plan, and Abimelech took some men and went to his father’s house to kill all of his brothers. Only one brother escaped - the youngest, whose name was Jotham. Jotham was able to hide from Abimelech.

Now Abimelech believed that nothing stood in the way of him becoming king! But God was very angry with Abimelech. Killing people is against God's laws, isn't it? God was also angry with the people of Shechem, who helped Abimelech and made him king. They thought no one could stop them now, but the Lord had other plans!

The people of Shechem brought Abimelech out to crown him king. But Jotham, Gideon's youngest son, heard about this. He climbed to the top of a nearby mountain (where he would be safely out of reach), and called down to Abimelech and the people.

"Listen to me, citizens of Shechem!" Jotham called down to the people. And then he told them the following story - the story of the trees who wanted a king:

One day the trees decided that they wanted to have a king to rule over them. So they went to the olive tree and asked him to be their king. But the olive tree was a busy tree with a very important job to do. His olives were used to make olive oil, which was useful and honored by all. He told the trees that he could not stop growing olives. He couldn't be their king.

Next the trees asked the fig tree to be their king. But the fig tree was busy growing its good, sweet figs - too busy to be the king. He said no as well.

Then the trees asked the grape vine to be their king. But the grape vine already had an important job - growing grapes. His grapes were used to make wine, which everyone enjoyed. He, too, said no to the trees.

Finally, the trees were left with the worthless thornbush. The thornbush had no fruit and no important job to do. All he had was prickly thorns that would hurt everyone who came near! When the trees asked him to be king, he agreed - but only if the other trees would gather close to him, and stand in his shade. Otherwise, the thornbush said, fire would come out of him, and destroy them all! The foolish trees had chosen the worst one of all to be their king!

Jotham explained his story to the people of Shechem. They had destroyed his brothers - the sons of Gideon - even though his father had risked his life and fought to save them from the Midianites. And they had chosen Abimelech - the worst of them all - to be their king!

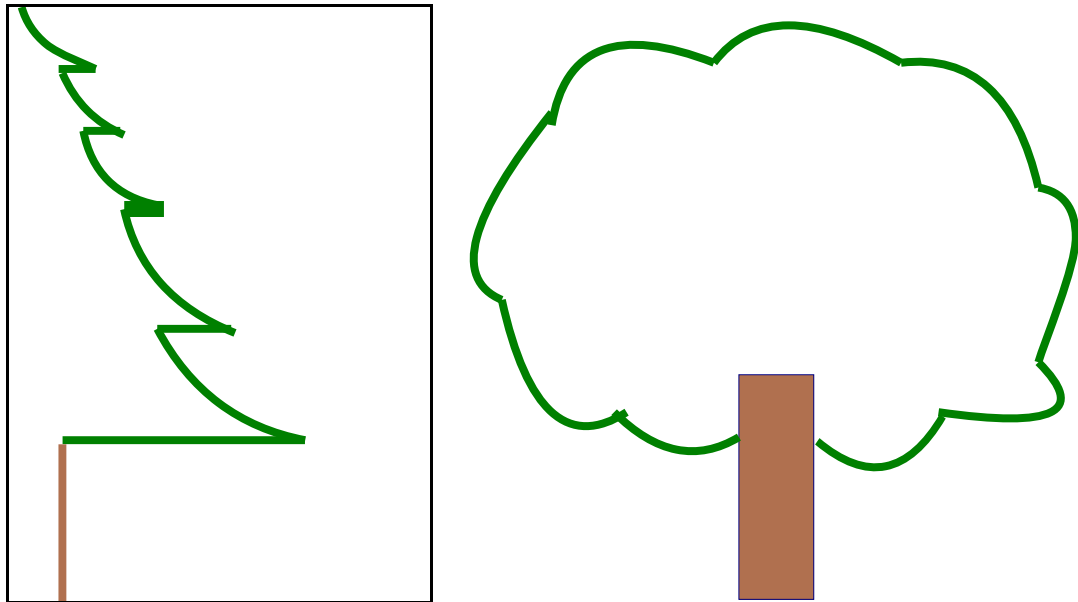
"If you have done the right thing," Jotham told the people, "may Abimelech be your joy, and may you be his joy! But if you have done the wrong thing, then let fire come out of Abimelech and destroy you! And let fire come out of Shechem and destroy Abimelech!" Then Jotham ran away and hid so that Abimelech couldn't find him.

But Jotham was right! After just three years, the people became weary of having Abimelech as their king. Another man thought that he should be king. Abimelech heard about this and went to fight against the city of Shechem. He totally destroyed the city and its people. But as Abimelech went to fight the next city, the people ran to a high tower. Abimelech attacked the tower, but a woman high above him dropped a millstone on his head. So Abimelech killed his own people - and his own people killed Abimelech!

Jotham's story came true! Our God is a fair and just God. He will not allow evil men to go unpunished. He was angry for what Abimelech and the people of Shechem did, and He allowed them to destroy each other. We can have faith that some day God will make everything right in the world. Those who do evil and break His laws will be punished. Those who love him and follow His ways will be blessed. He is a good God, isn't He? Let's praise Him together in prayer (lead in prayer).

## Project

We're going to send each child home with a copy of "The King of the Trees" poem on the back of a construction paper tree. The tree can be made in a number of different ways; it can be cut from a folded piece of paper, like a Christmas tree, or it can be constructed from a straight, brown construction paper trunk, and green construction paper "leaves" (see below).



Just make sure the tree is big enough to glue the poem on the back. Students may then take the poem home to share the story with their families. [Note: Hopefully some or most of your students will have brought in a picture to use in next week's project. For those who didn't, remind the parents to bring one in next time.]



## **The King of the Trees**

*(a poem based on Judges 9: 7-20)*

One day the trees decided  
That they should choose a king.  
They asked the olive tree to rule,  
Who said, "I'll do no such thing!"

"I cannot stop the job I do;  
My oil is very needed."  
Their next choice was the fig tree;  
"Come be our king!" they pleaded.

But as his job was growing figs,  
The fig tree answered no.  
They asked the vine, but he replied  
That he had grapes to grow.

Finally, the useless thornbush  
Said "yes" to the trees when they called.  
But it wasn't long before they knew  
They had chosen the worst king of all!



# **THE BIRTH OF SAMSON**

## **Judges 13**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show students that our faith is in a caring God.

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 1:8** - "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it."

### **Lesson Background**

It's amazing when you look through the Scriptures to see how many times God's people were in trouble - and God sent a baby! Special babies in the Bible include Isaac, Moses, Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist and, of course, even our Savior, Jesus Christ! We value babies and young children so little today, and it's important to see them as God sees them. Certainly, Manoah and his wife probably didn't hold their newborn son and see much of the "deliverer of Israel" that he would become. But Samson was a gift from God, filled with promise and potential. May we look at all the young children in our Sunday School class, and realize that God has a plan and a purpose for each one of them as well.

This is the week we will be using the photos of the students in our project. Hopefully they will each have brought a picture to class. This project is a good way of visually reinforcing the idea that God cares about and cares for each and every one of us.

## Lesson Procedure

For this week's lesson you will need the following: baby dolls for the Focus Activity (or see Alternate Activity); pictures or flannelgraph to illustrate story (optional); a photo of each student; photocopies of worksheet; crayons, markers, glue sticks, etc.

### 1. Focus Activity

Have some baby dolls set out for your students to play with when they first enter the classroom (if you don't have these available from your church nursery or your home, you might ask some of your students' parents to bring some in for the class). It would be good to have some kind of activity for the kids to do with the dolls such as dressing them or wrapping them in a blanket, etc. As the students play with the dolls, ask them some questions: "How do Mommies and Daddies take care of babies? Can the baby feed himself? What happens when he cries?" Some of your students will have some good ideas about what babies need - especially if they have a baby brother or sister at home!

"Babies need someone to take care of them because they are too little to do anything for themselves. That's why God gives them Moms and Dads. Our story today is about a special baby. It's also about the way God cares for each of us, too. Let's go to our story area to find out more."

(Alternate Activity: If someone in your church has had a baby recently, and would be willing to bring the child to your class for a few minutes, that would also be a good way of introducing this week's lesson.)

In the story area, review the memory verse and then introduce the action rhyme we will use for the next few weeks (you may only want to use the first half this week, but the whole action rhyme is printed below).

"Samson had a secret:  
Ssh! Don't tell! (Put finger to mouth, and whisper)  
Ssh! Don't tell!  
He started as a baby, so weak and small (Cradle pretend baby in arms)  
Then grew to be a big man, strong and tall (Stretch arm to show height)

"But Samson had a secret:  
Ssh! Don't tell! (Finger to mouth, and whisper)  
Ssh! Don't tell!  
He could be the strongest man ever! (Make muscles in both arms)  
But could he get a haircut? (Make scissors motion with fingers)  
No! No! Never!" (Shake head "no" emphatically.)

### 2. Bible Story (from Judges 13)

God's people were slow learners! After Gideon died, they went back to following idols and worshipping them. They forgot about the true God of Israel. They didn't follow His commandments.

God wanted them to come back to Him and follow His ways. He allowed the Philistines to make trouble for Israel. The Philistines were Israel's enemy for many years. They fought God's people and made life hard for them. For forty years, the Philistines were in charge.

God was punishing His people, wasn't He? But did that mean He had stopped loving them and caring for them? No, not at all. Just like mommies and daddies sometimes have to discipline their children to teach them right from wrong, God was disciplining His people. But He still cared about them. He would not let the Philistines bother them forever.

There was a man in Israel whose name was Manoah, and he and his wife had no children. That was a very sad thing for them. Manoah had no son to come after him. If he died, there would be no son to take care of his wife.

One day the angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and told her that soon she was going to have a baby boy! How excited and happy she was to hear this! But this baby was to be a special baby. The Angel of the Lord told the woman that she could not drink wine, and she had to be careful about the food she ate. And when the baby was born, she was never to cut his hair.

"No razor may be used on his head," the Angel of the Lord told her, "because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth." Then he said that her son would begin to save Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

The woman saw the Angel of the Lord, but Manoah didn't. She told him that a man of God who looked like an angel had come to her, and told her that they were to have a son. She told him that the baby was special, set apart from birth.

Manoah knew that raising this son would be an important job. He wanted to do it right! There were so many questions he wanted to ask, but he hadn't seen the Angel of the Lord. He prayed that God would send back the man who had spoken to his wife so he could ask him questions.

God heard Manoah's prayer, and the Angel of the Lord appeared to his wife once again. She ran to get her husband. Now, Manoah and his wife didn't know they were speaking to the Angel of the Lord. They thought he was just a prophet - a man of God. Manoah talked to him about the baby, and then he asked him to stay while he prepared some meat.

"I will not eat any of your food," the Angel of the Lord replied. "But if you prepare a burnt offering, offer it to the Lord."

Manoah brought a young goat and a grain offering and sacrificed it on a rock to the Lord. Then something amazing happened! As the flame blazed up from the altar toward heaven, the angel of the Lord went up in the flame! When Manoah and his wife saw this, they fell with their faces to the ground. Now they knew they had not been talking with a man!

"We are doomed to die!" Manoah cried to his wife. "We have seen God!"

But his wife knew that couldn't be true. She reminded her husband that God had accepted their offering and that He had given them a job to do. They were going to have a baby, and it was their job to raise him up right.

God cared about Manoah and his wife, didn't He? He sent them the greatest gift they could wish for - a baby boy! When the child was born he was named Samson, and he became a very special man.

God cared about His people, too. He was sending Samson to them as a strong warrior to fight the Philistines. We're going to talk about Samson some more next week in Sunday School.

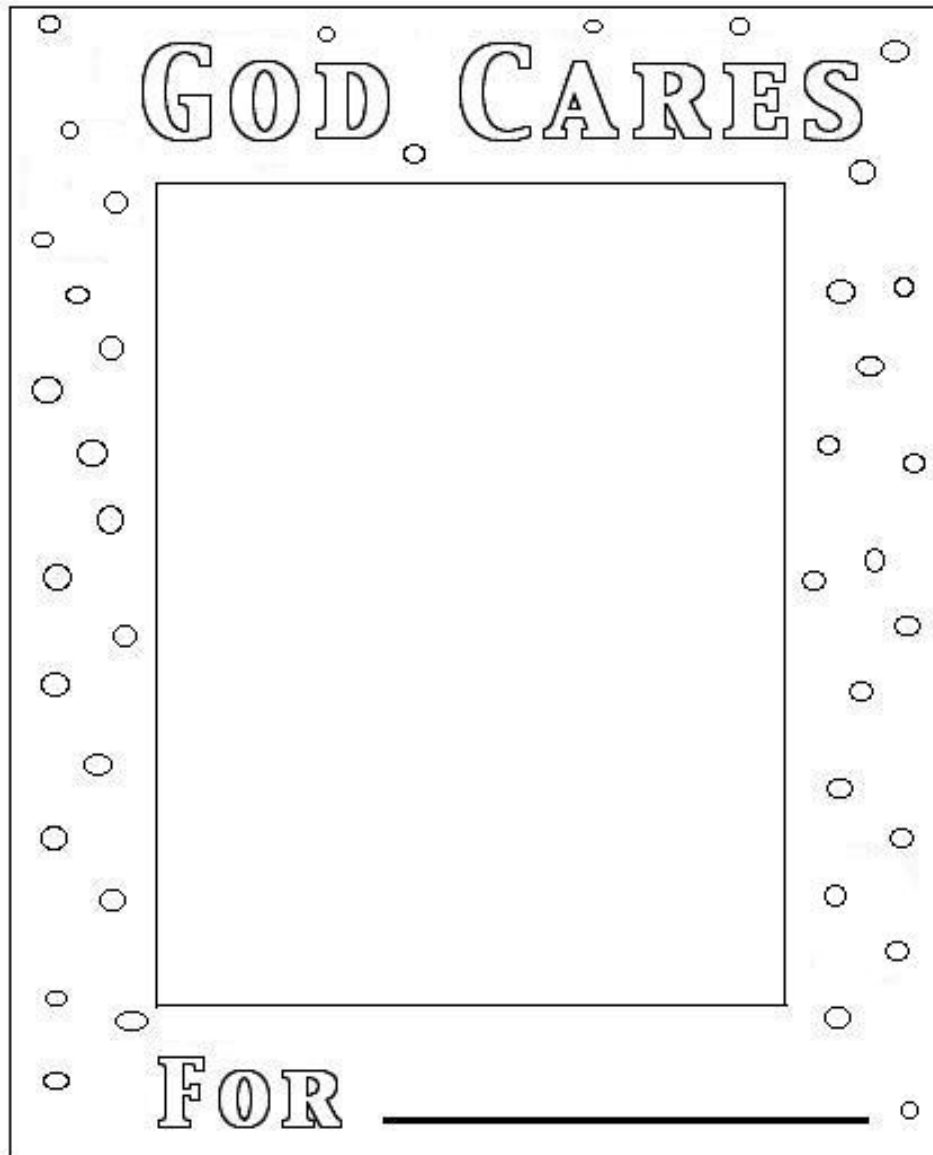
And God cares about you and me! We can pray to Him, as Manoah did in our story this week. We can ask Him to help us with our problems. And we can thank Him for all the good things He does to take care of us, like giving us our families and our homes and our church. Let's think of some ways right now of how God cares for us and thank Him in prayer (close with prayer).

## **Worksheet/Project**

Have students color the "God Cares For \_\_\_\_" frames and fill their names in the space provided. Help them to glue their own picture in the space provided. When they are finished, you may wish to cut the frame out of the worksheet (most of your students will not be able to cut well enough to do this).

This project can be sent home, or you can use it to decorate your classroom. The framed pictures would look nice on a bulletin board in your classroom.

Paste your picture in the frame below, color the frame, and write your name at the bottom.







# **SAMSON'S VICTORIES**

## **Judges 14-15**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show students that God is perfect; we are not perfect (part 1).

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 24:15b** - "Choose for yourself this day whom you will serve ..."

### **Lesson Background**

The *NIV Study Bible* points out that Samson's life exemplifies the history of the nation of Israel. Samson was a child of promise, born with great potential. He was empowered by God to battle his enemies. But Samson's pursuit of foreign women was like Israel's pursuit of foreign gods, and in the end it brought about his downfall.

Samson's story is a sad one; it shows human imperfection and its ultimate consequences. Even young children understand that they are not perfect. What a comfort to know that our heavenly Father is! We will deal with this theme, both this week and next, as we discuss Samson's victories and his defeat.

### **Lesson Procedure**

For this week's lesson you will need the following: a cassette or CD of children's Sunday School music (optional); flannelgraph or pictures to illustrate story (optional); plain white paper plates; brown or orange construction paper; glue sticks, crayons or markers, scissors.

## 1. Focus Activity

Begin your class with some simple exercises, such as jumping jacks, touching toes, or running in place. You may wish to play some happy children's Sunday School music while you're active.

“Exercising makes our bodies strong, doesn't it? We are thankful that God gave us strong, healthy bodies! Our story today is about a very strong man named Samson. He was very strong - but he wasn't always good! Let's go to our story area to find out more.”

In the story area, go over the new memory verse. If you used the action rhyme last week, you may use that as you review last week's lesson about the birth of Samson.

## 2. Bible Story (from Judges 14 and 15)

What was the name of the special baby we talked about last week? His name was Samson. God said Samson was a Nazirite, to be separate from birth. His hair could never be cut, could it? His long hair was a sign that Samson was special to God. God wanted him to fight the Philistines - the enemies who controlled the land and treated God's people badly.

Samson was very strong, and God's Spirit began to move him. But Samson did not always live the way God wanted him to live. One day Samson saw a beautiful young Philistine woman. He decided he wanted to marry her, even though it was against God's law to marry a Philistine. He told his parents to arrange a marriage with the girl.

Samson's parents were very upset. Marry a Philistine - never! The Philistines were wicked people who worshiped idols instead of the true God. They tried to get Samson to change his mind, but he refused. Finally, his parents agreed to go to the girl's town and talk to her family.

On the road to the town, a young lion came roaring toward Samson! But God's Spirit came upon him and filled him with special strength. Samson grabbed the lion and tore him apart with his bare hands! His parents, who were on a different part of the road, didn't see the lion attack, and Samson didn't tell them what he had done.

Samson and his parents met with the woman's family and made plans for the wedding. Then they went back home. When the day for the wedding drew near, Samson walked down the same road toward the woman's town. He was surprised to see that some bees had made a hive in the dead body of the lion he had killed. He took some of the honey and shared it with his parents - but he didn't tell them where it came from.

When Samson's wedding day arrived, Samson made a great feast in his wife's home town. In those days, weddings used to last for many days. Samson's wedding feast lasted a week. He had thirty Philistine men as companions for the wedding. And on the first day of the feast, Samson gave them a riddle. Samson promised the men that he would give each of them a new linen garment and a new set of clothes if they could answer his riddle. But if they couldn't, they would each have to give Samson a linen garment and a set of clothes.

The Philistine men were interested; clothes were very valuable in those days. “Tell us your riddle!” they said to Samson.

Samson said, “Out of the eater, something to eat; out of the strong, something sweet.”

Do you know what Samson was thinking about? He was thinking about the body of the young lion he had killed, where he had found the beehive full of honey! The Philistines couldn’t guess the answer, although they tried for several days. But they were wicked men and thought of another way to learn the answer.

The men went to Samson’s new wife and told her that if she didn’t give them the answer to the riddle, they would kill her and her family! The woman was afraid. She began to beg Samson for the answer to the riddle. She threw herself on him and cried. “You don’t really love me!” she said to Samson. “You’ve given my people a riddle, but you haven’t told me the answer.”

Finally, on the last day of the feast, Samson couldn’t stand it any longer. He told his new wife the answer to the riddle, and she told it to the Philistine men. Before sunset, the men came to Samson with the answer: “What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?”

Samson knew what they had done! He was filled with anger against the Philistines. He decided to give them the promised garments and clothes - but they would come from their own countrymen! God’s Spirit filled Samson with power, and he went to one of the Philistine cities. There he single-handedly struck down thirty men. He took their clothes to the men at the feast and returned to his father’s house.

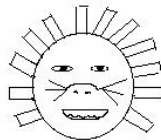
This was the beginning of many fights between Samson and the Philistines. Even though Samson was only one man, God’s Spirit gave him great power to battle his enemies.

Once an entire Philistine army came out to capture Samson and make him a prisoner. Samson was brought to them, tied up with two brand-new ropes. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he snapped the ropes in two. Then Samson found the jawbone of a donkey, and he used it to fight the Philistines. It was his only weapon, but he was able to kill a thousand men and win the battle.

Samson was very strong, wasn’t he? But did he always do things the Lord’s way? No! Samson was a sinner. Sometimes he disobeyed God’s law. Sometimes we disobey God’s law, too. We are not perfect; sometimes we sin, don’t we? But do you know who is perfect? Yes, God is! He never sins, does He? Let’s thank Him for always being perfect (lead in prayer).

### 3. Project

We’re going to make lion faces to remember the lion that Samson killed with his bare hands. Have each child draw the face of a lion on a plain white paper plate. Have strips of orange or brown paper (about 3 inches long; cut these ahead of time) for them to glue onto the paper plate as a “mane” (see below).



If you like, you can also have a couple of brown “ears” for the students to glue onto their lion’s face. Pipe cleaners could be used for whiskers -- although these will be harder to glue. When finished, have your students take them home to their families.



# **SAMSON'S DEFEAT**

## **Judges 16**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show students that God is perfect; we are not perfect (part 2).

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 24:15b** - "Choose for yourself this day whom you will serve ..."

### **Lesson Background**

We come to the sad conclusion of Samson's life in this week's lesson. Certainly we can see that Samson's sin has brought his defeat upon himself; still, it is impossible not to identify with him in his disgrace. As Gordon J. Keddie writes:

... no real Christian can fail to be touched by a sense of fellowship with Samson in his experience with sin within his own members. The offended tone of some Christians writing on Samson suggests the possibility of a certain lack of self-knowledge in the writers. When a sinner knows what it really is to be a sinner - one who offends God's perfect holiness - then he is moved to compassion rather than indignant self-righteousness. (p. 106, *Even in Darkness*)

We will share the sadness of this story with our students, but we will also share God's mercy in granting Samson one last victory. Samson died, not as a blind, defeated prisoner of the Philistines, but as Israel's champion for one last time. He is listed in the book of Hebrews as one of the great men of faith, not because of his own merit, but because of the grace of God. None of us can claim any more than that!

## Lesson Procedure

For this week's lesson you will need the following: a large piece of paper or posterboard, marker; white paper plates; a skein of brown or black yarn; scissors; glue; crayon; pictures or flannelgraph to illustrate story (optional).

### 1. Focus Activity

Have a large piece of paper or posterboard and a marker out as the children come in. Tell your students that you are making a list of some of the "rules" that families have. Try to have each child contribute one rule from his household, such as "Don't sit too close to the TV" or "Don't hit your brother" or "Brush your teeth before bedtime." It will be helpful for your students if you can draw a simple picture next to each rule - such as a TV set next to a TV rule. Don't worry about your lack of artistic talent - your pictures will look great to your students.

"Why do families need rules? Some rules, like eating good food and brushing our teeth, help us to keep healthy and safe. Some rules keep peace in the family or make our homes nice places to live.

"God gave us rules, too; sometimes we call His rules commandments. God's rules are always good, and His way is best. If we follow His rules, He will bless us. But sometimes we break rules, don't we? We are sinners; sometimes we do bad things. Samson was like that, too. Today we're going to find out about what happened to Samson; let's go to our story area."

This is our last week for this memory verse and for the Samson action rhyme. Remind your students that Samson was commanded never to cut his hair. Also review last week's lesson about the battles between Samson and the Philistines.

### 2. Bible Story (from Judges 16)

Samson was a special man; God had given him great strength so he could fight his enemies, the Philistines. Samson was supposed to be God's man, set apart from birth. What was the sign that Samson was different from other men? That's right; it was his long hair, wasn't it? Samson's hair had never been cut as a sign that he was special to God.

Samson was supposed to be God's man - but he didn't always follow God's rules. For one thing, he had a problem with women! He kept going after Philistine women, who did not know God and who lived very evil lives. Samson knew this was wrong, but he kept doing it anyway. And one day it led to trouble!

Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. He began to spend a great deal of time with her. The rulers of the Philistines found out about it, and they saw a chance to capture their great enemy, Samson! They went to Delilah and told her to find out the secret of Samson's strength so they could make him their prisoner. If she did that, they would each give her eleven hundred shekels of silver.

Did Delilah love Samson? Not as much as she loved money! She agreed to the plan and began to ask Samson about the secret of his great strength.

At first, Samson treated Delilah's questions like a game. He told her he could be made weak if he was tied with new ropes, or with seven fresh thongs, or if the seven braids of his hair were woven into a loom. Delilah tried those things while Samson slept, and then woke him by saying, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" But each time Samson woke up, as strong as ever, and easily freed himself.

Now Delilah became serious. "How can you say 'I love you' when you won't tell me your secret?" she said to Samson. She asked him constantly, day and night, for the secret of his strength. Finally, Samson was just too tired to keep saying "no" to Delilah, so he told her everything.

"No razor has ever been used on my head," he said, "because I have been a Nazirite, set apart to God since birth. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man."

Now Delilah knew Samson's secret! She called the Philistine rulers and told them of the plan. While Samson slept in her lap, she had a man shave off all of his hair. With men in the room, she awakened Samson.

"Samson, the Philistines are upon you!"

Samson woke up, but the Lord had left him! He no longer had the Lord's gift of great strength. The Philistines grabbed him, and there was nothing he could do. They blinded poor Samson by poking out his eyes, and they put him in chains. Then the Philistines took their prisoner and made him grind grain in the prison. The Philistines were so happy; they had finally defeated their great enemy, Samson! Now that he was a blind prisoner, there was nothing to fear from him ever again.

But there was one thing they didn't notice; while Samson was in prison, his hair began to grow back.

One day the Philistine rulers decided to celebrate the capture of Samson. They came together to sacrifice to their false god, Dagon. They said Dagon had brought Samson into their hands.

Thousands of Philistines came together at the temple of Dagon. They brought poor, blind Samson into the temple to laugh at him and make fun of him.

Samson could hear the large crowd of Philistine voices in the temple. He asked to be brought near where the two great pillars of the temple stood so he could lean against them and rest. And then Samson began to pray to his God once more.

"O Sovereign Lord, remember me," he prayed. "O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." And then Samson began to push with all his might against the pillars of the temple. The Lord heard Samson's prayer, and once again he was filled with mighty strength. "Let me die with the Philistines!" Samson said, and the pillars began to topple. The entire temple collapsed, killing the Philistine rulers and all the men and women who had come to watch Samson. And Samson died as well, because the temple fell on him, too.

Samson's family came to get him and bury him with honor in his family's tomb. He had been God's champion for twenty years, and the Lord had heard and answered his last prayer. He gave Samson the victory over the Philistines, even in his death.

Samson was not a perfect man, was he? No, he sinned against God's rules. His life would probably have been longer and happier if he had only obeyed the Lord. God still cared about Samson, though, and helped him many times to defeat the Philistines.

We aren't perfect, either; sometimes we sin against the Lord. Sometimes we do things that we know are wrong, and then we need to ask God's forgiveness. God is perfect; He never does anything wrong. We should try to obey him because that is the way to blessing. Let's ask the Lord to help us to be obedient to Him (lead in prayer).

### 3. Project

We're going to make a "Before and After" picture of Samson to help us remember this story. Have the children fold a paper plate in half (or fold it for them), and ask them to draw half a smiling face on one half, and half a sad face on the other (you will probably want to make a sample project to show them what you want).



On the smiling half, have the students glue short pieces of yarn for Samson's hair. Ask them to leave the sad half "bald." Remind them that Samson's hair was a sign that he was special to God, and that the Lord left him after Delilah shaved his head. That's why the side with the hair is happy and the side that's bald is sad. The finished project should look something like the figure below.





# **RUTH AND NAOMI**

## **Ruth 1**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show that God gives us families to love and care for us.

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 24:15d** - "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

### **Lesson Background**

As we wind up this quarter, the book of Ruth seems to be a fitting conclusion to our lessons on faith. For one thing, in Ruth 1:1 we are told that the events of Ruth occurred during the time of the Judges, so it fits in chronologically with our studies. Also, Ruth is like the woman with whom we began these lessons - Rahab. Like Rahab, Ruth was an outsider from the nation of Israel. Like Rahab, she became a part of God's people by choosing to throw her lot in with them and by claiming the Lord as her own by faith. And, like Rahab, she became a part of the line of Christ, and is one of the few women mentioned by name in His genealogy in Matthew 1.

We will begin this week by discussing the family relationship between Ruth and Naomi - how they loved and cared for one another. Next week we will discuss how Ruth became a part of the family of faith and how our church family loves and cares for each other. In today's world, you will no doubt have at least one child in your class whose family does not resemble the traditional "mother, father, sister, brother" model. Be sensitive to this; after all, Ruth and Naomi hardly looked like a traditional family when they returned to Bethlehem! Hopefully, each child comes from a home where someone loves and cares for him - whether a parent, step-parent, grandparent or foster parent. This is the point we are trying to get across in this lesson - that God provides for our needs as children through the families He gives us.

## Lesson Procedure

For this lesson you will need the following: old magazines (women's magazines will work best); construction paper; scissors; glue; markers and/or crayons; flannelgraph or pictures to illustrate story (optional).

### 1. Focus Activity

Have a stack of old magazines out, and ask students to find pictures of families and cut them out. We will be using these pictures later in our project after the Bible story; you might want to have some pictures cut out ahead of time for students to use. Try to encourage pictures that show lots of different activities - perhaps families eating together, playing together, riding in a car together. Some of your younger students may have trouble using scissors; in this case, they can locate the picture, and you can cut it out.

While you're working, talk about the things that families do. "That's a good picture of a Mommy taking care of a sick child. Who takes care of you when you're sick?" When you have a good number of pictures cut out, tell your students that they will use the pictures in their project, but now it's time to go to the story area.

In the story area, introduce the new memory verse. Since it's the latter part of the last verse, you can say the two together if you like. We will have this verse next week as well.

### 2. Bible Story (from Ruth 1)

We've been talking about families this morning, haven't we? God gives us our families to love and care for us. When children are little they need parents and grandparents to take care of them - to fix their meals, keep them safe, and help them to stay healthy. Sometimes when parents and grandparents get old, they need their grown-up children to help them! God wants us to love the people in our family. He wants us to honor and obey our parents.

The Bible tells us about one family who lived in Israel back in the days of Gideon and Samson and the other judges. The father's name was Elimelech, and his wife was named Naomi. They had two sons. This family was having a very hard time because there was no food in the land. Many people were going hungry, and the family was worried. They decided to leave God's people and move to a different country. They went to the land of Moab, where there was food to eat. The people of Moab worshiped idols, which were false gods. They didn't believe in the true God of Israel, like Elimelech and Naomi did. But the family moved there anyway and stayed for many years.

While they were in Moab, the father, Elimelech, died. Naomi did not have a husband now, but she still had her two sons. The two sons were married to women of Moab; one married a woman named Orpah, and one married a woman named Ruth.

Then something very sad happened; Naomi's two sons both died! Now Naomi had no husband and no sons to take care of her. Orpah and Ruth had no husbands to take care of them. In those days, it was a very bad thing not to have a man who could work for the family and protect them. A woman all alone had no one to take care of her, and Naomi, Orpah and Ruth were three women, all alone.

Naomi knew what she had to do. She could not stay in the land of Moab; she would go back to her homeland, to Israel, where God's people lived. Her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, planned to travel back with her.

But as Naomi got ready to take the road that would bring her back home, she turned to Orpah and Ruth. Orpah and Ruth were not from Israel. Their parents and their families lived in Moab. They had no one else to take care of them now - no husbands who could work and give them the things they needed. Naomi decided the best thing for the young women would be to return home.

"Go back, each of you, to your mother's home," Naomi told them. "May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."

But Orpah and Ruth loved Naomi. She was their mother-in-law! They knew she had no one in her homeland to take care of her. They did not want her to return to Israel alone. They both cried and said, "We will go back with you to your people."

But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons who could become your husbands?" No, Naomi would have no more sons. Orpah realized her mother-in-law was right; the safest place to be was with her own family. Sadly she kissed Naomi good-bye and went back to her home.

But Ruth refused to leave Naomi. "Don't beg me to leave you or to turn back from you," she said to Naomi. "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God."

Naomi saw that Ruth had made up her mind; she was going with Naomi! Together the two would be a family and take care of each other. Ruth had decided to share Naomi's life, her people, and even her God! She would follow the true God of Israel, not the false gods of Moab. Ruth would become a part of God's people.

So Ruth and Naomi returned to Naomi's hometown together. Because they had no man to take care of them, they were very poor. But Ruth worked hard in the fields, picking up the grain that the workers left behind, so that she and Naomi would have bread to eat. They loved each other and cared for each other, and God did not forget about them! Next week we will learn about the way God blessed Ruth and Naomi and provided for them. But let's finish this morning by thanking Him for the families that love and care for us (lead in prayer).

### **3. Project**

We're going to make "family collages" this week with the pictures we cut out from the magazines. You can do this in a couple of ways: if you have a small class and just a few pictures, you can make one large collage by gluing the pictures on a large piece of construction paper. You can then display this collage in your classroom. If your class is larger, or if you have lots of pictures, each child can make his or her own collage on a smaller piece of construction paper. Whichever you choose to do, be sure to write "God Gives Us Families To Love And Care For Us" on each collage.



# **RUTH AND BOAZ**

## **Ruth 2-4**

### **Lesson Aim**

To show that God gives us our church - a family of faith.

### **Memory Verse**

**Joshua 24:15d** - "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

### **Lesson Background**

We can look at the church in many different ways, but one of the best is to think of ourselves as a family of faith. One of the reasons we refer to each other as "brother" and "sister" is to remind us of the relationship we should have with one another. Like a family, we should love and care for one another. We should look out for the "young ones" in the faith and help them to grow. We should respond to one another with understanding and concern. And we should be real enough so that others can know us as we truly are.

Ruth and Naomi return to Israel as two poor widowed women. But as they take their place with the people of God, we see their circle begin to widen. Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, enables them to take their place in the community of faith. No longer outsiders, we see them at the end of the book of Ruth with a home, a family, and the recognition of the community with which God has blessed them.

Generally the romance of Ruth and Boaz takes center stage, but this week we will look at it as the story of a woman who, through God's mercy, finds her place among His people. Like Ruth, we were all once strangers and aliens from God's grace, but we read in Ephesians 2:12-13, "you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ."

## Lesson Procedure

For this week's lesson you will need the following: a large piece of paper for your class to work on together; flannelgraph or pictures to illustrate the story (optional); photocopies of worksheet; crayons, markers, or colored pencils.

### 1. Focus Activity

Have a large piece of paper out on a table for your students to work on; if you have a large class, you might use a long sheet of the paper like those used to cover tables for church dinners, wedding receptions, etc. Somewhere on the paper draw a simple picture of your church and draw yourself and your family nearby. (Don't worry if you don't have great artistic talent - they'll think your pictures are wonderful!) Then encourage each child to draw a picture of himself and his family as they come into church.

If there is room, you might also draw a picture of the pastor or some of the other people your students will recognize as a part of your church. As your students work, explain the following: "Last week we talked about the families God gave us and how they love and care for us. But our church is a family, too - a family of faith! Christians are a part of God's family, and we love and take care of each other. We pray for each other, don't we? And we teach one another about the Lord. We're going to talk about that this morning as I finish telling you the story of Ruth."

Have your students come to the story area, and review this week's memory verse. Also, review last week's lesson about Naomi and Ruth, and why they left Moab together and returned to Israel.

### 2. Bible Story (from Ruth 2-4)

Ruth had decided to go back to Israel with Naomi. She was leaving her country and her parents. She was leaving the idols that her family worshiped, and she was joining the people of the true God of Israel.

She and Naomi came back to Israel with little to call their own. They were very poor. But God had given His people some special laws to help people like Naomi and Ruth. In every field, the farmers were supposed to leave some grain behind so the poor could collect it and have enough to make bread. Ruth asked Naomi if she could go to the fields to pick up some of this grain, and Naomi agreed that this was the thing to do.

Ruth went to work in the fields of a man named Boaz. Boaz was a good man and a relative of Naomi's husband, Elimelech. He saw Ruth working in the fields and asked, "Whose young woman is that?" His servants told him about Ruth, who had returned with Naomi.

Boaz decided to take special care of Ruth. He had her work beside his own servant girls and told her to eat and drink with the harvesters. And then, secretly, he told his workers to leave big handfuls of grain for Ruth so she could bring lots of food home to Naomi.

When Ruth returned home that evening, Naomi could hardly believe her eyes! Ruth had brought back so much grain! She even brought Naomi some of her leftover lunch. "Where did you work today?" she asked. "Blessed be the man who took notice of you!"

“The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz,” Ruth told Naomi. Then Naomi realized she had been working with one of their relatives.

Boaz told Ruth to stay in his fields and continue to work beside his servants. She stayed until both the barley and wheat harvests were finished. Naomi began to think that Boaz might be a good husband for Ruth. God had given another special law to His people to help women whose husbands had died. This law said that a close relative should marry the dead man’s wife so she could have a family, too.

Naomi talked to Ruth about this, and Ruth talked to Boaz. Boaz was very happy - he wanted to be Ruth’s husband! But there was another relative who was an even closer relation, and Boaz had to make certain that this man would not stand in the way. He hurried to the town’s gate to discuss the matter with him. In the end, it was decided that Boaz would marry Ruth and that they would begin a new family together. Everyone rejoiced that God had blessed Ruth with a new husband and Boaz with a good wife. And Naomi had a new home as well, for she came to live with Ruth and Boaz.

Now Ruth was no longer a stranger in Israel. She was a part of God’s people! She and Boaz had a little boy; they named him Obed. He was a very special baby for Naomi, who helped to take care of him. All the women in the town were happy for Naomi. “Praise be to the Lord,” they said. “This baby will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. For your daughter-in-law, who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth.”

Both Ruth and Naomi were glad to be a part of God’s people. He blessed them with people who loved them and cared for them, and He gave them a new family, didn’t He? We talked last week about families, and how they love and care for us. But our church is a family, too - a family of faith. God’s people here in our church pray for each other. We help each other when we have special needs. We teach one another about the Lord here, and talk about the great things He had done. Let’s thank God today for His people - our church family. Let’s ask Him to bless us and help us to love one another (lead in prayer).

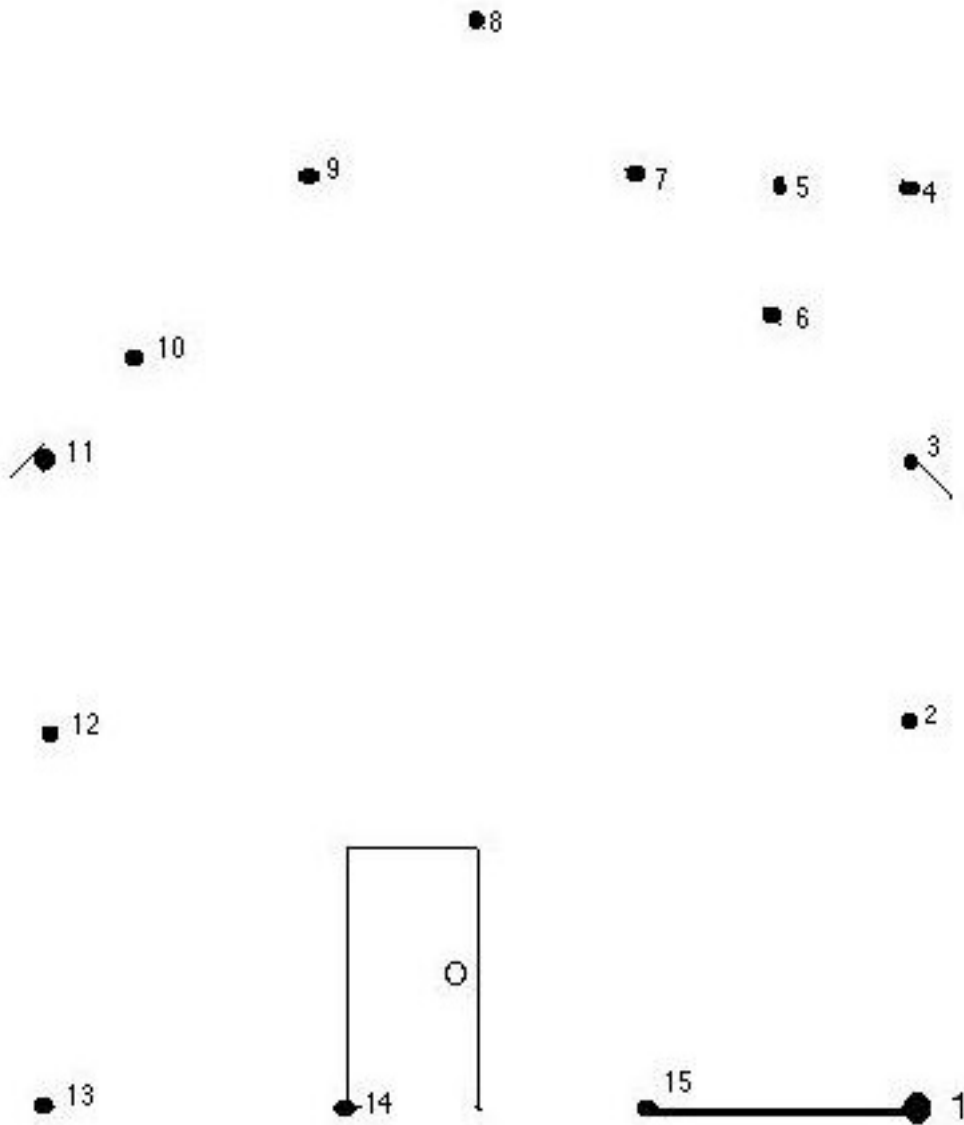
## **Worksheet**

This lesson’s worksheet emphasizes the memory verse we have had for the last few weeks. Have the children connect the dots - most should be familiar with this kind of puzzle, although some of your younger students may need help. Once they have the outline of the house, they may color the house. They may also draw a window with themselves or a family member looking out. Be sure to read the verse and talk about how it applies to the lessons about Ruth, who chose to become a part of the people of God and serve the Lord.





**But as for me and my household . . .**



**We will serve the Lord!**