

THE NAMES OF GOD

by Christine Walton

**Grades 5-6
Year 2
Quarter 3**

The Names of God

Elohim, God, created the world
but came to His people as LORD
the covenant-keeping Redeemer, Yahweh,
Adonai, Lord, the One to obey;
El Elyon, Most High, makes enemies flee
El Roi, the God Who always sees me;
El Shaddai, Nurturer, stays by my side;
Jehovah Jireh for me does provide;
Jehovah Rapha, the God Who does heal
To El Olam th'eternal One let us all kneel
Jehovah m'Qadesh sanctifies me
Jehovah Shammah is present with thee
For victory 'gainst enemies we turn to both
Jehovah Nissi my Banner and LORD Sabaoth.

ELOHIM

Genesis 1

Lesson Aim

That your students will understand the importance of names and the meaning and significance of God's name, Elohim.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week, Exodus 3:1 - "Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God."

Lesson Background

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" (*Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, scene 2, lines 43-44). Thus moans Juliet, wishing that Romeo could change his name from Montague, a clan engaged in a bitter feud with her family, to something more acceptable. She insists that Romeo would be the same person no matter what he was called. Are names important? The Bible emphatically concludes, "yes!"

To name something is to define it and to have power and authority over it. God gave Adam the right and responsibility to name the animals over which he was to have dominion (Genesis 2:19-20). Similarly, this headship extended to the woman God gave Adam, whom he named *Eve*, mother of all the living (Genesis 3:20). Names are not just useful designations, but have meaning. Parents name the children who are subject to them (Genesis 16:15; 21:3; 29:31-35; 30). These names often indicate a hoped-for character trait in the child or say something about the family or circumstances of birth (Genesis 29:31-35; 30). Names are

sometimes changed by God or by people themselves to indicate a significant transformation in their lives (Jacob, *deceiver*, became Israel, *he strives with God* - Genesis 32:28; Abram, *exalted father*, was changed to Abraham, *father of many* - Genesis 17:5; Naomi, *pleasant*, called herself Mara, *bitter* - Ruth 1:20). The Lord has even promised someday to give a new name to “him who overcomes” (Revelation 2:17; see also Revelation 3:5,12).

Places are also given names to show their significance. Jacob called the location where he had struggled with God *Peniel (face of God)*, “because I saw the God face to face, and yet my life was spared” (Genesis 32:30). When the Lord provided a ram for a sacrifice instead of Isaac, Abraham called the place *the Lord will provide* (Genesis 22:14; see also Joshua 5:9; Judges 15:17,19). God put His name on a special place, marking it as uniquely His (Deuteronomy 14:24; 16:2,11).

Society in general understands the importance of a name in the marketing and promotion of a star or product. Fragrances are given sensual names and cars names that connote speed, power or reliability. In some cases, a name is chosen before a product is even formulated.

In developing nations, names have long held great impact. In some tribal cultures, children are given secret names that they tell no one lest that person gain power over them. In other communities, it is taboo to say the name of a dead person lest one open oneself to demonic attack.

God’s name is holy and not to be misused (Exodus 20:7; Matthew 6:9). Jesus died so that the name of His Father might be glorified (John 12:27-28). Salvation is found only in calling on the name of Jesus (John 1:12; Acts 4:12; 2:21). We should be baptized in His name (Acts 2:38). Our sins are forgiven on account of his name (I John 2:12), that name that is above every name and before which every knee should bow (Hebrews 1:4; Philippians 2:9-10). Jesus said God would be with two or three gathered in His name (Matthew 18:19-20) and grant requests made in His name (John 14:12-14; 16:22-24). Miracles are done in the name of God (John 10:25) and the Lord Jesus (Acts 3:6,16) and demons are subject to His name (Luke 10:17; 9:49-50). The name of God is powerful, but it is no magic talisman, as some exorcists found out to their dismay (Acts 19:13-17).

God names, defines, and has authority over all things, but no one can properly give a name to God. His names are self-revealed, for He is the self-existent one who created and gives definition to everything. The first name given in the Bible for God is *Elohim*. It is the general name for God, used over two thousand times in the Old Testament, and means the mighty, faithful one (*el - the strong one; alah - to swear or pledge oneself*). It is the term used for God, the Creator, in Genesis 1 and the name by which God was known to pagan nations. The name Elohim strongly implies a Trinitarian God, for it is a plural noun (in Hebrew, plural indicates three or more) used with singular verbs. Many Old Testament names affix *el* to a root to show a relationship to God, for example, Samuel (*heard of God*), Daniel (*God is my judge*), Israel (*he strives with God or a prince with God*), Bethel (*house of God*), and Elijah (*Jehovah is God*; this name combines two names for God, *Elohim* and *Jehovah*). Many compound names for God, such as *El Elyon*, *El Roi*, and *El Shaddai* are based upon Elohim, the strong, faithful one.

Genesis 1:1 opens God’s revelation of Himself with a declaration of who God is: “In the beginning, *Elohim* created the heavens and the earth.” We have become too blasé about the wonders of creation. Computers, medical advances, and supersonic jets are technological marvels, but they pale to insignificance when compared to the vastness of the universe or the intricacies of a single cell. We could not begin even to plan to fabricate a millionth of the things that *Elohim* created by the word of His power, never mind keeping them running smoothly in intricate relationship with each other. Paul, referring to Christ, writes in Colossians 1:16-17, “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before

all things and in him all things hold together.” We need to ponder and grow in wonder of what God has made so that we might stand in amazement and worship the mighty Creator, *Elohim*, the mighty, faithful God.

Lesson Procedure

What’s in a name?

Read the quotation from *Romeo and Juliet* (“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet”). Ask your class if they feel this is true. Explain to your students that names have meanings. Do any of them know the significance of their names? Why did their parents choose that particular appellation? Were they named for a relative or a person in the Scriptures? Bring in a Baby Name Book and have your students look up the meanings of their names. Talk about surnames, too, such as Johnson, Miller, Smith, or MacDonald (Mac = the son of), and nicknames. Also explain to them the meanings of several biblical names.

Tell your students that to name something is to define it and to have power and authority over it. Children do not name themselves, but are named by their parents. Perhaps they have heard the expression, “open up in the name of the law,” meaning that an officer has the authority to enter a building. In some tribal cultures, children are given secret names that they tell to no other person, for they believe that knowing their names will give others power over them.

Explain that God has names, too, which we will learn about this quarter. Ask your students how God got His names. He named Himself. No one can properly give names to God, for He is the self-existent one. God’s name is holy and we should honor Him. Read Exodus 20:7 and Matthew 6:9. Tell your students that the first name they will learn about is *Elohim*, which is the general name for God (refer to the Lesson Background for further information on *Elohim* or names in general).

Elohim and God’s Creation

Ask your students if they think they could find a brick somewhere. More than one? Could they find some boards? Panes of glass? Electrical wire? Paint? If they were each to bring those things together and put them in a pile, what would they have? Would it be a house? Why not? For a house to be built, plans must be made and executed in a precise manner. Even the raw materials for the house had to be made first before they could be used in construction. If even a house must have a master planner and builder, could creation have come about merely by chance? No, it was created by *Elohim*, the mighty, faithful One.

Bible Story

Read Genesis 1. You need not discuss this passage verse by verse, but rather should focus on the general concept of God the Creator. To underscore what an amazing God we worship, tell your students about some of the wonders of creation from the scientific facts given below and ones you or your students can add. Perhaps you would like to look at some salt and sugar crystals or a leaf under a microscope.

Some facts about God’s creation:

- The size of the Milky Way is estimated to be 100,000 light years (one light year equals 9,461,000 million kilometers or 5,879,000 million miles, so that the size of our galaxy may be represented by the number 9461 or 5879 followed by fourteen zeros).

- The orbit of the Mercury, the planet closest to the sun, ranges from 29,000,000 miles (46,000,000 km) to 43,000,000 miles (69,000,000 km). The sun is a mere 865,000 miles (1,392,000 km) in diameter.
- Stars vary in temperature from 3000° to 60,000° Kelvin.
- There are 850,000 different species of insects.
- Bacteria found on the roots of leguminous plants create nitrogen necessary to the plants' survival.
- The inner linings of a person's lungs could cover the floor of a fair-sized room.
- The human eye contains 107,000,000 cells. The body contains approximately 50 billion (50,000,000,000) white blood cells and many more red ones.

Songs

These songs may be used throughout the entire quarter of lessons (page numbers are for *Maranatha Praise Chorus Book*, third edition; distributed by Word). "Jesus, Name Above All Names" (47); "I Lift Your Name" (chorus, 54); "The Name of the Lord" (78); "How Excellent is Your Name" (80); "Blessed Be the Name of the Lord" (99); "Glorify Thy Name" (123); "Lord, I Lift Your Name on High" (199); Praise the Name of Jesus" (200); "How Majestic is Your Name" (217); "Great is Thy Name" (280); "O Lord, Our Lord" (297).

Song for today: "Only Elohim" (found on the Sparrow/Birdwing recording *Sir Oliver's Song*).

Activity

Have your students work on a Names of God project for the entire quarter. Have them make a banner, poster, and/or bookmarks with the names of God written on them. Your class may also wish to construct plaques with their own names and their names' meanings written on them. They may wood-burn the letters into small pieces of wood or leather, or paint them on tile or acetate stretched across an embroidery hoop. These plaques may be suitably decorated with ribbon, dried flowers, and the like. Your students might also write their names and meaning on a bookmark using calligraphy. Your students may also enjoy learning how to write the two basic names for God, Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) and Yahweh (יהוה), in Hebrew.

YAHWEH

Exodus 3; 6:1-8

Lesson Aim

That your students would know more of *Yahweh*, the Lord, the personal, covenant-keeping God.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week, Exodus 3:2-3 - “There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, ‘I will go over and see this strange sight - why the bush does not burn up.’”

Lesson Background

God is the Creator of the universe who has revealed Himself to be *Elohim*, the mighty, faithful God. Yet equally important is that He is a personal, loving God who has acted in history to redeem His people. God focuses on this aspect of Himself in the name *Yahweh*.

The Jews considered this name for God so holy they would not even pronounce it lest they break the third commandment. Hence, since the Hebrew language is written with only consonants, the exact pronunciation remains unknown. יהוה is transliterated into English as *YHWH*. Later forms of the Hebrew language inserted small dots, called vowel points, under and over the consonants to aid in reading. The name *Jehovah* results from taking the vowel points for God’s name *Adonai* and placing them with the Hebrew consonants *YHWH*. Most English Bibles distinguish between *Adonai* (Lord) and *Yahweh* by writing LORD in all capitals when the latter Hebrew word is being used.

God created the world and made a covenant with Abraham to bless him, give him a land, and give him more descendants than the stars in the sky (Genesis 15). This promise must have been difficult to believe as his family suffered under Egyptian taskmasters, but God had prepared a deliverer for them. Moses had to learn, however, that he could not accomplish God's purposes in his own strength. Then, when he was, humanly speaking, only an old shepherd, *Yahweh* called to him from a burning bush. God called Moses' name and told him to take off his shoes because he was standing (by virtue of God's presence) on holy ground. Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God. *Yahweh* identified Himself as the *Elohim* of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Lord said He had seen the misery of His people in Egypt and had come down to rescue them and bring them to "a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8). This would, in part, fulfill His promise to Abraham. The Lord was sending Moses to bring His people out of Egypt. Moses, in humility, wisdom, and/or in fear and unbelief responded, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11). God promised to be with Moses and gave him a sign that it was He who was sending him - when he had brought the people out of Egypt, they all would worship God on Mount Horeb.

Moses then questioned God as to how he should answer if the people asked the name of the God who had sent him (remember, the Egyptians had many gods). God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: I AM has sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14). By using this obscure form of the verb "to be" (upon which the name *Yahweh* is based), God declared Himself to be the self-existent One, the eternal I AM who always was, is, and will be. God decreed that *Yahweh* is His name forever, the name by which He is to be remembered from generation to generation (Exodus 3:15).

In Exodus 3:16-22, the Lord gave further instruction to Moses and gave specific promises as to how He would deliver His children from bondage. In Exodus 4, the Lord, despite Moses' arguments, empowered him to do miraculous signs. Moses returned to Egypt, but at first his efforts seemed to make things worse (Exodus 5). Discouraged, Moses berated God: "O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all" (Exodus 5:22-23). How like our own lack of trust in the Lord, and how merciful He is not to punish such insolence! Note that Moses does not call God *Yahweh*, the relational, covenant-keeping name by which God wished to be known forever, but the more general, *Adonai* (although God is glorified by all His self-revealed names, in this context it may be significant). God told Moses that he would see what He would do to Pharaoh; because of the mighty hand of God, Pharaoh would drive the Israelites from Egypt. God then reminded Moses that He is *Yahweh*, the God who keeps His promises, and that Moses was to present Him to the Israelites as this covenant-keeping God.

"God also said to Moses, 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty [*el Shaddai*], but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them'" (Exodus 6:2). This seems a strange thing to say, for the name *Yahweh* was not unheard of before this time. Abram called on the name of *Yahweh* (Genesis 12:8; 13:4); even as far back as the lifetime of Enosh, Seth's son, men began to call on the name of the LORD (Genesis 4:26). Walter Kaiser, in the Expositor's Bible Commentary series, explains that the grammar of the verse indicates that "it is the character and capacity of that name that is in view, not the base knowledge of the name as the label for his person . . . [the name] stood for his reputation, character, and accomplishments in doctrine and deeds . . . the God who would personally, dynamically and faithfully be present to fulfill the covenant he had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (EBC, 342). God was further revealing Himself to the Israelites and establishing a more personal relationship with them. Based upon who He is, God told Moses to tell the Israelites that he would "bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians . . . free you from being slaves to them . . . redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment . . . take you as my own people . . . be your God . . . bring you to the land . . . [and] give it to you as a possession (Exodus 6:6-8). All these verbs are in the perfect

tense, “for so certain was God of their accomplishment, they were viewed as having been completed” (Kaiser, EBC 342).

The Lord is indeed the loving, faithful God who keeps His promises. Not only did He deliver the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt, He gave Abraham offspring more numerous than the stars in the sky; God sent Abraham’s seed, Christ, to die for the redemption of many who would be, spiritually speaking, descendants of Abraham as well as children of God (Galatians 3:16,26,29). For this we are eternally grateful. May we grow in closer relationship to *Yahweh*, our loving and faithful Lord.

Lesson Procedure

Read your students the following story:

Chen Li sat staring out the window at the neat terraces climbing up the mountainside, oblivious to the clamor of children’s voices around her. She wasn’t, however, watching the sprouting green shoots of rice or the hunched backs working in the paddies. She was dreaming. “Hey, Chen Li, come and play,” said Chao Tsing, her best friend, running up to her and lightly touching her shoulder. “We will have to do our chores soon.”

“Chen Li never wants to play anymore,” Huang Ling called from across the room. “She just sits around and mopes, ever since she got that letter from the man who said he was going to adopt her. I don’t believe there is any such person. She might as well stop thinking about him and quit sulking all the time.”

“Come on, Chen Li,” Chao Tsing coaxed. Chen Li smiled softly at her and shook her head. “I’m not sulking,” she thought, “just pondering. I’m not trying to be unfriendly. I just want to be alone and think. Huang Li was wrong! Her new father did exist! And soon he would be coming to take her to a new home. She would miss her friends and teachers at the orphanage, but oh, how wonderful, to have a beautiful new home and a father to love her. From her jacket pocket, Chen Li took out the precious paper creased with many folds and smudged from much handling and even a few tears. A copy of her adoption agreement, it was in English, a long complicated document of which she could understand little. Yet this was proof that she had a father, for that is what it promised, and it was signed with his name at the bottom - David Elson. What was he like, this David Elson? He must be a kind person to come so many thousands of miles to take her into his family. What would it be like to live with him? It was so hard to wait. If only she knew a little more about him she would not mind so much. Surely he would come and get her!

Just then, one of the older girls came up to Chen Li. “Chen Li,” she said, “hurry! The director wants to talk to you!” The director of the orphanage! The director of the orphanage wanted to see her? Chen Li had only ever seen him a few times, and that at a distance as the children lined up in neat rows on special occasions for his inspection, for the director was a very busy and important man! Timidly, Chen Li knocked on his office door. The director’s assistant opened the door and she bowed politely to him and the director, who was seated at the desk talking on a telephone. Chen Li knew, of course, what it was, but she had never used one in her life.

“Ah, Chen Li,” said the director, “there is someone who would like to talk to you. I hear you are a very good English student, so I think you will be able to understand each other.”

Hesitantly, Chen Li put the telephone up to her ear. She heard a voice that sounded far away, but which was still intelligible. “Hello, hello, Chen Li?” it said.

“Yes,” she replied.

“Chen Li, it is so good to talk to you. I’m David Elson. I’m your new father. I hope you are looking forward to being together as much as I am. I’m coming for you soon. Like I said, my name is David Elson, but I would like you to call me ‘Dad.’” They had a wonderful, albeit short, conversation. When Chen Li left the director’s office, she felt as if she were floating on air. She had talked to her father. He had asked her to call him “Dad.” He was a wonderful person. Soon he would come to take her home. Until then she could

write him letters and he would write back, too. Now Chen Li could wait, in contentment and joy, for her loving father would keep his promises.

Questions

Does God ever seem far away to you like her father did to Chen Li? Why might this be so? Is there anything you can do about this?

Bible Story

“God, like Chen Li’s father, wants to have close bonds with His children. When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, they felt many times that God had forgotten them, but this was not so. God was faithful to the covenant He had made with Abraham, and He would deliver the Israelites from bondage and bring them into a personal relationship with Himself. To do this, God raised up a man named Moses. Although Moses was an Israelite, by God’s amazing providence he grew up as the adopted son of Pharaoh’s daughter. When, as an adult, Moses saw how the Egyptians were oppressing the Israelites, he tried to help his people himself, but ended up having to flee for his life to the desert. There he lived for forty years as a shepherd, until one day God met with him. We will learn about this today, but first we will learn some more about the names of God.”

“Does anyone remember the name for God we learned last week? *Elohim* is God the Creator, God in charge of the whole world. God revealed Himself to Moses by a new name, *Yahweh*, the covenant-keeping God who wants a personal relationship with His people. This name comes from a word meaning *to be*: God is the One who always was, who is, and who always will be. Although we say *Yahweh*, we actually do not know how this name was spelled or said because in old Hebrew only consonants, not vowels, were written. The consonants for this name are יהוה (*YHWH*). Later, people added little dots and lines called vowel points under and over Hebrew consonants to help people read words more easily, but because the Jews would not say this holy name of God, we do not know for certain how it was pronounced. Sometimes people say *Jehovah* instead of *Yahweh*; this word comes from putting the vowel points from *Adonai*, another name of God, with *YHWH*. Our English Bibles indicate when the name *Yahweh* is being used by writing the word LORD in all capital letters. Now let’s read about how God showed Himself to be *Yahweh*, the personal, covenant-keeping God, and used Moses to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian slavery.”

Read Exodus 3 and Exodus 6:1-8 with your students and discuss. Focus on God’s initiative and love for His people, His being *Yahweh*, the “I AM,” the self-existent One who keeps His covenant and delivers His people from bondage. Also consider Moses’ response to the Lord (His slow surrender and rationalizations). Challenge your students as to whether they have a personal relationship with the Lord and whether or not they respond to Him in instant and complete obedience without excuses.

Introduction to Exodus 3

“God’s people, the Israelites, were living as slaves in Egypt. Moses, an Israelite who had been raised in Pharaoh, the king’s, court, killed an Egyptian he saw beating an Israelite. When his action became known, he fled to Midian where he became a shepherd.”

Questions on Exodus 3

- Why did God tell Moses to take off his sandals?
- How did God identify Himself?
- What was Moses reaction when he found out he was talking with God? Was this a proper reaction?

- How do we react to God?
- How did God feel about the suffering of His people? What was He going to do about it?
 - What was Moses' reaction to God's command that he bring the Israelites out of Egypt? From previous knowledge you have of Moses, do you think his attitude had changed? In what way?
 - How did God encourage Moses? What did He say would be a sign to him?
 - Why did Moses ask God what His name was?
 - What is the significance of God's answer to Moses in verse 14 [explain about the meaning of the name *Yahweh* using the Lesson Background material]?
 - Why would being told that *Yahweh* was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be an encouragement to the Israelites?

Introduction to Exodus 6

“Moses and his brother Aaron went to Egypt to tell Pharaoh that God wanted him to let the Israelites leave Egypt. Pharaoh refused. Why should he lose all that free labor? He replied, “Who is the Lord that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and I will not let Israel go” (Exodus 5:2). Pharaoh told the slave drivers that they were no longer to supply the Israelites with the straw necessary to make bricks, but that the Israelites must gather their own and yet maintain the same quota they had previously. It seemed that Moses and Aaron had made things worse! Moses returned to the Lord and said, ‘O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all’” (Exodus 5:22-23).

Questions on Exodus 6:1-8

- What evidence from the past did God give to encourage Moses?
- What did God mean by saying, “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty (*El Shaddai*, another name of God we will learn about), but by my name the LORD (*Yahweh*) I did not make myself known to them”?
- What promises about the future did God make to encourage Moses?
- How is God's character as *Yahweh* seen in the passages we studied today?

Music

If possible, listen to the choir composition *Moses* by Ken Medema, which dramatizes Exodus 3, focusing on Moses' and our need to obey God and give Him all we are and have.

ADONAI

Joshua 5:13-6:7; Ephesians 6:1-9

Lesson Aim

That your students will understand that they must surrender their lives to *Adonai*, the Master who is to be obeyed.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week, Exodus 3:4 - “When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, ‘Moses! Moses!’ And Moses said, ‘Here I am.’”

Lesson Background

God’s name *Adonai* and its Greek counterpart *Kyrios* mean lord (written in small letters as opposed to *Yahweh*, which is written in all capitals: LORD). The words can be used as a human title as well (e.g., Genesis 18:12 and 24:9-12, *master*), but in both cases, an attitude of respect and submission is indicated. The lord is the master who has the right to require absolute obedience from his servant. As William Allan Dean points out in his book, *The Names of God*, in such a relationship, the servant can also expect his lord to take care of him, direct his work, and provide for all his needs (Dean, 62).

One place of many where the word *lord* (as well as *LORD*) is used is Joshua 5:13-6:7. As Joshua neared Jericho, the first obstacle in the Israelites’ conquest of Canaan, he met a man with a drawn sword. Joshua asked him the obviously significant question as to whether he was fighting for the Israelites or their enemies. The man replied, “‘Neither, but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.’ Then Joshua fell face-down to the ground in reverence and asked him, ‘What message does my Lord have for his servant?’” (Joshua 5:14). The commander, in words like those spoken to Moses, replied, “‘Take off your

sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.’ And Joshua did so” (Joshua 5:15). Joshua had to be completely submitted to the Lord, bowing in reverence to him, before God would reveal His battle plans. He needed to understand that the Lord was responsible for the conflict’s outcome, and Joshua was totally dependent on, and must be absolutely obedient to, Him for success.

How strange God’s strategy must have seemed to Joshua! We, so familiar with the story and its results, are dulled to their fantastic oddity. He was not to lay siege to Jericho nor gain access to that walled city by means of ladders or a tunnel. Rather, he was to have the Israelites march silently around it once a day for six days and on the seventh, seven times, ending with long blasts on the trumpet and a loud shout by all the people. Then the wall of the city would collapse and the people could go straight in. Joshua could have brought forth dozens of objections. How foolish they would look to their enemies! Perhaps someone on Jericho’s wall would shoot an arrow far enough to reach the people. How could he ever get the people to be completely silent while marching for such a long time? What would his war council think of these plans? They’d suppose he’d gone completely crazy! Joshua knew, however, that before the Canaanites would surrender, he had to surrender his life and will to the Lord. He was master and Joshua had no choice but to obey. Joshua trusted the Lord and by that faith the walls of Jericho fell (Hebrews 11:30).

We may never meet the Lord in a dramatic encounter like Joshua, but our complete submission to Him is just as vital for the battles we fight (Ephesians 6:12). Our obedience to God is learned and acted out in the arena of human relationships. In Ephesians 5 and 6, the apostle Paul instructs husbands and wives, children and parents, and slaves and masters how they can live in a way that pleases the Lord. As you study the last two relationships with your students today (Ephesians 6:1-9), show them how their obedience to their parents and teachers or employers is the primary way they show obedience to *Adonai* (*Kyrios*). May we all be totally surrendered to Him, our Lord.

Lesson Procedure

Write the names of God you have learned so far on the board and review their meanings. Write down *Adonai* and explain that it means *lord* or *master*. Ask your students what these words signify. Explain that *Adonai* is the word for God in today’s Bible passage. You may introduce the passage as follows:

“God promised to lead His people into a new land, ‘a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey’ (Exodus 3:8). They could not just march into the land and settle there, however, but had to fight the wicked people who lived there. The first place they needed to conquer was the walled city of Jericho. You are probably quite familiar with this story and know its outcome, but remember, Joshua, the leader of the army, and the Israelites didn’t. Imagine their thoughts as they considered how to attack Jericho. What strategies might they have devised? We will begin reading as Joshua approaches Jericho.” Read Joshua 5:13-6:7. Focus on Joshua’s submission and obedience to the Lord in spite of the oddity and difficulty of the command. Stress that complete, willing and instant obedience to God is absolutely essential.

Questions on Joshua 5:13-6:7

- 5:13 - Imagine this situation. Why was Joshua’s question a logical one?
- 5:14 - What was Joshua’s reaction to the man’s reply? Why did he do this? Who was this man?
- 5:15 - What was the significance of the man’s command? Can you think of someone else in the Bible who was told to do this?
- 6:2 - Who would be responsible for the victory over Jericho? Note the surety of the victory: “I *have delivered* Jericho into your hands.”

6:6-7 - How did Joshua respond to the Lord's command? Why might the command have been difficult to obey? Do we reply readily, instantly, and completely to the Lord's commands?

6:8f. - We are not going to read the rest of this passage, but can anyone describe the results of Joshua and the Israelites' obedience?

"One of the most important ways we obey the Lord is to obey those people in authority over us. Paul speaks about this in Ephesians 6. In this passage, he uses the Greek word *Kyrios*, which has the same meaning as the Hebrew *Adonai*." Read Ephesians 6:1-9 and discuss.

Questions on Ephesians 6:1-9

The end of Ephesians 5 speaks of the necessity of wives being submissive to their husbands and of husbands loving their wives. What two authorities are considered in Ephesians 6?

6:1-4 - What is the responsibility of children given in this passage? What is the responsibility of fathers?

6:5-9 - Roman slaves led a very difficult life (it is estimated that one third of the Roman empire, sixty million people, were slaves). What are the responsibilities of slaves and masters given in this passage? We no longer have slaves in our society. Does this passage have any meaning for us? Who occupies a similar position to that of a slave master in our lives [employers and teachers]? What should our attitude be toward them and toward our work?

"Are there ever any times when we should not obey human authorities [when that authority commands us to sin - see Acts 5:29]? What should we do in these cases? In most cases, however, this is not a problem. Sometimes, though, it is very difficult to obey. Can you think of a time when it has been hard for you to do so? Why was it difficult? How can we learn to be more obedient to God and those in authority over us [e.g., prayer, deciding ahead of time that disobedience is not an option, that, with God's help we will obey, no matter what]?"

Pray about these matters with your class, for we can only obey by His grace. Then read and discuss the following story, which illustrates a master/servant relationship. Note that Christopher's heart was set on obedience in small tasks before he risked his life for his lord.

Christopher gave the silver cup an extra rub with the soft cloth. "There," he thought, gazing at his face reflected at odd angles from the shiny surface, "that should do."

"Hast thou finished yet? Thou wilt rub a hole right through! It is not as though thou wast Sir John's squire and that his armor."

Christopher tossed his rag at the freckled face of his best friend, Will. "My highest dream and chief joy would be to serve my lord as his squire, but as a page I will serve him none the less diligently. I wish to go fishing as much as thou dost, but this cup is to be used by the master for a great banquet tonight. Our lord's great enemy, Douglas Macbaine, has accepted his invitation and important issues of war and peace hang on tonight's proceedings."

"Thinkest thou I know nothing of the banquet? For days now, we who work in the kitchen have been making preparation. In truth, I should be helping now, but cook gave me leave to go for a short while as long as I bring back some fish. So make haste!"

Christopher and Will ran off eagerly to the lake and later returned with three fish between them. "Look," Will commented, "Baron Macbaine has arrived."

"We'd best not tarry. The master will wish me nigh and methinks cook will box thine ears if thou displeasest her."

That evening, Christopher returned to the kitchen, from whence came delicious odors of suckling pig, venison, and fish sprinkled with herbs. "Will, you should see the great hall! So many candles, garments of velvet and fur, huge platters of food . . ."

"I know of the food," groaned an exhausted Will. "I've been chopping onions for hours!"

The page ignored his friend's complaints. "How gracious and kind is our lord to prepare such a feast for one who was his enemy! But I forget my errand. Prithee, run to the cellar and return anon with another bottle of wine."

Christopher took the flagon from Will and headed back whence he had come. As he drew nigh, a wondrous noise reached his ears. Entering the great hall, Christopher dropped the wine in astonishment; the impact of its shattering was lost in the tumult around him. For the tranquil meal had turned into bloody battle; clanging steel, curses, shouts of triumph and cries of pain rang out as slashing swords met their mark.

Christopher quickly hid behind a pillar. What had brought such horrors to pass? Had the treacherous Macbaine scorned Sir John's hospitality? The stench of smoke, blood, sweat, and the remains of the feast mingled in his nostrils. He bethought himself that he could smell fear, too, at least his own. He hung his head in shame at his reaction to his first taste of battle. This was not how he had pictured it at all, as he and Will dreamed of noble victories, valiantly putting the enemy to flight, hoofs pounding and flags waving. This was different. Some squire he would make, cowering behind a column, trembling as if with the ague.

He glanced out from the pillar as two warriors, separated from the main fray, confronted each other not two yards away. He gasped, emotions struggling within him as if they, too, were combatants intent on subduing all rivals. One of the men was his master!

"Thou art a cowardly knave and no lord," taunted the knight.

"It is not before thy judgement I stand or fall," Sir John replied quietly. "But I bid thee prove thy charge upon my body, else quit this place with thy lord, who hath betrayed my love with his perfidy."

Savagely, the knight struck, but Sir John repelled the attack with ease. He made a counter-move that the knight deflected, making up in strength what he lacked in agility. For some minutes their fight raged hot. When the men briefly drew apart, Christopher saw the knight had a flesh wound in his shoulder, while Sir John appeared unscathed. However, both men were winded and it was difficult to tell who would emerge victor.

The conflict began anew, but it was not long before the outcome became evident. Sir John slipped on something on the floor - a chicken bone, a piece of fruit, they would never know - but much hung on its placement there, for Sir John fell, his sword flying from his hand as he did so, and the knight hurried forward to kill him.

He would have done so, too, but somehow in his haste, he also lost his balance and, instead of going through Sir John's heart, the knight's sword pierced his side. This was no small matter. The knight began to rise, unhurriedly now, gathering his strength, for his opponent lay wounded and defenseless, his weapon cast away too far to reach, with the knight between. Christopher watched in horror. Suddenly, he heard his own name.

"Christopher," Sir John called. "I know thou art behind yon pillar. Get me my sword!"

For what seemed forever, but was not much more than the blink of an eye, Christopher stood frozen. How could he possibly do what he was commanded? The knight, twice his height and three times his girth, would be on him in a trice and Christopher would die for no benefit. Yet he had no choice. His lord and master had given command. He must obey.

"Yes, my lord," Christopher replied, and dashed toward the sword. He snatched bits of food and a pair of goblets on the way, hurling them at the knight. This had the effect of distracting and delaying him long enough for Christopher to return the sword to Sir John and help him to his feet. Even then, there would have been little hope were it not for the continual barrage of dishes and foodstuffs encountered by the knight as he pressed his attack. Were things not so serious, Christopher would have laughed at his unusual weapons. In the end, the knight was slain and Sir John lay weakly on the floor. He roused himself, and, half crawling and half being dragged by Christopher, arrived at the relative safety of a small room hidden behind a tapestry.

“Christopher, I thank thee for thy noble work this night. But thou must help me further. Perchance I have received a mortal blow.” Christopher doubted it not, for his master’s breath came in strange gasps and the crimson stain on his shirt was widening rapidly, spreading over his fingers, which pressed close against the wound.

“Take my steed and hie thee to Lord Reginald, that he may come to our aid. His castle lies past Edwin’s Dale, then on beyond Saint Martin’s Abbey. Sir John took off his signet ring and handed it to his page. “This,” he said, “will give thee authority to speak in my name and carry out my desires.” His lord laid his great hand on Christopher’s shoulder. “Seest thou that thou fulfill my commission; may God go with thee, faithful servant,” he breathed, and collapsed, barely conscious.

“By His grace, I will, my Lord,” Christopher vowed solemnly, and hurried off, fear now conquered, or at least in abeyance, as he sought to please and obey his master.

EL ELYON

Genesis 14

Lesson Aim

That your students would know more of El Elyon, the Most High God, the Strongest Strong one.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week, Exodus 3:5 - “‘Do not come any closer,’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.’”

Lesson Background

God has communicated who He is by the names Elohim and Yahweh, and also by compounds of these names that reveal different aspects of His character. *El Elyon*, translated the Most High God, shows the God of strength and power. Elyon is the superlative of El, the name literally meaning *the Strongest Strong One*.

The name El Elyon first appears in Genesis 14. The chapter opens with Kedorlaomer king of Elam and the kings allied with him (Tidal king of Goiim, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar) waging war against and defeating Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela, all of whom had rebelled against paying tribute to Kedorlaomer. In sacking Sodom, Kedorlaomer’s forces carried off Lot, who was living there, along with his family and possessions. When Abram heard what had happened, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went to rescue his nephew. It would seem foolhardy for such a small force to attack the armies of four kings (though they were more like tribal chieftains than kings over nations), but incredibly Abram not only did so, but succeeded in rescuing Lot and his family and also recovering his possessions.

Great honor and riches would attend the leader of such a victory, but, as the story continues, we see Abram giving the glory for his accomplishment to God.

As Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer, he was met by two rulers, the king of Sodom and Melchizedek, king of Salem (Jerusalem; *Salem* means *peace* - Hebrews 7:2). Melchizedek (his name means *king of righteousness* - Hebrews 7:2) is a rather mysterious character who appears in the Pentateuch only in this short passage, but then is mentioned extensively in the book of Hebrews (chapter 7) as a type of Christ and also prophetically in Psalm 110:4. Melchizedek, priest of El Elyon, brought out bread and wine to Abram and blessed him: “Blessed be Abram by God Most High (El Elyon) Creator of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High (El Elyon) who delivered your enemies into your hand” (Genesis 14:19-20). Abram seems to have recognized that it was indeed God Most High who was responsible for his victory, and, in gratitude, Abram gave Melchizedek one tenth of everything (later the Israelites were to tithe their possessions to the Levitical priesthood - Numbers 18:21).

The king of Sodom said that Abram could keep the people of Sodom’s goods that he had recovered from Kedorlaomer. However, Abram refused to form such an alliance with a heathen ruler and said to the king of Sodom, “I have raised my hand to the Lord (Yahweh) God Most High (El Elyon), Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich’” (Genesis 14:22-23). Abram did not need or want the gifts of the kings of this world. Perhaps Abram’s relatives and followers thought him crazy for risking so much and not profiting from his victory (“think what could be done with all that wealth . . .”), but Abram was concerned about pleasing God. El Elyon, the Strongest Strong One, the Creator/Possessor of heaven and earth, who had enabled Abram to win a great victory, set the captives free, and come home with great spoil would provide for all his needs. As we seek His glory, El Elyon will do the same for us.

Lesson Procedure

Introduce your lesson by having your students arm wrestle each other (opponents rest one elbow on a table, clasp hands and try to push each other’s arm down so his or her wrist touches the table). Talk about being strong, feats of strength of which they may have heard, and who they think is the strongest person in the world. Remind them that no one is as strong as God, and it is this aspect of His character that they will discuss today. Review the names of God that you have considered thus far, and then introduce God as *El Elyon*, God Most High, the Strongest Strong One. Tell your students that before you read today’s Bible story, which speaks of El Elyon, you will read a fictional account of people who had to depend on God Most High. Genesis 15 presents Abram’s rescue of Lot in a very matter-of-fact way. The following story is presented to help your students better grasp the probable emotional responses of Abram and his family, and how amazing it was that Abram could deliver his nephew from such a powerful foe.

The Rescue

“Papa, they’ve taken Louis. The Nazis have captured Louis!”

Jean-Paul Duvall turned pale. His nephew Louis always had been a foolhardy boy, a reckless adventurer, heedless of authority. Questions tumbled through Monsieur Duvall’s mind: How had Louis been captured? Where was he now? How did his daughter know these things? But he forced himself to keep calm.

“Papa, they’ve taken him to the castle, they’re . . .”

“Hush, Danielle, begin at the beginning. What happened?”

In bits and pieces the story unfolded to the open ears and anxious faces around her. Louis had been running a black market operation, getting to know Nazi supply officers and then brazenly stealing their goods and reselling them to his countrymen, or back to the Germans themselves. He had become quite accomplished at doing this, but on this day a German officer had recognized as his own the stolen watch Louis was attempting to sell and had had him arrested.

M. Duvall bowed his head and sat in silence for what seemed an eternity in the tension-filled room. Then he said quietly, "We must try to rescue him."

Like the roar of the surf, voices from his family and visiting neighbors exploded around him:

"How can we? The castle's impregnable."

"He doesn't deserve our help!"

"But we can't just do nothing. They'll torture him."

"Maybe it's all a mistake."

"No, Danielle saw them take him for questioning. They treated him very roughly."

"Even if he escapes, he can't stay here; he'll have to leave the country or at least this area."

"If they catch us helping him, they'll kill us too."

Madame Duvall softly concluded, "He is family and of course we would help if we could, but, as you have said, '*C'est impossible!*'"

"*Oui*, it is impossible, but we serve a mighty God. He will help us. I believe He has given me an idea, but the plan is dangerous. However, we must try to do what we can. Henri, do you remember when we were boys, that tunnel we found in the cave by the sea? We always suspected it led to the castle, but it was filled with rubble that blocked our path, so we never explored far enough to find out."

"*Mais oui*, of course I remember, but if the passageway was blocked then, we will never get through now, and even if we did, we do not know where it lets out in the castle. And what would we do about the guards?"

"The tunnel almost certainly lets out on the lowest level of the castle, which is where they are most likely to keep prisoners. Perhaps we can create a diversion to draw away the guards. At this point, I have no idea how we will get into the cell. We must do what we can and trust *le bon Dieu*, the good God, to take care of the rest. Let us pray and commit our cause to Him and then Henri, Jean-Claude, and you, too, André, come with me to see about that tunnel! We may not have much time, for the Nazis may transfer Louis to another prison or even execute him."

The tunnel was indeed blocked by much refuse, stones, and fallen earth. The men and older boys worked diligently each night, removing the debris, shoring up the roof where it had collapsed. They posted Danielle and the younger boys as sentries lest their work be discovered.

"I still don't think your nephew is worth all this work, Jean-Paul," Henri LeClerc complained half seriously. "We have had no word. He may not even be in the castle anymore."

Yet the men and older boys worked on and eventually, five days later, they came upon a wooden door. Offering a quick prayer, M. Duvall pushed on the blackened oak. It didn't budge. Motioning for his son Jean-Claude to help, he tried again. This time the door opened, bringing them face to face with row upon row of amber and green bottles. They had reached the castle's wine cellar. The door through which they had come had been ingeniously concealed by stanchions in which rested a row of oaken casks. M. Duvall crept quickly to the room's main entrance and gave the door a pull. It was locked. All their work had been for nothing! Checking to be sure they had not left evidence of their presence in the cellar, M. Duvall and Jean-Claude dejectedly returned to tell M. LeClerc, André, and the others what had occurred.

"I was so sure that was the answer," groaned M. Duvall. "But now what can we do? God is with us, but we are not like the Lord Jesus; we cannot walk through locked doors." He gave a wry half grin.

"Maybe we can," said André.

"The boy's been working too hard," said M. LeClerc. "Next he will be telling us we can fly into the castle like angels."

"No, no, that's not what I meant. Of course we cannot walk through locked doors, but maybe, just maybe, the door can be unlocked. My friend Raoul Bouchard delivers wine to the castle. A German soldier

accompanies him to unlock and relock the wine cellar door, but the man is fat and lazy and hates climbing down all those stairs, so lately he's just been sending Raoul down to the cellar by himself."

"But will he do it?" M. LeClerc inquired. "And can we trust him?"

"Yes, I think so," Jean-Claude replied with mounting enthusiasm. "I, too, know Raoul. I'm sure we can trust him and I'm pretty sure he will help us, too. When is his next delivery date, André?"

"Thursday, he delivers on Thursdays. But that's tomorrow . . ."

Very early the next morning, André went to Raoul's house and found him mounting his bicycle ready for work.

"André, what are you doing up so early? I thought that now that there is no school you stayed in bed as late as possible."

"Not today, Raoul. I have something important to ask you."

When André told him the situation, Raoul was hesitant. "I don't know, André. It sounds dangerous."

"It is, but not really for you. Anyone could forget to lock a door and besides, that's the guard's job so he could hardly blame you."

"Well, I suppose if you are willing to risk your life, I am too. Your cousin's being held just down the passageway from the wine cellar. There's only one guard and he keeps the keys to the cell in his jacket pocket."

"Thank you, Raoul," said André, and sped off to tell his father the news.

Back at the house, they made plans. "Henri, would you come and help in case we have to carry Louis back? They will not have fed him well, and perhaps they will have tortured him."

"Of course, *mon ami*," M. LeClerc replied. "And I know how we can subdue the guard. I will make noise in the passageway and then hide. When the guard comes to investigate - 'wham' - I will hit him on the head!"

"*Merci beaucoup*, Henri. I thank you so much that you would put yourself in such danger for us. But hitting the guard on the head? You know I abhor violence."

"Jean-Paul, there is no other way."

"Perhaps not. *Je ne sais pas*. I do not know. Jean-Claude, if you are willing, I would like you to come too."

"I will be glad to, Father"

"May I come too, Papa?"

"No, André. It is too dangerous. You have helped already by talking with Raoul."

"Please, Papa, I won't get in your way."

"I suppose you have been as much a part of this as any of us. You may come, but you must remain in the wine cellar and be very quiet. We will leave in about an hour. Until then, let us again come before God and ask His help in our endeavor."

A short while later, the men and boys snuck through the tunnel and, with trepidation, approached the outer wine cellar door. It opened. Raoul had done his work well.

"Stay here while I reconnoiter," M. Duvall directed.

Presently, he returned. "Raoul was right. A guard is standing in front of a cell less than ten yards from here. He's . . ."

Crash! In startled horror M. Duvall and Jean-Claude turned to see that André had knocked a small cask off the shelf onto the floor, where it had shattered. The guards would be sure to come and investigate! With beating hearts the rescuers dashed back to the relative safety of the tunnel. They waited but heard nothing. What had happened?

M. Duvall reentered the wine cellar and cautiously opened the door to the passageway. As he did so, the reason for the Nazis' lack of interest in the keg's fall became evident. Sounds of confusion, the smell of smoke, and loud shouts drifted down the hallway: "*Feuer! Feuer! Mach schnell, Hans. Raus! Raus!*"

Fire! No wonder their disturbance had been ignored. Quickly but warily, M. Duvall approached Louis' cell, but no one was there. Not only that, in his haste the guard had left his keys in the lock! The lock

was stiff, but M. Duvall persisted and finally it opened. There was his nephew, collapsed on the stone floor. “Louis!” M. Duvall cried.

“*Oncle Jean*,” Louis responded.

Louis was too weak to walk, so M. Duvall returned to the wine cellar for help. There he found his compatriots crouched in a circle, staring at something on the floor. “Look, Papa,” said André, “jewels!”

“What!” said M. Duvall in astonishment.

“When the Nazis invaded, the owners of the castle must have hidden them in this cask that André broke,” M. LeClerc proposed.

“May we keep them, Papa?”

“Of course not, that would be stealing.”

“But, Jean-Paul, we can’t very well leave them here for the Nazis.”

“You are right as you usually are, *mon ami*. We will take the jewels, and if we cannot find their proper owners, we will give them to the church. However, that is not what is important now. Louis is safe, but he is weak. Henri, I need you to help me carry him. André and Jean-Claude, tie the jewels in your shirts and carry them back to the house. Hurry and tell your mother to heat a large tub of water by the fire so Louis can have a bath; ask her to heat up the soup as well.”

They did so, and soon the family and friends were gathered around the fireplace eating soup, talking and laughing and praising God for His merciful providence.

Discussion

- One might explain things as coincidence, but how can we see the hand of God in this story [M. Duvall had the idea about the tunnel, André had a friend who worked in the castle, the guard was too lazy to accompany Raoul, and it was he, not another guard on duty, the timing (Louis was arrested when he was, they cleared the tunnel in time for Raoul’s delivery date, not a week later which might have been too late, the fire occurred that drew the guard away), the guard left the key in the lock]?
- How did the people in the story show faith in God [they trusted Him, risking their lives to deliver their relative from the enemy; they committed their enterprise to the Lord and prayed frequently for His help; they did not steal the money for themselves]?
- How do you think the events of this story would effect the lives of the people involved?

Bible story

“The passage we will read today tells a story in some ways similar to the fictional account we just read. In it, God shows Himself to be *El Elyon*, the Most High God, the Strongest Strong One.” Read Genesis 14 to your students and discuss the passage. Since the stories in this quarter jump around chronologically, always give some sort of introduction to help your students sort this out. For example: “Today’s story is about a man named Abraham, or Abram as he is called here, who lived many years before Moses and Joshua. What can you tell me from your previous knowledge of Abraham?”

Questions on Genesis 14

14:1-4 - On the board, write down two lists of the kings who fought each other. Who rebelled against whom?

14:5-8 - Kedorlaomer, et. al., conquered a lot of territory. Check it out on a map if you would like.

14:8-12 - Where did the two armies fight? What was the result of the battle? Who was taken captive by Kedorlaomer and the other three kings?

14:13-16 - What do you know about the relationship of Abram and Lot? How do you think Abram may have felt when he heard his nephew had been captured (how did Louis’ relatives feel when they heard

he had been taken prisoner?)? What did Abram do when he heard of the capture? Even though details are not given, how do we know that *El Elyon* delivered Abram's enemies into his hands (see also Genesis 14:20)?

14:18-20 - Melchizedek is a mysterious character. See what else you can learn about him by reading Hebrews 7:1-19 and Psalm 110:4.

14:22-24 - Why did Abram not want to keep any of the spoil?

We may never have to engage a physical enemy as did Abram, but we will have battles to face in life. In what way is God, *El Elyon*, God Most High, the Strongest Strong One for us?

EL ROI

Genesis 16

Lesson Aim

That your students would know more of El Roi, the God who sees.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week Exodus 3:6 - “Then he said, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ At this Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.”

Lesson Background

The old Christmas song advises, “he knows when you’ve been sleeping, he knows when you’re awake, he knows when you’ve been bad or good, so be good, for goodness sake.” Contrary to the beliefs of thousands of misinformed toddlers, Santa Claus is not omniscient. But God is. He knows everything that happens to us before it even occurs and sees into the deepest recesses of our minds and hearts. He knows about our most secret sins and sees evil in our hearts that we ourselves ignore. “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give an account” (Hebrews 4:13; see also I Corinthians 4:5). God also sees the pain and sorrow we endure and cares for us. Sarai’s Egyptian servant Hagar discovered both of these characteristics in the one she called *El Roi* (לֵא יֵרֵא), the *God Who sees* me.

The Lord had promised Abram that He would give him offspring as numerous as the stars in the sky. Abram believed the Lord’s promise, and it was credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:5). When, however, at the age of eighty-five (possibly eighty-six), Abram was still childless, he gave in to the

temptation to take matters into his own hands and agreed to Sarai's suggestion to sleep with her maidservant so that they might build a family through her (custom held that children of such a union could be considered theirs). Their sin caused them misery and brought about devastating consequences right down to the present day (the Arab peoples, perpetual enemies of Israel, are Ishmael's descendants).

When Hagar became aware that she had conceived, she began to despise her mistress. Sarai blamed Abram for the situation, even though the arrangement had been her suggestion, and she mistreated Hagar. In distress, Hagar decided to risk the long, dangerous trek back to Egypt (presumably her destination, for that was the direction of the road to Shur - 16:7). One can imagine how Hagar felt, a slave away from her homeland, living among a people of strange customs, language, and God, turned on and cruelly tormented by the very people she had served. No wonder she fled. Of course, it was Hagar's sinful attitude that did much to provoke Sarai's reaction in the first place, but one can still sympathize with the plight in which she found herself. Hagar may have felt alone, but God was watching and stopped her headlong flight as the Angel of the Lord (a theophany, a preincarnate appearance of Christ; see 16:10,13) appeared to her near a spring in the desert.

The Angel of the Lord addressed Hagar as the servant of Sarai, indicating, even from the beginning, her responsibility. He asked her where she had come from and where she was going, not due to lack of knowledge on his part, but that Hagar might examine herself. The Angel of the Lord told Hagar to return and submit to Sarai and promised her that he would increase her descendants (something that is God's prerogative). He told her to name the son in her womb Ishmael, which means *God hears*. He also foretold what sort of man Ishmael would be. The God who knew these things was unlike any of the gods of Egypt, and she called him *El Roi*, the God who sees me. She named the well where the Angel of the Lord appeared to her *Beer Lahai Roi*, which means *well of the living One who sees me*.

God, indeed, sees and knows everything about us. He sees our sinful actions and knows the thoughts and desires of our evil hearts, even when we are unaware of them. If we are children of God, this should be a comforting thought, not a terrifying one. He has already paid the price for our sin, so we do not need to hide from Him. Rather, His intimate knowledge of us enables Him to work in our lives, loving us and conforming us to the image of His Son. Therefore we can trust and love the God who met Hagar by the desert spring, *El Roi*, the *God Who sees me*.

Lesson Procedure

Hide a small object under one of three opaque cups and have your students tell you where it is hidden. They may guess correctly but will not be able to choose with certainty. Repeat the procedure with three transparent glasses. The game will then become silly, for of course they will know under which glass the object is hidden. Explain that sometimes we think we can hide from God like an object under a cup, or like a two year old who thinks he is concealed when he puts a pillow over his head. However, "nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13; see also I Corinthians 4:5). Continue as follows:

"Does the fact that God sees you at all times reassure you or make you afraid?" John, comparing Jesus to light, said, "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God" (John 3:19-21; see also John 1:4-9; I John 1:5-7). It is scary that God knows about all the bad things we do and, in fact, can see right into our evil hearts. Yet if we trust in Christ, He will forgive us and change our hearts and lives to be pleasing to Him.

It then becomes a great comfort to know that He sees and understands all that happens to us, the hurts and joys, and to know that He loves us. Today's Bible story tells of someone who learned that God was watching out for her. Her name was Hagar, and she was an Egyptian maidservant of Sarai. Perhaps you remember that God had promised Abram, Sarai's husband, that he would make of him a great nation. But Abram and Sarai were more than seventy-five years old and they did not have any children. Had God forgotten His promise? Abram and Sarai decided that perhaps God needed some help in fulfilling His word."

Bible Story

Read and discuss Genesis 16. Before you do so, review with your class who *the Angel of the Lord* is. When you get to Genesis 16:8 in your reading, ask your students why they think the Angel of the Lord asked Hagar that question (it wasn't that He didn't know the answer). After you read the passage, you may discuss it using the following questions:

Questions

- How did today's story show God as *El Roi, the God Who Sees* [the Angel of the Lord identified Hagar as Sarai's servant (verse 8), he knew of Hagar's rebellion (verse 9), he said he would increase her descendants (verse 10), he told her she was pregnant, the name of her son and what sort of man he would be (verse 11)]?
- Why do you think God revealed Himself to Hagar by this name? Why would that have been important to her [unlike the gods of Egypt, *El Roi* knew her heart, her sins, and yet also saw her suffering and cared for her]?
- What did the people in Genesis 16 do that displeased God? What did they do that pleased God [displeased: Abram and Sarai did not fully trust God to give them a son as He had promised; Abram slept with Hagar; Hagar despised Sarai; Sarai blamed Abram for the situation; Sarai mistreated Hagar; Hagar fled; pleased Him: Hagar returned to Sarai]?

"God told Hagar to return and be submissive to Sarai even though Sarai was mean to her. We, too, need to be submissive and obedient to those in authority over us: parents, teachers, and employers, even those with whom it is difficult to get along. There are, however, adults who hurt children severely, beating them enough to cause injury (more than just spanking them) or by touching them in ways that are wrong. You should not allow anyone to do these things to you, but should tell someone you trust, perhaps your Sunday School teacher or pastor, and keep telling until he or she helps you. For all our lives we will have authorities over us and we must learn to submit to them (Romans 13:1-7) unless they are forcing us to sin (Acts 4:18-20). We should also pray for them (I Timothy 2:1-2)." The following fictional account tells of a boy who had a difficult time with someone in authority over him.

"I'm Leaving!"

"That's it! I'm leaving!"

"What do you mean, you're leaving?"

"What I said, dim-bulb, I'm leaving, splitting, getting out! I'm not staying there one more hour."

"But, Joe, what happened?" Steven looked at his friend with concern. He knew things were not great at Joe's house, but he had never seen him like this before.

"It's my old man. I hate his guts! You know that CD player I got? I worked for about a year to get it, doing odd jobs for Mr. Potter. Well, he broke it! My dad broke it! He knocked it off the table and now it won't work! He didn't even offer to pay for it. Just said I was careless for leaving it near the door so close to the table edge. It wasn't on the edge at all."

“Wow, Joe, what an unfair deal. I’m sorry. I know how much you liked that player. Maybe it can be fixed. Still, that’s not enough reason to . . .”

“It’s not just that! You don’t know what it’s like. You’ve got a cool family, but me . . . I feel like killing them all sometimes. My Dad’s always yelling at me about something. Missy - you know, Melissa, his girlfriend’s daughter - bosses me around big time and they always take her side. Prissy Missy never does anything wrong - ha!”

“Still, you can’t just run away. Where would you stay? And your family would be worried about you, I think.”

“Well, they probably would, a little. And I gotta admit it could be worse. I mean, my Dad never beats me or nothing, even when he’s drunk. But - and here Joe cursed - I can’t stand living there! I can’t please them. Nothing I ever do is right. I’ve got to run away!”

“You know, Joe, you just mentioned God and . . .”

“I what?” Joe interrupted. “Oh yeah,” he said sheepishly, realizing Steve had been referring to his cursing.

“Anyway, do you realize, Joe, that God knows about everything that’s going on in your life? We were talking about it at church this week. God is *El Roi*, the *God Who Sees*. He sees everything that happens, not only what people do, but how they think and why they do what they do. He knows when you are treated unfairly and when you hurt. He knows when you and I do bad things, too.”

“Yeah, maybe. But what good does that do me? There’s God way up in the sky somewhere, and here I am going through all this stuff, and what difference does it make if He sees me or not?”

“It depends, Joe. We’ve talked before about how you have to turn your life over to God. If you will do that, if you will trust in Jesus, God will make you a new person. He’ll forgive your sins, because of what Jesus did, and then He will take care of you. You’ll be His child and it won’t matter so much about your earthly family.”

“I don’t know, Steve. Maybe you’re right. I gotta think about it. Uh, Steve, you don’t think . . . I mean, could I stay with your family for a couple of days?”

“That would be great! I’d have to ask my parents, but I’m sure it would be okay as long as you asked your dad first. Does this mean you’re not going to run away?”

“Naw, I guess not for now. It was a stupid idea. Anyway, I don’t think I could have gotten very far on fourteen dollars and twenty-two cents.”

Choral Reading

Have your students read Psalm 139:1-16 in unison, or alternating verses (combine verses 9 and 10 and verses 11 and 12). If you prefer, have a number of individuals read the different verses, but say verses 1 and 14 in unison (end with verse 14; again combine 9/10 and 11/12).

EL SHADDAI

Genesis 17:1-8

Lesson Aim

That your students would know more of El Shaddai, Almighty God the Nourisher.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week Exodus 3:7 - “The Lord said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.’”

Lesson Background

El Elyon, God Most High, the Strongest Strong One who delivers captives and defeats the foe has also made Himself known as *El Shaddai*, Almighty God. Ironically, however, the strength of El Shaddai is that of a mother nourishing her child.

Most scholars believe that the name *shaddai* comes from the Hebrew word *shad*, meaning breast. Hence God is the Nourisher, the Comforter, the All-Sufficient One who pours His life into the weak, dependent child who trusts in Him. In Isaiah 63:13 the Lord says, “As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you.” The gentle mother-child image clearly does not indicate weakness on the part of the One who has the power to impart life.

God not only gives life to His children, but He enables them to be fruitful as well. This is evident in Genesis 17 where El Shaddai renews His covenant with Abram. “When Abram was ninety-nine years old,

the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘I am God Almighty (*El Shaddai*); walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.’” Abram fell face down in reverence and God confirmed His promise. He would make him the father of many nations and, in token of this, his name was no longer to be *Abram, exalted father*, but *Abraham, father of many*. The covenant was to be an everlasting one for the generations to come; God would be their God and He would give them the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. The idea of God making His people fruitful carries through in other passages as well when the Lord is referred to as *El Shaddai* (see Genesis 28:3; 35:11).

In our mind the sweet picture of a mother feeding her child seems far removed from sorrow and suffering, but to God the two are often intertwined. The author of Hebrews states in chapter 12:5b-7, “‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as his son.’ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?” When Naomi returned to Bethlehem after great suffering in Moab she said, “Call me Mara [meaning *bitter*] because the Almighty [*El Shaddai*] has made my life bitter” (Ruth 1:20). God had dealt with her severely, but brought her renewed blessings in Bethlehem and much fruit from her suffering, even the birth of her grandson, the forefather of the Lord Jesus Christ. Job certainly knew what it was to endure great pain, but at the end of this book, in which the name *El Shaddai* appears with greater frequency than anywhere in the Bible (more than thirty times), Job rejoices in his newfound knowledge of the Lord, who then blesses the latter part of his life more than the first. Life from death, fruitfulness from suffering stands as a central principle of Scripture. It finds its culmination in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who said, “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24). Using the image of a fruit-bearing vine, He also said, “. . . every branch that does bear fruit he [God, the Gardener] prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (John 15:2b).

El Shaddai, God Almighty, the Nourisher, promised to make Abraham the father of many. Yet Abraham and his descendants would have to undergo suffering in order to bear fruit. God said, “This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: every male among you shall be circumcised” (Genesis 17:10). Abraham had to have a piece of the most vulnerable part of his body (on which depended his dream, the birth of a son and the fulfillment of God’s promise) excised if it were to bring about the fruit-bearing intended. In our lives, too, the flesh must be cut away if we are to bear fruit for God. However, the surgeon is the Almighty gentle Nourisher who loves us and will comfort and sustain us in affliction, causing us to yield much fruit for His glory (John 15:8).

Lesson Procedure

Ask your students to picture a mother nursing a tiny little baby. Discuss with them characteristics of the mother (nourishing, loving, caring, patient) and baby (completely dependent, often selfish, impatient, complaining and demanding). Tell your students that God has revealed Himself not only as *Elohim, Yahweh, Adonai, El Elyon*, and *El Roi* (you may wish to review the meaning of these names), but as *El Shaddai*, who is like a mother nourishing her baby. Tell them that *El Shaddai* is translated in their Bibles as *Almighty God*, and the name incorporates this meaning. However, God’s strength is not here seen as the One who defeats His enemies, as is the case with *El Elyon, God Most High*, but as the strong, loving parent who feeds His children and does what is best for them. This God not only wants to provide for His children, but to make them fruitful, too. In today’s Bible passage, God appears to Abram as *El Shaddai* to confirm His covenant with him. Review with your students what they have learned about Abram and then read Genesis 17:1-8. You may choose to read later through verse 14 or to finish the chapter. The Genesis 17 passage is a whole and the necessity of circumcision is integral to God’s work as *El Shaddai*. However, this topic would almost

certainly be difficult and perhaps unwise to broach with fifth and sixth graders, so it will probably be best to focus instead on Job and Hebrews to explain the relationship between nourishment and suffering.

Tell your students that when the name *El Shaddai* appears in Scripture, it often speaks of the person in relationship with God as being fruitful (Genesis 28:3; 35:11). Explain that it is also often linked with suffering. The name occurs most frequently in the book of Job. Summarize the story of Job for your class. You may wish to take time to read Job 1-2 and 42. Also read Hebrews 12:5b-7 and/or John 15:1-5 (the name *El Shaddai* does not appear in these passages).

You may wish to bring in a snack for your students to remind them that God not only provides for our bodies, but feeds our souls and spirits. Close your class in prayer, thanking God for nourishing us and asking Him to continue to sustain you and conform you to His image.

Questions on Genesis 17

17:1-2 - Why would God's appearance and words have been an encouragement to Abram? Why would God's revelation of Himself as *El Shaddai* have been reassuring? What command did God give Abram?

17:3 - How did Abram respond to God? Abram's response to God should be ours as well.

17:4 - Note how gracious God is to renew and expand His promise of blessing to Abram despite Abram's efforts to take things into his own hands by fathering Ishmael. How does God's covenant here expand on His previous promise?

17:5 - What is the difference in the meaning of *Abram* and *Abraham*? Why is this significant?

17:6-8 - What were the three major provisions of God's covenant with Abraham? Why, in what sense, are these blessings so wonderful, more than Abraham could have asked or imagined?

17:9-14 - How were Abraham and his descendants to keep God's covenant?

17:15-16 - To what did God change Sarai's name?

17:17-18 - What was Abraham's attitude towards God's word?

17:19-22 - What was God's response to Abraham?

17:23-27 - Although he questioned God, Abraham obeyed Him. Why would his desire for a son have made it particularly difficult for Abraham to follow God's command [note the link between suffering and fruitfulness; Abraham on his own could not bear a son, but when he obeyed God and cut away the flesh he could; see also Jeremiah 4:4]?

Questions on John 15:1-5

- Who is the vine in this passage?
- Who is the Gardener?
- Who are the branches of the vine?
- What does the Gardener do to unfruitful branches?
- What does He do to fruitful branches?
- Can a branch produce fruit by itself?
- What must a branch do in order to produce fruit?

Questions on Hebrews 12:5b-7

- To whom does this passage compare the Lord?
- What do fathers and the Lord do to their sons?
- Why do they do this?

This passage does not use the name *El Shaddai* for God, but it links God's loving care with suffering. This can be seen in a book of the Old Testament, a book that uses the name of God *El Shaddai*, Almighty God the Nourisher more times than any other yet tells the story of a man who suffered so greatly as to become proverbial for pain. His name is Job.

Questions on Job

- What was Job's life like at the beginning of the book?
- What happened to him?
- Who did his friends blame for Job's suffering?
- Who did Job's wife blame for their troubles?
- What was Job's response?
- What was his attitude toward God?
- In what ways and why did Job's attitude toward God change at the end of the book?
- Did God ever give Job a reason for why he had suffered so much?
- What was Job's situation at the end of the book?
- Why is *El Shaddai* an appropriate name for God in this book?

Song

If possible, sing or listen to "El Shaddai" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #42).

JEHOVAH JIREH

Genesis 22:1-19

Lesson Aim

That your students would know more of *Jehovah Jireh*, the Lord who provides.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week, Exodus 3:8 - “So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey - the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.”

Lesson Background

In the account recorded in Genesis 15, God revealed Himself to Abram as Jehovah (Yahweh) the Lord, the covenant-keeping God. Abraham was to learn, through a great trial of faith, that the Lord would supply all that was needed to keep that covenant. He is *Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide*.

It seems incomprehensible to us that the all-wise, loving Lord would test Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his only son Isaac. God said in Deuteronomy 18:10-12, “Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord” God had no intention of actually allowing Isaac to die, but we do not know to what extent Abraham understood this. The command was put forth, and Abraham did what God told him immediately (Genesis 22:3) and completely in one of the most remarkable instances of obedience recorded in Scripture. The agony of the ordeal was multiplied many fold, for Isaac was not only a beloved child, but the long-awaited son of promise, the key to the covenant.

It is difficult to imagine Abraham's thoughts as he made preparation for sacrifice - gathering supplies, informing Sarah (presumably), Isaac and the servants of the trip, cutting the wood to burn for the offering, saddling his donkey - and traveling steadfastly forward three days to the place of death God Himself had chosen. Thirteen-year-old Isaac had some concerns about the journey as well. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Did Abraham really believe this? Nothing in Scripture indicates that he did not. Yet they reached the place of sacrifice without the appearance of a sacrificial lamb. Abraham built an altar, arranged the wood, bound Isaac, and laid him upon it. The Bible mentions no rebellion on the part of Isaac, remarkable trust in view of the circumstances. Of course, scriptural silence does not preclude a struggle. In support of Isaac's submission, many point out that a thirteen-year-old could easily overpower a man over a hundred years old. Yet most people lived longer, probably healthier lives, in those years described in the first chapters of Genesis. Abraham reached the age of one hundred and seventy-five years. At one hundred, he had walked three days and climbed a mountain to arrive at the place of sacrifice. It is not inconceivable that he could overpower an unsuspecting Isaac.

The sacrifice was ready and Abraham took the knife to slay his son. It was then that God intervened. "The angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, 'Abraham! Abraham! . . . Do not lay a hand on the boy,' he said. 'Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son'" (Genesis 22:11-12). Then Abraham looked up and there was a ram for sacrifice caught in a thicket. God had provided. "So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided'" (Genesis 22:14). *Jehovah Jireh* and *El Roi* actually come from the same root, *ra'ah*, to see. The word means *to see* or *to see to it*, in other words, *to provide*.

God was pleased with Abraham's obedience and renewed His covenant with him: "I swear by myself . . .," the Angel of the LORD said. An oath taken in the name of one greater than oneself would make good the promise, like someone today, for example, co-signing a loan. However, no one is greater than God, so He swore by Himself. "I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies and through your offspring all the nations of the earth will be blessed because you have obeyed me" (Genesis 22:15-18). Our obedience and willingness to sacrifice brings blessing to others as well as ourselves.

God is *Jehovah Jireh* for us as well as Abraham and Isaac. Like Isaac, we have the expectation of being killed, and we deserve it; but He has provided a sacrificial Lamb to save us from eternal death (John 1:29; Hebrews 9:11-15; 10:3-10). Our salvation in Christ is paramount, yet God's provision is not limited to this. "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things" (Romans 8:32). He will give us all we need to accomplish His will, even providing the longing to please Him (Philippians 2:13). He will even give us the desires of our hearts if we delight ourselves in Him (Psalm 37:4). We can trust in the Lord. He may test our love (although never contrary to His Word), but will work all things together for good to His children (Romans 8:28) and "repay from His fullness all He takes away" (Katherina von Schlegel, *Be Still My Soul*). As Paul wrote to the Philippians, "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). For this we thank Him.

Lesson Procedure

Ask your students the following and discuss: “How would you like to be a prince or a princess? What would your life be like? Would you ever have to worry about being hungry or cold or having your needs met? Would your father always give you what you wanted? Why or why not? Could he give you everything you wanted even if he desired to do so? What would be the most important things he would give you?” Explain to your students that if they know the Lord, they do have a king for their father. Discuss the implications of this and then ask, “What would you do if one day the king asked you to give up something that was very special to you and didn’t even tell you why? One day God asked Abraham to give up the most important thing in his life.”

Bible Story

Read and discuss Genesis 22:1-19. Focus on Abraham’s obedience and God’s provision (be sure your students understand that God hates human sacrifice and will never ask us to do anything that is contrary to His Word). Talk about the importance of obeying God and the blessing it will bring to ourselves and others. Explain how God has provided for His peoples’ salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God, and how He will provide for their other needs as well. He is *Jehovah Jireh*.

Questions on Genesis 22:1-19

22:1-2 - Imagine Abraham’s thoughts and feelings at this time. Why would this command have been even more difficult for Abraham than for any father [Isaac was the long-awaited child of promise through whom God would bless the earth]? What was God’s reason for giving Abraham this command? Read and consider Deuteronomy 18:10-12 and Matthew 10:37-38.

22:3-7 - What was Abraham’s response to God’s command? Imagine how difficult it would have been for him to talk with Sarah and Isaac at this time.

22:8 - Do you think Abraham really believed this [nothing indicates to the contrary, but we do not know, though Hebrews 11:19 commends Abraham’s faith in God]?

22:9 - Isaac was thirteen years old and Abraham was an old man (but one strong enough to take a three-day hike into the mountains). Do you think Isaac trusted Abraham (if so, what amazing obedience, love, and trust on his part) or struggled against him [Scripture indicates no struggle, but the Bible’s silence does not preclude the possibility]?

22:10-12 - Again, imagine the situation. What great obedience and what wonderful provision!

22:12 - What was the reason God gives here for His reprieve of Abraham?

22:13 - What did God provide for Abraham to offer in sacrifice?

22:14 - What did Abraham call that place on the mountain? This name for the Lord is *Jehovah Jireh*.

22:15-19 - What three things did the Angel of the Lord say would be the result of Abraham’s obedience? Will God bless us as well if we obey Him? Should this be the reason for our obedience?

Is it as important for us to obey God today as it was for Abraham? Why? What are some ways in which we can obey God? Can you think of a time when it was difficult for you to obey God? Would you tell us about that experience, and any obvious results of your obedience or disobedience?

Did Isaac deserve to die? What did God provide as a substitute for Isaac? Do we deserve to die? What has God provided as a substitute for us? If we are Christians, God is truly for us as He was for Abraham, *Jehovah Jireh*. Is salvation the limit of His provision for us? See Romans 8:32.

Game

Review the names of God studied so far in a game matching the names and their meanings. Write the names of God studied so far on sticky-back note paper (or put tape on the back of regular paper, or hang the names from spring-back clothespins). Line up two or more teams at the opposite end of the room from where you have hung the names. Place a stack of cards with the meanings of the names of God in front of each team. The first players on each team race to the other end of the room to see who can be the first to return to their team with a matching pair; the second player on each team draws the next card and play continues. You may choose to have only one copy of each name of God, in which case the team with the most correct pairs wins, or you may have duplicate copies of the names of God for each team, in which case the team that finishes first with all the correct pairs wins. You should play this game, or one of the other matching-type games and activities found in the Activity Book, for many of this quarter's lessons.

Song

Sing "Jehovah Jireh" (Merla Watson).

JEHOVAH RAPHA

Exodus 15:22-27; II Kings 20:1-11

Lesson Aim

That your students would know more of Jehovah Rapha, the Lord who heals.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week, Exodus 3:9-10 - “And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

Lesson Background

God often brings blessing at times of great desperation. In Exodus 15, a situation of imminent death became the occasion for God to declare that He is *Jehovah Rapha*, the *Lord who heals*.

The Israelites had been trapped in a cul-de-sac, mountains on both sides, the Red Sea in front of them, and Pharaoh and his army in strong pursuit. God miraculously delivered Israel from their enemies, opening the sea for them to cross while drowning the Egyptians in the returning flood. Moses then led the Israelites to the Desert of Shur where, once again, the situation looked hopeless. “For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter (that is why the place is called Marah)” (Exodus 15:22b-23; *Marah* means *bitter*; as also Ruth 1:20). Three days without water would have put many in the group on the verge of death. Arriving exhausted at a place full of the promise of relief only to find the water undrinkable would have been a crushing blow. Small wonder (although still inexcusable sin) that the people grumbled, for their trust was in their circumstances rather than their God. Moses cried out to the Lord, who showed him a piece of wood

which, when thrown into the water, made it sweet. Whether this wood actually had special properties, inherent or temporary, or whether it was only a sign of Moses' obedience, is unknown and not very important. God heard Moses' prayer, Moses did what God told him to do, and God had compassion on His people. Not only did the Lord sweeten the waters of Marah, but He soon brought them to Elim, an oasis of twelve springs and seventy palm trees, a place of great blessing and abundance after their privation (see II Kings 2:19-22 for another instance when God healed a source of water; do we trust the source of living water to supply our needs?).

Before Elim, however, there was the testing and promise at Marah. "There the Lord made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them. He said, 'If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you'" (Exodus 15:25-26; see also Exodus 23:25-26; Deuteronomy 7:14-16; 28). If the Israelites obeyed the Lord, he would be for them *Jehovah Rapha*, the *Lord who heals*.

Throughout Scripture, God reveals Himself as the Healer. God healed Abimelech, king of Gerar, in response to Abraham's prayer (Genesis 20:17). The Lord worked through the ministry of Elisha to bring healing to an Aramean army officer and to bring a boy back to life (II Kings 5; 4:8-37). David said, "O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me. O Lord, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit" (Psalm 30:2-3). The Gospels abound with instances of Jesus healing people. Matthew reports, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them" (Matthew 4:23-24). Acts and the epistles as well speak of God's healing and His using His people in this ministry (Acts 3:1-9; 5:12-16; 8:5-8; 9:32-42; 14:8-10; 19:11-12; 28:7-9; I Corinthians 12:9).

The Lord not only heals physical disease, but spiritual and emotional affliction, even on a national level. Psalm 147:3 states, "He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds." Through Hosea the Lord spoke to rebellious Israel, saying, "I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them" (Hosea 14:4). God told Solomon, "if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (II Chronicles 7:14). Isaiah prophesies of the Messiah in the following words: "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4-5). Both Matthew and Peter point to these verses, the former seeing them pointing to His healing of bodies (Matthew 8:16-17) and the latter to our deliverance from sin (I Peter 2:24).

There is an intimate connection between sin and sickness. When Moses' sister Miriam sinned, God punished her with leprosy, but Moses prayed for her healing (Numbers 12:13). When the Israelites again complained about lack of food and water, God sent venomous snakes among them, but healed any who looked at the bronze snake on a pole (Numbers 21:4-9, a story that is symbolic of what Christ has done for us - see John 3:14-15). David prayed, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits - who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases" (Psalm 103:2-3; note Hebrew poetic parallelism). Psalm 41 intertwines right behavior and God's healing: "Blessed is he who has regard for the weak . . . The Lord will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness. I said, 'O Lord, . . . heal me, for I have sinned against you'" (Psalm 41:1-4). On a number of occasions in the Gospels, Jesus spoke of His forgiveness to the people He healed (e.g., Mark 2:1-12; John 5:14). Paul warned the Corinthians to examine themselves before partaking of the Lord's Supper, for many were weak and sick among them and, in fact,

a number had died because they had eaten and drunk in an unworthy manner (I Corinthians 11:27-32). When God's people sin, He will punish them, but He is eager to restore them. Hosea said to sinful Israel, "Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds" (See also Isaiah 19:22; 30:26). James says, "Is any of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven" (James 5:14-15).

This is not to say that sickness necessarily indicates that a person is in rebellion against God. The examples of Job and Paul (II Corinthians 12:7-10) clearly indicate otherwise. Often God uses suffering to bring glory to Himself (John 9:1-3f; 11:4). Sometimes the Lord will miraculously heal a person, at other times do so through medical means, or the person may continue to undergo affliction. If the suffering must continue, it is not the heartless action of a capricious despot. The Lord is compassionate (Matthew 14:13-14) and works all things together for good (Romans 8:28). Sometimes people are not healed because of rebellion or unbelief (Matthew 13:58). The Lord frequently heals in response to trust in Him (Matthew 9:22; 9:28-29; 15:28; Mark 2:1-12; Acts 14:8-10), but sometimes He chooses to do so despite a lack of faith.

Scripture does not indicate the extent of Hezekiah's faith, but he knew enough to turn to the Lord in his time of need. This God-fearing king of Judah had become ill, and the Lord sent word to him through the prophet Isaiah that he would not recover, but die. Hezekiah prayed, reminding God of his faithfulness to him and weeping bitterly. Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him. He was to tell Hezekiah that the Lord would heal him, adding fifteen years to his life, that Hezekiah would go up to the Temple of the Lord three days hence, and that God would deliver Jerusalem from the hand of the king of Assyria. Isaiah told Hezekiah's attendants to apply a poultice of figs to the boil, which they did. Hezekiah asked for a sign that the Lord would heal him, and Isaiah, after further questioning of Hezekiah, agreed that amazingly the shadow would go backwards the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz (II Kings 20:1-11; also Isaiah 38:1-22; II Chronicles 32:24-26).

Some people see Hezekiah's healing as a judgment rather than a blessing, but this is contrary to the sense of the passage and God's nature as *Jehovah Rapha*. It is true that God punished Judah and Jerusalem for Hezekiah's pride (II Chronicles 32:25), and that Hezekiah's son Manasseh, one of the most evil kings Judah was to endure, may have been born during Hezekiah's fifteen-year life extension. Yet Hezekiah's sin does not mean he was wrong to ask God to heal him; it does not negate God's mercy, as even the II Chronicles passage indicates. Healing is not as important as a person's response to it.

God is sovereign; He is the One in charge of life and death, healing and pain. In Deuteronomy 32:39, the Lord declares, "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal and no one can deliver out of my hand." Suffering is part of life and we cannot demand that the Lord keep us from it. But God is a compassionate Father who delights in healing His people. He is *Jehovah Rapha*. May we trust Him and respond to Him in love and praise.

Lesson Procedure

Introduce the lesson approximately as follows: "Have you ever gone on a long hike with your family and forgotten to bring anything to drink? How glad you would have been to find a water fountain somewhere along the trail. Imagine, though, what it would be like if there were no source of water anywhere along your journey, and suppose that you had been walking, not just for one day, but for three days without anything to drink! How would you feel? Now imagine that just up ahead, you see a stream. Eagerly you stagger toward it, cup your hand, and take a swallow - blech! It's horrible, bitter and polluted! You couldn't drink

this if your life depended on it (and it does)! What are you going to do now? This is what happened to the Israelites in the Bible story we will study today.”

Read and discuss Exodus 15:22-27. Discuss what it means that God is *Jehovah Rapha*. Have your students mention other Scriptures they know that talk about God healing (see Lesson Background; include verses that deal with healing in a non-physical sense). Read and discuss II Kings 20:1-11 and talk about the implications of these passages (e.g., Does God heal people today? How does He heal? Does He always heal? Why might He choose to heal or not to heal someone? What, as can be seen in the example of Hezekiah, is more important than whether or not God heals someone?).

Questions on Exodus 15:22-27

15:22-24 - Imagine traveling three days without finding water. The Israelites would have carried some water with them, but by the time they reached Marah, their water supply would have been seriously depleted. In such desert conditions, some may have even been close to death. At last they arrived, only to find that the water was undrinkable (they named the place *Marah*, which means *bitter*, for this reason). “So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, ‘What are we to drink?’” Were they justified in doing so? Why was grumbling against Moses also grumbling against God? What had occurred three days earlier that showed God’s power and love for His people? Would God have delivered them from the Egyptians only to let them die in the desert? When we are suffering, do we focus on the circumstances or on God, who has promised to take care of His people?

15:25 - What was Moses’ response? What was God’s answer?

15:22-26 - What were the conditions and blessings of the law the Lord made for the Israelites [if . . . then . . .]?

15:27 - How did the Lord further bless the Israelites?

Questions on II Kings 20:1-11

20:1 - What was the situation?

20:2-3 - What was King Hezekiah’s response to the situation?

20:4-5 - What was God’s answer to Hezekiah’s prayer? Does God always answer prayer this quickly?

20:6 - What additional blessing did God promise Hezekiah?

20:7 - What was the cause of Hezekiah’s illness? What remedy did Isaiah prescribe [God may have healed through these medical means or solely miraculously]?

20:8 - What do you think of Hezekiah’s request for a sign?

20:9-11 - What sign did the Lord grant Hezekiah? Do you realize the possible implications of this miracle?

“One of the Names by which God has chosen to reveal Himself is *Jehovah Rapha*, the Lord who heals. Today we saw two instances where God brought healing. Can you think of other times in Scripture where He did so [list and briefly discuss]? Does God still heal people today? How does He heal [through medicine, miraculously]? Why might God choose to heal or not to heal someone? What is more important than whether or not a person becomes well?

Story

Perhaps you know someone who would be willing to testify to your class to God’s healing work in his life or someone who has endured suffering who would testify to God’s grace in his situation (both are equally valid expressions of God’s work in one’s life, but the former ties in more closely with the lesson).

You may instead wish to read a modern story of God healing someone, such as when twelve-year-old David Wilkerson prayed for God to heal his father (David Wilkerson, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, chapter 5, p.40-42; note that this is a readily-accessible resource, and citing it does not imply approval of the author's theology in any sense). Close your lesson by having your class pray for those they know who are sick.

JEHOVAH NISSI

Exodus 17:8-16

Lesson Aim

That your students would know more of Jehovah Nissi, the Lord my banner.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week, Exodus 3:11-12 - “But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’ And God said, ‘I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.’”

Lesson Background

People like to feel self-sufficient - strong, capable, in control. We all, however, encounter situations in which the truth becomes evident - we are helpless without the intervening hand of God. In Exodus 17, the Lord once again showed the Israelites their total dependence upon Him and His desire to help them in all their struggles.

As the Israelite community was traveling toward the Promised Land, they were attacked at Rephidim by a group of Amalekites. These people, who lived in the desert south of Canaan near Kadesh, were descendants of Esau by his eldest son Eliphaz (Genesis 36:12). They attacked the weary Israelites from the rear, cutting off those lagging behind, and then apparently making a temporary retreat (Deuteronomy 25:17-18). Moses told Joshua to choose some men to fight the Amalekites, and the following day the battle ensued. Moses stood on top of a hill, holding in his hands the staff of God by which the Lord had wrought so many miracles in Egypt. “As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he

lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning”(Exodus 17:11). He was aided in his task by his brother Aaron and Hur (perhaps the grandfather of Bezalel mentioned in I Chronicles 2:18-20 or, as Josephus maintains, the husband of Miriam). When Moses grew tired, Aaron and Hur gave him a stone to sit on and held up his hands, one on each side. “. . . his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword” (Exodus 18:12b-13).

As throughout the long day the combatants looked toward the hill, the significance of Moses’ action became clear. Joshua and his army were completely reliant on God for victory. We, like the Israelites, can conquer in the battles we must face, but only by God’s grace. Spiritual conflict is inevitable, for we face a merciless enemy (who like the Amalekites attacks those who are weak and weary), but we will prevail as long as there are those, like Moses, who will beseech God on our behalf (and even those who, like Aaron and Hur, will support them in their praying). We must not become proud and think that we can succeed by ourselves. Later when Israel attempted to fight the Amalekites in their own strength, they were utterly devastated (Numbers 14:41-45). Arrogance is a temptation for even the best of men. That the truth would be known, God told Moses to chronicle the day’s events in a scroll and to be sure Joshua heard of it.

Moses knew the Source of their victory. He built an altar and called it *The Lord my Banner (Jehovah Nissi)*, “For hands were lifted up to the throne of the Lord” (Exodus 17:15-16). *Jehovah* is, of course, the self-revealed covenant name of God. It is compounded with a form of the word *nes* meaning *to be high, raised, conspicuous*, and therefore alluding to an ensign, or banner. Using this same word, the psalmist in Psalm 60 writes, “For those who fear you, you have raised a banner to be unfurled against the bow” (Psalm 60:4). A flag raised in warfare is symbolic of the cause for which one is fighting. Warriors are encouraged by its presence, for they know that as long as it flies victory is possible. We can fight knowing that the banner of God will never fall. Let us, like Moses, lift our hands to the throne of God in supplication and praise (Exodus 17:15; I Timothy 2:8; Psalm 63:4).

Lesson Procedure

You may wish to introduce your lesson with the following game, for which you will need an abundance of newspaper and a five-to-ten-pound weight, such as flour, sugar or potato bags. Divide your class into two teams, which stand at opposite ends of the room. Have them throw paper balls (which they make by crumpling up the newspaper) at each other in mock battle. If a player is hit a certain number of prearranged times, he is out of the game. The team with the most players at the end of the time limit wins. The wrinkle in this game (which helps bring correlation with the Bible story) is that only one team may throw the paper balls at a time. An individual on the “Israelite” team is designated weight-carrier. As long as he holds the weight in his outstretched arms, his team may throw the balls, but when his hands drop, the Israelites must stop throwing and the “Amalekites” can throw their balls. Figure out beforehand at what angle the weight-carrier must hold his weight (in front of him? to the side? palms up or down? one hand or two?) and how far his hand must drop to change the direction of play. How he holds the weight will determine how heavy you make it, for doing so should be possible for only short periods of time, and hand position and strength of your students will be determining factors. If you use flour or sugar bags, be sure to place them in one or more plastic bags lest they create a mess if they are dropped. Be sure you explain the ground rules of the game to your class and closely supervise play, or it may get out of hand and arguments may ensue as to whether or not a person was hit.

If you do not choose to use this game, ask your students about battles they have read about or seen on film; consider the function of a flag in battle. Read Exodus 17:8-16 (also Deuteronomy 25:17-18) and discuss. Point out the essential nature of prayer and the fact that God is *Jehovah Nissi*. Review the names of God you have studied so far.

Questions on Exodus 17:8-16

17:8 - As the Israelites continued their journey from Egypt, they were attacked by the Amalekites, a people who were descendants of Esau. Read Deuteronomy 25:17-18 to see the Amalekites' initial strategy. Satan tends to attack us when we are worn out and vulnerable.

17:9 - What was the staff of God? When had it been used by Moses before?

17:10-13 - What two things were necessary for victory in the battle [Joshua and his men fighting and Moses lifting up the staff of God]? Of what is lifting one's hands symbolic (see I Timothy 2:8 and Psalm 63:4)? Was either job easy? Notice that Moses could not do his job alone, nor could Joshua.

17:14 - Why did God want Moses to write these events on a scroll?

17:15 - *The Lord is my banner* is *Jehovah Nissi*. What is the purpose of a flag or banner in war?

17:16 - The word for *banner* also comes from a word meaning *to be high*. God gave victory as "hands were lifted up to the throne of the Lord."

Activity

This would be a good week to make cloth banners with the names of God.

EL OLAM

Isaiah 40:27-31 and various

Lesson Aim

That your students may know more of El Olam, the Everlasting God.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week, Exodus 3:13 - “Moses said to God, ‘Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?’”

Lesson Background

The idea of eternity is mind-boggling. We can grasp the idea of hundreds or thousands of years, and possibly even millions or billions, but for something to have no beginning or no end is inconceivable. God is an eternal God. He has no beginning and no end. He has always existed and always will be. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last (Revelation 22:13). He is the everlasting God, *El Olam*.

The implications of God’s eternity are great. He is eternal in His attributes. He is, has been, and always will be all-powerful, all-loving, and all-wise. He knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). He is not limited by time or space. The people of Judah who were being threatened with Assyrian invasion during the time of Isaiah needed to be reminded of this fact as they complained, “My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God” (Isaiah 40:27). God’s response to them was that He is *El Olam*, the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. God’s eternity implies his knowledge of their situation, what brought it about, and what would happen to them in the future. If God has the power and wisdom to create the universe, He has the power to look after His people and the wisdom to do what is best

for them. Finite man cannot understand the infinite God. Even the strongest youths grow weary, but *El Olam* does not, and He will renew the strength of those who hope in Him.

God is the eternal king (Psalm 93:2; 145:13; Jeremiah 10:10) who established His covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:7; 21:33; Psalm 105:8-10). When God's people broke His law, He sent His Son Jesus as a propitiation for His people's sins (Micah 5:2). God has an everlasting love for His people (Psalm 103:17-18; 100:5); He will take them to live with Him forever (Daniel 12:2) and give them everlasting joy (Isaiah 35:10). For all this, God deserves our eternal praise. "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from *everlasting* to *everlasting*. Let all the people say, 'Amen!' Praise the Lord" (Psalm 106:48).

Lesson Procedure

You may introduce the lesson by having your students make marks on a paper or do some other repetitive activity such as throwing a bean bag in the air. How many marks did they make? How long would it take to make a million marks? A billion (1×10^9 , that is 1 followed by nine zeros)? A trillion (1×10^{12})? Do they think, "That would take forever!" What do we mean by the words *forever*, *eternal* or *everlasting*? Discuss this concept and the fact that God is *El Olam*, the *everlasting God*. What are the implications of this aspect of God's character? Read Isaiah 40:27-31 and discuss. Your lesson should focus more on God as *El Olam* than on this passage per se.

After you have discussed Isaiah 40:27-31, explain to your students that there are a number of verses that speak of God as *El Olam* or that refer to the eternal aspects of who He is. The responsive reading below incorporates some of these passages. The teacher, or a selected person or group, should read the sentences written in boldface while the rest of the class reads the parts in regular script. Words translating the Hebrew word *olam* (*everlasting*, *eternal*) are italicized.

God is El Olam, the Everlasting God.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from *everlasting* to *everlasting* you are God. You turn men back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night (Psalm 90:1-4).

Your throne was established long ago; you are from all *eternity* (Psalm 93:2).

Your kingdom is an *everlasting* kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations (Psalm 145:13).

God revealed Himself to Abraham.

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called upon the name of the Lord, the *Eternal* God (Genesis 21:33).

The Lord made a covenant with Abraham. He said:

I will establish my covenant as an *everlasting* covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you (Genesis 17:7).

He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an *everlasting* covenant (Psalm 105:8-10).

Abraham's descendants broke God's law and turned to idols, false gods with no power that are worshiped for a short time.

But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the *eternal* king. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath (Jeremiah 10:10).

God will punish those who rebel against Him.

Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to *everlasting* life, others to shame and *everlasting* contempt (Daniel 12:2).

But from *everlasting* to *everlasting* the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children - with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts (Psalm 103:17-18).

God loved His people so much that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be born in Bethlehem, live on earth, and die as a sacrifice.

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from *ancient times* (Micah 5:2).

Let us give our lives to God.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way *everlasting* (Psalm 139:23-24).

Trust in the Lord forever for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock *eternal* (Isaiah 26:4).

Those who trust in the Lord will know great joy.

And the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; *everlasting* joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away (Isaiah 35:10).

Let us praise our great God, El Olam.

For the Lord is good and his love endures *forever*; his faithfulness continues through all generations (Psalm 100:5).

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from *everlasting* to *everlasting* (Psalm 41:13).

Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, from *everlasting* to *everlasting*. Let all the people say, "Amen!" Praise the Lord (Psalm 106:48).

JEHOVAH SABAOTH

Isaiah 36-37

Lesson Aim

That your students would know more of Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week, Exodus 3:14 - "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you."'"

Lesson Background

God's Word often uses military imagery. We have seen that God is *Jehovah Nissi*, the Lord who is a banner, a war flag, the One to whom we look for victory. He is also *Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts*.

The word *Sabaoth* means to assemble together. So God is the Lord of armies, the Commander of heavenly hosts (Psalm 148:2). The name is translated in the New International Version as *Lord Almighty* (this is not to be confused with *El Shaddai, Almighty God*). *Jehovah Sabaoth* is used throughout Scripture, particularly, it seems, during times of crisis in Israel's history when they needed the strong hand of the Lord to rescue them from their foes. For example, it occurs in I Samuel 17:45, the account of David's fight with Goliath, and also a number of times in the book of Zechariah, where the people needed God's supernatural help to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. King Hezekiah, too, was someone who knew that his only hope for victory lay in the intervention of *Jehovah Sabaoth* (Isaiah 36-37 and II Kings 18-20).

“In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah’s reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them”(Isaiah 36:1). Sennacherib dispatched his *Rabshekah* (*chief; great one; NIV - field commander*) with a large army to Jerusalem. Hezekiah sent his three leading men, Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph the recorder, to the Upper Pool on the way to the Washerman’s Field to meet with the field commander [interestingly, this is the place where years earlier Isaiah had confronted King Ahaz, who, rather than trusting in the Lord, actually turned to Assyria for help against Aram and Israel, which were attacking him at the time (Isaiah 7; II Kings 16)]. Arrogantly, the field commander enumerated reasons why Hezekiah should surrender to the Assyrians. Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, concerned lest the Rabshekah’s speech should dishearten the people of Jerusalem, asked him to speak in Aramaic rather than Hebrew, the Judean language. The commander not only refused, but raised his voice, telling the common people they should not believe Hezekiah when he said they would be rescued. In obedience to the king’s command, the people remained silent. Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah returned to Hezekiah with their clothes torn in grief to report their deliberations.

When Hezekiah heard the news, he, too, tore his clothes and humbled himself, putting on sackcloth. His distress was not only due to the presence of Assyria, but also in recognition of God’s judgment. He knew that, like a child unable to come to birth (Isaiah 37:3), his people could only be delivered by God’s help, so he went into the Temple to seek the Lord and sent for Isaiah the prophet. Isaiah sent back this message: “Tell your master, ‘This is what the Lord says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard - those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me [indeed, this was the point, although God did have great compassion for the people of Judah who were suffering]. Listen! I am going to put a spirit in him so that when he hears a certain report, he will return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword’” (Isaiah 37:6-7).

And so, Sennacherib, receiving a report that the Cushite king of Egypt was marching out to fight against him, withdrew from Jerusalem, but, in parting, declared to Hezekiah Assyria’s power and will to destroy them. He called God a liar and warned the king not to trust in Him (Isaiah 37:10-13). When Hezekiah received the letter, he returned to the Temple and spread it out before the Lord. We can learn much from his prayer at this time. Hezekiah opened his prayer with adoration and an acknowledgment of who God is; he acknowledged that *Jehovah Sabaoth*, the Lord of hosts (NIV, *Lord Almighty*) is God over all the kingdoms of the earth (Isaiah 37:16). Although the people of Judah were in desperate straits, his primary concern was for God’s glory (Isaiah 37:17,20). He faced facts, but trusted the Lord (Isaiah 37:18-20).

God honored Hezekiah’s prayer. He sent word through Isaiah, saying that because Hezekiah had prayed, the Lord had spoken against Sennacherib. The prophecy is a taunt song that begins with a picture of Jerusalem as a young virgin disdainfully rejecting the advances of a disagreeable and bothersome suitor. The verses continue by pointing out that the affront was really against the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. Sennacherib arrogantly claimed that he had conquered lands in his own strength, but their victories had been ordained long before by God. However, the tables would be turned and Assyria would suffer as it had made other nations suffer: “But I know where you stay and when you come and go and how you rage against me. Because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth and I will make you return by the way you came” (Isaiah 37:28-29; see also verses 22-27).

The Lord also gave Hezekiah a sign that these things would be fulfilled, saying that the land and people would indeed, year by year, recover from the devastation that had been wrought. As for the king of Assyria, the Lord said, “He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city” (Isaiah 37:33-34). “Then the angel of the Lord went out [the word is used for going forward in battle] and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next

morning - there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there” (Isaiah 37:36-37). About twenty years later, while Sennacherib was worshipping his god, he was murdered by his two sons. Hezekiah trusted God and God fulfilled His word.

We are not being threatened by Assyrian invasion, but we are under attack by an enemy even more cruel than that horrendously ruthless nation. Satan’s strategies are remarkably similar to those of the Rabshekah (Isaiah 36:4-10,12-20). The field commander tried to undermine the confidence of the people of Judah by doubting what they said (verse 5); Satan will try to bring into question our confident assertions about the Lord’s power and goodness. He next inquired about the one or ones upon whom they were relying to deliver them from the hand of Assyria. Was it Egypt, “that splinter of a staff, which pierces a man’s hand and wounds him if he leans on it” (verse 6; are we depending on the things of the world?), or were they depending on the Lord, which in the Rabshekah’s mind was no better? He maintained that Hezekiah, in tearing down the high places and altars to false gods, had rebelled against his God rather than obeying Him, as was the case. People may mock our worship, even saying that it displeases God, or twist our actions so that they appear to be the opposite of what is actually true.

The Rabshekah’s fourth tactic was to question sarcastically the men of Judah’s skill in warfare: “I will give you two thousand horses - if you can put riders on them! How then can you repulse one officer of the least of my master’s officials . . .” (Isaiah 36:8-9). Likewise the devil will taunt us: “You are such a weak Christian! What do you think your foolish little faithless prayers can accomplish? Hardly anyone will even pray with you. You couldn’t defeat even the least of my demons!” The field commander followed this attack by more subtle reasoning, which used a grain of truth to lend credence to blatant error: “Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this land without the Lord? The Lord himself told me to march against this country and destroy it.” Sennacherib was God’s instrument of destruction (Isaiah 37:26), but was motivated by his own selfish desires and sin, not by a desire to be used by the Lord (Isaiah 37:28-29). Satan will try to confuse and misinterpret the circumstances of our lives so that we would doubt God’s goodness and desire to deliver us from evil.

The field commander next tried to instill fear in the common people by graphically picturing what he deemed their probable future (Isaiah 37:12). However, God was in control and there was no cause for His people to worry. We, too, need to trust Him and not give way to fear. The Rabshekah then appealed to the people’s natural desire for peace and security. They had been fighting and going through terrible times, for what? Assyria was going to be victorious anyway, he claimed, so why postpone the inevitable? They had been misled. Life under Assyria’s control was most pleasant. Things would be so much better and simpler if only they would give in. “Make peace with me and come out to me. Then every one of you will eat from his own vine and fig tree and drink water from his own cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your own - a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards” (Isaiah 36:16-17). Satan would similarly tempt Jesus, “All this will I give you . . . if you will bow down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9). “You deserve to take a break and enjoy the ‘good life’ a bit; don’t get involved; what difference does it make? it’s not all that important . . .” Satan’s voice continues to lull and lure God’s people with false promises of pleasure and security.

God’s power and truthfulness (see Isaiah 37:10) were then called into question. The field commander used examples of his dominance with which they were familiar to discourage them. “Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?” (Isaiah 36:18). Where did they ever, then, get the idea that their god was any different? Besides, the argument continues, even if God had the ability to deliver, what makes them think He would want to, especially considering how unfaithful the Israelites had been to Him (Isaiah 36:7,10)? One of Satan’s primary strategies today, as well, is to get God’s people to doubt the Lord’s power and/or love. Yet we need not listen to the Devil’s lies. God is Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts. He has countless armies and almighty power to deliver His people. And

God loved His people so much that He sent His Son to die for us; “. . . how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things” (Romans 8:32).

Lesson Procedure

Introduce your lesson as follows: “Imagine what it would be like to be besieged by a cruel and terrible army. Their forces are far stronger than yours; you could never defeat them or even escape. Day after day your food supplies dwindle. Many are saying, ‘Why don’t we just give in? Perhaps it would be for the best; there is no hope and we can’t hold out much longer,’ but you know God wants you to stand firm. This is the situation the people of Judah found themselves in about seven hundred years before the birth of Christ. The ruthless Assyrian army had captured all the fortified cities of Judah and now reached Jerusalem; the situation was desperate.”

Read and discuss Isaiah 36-37 with your students, bringing out the points emphasized in the Lesson Background such as Hezekiah’s prayer. Explain how Hezekiah addressed God as *Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts*, and how appropriate that was in his situation. Tell your students that we have an enemy who is even more powerful and ruthless than the Assyrians, but that *Jehovah Sabaoth* is mighty to deliver His people from his evil designs. It is probably better to discuss the Rabshekah’s tactics after reading the entire passage so you can compare them with Satan’s wiles at the end of the lesson.

Questions on Isaiah 36-37

36:1-4 - Describe the situation. Imagine how you would feel being surrounded by such a fierce and cruel army, knowing that at any time they might breach the walls, and even if they did not, that as food supplies ran out, surrender and probable torture and death were practically inevitable (humanly speaking).

36:4-10 - What were the main points of the field commander’s (the Rabshekah) speech [write these points on the board to discuss later: what you say is without merit, you can’t depend on man or God, you’ve displeased God with your worship, you have no skill or power in warfare, my attacking you is God’s will]?

36:11 - What was Eliakim, Shebna and Joah’s request to the field commander and why did they ask this?

36:12 - What was the field commander’s reply and why did he answer in this way [to instill fear by explicitly picturing a depressing future; add to your board list]?

36:13-17 - How does the field commander tempt the people in these verses [add to your board list]?

36:18-20 - What is the field commander’s final argument [add to your list]?

36:21-22 - How did the people respond to the field commander?

37:1 - What did King Hezekiah do when he heard what had transpired?

37:2-4 - What else did King Hezekiah do?

37:5-7 - What did the Lord tell Hezekiah through Isaiah the prophet?

37:8-13 - Summarize the content of these verses.

37:14-20 - What did Hezekiah do as soon as he received the letter from the messengers? Do we turn to the Lord as quickly with all the happenings of our lives? We can learn much from the way Hezekiah prayed. What were the main parts of his prayer [adoration recounting who God is and who He is in respect to the situation, petition on the basis of desiring God’s glory, accurately presenting the situation, in faith again petitioning God’s help that He might be glorified]? Hezekiah addressed God as *Jehovah Sabaoth, Lord of Hosts* (NIV - *Lord Almighty*). Why was this an appropriate title for God in Hezekiah’s situation?

37:21-35 - These verses are a taunt song. In the song, what is Israel pictured as? Who is the *you* in the song? What is Assyria seen as? How did Assyria brag (verses 24-25)? Who was really responsible for Assyria's victories (verses 26-27)? What was Assyria's attitude toward God and what was God's plan for Assyria (verses 28-29)?

37:30-32 - What sign did God give Hezekiah?

37:33-35 - What promise did God make to Hezekiah?

37:36-37 - What happened the next day?

37:38 - What eventually happened to Sennacherib, the king of Assyria?

“What sort of battles do we face in life? Satan's tactics against God's people can be similar to those of the field commander (Rabshekah) of Sennacherib's army. Let's look at the list on the board and see if we can find any similarities.”

Songs

“A Mighty Fortress” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #92); “The Battle Belongs to the Lord” (Jamie Owens-Collins, *Maranatha Praise*, #268).

Game

Construct a pathway-type board game of your own design. You may wish to use a military theme and mark hazard and bonus squares accordingly (e.g., run away from the enemy - go back three spaces; strike enemy with sword - take extra turn). Mark special squares to indicate that your students should choose a “Satan's lies” card when they land on this space. Print on these cards one of the lies/tactics the Devil may use (see list below). The player should read the card and then a verse that relates to it, or a general verse about God's power over His enemies, either from a sheet you pass out or from the Bible. If the player reads the verse he may go forward an agreed-upon number of spaces, but if he cannot find an appropriate verse in a given time limit, he must go back the predetermined number of spaces. You may wish to limit the number of times the same verse can be read.

TACTIC	VERSE
God is a liar	Numbers 23:19; John 14:6
God is weak	Isaiah 9:6; 1 John 4:4; Proverbs 18:10
God doesn't care	I John 4:10; Romans 8:31-32
You are weak	James 5:16b
Satan's going to win	Romans 8:31-32; Revelation 20:10
Fear	Romans 8:15; Psalm 27:1
Relax; take it easy	Proverbs 6:10-11
You are too sinful so God won't help	Isaiah 1:18; 1 John 1:9
Your worship is not good	Psalm 149:6
General	II Corinthians 10:4; Psalm 68:1; Psalm 91; Psalm 3

Numbers 23:19	God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should change his mind.
John 14:6	Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me."
Isaiah 9:6	For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
I John 4:4	You, dear children, are from God and have overcome the world, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.
Proverbs 18:10	The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run into it and are safe.
I John 4:10	This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.
Romans 8:31-32	What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also along with him graciously give us all things?
James 5:16b	The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.
Revelation 20:10	And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
Romans 8:15	For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, " <i>Abba</i> , Father."
Psalms 27:1	The Lord is my light and my salvation - whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life - of whom shall I be afraid?
Proverbs 6:10-11	A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest - and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.
Isaiah 1:18	"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."
I John 1:9	If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
Psalms 149:6	May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands.
II Corinthians 10:4	The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.
Psalms 68:1	May God arise, may his enemies be scattered; may his foes flee before him.

Psalm 91 and Psalm 3

JEHOVAH m'QADESH

Leviticus 20:7-8 and various verses

Lesson Aim

That your students would know more of Jehovah m'Qadesh, the Lord who sanctifies.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week, Exodus 3:15 - "God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, "The Lord, the God of your fathers - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob - has sent me to you." This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.'"

Lesson Background

God is holy. We are sinners who have no right to come into His presence. Yet by the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we have gained access to God. Christ imparts His righteousness to us and makes us holy (I Peter 1:15-16; see also Leviticus 1:44-45; 19:2; 20:7). What does it mean to be holy? The word in both Hebrew (*qadesh*) and Greek (*hagios*) means *separate, set apart*, with the strong implication that this is for sacred use. Incredibly, God applies this term to us (I Peter 2:9) because of the finished work of Christ. Although we are holy positionally before God, this holiness has not worked itself out completely in our lives. As temples of His Holy Spirit, God wants us to be holy because He is holy (I Peter 1:15-16; Romans 1:7 - *saints* is a form of the same word as *holy*). Yet we can only do this as He works His will within us (Philippians 2:13). The name of God you will study today brings out this very point. God is *Yahweh m'Qadesh, the Lord who sanctifies*. Leviticus 20:7-8 brings out both human responsibility and the divine enabling necessary to make us holy: "Consecrate (*qadesh*) yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord, who makes you holy (*Yahweh m'Qadesh*)." May we strive to be holy as He is holy, and may God work in our lives to bring this to pass.

Lesson Procedure

Today's Bible lesson focuses on the meaning of holiness and the Lord being Jehovah m'Qadesh, the Lord who sanctifies, by examining a number of passages. Discuss the concepts below as thoroughly as possible. Have your students look up and read the various verses. Begin by asking your class about the meaning of the term *holy*.

“What do you think of when you hear the word *holy*? God is holy. What does this mean? The word *holy* (*qadesh* in Hebrew and *hagios* in Greek) means *separate, set apart*. God is set apart from sin and from His creation. Yet people are sinners. How can we ever enter the presence of a holy God? We can do so only on the basis of the blood of Jesus Christ shed for His people.” Read Hebrews 10:10. “Therefore, Christians are holy.” Read I Peter 2:9. “Because of what Jesus did, we can stand clean before God; if we have put our trust in Him, He sees Christ's righteousness, not our sin. Does this mean we can live any way we want? No. God says that He wants the way we live to come as close as possible to the way He sees us in Christ so that we would be conformed to His image (Romans 8:29; II Corinthians 3:18), so that we would be like Him. God says, ‘But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written: “Be holy because I am holy”’” (I Peter 1:15-16).

Optional discussion: “God's Temple in the Old Testament was a place where God dwelt in a special way. You will remember that there were many rules and things the people had to do to make the Temple a place set apart for God. God says that a Christian's body is His temple (I Corinthians 6:19). If we are believers, He lives inside us by His Holy Spirit; we want our lives to be holy, with each of our bodies a place set apart for Him to live.

Continue: “God calls us to be saints (Romans 1:7; the word is the same as *holy*), holy people.” Show your class a reproduction of a painting in which a saint is distinguished by a halo and ask, “Is this what is meant by a saint? Do saints wear strange clothes and go around with sour expressions on their faces? Then how should God's people be set apart from others? Is there a difference in how you and your non-Christian friends live?”

At this point, discuss and list areas of difference and similarity in lifestyles. Examine such things as what is important to a person, his goals and aspirations, how his time is spent, habits, values, ethics, choice of close friends, what is read and viewed and the like. Have your class think of actual situations in which people they know have lived in a way set apart to God. Ask your students to think of areas in which they need to become more like Christ and challenge them as to what they will do about it. Ask them if they think they should just try harder to be good. Guide the discussion so they see that they will never be able to accomplish this themselves. “Only by the work of God's *Holy* Spirit can a person's life begin to match his holy standing before God. Philippians 2:13 says, ‘for it is God who works in you to will and act according to his good purpose.’”

“You may be wondering why, since we have been studying the names of God this quarter, today's lesson has been on the holiness of God and the holiness of His children. Well, God has revealed Himself by a name that speaks of this, *Jehovah m'Qadesh*, the Lord who makes you holy. In Leviticus 20:7-8 God first talks about our responsibility to set apart ourselves to Him, and then about His enabling to bring that about: ‘Consecrate (*qadesh*) yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord who makes you holy (*Yahweh m'Qadesh*).’ Let us resolve this week to follow God's laws and to be holy as He is holy. Let us now ask Him for help in doing so.” Remind your students that they need to be positionally holy through trusting Christ and His work before they can be practically holy. Tell your students to pray silently, confessing areas where they have not been the people God wants them to be and asking the help of God's Holy Spirit to change them. You should close in audible prayer.

JEHOVAH SHAMMAH

Ezekiel 48:35 and various

Lesson Aim

That your students would know more of Jehovah Shammah, the God who is there.

Memory Verse

Exodus 3:1-15; this week, review Exodus 3:1-15.

Lesson Background

The name *Jehovah Shammah* (*the Lord is there*) is found only in Ezekiel 48:35, but the concept of God being present with His people is found throughout Scripture. Today you will briefly explore some chapters in Ezekiel and some verses in the rest of the Bible that speak of this.

Ezekiel was a priest, captured by the Babylonians, who ministered in exile from 593-571 B.C. He wrote to warn of God's judgment on unrepentant sinners in Jerusalem, His judgment on the heathen nations, and future hope for a godly remnant, including the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. God gave Ezekiel a vision of the appalling sin and vile idolatry to which His people had sunk: "The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance to the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood. And there before me was the glory of the God of Israel, as in the vision I had seen in the plain" (Ezekiel 8:3b-4). Ezekiel was shown idols in the very Temple of the Lord, and on the walls portrayals of animals and crawling things that were being worshiped by the elders. He saw women mourning for the Syrian/Phoenician god Tammuz, men bowing down to the sun and wicked things too horrible even to be described. God could not allow this to continue: "Is it a trivial matter for the house of Judah to do the detestable things they are doing here? Must they also fill the land with

violence and continually provoke me to anger? Look at them putting the branch to their nose! Therefore I will deal with them in anger. I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them” (Ezekiel 8:17b-18). God judged His people by withdrawing His presence from the Temple; in subsequent chapters His Spirit moves farther and farther from the altar (Ezekiel 8:6; 9:3; 10:4,18-19; 11:23).

These chapters discuss other judgments of God on Judah as well. In his vision, Ezekiel saw the Lord speak to a man clothed in linen who was told to put a mark of protection on the foreheads of those who grieved over the idolatry; many (perhaps all) of those without this mark were to be killed. Ezekiel cried lest God destroy the entire remnant of Israel, but God replied that the sin of Israel and Judah was very great and He would not relent (Ezekiel 9). In chapter 10, the man in linen is told to fill his hands with burning coals from among the cherubim that were under the throne of the Lord and to scatter them over Jerusalem. Most of the chapter is taken up in a description of the cherubim. In chapter 11, God told Ezekiel to prophesy that He would drive those living in Jerusalem away from the city, and that they would fall by the sword. However, those who had been taken away into exile would return to Israel. “They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 11:18-20).

Not only that, but someday there would be a new Temple made in the city where God would dwell. God’s Spirit would return (Ezekiel 43:1-7). The name of the city from that time would be: THE LORD IS THERE - *Jehovah Shammah* (Ezekiel 48:35; see also Ezekiel 43-48). People disagree as to the meaning of the last chapters in Ezekiel, as to whether they are fulfilled through the spiritual presence of God in the church or whether they have eschatological significance. What is clear is that the Lord is a merciful God who desires to dwell with His people, so much so that “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). Jesus came as *Immanuel, God with us* (Matthew 1:23). When Jesus returned to the Father, He did not leave us orphans, but sent the Holy Spirit to live in us (John 14; Romans 8:9-11). May we get rid of the idols and things in our lives that God hates, that we might be a holy temple (I Corinthians 6:19-20) and be filled with His presence.

Lesson Procedure

“Have you ever had a strange dream?” Students may wish to share some dreams they have had. “You probably have never dreamed of anything as unusual as what a man named Ezekiel saw. Ezekiel had a vision, which is sort of a wide-awake dream, of some strange things. This vision was given to him by God. Because of Israel’s sin, God had allowed the people to be taken captive and brought to live in Babylon. The Babylonians first took the nobles and people who were considered important to Babylon and then returned twice more for others (605, 597, and 586 B.C.). Ezekiel was living in Babylon when God gave him this vision about the people who remained in Israel. They had refused to repent and were involved in terrible idolatry. God could not allow this to continue, so He punished them. Do you know what was the most terrible judgment He brought about? God left them. Why would that be such a terrible thing? In the Old Testament, where did God dwell in a special way? As we read a section of the book of Ezekiel, notice how God’s Spirit little by little leaves the Temple and finally Jerusalem.”

Read and discuss Ezekiel 8:1-9:3 (continue through chapter 10 if desired). Point out how horrible their idolatry was and how God’s Spirit left the Temple (9:3; 10:4,18-19; 11:23). Explain that this was a horrible judgment, for to be with God is the ultimate good; He is the source of all good. Yet God in His great mercy did not leave Israel in that condition. He promised that someday He would return. Read Ezekiel 43:1-7 and Ezekiel 48:35. The exact meaning of these verses has been debated, so do not spend much time

discussing their fulfillment, but rather emphasize the fact that God is merciful and desires to bless His people, the best of these blessings being His very presence. This is reflected in Ezekiel 48:35, the only place in Scripture where *Jehovah Shammah* appears, although the concept is found throughout God's Word. Ask your students what they can tell you about God being present with His people. Emphasize that Jesus is *Immanuel, God with us* (Matthew 1:23), and that God has given us His Spirit (Romans 8:9-11; Acts 2:38-39). Also point out that for the wicked, God's presence is a terrible thing (Isaiah 19:1) and that hell is such a dreadful place because it is severed from Him and all His blessings (II Thessalonians 1:9). Challenge your students as to whether they desire to be with God. Some verses about God's presence that you may want to consider are listed below.

Psalm 114:7	Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.
I Chronicles 16:27	Splendor and majesty are before him, strength and joy in his dwelling place.
Isaiah 19:1	An oracle concerning Egypt: See, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him [<i>His presence</i>] and the hearts of the Egyptians melt within them.
Psalm 97:2	Clouds and thick darkness surround him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
II Thessalonians 1:9	They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.
Psalm 139:7-9	Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths (<i>Sheol</i>), you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.
John 14:16-17a	And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth (see also John 14:18-27).
Hebrews 13:5-6	Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"
Psalm 16:11	You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.
Psalm 95:2	Let us come before him [<i>His presence</i>] with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.