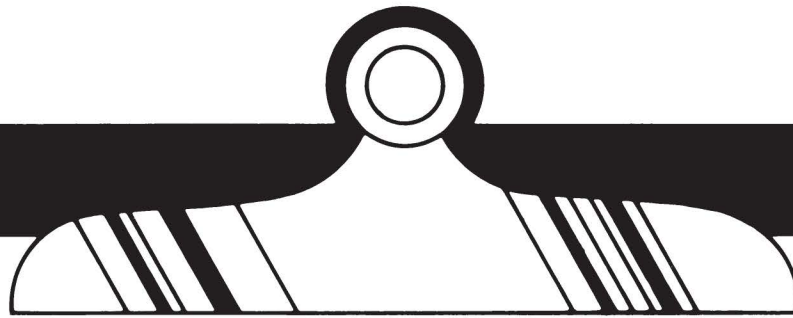




PERSONALITY PROFILE



Theme Thoughts

Webster's dictionary tells us that one meaning of the word *profile* is, "a short, vivid biography, briefly outlining the most outstanding characteristics of the subject." It is not difficult to go through the Bible and compile an extensive list of individuals who displayed some "outstanding characteristics" and from whom we can learn valuable lessons.

Would a lesson on the dangers of refusing to obey the commands of God be profitable? Where could we find a better example to illustrate that point than in the story of Jonah—a man who spent three days in the belly of the whale because he declined to follow the instruction of the Lord?

Would you like to know the secret of leading a triumphant life anointed by the Holy Spirit? Learn a lesson from the prophet Elisha—a man who performed a greater number of miracles than any other prophet except Moses.

Do you see among your associates a tendency toward becoming involved in the things of this world? Looking at what happened to Lot's wife, because she couldn't give up the entanglements of Sodom, could prove to be a very beneficial study.

In this quarter, we have chosen twelve Bible characters from whom we can learn some valuable lessons. They are not all "heroes of the faith." In fact, some are the exact opposites! But there is something that can be learned from each of them.

The final lesson in this quarter will be an overview of the preceding weeks, summing up the importance of learning from the lives of those who live on in the pages of Bible history.

Abraham

TEXT: Genesis 12:1-4; 15:1-6; 21:1-5

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Romans 4:3,17-21

KEY VERSE: And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. — Genesis 17:8

Abram's implicit faith in what God said caused him to act in total obedience to God. For this faithfulness he was counted righteous, in turn receiving the promise, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." His faith, obedience, and righteousness brought about many promises including the miraculous birth of his son, Isaac. Through the lineage of Isaac, God fulfilled His promise to Abram of the Messiah who would provide the blessing of salvation to those of all generations. When God made that covenant, He also changed Abram's name to Abraham, because he would be a "father of many nations."

1. In Genesis 12:1-3, what do you think was the center of Abram's motivation?

2. Undoubtedly it would have been easier for Abram to provide for his family by staying near his father's house and kindred. What might have been some of the influences which caused him to make the decision to obey God?

3. Abram's obedience had direct effect on his family, and far-reaching effects on his descendants, and on believers even to our day. How might others be affected by our obedience to God?

4. God commanded Abram to make a certain offering, and he obeyed this instruction (Genesis 15:9-11).

What is the significance of Abram's driving the fowls away? Parallel this to action we must take when we obey God by making a consecration He is requiring of us.

5. In Genesis 15:17, Abram received a witness—the smoking furnace and burning lamp which passed between the pieces of his sacrifice—that he would surely inherit the land of Canaan. What are some ways we can know when our offering or consecration has been accepted by God?

6. Included in this promise to Abram was the miraculous birth of a son. How did Abram respond, even though he knew the circumstances of his and Sarah's advanced ages? See Romans 4:20,21.

7. In Genesis 17:19, God gave Abraham a command regarding the son that would be born to him. What was that command and where in our text do we find that Abraham obeyed God in this also?

8. According to the key verse, what was the extent of God's promise to Abraham?

Lot's Wife

TEXT: Genesis 19:15-28

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: Luke 17:28-32

KEY VERSE: The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. — 1 John 2:17

Sometimes the things of this life, as innocent as they may seem, trap people in sin to the extent that they lose their souls and must face the judgment of God just as Lot's wife did. God is always faithful in giving timely warnings. There are many instances in the Bible where He warned men of impending judgment. God has also warned us in these days of the wrath that is to come upon the ungodly if they do not repent.

1. Why did the Lord say the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were to be destroyed? See Genesis 18:20.

2. What do the cities of our day have in common with Sodom and Gomorrah?

3. When Abraham was told of the intended destruction of Sodom, what steps did he take to ensure the safety of Lot and his family (Genesis 18:23-32)? How might his actions be an example to us?

4. What method did God use to get Lot and his family to leave the city?

5. Why do you feel Lot and his wife lingered before leaving Sodom?

6. Once Lot and his family were outside the city of Sodom, what were they told? How soon after they left the city did the fire and brimstone fall? See Luke 17:29.

7. What happened to Lot's wife? Make a parallel between this event and the results which occur when one whom God has delivered looks back to the world.

8. In Luke 17:32, we read that Jesus admonished the disciples to "Remember Lot's wife." What do you feel were the underlying reasons for this statement?

Isaac

TEXT: Genesis 22:6-14; 24:1-8,62-67; 26:1-5,17-33

KEY VERSE: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. — 1 Corinthians 1:27

Isaac was Abraham and Sarah's only son, born when Abraham was one hundred years of age and Sarah ninety. Before Abraham died, he gave all that he had to Isaac (Genesis 25:5). Isaac had been an obedient son, and he became a great man (Genesis 26:13), but never sought place or fame. He was a man of peace, one who loved God, and one whom God loved and blessed.

1. What prominent place did Isaac fill in God's plan of salvation for mankind, as shown in Genesis 21:12 and emphasized in the New Testament in Romans 9:7 and Hebrews 11:18?

2. What significant similarities do we find in the life of Isaac and the life of Jesus, as shown in the following accounts?

Abraham's offering of Isaac — Genesis 22

Abraham's servant's seeking a bride for Isaac — Genesis 24

3. When Rebekah and the servant returned, in what attitude did they find Isaac? See Genesis 24:63.

How can this attitude be beneficial to a Christian?

4. When Isaac heard the report from the servant concerning his meeting with Rebekah, what did he do?

What was his attitude toward Rebekah?

5. What statements can we make regarding Isaac's prayer life, and how can we profit by the example?

See Genesis 25:21; 26:24,25.

6. One Bible commentator brings out that Abraham's long residence in this part of the country had left its traces in many a valley by the wells he dug. After his death, the Philistines seemed to have hastened to obliterate the witnesses of their treaty with him. What spiritual lesson can we learn from the account of Isaac's digging again the wells which the Philistines had stopped? See Genesis 26:18.

7. What did Isaac do when there was strife between his herdsmen and those of the Philistines over the wells his servants had dug? What characteristic did this exemplify and why is this a commendable trait?

8. As we read the account of Isaac's life, what miracles or feats of valor and courage come to mind?

9. What reward did the Lord give to Isaac for his obedience and integrity? See Genesis 26:3,12,24.

Esau

TEXT: Genesis 25:27-34; Hebrews 12:14-17

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: Genesis 27:30-40

KEY VERSE: Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. — Jeremiah 5:25

In the previous lesson we learned that Isaac's attributes included submission, meditation, affection, peaceableness, and prayerfulness. It was noted that these are qualities we can each develop. An analysis of Esau's character teaches us that it is possible to live without these qualities, but the consequences are not what anyone would desire.

1. Genesis 25:30 indicates that Esau was given the name *Edom*, which means "red," in memory of his having sold his birthright for red pottage. Using this incident, and other clues in the text, outline a possible personality profile of Esau.

2. As the Children of Israel left Egypt and journeyed toward Canaan, what kind of response did they receive when seeking to pass through the territory of Edom, whose people, the Edomites, were the descendants of Esau? See Numbers 20:14-21. What significance do you see in this as it relates to Esau's failure?

3. Galatians 4:7 indicates that our spiritual birthright is our privilege to be born into the family of God, and to become joint heirs with Christ himself. Without that experience of salvation we are heirs of no good thing, but as sinners entitled only to eternal punishment. Compare our spiritual birthright with the physical birthright of Esau's time.

4. Esau sold his birthright because he apparently did not consider it of much value compared to his physical need at that moment. People today are faced with a choice based on how much they value their spiritual birthright. Name some things for which the spiritual birthright is exchanged.

5. What are some ways we can protect our spiritual birthright?

6. How do we know that Esau lived to regret selling his birthright? Did his regret do him any good? See Hebrews 12:17.

7. What do you think is the most important lesson to be learned from a character study of Esau?

John the Baptist

TEXT: Luke 3:1-18

KEY VERSE: In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. — Matthew 3:1,2

John the Baptist came as forerunner of Christ, preparing the way before Him by calling men to repent and turn their hearts to God. No other prophet or preacher held the unique position that John had at that time in history. His mission in life was to introduce Christ to the world.

1. John was not a part of the accepted religious hierarchy of the day. By whom and under what condition was John commissioned to preach the Gospel?

2. What might have attracted the people to come to see John and hear his message?

3. In early days it was customary for kings, when on journeys, to send some men before them to command the inhabitants to clear the way. In rough countries this was a necessary precaution, for there were no public roads. Verse 4 of our text refers to this in John's message to "Prepare ye the way of the Lord. . . ." How can Christians "prepare the way"?

4. What is the meaning of John's admonition, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance"? What is the difference between believing in Christ and obeying His Word?

5. John's message was a message of judgment for those who would not repent. How did he explain this judgment?

6. How did Isaiah describe the personage of John the Baptist, and what was the implication regarding John's importance? See Isaiah 40:3.

7. Cite an example in John's life, proving that he was not one to compromise his message. See Matthew 14:3-10.

8. In what words did John express his unworthiness?

9. What was Jesus' appraisal of John? See Matthew 11:9-11.

The Risen Christ

TEXT: Mark 16:1-14; John 20:19-29

KEY VERSE: Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. — John 20:29

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25). All human hope centers at Calvary and the resurrection of Christ. Calvary shows Christ's humanity, and the Resurrection shows His deity. Faith in the truth of Christ's resurrection brings access to a spiritual resurrection for the believer. Jesus Christ's life here shows us He was the Son of man; and His power over death shows us He is the Son of God.

1. What does the word *believe* mean, and how does it apply to the Christian?

2. Until they saw Jesus after the Resurrection, the disciples had a difficult time believing Jesus was alive. At the end of our text in John, Jesus said, ". . . blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." What did He mean?

3. What are some things in this life that we believe in and yet don't see or understand? Parallel this belief to our faith in Jesus Christ and the Resurrection.

4. How does the Resurrection show that Jesus was not a mere human? Why is the Resurrection so important to the Christian? See Revelation 1:18 and 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.

5. What is the Christian's guarantee that if he dies he will be resurrected? See Romans 8:11.

6. How many people were in the largest group recorded as seeing Jesus after His resurrection and why is this such a great fact to us today? See 1 Corinthians 15:6.

7. Suppose a friend asked you the question, "How do you know Christ really rose from the dead?" How would you answer him?

8. How does water baptism typify the Resurrection? See Romans 6:3-5.

Peter

TEXT: Matthew 26:30-35,69-75; Acts 2:14-24,41

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: John 21:15-17; 1 Peter 1:3-9

KEY VERSE: Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. — 1 Peter 3:15

Simon Peter had left his fishing nets by the Sea of Galilee to follow Jesus. He had witnessed the feeding of the five thousand, the raising of Jairus' daughter, and had walked to Jesus on the water. He had been taught love, forgiveness, resolve, allegiance, faith, and obedience, by the Messiah himself. In this lesson, we contrast Peter's failure to stand up for his Lord, with the triumph over Satan he experienced after Pentecost when three thousand souls were converted to Christ. Our objective is to find the reasons for his failure and subsequent successes, and apply those lessons to achieve greater effectiveness in our service to the Lord.

1. Reading the first portion of our text in Matthew, what can we see in Peter's expressed determination to follow Christ?

2. In spite of Peter's earlier stand, when the testing time came, he failed his Lord. On the three occasions when he was accused of being a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, how did Peter's behavior become increasingly vehement and reproachful?

3. Looking at Matthew 26:40,41, note one reason why Peter's resolve to stand by his Lord failed.

4. Is it possible to discover our weakness in time to avert failure?

5. Why was the cock's crowing of concern to Peter? How did Peter react and what does this signify?

6. Compare Matthew 26:75 with John 21:15-17. What connection does one have with the other?

7. In the Acts portion of our text, we see a completely different Peter from the man who denied his Lord. What enabled him to boldly preach Jesus Christ to this multitude of people when he had previously failed Christ so miserably? See Acts 1:8.

8. The Bible tells us of both the strengths and weaknesses of many of God's men through the ages. Can you cite a reason why God chose to include their weaknesses and failures? See 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 3:17,18.

9. If one is not completely satisfied with some aspect of his spiritual life, note here what actions can be taken in order to improve.

Paul

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 4:8-18; 11:24-28; 2 Timothy 4:6-8

KEY VERSE: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. — 2 Timothy 4:7,8

Paul the Apostle desired to win souls for the Kingdom of Christ and to attain the crown of righteousness. He was successful in both pursuits because he closely followed the Lord's instructions. We can also be a soul winner and receive a crown of righteousness if Paul's example becomes our pattern.

1. Paul suffered many trials and troubles, yet he termed them but "light afflictions." Name some of our light afflictions and explain how, in overcoming them, they help us to gain the crown of righteousness.

2. Why do you think God allows "afflictions" to come into the life of a Christian today?

3. In 2 Corinthians 4:8,9, a number of contrasts are listed. How can the second part of these contrasts be realized in our life on earth?

4. Verse 16 of our first text refers to the outward man's perishing. What will happen to the inward man?

Explain.

5. Paul's sufferings, as mentioned in our text, reveal the extent of his faithfulness. What does it mean to be faithful?

6. Paul likened his Christian life to a good fight. Explain what he meant.

7. A crown of righteousness has been laid up for Paul and for everyone else who loves Christ's appearing. How do people who are looking for Christ's appearing conduct themselves?

8. James 1:12 mentions another crown which can be won—the crown of life. What does one have to do in order to gain this reward? How did Paul fulfill this requirement in the things which he faced?

Jonah

TEXT: Jonah 1; 2; 3

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: Matthew 12:39-41

KEY VERSE: And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. — Jonah 3:1-3

Why would a prophet like Jonah, who had been called by the Lord, suddenly want to flee from his duty and from the presence of the Lord? We find that the man who runs from the Lord runs into trouble every time.

1. Jonah was a prophet of God, called to preach to the people of Nineveh. Consider the fact that Nineveh was a political enemy. How might this have affected Jonah's thinking?

2. How do we know that God was displeased with Jonah when he refused to go to Nineveh?

3. Inasmuch as Jonah was running from God, how do you suppose he could go to the lower part of the ship and sleep, apparently oblivious to the storm? What behavioral patterns of people in today's society reflect the same kind of attempt to escape from God's call?

4. Which verse in our text shows the turning point in Jonah's attitude? Explain.

5. What were Jonah's feelings in the belly of the fish regarding his own spiritual condition? How did he react on this occasion?

6. When Jonah prayed, the Lord heard his prayer. What was the result?

7. What was the message which Jonah delivered to Nineveh? What were the results?

8. The truth of this account is challenged by many. Find a New Testament Scripture which confirms the story of Jonah as an actual happening.

Thought Provoker: Have you ever come to a point in your life when you reacted to God's call in a manner similar to the way in which Jonah first reacted? What did you learn from this experience?

Elisha

TEXT: 2 Kings 2:1-15

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: 2 Kings 4:1-7,18-37; 6:1-7

KEY VERSE: And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. — 2 Kings 2:14

God commissioned Elijah to anoint Elisha to be the prophet in his place. Elisha was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen when Elijah found him. The symbol of Elijah's authority was the mantle he wore. This he cast upon Elisha as he passed by him, fulfilling God's command. When Elijah was taken by God into Heaven, without dying, Elisha received his mantle and was God's prophet in Israel for many years.

1. What desirable attributes do we find exhibited by Elisha when Elijah cast his mantle upon him, showing God had chosen the right man? See 1 Kings 19:19-21.

2. We hear nothing more of Elisha for several years. What was he doing? Had he gone back home? See 1 Kings 19:21 and 2 Kings 3:11.

3. Explain the difference between the way Elijah was followed by Elisha and by the sons of the prophets, considering they all knew he was to be taken from them that day.

4. What are some of the dangers involved in following God afar off in our day?

5. We find Elisha facing several discouragements, some from Elijah himself, in his quest for a double portion of the power that was manifested in Elijah's life. What were they, and how did he overcome them?

6. What similarities do we find in Elisha's receiving a double portion of Elijah's spirit, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit recorded in Acts 2:4?

7. After Elisha received a double portion of Elijah's spirit, what were some of the results in his life?

8. What virtues does Elisha exhibit in many of the miracles he performed, including the four he performed in 2 Kings, chapters 4 and 5?

9. Although both Elijah and Elisha were prophets who were filled with the Spirit of God and who performed miracles, there were distinct differences in their personalities and life styles. Name some of these.

10. In 2 Kings 13:20,21, what is revealed regarding the power of Elisha and God's honoring him?

Moses' Mother

TEXT: Exodus 1:22; 2:1-10; Hebrews 11:23

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURES: Exodus 6:20; Hebrews 11:24-26

KEY VERSE: For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. — 2 Timothy 1:12

Who can find a virtuous woman? Amram was married to one named Jochebed. She so thoroughly ingrained the teachings of her God into her son, Moses, that all the allurements of the heathen palace never eradicated those early impressions. He had the finest education Egypt afforded, but it did not turn his head or cause him to lose his simple childhood faith. Perhaps Jochebed's greatest virtue was her success in imparting to Moses the virtue of trusting God.

1. "Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river . . ." (Exodus 1:22). Through this commandment, the river became a symbol of grief and terror to every Israelitish mother. What virtue did Jochebed display in overcoming that dreadful symbol?

2. Why do you think Moses' parents were not afraid of the king's commandment? Under those circumstances, what would your reaction have been?

3. What assurance did Jochebed have that Moses would be safe when she placed him in the ark and laid it on the brink of the river among the flags? Consider the word "safe" in reference to the key verse.

4. How did the teachings of Moses' mother influence him? See Hebrews 11:23-26.

5. One of the great virtues that both Jochebed and Moses had was that of faith. Describe how this virtue was evidenced in their lives. How might the course of their history have been changed had they not exemplified this?

6. Give an example from your own knowledge or experience of one who committed something to the Lord and saw a need supplied.

7. Why do you think it is so difficult to reach a place of complete trust? See 2 Corinthians 3:5.

8. What specific needs do men have that should be committed to the Lord?

Solomon

TEXT: 1 Kings 3:5-14; 4:29-34

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 3:16-28

KEY VERSE: And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding. — Job 28:28

Shortly before he died, King David established his son Solomon as king over Israel, as God had ordained. In so doing, David charged his son to serve the Lord “with a perfect heart and with a willing mind” (1 Chronicles 28:9). Earlier, David had admonished Solomon to build a house for the Lord, desiring that the Lord would give him wisdom and understanding (1 Chronicles 22:12). David’s desire for his son was granted in that Solomon requested from God the necessary wisdom and understanding to judge and guide the Children of Israel. The Bible gives encouragement for all to seek God’s wisdom.

1. In 1 Kings 3:3 what was the attribute in Solomon that allowed God to trust him with the limitless offer, “Ask what I shall give thee”? Why is this attribute important in our lives also?

2. By carefully studying Solomon’s answer to God’s question, how many Christian traits can you find in verses 6,7,8, and 9?

3. List those things which God promised Solomon in answer to his request.

4. Read James 4:3, then write what you think might have been God’s answer to Solomon had he asked for riches and honor instead of wisdom and understanding.

5. What evidence do we have that Solomon’s request for wisdom was answered (1 Kings 3:16-28)? Was Solomon’s wisdom limited only to matters concerning righteous judgment?

6. What did the Queen of Sheba think of Solomon’s wisdom? See 1 Kings 10:1-9.

7. When we think of wisdom, we think of the ability to make right decisions and discern between good and evil, but godly wisdom extends beyond these characteristics. List some other characteristics given in James 3:17.

8. How is godly wisdom to be attained today? List two or more things that are required. See James 1:5,6,22-25.

Thought Provoker: How is godly wisdom related to Christian maturity? See Ephesians 3:17-19 and 4:13. Have you observed Christians who cannot be moved from their faith by the most adverse circumstances? Have you seen some stand when it seemed all was going against them? Have you heard soft answers given when harsh words have been spoken? Have you noted Christlike people who took no offense but rather prayed for those who had mistreated them? These people are mature Christians who have been given a good measure of “the wisdom that is from above.” Paul’s prayer for the church in Ephesus was that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith, and that they might be rooted and grounded in love, so as to comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height of the love of Christ, which exceeds all worldly knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fullness of God. So godly wisdom is manifested when we are filled with the love of Christ—and Christian maturity is really Christlikeness.

Quarter Review

TEXT: Hebrews 11:8-27

KEY VERSE: Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. — Psalm 37:37

During the past twelve weeks we have been studying a number of Biblical characters—some of whom were heroes of the faith and others who were not. But from each of them can be learned a valuable lesson. As we use this lesson to evaluate the characters studied, let us assess their strengths and weaknesses and apply to our own lives the lessons we have learned.

1. Abraham's life is an outstanding example of one who followed God in true faith and obedience. What are some traits in Abraham's life that can be applied to Christian lives today?

2. The Bible warns us against letting our lives become entangled with the affairs of this world. What is the danger in doing this? "Remember Lot's wife."

3. In Genesis 25:27-34 we see an example of one who defaulted from the grace of God through the forfeiture of his birthright for temporary secular gain. He exchanged spiritual well-being for momentary fleshly gratification. What are some of the ways we, as born-again believers, may protect our spiritual birthright?

4. What was John the Baptist's particular purpose for this life and how is this call similar to the Christian's call today? What can we do about it? See John 1:29-31.

5. The account of Peter's actions in Acts shows a far different person than the one who denied his Lord.

Trace the events that brought about this change.

6. Scripture indicates that those who are faithful in the service of the Lord and love His appearing will receive a crown of righteousness. Describe what being faithful means and how people who are looking for Christ's appearing should conduct themselves.

7. What assurance did Jochebed have that Moses would be safe when she placed him in the ark and laid it in the flags by the river's brink? Explain how and why her attitude and actions are a good example to the Christian today. A helpful Scripture could be 2 Timothy 1:12.

8. What quality in Solomon's life is most commendable? Why is it important for Christians to seek this blessing?

9. Each character in this quarter had decisions to make just as we do today. How do you know if the decisions you are making are right?