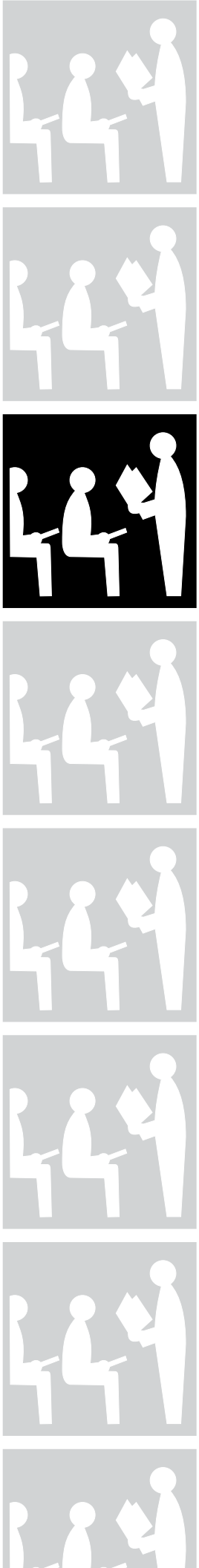

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Discovery is a Bible study course for the high school and adult levels. Bible references are taken from the King James Version. The companion to these Sunday school lessons is Daybreak, a daily devotional and personal Bible study continuum. All of the material is available on our website, as well as in printed form. The print version is designed as a tear apart, to be stored in a binder; subsequent modules can then be easily inserted. Discovery is an official publication of the Apostolic Faith Church. All rights are reserved.

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DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

The Creation

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Genesis 1:1 through 2:25

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

BACKGROUND

The Word of God begins with the statement, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The Biblical explanation of origins, described in the first chapters of Genesis, is foundational to a correct understanding of all Scripture. If one undermines or challenges the Creation account, the rest of the Bible is also undermined and challenged. This passage opens by describing God's creation of the universe, and closes by describing the creation of Eve and her relationship with Adam.

The first of the great themes in Genesis is God's creative power. The Genesis description of Creation is simple and specific, establishing a definitive beginning of the universe and all it contains, and recording that God the Creator accomplished this in a six-day period. There is no reference to a world that is evolving, or to creatures that are becoming more complex.

Some have theorized that the twenty-four-hour day portrayed in Genesis 1 actually represents an eon of time. However, if "the evening and the morning" referred to were each an eon long, all plant life on the earth's dark side would die during the earth's rotation. Also, the theory that the days of Creation were actually geologic ages fundamentally undermines the Gospel, because that would mean that death, disease, and decay occurred before the Fall of mankind.

A further validation of the twenty-four-hour time periods of Creation is found in a study of the Hebrew word *yom*, translated *day* in Genesis 1. The word *day* can have a variety of meanings, both in Hebrew and in the English language. However, in this chapter, both a number and the phrase "evening and morning" are used to describe each day of Creation. The same usage (yom with a number) occurs in Scripture 359 times—and in every instance, it means an ordinary, twenty-four-hour day. There is no reason to assume that the yom in Genesis 1 would be an exception.

Another theme we find in these chapters is that of God's wonderful love. His provision of a perfect

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environment which provided all the necessities for man's existence, His design for marriage and human companionship, and His desire to have a close and personal relationship with man all show that we serve a God who loves us and wants the best for us.

The account given in this text is true, literal, and perfect. In order to preserve the foundations of Christianity, the followers of Christ must protect the truths expounded in these key chapters of the Bible, and be willing to stand against the forces in current society which promote an explanation of the beginning of the world that is contrary to what is taught in God's Word.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. In the first chapter of Genesis, it is stated ten times that the living entities God created would produce after their own kind. The phrase "after his kind" indicates that God put boundaries in place with regard to the ability to reproduce. What evidence do we see of those boundaries in the natural world around us?

The boundaries are evidenced by the fact that each species of living thing reproduces a like living thing. Though strains may be combined and crossbred within a species to enhance certain characteristics, dogs will always produce dogs. Likewise, birds will always produce birds, wheat will always produce wheat, and peach trees will always produce peach trees.

You may wish to amplify your class discussion by pointing out that since the days of Charles Darwin, evolutionists have used the fact of natural selection (the "survival of the fittest" theory, which simply says that the future gene pool of any species is dominated by the those who best survive and reproduce in their environment) as evidence of the theory of evolution. However, natural selection does not come close to proving evolution, nor does it contradict a firm belief in the Creation account. Creationists point to natural selection as a possible explanation of why species today are so diverse around the world despite only two of each kind having been preserved on the Ark.

2. What are some foundational truths that are established in these opening chapters of Genesis?

Class input may bring up a number of truths in response to this question. Among the points that could be discussed are the following:

- *The Biblical account of Creation identifies God. Our culture today interprets the word* god *in a variety of ways, including an embodiment of nature, the universe, or each individual himself. The Genesis record reveals God to be the Supreme Being.*
- *The Biblical account of Creation identifies man. Human beings are not just an evolutionary*

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happenstance or a random conglomeration of cells in which life spontaneously arose. The Biblical account of the creation of man teaches that we have a Creator who purposefully created us in His own image.

- *The Biblical account of Creation is the basis for laws and morality. The principles of right and wrong are anchored in the fact that God, as Creator, has the right to ordain what is right or wrong because He created us and thus He owns us. The evolutionary philosophy, which rejects a divine Creator, regards the universe as the result of random chance. When there is no absolute authority, the basis for morality becomes whatever seems right or convenient to an individual at any given time.*
- *The Biblical account of Creation substantiates God's miracle-working power. If the miraculous is rejected in the first chapters of Genesis, then Jesus' miracles and the miracle of the Resurrection must also be rejected. Without a belief in the Resurrection of Christ, our faith is vain (see 1 Corinthians 15:14).*

3. What is unique about man when compared to the rest of God's creation? Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7

Genesis 1:26-27 brings out that man alone was made in the image of God. Genesis 2:7 establishes that rather than speaking man into existence, God formed him from the dust of the ground. However, the most important distinction between man and the rest of God's earthly creations is also noted in Genesis 2:7—that man alone is a spiritual being, the result of God breathing into him the breath of life.

Since the soul of man will live forever, this is a good time to point out to your class how important it is that we prepare for our eternal destiny.

4. What does Adam's ability to name all the animals reveal about his intelligence from the day he was created? Genesis 2:19-20

Adam had a fully developed mind from the beginning; he did not evolve from a simple creature to a more advanced one.

You may wish to briefly expand upon the subject of the amazing capabilities of the human brain. For instance, it could be pointed out that our brains are made up of more than ten billion nerve cells and over fifty billion other cells, yet they weigh less than three pounds. As humans, we have the ability to invent, dream, reason, store data, imagine, and experience emotions. Human brains are more complex than the brains of any other living entity on earth. The brain continually processes a flood of information about the world around us, utilizing various senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching) to acquire, sort, and respond to data. The point can be made that

while man has created many amazing devices, not one compares in function and ability to the human brain.

5. Although God pronounced that everything He had made was "very good," He proceeded to identify a condition that was *not* good: He said that it was not good that man should be alone. To address man's need for a suitable companion, God created woman. How did God go about creating Eve? Why do you think He used this method? Genesis 2:18, 21-22

God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam. Then He took one of Adam's ribs, and from it "made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Genesis 2:22).

While the Bible does not give a direct answer to the second question, class discussion should bring out that by forming Eve from Adam, God made a companion for Adam who would be a helper who was "meet" (fit) for him. The literal meaning of this phrase is "a helper corresponding to man"—one who was equal and adequate for him. Woman was perfectly and uniquely formed to complement man physically, mentally, and spiritually. She was designed to be his counterpart—one who would provide exactly the kind of help, companionship, and support he needed.

To amplify your discussion, you may wish to point your students' attention to verse 23, which shows that Adam was impacted by the fact that Eve was made of his own bones and flesh. Clearly he recognized that her creation was very different from that of the animals that were only created male and female for the purpose of reproduction. The fact that Eve was made from Adam created a unique relationship between them.

6. After God brought Eve to Adam, He instituted the bond of marriage. What guidelines and principles can we see in Genesis 2:22-25 regarding marriage?

This passage brings out that marriage is to be monogamous, between a man and woman, and the husband and wife are to be unified both physically and spiritually. According to God's decree, the marriage union transcends even the bond between parent and child.

This account establishes that marriage was not instituted just for convenience, nor is it simply a cultural tradition. While the world may regard marriage as an agreement between two individuals that can be dissolved at the will of either or both of the parties, it is clear that marriage is a sacred institution originated by God. It is a covenant relationship, which is not to be broken. Since God is the Author of marriage, He has the right to designate guidelines concerning the nature and duration of this bond.

It is interesting to note that marriage was the only covenant created by God before the fall of man; all other covenants of God were made in response to man's fallen nature.

7. In Genesis 2:16-17, God gave a single prohibition to Adam—the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Why do you think God gave Adam and Eve a choice regarding obedience, instead of simply physically preventing them from eating the fruit?

Class discussion should lead to the conclusion that God clearly wanted a relationship with the people He created; there would have been no true companionship if Adam and Eve had been simply robotic-type beings with controlled responses. The tree was placed in the Garden, and the prohibition given, to provide opportunity for a choice to be made—a clear indicator that man was created with a free will. Your group should conclude that sin brought separation between God and man, and that fact in itself is evidence that true companionship with Him is built on a foundation of obedience and a desire to do what pleases Him.

CONCLUSION

These first two chapters of God's Word are not only informative and inspiring, but they provide a foundation for many of the theological truths presented in the remainder of the Bible.

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Teacher's Guide

From the Fall to the Flood

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Genesis 3:1 through 5:32

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken." (Genesis 3:22-23)

BACKGROUND

The first two chapters of Genesis describe the perfect world created by God and put under the stewardship of the man, who was created with a moral nature patterned after God's own. This included the freedom to reason, and to choose between good and evil. The third chapter of Genesis continues the narrative in the Garden, describing the temptation of Eve by the serpent, and the disobedience of Adam and Eve in partaking of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At that point, the nature of human beings shifted from good to evil—the terrible consequence of an event theologians refer to as the "fall of man." The chapter continues with a description of the punishments meted out to the serpent, the woman, and the man, along with the impact on all of creation. Included in this chapter is the first Messianic prophecy of the Bible, offering an initial glimmer of hope in a reference to Jesus Christ, who would ultimately deliver the death-blow to Satan.

In chapter 4, we read of the births of Cain and Abel, the first two people born into this world. An account is given of their offerings to God, and Cain's jealous murder of his brother when Abel's offering was accepted while his was rejected. God ordained that as punishment, Cain would be cursed, banished to a life of homelessness, and driven away from his agricultural vocation. This chapter concludes with a record of Cain's descendants.

Chapter 5 closes out the history of Adam, giving a list of his descendants. The genealogical record begins with the assertion that Adam's son Seth was born "in his [Adam's] own likeness" rather than "in the likeness of God" as Adam was created, thus indicating that successive generations were born with a fallen nature. Notable in this genealogical record is the brief commentary on Enoch, whose testimony of intimate fellowship with God brought about his translation. The chapter concludes with the introduction of Noah, whose account is developed in the following chapters.

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SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Who are the four main participants in the narrative of Genesis 3:1-24, and how would you describe the nature of each?

The four main participants in this chapter are God, Adam, Eve, and Satan (in the form of a serpent). Class discussion of the nature of each of these four should bring out that God, the omnipotent Creator, is all-knowing, all-powerful, holy, just, and perfect. Adam and Eve were moral creatures with consciences, the ability to reason, and the power to make choices. Satan is deceptive, cunning, and the essence of evil.

2. Genesis 3:1 declares that the serpent (Satan) was "more subtil [cunning, crafty] than any beast of the field." What question did Satan use to put doubt in Eve's mind concerning God's words? What are some ways he attempts to stir up doubts in people's minds today?

Satan's first question to Eve was, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Point out to your students that this was a misquote of God's command; the original prohibition concerned only one tree. By suggesting it concerned "every tree of the garden," Satan not only made the command look unnecessarily restrictive, but almost ridiculous.

As your class considers the second question, they may suggest some of the following ways Satan attempts to stir up doubts today:

- *He tries to make people doubt whether God would ever save them, or that they could stay saved.*
- *He says that Jesus was merely a good teacher, but not the divine Son of God.*
- *He insinuates that following Jesus is much too strict a way to live.*
- *He asserts that there are many other avenues to find religious satisfaction besides believing in Jesus Christ and His power to save.*
- *He suggests that it is impossible for man to live without sinning.*

Obviously, the list generated by your class could be extensive. The point of this exercise is to help your students recognize some of the common devices employed by Satan, and thus be equipped to resist him.

3. Temptation often seems to follow the progression found in Genesis 3:1-6. Describe this progression and explain how we can use this knowledge to avoid or resist temptation.

The progression developed by your students should depict the downward spiral of temptation. It may be summarized by noting that Eve's downward spiral came about as she listened to Satan, dialoged

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with him, believed his lie, desired the fruit, and finally took and ate of the tree and gave to her husband as well. You may wish to bring out that Satan uses our natural, God-given desires and characteristics to tempt us. In Eve's case, he preyed upon her ability to see and appreciate beauty, her natural desire for nourishment, and her interest in and capacity for acquiring knowledge. This illustrates that even holy individuals are subject to temptation.

As you discuss how to avoid or resist temptation, principles such as the following should be covered.

- *Don't listen to Satan or enter into a discussion with him—if Eve had not been talking to him, he would not have had the opportunity to entice her to sin.*
- *Remember that Satan is a liar, and one strategy he uses is to plant the thought that it will somehow benefit us to disobey God.*
- *Remove yourself from the vicinity of temptation.*
- *Guard your thoughts, realizing that doubt led to sin in the Garden.*
- *Maintain a close relationship with God.*

4. In Genesis 3:9-13, how did Adam and Eve respond to God's probing questions? What did their response reveal about how knowing both good and evil affected their inner nature?

They responded to God's questions by hiding, admitting to being afraid, and then by shifting the blame. Adam blamed Eve, and in some sense, even blamed God who had given him the woman. Eve, in turn, blamed the serpent who had beguiled her. Adam and Eve's response clearly revealed that their pure natures had been corrupted, and they had become self-centered, self-protecting, and self-serving. Whereas before they had known only delight, peace, and fellowship with God, they now experienced three of mankind's perennial problems: guilt, shame, and fear, and all these were evidenced in their response to God's questions.

The tendency to blame others is still evident in sinful man today, particularly when disobedience is pointed out rather than freely admitted. You may wish to follow up this question by asking your students to identify ways people deal with guilt in our day. Answers could include: rationalizing, excusing, refusing to acknowledge wrongdoing, considering oneself a victim, blaming upbringing or other external factors, or even contending that there are no moral absolutes (i.e. God's laws) and thus right and wrong are totally subjective.

5. The dire results of sin were immediate and severe. What were the moral and temporal consequences that befell Adam and Eve, and how did those consequences affect subsequent generations?

The moral consequence for Adam and Eve was spiritual separation from God. After choosing to disobey Him, their human nature changed from a predisposition toward good to a predisposition toward evil. The temporal consequences to Adam and Eve were that they were banished from the Garden and the tree of life, they would have to toil for their food because the ground had been cursed, Eve would experience pain in childbirth, and they would be subject to physical deterioration ending in physical death—there is no record of physical death entering into God's plan until the fall of man.

Today, the temporal results of the fall are still evident, including pain in childbirth, the fact that cultivation is necessary for agricultural crops while weeds grow spontaneously, and inevitable physical death. Of far greater consequence, however, are the moral consequences: all humanity is born with the nature of sin, and as a result, we live in a world that is full of violence, crime, decay, and death. Our reason, emotions, and will are all flawed.

6. Genesis 3:15 speaks prophetically of Jesus Christ (the seed of the woman). Why is this verse so important to us?

This verse gives a first glimpse of God's merciful plan of redemption for the human race. Although Jesus Christ's heel would be bruised by Satan through the Crucifixion, Christ would bruise the head of Satan through His Resurrection. The Hebrew word translated bruise *actually means "to grind, crush, and destroy." Commentators note that a bruise on the heel will not result in death, but a crushing blow on the head will. Ultimately, the Son of God will deliver a death-blow to Satan.*

This would be a good time to emphasize the fact that God loved His creation so much that He promised redemption rather than destruction, even though the disobedience of the first man and woman plunged the entire human family into sin.

7. In Genesis 4, we read about Cain and Abel, the first two individuals born on this earth. What was the difference between the offerings they brought to God? (Genesis 4:3-5) What can we surmise about Cain's character, based on his subsequent words and actions, as described in verses 8-16?

The difference between the two offerings was that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, while Abel brought an animal. God had respect unto Abel and his offering, but Cain's offering was not accepted. Point out to your students that while no specific reason is given in Scripture for the distinction between the two, in some way Cain did not obey all he knew to do. God saw the heart motive behind the offerings. Have a volunteer from your class read verse 7, which clearly indicates that if Cain had done well, he would have been accepted.

As you review Cain's words and actions with your class, discussion should bring out that he was downcast at the rejection of his sacrifice. Other descriptive words might be depressed, sullen, and angry. He eventually rose up and violently slew his brother Abel, and then responded to God's questions in an untruthful and arrogant manner. What tragic proof that the nature Cain inherited from his parents was inclined toward evil, rather than good.

8. The final two verses of chapter 4 record the birth of Adam and Eve's son Seth. In Genesis 5:3, we read that Seth was born "in his [Adam's] own likeness." How was this different from how Adam was created, and what does this indicate? Genesis 5:1

Genesis 5:1 states that Adam was created in "the likeness of God." This substantiates the fact that successive generations after Adam were born with a fallen, depraved nature, rather than a nature patterned after God's holiness.

9. Adam and Eve had many children. In the genealogical record of Adam's descendants, given in chapter 5, the refrain "and then he died" closes out the history of each individual—except one, Enoch. How did Enoch's story end, and why? Genesis 5:24

Enoch's life on earth ended when he was miraculously translated without physically dying. His testimony of intimate fellowship with God brought about a delivering act of the Almighty. The same Hebrew word laqach*, meaning "taken," is used in the description of Elijah's translation (see 2 Kings 2:3-5).*

CONCLUSION

As a result of man's disobedience in the Garden of Eden, all the descendants of Adam and Eve are born under the consequences that God ordained. Still, these sad chapters of Genesis include a bright note of hope in the person of the "seed of the woman," the Redeemer who would come to deliver mankind from the bondage of sin.

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Teacher's Guide

Noah, and the Tower of Babel

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Genesis 6:1 through 11:9

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God." (Genesis 6:9)

BACKGROUND

By Noah's generation, the embers of sin which Adam and Eve had ignited had become a flame that engulfed the whole earth. Chapters 6-9 of our text record that man, who had been created in the holy image of God just nine generations earlier, had forgotten God and become terribly evil in his ways. So devastating was the scope of the sins of mankind that God resolved to wipe out all living things. However, Noah was different. Unlike the rest of the people who walked according to the evil dictates of their hearts, this man walked step by step in faith, a living example to his generation. Though he did not have much of a support base of godly people—only those in his own family made it into the ark with him—the power of God sustained him. Because of Noah's faithfulness and obedience, God preserved him and his family from the devastating Flood that destroyed all other human beings on the face of the earth.

Noah lived 350 years after the Flood, and chapter 10 of Genesis records the history of his sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. This chapter, a genealogical record of the principal races and peoples known to the Israelites, is sometimes referred to as the Table of Nations.

Chapter 11 details God's response to the ungodliness that once again characterized human civilization after the Flood. The corruption and defiance of the people in resisting God's command to "replenish" the whole earth resulted in their language being confounded, and the people being scattered abroad "upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:9).

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. In Genesis 6:8, what indicator do we find of Noah's spiritual standing? What words and phrases in chapter 7 paint a picture of what Noah did to "walk with God"?

Noah "found grace in the eyes of the LORD." In chapter 7, we see that "Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him" (verse 5). Verses 9

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and 16 also refer to Noah's obedience. Ask your class: How do we walk with God in our day? What role does obedience play for us?

You may wish to amplify this question by pointing out that Noah is an excellent example of the fact that our own household is our primary and God-given responsibility. Noah's three sons were born after he began work on the ark, and were more than one hundred years old when the Flood came. The fact that they were present in the ark with Noah indicates that their godly father was not so busy with his assignment from God that he neglected to teach and train his own children.

2. Noah was not shielded from the negative influences of the world around him. What kinds of obstacles do you suppose he faced?

Suggestions could include the corrupted lifestyle of the people around him, their ridicule and mockery, the complete rejection of his message, the fact that he had never experienced a flood before so was following God beyond the realm of human experience, and the necessity of continuing in obedience over a long period of time.

Hebrews 11:7 and 2 Peter 2:5 are supplemental Scriptures you may wish to review with your class as you discuss this question.

3. Like Noah, as Christians we also face obstacles or hindrances in our walks with the Lord. How can we live in a sinful world without being drawn into it or isolating ourselves and losing contact?

You may wish to begin the discussion by asking your group to identify things that are hindrances to them or others. Some suggestions could include busyness, certain types of jobs, unsaved family members, some friendships, money, or success. While these are not necessarily evil in themselves, the point should be made that anything we prioritize ahead of God is a hindrance. In addition, anything that encourages conduct contrary to the Word and Spirit of God is a hindrance. Discuss specific ways hindrances can be resisted, such as by being alert to the Spirit, spending time in communion with God, attending church regularly, fellowshiping with like-minded believers, etc.

4. In Genesis 7:17-24, what details are given about the Flood and its results?

There were forty days of rain, the waters rose over the mountains to a depth of fifteen cubits, all people and animals died, and the waters prevailed for 150 days. If you wish to expand your class discussion of the Flood, Genesis 8:1-18 provides additional details. Use this question to reinforce that God's reason for sending the Flood was to destroy all the earth's wickedness; only those in the ark escaped the fury of the storm.

5. Noah's decision to follow the Lord saved him and his family from utter destruction. What does God's provision for them tell us about Him?

Though your class may come up with a variety of responses, you should conclude that God is merciful and will always make a way of escape. Though we are not protected physically in every circumstance—the righteous may suffer in body—the Lord will always preserve the soul and will not allow a person to go through more than he can bear.

6. What was the first action Noah took after he and his family left the ark? What does this reveal about Noah? Genesis 8:20

Noah's first action was to build an altar to the Lord and offer a burnt offering. As your class discusses what this action reveals about Noah, they may bring out that no doubt Noah was impacted by the tremendous devastation that met his eyes when he stepped from the ark. Whatever his feelings may have been, however, the fact that he built an altar clearly indicated his respect for God and his desire to please Him. God's response to Noah's sacrifice was His promise to never again use a flood to destroy the world, and as a witness to His promise, He gave the rainbow (see Genesis 9:12-17). The point can be made that sacrifice offered by a righteous man in faith is always acceptable to God.

7. What spiritual lesson or insight most impressed you as you considered the account of Noah?

As your class offers their thoughts about lessons or insights from the account of Noah, some of the points brought out may include that God is faithful to those who obey Him; that God does not always shield us from trouble, but He cares for us in the midst of trouble; and that obedience is vital in our relationship with God.

8. After the Flood, Noah's family was divided into tribes or colonies to settle in different directions, thus replenishing the other regions of the earth. However, as the population increased, they all came together. Ultimately they settled in the land of Shinar, where they determined to build a city and a tower that would reach unto Heaven. Why was it wrong for the people to build a tower and a city? What was God's reaction to their rebellion? Genesis 11:1-9

It is apparent that the people's hearts were set to do as they pleased and not as God had commanded. They wanted fame, saying, "Let us make us a name . . . ", and they wanted security, ". . . lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (verse 4). Their purpose was to secure these aims through human ingenuity and effort. God was left out of the endeavor; there is no mention of Him. God responded to their rebellion by demonstrating that human ingenuity and effort apart from God is futile.

He caused confusion in human language, and the result was chaos. The great project was abandoned and the godless society was segmented and scattered.

You may wish to conclude your class session by contrasting righteous Noah with the godless people who attempted to build the tower of Babel. Noah persevered according to God's direction, and succeeded in a seemingly impossible task. The people of Babel chose to strive in their own strength, and saw their efforts fail because they did not align their efforts with God's will and purposes.

CONCLUSION

Noah and the people of Shinar present a picture of the choice facing every individual in our day: will we live and work in obedience to God, or will we choose to resist and rebel against Him and His directives? As we ponder the outcomes for Noah and the tower builders at Babel, the best choice is clear.

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Teacher's Guide

Abraham, Man of Faith

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Genesis 11:10 through 23:20

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing." (Genesis 12:2)

BACKGROUND

The first portion of text for this lesson, Genesis 11:10-26, gives a selective list of ten generations that traces the ancestry of the man Abram, whose name was changed by God to Abraham in Genesis 17:5. The account of Abraham marks a pivotal point in the Book of Genesis. Prior to this time, God had dealt with the entire human race. At this point in Scripture, He centered His attention on Abraham and his family, beginning the patriarchal history.

The themes of separation, faith, and obedience are interwoven threads that can be traced throughout the life of Abraham. God called Abraham from pagan Ur of the Chaldees, which was a well-developed city with approximately 250,000 inhabitants at that time. A call from God always necessitates a choice. Abraham had to forsake the heathen practices of his society, and anchor his faith in the one true God. He had to leave behind his country and all that was secure and familiar, and begin traveling at God's direction toward a land that was unknown to him. As a result of Abraham's choice to obey, God established a covenant with him, promising to bless Abraham and make of him a great nation. Then God led Abraham step by step on a fifteen-hundred-mile journey, ending in the fertile region of Canaan where His desire was to establish a moral, God-centered nation through Abraham's offspring.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. God is generous with His promises, but often those promises are accompanied by conditions. What were the first promises He made to Abraham? What was required of Abraham if he wished to obtain God's promises? Genesis 12:1-3

God promised Abraham that He would make of him a great nation and would bless him, make his name great, and make him a blessing. In order to obtain God's promises, Abraham had to leave his country and kindred and go to a land that God would show him. Point out to your group that Abraham seemingly did not struggle with the unknown details.

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He concentrated only on what he understood to do—that he was to leave and head in the direction that God indicated. This always applies to us as well.

You may wish to amplify the class discussion by pointing out that the words "shall" and "will" occur six times in Genesis 12:1-3 and twice more they are implied, thus indicating the certainty of God's plan for Abraham. Discuss with your class the fact that we can never outgive God. While He may ask us to make what might initially appear to be "sacrifices" for Him, God's requirements always have valid reasons behind them, and they are always for our benefit. The blessings He bestows when we obey far exceed whatever He requires of us.

2. In Genesis 12:6-8, we read of Abraham's first encounters with the Lord in the new land. What action did Abraham take in his stops at both Sichem and Bethel? What was the significance of his action?

Abraham built altars to the Lord and worshiped Him. Sacrificial altars were used in many heathen religions, but for God's people, they symbolized communication with the one true God, and memorialized notable encounters with Him. The significance of Abraham's action revolves around the fact that his altars were built for prayer and worship. Seemingly, he felt a deep need to renew his love and commitment to God on a regular basis. We, too, need to take time on a regular basis to pray, read God's Word, and worship in God's house.

Follow-up class discussion could center on specific ways our worship services—which could be compared to Abraham's worship in these instances—help us to remember what God has done for us. For example, songs of worship help us reflect on the nature of God, the blessings He has placed in our lives, and the spiritual experiences He has given us. Testimonies memorialize notable encounters with Him, and sermons inspire and challenge us to continued obedience. Prayer services offer an opportunity to seek new spiritual ground, renew our consecrations, and enjoy fellowship with God.

3. After settling in Canaan, a conflict arose between the households of Abraham and Lot (Genesis 13:2,5-7). Describe the situation, and then identify Abraham's solution. Genesis 13:8-9

The herdsmen of Abraham and Lot disputed with each other regarding the shortage of available grazing land. To avoid strife, Abraham suggested separation of the flocks. He proposed that Lot choose which section of land he wanted to dwell in, and Abraham and his household would take the other section of land.

Ask your class to offer their thoughts regarding what Abraham's solution reveals about his character. They should conclude that Abraham was unselfish,

generous, peaceable, wise, and kind-hearted—all qualities that we would do well to develop in our own lives. It also shows Abraham's continual trust in God and His leading. He allowed God to work for him, rather than trusting in his own wisdom.

4. After ten years, with no fulfillment of God's promise of numerous descendants, Abraham began to wonder how it was really going to come about. How did God reassure Abraham, and what was Abraham's response? Genesis 15:1-6

God reassured Abraham that he would have a son of his own, rather than his eldest servant becoming his heir. Then God showed Abraham the stars and said that his descendants would be as the stars in number.

You may wish to explain that the law prevalent around Haran, where Abraham had lived before departing for Canaan, allowed a childless couple to adopt a servant to take care of them in their elderly years and to attend to their burial. The expectation was that the servant would then inherit the wealth of the family. Eliezer of Damascus, referred to in Genesis 15:2, was a trusted servant who served as Abraham's household administrator (see Genesis 24) and was also his heir if Abraham died childless. Though Abraham clearly regarded this man very highly, he naturally wanted a son of his own to carry on his lineage.

The Hebrew word chashab *that is translated* counted *in Genesis 15:6 means "to think, reckon, calculate, imagine, to put one's thoughts together." God added up everything that Abraham's belief meant to Him and concluded that it equaled righteousness (Romans 4:1-3).*

5. In Genesis 17, God appeared to Abraham again and renewed and expanded His covenant. At this time he changed the man's name from Abram (which means "high father" or "patriarch") to Abraham (which means "father of a multitude"). What was the significance of the new name, and how did it fit with the expanded promises God gave at that time?

The significance of the new name was that it reinforced God's covenant with Abraham. It was another indicator that he would indeed become the father of a multitude—he would become the patriarch of the whole Hebrew nation, as well as the Arab nations.

You may wish to follow up with a discussion of how faithful God is to give assurance to those who follow Him. This encounter between Abraham and God seemed to be mainly for that purpose. God does not need assurance, but He knows that we do. Your class members could be encouraged to share times when God has offered them reassurance in personal and individual ways.

6. While God was confirming and encouraging righteous Abraham, His judgment was about to be poured out on the unrighteous people who lived in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Why did God tell Abraham about His plans to destroy these cities? What does Abraham's intercession reveal about his view of God? Genesis 18:16-19; 23-33

God told Abraham about His plans because He had confidence in him, knowing that Abraham would teach his children in a manner that would perpetuate "the way of the Lord" to future generations. What a wonderful commendation—and it came from God himself! Also, God knew Abraham loved Lot like a son and was aware of the younger man's proximity to Sodom and Gomorrah, so He revealed the danger Lot was about to face, giving Abraham a chance to intercede.

In response to the second question, your group will likely conclude that Abraham clearly had faith in God's justice and compassion. Abraham was aware that God must punish sin, but he also knew from experience that God extends mercy to sinners.

7. After numerous promises, a visit by two angels, and the appearance of the Lord himself, Genesis 21:1-7 records how Sarah finally rejoiced at the birth of a son. How can the experience of Sarah and Abraham encourage us as we wait for our prayers to be answered?

Your group should conclude that Abraham and Sarah's experience can encourage us to be patient and hopeful when we are waiting for an answer from God. In fact, many times "wait" is *God's answer. Waiting will also help us to grasp the truth that doing the impossible is everyday business for God. Our "unsolvable" problems may not seem so impossible if we let God work out His own solution in His own time.*

8. In Genesis 22, we observe Abraham's response to a soul-wracking test of obedience: God instructed him to take his only son, Isaac, into the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering to the Lord. What details in this account emphasize Abraham's unhesitating response?

He rose up early *to do as God had commanded. Abraham and Isaac traveled fifty to sixty miles from Beersheba to Mount Moriah, a three-day journey that required sustained purpose, for no doubt Satan was interjecting all manner of thoughts into Abraham's mind to try to dissuade him from obeying. Even when Isaac asked about the lack of a lamb for the sacrifice, Abraham's answer reflected no hesitation.*

As your class discusses this account, bring out how heart-wrenching it must have been for Abraham to face slaying his long-awaited son of promise with his own hand. Still, Abraham was steadfast

in his determination to obey, even when he did not understand why God would require such an action. Hebrews 11:17-19 offers a further commentary on Abraham's response.

9. What spiritual lessons can we learn from the life of Abraham?

Class responses should provide a good way to conclude your class session. Suggestions may include such thoughts as:

- *Obedience will be rewarded.*
- *God can make the impossible possible.*
- *God communicates with those who trust in Him.*
- *It pays to have faith in God.*
- *God keeps His promises.*

CONCLUSION

Abraham was an example of a righteous man who clung to his faith in the promises of God in spite of impossible odds. The promises originally given to Abraham were eventually reiterated to his son Isaac (Genesis 26:3) and to his grandson Jacob (Genesis 28:13). In the New Testament, Abraham is held up as the example of the faith required for the followers of Christ. He is viewed as the spiritual father of faith to all believers (Galatians 3:7-9).

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DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

Isaac, Son of Promise

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Genesis 24:1 through 26:35

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake." (Genesis 26:24)

BACKGROUND

The covenant God had made with Abraham—to create from Abraham's descendants a great nation through which He would bless the world—was passed on to the next generation through Isaac.

Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah when the patriarch was one hundred years of age, and his wife was ninety. Their choice of the name Isaac (which means "laughter") for this long-awaited miracle child no doubt reflected their joy at his birth. His very existence was a testimony to God's power to make His promises become a reality.

An obedient and trusting son, Isaac was willing to follow his father's instructions even when obedience seemingly would lead to his own death. As a young man he showed a desire to commune with God and to trust the Lord to choose his wife. When it became apparent that his wife Rebekah was barren, he interceded in prayer for her to bear a child, and he prevailed in that request.

God blessed Isaac and he became very great and powerful among the inhabitants of the land. His patient and peaceful manner caused him to avoid strife, and made those who would be his enemies seek peace with him.

Isaac chose to follow his father's faith and to do his part in obedience to God. Because he did so, he is listed among the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11:9).

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Often the account of the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22:1-24 focuses on Abraham, but it is interesting to study this passage from Isaac's viewpoint. Although his age at this time is unknown, many Bible scholars believe he was between twenty-five and thirty-six years old. Since he was able to carry the wood for the sacrifice (verse 6), he certainly was old enough to resist being bound as a sacrifice. However, there is no record of such resistance. What convictions and qualities might Isaac have seen in Abraham that caused him to submit to impending death?

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Suggestions from your class may include: Abraham's faith in God and commitment to Him, his willingness to obey, and his submission to God's authority in his life. Your group should conclude that Abraham clearly inspired and taught his son the importance of trusting the one true God. Isaac not only observed, but he trusted his father and his father's relationship with God, and followed his father's good example.

2. Isaac being offered as a sacrifice is often compared with Jesus being crucified. In what ways were Isaac and Jesus similar? In what ways were they dissimilar?

Class input in response to this question may include the fact that both Isaac and Jesus were only sons, dearly beloved by their fathers. (Though Jesus had earthly siblings, He was the only Son of God.) Both were ordained by God to be a sacrifice. Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice, while Jesus carried the cross. Isaac submitted to the will of his father just as Jesus submitted to His Father, though the price was their own lives.

Isaac and Jesus were dissimilar in that Isaac was mortal, while Jesus (though in earthly form) was the Son of God. Isaac was delivered from death, but Jesus paid the ultimate price on the Cross. Isaac's death would have had no redeeming merit, but Jesus purchased salvation for all mankind through His death.

3. When Abraham was old and "well stricken in age" he gave the responsibility of choosing an appropriate wife for Isaac to a trusted servant. Where was the servant sent to find a wife? Why do you think Abraham felt it was so important that Isaac not marry one of the daughters of the Canaanites? Genesis 24:1-9

The servant was instructed to go to Abraham's former homeland and take a wife for Isaac from among Abraham's kindred. As your class discusses why Abraham made the servant promise not to choose a wife from among the Canaanites, the conclusion should be reached that Abraham clearly was aware of the danger of intermarriage with heathen neighbors. God wanted a holy people who were set apart from the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites, and marriage between the two cultures would certainly blur any line of demarcation.

You may wish to amplify the discussion by bringing out that God still requires His people to be separate from the world, warning us against entering into marriage or other close relationships with unbelievers.

4. Abraham's servant asked God for a specific sign that would identify the woman who would become Isaac's wife. What was that sign, and what does the outcome teach us about God's guidance and care? Genesis 24:14-20

The servant told God that he would stand by the well where the young women of the city came to draw water. He asked that the woman God had chosen would offer to water his camels when he asked her for a drink. Before he even finished his prayer, Rebekah came to draw water and gave the very response that the servant had requested.

Class discussion of the second half of the question should bring out that God is faithful to give guidance and provide according to His will if we seek Him. It is worth noting that the servant asked God to reveal His will in a simple and straightforward manner. Following God is not complicated. Guidance may not always come as directly as it did in this instance, but God will always make His will clear in His own way and time if we are committed to following His plan.

5. Where was Isaac and what was he doing when Rebekah first saw him? What conclusion might we draw from this? Genesis 24:63-64

Verse 63 indicates that Isaac was out in the field meditating. The Hebrew word translated meditate *in this verse means "to muse pensively." We can conclude Isaac was a man who contemplated the things of God; seemingly he was a man of a serious and quiet disposition.*

You might wish to follow up this question by asking your class why it is a good practice to spend time contemplating the things of God. Discussion should bring out that meditation helps us to focus on God, brings to mind reasons for praise and thanksgiving, and communicates our love and sincere interest in God's words and ways.

6. What conditions was Isaac to meet in order to obtain the blessings of God's covenant? Genesis 26:2-5

He was not to go to Egypt, but to dwell in the land that God showed him. Scripture does not give a definitive reason why God made this requirement. Bring out that sometimes we will not know the reason for the requirements God gives us. However, God requires obedience even when we do not understand. Stepping out in faith even when we do not have a reason is one way we learn to trust and to walk by faith!

7. Genesis 26:7-11 recounts how Isaac wavered in his trust of God's protection in the face of potentially perilous circumstances. Why is wavering so dangerous?

Failure to trust in God can lead to sin, and sin will always have an impact—not only on ourselves, but many times on others also. In Isaac's case, his actions, which were based on fear rather than trust in God, put Rebekah in a vulnerable position, and ultimately drew the rebuke of King Abimelech of the Philistines. To Isaac's credit, when Abimelech confronted him about his behavior, he acknowledged rather than justified it.

This could be a good opportunity to explore with your class the right way to deal with failures and shortcomings in our Christian lives. If we have willfully turned our backs on God and sinned, we need to repent and seek His forgiveness. If we have erred through human weakness rather than outright rebellion, we should acknowledge our error, do our best to repair any damage caused, seek for God's help to do better the next time, and step forward in confidence that God has seen our contrite spirit and will help us to learn from our mistakes and walk victoriously in the future.

8. What ongoing problem described in Genesis 26:12-22 did Isaac face? What did Isaac's response to the herdsmen of Gerar reveal about his character? Genesis 26:18-28

His enemies harassed him by stopping up the wells that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham. You may wish to point out to your class that sheep and goats need water on a daily basis; a large herd requires a lot of water. The area where Gerar is located has very few sources of water and a low annual rainfall. In Isaac's day, herdsmen depended on wells. If a well could only supply one group of herdsmen, contention often resulted over who had the rights to it. Sometimes a new well was only tapping into the source of an existing well, making peaceful co-existence very difficult.

In response to the second question, Isaac seemingly was a peace-loving man who did everything in his power to avoid trouble. He was quick to make an agreement to clear up old tensions.

9. What key lessons can we apply to our lives based on a study of Isaac?

As your class discusses some of the lessons we can learn, thoughts brought out may include:

- *To please God does not require great accomplishments or tremendous exhibitions of our faith. He wants us to be faithful in the call that He has placed upon our lives.*
- *God has a plan for each of our lives and a role for us to fill.*
- *Submission is a vital attribute in a successful Christian life.*
- *God keeps His promises! We should never be afraid to trust in Him.*

CONCLUSION

Like his father Abraham, Isaac was a stranger and pilgrim in a foreign land. He was a vital part of the divine plan that eventually produced the Hebrew nation, gave us the Bible, and brought Jesus Christ into the world as the Savior for all mankind.

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

Jacob, Heir to the Promises of God

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Genesis 27:1 through 36:43

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." (Genesis 32:28)

BACKGROUND

Jacob was the younger of the twin sons born to Isaac and Rebekah, and the third patriarch of the Hebrews with whom God made a covenant. Before Jacob was born, God ordained that His plan for His chosen people would be through Jacob, rather than through Jacob's twin brother, Esau, even though Esau was the elder. Jacob and his brother, Esau, were at odds with each other even before they were born, struggling within Rebekah's womb.

As Jacob grew to manhood, he must have learned much about God and His promises from his parents and his grandfather, Abraham, who died when Jacob was about fifteen. He no doubt also knew that the hereditary responsibilities, privileges, and blessings would customarily flow through Esau, the elder. Through devious means, he tricked his father, Isaac, into giving him the eldest son's blessing, but as a result, he had to flee his homeland and go to dwell with his mother's kinsmen in Haran. In time, Jacob married, and fathered twelve sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. They are the ancestors of the tribes of Israel, and the ones for whom the tribes are named. Joseph is the father of two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim.

As we trace the key events in Jacob's life, we also follow his spiritual pilgrimage as God prepared him to be Israel, ancestor of His chosen people and heir of the promises made to his father and grandfather. Many times Jacob seemed an unlikely candidate for the role of a patriarch of Israel, but God repeatedly appeared to him, affirming His covenant and reminding Jacob of his place in God's plan.

Sin and its effects, God's sovereignty, conviction, God's grace, redemption of man, and God's keeping power are some of the many themes present in the account of Jacob.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. The text of our previous lesson contains the account of how Jacob took advantage of Esau's hunger and seeming disregard for his hereditary

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privileges, and obtained Esau's birthright in exchange for a bowl of lentil stew. (See Genesis 25:27-34.) In the first chapter of today's text, we read how Jacob deceived Isaac into giving him the blessing that Isaac expected to give to Esau. Why was the trickery and conniving of Jacob and Rebekah unnecessary in both of these circumstances?

God had revealed to Rebekah before the twins were born that the elder of her sons would serve the younger (see Genesis 25:23), although this was contrary to the custom of the day. There was no need for Rebekah and Jacob to connive in order to bring about what God had already ordained.

Ask your class what lessons we can learn from this account. They will likely conclude that no matter how worthy we think our goals, we must be careful about how we attempt to achieve them. It is important not to get ahead of God, and critical that we guard against anything dishonest or even questionable in our pursuit of a goal. God has a perfect plan for each of our lives, and if we submit to Him and follow His leading, He will bring it to pass no matter how impossible it may seem from our human perspective.

2. What was Esau's response to Jacob's deceitful action in securing Isaac's blessing, and how did God use this in Jacob's life? Genesis 27:41-45

Esau was angry at Jacob's deception, and determined to get revenge. Rebekah became aware of Esau's intent, and warned Jacob to flee from his brother's wrath and go to her family in Haran. Her counsel was for him to stay there "a few days" but God had a different scenario in mind, and Jacob spent many years away from his homeland. It is interesting that in all of Jacob's planning and conniving, leaving home to dwell in an unknown land was not in his plans. However, God can use circumstances in our lives to bring about His own purposes. It was in Haran that Jacob married, and fathered the sons who would become the leaders of the tribes of Israel. Later, it was the knowledge of Esau's anger which helped Jacob learn humility and dependence upon God.

3. God spoke to Jacob in a dream as he fled from Esau. What did God show Jacob, and how did Jacob respond when he awoke? Genesis 28:12-22

God showed Jacob a vision of a ladder resting on the earth, with its top reaching Heaven. The angels of God were moving up and down the stairway, and at the top stood the Lord. At this point, God extended to Jacob the covenant promise He had made with Abraham and Isaac. In response, when Jacob awoke, he acknowledged that God was in that place. He rose up and created an altar from the stone he had used as a pillow, and made a lifelong commitment that the Lord would be his God, and also that he would give God a tenth (or tithe) of all that came to him.

Bring out to your class that Jacob had to establish his own personal relationship with God. Jacob's response of making an altar and an offering to God parallels our steps of conviction, admission of sin, repentance, committing our lives to God, and then, by His power, walking in a new way. God extended grace to Jacob, which He does to us as well.

4. After Jacob spent a month with his uncle Laban's family, Laban inquired what wages Jacob desired for his services. According to Genesis 29:15-19 the two men agreed that after seven years of service, Rachel would become Jacob's wife. How did Laban deceive Jacob in this matter? Genesis 29:23

Laban did not reveal to Jacob the custom of the area which dictated that an older daughter must be married before a younger. After Jacob labored seven years for Rachel, he was given Rachel's sister Leah as his wife instead. When Laban said "fulfill her week" (Genesis 29:27), he referred to a week of marriage festivities. When that week was fulfilled, Rachel was given to Jacob, and he worked another seven years for her. Jacob may have been reaping what he had sowed years before when he deceived his father into giving him the birthright that belonged to Esau.

Ask your class what admirable characteristics Jacob exemplified in this situation. They will likely comment on his deep love for Rachel, and his apparent acceptance of the injustice of his employer.

5. Over the twenty years that Jacob worked for Laban, the relationship between the two men was strained and, at times, adversarial. Chapters 30 and 31 relate details of some of their disputes, which are summed up in Jacob's complaint, "I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou has changed my wages ten times" (Genesis 31:41). In spite of the unfair manner in which Jacob was treated, God prospered him. When God told Jacob it was time for him to return to the land of his fathers, Jacob told Leah and Rachel of his decision. What verses reveal that he knew that God had been with him? Genesis 31:1-13

Jacob's words in verses 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13 all indicate Jacob's clear awareness of God's activity in his life. God had showed concern for Jacob, allowing him to prosper greatly, and Jacob rightly attributed his prosperity to God rather than to his own ingenuity. Jacob had been deceived repeatedly in the house of Laban, and likely this caused him to recall the deceit he himself had practiced. The lessons Jacob learned at the hands of Laban must have reinforced the standard of God, which he previously had ignored.

Use this question to bring out the two parallel themes that emerge in this narrative: Jacob's suffering the consequences of his sin, and God's mercy and providential care.

6. As Jacob prepared to meet Esau, he was afraid of what might transpire, and was not reassured when he heard that Esau was coming with four hundred men. Referring to Genesis 32, list the steps Jacob took before meeting his brother Esau.

Jacob asked God for help and protection and then organized an enormous gift and arranged for Esau to receive it by installments. He put all of his family and possessions over the brook Jabbok, and turned to prayer. Verse 24 indicates that "there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." Though this heavenly Being touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, putting it out of joint, Jacob would not release Him until he received the reassurance he needed.

Bring out to your class that we need to keep our commitments and consecrations up to date. In this account, God again used what seemed to be a fearful situation from Jacob's past to bring him to a new experience with Him, and into a closer and deeper walk. You may wish to encourage your class to share incidents from their own experiences in which God used a difficult situation or even a spiritual battle to bring about ultimate good.

7. The name Jacob meant "supplanter." The name Israel meant "one who struggles with God and prevails." What change of character was represented by the change of names for Jacob? (Genesis 32:28)

People in Jacob's culture believed that a person's name revealed his character, so this change was significant to Jacob. Use this question to summarize with your class the transformation of this man from a scheming conniver to a man who prevailed with God.

8. Genesis 33:1-17 recounts the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau. What was Jacob's first action when he approached his brother? How many times in that passage did Jacob refer to himself as Esau's "servant" and Esau as his "lord"? What do these details indicate?

Jacob bowed himself to the ground seven times before Esau. He referred to himself as Esau's "servant" two times, and to Esau as "my lord" five times in these verses. Jacob's bowing low seven times was a sign of respect—it was the manner in which one would indicate homage and subjection to a king. His reference to himself as Esau's servant, and to Esau as his lord, were further indicators of his submissive spirit and his desire to obtain forgiveness and mercy from his estranged brother.

9. In Genesis 35:1, God instructed Jacob to return to Bethel, the site where He had made the initial covenant revelation to Jacob, and build an altar there. After receiving that instruction, what did Jacob command his family to do? What was the significance of his command? Genesis 35:2

Jacob required his whole household to put away their strange gods. They were instructed to clean themselves and change their garments; these were ceremonies signifying the purification and change of heart. The cleaning of the household was a solemn preparation made before they attended to the solemn ordinance of God.

Follow-up discussion of this point could revolve around the thought that we, too, need to be sure that we remove all idols—anything that takes precedence over God in our lives—in order to worship Him acceptably.

CONCLUSION

No matter what we perceive to be happening, God is sovereign and well able to bring about His plan. Let us learn a lesson from the life of Jacob, and allow God to work out the details of our lives in accordance with His divine will. As we submit to Him, we can be assured of His favor.

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DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

Joseph

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Genesis 37:1 through 50:26

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance." (Genesis 45:7)

BACKGROUND

Joseph's birth is recorded in Genesis 30:22-24, and then his story begins in chapter 37, opening a new section in the book and covering fourteen chapters. Like his father Jacob, grandfather Isaac, and great-grandfather Abraham, Joseph was a chosen man. The hand of God was evident on his life in each situation portrayed, ruling and overruling the plans and decisions made by men.

Joseph was the eleventh of Jacob's twelve sons, and the elder son of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel. Of all his sons, Jacob loved Joseph the most, and this obvious favoritism caused a spiraling resentment in Joseph's half-brothers that brought seeming tragedy into the young man's life. However, Joseph's commitment to the principles of truth, right, and faith in God were already entrenched in his heart, and those attributes served him well in the ensuing traumatic events. Though he faced betrayal, temptation, false accusations, and unfair imprisonment, his positive responses and consistent faithfulness to God transformed each adversity into something God could and did use.

The story of Joseph cannot be fully understood without a clear grasp of the Lord's involvement in the proceedings. Years before Joseph was born, God had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham. However, He had also revealed to the patriarch that "thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them" (Genesis 15:13). God used the harsh events in Joseph's life to relocate him, and ultimately his whole family, to Egypt, which was part of God's foreordained plan. Joseph's story offers us insight into how the mysterious workings of our sovereign God are threaded through all the endeavors of humankind, and His purposes will ultimately prevail.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. In Genesis 37:3 we read that Jacob made Joseph a coat of many colors. What did the coat represent? How did this garment impact his relationship with his brothers?

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The coat of many colors given to Joseph by his father was a symbol of Jacob's preference for Joseph. As such, it added to the resentment of his brothers, which was already growing because Joseph had given his father a bad report about them (see verse 2). Historians suggest that the coat may have been a long, colorful, embroidered or striped robe with sleeves; ancient writings suggest that it may have been an ornamental tunic such as royalty might wear. Colorful dyes were difficult to procure and therefore rare in those days. Clearly, Jacob must have put much thought and money into this coat for his most-loved son. The dangers of preferring one child above another in a family may be discussed here.

2. Joseph had some unusual dreams, and he shared them with his already antagonistic brothers. What effect did Joseph's dreams about the sun, moon, and stars, and the sheaves have on his brothers? Genesis 37:5-9

The brothers' resentment escalated as a result of hearing about the dreams. Discuss with your class that while Joseph's recitation of the dreams stirred up the jealousy of his brothers, his simple frankness may actually point to a spirit that was without guile. Possibly he was only mildly conscious of the significance of the dreams, and merely related them because of their somewhat unusual nature. Joseph likely had no idea that his brothers would hate him "yet the more" because of what he told them. While he may have been short on tact, we can already see the commitment to the principles of truth, obedience, and faith in this young man—attributes that would serve him well in traumatic events that occurred later.

This could be an opportunity to discuss the danger of allowing the slightest amount of animosity or bitterness against another individual to creep into our hearts. Harboring those feelings led Joseph's brothers to hostility, rage, and attempted murder.

3. The brothers' anger at Joseph led them to conspire to murder him when he came to them in Dothan at his father's request. Which two brothers intervened, and what was the outcome of their intervention? Genesis 37:18-28

Reuben and Judah intervened, and God used their efforts. Reuben kept the other brothers from killing Joseph outright, and persuaded them to cast Joseph into a pit instead, planning to deliver him later. When a band of traders approached, Judah suggested that they sell Joseph into slavery instead of slaying him.

Follow up this question by discussing God's involvement in this sequence of events. What befell Joseph was tragic and unjust. However, God used these events to fulfill His prophetic announcement to Abraham that his descendants would be strangers in a land that was not theirs (see Genesis 15:13-16).

4. In Egypt, Joseph became a slave in the household of Potiphar, an officer of Pharoah. Genesis 39:2-6 tells us that Potiphar put all his affairs into the hands of Joseph. Why did he do this?

In spite of the fact that Joseph was merely a slave in Potiphar's house, his life and demeanor earned the confidence of Potiphar. For that reason, Potiphar put the young man in charge of all his affairs. This account provides a good opportunity to emphasize the value of a clean life and a credible witness before others. Stewardship, faithfulness, dependability, and honesty are traits that we should develop in our lives. We want others to see in us, as Potiphar did in Joseph, that the Lord is with us.

5. Potiphar's wife was a woman devoid of moral standards. She made Joseph the target of her attention, and one day when the master was away, she propositioned him. How did Joseph respond to this temptation? Genesis 39:7-12

Joseph refused the advances of Potiphar's wife by saying that yielding would not only be unfair to his master, who had entrusted him with great responsibility, but would be a sin against God. Joseph's response was based upon a solid commitment to the principles of God. Potiphar's wife evidently thought she could erode his determination by persistence, for she "spake to Joseph day by day." However, when she caught him by the garment, he ran from her presence, leaving his garment behind.

Ask your class to discuss how we should respond when faced with temptation. Joseph's response—to resist and flee—is an excellent strategy.

6. Because Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph, he was put into prison. However, once again his exemplary life was noticed, and before long he was placed in charge of many details of prison life. He won the confidence of his fellow prisoners, including Pharoah's butler and baker. To whom did Joseph give the credit for interpreting the dreams of the imprisoned butler and baker, and later, of Pharoah himself? (See Genesis 40:8; 41:16.) What does this tell us about Joseph's character?

Joseph told the butler and baker that the interpretation of their dreams was from God, rather than using the situation to make himself look good. Contrast his humble demeanor with the self-assertive attitude that is common in society today. Note also that it was not Joseph's knowledge of dreams that helped him interpret their meaning, it was his knowledge of God. Knowing God will help us to face any eventuality life may bring our way. Many times what may seem to be a dead end for us may actually be another step in God's full plan.

7. Numerous events in Joseph's life could have caused him to feel that God had forsaken him: the

anger and resentment of his brothers, their selling him into slavery, the false accusation that resulted in his imprisonment, and the fact that even his kindness to fellow prisoners was forgotten. However, we see no indication that Joseph was discouraged or embittered. What do you think was the secret to his remarkable attitude? Genesis 39:2,21,23

While the circumstances of Joseph's life could have led him to view his situation as hopeless, Genesis 39:2, 21, and 23 point out that the Lord was with Joseph. His experience with God had taught him that while he could not anticipate being exempted from trials and harsh injustices in life, he could expect the Lord to be merciful and gracious to him in whatever circumstance he found himself.

You may wish to use this question to discuss ways we can keep from succumbing to discouragement in times of trial and hardship. Joseph's attitude has been a glowing example through thousands of years to the power of God to sustain an individual in the midst of exceedingly hard places.

8. Two years after he correctly told the baker and butler what their dreams meant, Joseph was called to stand before Pharoah and reveal to Egypt's ruler that a national disaster was impending. What was the nature of that disaster, and how did Pharoah respond? Genesis 41:28-32; 38-45

Pharoah's dream foretold that seven years of plenty in the land of Egypt would be followed by seven years of terrible famine. Pharoah recognized that the Spirit of God was in Joseph, and that God himself had revealed to Joseph the events that were about to take place. He promoted Joseph to a position of leadership in Egypt second only to himself, and put the former slave and prisoner in charge of implementing the strategy that would preserve Egypt from the devastating effects of famine.

You may wish to point out to your group that the assurance and stability of God's promotion is in great contrast to the instability and uncertainty of self-promotion.

9. Acts of harsh unkindness and a period of twenty years stood between Joseph and his brothers. When they came to Egypt to procure provisions, Joseph orchestrated a series of circumstances that revealed their attitudes truly had changed. Then he made the startling disclosure to them: he was their brother, Joseph. (See Genesis 45:4-8.) What did Joseph understand about God that helped him give such a merciful and kind response to his fearful brothers?

Joseph understood that God is sovereign. He was able to recognize that God's plans are not dictated nor altered by man's activities. Man's intentions may be evil but God will overrule and make all things work together for good for those who trust Him.

CONCLUSION

Joseph's connection with God allowed him to survive and prosper in spite of extremely trying circumstances. He was betrayed and deserted by his brothers, falsely accused and imprisoned for doing the right thing, and forgotten by those he had helped. Still, his positive reaction transformed each obstacle into a step forward. When we face setbacks, a Joseph-type response will help us navigate through difficulties!

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

The Call of Moses and the Exodus

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Exodus 1:1 through 11:10

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go." (Exodus 3:20)

BACKGROUND

Approximately four hundred years had passed since Joseph had brought his family to dwell in Egypt. The Children of Israel were in Egypt from about 1800 B.C. to approximately 1400 B.C., and while the early part of their stay had been favorable, the latter years were spent in slavery. The Pharaoh ruling Egypt at the time of Moses' birth was greatly concerned because the Hebrew population had increased to nearly two million, so he took steps to control their expansion. Oppressed and afflicted, the heart's cry of the Hebrews was for deliverance.

The theme of Exodus is just that: deliverance. The opening chapters give an account of how the Children of Israel were forced into slavery in Egypt, the birth of Moses, God's calling of Moses to leadership, Moses' dealings with Pharaoh, and the plagues that God sent against the Egyptians. Time and again, we see what a special relationship Moses had with God. Initially, God spoke to him through a burning bush, and communicated with him directly several more times during the process of the release of the Children of Israel. God performed many miracles in leading His chosen people out of Egypt. In so doing, He displayed His awesome power.

It is interesting to note that many of the plagues sent upon Egypt were a direct insult to the gods the Egyptians worshipped.

- Hapi, the god of the Nile River, could not prevent the river from turning to blood.
- Hathor, the cow goddess, could not prevent the Egyptian cattle from dying.
- Osiris, the god of vegetation, could not protect their crops.
- Ra, the sun god, could not stop the three days of darkness that God sent upon the land.
- Seth, the god of chaos, was supposed to protect from anything that threatened the harmony of Egypt, but clearly was unable to withstand the power of the God of the Hebrews.
- Isis, the protective goddess, was supposed to bring help to those in need, but the dire results of Pharaoh's defiance could not be lessened.

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The plagues showed the inadequacy, and in fact, the non-existence of these purported gods.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Through what series of miraculous events did a Hebrew baby become a prince in the palace of the Pharaoh of Egypt? Exodus 1:22; 2:1-10

Lead your class in summarizing how, in spite of Pharaoh's decree that all Hebrew baby boys were to be killed at birth, God preserved Moses. His mother kept him hidden for three months, and when that could not be done any longer, she made an ark of bulrushes and placed him in the river. There the infant was discovered by the daughter of Pharoah, whose heart was moved with sympathy. Moses' own mother was summoned to be the baby's nursemaid, and the child Moses was raised as the son of Pharoah's daughter.

Ask your class if they ever feel surrounded by the enemy and powerless against his forces. In such times, what lesson can we learn through the miraculous preservation of Moses? Discussion should bring out that God can intervene to protect and preserve His own, no matter how impossible the circumstances may appear to our finite understanding. We must focus on God and trust Him for deliverance, or for grace to endure if deliverance according to our hopes is not His divine purpose.

2. After spending forty years tending sheep in the desert, God spoke to Moses from a burning bush that was not consumed. What was God's command to Moses in Exodus 3:5, and what did Moses' response signify?

God's command to Moses was that he was not to come near, but was to put off his shoes, because the place where he stood was holy ground. Moses' response indicated that he realized he was in the presence of God. The symbolic action of taking off his shoes was not only an act of obedience, but also one of reverence, and conveyed his own sense of unworthiness and humility before God.

This question provides a good opportunity to discuss the fact that the places and the presence of God are to be honored and viewed as holy in our day as well. He is to be regarded with awe and respect. Ask your class: what are some ways we can show reverence and respect to God when we come into His house?

3. Read Exodus 3:7-8. What did God promise Moses He would do for the Children of Israel? How can we find encouragement when we apply these verses to our own lives?

God promised to deliver the Children of Israel from Egyptian bondage and to bring them into a land that flowed with milk and honey. Focus class attention on the three key words in verse 7: God let Moses know

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that He had seen the afflictions of His people, He had heard their cry, and He knew their sorrows.

God is the same today. We will face challenges in life, but God sees our afflictions, He hears our cries, and He knows our sorrows. As we follow the Lord in obedience, we can be assured of His care and provision. We may not experience physical deliverance from every trial, but God will be with us. We can be assured of ultimate deliverance and victory in the hereafter.

You may wish to encourage your students to share experiences in their personal lives of when God was near in a time of difficulty, and ultimately brought victory.

4. In Exodus 3:12, God promised Moses a token. What was that token?

The token God promised Moses was that, when the people came out of Egypt, they would serve God "upon this mountain," the very place where the burning bush incident took place. Mount Sinai (also referred to as Mount Horeb), is located between Midian and Egypt. This promise, and its realization, would give an assurance both to Moses and the Children of Israel that God was leading them.

The point should be made that God does not always give visible or physical tokens. It may be that such reassurances are more needed in an individual's early walk with the Lord. As we grow and mature as Christians, we may be required to walk more by faith. However, wherever we are in our spiritual journey, we can be assured that when God makes a promise, it will be realized.

5. God told Moses, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14). In the original Hebrew, the tense used could equally indicate past, present, or future. Why would that have been significant to Moses? What encouragement is found in this verse for us?

"I AM" reflected more than God's transcendent existence; it also indicated that His divine Presence would be with Moses and Israel in the present and future, just as He had been with Israel's forefathers in the past (see verse 15).

These verses speak to us of the eternal power and unchanging character of God. We live in a world where moral beliefs and civil laws are constantly changing, but we can find stability and assurance in the fact that God never changes.

6. Moses saw the challenges of his assignment and was reluctant to accept it. What excuses did he offer God, and how did God respond? Exodus 4:1-17

First, Moses protested that the people would not believe him, nor hearken to his voice. Then he offered the excuse that he was not eloquent, but was slow of

speech. God responded by demonstrating His power, and then stating He would allow Aaron to accompany Moses as his spokesman.

Class discussion of this passage should bring out that a lack of confidence, or an awareness of our own limitations, is never justification for avoiding God's call. God understands when we feel inadequate for the tasks He gives us, but He does not change His mind. It is easy for us to focus on our weaknesses, but if God calls us to do something, we can be sure He will help us accomplish the task by providing what we need to obey Him.

7. When Moses appeared before Pharaoh to request that the Israelites be allowed to leave to worship their God, the ruler refused. His stubborn disobedience brought terrible suffering upon himself and his entire country. What were the first nine plagues God sent upon Egypt? Exodus 7:14-25; 8:1-7, 16-19, 24; 9:1-12, 22-26; 10:12-15, 21-26

You may wish to compile a list with your students.

- *Exodus 7:14-25—Water turned to blood*
- *Exodus 8:1-7—Invasion of frogs*
- *Exodus 8:16-19—Plague of lice*
- *Exodus 8:24—Swarms of flies*
- *Exodus 9:1-7—Pestilence upon livestock*
- *Exodus 9:8-12—Painful boils*
- *Exodus 9:22-26—Hailstorm*
- *Exodus 10:12-15—Plague of locusts*
- *Exodus 10:21-26—Three days of darkness*

8. Pharaoh's sorcerers were able to mimic some of Moses' miracles through enchantments (see Exodus 7:22 and 8:7). Ironically, they only made matters worse. Why were the sorcerers unable to reverse the plagues?

The sorcerers were unable to reverse the plagues because God did not permit them to do so. While Satan has power, he can only operate within the boundaries that God allows. Eventually, even the sorcerers had to acknowledge the plagues were from God (see Exodus 8:19).

9. How did God demonstrate His concern for Israel during the plagues? Exodus 8:22-23; 9:4-7, 26; 10:23

God prevented the flies from entering the land of Goshen, protected the livestock of the Hebrews, did not allow hail to fall upon Goshen, and did not allow the darkness to overspread the Hebrews in the land of Goshen—all things only God could do! Bring out to your class that, in Exodus 8:23, the word translated division *means, "a distinction." Because the Children of Israel belonged to God in a special way, God made a distinction between them and the heathen people of Egypt. God's hand was over them and provided deliverance.*

10. What suggestion did Pharaoh make in Exodus 8:25, and how did Moses respond? What lesson can we learn from his response?

Pharaoh suggested the Children of Israel sacrifice in the land of Egypt rather than traveling out of Egypt. Moses responded that this was not acceptable.

Class response to the second question should bring out that God requires complete obedience. At times in our Christian lives, unbelievers may urge us to compromise or to only partially obey God's commands. However, we must respond as Moses did and let it be known that we have no intention of giving only partial obedience to Him. The fact is, partial obedience *is really just* disobedience.

You may wish to wrap up your class session with the thought that God was not done with Pharaoh and Egypt. In next Sunday's lesson, we will study the final culmination of God's dealing with Egypt, and the great deliverance He brought about for the Children of Israel.

CONCLUSION

The life of Moses should be an inspiration to all of us. Although he felt inadequate to face the challenges of the task assigned him by God, he ultimately followed. The lesson is plain: God knows us better than we know ourselves, so we must simply trust Him and obey. The command of God will never lead us where the power of God cannot enable us!

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DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

The Deliverance

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Exodus 12:1 through 15:21

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." (Exodus 12:13)

BACKGROUND

In spite of the devastation that had come upon Egypt, Pharaoh continued to harden his heart against God, thus setting in motion the painful consequences which precipitated the Exodus of the Children of Israel from bondage. By the hand of God, in a single night the Children of Israel exchanged slavery for freedom, and living in the land of Goshen for a journey to the Land of Promise. As Egypt buried their dead, the Children of Israel left the country, a free people at last.

God instructed the Israelites to commemorate the night when the Lord had "passed over" their homes and, through the sacrifice of an innocent lamb, had spared their firstborn from death. This annual feast, called the Passover, foreshadowed the death of the Lamb of God, who would be sacrificed at Calvary for the sins of all people. The Passover would remind each succeeding generation of the nation's deliverance from Egypt, and would mark the beginning of the Jewish religious year.

God gave the Children of Israel a pillar of a cloud by day and one of fire by night so they would know that God was leading and protecting them on their journey to the Promised Land. He directed them to an encampment by the Red Sea—a seemingly defenseless position—and, at the miracle of the Red Sea parting, delivered Israel from the Egyptian military might. The people witnessed a miraculous event, crossing the Red Sea on dry ground, while their enemies perished. After the triumph of escape and victory, they rejoiced in a magnificent song of praise.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. What did God instruct the Children of Israel to do in order to prepare for the final plague and for the observance that would become the first Passover? Exodus 12:3-13

Each household was to take an unblemished lamb, slay it, and put the blood on the two side posts

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and the upper door post of their house. They were to roast the lamb and eat it entirely with bitter herbs; they were to do this fully dressed and with their shoes on their feet, ready for travel. The household was to stay indoors throughout the night.

Point your students' attention to Exodus 12:28, which records that the Israelites "did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron." The point can be made that in our day as well, we must completely follow God's plan in order to be saved. We must accept the provision Christ made at Calvary by repenting and then believing in order to receive His forgiveness and justification for our sins.

2. Parallel the lamb slain in the households of the Israelites to Christ, the Lamb of God, and His provision for our salvation.

As your students discuss the parallels, points made could include the following:

- *The lamb chosen for sacrifice was to be without blemish—Christ was perfect and sinless.*
- *The blood of the lamb was shed—Christ shed His precious Blood for us.*
- *The lamb was a substitute for the firstborn, who would otherwise be slain—Christ was a substitute for us; we should have received the death penalty for our sins.*
- *None of the lamb's bones were to be broken—none of Christ's bones were broken during His crucifixion.*
- *The blood had to be applied to the two side posts and the upper door post or it would not avail—Christ's blood must be applied to our hearts through repentance and believing that He died and rose again.*

Conclude your discussion of this question by pointing out that Jesus was crucified during the Passover, thus fulfilling this feast which had been established so many centuries earlier.

3. God had promised the Israelites deliverance. However, to obtain it they not only had to obey His instructions regarding slaying a lamb and preparing and eating the Passover meal, but they actually had to walk out of Egypt. What are some ways we must "walk away" from our former lives when we begin our new lives in Christ?

Your students will likely bring out that we will have to separate ourselves from unrighteous behaviors, as well as from close relationships with those who are not serving God. Worldly plans and ambitions will be surrendered to Christ. We may even be called to forego "lawful" activities that distract us from wholehearted focus on God. We will need to flee temptation and remove ourselves from situations that could compromise our Christian testimonies.

You could follow up this question by discussing the outcome of failing to obey, both for the Israelites, and for us.

4. Moses was instructed to sanctify (or consecrate) certain individuals unto God. Who were they? Why do you think this commandment was given? Exodus 13:1-2, 12-16

Moses was to sanctify the firstborn of both man and beast because God said, "It is mine." God had spared the lives of the firstborn of every house marked by blood, and thus He had a rightful claim to them. The firstborn of beasts were offered as a sacrifice to God, but since the firstborn sons could not be sacrificed, God told the Israelites to redeem (or buy back) their sons from Him by setting them apart.

Class discussion of the second question should point to three possible reasons for God's commandment:

- *To remind the people of how God had spared their sons.*
- *To show God's high regard for human life in contrast to the heathen gods to whom human lives were sacrificed.*
- *To look ahead to the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who would "buy back" all mankind by paying the penalty for sin.*

5. What circumstances did God consider when selecting Israel's route to the Promised Land? (Exodus 13:17-18) What can we learn from this?

God led them through the wilderness so they would not face potential warfare. The Children of Israel, having come out of slavery, were untrained for battle. They likely had little or no knowledge of the people or obstacles they would have encountered if they had taken what was seemingly the most direct route—a distance of about two hundred miles, which could have been covered in a few weeks.

We can learn from this that God does not always work in ways that are understandable to us. We must trust our omniscient God to lead us safely in the way He knows is best. This question could present an opportunity for those in your class to share times when God has worked in "mysterious" ways which ultimately proved to be for good in their lives.

6. What visible sign of God's presence accompanied the Children of Israel on their journey? What did this visual indicator do for them? Exodus 13:21-22

The visible sign was a pillar of fire by night to give them light and a pillar of cloud by day to lead them. In addition to light and guidance, the visual evidence of God's presence no doubt was a source of reassurance and inspiration to the people.

As an optional point of discussion you could ask your group: What evidences do we have today

that serve to reassure and inspire us? Discussion could point to the witness of the Spirit to our hearts, answers to prayer, miraculous healings, and God's divine intervention and providential care of our lives.

7. When seemingly trapped between the advancing armies of Egypt and the "uncrossable" Red Sea, Moses said to the people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you today" (Exodus 14:13). Why would it have been difficult for the Israelites to "stand still" under those circumstances? What lesson can we learn from this incident for when we face challenges in our own lives?

It would have been difficult for the people to stand still because their destruction appeared to be imminent. Since the Red Sea was in front of them, there was no way forward. Behind them, the armies of Egypt were advancing upon them. The situation seemed to be impossible, but God brought a miraculous deliverance.

As your students discuss what lessons we can learn from this incident, they will likely come up with a number of suggestions. For example, they may conclude that with God, nothing is impossible. He will make a way for us through all circumstances if we will just keep our trust in Him. He is never too late. Your group also may observe that the Red Sea was the way that God chose for the Israelites—it was no accident! We may not understand why God leads us in a certain direction, but we can trust that He has a plan, and that He has our best interest in mind.

8. After crossing the Red Sea, the Children of Israel expressed their gratitude to God in a song of deliverance. What attributes of God did they extol in this song (Exodus 15:2-3,11-12)? How can we express our gratitude to God for our spiritual deliverance?

The Israelites' song extolled the strength of the Lord, the salvation (delivering power) of the Lord, the holiness of God, the glory of God, and the omniscient power of God to work wonders.

As your students discuss ways we can express gratitude for spiritual deliverance, they may mention testifying, witnessing to others about His transforming power, worshipping and serving Him, and remaining faithful to God in spite of tests and trials.

CONCLUSION

The Israelites stood, free at last, on the far side of the Red Sea. Their miraculous deliverance not only signified freedom from the oppression of Egypt, but it was also a physical demonstration of the power of God. What an encouragement for Israel to continue to place their faith and trust in the Almighty God as they journeyed toward the Promised Land!

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

Migration and Revelation of the Law

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Exodus 15:22 through 24:11

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for the earth is mine." (Exodus 19:5)

BACKGROUND

The Children of Israel had just crossed the Red Sea. After experiencing the miracle of the bitter water made sweet, they left the oasis of Elim and were ready to travel through the Wilderness of Sin — a narrow, rocky area that ran parallel to the mountain range which included Mount Sinai. Once again the people were hungry and quick to complain. To meet their need for nourishment, God sent manna — small pearl-like wafers which tasted like honey. Later, in Rephidim, when the Israelites complained of thirst, God gave water from a rock.

The Amalekites, who were descendants of Esau, confronted Israel at this time. These people were nomads who lived in the wilderness around the Dead Sea and raided and killed for both sport and profit. Joshua led Israel to battle against them, while Aaron and Hur stood on a hill with Moses to hold up his hands. As Moses' hands remained lifted up, God gave the victory to Israel.

Following the battle, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came to visit. After observing Moses working long hours to mediate disputes among the people, Jethro suggested Moses delegate to qualified men the job of judging less important matters. This would free Moses to make decisions regarding critical issues and give others the responsibility to help shoulder the burden of overseeing the people. Moses was quick to take Jethro's suggestion.

After leaving Rephidim, the Children of Israel approached the desert and mountain of Sinai which is found in the south central Sinai Peninsula. It was there God met with Moses and gave His Law, a set of commands and guidelines including the Ten Commandments, which was designed to lead Israel to a life of practical holiness.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. Soon after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they came to Marah where the water was bitter (Exodus 15:22-26). What did Moses cast into the water to sweeten it? What lessons can we learn from this?

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Moses cast a tree into the water at the Lord's command and the waters were made sweet.

Your students may have various thoughts in response to the second question. One lesson is that obedience brings blessing. This concept is reinforced by verse 26. We need to obey even when we do not understand why God has given the instructions He has. Moses probably did not know why God told him to cast a tree into the waters, but his obedience brought the desired result.

In the original language the word mar *means "bitter." All of us have bitter experiences in life. This account reminds us that God is aware of our problems and will help us if we obey Him.*

Also, we can see that the Children of Israel murmured but Moses cried out to God. We will be benefited if we pray and do not complain.

2. Why did God allow the Children of Israel to suffer hunger and thirst in the wilderness? Exodus 15:24-25

God allowed the Israelites to suffer hunger and thirst to prove them. They should have known He would not abandon them. Amplify this question by discussing what types of trials God might allow us to go through for the same reason.

3. When the Israelites ran out of food and complained again, God promised to send them "bread from heaven" (Exodus 16:4). What were some of the characteristics of manna (Exodus 16:14-28)? What was God's purpose in providing it, beyond it being a source of nourishment?

The characteristics of manna include:

- *It came in the morning, was visible when the dew evaporated, and melted in the sun.*
- *It was white and like a coriander (cilantro) seed.*
- *It tasted like wafers made with honey.*
- *It could be cooked.*
- *The people were to gather a specified amount for each person.*
- *They were to gather only enough for one day.*
- *If they tried to keep it until the next day, it became wormy and stank.*
- *The day before the Sabbath, they were to gather twice as much, and it did not spoil.*
- *No manna appeared on the ground on the Sabbath day.*
- *Manna nourished the Children of Israel (with all the necessary vitamins and minerals) during the forty years they were in the wilderness.*

In response to the second question, your group should conclude that while God was showing His care and concern for His people, verse 4 brings out that He also wanted to "prove them, whether they will

walk in my law, or no." This is another illustration of the importance of obedience.

4. As Joshua led Israel in battle against Amalek, Aaron and Hur lifted up Moses' arms so that the Children of Israel would prevail (Exodus17:10-12). What valuable spiritual lesson does this teach us?

Aaron and Hur shared in the victory for Israel by lifting up Moses' arms: this teaches us the value of supporting each other in the service of the Lord. You may wish to point out that Scripture gives no indicator that Aaron and Hur were asked to help. Seemingly, they simply saw the need and stepped in to offer support. And God blessed by giving Israel the victory.

You could ask your class to suggest ways that we might help our spiritual leaders today. Class responses should include praying for them, being faithful in our responsibilities, not having a critical attitude, doing our best to maintain unity in the body of believers, etc.

5. What did Jethro recommend to Moses, and why was his suggestion valuable? Exodus 18:13-26

Jethro recommended that Moses adopt an organized system of leadership that would relieve Moses of the responsibility of resolving minor problems. This suggestion was valuable because such a system would allow Moses to focus his energy on handling the more difficult matters.

As a follow-up, ask your class what Moses' response indicates about his character. They should identify the fact that Moses was meek and humble enough to take Jethro's suggestion. There is no hint that he wanted to hold onto all the power. The lesson to us is that no matter what our role is in the service of the Lord, we should always be open to counsel and suggestions. A supporting Scripture would be Numbers 12:3.

6. In Exodus 19:5-6, how did God promise to regard the Israelites if they obeyed Him? What was His purpose in this?

God promised that if the Israelites obeyed, He would make them a special treasure unto Himself. His purpose was to make Israel a channel of blessing to influence the world. He wanted them to be an example to other nations of how to worship Him and represent the benefits of obeying Him. Many heathen nations were aware of how God had blessed Israel and feared because of Israel's God. However, Israel's influence and ability to do this was dependent upon their obedience.

God wants Christians to be His representatives to the world by showing people how to serve Him. (You could refer to 1 Peter 2:9 to establish this point.) However, obedience is necessary for us to be effective in our calling, just as obedience was vital

for the Children of Israel. If Israel had followed God in continued obedience, they would have been God's main evangelical tool in this world.

7. Exodus 20:3-6 instructed Israel to serve only the one true God in Heaven rather than idols. How does this apply to us today?

The Children of Israel had left Egypt, a culture worshiping many idols and false gods. It was important for them to realize that God is not made by the work of men's hands. We too need to worship God from the heart and put nothing in this life ahead of our commitment to Him. Discuss some of the things that could come between God and us.

8. The first four of the Ten Commandments have to do with love and service to God. What do the last six commandments pertain to? Exodus 20:12-17

The last six commandments deal with how we treat others. These laws were in effect before God had Moses deliver them to the Children of Israel, and they still stand today.

You may wish to bring out that Jesus condensed the Ten Commandments into two (Matthew 22:37-40). We are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind—a directive which parallels the first four commandments. We are also to love our neighbors as ourselves, which parallels the last six commandments and encompasses the rest of the Law given to Moses. Wrap up your class time by discussing practical ways we can implement Jesus' two commandments in our communities.

CONCLUSION

The Children of Israel began their sojourn in the wilderness. God worked many miracles for them along the way and promised that they would be a special treasure to Him as they honored Him. Let us remember that God will be with us on our journey to Heaven. He will consider us a special treasure as we honor and obey Him.

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

The Establishing of Israel's Worship

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Exodus 24:12 through 40:38

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"Thus was all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation finished: and the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did they." (Exodus 39:32)

BACKGROUND

This final portion of the Book of Exodus focuses on Israel's worship. Moses had been on the mountain with God, where he received the covenant which was to be established with the people (Exodus 19:3-7). Chapter 24 details the people's promise to obey the covenant and its ratification. Moses built an altar with twelve pillars (representing the twelve tribes) and there the people vowed obedience to God. After sealing the covenant with blood, the spiritual and political representatives of the people ascended the mount with Moses, where they saw a visible manifestation of God. Following that, Moses was commanded to come again to the mount to receive further instructions for God's special people and establish the rites and ceremonies that would define their worship.

In Chapters 25-31, God gave Moses specific directions regarding the construction of a tabernacle where His Spirit would dwell. While at first glance these instructions may appear to be merely ancient and complicated structural details, they are in fact a rich treasure trove of symbolism. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Tabernacle and its furnishings were a picture of God's great plan for the salvation of humanity—God's new and better way, described in the New Testament in the Book of Hebrews.

Chapters 32-34 record how Israel turned to idolatry while Moses was on the mountain. We are told of God's punishment for the people's rebellion and their subsequent restoration to God.

In chapters 35-40, we read how God's plans for a place of worship were carried out by those who built the Tabernacle. Much of this material is a repetition of the details given earlier to Moses in chapters 25-31, witnessing to the fact that God's instructions were carried out precisely. On the appointed day, almost a year after leaving Egypt, Moses set up the Tabernacle and all the furnishings just as God had directed. When he finished the work, "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34).

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SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. God told Moses to ask the Children of Israel to bring an offering in order to build the Tabernacle. What condition did He place on the offering and why? Exodus 25:1-8

The offering was to be from a willing heart. God wanted to dwell among the Israelites in a place built from the love of their hearts toward Him. And the people did respond willingly, for Exodus 35:21-29 tells us that "every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing . . . brought the LORD's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation."

It is interesting to note that although the amounts given by individual Israelites were no doubt different, all had an equal part and blessing if they gave willingly. Discuss with your class why our willingness is so important to God. The point should be made that God is far more concerned with the attitude of our hearts than with any external gifts we can offer Him. The theme of "willing sacrifice" runs throughout Scripture.

2. In Exodus 25:10-16, 21 we read the first instructions God gave Moses relating to the Ark of the Covenant, which was part of the furnishings of the Tabernacle. What item was the Ark to contain, and why was this article so important?

The Ark of the Covenant was to contain the "testimony" or Law that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai. Class discussion of the second part of the question should bring out that the Law was to be carefully preserved by the Israelites because it was God's instructions to His people. Today, we too should take care to honor and preserve God's Word, for it is our instruction book given to us by our Creator himself, and it teaches us how to have a right relationship with Him.

3. Exodus chapters 25-27 describe the Tabernacle and its furnishings. List at least five items for which God gave the details. Why do you think God gave such exacting and specific instructions?

Items which could be named are:

- *The Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:10)*
- *The Mercy Seat (Exodus 25:17)*
- *The table of shewbread (Exodus 25:23)*
- *The golden candlestick (Exodus 25:31)*
- *Bowls (Exodus 25:33)*
- *Lamps (Exodus 25:37)*
- *Curtains (Exodus 26:1)*
- *Taches of brass (Exodus 26:11)*
- *The tent covering (Exodus 26:14)*
- *The boards (Exodus 26:15)*
- *Sockets of silver (Exodus 26:19)*

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- *Bars of wood (Exodus 26:26)*
- *The veil (Exodus 26:31)*
- *Hangings for the door (Exodus 26:36)*
- *The brazen altar (Exodus 27:1)*
- *Court of the Tabernacle (Exodus 27:9)*

As your class discusses why God gave such exacting and detailed instructions, the point should be made that when God gave Moses the pattern for the Tabernacle, He was looking beyond the time of Israel and into the future. The Tabernacle and its furnishings were an "example and shadow of heavenly things," looking ahead to God's plan of redemption. God was clear that Moses was to make all things "according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Hebrews 8:5). The life of Christ showed this same preciseness in that it fulfilled every Scripture regarding God's redemption plan. We should approach God's plan of redemption with the same care and scrupulous attention as Moses was instructed to show.

It may be helpful to refer to the drawing of the Tabernacle included in Daybreak *in conjunction with the discussion of this question.*

4. Why did the Children of Israel have Aaron make them a golden calf? Exodus 32:1-8

The Children of Israel became impatient as they waited for Moses to come down from Mount Sinai, so they sinned by having Aaron fashion them a "new" god to lead them.

As a follow-up, ask your class to list ways that impatience can be disastrous in our walk with the Lord. Class discussion should bring out that being impatient could cause us to move ahead of God, to become discouraged, or to choose our own path rather than letting Him guide. We must rest in the assurance that God's timing is always perfect, and never become impatient with God's providence. You may wish to look at Hebrews 10:36 and James 5:10-11 with your class to amplify this point.

5. What were the qualifications of Bezaleel and Aholiab, the men whom God chose to supervise the construction of the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:30-35; 36:1-2, 4, 8)? How do their qualifications parallel God's requirements for workers today?

Bezaleel and Aholiab were men with natural capabilities and skills, along with an ability to teach others. More importantly, they were men filled with the Spirit of God who possessed wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. Class discussion should bring out that while our differing responsibilities in the work of the Lord today may require a variety of skills and talents, all workers today need the same spiritual qualifications.

God equips each of us specifically for the task He has intended for us. It might be interesting to give

your class an acronym that spells out how God shapes us for ministry:

S—Spiritual qualifications

H—Heart involvement

A—Abilities

P—Personality

E—Experiences

Your class could offer examples from their own knowledge or experience of times when God imparted one of the items in the acronym to enable them to accomplish a specific task.

6. Chapter 36 gives details regarding the construction of the Tabernacle. What might be the significance of the following facts?

There was only one sanctuary, not many.

The Tabernacle was located at the center of Israel's encampment.

The Tabernacle and its furnishing were portable.

There may be more than one answer. However, you could direct your students to these thoughts:

- *There is only one approach to God, and that is through His Son, Jesus. This also stressed the importance of spiritual unity.*
- *This was a picture of the fact that the nation's life must revolve around God, and that He was dwelling in its midst for worship and fellowship.*
- *The Children of Israel were traveling toward their goal through a land that was not their permanent dwelling place.*

7. Aaron and his sons were chosen to minister inside the Tabernacle (see Exodus 28:1-3). The first 31 verses of chapter 39 describe the preparation of the holy garments to be worn by Aaron. Why do you think God required special clothing for Aaron?

Class discussion may bring out several thoughts. Obviously, the garments were designed to give Aaron dignity and grandeur, for the appearance of the high priest was to convey the beauty and authority that belonged to God himself. Each piece also had a functional role. However, perhaps the most important reason was the symbolism involved. The Tabernacle was a holy place because God's presence was there. It necessitated the ministers to be separated for the work and consecrated to it by ceremony (Exodus 29). The clothing was specially made to distinguish Aaron and his sons.

8. The glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle when it was completed (Exodus 40:33-34). What can we expect to happen if we do everything God asks of us?

We can expect to be filled with God's Holy Spirit, and enjoy His presence with us and in us as we go through life. You may wish to refer your class to Luke 24:49 for additional Scriptural support.

CONCLUSION

God delineated minute details regarding the place and methods of worship for the Children of Israel, showing us the care we must take in our worship of Him if we desire His blessing upon our lives.

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

Overview and the Assault on Job

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Job 1:1 through 37:24

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)

BACKGROUND

The suffering of faithful Job took place in the land of Uz, believed to have been a large valley located along the border of Palestine and Arabia, about fifty miles east of Edom. Job lived in an era when wealth was measured primarily in terms of property, animals, and servants, and Job had all three in abundance. He knew, however, that his wealth came from God. We learn from Scripture that he was faithful, highly respected as a judge and benefactor, and widely regarded as wise and generous.

The beginning of the Book of Job (chapters 1-3) and the end (Job 42:7-17) relate the circumstances of Job's life. The main body of the book is a dialogue between Job, his three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar), a younger bystander (Elihu), and God. Job's "comforters" (Job 2:11) were convinced his suffering was caused by hidden sin. Job insisted he was innocent, and challenged the supposition that sin and suffering are linked in a cause-and-effect relationship.

It is vital to compare the statements made in the Book of Job with the full message of Scripture. In Job 42:7, God states that Job's friends had not spoken "right" about Him. Thus, it cannot be assumed that every statement they made is correct. Job himself was in a dark and confusing place in life, so even his statements do not give an accurate picture of God or reflect Job's enduring sentiments. While he expressed feelings of being overwhelmed and isolated from God at times, his faith was still anchored in God.

The Book of Job does not offer solutions to all of life's troubles, but it depicts patience in the midst of trials and shows us that a godly person can love God because of who He is, even in the absence of good health and material benefits. This lesson explores God's refining process in believers, which is necessary to our spiritual growth.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. From the outset of the Book of Job, we are made aware of God's regard for Job's integrity. In the opening discussion between God and Satan, God identified Job as "a perfect and an upright man, one

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that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (Job 1:8). Satan did not dispute that characterization, but asked God, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" (verse 9). What was he implying by this question?

Satan's implication was that Job's devotion to God was based upon selfish and self-serving motives—that he served God only in order to obtain material blessings from Him. In essence, Satan was stating that loyalty and obedience to God can be bought. Scripture examples that negate this supposition abound. Ask your class to name some Biblical figures whose lives prove this assumption false. Possibilities include Elijah, David, Daniel, Jeremiah, Paul, and many others.

You may wish to bring out to your class that this dialogue between God and Satan shows that man has a free will. Satan's statement, "Put forth thine hand . . . and he will curse thee to thy face" (verse 11), clearly shows that Satan realized Job had a choice in the matter.

2. Satan was allowed by God to afflict Job (1:6-12; 2:1-6). What was Satan's objective? What can we learn through this about Satan as the adversary of our souls?

Satan's objective was to get Job to curse God to His face, and in his attempt to achieve that objective, he was allowed to destroy all Job had and then to afflict his body.

In answer to the second question, we can learn that Satan will use any means within his power to force us into discouragement, doubt, and death. You may wish to bring out that Satan is characterized as a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8) and an accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). Though we must guard against the attempts of Satan, remind your class that Satan can never go beyond the boundaries God establishes. We can be assured no trial will come our way that God does not allow, and He will always make a way of escape or give us grace to endure.

3. Three of Job's friends came to "comfort" him, but instead, they blatantly accused him and cited hidden sin as the reason for his suffering. Eliphaz backed his accusations by a dream (Job 4:1 through 5:27), Bildad by old proverbs (Job 8), and Zophar by experience and reason (Job 11). What was the basis of their wrong conclusion regarding the cause of Job's suffering?

Class discussion should lead to the conclusion that they were wrong in their understanding of God himself, and of how He works. They seemingly believed God unfailingly blesses the righteous with a sheltered and comfortable existence, and punishes the wicked with misery and destruction. In the face of the physical suffering Job was experiencing, that led to their conclusion that Job must have sinned.

You may wish to expand your class discussion by pointing out that the "prosperity Gospel" of our day is based upon the same concept: if a person lives right, he is somehow guaranteed a prosperous and trouble-free existence. However, that viewpoint is not supported by Scripture. This is a good opportunity to bring out the importance of day-by-day obedience, for then we can have confidence before God, whether or not we prosper temporally.

4. Scripture gives us insight into the thoughts of Job's heart during his time of trial and accusations by his friends. Review the following passages and briefly summarize the "nuggets" of Scriptural truth that Job proclaimed even though he was in the midst of terrible suffering. Job 1:21; 13:15-18; 14:14-15; 19:25-27; 23:8-12.

- *Job 1:21—Everything we have is from God, and it is His prerogative to take it away.*
- *Job 13:15-18—No matter how extreme our circumstances, we can maintain our trust in God.*
- *Job 14:14-15—Some day our physical bodies will be resurrected.*
- *Job 19:25-27—We have a personal and living Savior, and because of Him, there is a glorious future ahead.*
- *Job 23:8-12—Testing will refine us, and we will emerge triumphant when the trial is over.*

After your class summarizes these verses, you may wish to point out that in spite of his terrible suffering, the fact that Job was anchored in his trust of God was revealed in the trial. It is often made plain in *the trial where one has been with God* before *the trial. In the midst of his questions and discouragement, the truth in Job's heart was irrepressible.*

5. In Job 28:1-28, Job speaks on the topic of wisdom, leading up to the key question of the chapter, which is found in verse 12. In essence, Job was asking, "What is wisdom?" What are some of the points he makes about wisdom, and what was his eventual answer to the question?

Class discussion should bring out the following thoughts: Man has not found wisdom in his search for wealth (Job 28:1-12); man cannot buy wisdom with his wealth (Job 28:13-21); and God alone knows the place of wisdom (Job 28:22-27). The answer to the question in verse 12 is found in verse 28: to fear God and depart from evil is wisdom.

This may be a good time to discuss the difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge can result from the acquisition of information, but wisdom (or understanding) is learning how to apply knowledge, and is based on a correct view of God and His principles for living.

6. Affliction may impact us physically, emotionally, mentally, and even spiritually. How did Job describe the effect on him in each of these passages? (Job 7:4; 10:15; 13:24; 16:12-14, 20; 23:8-9). What does this indicate about our possible spiritual and emotional condition during trials?

Job experienced sleeplessness (Job 7:4), confusion (Job 10:15), and a sense of rejection (Job 13:24). He felt broken (Job 16:12-14), lonely and sad (Job 16:20), and abandoned (Job 23:8-9). Job's response to his circumstances gives us Biblical evidence that individuals with faith in God still experience a wide range of emotions and even physical symptoms as a result of extreme trial. Bring out that the natural reaction to grief—which Job clearly was experiencing—includes the emotions of shock, bewilderment or confusion, questioning, guilt, and depression. These feelings, however, do not necessarily indicate a spiritual problem. And whatever emotions and feelings may occur in such times, God is well able to help us overcome by His abundant grace (2 Corinthians 12:9), just as He helped Job.

7. While enduring affliction is not easy, it actually can bring a positive outcome in our spiritual lives. What are some potential benefits of going through a time of suffering?

Ask your class to describe some of the positive results of trying times based on their own personal experiences or knowledge. Thoughts brought up may include such benefits as: a heightened sense of gratitude for God's blessings, a closer walk with God, increased faith, and a heartfelt empathy with others who suffer. Romans 8:28 is a good Scripture to support this point.

CONCLUSION

We know we can trust God, but can He trust us to endure even in times of trial?

DISCOVERY

Teacher's Guide

The Power of God and the Meekness of Job

SOURCE FOR QUESTIONS

Job 38:1 through 42:17

KEY VERSE FOR MEMORIZATION

"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee." (Job 42:5)

BACKGROUND

In the lengthy dialogue between Job and his friends, recorded in chapters 4 through 37, Job had frequently expressed his longing to have God respond to his questions. In these chapters, Job's wish was granted and God's silence was broken, though not in the manner Job had expected.

By refraining from cursing God at the loss of his loved ones, health, and material advantages, Job had disproved Satan's contention that he would not serve God without reward. By persisting in his assertion that sin and suffering are not linked in a cause-and-effect sequence, he had silenced his friends' accusations. However, in defending his own integrity, he had questioned the integrity of God and characterized Him as being unjust. He felt God had not been consistent in His moral jurisdiction of the world, and that God had an unjustifiable enmity against him.

Job seemed to presume that his own finite mind could comprehend and even challenge the infinite mind of God. It was this presumption that God addressed in His approach to Job, chiding him for his empty words about a subject far beyond his knowledge. With poetic beauty, God presented Job with a series of hard questions related to His work as the Creator of the universe.

Job's repentance and submission concluded the dialogue between God and Job, and the final verses of the narrative (Job 42:7-17) record the restoration of Job—an inspiring conclusion to this account of true worship and integrity in the face of extreme adversity.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

1. In chapters 38 and 39, God referred to the grandeur of creation, and by implication pointed to the power and wisdom of the One who could create such a universe. In one or two sentences, summarize the essence of the questions that God asked Job in chapter 38. Why do you think God said what He did and why in this tone?

Class summary should bring out that God's series of questions were pointed toward helping Job understand where he stood in relation to God. In

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effect, God was saying, "Who do you think you are, challenging God himself?"

In response to the second question, lead your group to conclude that God was trying to help Job understand that if he could not explain the conditions of nature, how could he question the God who controls these conditions? If nature was beyond his grasp, God's purposes could well be hidden also. The human mind cannot comprehend or understand the reason for suffering. Job needed to grasp that the real question was not why *he suffered, but* Whom *he trusted.*

2. God spoke of very broad topics such as creating the earth (Job 38:4-7), but also of details of creation such as clouds and rain (Job 38:37-38). What does this tell us about God, and how does this help the Christian have hope?

Class response should center on the thought that God is not only powerful and awesome, but He is also concerned and aware of the tiniest details of our lives. Though He commands the universe, nothing about our personal lives is too insignificant for Him to care about. You may wish to reference Psalm 139 to amplify this point.

3. Throughout his trial, Job often complained about God's seemingly unjust treatment of him. In Job 40:2, God asked him, "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?" How do we bring our cares to God without lapsing into complaining about our circumstances?

Help your class evaluate the difference between bringing our needs and petitions to God, and simply complaining and expressing discontent regarding our circumstances. Some points to consider: With what "tone" do we bring our needs to God? Do we accompany our requests with praise and thanksgiving? Are we willing to accept that God may not always explain "why"? Do we truly believe He has our best interests at heart? Your class should be led to conclude that no matter what comes our way, we can be assured God is working all things together for our good.

4. Job had been so absorbed in his terrible trial that he overlooked the revelation of God which is apparent in every part of the universe. God's eloquent speech and series of questions in chapters 38 and 39 hit their mark. According to Job 40:3-5, how did Job respond to God's question in the preceding verses? What does his response tell us about Job's spirituality?

Job was awestruck by God's pronouncements, and clearly recognized the presumptuousness revealed by his questioning of God. He put his hand over his mouth, vowing not to contend with God any further.

Your class should conclude that Job's response showed humility, respect to God, and submission.

Discuss why these qualities, and any others your class may bring out, are important virtues in the Christian life.

5. While Job had a new understanding of his insignificance compared to the majesty of God, God was not yet finished. In Job 40:6 through 41:34, He again spoke out of the whirlwind, challenging Job to demonstrate his power if he thought he was equal to the Omnipotent Creator. God had spoken glowingly of Job in Job 1:8 and 2:3, so what did Job mean when he responded by saying he would "repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6)?

Job saw he should not have questioned God, and openly and honestly faced God and admitted he had been foolish. "Repent" in this case means a complete turnaround from the former perception. Job was not asking forgiveness for sins, but for questioning God's sovereignty and justice. He recognized that he had spoken without understanding. Clearly his thinking had been transformed by his personal encounter with God.

6. At the conclusion of the dialogue between God and Job, God still had not answered all of Job's questions. Should a Christian always have to know the reasons God does what He does? Why or why not?

It is natural to desire an answer, but we will not always receive one. The point should be made that although we may not understand an event or circumstance, if we are to gain spiritually rather than become embittered and confused over the lack of an explanation, we must choose to believe that the divine hand of God has permitted what has come our way. Acceptance can lead to spiritual growth instead of despair, blessing instead of bitterness.

7. As we conclude our study of Job, what key lessons stand out to you from this book?

This question should provide an opportunity for a good wrap-up to the lesson. Your students will likely offer several thoughts. These may include:

- *Satan may be allowed to try our faith, but He cannot proceed beyond the limits God sets.*
- *Serving God does not guarantee a life without trials.*
- *Prosperity is not a sign of God's favor.*
- *It is vital to trust God even when circumstances might tempt us to doubt.*
- *Suffering is not always because of sin. We should be careful not to judge others who are suffering.*
- *We love God because of who He is, whether He allows blessings or trials to come to us.*
- *We must accept that we will not always understand God and His ways.*

- *We may experience physical, emotional, and mental symptoms as a result of extreme trials, but these do not necessarily indicate a spiritual problem.*
- *God's assurance may come in a variety of ways, and it is always invaluable to our faith.*

CONCLUSION

Job despaired about life when his troubles seemed the worst and God was silent. However, he refused to curse God and became an encouraging example of one who held onto God without knowing the specific end of his trial. Can we also trust God with our unanswered questions?

Key Places in Genesis

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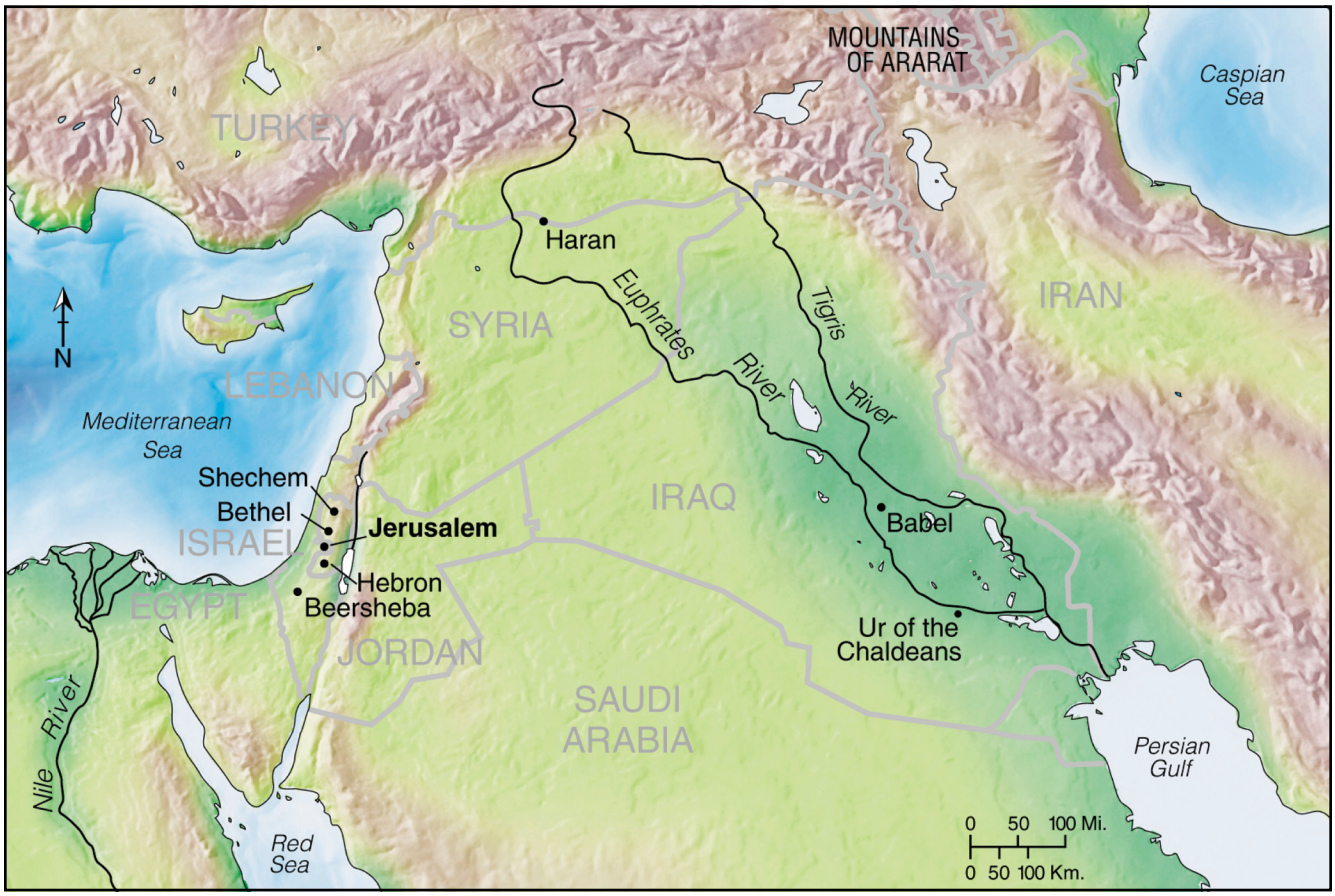
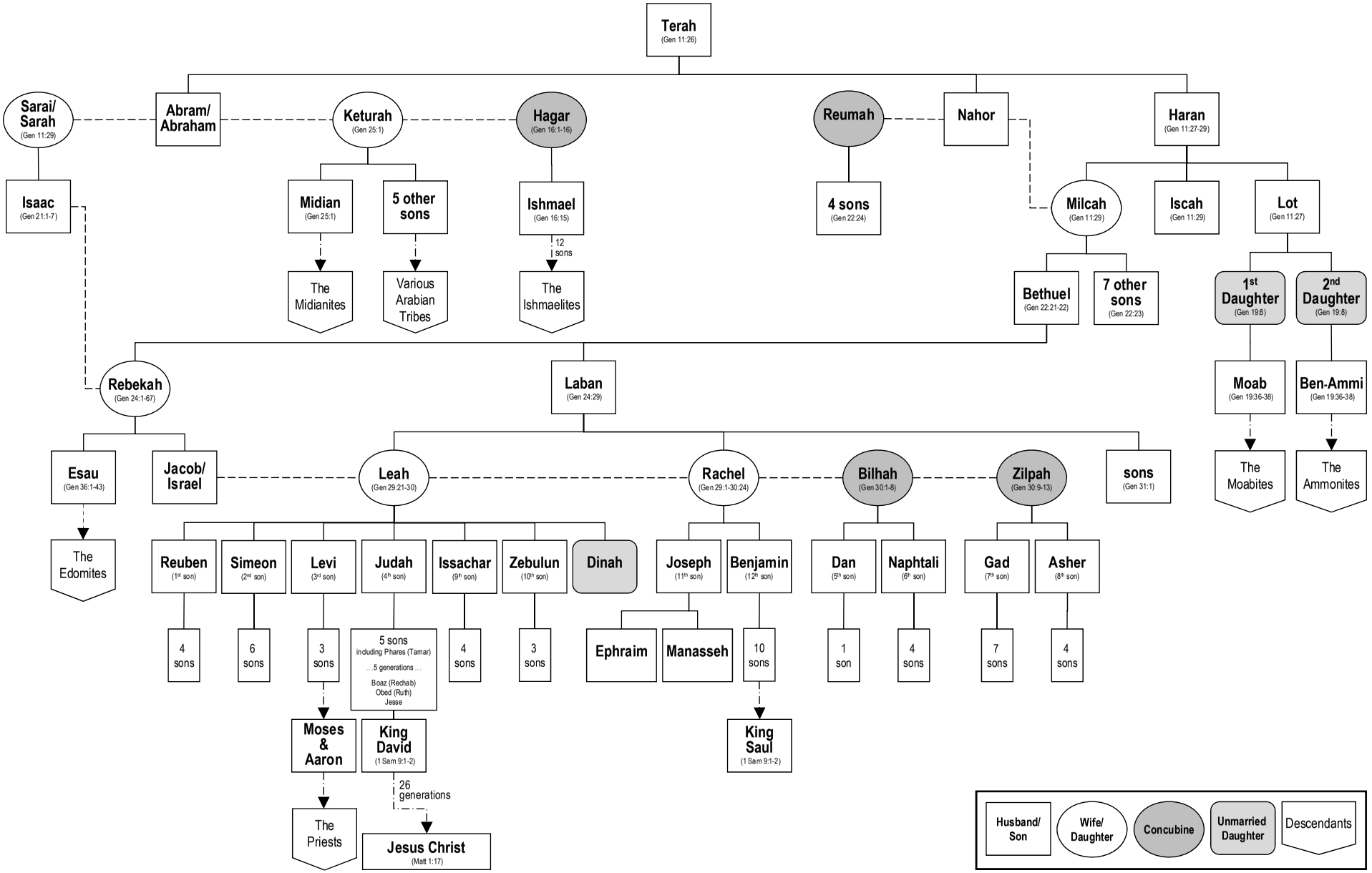


God created the universe and the earth. Then He made man and woman, giving them a home in a beautiful garden. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were banished from the garden (3:23).

1. **Mountains of Ararat** • Adam and Eve's sin brought sin into the human race. Years later, sin had run rampant and God decided to destroy the earth with a great flood. But Noah, his family, and two of each animal were safe in the boat. When the floods receded, the boat rested on the mountains of Ararat (8:4).
2. **Babel** • People never learn. Again sin abounded, and the pride of the people led them to build a huge tower as a monument to their own greatness—obviously they had no thought of God. As punishment, God scattered the people by giving them different languages (11:8-9).
3. **Ur of the Chaldeans** • Abram, a descendant of Shem and father of the Hebrew nation, was born in this region (11:27-28).
4. **Haran** • Terah, Abram, Lot, and Sarai left Ur and, following the fertile crescent of the Euphrates River, headed toward the land of Canaan. Along the way, they settled in the city of Haran for a while (11:31).
5. **Shechem** • God urged Abram to leave Haran and go to a place where he would become the father of a great nation (12:1-2). So Abram, Lot, and Sarai traveled to the land of Canaan and settled near a city called Shechem (12:6).
6. **Hebron** • Abraham moved on to Hebron where he put down his deepest roots (13:18). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all lived and were buried here.
7. **Beersheba** • The well at Beersheba was a source of conflict between Abraham and King Abimelech and later became a sign of the oath that they swore there (21:31). Years later, as Isaac was moving from place to place, God appeared to him here and passed on to Isaac the covenant He had made with his father, Abraham (26:23-25).
8. **Bethel** • After deceiving his brother, Jacob left Beersheba and fled to Haran. Along the way, God revealed himself to Jacob in a dream and passed on the covenant He had made with Abraham and Isaac (28:10-22). Jacob lived in Haran, worked for Laban, and married Leah and Rachel (29:15-30). After a tense meeting with his brother, Esau, Jacob returned to Bethel (35:1).
9. **Egypt** • Jacob had twelve sons, including Joseph, Jacob's favorite. Joseph's ten older brothers grew jealous, until one day the brothers sold him to Ishmaelite traders going to Egypt. Eventually, Joseph rose from Egyptian slave to Pharaoh's "right-hand man," saving Egypt from famine. His entire family moved from Canaan to Egypt and settled there (46:3-7).

Abraham's Lineage



Key Places in Exodus

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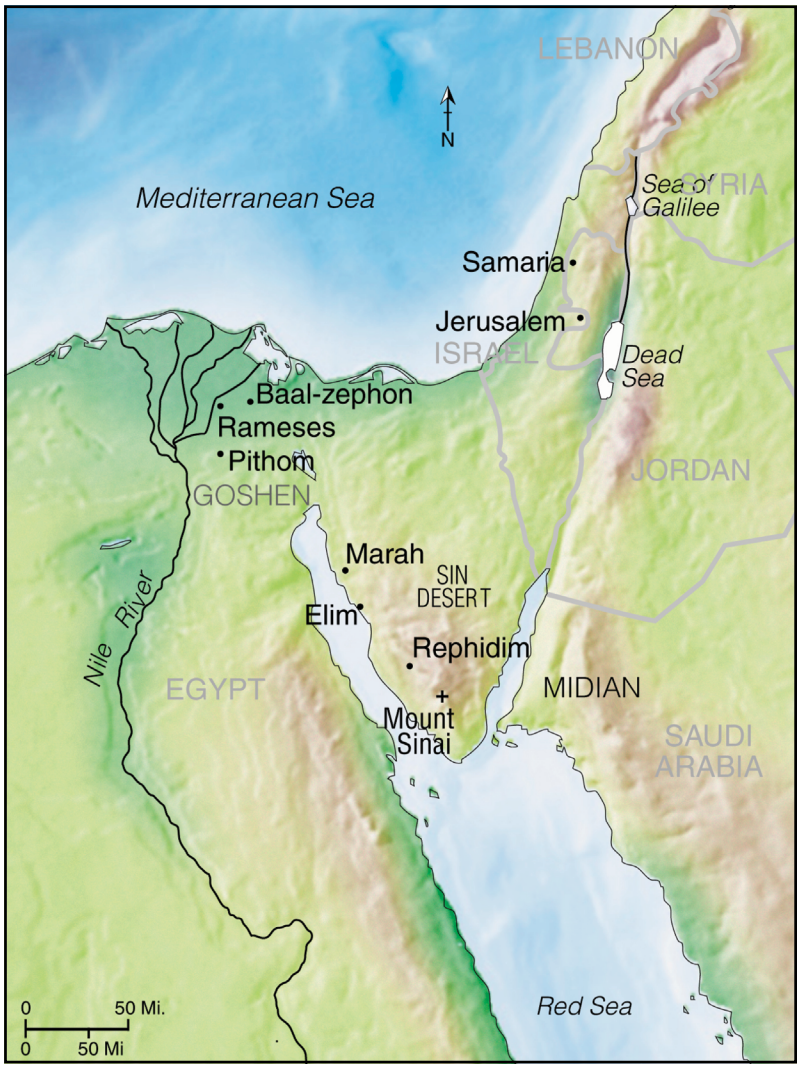


1. **Goshen** • This area was given to Jacob and his family when they moved to Egypt (Genesls 47:5-6). It became the Hebrews' homeland for 400 years and remained separate from the main Egyptian centers, for Egyptian culture looked down upon shepherds and nomads. As the years passed, Jacob's family grew into a large nation (Exodus 1:7).

2. **Pithom & Rameses** • During the Israelites' stay in the land of Egypt, a pharaoh came to the throne who had no respect for these descendants of Joseph and feared their large numbers. He forced them into slavery in order to oppress and subdue them. Out of their slave labor, the supply cities of Pithom and Rameses were built (1:11).

3. **Midian** • Moses, an Egyptian prince who was born a Hebrew, killed an Egyptian and fled for his life to Midian. Here he became a shepherd and married a woman named Zipporah. It was while he was here that God commissioned him for the job of leading the Hebrew people out of Egypt (2:15—4:31).

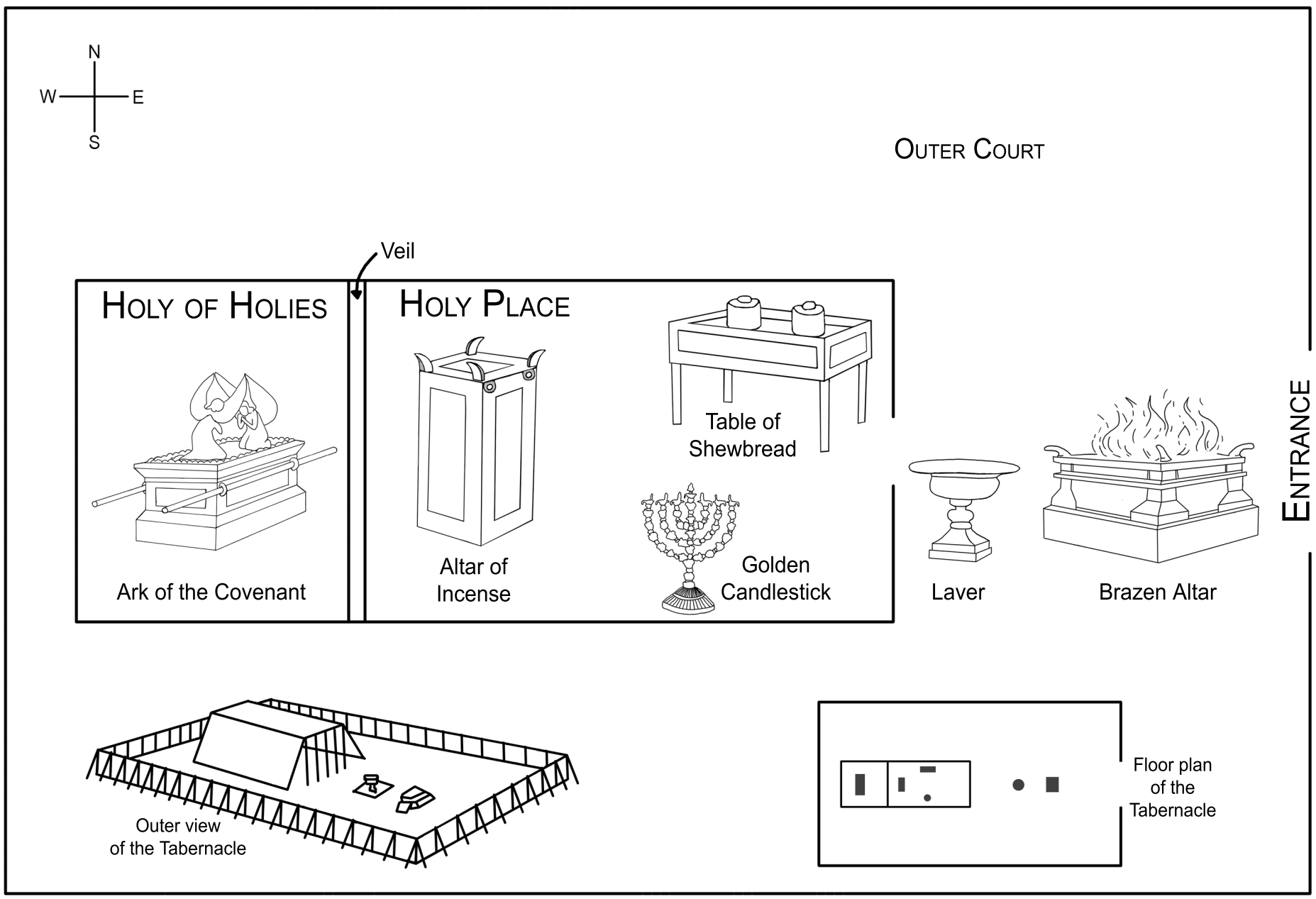
4. **Baal-zephon** • Slavery was not to last because God planned to deliver His people. After choosing Moses and Aaron to be His spokesmen to Pharaoh, God worked a series of dramatic miracles in the land of Egypt to convince Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go (5:1—12:33). When finally freed, the entire nation set out with the riches of Egypt (12:34-36). One of their first stops was at Baal-zephon (14:2), where Pharaoh, who had changed his mind, chased the Hebrews and trapped them against the sea. But God parted the waters and Moses led the people through the sea on dry land. When Pharaoh's army tried to pursue, the waters collapsed around them, and they were drowned (14:5-31).

5. **Marah** • Moses now led the people southward. The long trek across the desert brought hot tempers and parched throats for this mass of people. At Marah, the water they found was bitter, but God sweetened it (15:22-25).

6. **Elim** • As they continued their journey, the Hebrews (now called Israelites) came to Elim, an oasis with 12 springs (15:27).

7. **Sin Desert** • Leaving Elim, the people headed into the Sin Desert. Here the people became hungry, so God provided them with manna that came from Heaven and covered the ground each morning (16:1, 13-15). The people ate this manna until they entered the Promised Land.

8. **Rephidim** • Moses led the people to Rephidim where they found no water. But God miraculously provided water from a rock (17:1, 5-6). Here the Israelites encountered their first test in battle: the Amalekites attacked and were defeated (17:9-13). Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, then arrived on the scene with some sound advice on delegating responsibilities (18:5, 13-23).

9. **Mount Sinai** • God had previously appeared to Moses on this mountain and commissioned him to lead Israel (3:1-10). Now Moses returned with the people God had asked him to lead. For almost a year the people camped at the foot of Mount Sinai. During this time God gave them His Ten Commandments as well as other laws for right living. He also provided the blueprint for building the Tabernacle (chapter 19-40). God was forging a holy nation, prepared to live for and serve Him alone.

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness