

FAMILY

by Laura Sweet

**Grades 3-4
Year 2
Quarter 4**

GOD MADE THE FAMILY

Genesis 2:18-25; 5:1-5

Lesson Aim

To give our students a biblical definition of the family.

Memory Verse

Genesis 2:18 - “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’”

Lesson Background

As we begin this quarter on marriage and the family, it is important to give our students a biblical definition of the family. We have seen many in our day try to redefine the family so that it is more inclusive of “alternative” lifestyles. Gone are the days of families consisting of mother, father and children (or so we are told); some insist that the term “family” should include couples who are cohabiting, gay partners, lesbian lovers, and others who are clearly living contrary to God’s will. We begin these lessons with an introduction to the family as God created it: a family beginning with a marriage between two people bound to each other for life and that produces and raises children from that sacred union.

In this day and age it is not only probable but very likely that you have at least one child in your Sunday School class whose family does not fit this ideal mold. We do not want any child to feel guilty or isolated because of the choices his or her parents have made, and this lesson should not be taught in a negative way that might make the child feel ashamed. Rather, we want to hold up before all the children the biblical model for marriage as God intended it to be. Our goal throughout this quarter should be to present

the biblical concept of the family in a positive light, which will help all of our students to make good choices now and in the future.

Lesson Procedure

Begin your lesson this week by asking your students, “Who are the people in your family?” If you have a small class, you can have each student list the people he or she lives with at home. Point out that everyone has family members who live in other homes, like grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc., and while we may not see them every day, they are still part of our families.

“I think most people would say that families are a good idea. It’s good for grownups to take care of children, love them and watch out for them. It’s good to have people on whom you can rely and with whom you can pray and have fun. But the family is more than just a good idea; the family is God’s idea. God decided that people should live together in families, and the first family was started way back in the Garden of Eden. That’s what we’re going to learn about today.”

1. The Family is God’s Idea

Have your students turn to Genesis 2. Remind them that the first two chapters in Genesis tell us about the creation of the world. God made the earth and all of its creatures in six days. The last creatures that God made were the man and the woman. We’ll begin reading in verse 18, right after God creates Adam and puts him in the Garden of Eden.

Read verses 18-22 aloud in class. Explain to your students that Adam by himself was not complete. He needed a partner and a helper to be the creature God wanted him to be. The Lord wanted Adam to understand this need as well, so He brought the animals to him for him to observe and name. It soon became clear to Adam that none of the animals would make a suitable helper for him. Perhaps he also noticed that all of the other animals were created as male and female.

Now Adam was ready for his partner, and the Lord put him to sleep and took one of his ribs to form the first woman. When Adam awoke, the Lord presented him with his helper.

“It was the Lord’s idea to make people in two different sexes, male and female. Genesis 1:27 tells us that both man and woman are made in the image of God. It was God’s idea that the two people would work together and help each other. It was God’s idea that they share life together. This is the beginning of the first family.”

2. The Family Begins With a Marriage

Now have your students finish Genesis 2 by reading verses 23-25. Here we see marriage as God intended it to be from the beginning. Adam declared that Eve was “bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.” Verse 24 is no longer Adam speaking, but Moses’ comment on God’s plan for the family: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”

“Eve was made for Adam. God intended them to live forever as man and wife. God intended Eve to have one husband - Adam. Adam was to have one wife, and the two of them were to begin the first family. They were to be so close to one another that they would be like ‘one flesh,’ or body. God’s plan for the family begins with this marriage between two people who were bound together for life.”

3. The Family Includes Children, Both Boys and Girls

Now have students turn to Genesis 5:1-5 and read these verses aloud in class. These verses show the pattern God established for the human family. God created a man and a woman, and from their union came many sons and daughters. These sons and daughters grew up to marry and have children of their own, who would likewise grow up and establish their own families.

God created the human race to multiply and fill the earth with people. His plan for doing this involves the family. God intended the family to begin with the marriage of a man and woman, bound to each other for life. Then this couple would have children, and raise those children until they were old enough to be out on their own and establish their own families. This is God’s plan for the family; this is how He created it to work.

“Of course, we do not live in a perfect world. Something happened in the Garden of Eden that changed life forever, that changed Adam and Eve forever. Do you know what that was? That’s right, sin entered the world. Adam and Eve became sinners. Because of sin, people don’t always love each other as they ought to. They aren’t always faithful to each other and they don’t always stay married. They don’t always treat their children as God wants them to treat them or teach them what God wants them to teach their children. That’s why families are not always as happy as they should be.”

“But God’s idea for the family hasn’t changed. He still wants marriages to last forever. He still wants parents to raise their children well. His book, the Bible, has much to say about families and about how Moms, Dads and children are to behave in a family. We’re going to be looking at many of these things in the weeks to come because we all want to have happy family lives. We all want to know what God expects from us and how we can live in a way that pleases Him.”

Worksheet

Have students create a “family profile” by answering the questions on the worksheet. This should be about each child’s immediate family, although some children from divorced situations may need to write about two households instead of one. Have students share what they’ve written with the class if they care to do so.

Related Music

“God Made Me”; “The Family of God”; “The Earth, With All That Dwell Therein” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #68).

Your Family

All families are different. Answer the questions below to describe what your family is like.

How many people are in your family? _____

Name them. _____

Who is the youngest person in your family? _____

Who is the oldest person in your family? _____

What kinds of things do you enjoy doing together? _____

Name one special thing you like about one member of your family. _____

Memory Verse

Genesis 2:18 - "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'"

GOD’S PLAN FOR THE FAMILY - Part I

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Lesson Aim

To show students that Christian parents are to instruct their children in the truth and teach them about God.

Memory Verse

Genesis 2:22 - “Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man.”

Lesson Background

The family performs many different functions for its members throughout the years; it is at times a shelter, a hospital, a sanctuary, a loan institution, etc. But first and foremost the family is a classroom, and the parents are the first and best teachers for their children. There are so many things to learn, from tying shoes to driving the family car! But, as we’ll see in today’s lesson, God wants the family to be the primary conveyor of truth, and that truth is contained in His Word. If we teach our children everything else in the universe and neglect to tell them about our Lord, we have failed utterly as parents.

In Deuteronomy 6 Moses tried to impress this responsibility upon the people of Israel just before they entered the Promised Land of Canaan. The Israelites had been wandering in the wilderness for forty years, and an entire generation had died in the wilderness because of their disobedience. As the people prepared to enter and possess the land, Moses not only reminded them of God’s commands, but also of their responsibility to teach these commands to their children and grandchildren.

Unfortunately, as we know from the rest of Bible history, the Israelites usually failed miserably in passing the truth down to their children, and subsequently a godly generation of Jews was usually followed by an idolatrous generation who didn't know the Lord. May we do better, both as parents and as Sunday School teachers, in teaching the children in our care about the Lord and His Word.

Lesson Procedure

Introduce this week's lesson by asking your students to name some of the things that parents teach their children. You may wish to list the things they suggest on a chalkboard or piece of paper. Help your students by suggesting they begin with things that parents teach babies (potty-training, dressing themselves, etc.), then move on to older children (tying shoes, riding bikes, playing softball) and teenagers (how to drive, mow the lawn, do laundry).

"Parents have a lot to teach their children, don't they? But the most important thing that parents need to teach their children comes from God's Word. Parents have a responsibility to teach their children about the Lord. They need to tell them about the Savior and what it means to be a Christian. This is part of God's plan for the family, and it's what we're going to look at in this week's lesson."

1. God Gives His People His Commands (Deuteronomy 6:1-5)

Give your students some of the information contained in the Lesson Background, explaining that the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land after forty years of wandering. Moses, their leader, was now very old; the Lord had told him that he would not be allowed to enter into the Promised Land with the people. Moses wanted the Israelites to understand that God expects His people to be holy. They were not to live like the nations around them. They were to follow God's commands and love and serve Him.

Read Deuteronomy 6:1-5 aloud in class, then ask your students the following questions:

- What are the children of Israel commanded to do? (Keep the Lord's commands; love Him with all their heart, soul and strength.)
- What are the promises given to them if they obey the Lord's commands? (They will enjoy long life; things will go well with them, and they will increase greatly in the land)

"As God's people, the Israelites were to live God's way in the land He was giving them. They were to love and serve Him, and they were to teach their children and their grandchildren to do the same."

2. The Family is to Teach and Live the Truth (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

Now have your students read verses 6-9 aloud in class. Explain that these verses describe the way that parents are to pass down the truth to their children. Point out to your students the different ways in which the parents are to teach the children.

A. They Are to Talk About the Commandments of God

Parents must verbally tell their children about the Lord and about how He expects us to live. They are to impress upon them the importance of godly living, as it is the most important truth that they can pass on to their children.

B. They Are to Make It a Part of Their Daily Lives

Instruction in the truth of God's Word is not to take place only during a specified "teaching" time like Sunday School, but it is to be a way of life. Parents are to teach their children about the Lord at home, on the road, in the morning and the evening. God's Word should be an important feature of family life. While Jews often take verses 8 and 9 literally, binding phylacteries to their foreheads and arms and placing mezuzahs containing Deuteronomy 6:4-9 on their doorframes, these verses should show us that God's Word needs to have a central place in our homes.

"As a mother and child walk down the road together, the mother may point out some of the beautiful things that God has made. As a father prays with a child before bedtime, they can thank God together for their day. As the family gathers together at dinner, they can discuss what God has done for them that day and prayers that have been answered. They may read God's Word together and pray. This is part of God's plan for the family. He wants parents to teach their children the truth, and He wants the family to live the truth together."

Conclusion

Have your students examine themselves and their own role in the family. Do they grumble when it's time to go to church or Sunday School? Do they pay attention when their family prays or reads the Bible together? Do they think talking about God is "boring"? Or do they listen and try to learn more about God? Are they beginning to read God's Word and pray on their own? Are they setting a good example for their younger brothers and sisters?

"If we are truly the Lord's children, we will want to learn all we can about Him. We will enjoy taking part in family discussions about His Word. If we don't have any desire to talk about the Lord, then maybe we don't really know Him. As always, if you have a question about your own salvation, you may see me at the end of class, and we'll talk about it together."

Project

Let's make placemats with Bible verses. Unlike orthodox Jews, we do not tie verses to our foreheads or arms and we don't attach passages of Scripture to our doorframes. But it is still helpful to have things in our home that remind us of God's Word, and these placemats can be a reminder at mealtimes.

Give each student a large piece of construction paper and have them write a Bible verse on the paper with marker or crayon (see below for verse suggestions). Have them decorate the placemat by drawing pictures, attaching stickers, gluing pictures from magazines, etc. When the placemat is finished, cover with clear contact paper to preserve it and make it somewhat waterproof. **Plan on beginning the project this week and finishing it up next week.**

Suggestions for verses to use on placemats:

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good.” Psalm 136:1

“Thanks be to God, who always leads us.” II Corinthians 2:14

“Rejoice in the Lord always.” Philippians 4:4

Related Music

“Thy Word Have I Hid In My Heart” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #136); “Happy The Home When God Is There” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #720).

GOD’S PLAN FOR THE FAMILY - Part II

Ephesians 5:22-33

Lesson Aim

To see the roles that husbands and wives fill in a marriage and how they reflect the relationship Christ has with His church.

Memory Verse

Genesis 2:23 - “The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.’”

Lesson Background

Few subjects are as controversial in the church today as the Bible’s teaching on the role of men and women in the marriage relationship. It is most often misunderstood when the woman’s role is analyzed separately from the Bible’s teaching on the husband’s role and the relationship between Christ and His church. To avoid this, we will consider all three subjects as taught in Ephesians 5. When a Christian marriage is operating as it should, in accordance with God’s will, it becomes a beautiful reflection of the way Christ relates to His Church. This is the truth we want to convey to our students this week, so that they see the beauty - not the controversy - of this New Testament teaching.

Lesson Procedure

Begin your lesson this week by reviewing some of the things we looked at in Lesson 1, particularly the fact that in God's plan the family begins with a man and a woman united together in marriage.

“Did you know that marriage should be a picture of how Christ loves and cares for His Church? That's what the Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5, and that's what we're going to look at today.”

1. The Wife's Role in Marriage (Ephesians 5:22-24)

Have your students turn to Ephesians 5 and read verses 22-24 aloud. Show your students that God's Word teaches that the wife is to submit herself to her husband as a way of serving the Lord. The husband is to be the head of the home and the wife is to be his support and helper. She is to put her rights and desires aside at times for the husband's sake and for the sake of the marriage. This does not mean that the woman is inferior or less of a person in the marriage; this is simply referring to the order that God has put in place for the family.

Ephesians 5:33 goes on to say that the wife is to respect her husband. She is not to ridicule him, call him names, or talk about him behind his back. She is to honor him and give him the respect he deserves.

“Remember when we talked about the creation of Eve in the Garden of Eden? Eve was created to be Adam's helper and special partner in his work. She was made to love him, keep him company, and bear his children. This is still true in the Christian marriage today. The wife should support and honor her husband. She should show her love to him and to her Lord by looking to his needs and desires. She should try to please him by giving him the kind of help he needs.

“Does this mean that the husband is the big boss - that he gets to order her around because God has made him the head of the family? No, not at all. Let's see what the rest of the passage is saying to the men.”

2. The Husband's Role in Marriage (Ephesians 5:25-33)

Now read Ephesians 5:25-33. Point out that the chief command that is given to husbands is to love their wives. Have your students tell you what two examples husbands are given to show them how much they are supposed to love their wives.

- **As their own bodies** - Husbands are to think of their wives as extensions of themselves. They are to give them the same consideration and love and care that they give to themselves and love their wives as much as they love themselves. Remind your students of what Adam said about Eve - “bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh” (this week's memory verse). That's how all husbands are to think of their wives. They are to treat them with gentleness, kindness, love and respect. There is no room for bossiness in this picture of how God expects husbands to treat their wives.
- **As Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her** - Husbands are to look at the supreme example of love - the love of Jesus for His people. He loved His own so much that He gave His life

to save them. He was willing to die for the sake of His church. God wants husbands to love their wives so much that they would even be willing to die, if need be, to protect their wives from danger. A husband should love his wife in this kind of unselfish, giving way.

“When a husband loves his wife enough to die for her, cares for her and thinks of her as a part of himself, and when a woman respects and honors her husband and seeks to please him, then you will see a beautiful, happy marriage. Then you see two people who are working together as partners in life, loving and caring for each other and the needs of their family. But that is not all you see; in this kind of marriage, you also see a picture of how Jesus loves and cares for His Church.”

3. Christ and His Church

Inform your students that when the Bible speaks of *the* Church, it is referring to the bride of Christ - all the believers in Christ who have ever lived or ever will live. We can also refer to the Church as the elect, or all the people for whom Christ died. When the Bible refers to the Church as the bride of Christ, it is showing that there is a special love relationship between Christ and His people. Jesus loves His Church so much that He gave His life to save her. He cares for the Church and has made her holy so that she might be “a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish” (verse 27).

“In verse 32 the apostle Paul says that the relationship between Christ and His Church is a ‘profound mystery.’ It’s not something we can easily understand. But the deep love that a man and a woman have for each other - the deepest love that we can see here on earth - and their commitment to love and care for each other through the rest of their lives is just a picture of how Christ loves His Church. He is bound together with her forever. He thinks of her as His own body, and all believers are members, or parts, of that body. He gave His life for her, and now lives to help her and pray for her and eventually receive her to Himself in heaven.

“It is clear that God views marriage as something very special if He compares it to the relationship between Christ and His Church. It is to be a relationship of deep love. It is to be a relationship of commitment, where two people are willing to stay together and work together and love each other no matter what. Now, people are human and don’t always live up to God’s standard, do they? But that doesn’t mean God’s plan has changed. He still wants marriage to be a special bond that lasts a lifetime. Let’s remember that His Word is the truth and shows us how we ought to live our lives in the world today.”

Project

Help students complete their verse placemats. If you’ve waited until this week to put the contact paper on, you will probably want to do that part yourself, since a large piece of contact paper can be unwieldy and difficult to handle. Students may take the placemats home this week.

Related Music

“The Family of God”; “The Church’s One Foundation” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #347); “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #353).

CHILDREN SHOULD OBEY PARENTS

Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-3

Lesson Aim

To show students that God expects children to obey and honor their parents, who are given the job of instructing and protecting them.

Memory Verse

Genesis 2:24 - “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”

Lesson Background

No matter what our age, we are all children - somebody’s offspring, somebody’s little girl or boy. While the command to “obey” our parents really only lasts until we reach adulthood and are out on our own, the command to “honor your father and mother” is one that continues as long as our parents are living. The Bible does not take lightly the breaking of this commandment; in II Timothy 3, Paul lists some of the worst sins of the last days, and *disobedient to parents* is listed alongside *slandorous, treacherous, rash, conceited*, and many other shocking sins. And in Matthew 15, Jesus has some somber words to say to the scribes and Pharisees, whose traditions allowed them to “get around” supporting their parents in their old age, thus dishonoring their parents and breaking the commandment.

In this lesson we will show our students that God commands them to obey and honor their parents. But we will also show them that this is for their own protection and well-being. Parents are given the great responsibility of teaching and protecting their children, and those who listen to and learn from their parents (especially godly parents) will in this life be far ahead of their contemporaries who think it is “uncool” to

obey. Let's show our students that, while it's not always easy to be obedient, in the end it is in their own best interest to do so.

Lesson Procedure

Have your students turn to Exodus 20 and tell them that this chapter lists the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses and Israel. "While all of these commandments are important, one of them is especially important to children and their parents. Do you know which one that is, or can you find it in the list?" Hopefully one of your students will remember the commandment to "honor your father and mother," and this is where we'll begin the lesson today.

1. Honoring Our Parents

Have your students look at verse 12 and read the verse aloud in class. How we treat our parents matters to God. Whether we are children or adults, we are to honor our parents as long as they live. The word "honor" has many ideas connected to it, and we want to look at some of the things that we should do to honor our parents.

- Respect our parents. God has put our parents in authority over us and He wants us to respect them. We shouldn't give them back talk or call them names behind their back. "Many children today sass their parents or scream at them when they don't get their way. Sometimes we see this on television programs and think that this kind of behavior is all right, or normal. But parents deserve our respect, and it's wrong to speak to them in this way. We honor our parents by respecting them."
- Listen to and learn from our parents. Have your students turn to Proverbs 6:20-23 and read these verses aloud in class. "Parents have a lot of wisdom to share with their children, if only because they are older and have been through many of the things you are going through today. Parents are more aware of the dangers that children can encounter, and they also know the easiest ways to try new things. A wise son or daughter listens to his or her parents and learns from them, whether it's advice on how to ride a bicycle for the first time or the safest way to roast a marshmallow in a campfire. If you refuse to listen and take your parents' advice, you are not only dishonoring them, you also might end up hurting yourself!"
- Taking care of older parents. Let your students know that honoring parents isn't just something that young children do; adults must also honor their parents. Many times this involves taking care of a parent when he or she is old. "Most children have parents who are young and healthy, who spend a great deal of time working and taking care of their family. But parents get older, and eventually they need their children's help. Maybe they need their children to help with yard work, or they need extra money to pay their bills, or maybe they just need their company because they're lonely. Taking care of older parents is another way to 'honor your father and mother.'"

"But there is another way in which children your age - children who are still young and living with their parents - need to honor their parents. That is through obedience, and we learn about that in Ephesians 6."

2. Obeying Our Parents

Have your students turn to Ephesians 6 and read verses 1-3 aloud in class. Remind your students that Ephesians 5, which we looked at last week, discusses the wife's and husband's roles in the family. Now Paul goes on to speak of the role that children should play. Children are to be obedient to their parents "in the Lord," as part of their service to God. We are told that this is right, which means that disobedience is wrong. Children need to recognize that they not only are not the "bosses" of the family, but they also do not have equal authority. This doesn't mean that they are less important as human beings, but rather that God has put them under the authority of their parents and expects them to obey. Even if the parents are not Christians, God still expects children to obey them. If the parent asks the child to do something wrong that goes against God's Word (such as lying or stealing), then the child must do what is right. Otherwise, the rules to honor and obey apply to what the non-Christian parents says as well as the Christian parents.

3. God's Promise

Now let's take a closer look at the promise given with the commandment in Ephesians 6:1-3. Have your students identify the promise, which is contained in verse 3 - the promise "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

"This promise makes sense, doesn't it? Parents are given the job of teaching and protecting their children. They give us rules to help keep us safe and to keep us from doing wrong. If we don't obey our parents' rule to buckle our safety belts and we get in a car accident, what might happen? We could get hurt, couldn't we? If we don't obey their rule about not chasing a ball into the street, we could get hit by a car. Obeying those kinds of rules will certainly help us to live a long life."

"But maybe sometimes our parents' rules don't make sense to us. Maybe we don't understand why we have to go to bed at a certain time, or why we can't watch some shows on TV or do some things that our friends are allowed to do. Then we need to know that our parents are older and wiser about some things and they are only doing what's best for us. They know how much sleep our bodies need, what kind of food is good for our bodies, and what kind of entertainment is bad for our souls. God gave us parents to take care of things like that, and obeying them is really for our own good, whether we like it or not. It's not always easy to do, but obeying our parents pleases the Lord, and it keeps us safe and happy, too."

Activity

To illustrate the principle that obeying our parents is really in our best interest, pick three students to play the parts of Derrick, his mother and father in the skit *A Painful Lesson* (choose students who are good readers and will have fun with the parts). Then ask all of your students to answer the questions on the back of the worksheet.

Related Music

“I Will Obey (The First Time I’m Told)”; “Trust and Obey” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #672); “Savior, Teach Me Day By Day” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #652).

A Painful Lesson

(It's about 7:00 P.M. Derrick comes into the house after a long bike ride.)

MOM: Derrick, where have you been? You were supposed to be home a half-hour ago!

DERRICK: I was just riding my bike with Jerry and Tom.

MOM: Well, you almost missed your favorite meal. Your Dad's leaving right now to go pick up some pizza.

DAD: Bye, hon - I'll be back in about 15 minutes. *(The door slams.)*

MOM: We need to get ready for dinner. Derrick, let's put your homework away and get the table cleared.

DERRICK: Aw, Mom, right now? I just got back and I'm too tired to move. I'll do it in a few minutes.

MOM: If you had put your stuff away before your bike ride like I told you to do, you wouldn't have to do it now. Honestly, Derrick, it seems like you haven't been listening to me all day!

DERRICK: Okay, okay, I'll do it now. I don't see what the big deal is!

DAD: Where's Derrick?

MOM: What are you doing back so soon?

DAD: I never got out of the driveway! Derrick, haven't you been told to put your bicycle in the garage when you're finished? You are not to leave it in the driveway.

DERRICK: I'll take care of it later, Dad. What's the big deal?

DAD: The big deal is you won't have to put it away later. I didn't know you parked it behind the truck and I ran over it on the way to get pizza. It's completely destroyed!

DERRICK: Oh no!

DAD: And it's going to be a long time before I'll buy you another one. No more biking for you until you start listening and obeying!

Questions

1. Name at least two times when Derrick failed to do what his parents told him to do.

2. Why was putting his bicycle away in the garage an important rule for Derrick to obey?

3. Do you think Derrick will start listening and obeying now? Why or why not?

Memory Verse

Genesis 2:24 - "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

TIMOTHY - THE PREPARED CHILD

Acts 14:8-20; 16:1-5; II Timothy 3

Lesson Aim

To show students that the Scriptures children study can prepare them to serve the Lord.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 6:1 - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

Lesson Background

Like many other New Testament characters, what we know about Timothy must be pieced together from a number of references in different places. We know that he was the son of a Greek man and a Jewish Christian woman (Acts 16:1) and that his mother and grandmother taught him the Scriptures from the time he was a small boy (II Timothy 3:15). We know that he was a member of the church in Lystra (Acts 16) and that he joined Paul on his second missionary journey while still a young man (probably a teenager). He and Paul remained close throughout the rest of Paul's life; Paul considered him to be as close as a son, and wrote his last epistle to him while Timothy was serving as a pastor in Ephesus (II Timothy 1:1-2).

Timothy was a child who was prepared for the Lord's service through the study and knowledge of Scripture. Our students who are truly born again will also be called to serve some day in some capacity, and we are also training and preparing them for that future service. Let's strive to be faithful, like Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice, to do our best for our students and to point the way.

Lesson Procedure

Begin this week's lesson by asking your students, "What do you think you'd like to be when you grow up?" Your class will no doubt have some exciting answers to this question; try to get as many to participate as possible.

"I hope that, no matter what kind of job you have or what kind of work you do, you will all be Christians. And if you are a Christian, then the Lord is going to have you serve Him. It may be as a pastor or a missionary. It may be as an evangelist or a Sunday School teacher or a deacon in your church. God expects all of His children to serve Him in some way. That's one of the reasons that you are learning about Him in Sunday School - to prepare you to serve some day. This week we're going to look at a young man who was taught the Scriptures from the time he was very, very small. That teaching prepared him for his work with the Apostle Paul! Let's see how all of this happened."

1. Paul's Experience in Lystra (Acts 14:8-23)

Have your students turn to Acts 14 and read verses 8-23. Explain that this is the account of the beginning of the Christian church in a town called Lystra. These people worshiped the Roman gods, and most of them did not know about the God of the Bible at all. Paul came as a missionary to Lystra, and he and his companion Barnabas began to tell the people about the Lord Jesus. But when Paul healed a crippled man in the crowd, the people of Lystra thought he was one of the Roman gods come to visit them! They tried to worship Paul and Barnabas, who protested strongly and pointed the people instead to the true God "who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them."

The scene was one of mass confusion, and some enemies of the Gospel from other towns took advantage of the situation. They convinced the crowd at Lystra that Paul was evil, and the people threw stones at him to kill him. Afterward they dragged Paul's broken body outside the city of Lystra. But as the believers gathered around Paul's body, a miraculous thing happened. Paul got up, completely healed, and returned to the city of Lystra. He and Barnabas left the city the next day, but they returned again sometime later to teach the believers at Lystra and appoint elders in the church before they returned home.

"No doubt most of the believers in the church of Lystra had been idol worshipers, but there was one young man named Timothy who was different. Timothy's mother was Jewish, and she and Timothy's grandmother had taught him the Scriptures from the time he was very little. Now the grandmother, the mother and Timothy were all believers in Jesus Christ. Perhaps young Timothy had even seen the crowd stone Paul and then watched him come back to life! Timothy knew God's Word, and the church in Lystra soon realized that his faith in Christ was strong."

2. Timothy Joins Paul and Silas (Acts 16:1-5).

Now have your students read Acts 16:1-5 aloud in class. Sometime later, during Paul's second missionary journey, Paul and Silas returned to visit some of the churches planted during his first trip. When he arrived at Lystra, Paul got to know Timothy. Timothy was probably still just a teenager (since Paul still considered him a young man some fifteen years later - see I Timothy 4:12).

Timothy was well thought of by both his church in Lystra and the church in the neighboring town of Iconium. Paul saw in Timothy a young man prepared for the Lord's service, and he took Timothy with him to serve on the rest of the missionary journey.

“Timothy turned out to be a young man Paul could count on. He and Paul remained close throughout Paul's life; Paul considered Timothy to be as close to him as his own son. Timothy served the Lord on the mission field with Paul and as a pastor in the church of Ephesus. He led a life of service to God from a very young age because his mother and grandmother had prepared him for this work by teaching him the Scriptures when he was just a little boy.”

3. Paul's Charge to Timothy (II Timothy 3:14-15)

Now have students turn to II Timothy 3:14-15. Explain that Paul wrote this letter to his dear friend Timothy near the end of his life, while he was in prison. Paul would soon be put to death for his faith, and he wanted to remind Timothy of the things that were truly important. Have one of your students read these two verses aloud in class.

“The things Timothy learned as a child from the Scriptures were still important for him to remember and cling to as an adult. Paul knew that Timothy would be all right as long as he held on to the Word of God. The same thing is true of each of you. The things you learn from week to week every Sunday are important things; they can make you ‘wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.’ And they can prepare you for a life of service someday for our Lord. Let's pray that the Lord will give each of us an understanding of His Word and a desire to listen and learn.” Close the lesson in prayer.

Worksheet

Have students look up the verses listed from I and II Timothy and write down Paul's advice to Timothy. Students do not need to copy the entire verse, but just the main point. Example: I Timothy 6:12 - “Fight the good fight of faith.”

Related Music

“Make Me A Servant”; “This Little Light Of Mine”; “In the Service of the King”; “Jesus Bids Us Shine (*Trinity Hymnal*, #592).

Paul Writes to Timothy

The New Testament books of I and II Timothy are actually letters that the apostle Paul wrote to his dear friend, Timothy. Paul gave Timothy advice, warnings, and many words of wisdom. Look up the passages listed below and write down some of the things Paul wanted Timothy to know.

I Timothy 4:12 _____

I Timothy 6:12 _____

II Timothy 2:1 _____

II Timothy 2:22 _____

II Timothy 4:2 _____

Memory Verse

Ephesians 6:1 - “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.”

JOSIAH - CHILD FROM AN UNGODLY HOME

II Chronicles 34

Lesson Aim

To show students that it is our relationship with God - not that of our parents - that is important, and that we each must personally come to Christ for salvation.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 6:2 - “Honor your father and mother’ - which is the first commandment with a promise.”

Lesson Background

King Josiah shines as one of the few bright spots in the line of the kings of Judah. We are told that “in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David” (II Chronicles 34:2). But Josiah’s family background was hardly conducive to such piety; his grandfather, Manasseh, had been one of Judah’s most wicked kings, even to the extent of practicing human sacrifice, so that God had him carried away in chains to Babylon (where he made a stunning repentance - see II Chronicles 33). And Josiah’s father, Amon, continued in Manasseh’s evil ways; his own officials conspired against him and assassinated him. Little Josiah was placed on the throne in his father’s place at the age of eight, but unlike his father and grandfather he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

If you have students in your Sunday School class from unsaved homes, this lesson will encourage them that they, too, have been called by God to serve Him despite their family situations. For your students from Christian homes, however, this lesson may be a wake-up call; their standing with God is not based upon

what their parents believe. Instead, they too must personally come to Christ in repentance for salvation. God has no “grandchildren” - every generation is answerable for its own response to His call.

Lesson Procedure

Begin your lesson this week with the following discussion. “There are many people in our country today who mistakenly believe that they are Christians. If you were to ask them, ‘What is your religion?’ or ‘What is your faith?’ they would answer, ‘I am a Christian’, but they really don’t know anything about God or Jesus or the Bible at all. Why do you think they would call themselves Christians?”

Get some ideas from your students. The reasons why an unconverted person would call himself a Christian are numerous. Perhaps his parents were Christians and he remembers going to church as a child. Perhaps she was baptized as a baby and thinks that makes her a Christian. Or perhaps he believes that because he is an American, and not a Muslim or Jew, he must be a Christian.

“What a person like this doesn’t understand is that it doesn’t matter what his parents believe or his neighbors believe or what church baptized him as a baby. What matters is what *he* believes. What matters is if he has come to Christ for forgiveness of sins. What matters is this - is Jesus Christ his Savior? You can come from the best Christian home in the world and still not be saved. Or you can come from a wicked, ungodly home and God may call you to be His child, as he did with a young boy named Josiah.”

1. Josiah is Made King (II Chronicles 34:1-3)

Have your students turn to II Chronicles 34 and read verses 1-3. Give your students some of the information included in the Lesson Background concerning Josiah’s father and grandfather. Not only were these two men very wicked kings, but they also led the people of Judah into sin. They built altars to false gods and worshiped them; II Chronicles 33:9 says that “Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites.” The true worship of the Lord was forsaken and His Word lost to the people.

God judged Manasseh and Amon, and Josiah came to the throne in their place. “Josiah was only eight years old when he began to rule. That’s the same age as some of you! But what is different about the way he rules God’s people? The Bible says that he sought the Lord while he was still young and did what was right in God’s eyes! Josiah believed in God and he desired to do what the Lord wanted him to do. But the people had been led in the wrong direction for so long! It was going to be a big job to clean up the nation and bring them back to the worship of the one true God.”

2. Josiah Makes Reforms (II Chronicles 34:4-8)

Have students read verses 4-8 aloud in class. Idol worship was widespread throughout Judah and Jerusalem, and Josiah began a campaign to rid the land of this sin. Explain to your students that the “high places” referred to in the text are open-air shrines or places of pagan worship. These places might have pillars to represent the god Baal or a pole for the goddess Asherah and an altar where people could sacrifice to these false gods. Josiah had the idols, poles, and altars torn down and the high places destroyed. He put the priests of these false gods to death.

It was not enough, however, merely to rid the land of the false religions within her; Josiah also worked to restore the worship of the one true God, the Lord. The Lord's Temple in Jerusalem was a mess; the previous kings of Judah had allowed it to fall into disrepair. It was a big job to clean it up, repair the joists and beams that were fallen or rotting, and restore it to its former glory and beauty. Josiah entrusted this job to several high officials, including Hilkiah the high priest.

3. The Book of the Law is Found (II Chronicles 34:14-21)

Now read verses 14-21 aloud in class. God's Temple was not the only thing that was neglected during the reign of Judah's wicked kings; it had also been many years since God's Word had been read. A copy of the Book of the Law was discovered in the process of repairing the Temple, and Shaphan read it aloud to Josiah.

Josiah recognized that this was the Lord's Word, and he listened as Shaphan read about the curses and condemnation that God promised to visit upon Israel if they did not obey Him. The words grieved him; he tore his royal robes and wept. His officials were sent to inquire of the Lord to see if this punishment would be visited upon his people.

While we will not read verses 22-28 aloud in class, you may read them yourself and summarize them by saying that the Lord's prophet confirmed that God's people would be judged for their sin, even as God's Word said. But because Josiah had humbled himself and had sought to serve the Lord, God promised that Josiah himself would not see judgment, but would live in peace throughout his days.

4. The Book of the Law is Read to the People (II Chronicles 34:29-33)

Now finish the chapter by reading verses 29-33. Josiah called the people together and had the Word read aloud to them. He took spiritual leadership of the nation, as he renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord and promised to follow the Lord's commands "with all his heart and all his soul." He had the people also pledge themselves to it, and we are told that "as long as he lived, they [Judah] did not fail to follow the Lord, the God of their fathers."

"Josiah did all he could to lead his nation back to the Lord, and the Lord honored him by blessing his reign and promising him peace throughout his days. Josiah knew the Lord and desired to serve him, unlike his father and his grandfather before him." Have students turn to II Kings 23:25, which tells us that neither before Josiah nor after him was there a king who followed the Lord as he did, with all his heart and strength and soul. He was truly a godly king.

Conclusion

Josiah's life shows us that it doesn't matter what our parents or our grandparents believe; what matters is what *we* believe. You can be a Christian even if your parents aren't saved. And you can be lost even if your parents are Christians (the wicked Manasseh was the son of the godly king Hezekiah)! Encourage your students to examine their own lives, to make certain that they personally have come to Christ in repentance for forgiveness of sins, and that, like Josiah, they follow Him with all of their heart. As always,

let your students know that you are available after class to answer any questions they might have about their own salvation.

Worksheet

Have students number the sentences in the correct order to tell the sequence of events in Josiah's life. Then read the sentences in their proper order aloud in class.

Related Music

“Where He Leads Me, I Will Follow”; “O Happy Day” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #698); “‘Tis So Sweet To Trust In Jesus” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #679).

Josiah the Godly King

The sentences below describe events in King Josiah's life, but in the wrong order. Number the sentences in the correct order, from the first thing that happened in today's lesson to the last.

_____ God's Word, the Book of the Law, is discovered in the Temple.

_____ The Lord promises to judge Judah, but not during the life of King Josiah.

_____ King Josiah stands before the people and promises to do what God says.

_____ Josiah becomes king at only eight years of age.

_____ Josiah orders repairs for the Temple.

_____ The Book of the Law is read before the king.

_____ Josiah gets rid of the idol worship in the land.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 6:2 - "Honor your father and your mother" - which is the first commandment with a promise."

SAMUEL - ASKED OF GOD

I Samuel 1; Psalm 127

Lesson Aim

To help students understand that children are a special gift from God.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 6:3 - “That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Lesson Background

Many people in today’s society speak euphemistically about children being a “blessing,” but in a practical sense they are often seen as anything but this. Much of the time children are perceived as being “annoying little nuisances.” They can be a hindrance to the advancement of their parents’ careers; they are expensive and time-consuming, and Christian parents who desire more than one or two of them may be considered off-beat or crazy, even by members of their own church. How different is God’s opinion of children! In Psalm 127 we see the words “heritage,” “reward,” and “blessed” in reference to the gift of children. Clearly God expects us to welcome children into our lives as gifts from Him and give them the time, energy and love they deserve. We in the church today should be especially “child-friendly.” Those who visit among us should sense a genuine love and appreciation for children.

Today we begin the first lesson in a series of three that deal with Samuel’s youth. This week we’ll focus on Samuel’s mother, Hannah, her desire to have a child, and the way the Lord honored this desire. As you reach out to your own class of “blessings,” ask the Lord to give you a heart filled with love for each and every one of them.

Lesson Procedure

“Perhaps you have heard the Christian song, ‘Count Your Blessings, Name Them One By One.’ If I asked you to list some of God’s blessings, what would you include in that list?” Have your students contribute ideas of what they would consider God’s blessings and list them on a chalkboard or large piece of construction paper. After you have a good-sized list, make the following comments:

“All of these are blessings that God has given us, but do you know what? You are a blessing as well! The Bible says that children are a blessing - a special gift from God. Did you know that?” Have students look up Psalm 127 and read verses 3-5 aloud. “God is the one who enables men and women to have children. Each child is a unique individual, a special gift from Him. No two people are exactly alike, are they? You are different from your brothers and sisters even though you have the same parents. Even identical twins have different likes and dislikes, different ideas, different personalities!”

“Our lesson today is about a woman who didn’t have any children, and she wanted to have a baby more than anything on earth. We find her story in I Samuel, chapter 1.”

1. Hannah’s Situation (I Samuel 1:1-8)

Read I Samuel 1:1-8 aloud in class. Explain to your students that Hannah lived in a time when it was very important for a woman to bear children. If she had no children, she was considered a failure and would have had no one to care for her and support her in her old age. Hannah’s husband, Elkanah, had two wives, and his other wife, Peninnah, had children.

“Although Elkanah appeared to be a godly man, we know that it wasn’t right for him to have two wives. Remember, God’s Word says that a marriage should be between one woman and one man, and they should be like one flesh. But many men in these days did have more than one wife, like Elkanah; however, this didn’t make for a happy home. Because both wives wanted the love and affection of their husband, and because Elkanah loved Hannah the most, his other wife, Peninnah, was jealous. She tried to make Hannah as miserable as possible by reminding her that she had children and Hannah did not. Hannah longed for a child more than anything, and she knew that only the Lord could help her.”

2. Hannah’s Prayer (I Samuel 1:9-18)

Read verses 9-18 aloud in class. This passage needs very little comment, as it tells about Hannah’s prayer and her conversation with Eli in a straightforward narrative. Be certain to point out to your students the emphasis placed on Hannah’s sorrow; we are told that she was in “bitterness of spirit” and she wept as she prayed. Hannah herself described it as “great anguish and grief” (verse 16). Hannah knew that the Lord was the only one who could bless her with a son, so she poured out her soul to Him in prayer.

Also point out to your students that Hannah made a vow, or a promise, to the Lord, that if He gave her a son, she would give that child back to Him and to His service all the days of his life.

3. Hannah's Reward (I Samuel 1:20-28)

Now read verses 20-28 aloud in class. When the child was born, she named him Samuel, because she “asked the Lord for him” (verse 20). The name Samuel sounds like the Hebrew for “heard of God.” True to her word, Hannah took Samuel to the Tabernacle when he was about three years old to be Eli’s helper and to serve the Lord there at Shiloh. She testified to the Lord’s goodness and grace to her in verse 27: “I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of Him.”

Hannah’s relationship with her son Samuel didn’t end when she brought him to the Tabernacle. Elkanah’s family continued to make their yearly trip to Shiloh to worship the Lord, and each year Hannah visited Samuel and brought him a new little robe to wear. In I Samuel 2:21 we read that the Lord continued to bless Hannah, and she gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Hannah’s greatest desire - to be a mother - was realized, as the Lord blessed her with children. And Samuel, the child she asked of God, continued to be a very special young man. We read in I Samuel 2:26 that he “continued to grow in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men.”

Conclusion

“God’s Word makes it very clear that children are a gift from God and should be considered a blessing by their parents. Some people today think they are too busy or too important to spend much time with children, but we know that isn’t a good attitude. In God’s eyes children are very important people, and grownups need to see them that way, too.

“But what about you? Do you think your parents see you as a blessing? Do you honor and obey them and respect them as your parents? Remember, God expects your parents to be blessed by your presence, and you should try to behave in a way that’s pleasing to them. No one can be perfectly good all the time, of course, and that’s not what we’re talking about. But you know whether you are usually a problem or a blessing. Let’s ask the Lord to show us ways that we can bless our parents and be a help and a joy to them.” Close the lesson in prayer.

Worksheet

Have children underline the word in each sentence that makes the sentence correct. The answers should read: miserable, son, drunk, did, Eli, did, reward, blessing.

Related Music

“I Will Obey (The First Time I’m Told)”; “Make Me A Blessing”; “Unless the Lord the House Shall Build” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #365).

The Birth of Samuel

Underline the word in parentheses that makes the sentence correct.

1. Hannah was (miserable - glad) because she had no children.
2. Hannah prayed to God and asked for a (son - daughter).
3. Eli thought Hannah was (crazy - drunk).
4. Hannah (did - did not) give her son Samuel to the Lord as she promised.
5. Samuel went to live with (Elkanah - Eli) when he was about three years old.
6. Hannah (did - did not) have more children after the birth of Samuel.
7. Psalm 127 says children are a (reward - burden) from the Lord.
8. Children are supposed to be a (problem - blessing) to their parents.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 6:3 - ““That it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.””

SAMUEL - AN OBEDIENT CHILD

I Samuel 3

Lesson Aim

To show students that obedience in small matters leads to being trusted with greater things.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 6:4 - "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

Lesson Background

Samuel was one of the greatest prophets and leaders that Israel ever knew. As the last judge of Israel he was held in high regard throughout the land, and his death was mourned as the death of a prominent leader (I Samuel 25:1). But Samuel's career as a great man of God did not begin when he became a man; it began back in the Tabernacle as a small boy waiting on Eli, learning to obey and to listen for God's voice. Like Joseph and Joshua before him, like Elisha and John Mark after him, Samuel learned to be obedient and faithful in small matters and was later entrusted with great service for the Lord. We want our students also to develop patterns of obedience as children, so that they may be ready for whatever work the Lord may call them to as adults. It's exciting to think about the potential that each one of our students may have for the kingdom of God.

This lesson may be a very familiar one to many of your students, especially if most of them have grown up in church or Sunday School. If you have extra time left at the end of class, try one of the listening and obeying activities suggested at the end of the lesson.

Lesson Procedure

Help your students review last week's lesson about the birth of Samuel by asking the following questions:

- What was the name of Samuel's mother? (Hannah)
- What did Hannah want more than anything on earth? (To have a son)
- What was Hannah's vow, or promise, to the Lord? (Her son would be given to God, to serve Him all the days of his life)
- Where did Hannah take Samuel when he was about three years old? (To live with Eli in the Tabernacle)

"Samuel's life had a very special beginning, and Samuel was a very special child. God had an important purpose for Samuel, a job He wanted him to do. Samuel was preparing for that job, even as he served Eli in the Tabernacle."

1. Samuel Serves God and Eli (I Samuel 3:1-2)

In I Samuel 2 we are told three things about Samuel's service to the Lord as a young boy in the Tabernacle. We read that he ministered before the Lord in a linen ephod (verse 18), he grew up in the presence of the Lord (verse 21), and he continued to grow physically, and in favor with the Lord and with men (verse 26). These verses show us that Samuel pleased the Lord, even as a young child, and that the adults who knew him were also pleased with his service.

Read I Samuel 3:1-2 aloud in class. At this point Samuel was no longer a little boy. He was probably about 12 years old, or perhaps a bit older. Samuel was no doubt a great help to the aging Eli, whose eyesight was weakening. He probably ran errands for the old man, helped keep the Tabernacle clean, and did much of the odd jobs and physical labor that Eli could no longer do. We know from verse 15 that one of his jobs was to open the doors of the house of the Lord every morning.

"Samuel's job may not have seemed very important to most people; he was just a young boy helping out where he could in God's house. But Samuel was a good worker, and faithful to Eli and to the Lord. He sought to obey and serve the Lord, and the Lord was pleased with his work."

2. The Lord Calls Samuel (I Samuel 3:3-18)

Now read verses 3-18 aloud in class. Don't be afraid of the natural humor of this passage; it is funny that Samuel didn't recognize the Lord's voice right away and ran to help Eli in his confusion. Your students will probably pick up on the humor right away.

This passage is a very straightforward narrative and needs little comment. Do point out to your students Samuel's obedient attitude; he went to Eli each time he thought Eli was calling him and he didn't appear to argue with the old man when he was sent back to bed.

Also point out that the message that the Lord gave Samuel was a very difficult one to deliver. Samuel had probably come to love Eli as a father, and this message, he knew, would break his heart. The Lord had given this young man a hard task. But Eli insisted on knowing the message; point out to your students Eli's willingness, too, to accept the decree of the Lord (this will be important to remember in our next lesson).

3. Samuel's Leadership in Israel (I Samuel 3:19-20)

Finish I Samuel 3 by reading verses 19-20. The revelation that Samuel received as a young boy marked the beginning of his work as God's man in Israel. He was soon recognized as a prophet by the Jewish people, and whatever he told the people eventually came true. Samuel became a leader and a judge in Israel and served the nation until his death at a good old age.

“Samuel was obedient to the Lord as a child in the small matters of helping Eli and taking care of the Tabernacle. He was faithful with the message that God gave to him for Eli. All of these things prepared him to be a great leader in Israel and God's prophet to the people. Samuel was obedient in small matters, and the Lord eventually delivered the nation under his leadership (I Samuel 7)!

“Sometimes you may feel that because you are young you can't really do anything important for the Lord. This story shows that that isn't really true. God wants you to be obedient and faithful in the things He has given you to do. If you are His child, then He is going to have some special work for you to do when you are all grown up. This time of childhood is a time of preparing you for that work. Let's pray now and ask the Lord to help us be obedient and faithful children like Samuel.”

Worksheet

Help students fill out the worksheet; do it as a class so they can share ideas with each other and with you. The following are some suggestions you might make if they need a little help.

- Whom we need to obey: parents, teachers, Sunday School teachers, pastor, etc.
- How we can help in church: holding doors open, picking up messes, being quiet during services, joining the singing, helping to clean, participating in special services.
- How we can prepare to serve: listening in church and Sunday School, reading our Bibles, praying that the Lord will show us what He wants us to do someday.

Activity

If you have extra time you may wish to play a “listening and obeying” game. Here are two suggestions:

“Eli Says” - This game is played like “Simon Says,” only the leader is Eli. Eli gives the other children commands to help out in the Tabernacle - sweep the floor, open the doors, run in place, wash and scrub, etc. The children pantomime what Eli says if the command is preceded by “Eli says.” If the command is not preceded by “Eli says,” the children ignore the command.

“Teacher May I?” - Played like “Mother May I?” but with you, the teacher, as leader. Give children individual commands but insist they ask “Teacher, May I?” before they proceed.

Related Music

“I Will Obey (The First Time I’m Told)”; “Trust and Obey” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #672); “Savior, Teach Me Day By Day” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #652).

The Lord Calls Samuel

Samuel was obedient to the Lord and to Eli. Who are some of the people we need to obey?

Samuel was a helper in the House of God. How can we help out in church?

God was preparing Samuel to serve Him. How can we prepare to serve the Lord someday?

Memory Verse

Ephesians 6:4 - "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

TWO DISOBEDIENT SONS

I Samuel 2-4

Lesson Aim

To show students that God will judge us if we know the truth but refuse to obey it.

Memory Verse

Psalms 127:1 - “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.”

Lesson Background

Spiritual privileges carry with them special responsibilities; if you know what is right and true, you are expected to act on this knowledge. Hophni and Phineas were of the priestly line of Aaron and their father was the godly Eli. They had grown up knowing the truth, and yet they chose to ignore all they were taught and use their priestly office to fulfill their sexual and physical appetites. The writer of I Samuel does a good job in these chapters contrasting Hophni and Phineas with young Samuel. “Eli’s sons were wicked men” (I Samuel 2:12), but “the boy Samuel continued . . . in favor with the Lord and with men” (I Samuel 2:26). Eli’s influence on Samuel appears to have been positive, but his own sons did not even listen to his rebukes and warnings.

Many of your own students probably come from godly homes, and while it is our hope that they will follow the Lord throughout their lives, they do need to be warned that God will judge them if they, like Hophni and Phineas, ignore the things they were taught and do evil. As we learned in the lesson about King Josiah, each generation is accountable to God for what they do and what they believe. Let’s use this lesson to remind our students of the importance of knowing the Lord in a personal, saving way.

Lesson Procedure

Introduce your lesson this week by reading the following story:

It's Greg's Fault . . . Isn't It?

"What is that noise?" Andy asked himself as he started up the stairs. Something was going on in his three-year-old brother's room, but he couldn't tell what it was. He decided to investigate as he walked past Greg's door.

Little Greg had just gotten a "big boy's bed" that week. He loved his new bed and he loved being out of his crib. And now he had discovered something else he loved - jumping on the new bed like a trampoline! He jumped and squealed with laughter with each new bounce.

Andy knew they weren't supposed to jump on beds; it was one of the rules of the house. He was about to remind Greg of this, but . . . well, it looked like a lot of fun. Besides, Mom was out in the garden and would never know about it. He decided to help his little brother "break in" the new bed.

When Andy started jumping on the bed the bounces became even bigger. Both boys started to laugh and yelp; they were having a good time. But then Greg got a little too close to the edge of the mattress. All of a sudden, he was bounced off the bed right into the bedside table, knocking off a lamp and breaking it in the process. Little Greg began to howl, and Mom came running in the door, taking in the whole scene at a glance - the broken lamp, the hurt toddler, and Andy, standing on top of the bed.

Andy's mother first took care of Greg, who was more frightened than hurt. Then she called both boys to her side. "Greg, I told you when you got that bed that you shouldn't jump on the mattress. Now you know what can happen."

Greg nodded his head. "I not do that again, Mama," he said solemnly.

"I'm sure you won't. And Andy, what were you thinking? You know you're not supposed to jump on beds! You've broken the lamp, and Greg might have been seriously hurt! I think you can forget about visiting your friend Mike this afternoon; you're grounded."

"But Mom!" Andy protested. "Why do I get all the punishment? It's Greg's fault - he's the one who started jumping on the bed first!"

Ask your students what they think of Andy's argument. Was it really Greg's fault? If some of your students seem sympathetic to Andy, remind them that Andy was older and knew better, while Greg was too little to really understand why he shouldn't jump on the bed. Andy's bigger body on the little bed also made the bouncing more dangerous for Greg, who could have been badly hurt.

"Andy's Mom punished Andy more because he was older and knew better. Sometimes we do wrong things accidentally; we don't know that what we're doing is a bad idea. But sometimes we do wrong even when we know better. Our Bible lesson today is about two evil men who were raised in a godly home. They knew what they did was evil and they were warned repeatedly to stop sinning. But these two brothers wouldn't listen, and they paid a very high price for their sin."

1. Hophni and Phineas, Eli's Disobedient Sons

Quickly remind your students of what we know about Eli from the past two lessons. Then read I Samuel 2:12-17 aloud in class. While the priests who served the Lord were entitled to part of the offerings (God's way of providing for their physical needs), Hophni and Phineas were not

content just to take a portion of the boiled meat. Instead, they wanted their portion of meat first, before it was cooked. They were not concerned about giving God His sacrifice His way. They were concerned only about what they could get for themselves. Verse 16 shows that they were violent men who used force when necessary to get what they wanted.

Eli heard about the way his sons were behaving and he warned them about it. Read verses 23-25 aloud in class. The old priest knew that God would not be mocked or cheated, but his foolish sons did not pay attention to him. They were headed straight for disaster.

“Eli’s sons were not stupid, and they had been taught the right way to perform the sacrifices. But they were greedy, violent men, and they refused to listen to their father. As priests in God’s house they had a very responsible and important job to do, and God was going to judge them for their disobedience to Him.”

2. The Prophecy Against Eli and His Sons

Eli was correct in his warnings; the Lord was about to judge him and his sons. Read verses 30-36 aloud in class. The Lord sent a prophet to Eli to let him know that judgment was coming. The Lord was going to remove Eli’s family from His priesthood. Also, Eli’s wicked sons, Hophni and Phineas, would both die on the same day. This message of judgment was later echoed by young Samuel when the Lord first spoke to him. The Lord told Samuel that there was no sacrifice or offering that could be made to atone for the guilt of Eli’s family. The judgment was certain, and it was only a matter of time before Hophni and Phineas were punished for their sins.

3. The Judgment of Hophni and Phineas

The tragic end to this story is found in I Samuel 4. Many years had passed and Eli was a very old man. The Israelites went out to battle against the Philistines, and the Philistines defeated them, killing about four thousand men. The Israelites realized that the Lord had allowed this defeat to happen and they wanted to be certain they had the Lord’s favor the next time they fought. It was decided that the Ark of the Covenant should accompany them when they battled again.

The Ark of the Covenant was kept within the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle. It was a symbol of the presence of God among His people, and God had given very strict commands about how it was to be handled and how it was to be treated. But the Israelites were now thinking of the Ark as a “good-luck charm.” If they brought the Ark of the Covenant to the battle, they believed it would guarantee God’s presence and blessing, almost forcing God to give them the victory. It seemed that the Israelites were making an idol of the Ark, thinking that it had power to save them (I Samuel 4:3 - “so that it may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies”).

Read I Samuel 4:4-18 aloud in class. Instead of stopping the soldiers from taking the Ark of the Covenant, Hophni and Phineas accompanied it to the battlefield! These two men surely must have known that this was a brazen and ill-advised attempt to manipulate God into blessing the Israelites, but they foolishly endorsed the plan with their presence. Both men were killed on the battlefield in a slaughter that left thirty thousand dead. The Israelites were defeated and the Ark was captured.

Eli, who was blind and heavy at 98 years of age, heard of his sons' deaths and the capture of the Ark. The news sent him falling backward off his chair, and he broke his neck and died. In this way, the prophet's words against the house of Eli came true (the Ark of the Covenant proved too much for the Philistines, who later returned it to Israel; this account can be read in I Samuel 5-6).

Conclusion

Hophni and Phineas were the sons of a godly man, Eli. Eli was not a perfect father, and there is the possibility that he didn't discipline his sons properly. Nevertheless, both brothers knew the truth but refused to obey the Lord, even when they were warned of the consequences. "What about you? Do you forget about the things you are taught in Sunday School as soon as you leave the class? Do you ignore your parents when they try to teach you what is right and just do what you want to do anyway? Today's lesson shows us there is a price to pay for sin. God judges sin, and if you know what is right He expects you to live in a way that pleases Him. Don't be foolish like Hophni and Phineas; take God's Word seriously and obey what it is teaching you."

Worksheet

The vowels have been removed from each of these verses about the consequences of sin. Have students try to figure them out or look up the references to see where the vowels belong.

Related Music

"I Will Obey (The First Time I'm Told)"; "Trust and Obey" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #672); "Savior, Teach Me Day By Day" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #652).

The Bible and Sin

God’s Word has a lot to say about sin - what it does and how we can avoid it. The following verses tell us about sin, but the vowels - a, e, i, o, and u - have all been left out. Look up the verses and fill in the missing letters.

Proverbs 11:21 - “B ___ s ___ r ___ ___ f th ___ s: th ___ w ___ ck ___ d
w ___ ll n ___ t g ___ ___ np ___ n ___ sh ___ d.”

Numbers 32:23b - “Y ___ ___ m ___ y b ___ s ___ r ___ th ___ t
y ___ ___ r s ___ n w ___ ll f ___ nd y ___ ___ ___ t.”

Psalm 119:11 - “ ___ h ___ v ___ h ___ dd ___ n y ___ ___ r w ___ rd
___ n my h ___ ___ rt th ___ t ___ m ___ ght n ___ t
s ___ n ___ g ___ ___ nst y ___ ___ .”

Memory Verse

Psalm 127:1 - “Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.”

ISHMAEL - A JEALOUS CHILD

Genesis 21:1-21

Lesson Aim

To show students that jealousy brings trouble and strife into a home.

Memory Verse

Psalm 127:3 - "Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him."

Lesson Background

Ishmael was Abraham's first-born son, and Abraham loved the boy very much. But Ishmael was not born of Sarah, and therefore was not the "child of promise" through whom God would bless the nations. Ishmael was the son of Sarah's slave woman, Hagar, whom she had given to Abraham in her own attempt to bring about the promises of God. When Isaac was born, Ishmael's presence in the family became a problem; he was clearly jealous of his brother, and Sarah saw him as a threat to her son's inheritance (and possibly to his well-being). While the apostle Paul finds great spiritual significance in the struggle between Ishmael and Isaac, the "child of the law" and the "child of the promise" (see Galatians 4:21-31), we are looking merely at the situation from a family perspective. Abraham had entreated the Lord for Ishmael's sake, and the Lord promised to make Ishmael a great man and the father of twelve rulers. But Ishmael's jealousy drove him from the family, and the two branches of the family lived at odds with each other (perhaps to this day, if Ishmael truly is the ancestor of the Arab nations).

Ishmael's story is a sad one, but the problem of jealousy is common in most families with more than one child. Petty squabbles over "who got the biggest piece of cake" can escalate into real problems, and sibling rivalry can become so ugly that the scars are carried into adulthood. Let's encourage our students

to live at peace with their own brothers and sisters and to beware of the problems that jealousy can cause in a family.

Lesson Procedure

Begin your lesson this week with a discussion about jealousy. Ask your students, “What is jealousy?” and get some of their definitions. Ask them what kinds of things make them jealous of someone else. Perhaps they may be jealous over someone’s toys or good grades or athletic ability. Show your students that jealousy is a feeling we get when we think somebody else is getting something that we want. While these kinds of feelings are common to all of us and hard to control, we must be very careful not to allow ourselves to be angry or bitter or resentful toward others because of our own jealousy.

“Many times brothers and sisters become jealous of one another. Younger children might be jealous of some of the privileges that older children have, like staying up later or getting to cross the street or visiting friends. Older children may feel that parents don’t ask as much of the younger children or punish them as severely. Sometimes kids worry that their parents may love a brother or a sister more than they love them. We need to be careful that these feelings don’t make us mean or hateful toward our brothers or sisters. In our Bible story today, we’re going to learn about a boy who was very jealous, and the trouble that his jealousy caused his family.”

1. Background of Ishmael’s Birth and God’s Promise

Provide the following background information for your students:

God promised Abraham that He would one day give him a son, and that He would make a great nation from that son and bless all the nations of the earth through him. Abraham believed this promise, but many years passed, and still Abraham's wife, Sarah, did not have a child. Finally, Sarah became impatient with waiting on the Lord. She asked Abraham to take her servant girl, Hagar, to be his wife, and to have children with her. Abraham agreed to this, and Hagar had a son. This boy’s name was Ishmael (Genesis 16).

But Ishmael was not the child that God had promised to give to Abraham. The Lord told Abraham that Sarah was going to have a child in her old age and that this miraculous baby would be called Isaac. The promises God made to Abraham would come through this child; Isaac would be the beginning of the great nation through which God would bless all the earth. When Abraham understood this, he prayed for his son Ishmael. Abraham loved Ishmael and wanted this child to be blessed as well.

Have your students turn to Genesis 17:18-22 and read the promise God made to Abraham concerning Ishmael. Ishmael was the son of a servant girl, but God promised to bless him and make him the father of a great nation as well. This young man had a rich, godly father who loved him and the blessing of God promised to him. He had much for which to be thankful.

2. The Birth of Isaac and Ishmael's Jealousy (Genesis 21:1-10)

Now have your students turn to Genesis 21 and read verses 1-10 aloud in class. Isaac, the son God had promised Abraham so many years before, had finally been born. Sarah and Abraham were elated, but not everyone in the family was happy.

Abraham threw a big party for Isaac when the boy was weaned - at about the age of two or three. Ishmael was probably about 16 or 17 years old, and he was jealous of his father's younger son. Sarah saw Ishmael mocking her son (making fun of him, teasing him) and this alarmed her. She worried that Ishmael might be a threat to her son's inheritance. She may also have been concerned that Ishmael might hate her son and physically harm him. He was much bigger than Isaac, and Isaac was young and vulnerable. She demanded that Abraham send Ishmael and his mother away to protect Isaac and his inheritance.

“How do you think Sarah's demand made Abraham feel? Do you think he would want to send Ishmael and his mother away from the family? But what about Sarah's concerns; did she have reason to be worried?” Have your students discuss this for a few minutes to show them the problems that Ishmael's jealousy brought to this family.

3. God's Provision for Ishmael (Genesis 21:11-21)

Now read verses 11-21 aloud in class. Abraham was upset over Sarah's demand; he loved Ishmael and didn't want to send the boy away. But the Lord spoke to Abraham and told him to send the boy away, reaffirming His promise concerning Ishmael.

Abraham obeyed immediately and Hagar and Ishmael were sent away. The Lord provided for their needs in the desert when their water was gone; He watched over Ishmael as he grew up, and eventually His promise concerning Ishmael came to pass. We read in Genesis 25:13-18 that Ishmael had twelve sons who became tribal rulers. Ishmael lived to be 130 years old.

Conclusion

Ishmael's jealousy brought problems to his family, and the problems could only be resolved when he was sent away. Jealousy can also cause problems in our homes if we allow ourselves to be filled with anger, hatred or bitterness. The next time we feel jealous about something, we need to stop and examine our hearts. We need to ask the Lord to help us deal with jealous feelings and to live at peace with others in our family.

Worksheet

The worksheet gives two scenarios in which one child is jealous of a brother or sister. It then asks your students to list ways to deal with such feelings of jealousy (the idea is not to deny jealous feelings, but to show our students practical ways of handling them). If your students need help, you might suggest some of the following:

Scenario 1: The child should remember that the brother's birthday is his special day, and he should be happy for him as well. Someday soon he will have a birthday, and then it will be his special day. The child could pray and ask the Lord to help him be truly thankful for his brother and his family.

Scenario 2: The child should remember that her sister is older, and as people get older they have special privileges. One day she will be older, and she'll get to stay overnight at her aunt's house, too. She could pray to the Lord and ask Him to help her be patient for special privileges.

Related Music

“They Will Know We Are Christians (By Our Love)”; “Bind Us Together”; “Happy the Home When God Is There” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #720).

Jealousy

Sometimes we all struggle with feelings of jealousy. Below are two stories about children who felt jealous. Read both stories and then answer the questions.

1. Jim’s little brother Andy was having a birthday. His parents, grandparents, and some of Andy’s friends were all coming to his party, and there was a pile of presents on the kitchen table. Everybody was paying attention to Andy and Jim felt unnoticed. He was jealous.

What would you say to Jim to help him with his feelings of jealousy?

2. Katie’s big sister Emily was going to spend the weekend with their Aunt Rachel. Aunt Rachel was going to take Emily to a fancy restaurant and then to a concert. Katie wanted to go too, but Mother said she was too young. Katie felt jealous of Emily.

What would you say to Katie to help her with her feelings of jealousy?

Memory Verse

Psalm 127:3 - “Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him.”

SIN DESTROYS A FAMILY

Joshua 7

Lesson Aim

To tell students the story of Achan, whose sin had severe consequences for his family and his nation.

Memory Verse

Psalm 127:4 - "Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth."

Lesson Background

Achan's sin was really a series of sins, including covetousness, lying, stealing, and continued refusal to repent. This had severe consequences for the nation of Israel; for one thing, it led to their defeat in the first battle of Ai and the loss of thirty-six lives. Still, the punishment for Achan's sin, which cost him his life and the lives of his children, seems very severe to us. We need to remember that this took place just as Israel was entering the Promised Land, and it served as an example to the people that they must not take God's direct commandments lightly. Like Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament, Achan serves as a warning that God hates sin in the lives of His people.

We see the consequences of sin in the lives of people around us, and we see how it affects their families as well. Alcoholism, violence, adultery, divorce and a host of other sins that are epidemic in our generation take a terrible toll, not just on those who commit these things, but on their innocent children as well. Sin really is a destroyer of families, and even Christian families are not immune from this. Praise God that He has made provision for sin, both for the salvation of souls and for their restoration from the destructiveness of sin!

Lesson Procedure

Write the following list on a chalkboard or a large piece of poster board:

lying
greed
selfishness
jealousy
hate
stealing
unfaithfulness
violence
cheating

Ask your students what all of these words have in common; at least one student will probably recognize that all of these things are sins, or sinful.

“We know that all of these things are sinful, but did you know that they can all be destructive to a family’s happiness? It’s hard to have a happy family when you can’t trust one another, isn’t it? It’s hard to have a happy family if someone in the family is getting physically hurt. And we saw from our lesson last week that jealousy and hatred bring trouble to a family as well. Sometimes when we sin we think that it’s our choice and that no one else will be hurt by our decision. But sin usually ends up affecting a lot of people, and our families often suffer because of the bad things we do. Today’s lesson is about a man who chose to disobey God’s direct command. His choice didn’t just affect him; it affected his family and the whole nation of Israel.”

1. **Achan’s Sin (Joshua 7:1)**

If you taught the first quarter of this year, you and your students learned about Joshua and the battle of Jericho. Review this lesson briefly, reminding the students of how God gave the city to the Israelites through miraculous means.

Joshua told the people that day that everything in Jericho was to be destroyed - all the people, all the animals, and all the material “stuff” (only Rahab and her family were to be spared - another lesson from the first quarter). The people of Jericho were so wicked that everything in the city had to be destroyed. Joshua solemnly warned the people not to take anything - anything! - from the city, because it was all to be devoted to destruction by fire. Joshua told the people that taking something from the city would lead to their own destruction (Joshua 6:18).

Now have your students read Joshua 7:1 aloud in class. One man disobeyed the command and took some valuable things from Jericho to keep for himself. We find out in verse 21 that he stole a beautiful robe from Babylon, 5 pounds of silver shekels, and a wedge of gold. He took these things to his tent and buried them in the ground. Now, only one man disobeyed God, but point out to your students that verse one says: “the Lord’s anger burned against Israel.” Achan’s sin affected the entire nation; because God’s command concerning Jericho was not obeyed perfectly, the Lord’s blessing on the nation was removed.

2. The Consequences of Achan's Sin for the Nation (Joshua 7:2-9)

Read verses 2-9 aloud in class. Achan's sin was an act of selfishness; he saw things that he wanted and decided that it would be in his own best interest to take them. But Achan's selfish act had dire consequences for the nation of Israel.

The city of Ai should have been an easy conquest for Israel. Joshua only sent out three thousand men to take it, but the Israelites were routed by the men of Ai. Thirty-six Israelite soldiers were killed and the rest of the army took flight.

The news of the defeat hit the people hard. Joshua and the elders went into mourning immediately. They knew that this was not a mere "setback"; if God had been with the Israelites, they would have been victorious. Their defeat meant that God had withdrawn His blessing from them, and Joshua feared the worst. Perhaps the people of Canaan would take heart in the knowledge that Israel could be defeated. Perhaps they would unite and wipe out the Israelites altogether! Without the Lord's blessing, Joshua knew, the nation would never stand a chance in the Promised Land.

"Achan selfishly took some things for himself, but many others had to pay the price for his sin. Thirty-six soldiers were dead. The entire nation experienced grief and fear. His sin had a devastating effect on many."

3. Achan's Sin and His Family (Joshua 7:13-26)

The Lord told Joshua that Israel had been defeated at Ai because of sin; someone had taken some of the things in Jericho that had been devoted to destruction. Read verses 13 through the end of the chapter aloud to your class.

Point out to your students the many opportunities that Achan had to come forward and confess his sin. Each time a tribe was chosen, or a clan, or a family, Achan could have come forward in repentance. Instead, he chose to remain silent throughout the selection process. Point out also that it is possible that other members of his family may have known about the things Achan took (it was, after all, buried in the floor of the family's tent), but they were also silent. Finally, Achan was revealed as the thief, and he, his family, and everything he owned (including the things he had taken from Jericho) were destroyed and burned by fire.

"Achan decided that he liked the things that Jericho offered and he chose those things over the blessings of God. Because he chose Jericho's riches, the punishment of Jericho fell upon him, his family, and all that he had. His sin destroyed him and his family. Sin can do the same thing to families today, and we must be careful not to think lightly of it. We need to obey and follow the Lord and put Him first in our families."

Worksheet

The story of Rahab, which we studied earlier this year, provides a stark contrast to the story of Achan. Rahab was a part of the wicked city of Jericho, but she wanted to be a part of God's people. By

hiding the Israelite spies, she showed her faith in God's promises and delivered herself and her family from destruction. Achan, on the other hand, desired the riches of Jericho more than God's blessings and brought himself and his family to destruction. Briefly review the story of Rahab with your students. The sentences on the worksheet describe Rahab, Achan, or both. Put an "A" in front of the sentences that describe Achan, an "R" in front of those about Rahab, and a "B" in front of the sentences that describe both. (The answers should read: A, R, B, R, B, A, R, A.)

Related Music

"Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #481); "Change My Heart, O God"; "Happy the Home When God Is There" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #720).

Rahab and Achan

The book of Joshua tells us the stories of Rahab, the woman from Jericho, and Achan, the Israelite man. Both of them did things that changed their lives and the lives of their families forever. Some of the sentences below are about Rahab, some are about Achan, and some are about both. Put an “A” in front of the sentences about Achan, an “R” in front of the sentences about Rahab, and a “B” in front of the sentences about both.

- _____ Ignored God’s command.
- _____ Believed God would give Jericho to the Israelites.
- _____ Lied about what had been done.
- _____ Desired God’s blessings over Jericho.
- _____ Rejected the God/gods of his/her nation.
- _____ Desired Jericho’s riches over God’s blessings.
- _____ Saved family from destruction.
- _____ Brought family to destruction.

Memory Verse

Psalm 127:4 - “Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one’s youth.”

ISAAC AND REBEKAH - A GODLY MARRIAGE

Genesis 24

Lesson Aim

To show students that believers should not marry unbelievers and that godly marriages are brought about by faith and prayer.

Memory Verse

Psalm 127:5 - "Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate."

Lesson Background

It may seem strange at first to think about teaching a lesson on marriage to third and fourth graders, but this is really an ideal time for them to begin thinking about marriage in a biblical way. Certainly most young people are bombarded with messages from the media about what is "attractive" or "cool" every day through the television, magazines and music of our culture. Our young people must know from day one that it is wrong for a believer to marry an unbeliever, and that therefore they shouldn't even date someone who hasn't professed faith in Christ. Also, it isn't too early for your students to start praying now for the man or woman they may one day marry, and ask God to help them have a godly home and marriage. Let's encourage our students to plan now on having a marriage and a family life that is blessed by God by doing things the Lord's way.

Lesson Procedure

Begin this week by briefly reviewing Lesson 10, where we discussed the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah. Remind your students that Isaac was a very special baby; God had promised to give Abraham a son and to make a great nation from that boy. This meant that Isaac would one day marry and have children, too, and Abraham knew that it was important to find the right wife for his son.

1. Abraham Sends His Servant to Find a Wife for Isaac (Genesis 24:1-14)

Read Genesis 24:1-14 aloud in class. Sarah was now dead and Abraham was quite old. It was time to find a wife for Isaac, and Abraham knew that it would be impossible to find a good wife among the Canaanite people around them. The Canaanites were wicked people who worshiped idols. Abraham wanted Isaac to have a godly wife, and so he sent his servant back to his homeland, to his own family, to find a wife for Isaac.

Point out to your students in verses 12-14 that Abraham's servant approached this task with prayer. He knew the importance of his mission, and he did not rely on his own wisdom to carry it out. No doubt he had seen his master Abraham pray on many similar occasions and knew that the Lord was faithful and answered prayer.

2. The Lord Answers the Servant's Prayer (Genesis 24:15-27)

Now read verses 15-27 aloud in class. Abraham had said that the Lord would send His angel ahead of the servant to prepare a wife for Isaac. Before the servant finished his prayer at the well of Nahor, Rebekah came with her jar as an answer to his prayer.

This portion of Scripture is a straightforward narrative and needs little comment from you. Point out the practicality of the servant's prayer; a girl who not only draws water for a stranger but offers to draw water for his camels as well is a generous, thoughtful person - just the kind of girl who would make a good wife for Isaac.

Also point out the praise the servant gave to God in verses 26 and 27. The servant knew that Rebekah was the answer to his prayer, and he didn't forget to thank and praise the Lord for His goodness to him and to his master, Abraham.

3. Rebekah Returns with Abraham's Servant (Genesis 24:49-67)

Rebekah ran home and told her family about the man at the well, showing them the gifts he had given her. Her family sent Laban to bring the servant home, and Abraham's servant told the family about his mission and the Lord's answer to his prayer.

Verses 34-48 retell the servant's story, and we will pick up the narrative again at verse 49. Read verses 49-67 aloud in class. Rebekah's family recognized that the Lord's hand was in this match. They agreed to let her return with the servant to marry Isaac. Rebekah herself seemed to know that this marriage was right for her, and she agreed in verse 58 to return with the servant. The

family blessed Rebekah and she made the long trip, far from her mother and family and the land she knew.

“Why do you think Rebekah agreed to go with Abraham’s servant? Do you think it was scary for her to say goodbye to her family to go and marry someone she had never met?” Perhaps Rebekah was convinced by the servant’s story that this was God’s will for her. Abraham said the Lord’s angel would go before his servant; perhaps Rebekah’s willing attitude was evidence of this work. No doubt it was frightening for her to leave her home, but she left it willingly to become a part of the beginning of God’s people, the nation of Israel.

Isaac was out in the field meditating as the servant and the camels approached; perhaps he was thinking and praying about his future wife. He and Rebekah met for the first time, and Isaac brought her home and married her. We are told that Isaac loved Rebekah, and later accounts show that the two of them must have had a very close relationship (Genesis 25:21; 26:8). Rebekah filled some of the emptiness Isaac felt after the death of his mother, and he was comforted by her presence with him.

Conclusion

Discuss with your students the way that Isaac and Rebekah were married and how it is different from the way people today meet and marry. For example, most young people do not have marriages arranged by their parents, but meet someone on their own. Most date someone for a long time before they are engaged and married, whereas Isaac and Rebekah met on their wedding day. Explain to your students that these are “cultural” differences; that is, this is the way people met and married back in Bible days (and, in fact, in many places in the world to this day).

But while there are cultural differences, there are still eternal truths about love and marriage that we can learn from this story. Abraham knew it would be unwise for Isaac to marry one of the ungodly women from the people around them. The New Testament also teaches that Christians are not to marry unbelievers (II Corinthians 6:14). We should not even consider marriage with someone who does not believe in Christ, for this will only bring problems and conflict into a home. In fact, it is best not even to date someone who isn’t a believer to make certain that you do not fall in love with someone you shouldn’t marry.

Another lesson we can learn from this story is the way that prayer played an important role in seeking the Lord’s direction in the matter of marriage. All Christians need to seek the Lord when they are selecting a marriage partner because it is a matter of the utmost importance. You might encourage your students to begin praying even now that the Lord will lead them to the person He wants them to marry, and prepare them both to have the kind of godly marriage that pleases Him.

Worksheet

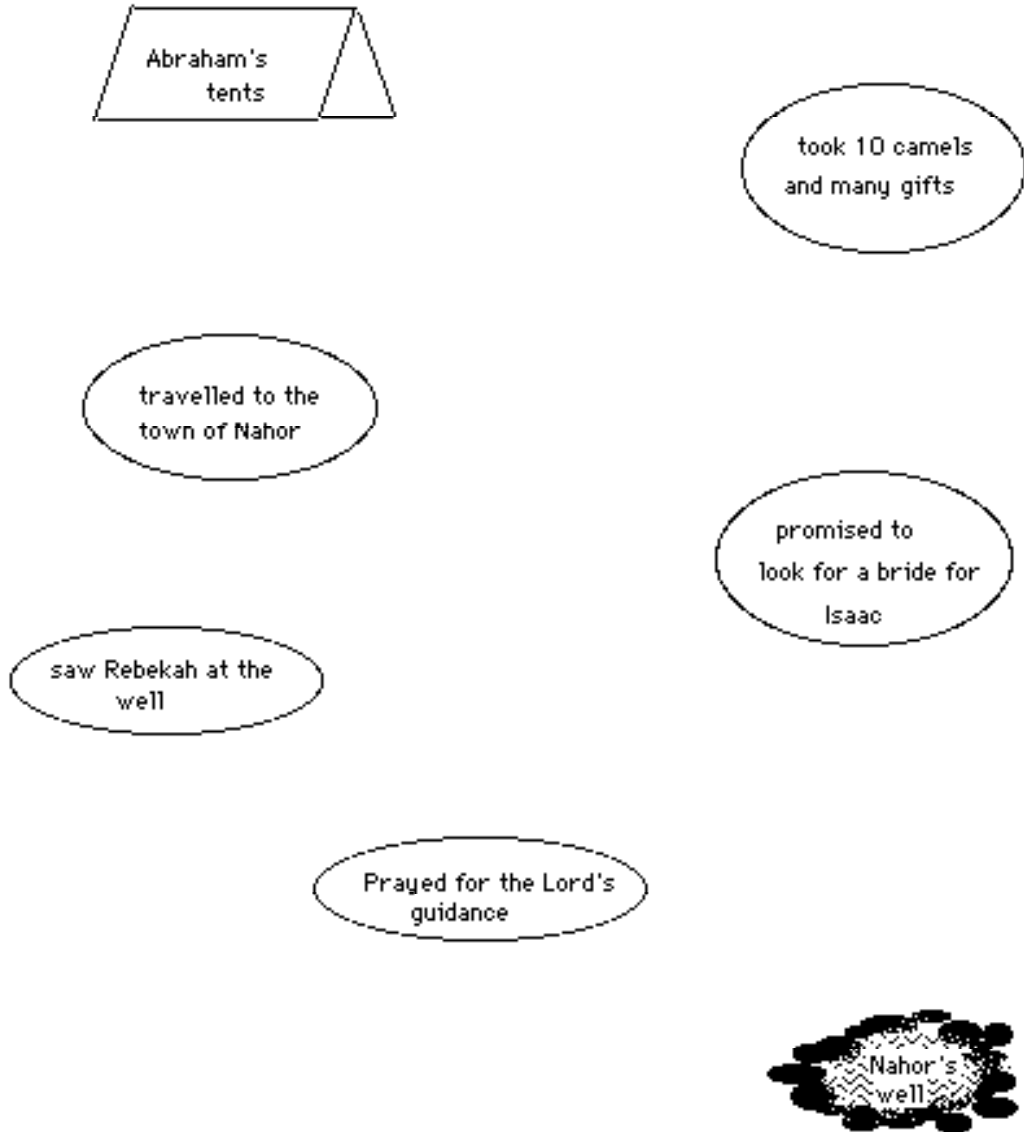
Have students connect the steps that the servant took from Abraham’s tents to meeting Rebekah at the well of Nahor. The steps should read: promised to look for a bride for Isaac, took ten camels and many gifts, traveled to the town of Nahor, prayed for the Lord’s guidance, saw Rebekah at the well.

Related Music

“Bind Us Together”; “Trust and Obey” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #672); “‘Tis So Sweet To Trust In Jesus” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #679); “Happy the Home When God Is There” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #720).

Isaac and Rebekah

Abraham gave his servant a very important job to do - find a wife for his son Isaac! Starting at Abraham's tents, connect the steps that the servant took until the time he left the well at Nahor.



Memory Verse

Psalm 127:5 - "Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate."

SOLOMON - THE DANGER OF A GODLESS MARRIAGE

I Kings 10-11

Lesson Aim

To warn students about the dangers of marriage outside the will of God.

Memory Verse

Psalm 127:5 - “Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate.”

Lesson Background

King Solomon’s story is really a tragic one of high expectations and potential gone awry. Solomon was blessed by God with both material and spiritual blessings. He was king of Israel at her zenith in history. He was rich, well-established on his throne, and lived at peace with the nations around him. He was given great wisdom and insight by God, who appeared to him twice in his dreams and promised to establish his kingdom forever if he and his sons would but obey Him. It would be difficult to think of anyone else in history who was as blessed and secure as Solomon. Yet we are told in I Kings 11 that Solomon loved many foreign women, who turned his heart from the Lord and enticed him to worship other gods. His foolishness brought trouble to his own reign and caused the eventual division between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Christians who marry outside the will of God may also expect trouble and divisions in the home. As Paul writes in II Corinthians 6:14, “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?” While God can and sometimes does graciously intervene when Christians knowingly marry unbelievers by saving the unbelieving

spouse, such marriages are still generally a source of grief and disappointment. This week's lesson is a warning for our students and also an exhortation to plan now to put God first in all things, including their future marriages.

Lesson Procedure

Review last week's lesson on the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. Have your students share some of the details of the servant's quest, the answer to his prayer, and the meeting of Isaac and Rebekah. Remind them that Abraham had sent his servant to find a good wife for Isaac because the women around them were idol worshippers.

"Abraham wanted his son Isaac to have a marriage that would be blessed by God. He knew his son couldn't marry one of the wicked women of the land who worshiped idols. The right wife for Isaac was found through faith and prayer. But what happens when a child of God marries an unbeliever? The result can be disastrous, as we'll see from this week's lesson."

1. King Solomon's Splendor and Wealth (I Kings 10:14-27)

Share some of the information in the Lesson Background with your students, explaining that Solomon was the son of King David and ruler after him over all Israel. Read aloud I Kings 10:14-27 to help your students understand the great wealth and splendor of Solomon's reign. Point out some of the phrases in this passage; the description of his throne, the fact that even his dishes were made of gold, and that silver was as common "as stones." Point out as well that the Lord had blessed Solomon with great wisdom, so that "the whole world sought audience" with him. Because of the way God had blessed him he was "greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth."

"The Lord blessed Solomon and his kingdom; he even appeared to Solomon twice in dreams. Solomon knew that all these things came from the Lord and should have been thankful for all of God's goodness toward him. But something happened to turn Solomon's heart away from the Lord and brought trouble to his kingdom and his family."

2. Solomon's Foreign Wives (I Kings 11:1-8)

Read I Kings 11:1-8. The Lord had warned the people of Israel against marrying people from the nations around them because they would turn their hearts after false gods (Exodus 34:16). Solomon, despite his great wisdom, ignored this command and married many foreign women - hundreds of foreign women. Perhaps he felt he was wise enough to withstand pressure from his wives to compromise his worship of the Lord; perhaps he felt a command such as this should not apply to such a great king as he; in any case, he thought it was more important to form alliances with the neighboring nations through marriage than to obey the command of God. Whatever his reasoning, things turned out to be exactly as the Lord had warned. Solomon built places of worship for the gods of his foreign wives and he eventually joined them in their worship. Many of these gods truly were "detestable," as they are described in the text. Some even involved the practice of human sacrifice. Of all men, Solomon certainly knew that this was sin.

“We know that God intended marriage to be between one woman and one man - but Solomon had hundreds of wives. We know that God’s people were not to marry unbelievers, but Solomon married many unbelieving women. His wives led him into idol worship and turned him from the Lord. Solomon’s kingdom was now in danger!”

3. The Price Solomon Paid (I Kings 11:9-13)

Now read verses 9-13 aloud in class. God judged Solomon for his sin; he violated God’s commandment and showed himself to be unworthy of kingship. Yet the Lord showed mercy as well - the kingdom would not be torn from Solomon, but from his son, because of the Lord’s love for David, Solomon’s father. From that day on, Solomon’s kingdom no longer knew the peace it had enjoyed in his early years as king. The Lord raised up adversaries to Solomon, like Hadad the Edomite and Rezon the rebel, who fought Solomon and caused him many problems. Also, Solomon did not live as long as his father David, no doubt because of his sin. The great kingdom he ruled over was eventually split in two and weakened because of it. Both Solomon and Israel suffered because of his sin.

Conclusion

While none of your students will be contemplating marriage anytime soon, encourage them to plan now to marry someone who shares their faith. Marrying an unbeliever will bring trouble and heartache, as it did to Solomon. But marrying a believer can unite two people in the Lord’s service and can make both people better servants. A shared faith is the best basis for a marriage, and will go a long way toward ensuring a happy home and family life in the years to come.

Worksheet

This week’s worksheet is a review of many of the people we have studied during this quarter. Have students choose a name from the word bank that each sentence describes. The answers are: Timothy, Hannah, Solomon, Josiah, Eli, Rebekah and Samuel.

Related Music

“Bind Us Together”; “Trust and Obey” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #672); “‘Tis So Sweet To Trust In Jesus” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #679); “Happy the Home When God Is There” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #720).

Review

Choose a name from the Word Bank to go with the correct sentence. (Hint: Not all of the names are used!)

1. “My mother and grandmother taught me the Scriptures.” _____
2. “I asked the Lord for a baby boy.” _____
3. “My foreign wives led me to worship false gods.” _____
4. “I was a godly king who repaired the Lord’s temple.” _____
5. “My two sons were wicked men.” _____
6. “I agreed to go with Abraham’s servant to marry Isaac.” _____
7. “I heard the Lord call my name in the night.” _____

Word Bank

Rebekah

Samuel

Timothy

Solomon

Elkanah

Abraham

Hannah

Josiah

Eli