



FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

YEAR 2

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WELCOME TO *Generations of Grace*



This curriculum has been designed to deepen your own study of God's word so that you might be able to properly understand and accurately teach each lesson. It's our prayer that this curriculum would be a blessing to your ministry and home as God uses it to encourage your family.



Share the Lesson

- **Five-Day Devotionals** – Guides the family through the Generations of Grace lesson, a cross-reference passage, and a passage about Christ to lead the family through the whole counsel of God.
- **Generations of Grace Passages** – Reinforces the lesson that your child learned in Sunday School.
- **Cross-Reference Passage** – Points to another passage that reinforces the central truth of each week's lesson.
- **Christ-Centered Passage** – Connects each week's lesson to Jesus Christ and to the gospel.
- **Explain** – Helps parents clarify key truths from the passage for their children.
- **Ask** – See what the children learned and help them remember key facts from the passage.
- **Discuss** – Help parents counsel their children in real life based on the passage.

Additional Resources

Use these additional resources to help support your lessons and to knit together the church and the home, ensuring that what is taught on Sunday matches what is learned throughout the week.

- **Coloring Book**
- **Craft Book**
- **Activity Book**
- **Student Journal**
- **Teacher Book**

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SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON
WEEK 32

God uses Esther to protect His people

Esther 1:1–10:3



DAY 1

Setting: Jews in high position and remembered • Esther 1:1–2:23

READ

Esther 1:1–2:23

EXPLAIN

The truth of Esther 1:1–2:23

This story happened between Ezra 6 and 7 during the reign of Ahasuerus (Esth 1:1), also known as Xerxes, who ruled Persia from 486–465 BC. It took place in Susa, one of Persia's great capital cities far away from Jerusalem. Susa was powerful and ridiculously luxurious (1:1–8), but its king lacked power over himself, his family, and his kingdom (1:9–12, 19). At the advice of his silly wise men, Ahasuerus' family problem grew into an empire-wide emergency (1:13–22). How would the Jews survive as God's people in a pagan empire under such a lousy leader? In the 1st of at least nine "coincidences" in this story, God used Ahasuerus' passion to select a Jewish orphan, out of all the women in Persia, to replace Vashti as queen (2:1–18). Then in a 2nd "coincidence," Esther's cousin and adoptive father, Mordecai, overheard a plot against the king (2:21–22), and his loyalty was recorded in the king's book (2:23). God had put Esther on the throne and Mordecai in the record book, perfectly positioned to protect His people when the time came.

ASK

1. What was King Ahasuerus like?
He was rich and ruled a powerful empire, but he was a terrible leader.
2. Whose foolish advice did King Ahasuerus listen to?
His wise men.
3. How did God prepare to protect His people?
He put His people in the right places: Esther on the throne and Mordecai in the record book.
4. What were Esther and Mordecai like?
Esther was beautiful and Mordecai was loyal and cared about people.

DISCUSS

1. How are Christians in your country like the Jews in pagan Persia? What are your culture and your rulers like? Is God still in control?
2. When do you take a break or rest? What does it mean that the Protector of Israel does not slumber or sleep (Ps 121:4)? Why does God never need to rest?

DAY 2

Crisis: A plot against the Jews • Esther 3:1–4:17

READ

Esther 3:1–4:17

EXPLAIN

The truth of Esther 3:1–4:17

Things got worse before they got better. Ahasuerus made a poor choice by ignoring Mordecai and promoting Haman. Haman was a descendant of Agag, the wicked Amalekite king captured by Saul and killed by Samuel (1 Sam 15). Haman was Israel's worst nightmare come true, a hater of Israel with immense power. But as Saul had toppled Agag, so Saul's relative would topple Haman. Mordecai was a Benjamite, descended from the same family as Saul (Esth 2:5; 1 Sam 9:1). Consistent with his family background, Mordecai refused to bow before Haman (Esth 3:2). Mordecai and Haman were arch-enemies, the 3rd "coincidence." True to his heritage, Haman retaliated against Mordecai by seeking to wipe out all Jews (3:6). Even the non-Jews were horrified, for when a wicked man rules, the people groan (3:15; Prov 29:2). Mordecai urged Esther to take action (Esth 4:4–9). If she did not act, she and her family would suffer for not using her position to honor God and protect His people (4:13–14). When God's providence puts believers in influential positions, He expects them to use their influence for His glory and His people's good.

ASK

1. Who was the wicked man who tried to kill all the Jews?
Haman.
2. Why didn't Haman and Mordecai like each other?
Since the time of Agag and Saul, their families were archenemies. Haman's family always wanted to destroy Israel, and Mordecai's family defended Israel.
3. How did Mordecai persuade Esther to speak up for her people?
He said that God did not need her, but that God had put her in a place of power and would hold her accountable to do the right thing.

DISCUSS

1. What opportunities has God given you? What influence do you have? Are you using it to honor God and help God's people?
2. Why is there really no such thing as a "coincidence" (something that seems to happen at random, by chance)?

DAY 3

Climax: Haman caught in his own plot • Esther 5:1–8:2

READ

Esther 5:1–8:2

EXPLAIN

The truth of Esther 5:1–8:2

Esther acted boldly, and God arranged events just right. Between the two banquets God arranged a sleepless night for the king, a 4th "coincidence" (6:1). The king asked for the book of records to be read, which led to a 5th "coincidence": his servants happened to read the part about Mordecai (6:2). Then a 6th "coincidence": the king, who failed to reward Mordecai five years earlier, asked about the reward (6:3). Then a 7th "coincidence": Haman,

driven by his evil schemes, arrived early in the morning exactly when the king wanted advice (6:5). Finally, an 8th "coincidence": when the king asked for advice, he failed to mention who was to be honored (6:6). So Haman, scheming for honor, planned his own humiliation—all this while the man he planned to execute was given the highest honor (6:10–12)! Then, after Esther identified Haman as the Jews' enemy (7:1–6), a 9th "coincidence": the king, having stomped off in a rage, came back just in time to see Haman falling onto Esther's couch (7:7–8). This, along with timely news of Haman's plans, sealed Haman's doom (7:9–10).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. How did Esther act cleverly?
She used two banquets and the king's physical attraction to get the king to commit before she risked accusing Haman, who was the king's favorite.
2. How did God shame Haman?
By causing him to publically honor Mordecai.
3. How was Haman executed?
On the gallows he had built for Mordecai (Esth 5:14).
4. How many "coincidences" can you remember? What do they show us about God??
See above. They show us that God is in control even of events that seem "random."

DISCUSS 

1. Have you ever tried to make yourself look good? How does Haman warn you not to?
2. How does Haman illustrate God's exact justice (Prov 26:27)?

DAY 4*Resolution: The plot against the Jews undone • Esther 8:1–9:19***READ** 

Esther 8:1–9:19

EXPLAIN **The truth of Esther 8:1–9:19**

All along selfish Ahasuerus never really cared about the Jews. He was still selfish, and he had only taken action because Esther wasn't as pretty when she was sad. Haman was dead, but the Jews were not safe yet. So Esther cleverly appealed to her own happiness again, essentially telling the king that if he didn't help, she wouldn't smile for him (Esth 8:3–6). It worked. The king gave Mordecai the power to issue a new decree (8:8–14). Confusion in the city (3:15) turned into rejoicing (8:15; Prov 29:2). The Jews' mourning and fasting (Esth 4:3) turned into joy and celebration (8:17a). The Jews' fear of others (4:4) turned into others fearing them (8:17b). The anticipated hateful destruction of the Jews (3:5, 13) turned into the destruction of those who hated the Jews (9:1–16). Because of God's providential power, all the evil intentions of wicked men were undone, bringing about just the opposite of what had been planned (9:1).

ASK 

1. Were the Jews safe after Haman was executed?
No. Haman's plan had not been stopped.
2. How was Haman's evil plan stopped?
Esther persuaded the king with her beauty and words again, and Mordecai wrote a new decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves.
3. What did God turn the plans of the wicked upside down?
Haman honored the man he hated. Haman was hanged on his own gallows. Those who planned to kill the Jews were themselves killed.
4. How did God turn the disaster for the Jews into blessing?
God made Mordecai 2nd in command, saved the lives of all the Jews, and caused them to be honored by the other people in Persia.

DISCUSS 

1. Esther trusted God, but she also used wisdom. How did she behave cleverly?
2. How has God continued to faithfully protect Israel throughout history?

DAY 5

Outcome: Jews remember and enjoy high position • Esther 9:20–10:3

READ

Esther 9:20–10:3

EXPLAIN

The truth of Esther 9:20–10:3

This sudden reversal has been remembered ever since by a holiday called Purim (Esth 9:20–32). Purim is named after the lots Haman had cast to determine the fateful day. This holiday is a reminder that God is faithful to preserve the line of the Messiah despite the ongoing attempts of Satan to eliminate it (Gen 22:17–18). In addition, Mordecai's rise to power and care for the Jews show that God's people can live successfully even in a foreign, unbelieving world (Esth 10:3). About 450 years later, the Messiah came and brought about a reversal even greater than the one in Esther. He overthrew the evil one, turned death into life, defeat into victory, slavery into freedom, and sin into righteousness (Col 2:13–15). Because of Christ's victory, you, like Israel, can hope in God as you live in a foreign, unbelieving world. For as God was faithful to send the Messiah once, He will do so again, when Jesus comes to take over the government and rule as the Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6–7; Zech 9:9–10).

ASK

1. What is Purim?
Purim is the holiday when Jews remember how God used Esther to rescue them and crush their enemies.
2. Why did Satan want to destroy the Jews?
He wanted to destroy stop the Messiah from coming. He failed. Again.
3. Who caused an even greater reversal than the one in Esther?
Jesus.
4. What kind of a reversal did Jesus bring?
He overthrew the evil one, turned death into life, defeat into victory, slavery into freedom, and sin into righteousness.

DISCUSS

1. We have many reasons to celebrate! How do Christian holidays help you to remember who God is and what He has done? Is it right to rejoice in God's just vengeance (Ps 58:10)?
2. Parents: How does God's care for the Jews in Persia encourage you as you raise children in a godless world?

NEXT WEEK

God uses Daniel to interpret the king's dream

Daniel 2:1–49



SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON
WEEK 33

God uses Daniel to interpret the king's dream

Daniel 2:1-49



DAY 1

God gave Nebuchadnezzar a troubling dream • Daniel 2:1-13

READ 

Daniel 2:1-13

EXPLAIN 

The truth of Daniel 2:1-13

When you have a scary dream, you probably want to forget it quickly. But when Nebuchadnezzar had a troubling dream (Dan 2:1), he wanted to know what it meant. The Babylonians believed that dreams were messages from the gods, and the ancient astrologers and sorcerers had created ways of interpreting dreams. But Nebuchadnezzar showed that they had no real power when he required them to first tell him what he dream was (2:5-9). The magicians' magic was worthless (2:10). They complained that only a god could know the king's dream—and they were right (2:11)! Apart from the true God, human wisdom is foolish (1 Cor 1:20), lacks understanding (1 Cor 2:14), and is spiritually blind (2 Cor 4:4). Their so-called gods could not communicate with humans, because their gods were worthless idols, unable to reveal anything about the past or the future (Isa 41:22-24; 44:12-20). In his anger, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the deaths of all the wise men, including Daniel and his friends (2:12). But Nebuchadnezzar would soon learn that there is a God unlike any idol, who both knows and speaks to man (Isa 42:8-9).

ASK 

1. Why did the king call all his wise men?
The king had a dream, and he wanted the wise men to tell him what the dream was before telling him what it meant.
2. Could any of the king's wise men tell the king what his dream meant?
No. Their magic was worthless.
3. What did the king do when no one could tell him his dream?
He ordered that all the wise men be killed.
4. How did the dream affect Daniel and his companions?
The death sentence included them.

DISCUSS 

1. Based on this story, what would you say to someone who looks for special knowledge through astrology, spiritualism, etc. (Deut 18:10-12)?
2. Explain why the magicians and sorcerers were right when they said that only a god could know the king's dream.

DAY 2

God revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel • Daniel 2:14–30

READ

Daniel 2:14–30

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 2:14–30

As all the wise men of Babylon trembled, Daniel came to the rescue. Daniel knew that only the God of Israel could reveal the dream (cf. Gen 41:25; Job 7:14). So Daniel and his friends did what godly people do when faced with an impossible task: they prayed, trusting God's power and depending on God's mercy (Dan 2:18). When God revealed the dream, Daniel praised God for being the sovereign God, the King of wisdom and power (2:19–20). First, God showed His wisdom by revealing the dream to Daniel. God is omniscient: He knows everything at all times, even things that humans cannot know (1 John 3:20). He knows every thought (Ps 139:2) and every secret (Heb 4:13). Not only does He have wisdom, but He also controls it. He alone decides who will receive knowledge (Dan 2:21–22). Second, God showed His power by what the dream was about. The dream was about God's rule over history and governments (2:21). Daniel understood that God was sovereign over wisdom and power, so he took no credit for himself when He explained things to Nebuchadnezzar (2:27).

ASK

1. What did Daniel do when he heard Nebuchadnezzar wanted to kill him?
He asked for time because he believed that God would reveal the dream.
2. What did Daniel and his friends do when Nebuchadnezzar gave him more time?
They prayed. They depended on God.
3. When God revealed the dream, what did this prove about God?
It showed that God controls wisdom and power.
4. What did Daniel tell Nebuchadnezzar before he interpreted the dream?
That only God could reveal such mysteries.

DISCUSS

1. What do you depend on when you face trials? How quickly do you turn to God? When you have success, do you take the credit or realize your success is from God?
2. Do you ever neglect God because you are focused on schoolwork instead? Even though studies are good, why is this imbalance foolish?

DAY 3

God revealed His future eternal kingdom • Daniel 2:31–49

READ

Daniel 2:31–49

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 2:31–49

Nebuchadnezzar's dream shows that God controls history. After the Babylonian kingdom an inferior kingdom would arise, represented by the silver chest and arms (Dan 2:38). This was the Medo-Persian kingdom led by Cyrus the Great (539–331 B.C.). Then in 332 B.C. the armies of Alexander the Great attacked and defeated the Medo-Persian Empire. The Greek Empire, represented by the bronze belly and

thighs (2:39), would dominate for the next 185 years (331–146 B.C.). The fourth kingdom was represented by the iron legs. Like iron, the powerful Roman kingdom would “break and crush” all the others (2:40). The toes of clay and iron represented a version of Rome that is still future. This revived Roman Empire will consist of 10 kingdoms (7:24). At Christ's second coming, this confederation of kings will be destroyed and Christ will reign forever over God's eternal kingdom (2:44–45). Like the stone in the vision, Christ's kingdom will have its source in heaven (John 18:36), but it will be located on earth, filling the whole world (Ps 2:6–9; Dan 7:13–27; Rev 21:1–22:5).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. What did the king's dream mean?
That God had given Nebuchadnezzar his power. The different levels of the statue represented different kingdoms that would come to power after Babylon.
2. What did the stone represent?
The stone represented God's kingdom that He will establish on the earth.
3. What can we learn about God from the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
God controls all of human history, leading to His own eternal kingdom on earth.

DISCUSS 

1. The Jews in Daniel's day were living in exile under a godless ruler. How did Daniel's message encourage them? How does it encourage you as you consider the nations and rulers today?
2. Why is it silly to resist God's power (Rom 14:11)?

DAY 4*Believers ought to live godly lives waiting for Jesus • 1 Peter 1:13–17***READ** 

1 Peter 1:1–17

EXPLAIN **The truth of 1 Peter 1:1–17**

Since Jesus' kingdom is coming, how should you live now? If your faith is in Christ, you should be filled with hope, holiness, and honor as you look forward to Jesus' earthly kingdom (1 Pet 1:13–17). First, live in hope of your "inheritance," which is "kept in heaven ready to be revealed in the last time" (1:4–5). Hope is an active choice of your will, not an emotional feeling. So living in hope means living expectantly, with your eyes focused on the grace that you will experience when Jesus returns (1:13). Second, be holy. With eyes fixed on your future in God's holy kingdom, don't live according to the past sinful desires and thoughts that you had before being saved (1:14). God does not expect you to be sinless in this life (Rom 7:14–25; 1 John 1:8), but He does expect you to be growing (1 Pet 1:15). Third, honor God as you wait for His Son. Show God reverence and respect during your temporary journey on earth. Live in awe of your coming King (1 Pet 1:17), because He will carefully judge your work (1 Cor 3:10–15).

ASK 

1. Are you supposed to set your mind on things in this life or the life to come?
The life to come.
2. How can you practice holiness?
By (1) putting of sinful behavior and (2) pursuing holiness in everything they do (1 Pet 1:14–15).
3. How can you honor God while waiting for His Son?
By reverencing and respecting God, and living in awe of Him.

DISCUSS 

1. Have you ever been patient or worked through something difficult because you knew something good was coming (a holiday, a prize, etc.)? Can you live your whole life this way?.
2. What can you do to grow in holiness (Eph 4:21–24)? What is one sinful behavior that you are actively putting off? If you don't love holiness now, then do you really look forward to God's kingdom, which is completely holy (Rev 21:2, 27)?

DAY 5

An everlasting dominion • Daniel 7:1–28

READ

Daniel 7:1–28

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 7:1–28

Nothing can stop God's coming kingdom. The rise and fall of kingdoms throughout history will come to a climax, when the Ancient of Days, God the Father, gives the eternal kingdom to the Son of Man. His kingdom will be a "dominion" and "glory" and "a kingdom" that "shall not pass away." All the "peoples, nations, and languages" of the earth will serve Him (Dan 7:14). This eternal kingdom of Christ follows the kingdoms of the nations: Babylon (7:4), Medo-Persia (7:5), Greece (7:6), and Rome (7:7). Following the kingdoms of the nations will be a final kingdom, the rebirth of the Roman Empire in the form of a ten king confederacy occupying much of the territory once dominated by Rome (7:7, 24). After this confederacy there will be a final ruler, "a little" horn, who will rise to world-wide dominance (7:8, 20, 24). This is the Antichrist, who will carry out one last persecution of the saints (7:21, 25). But the Antichrist will be unable to stop Christ's kingdom. He will be judged and executed (7:9, 11–12), and then Christ will be King over the earth forever.

ASK

1. What do the "four great beasts" represent? *Babylon ("like a lion," 7:4), Medo-Persia ("like a bear," 7:5), Greece ("like a leopard," 7:6), and Rome ("terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong," 7:7).*
2. What does the "little" horn represent? *The Antichrist who will rise to rule the world (7:8, 20, 24).*
3. What is the last event before Christ's everlasting kingdom? *The divine judgment and execution of the Antichrist (7:9, 11–12).*

DISCUSS

1. We are told over 50 times in the Bible to be ready for the Second Coming of Christ. How are you preparing for Jesus' return?
2. How will Jesus do the job Adam was created to do (Gen 1:26)? This shows that God has never given up on His plan for mankind.

NEXT WEEK

God protects Daniel's friends

Daniel 3:1–30



SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON
WEEK 34

God protects Daniel's friends

Daniel 3:1-30



DAY 1

Nebuchadnezzar commanded everyone to worship his gods • Daniel 3:1-7

READ 

Daniel 3:1-7

EXPLAIN 

The truth of Daniel 3:1-7

The Bible tells you to submit to your human authorities (Rom 13:1), but what if your human authority commands you to disobey God? Do what Daniel's friends did. Nebuchadnezzar had declared that God is great (Dan 2:47), but he wasn't yet willing to worship God alone (3:1). In fact, he wanted everyone else to worship idols with him, or else be thrown into the fiery furnace (3:6). But while everyone bowed low in worship, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood tall. They knew that God alone is God (Deut 6:4), that God demands the whole of our devotion (6:5), and that He alone is to be worshiped (Exod 20:3-4). So they obeyed God instead of man (Acts 5:29). That is what you should do too, but even when you must disobey human government, you must still do so with honor and respect (1 Pet 2:17). And you must be all the more careful to obey when obedience does not require sin. Otherwise, who will believe your testimony (1 Pet 2:20)? Instead of seeing a person devoted to God above all, they will only see a person with a rebellious attitude.

ASK 

1. What did Nebuchadnezzar build?
A statue that was 90 feet tall.
2. Who was at the dedication of Nebuchadnezzar's statue?
All the officials of his kingdom.
3. What did King Nebuchadnezzar demand all his officials to do?
He demanded that all of them worship the image he had built.
4. Why didn't Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego obey?
They chose to obey God rather than man.

DISCUSS 

1. Do you think it was hard for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to stand when everyone else bowed down? Why is peer pressure powerful and dangerous?
2. Is it possible to disobey an earthly authority without a rebellious attitude? If you had to disobey an earthly authority right now, would it be clear to people that you are doing so for God and not just to be a rebel?

DAY 2

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's gods • Daniel 3:8–18

READ

Daniel 3:8–18

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 3:8–18

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow, but would they give in when threatened with painful death? They were jealously accused by some of the Chaldeans, who were wise men of Babylonian heritage (Dan 3:12). Nebuchadnezzar was furious. How could these foreigners refuse to worship the gods who had conquered God's people by destroying Jerusalem? But Nebuchadnezzar had not yet understood that God is the "God of gods and the Lord of kings" (2:47). He did not realize that kings and nations are in God's hands—even his own victory over Jerusalem had been planned by God (Deut 28:45–57; Isa 39:5–7). In self-exalting pride, Nebuchadnezzar set himself against the God of gods. That was a foolish mistake, for God crushes the proud (Isa 13:11). But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew God's power. So not even the smell of smoke and the sight of flames weakened their loyalty to Him. They depended fully on God and trusted His power to save (Heb 7:25). But they also trusted that God's will was best, even if He chose not to save (Rom 12:2).

ASK

1. Who accused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego of disobeying the king's command? *Some jealous Chaldeans, wise men of Babylonian heritage.*
2. What did Nebuchadnezzar say to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? *That if they did not worship his gods they would be thrown into the fiery furnace.*
3. What did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego say to the king? *That their God was able to deliver them from the fiery furnace, but even if He didn't save them, they still wouldn't worship idols.*

DISCUSS

1. How should you respond to suffering (Rom 5:1–5; 1 Pet 4:13)?
2. Describe the last time you were able to demonstrate your allegiance to Christ. Parents: as appropriate, discuss with your children areas where they can expect to suffer for the truth (evolution, homosexuality, etc.).

DAY 3

God demonstrated His power by protecting Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego • Daniel 3:19–30

READ

Daniel 3:19–30

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 3:19–30

God proved His great power to save. God could not be stopped by Nebuchadnezzar's hatred for the three Jews for their faith. He could not be stopped by the super hot flames (Dan 3:19). Even though the scorching flames instantly killed the soldiers (3:22), the three Jews were unharmed! Not only that, but they enjoyed the company of one "like a son of the gods" (3:25). This man may have been the pre-incarnate Christ or

an angel of God. You also, if you belong to Christ, can enjoy His presence through any hardship, because Christ is always with you (Matt 28:20), and the Holy Spirit is present to encourage, bless, and sustain you (Ps 139:7–10; John 14:16–17; 1 Cor 3:16; 1 Pet 4:14). God's power to save showed Nebuchadnezzar that He was "the Most High God" (Dan 3:26). He praised the three men and declared that the Most High God is trustworthy (3:28) and powerful to save (3:29), unlike any idol. Nebuchadnezzar even commanded that all his subjects respect and honor God. Have you put your trust in God, who alone is able to save you?

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. What was the furnace like?
Very hot.
2. Did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego burn up in the fire?
They were thrown in, but they did not burn.
3. Who protected Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?
God. He sent His angel to protect the men.
3. What did the king do when he saw how God protected the three men?
The king praised God for protecting them.

DISCUSS 

1. Did God have to save Daniel's friends? What does it show you about God that He did choose to save them?
2. Is it enough to believe in and admire God's great power? What did Nebuchadnezzar still lack (Dan 4:37; Jas 4:6)? Are you like Nebuchadnezzar?

DAY 4

By faith Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego quenched the power of fire • Hebrews 11:34

READ 

Hebrews 11:32-40

EXPLAIN **The truth of Hebrews 11:34**

What does it mean that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego quenched the power of fire by faith (Heb 11:34)? Was it something they did that put out the flames? Not exactly, because faith is recognizing that there isn't anything you can do. Faith is admitting that God alone is able to save. Faith is being convinced that He can do it (Heb 11:1), and it depends on Him alone. And that is exactly what these three men did. They were convinced that God is always with His people, even in fiery trials. They embraced God's promise to Israel: "When you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you" (Isa 43:2). So they exited the furnace without even smelling like smoke. God never guarantees that you will be rescued from physical suffering or death, but you can still live by faith like Daniel's friends. Why? Because if your faith is in God, then no matter what happens in this life, heaven is guaranteed (Phil 1:21-30; 3:10-11, 14, 20-21). And no matter what trouble you face, God is always with you (Pss 9:9; 37:39).

ASK 

1. How did Daniel's friends overcome the fire?
By faith: they depended entirely on God and were confident that He could save them.
2. How was their rescue clearly a work of God?
God supernaturally protected them from the fire, even guarding their bodies from the smell of smoke.
3. What truth can help you have faith like them?
God gives heaven to those who believe. God is always with those who believe, no matter the trouble.

DISCUSS 

1. What is your "stronghold" during times of trouble (Ps 9:9; 37:39)?
2. Have you recently experienced a trial or hardship? What has sustained you?

DAY 5

Jesus is always with His people • John 14:16–17

READ

John 14:12–20

EXPLAIN

The truth of John 14:16–17

If Jesus ascended into heaven long ago, how can we say that He is with us? Jesus explained this the night before His death. His disciples were upset over the coming loss of their Lord, because they loved Him deeply and desperately relied upon Him. Even though His own death was coming soon, Jesus selflessly ministered to the needs of His disciples. He graciously promised to provide for all their needs (John 14:13), and He would do so by sending another Helper exactly like Himself (14:16). This “Helper,” the Holy Spirit, would remain with them forever. He would take Jesus’ place, empowering the disciples to accomplish His work. He is the “Spirit of truth” (14:17), the source who communicates the truth to His people (16:12–15). The world cannot see Him or know Him. They failed to recognize Jesus (1:10), and will fail to recognize His Spirit. However, ever since Pentecost, all Christians are personally and permanently indwelt by God’s Spirit (Acts 2; Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 12:13). So if you have the Spirit in you, then Jesus Himself is present with you too (John 14:20).

ASK

1. Who is the “Helper”?
The Holy Spirit.
2. Why is the Holy Spirit also called the “Spirit of truth”?
He is the source who communicates the truth to Christians.
3. Why can’t the world receive the Holy Spirit?
The world doesn’t see Him or know Him.
4. What did Jesus say would change about the way the disciples experienced the ministry of the Holy Spirit?
The Holy Spirit had dwelt with them but would soon dwell in them.

DISCUSS

1. Is there anywhere God’s Spirit is not present (Ps 139:7–10)?
2. One of the reasons God has given His Spirit is to empower Christians for service. What will you do this week to serve our great God? How can you tell the difference between serving by the Spirit’s power and serving by your own strength?

NEXT WEEK

God humbles Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 4:1–37



SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON
WEEK 35

God humbles Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 4:1–37



DAY 1

God gave Nebuchadnezzar a terrifying dream • Daniel 4:1–18

READ

Daniel 4:1–18

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 4:1–18

A supernatural dream and men unburned by raging flames had convinced Nebuchadnezzar of God's unique power. But there was still something missing: a humble response. Nebuchadnezzar thought God was pretty great. But he still thought that he himself, as king of Babylon, was pretty great too (4:4). So God sent him another dream. Again the wise men failed to interpret the dream, even though Nebuchadnezzar actually told them what it was this time (4:6–7). Human wisdom was again worthless (Jer 9:23). So Daniel explained what the dream meant: Because of Nebuchadnezzar's great pride, God would humble him. God would cut down his pride like an axe chopping down a magnificent tree. But the band around the stump showed that God would preserve Nebuchadnezzar's rule, for the stump would one day sprout again (Dan 4:26). What was the purpose of the king's humiliation? To demonstrate that God is **sovereign**. He rules over all, including over the kingdoms of man (Isa 40:22–24). He bestows these kingdoms on whomever He wishes (4:17), so no one, not even great Nebuchadnezzar, should boast.

ASK

1. Who tried (and failed) to interpret the king's dream before Daniel was called?
All the wise men of Babylon (the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans, and diviners).
2. What was the dream about?
A large tree that provided for the animals of the world was chopped down..
3. Would the tree be completely destroyed?
No. Its stump would be protected.

DISCUSS

1. God is kind: He showed Nebuchadnezzar a third sign after he was not humbled by the first two. What has God revealed to you to humble you before Him? How have you responded?
2. Ask your parents to help you identify any pride in your life. Are you humble enough to listen to what they say? Is it worth letting go of that pride? What does God do to the proud (Isa 13:11)?

DAY 2

God warned Nebuchadnezzar about his pride • Daniel 4:19–27

READ

Daniel 4:19–27

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 4:19–27

Getting chopped down does not feel good. Daniel was so troubled that he begged the king to respond rightly to the dream's interpretation. He urged the king to **repent, turning away from his sin**, and to show his repentance by showing mercy (4:27). Daniel urged this because he knew pride brings great destruction. Adam and Eve brought a curse on all creation when they proudly sought wisdom apart from God (Gen 3:6). The people at Babel were scattered and confused when they proudly sought a name for themselves (11:4). Pharaoh's kingdom was crushed when he proudly resisted God (Exod 12:29–30). Korah was swallowed up by the earth when he proudly challenged Moses (Num 16). Samson lost his sight when he proudly trusted in his own strength (Judg 16). Goliath suffered a shocking defeat when he proudly mocked God's people (1 Sam 17). Saul lost his kingdom, the Spirit, and his life by proudly pursuing his own will instead of obeying God's word (1 Sam 13:14). Be warned: pride leads to destruction (Prov 16:18).

ASK

1. How did Daniel respond to the dream?
He was troubled. Daniel cared about Nebuchadnezzar.
2. After interpreting the dream, what did Daniel tell Nebuchadnezzar to do?
To repent: to stop sinning and practice righteousness.
3. Why was all this going to happen to Nebuchadnezzar?
To show everyone that it is God who rules. .
4. What other biblical characters were devastated because of their pride?
Adam and Eve, the people at Babel, Pharaoh, Korah, Samson, Goliath, and Saul.

DISCUSS

1. What does God think about pride (Prov 6:16–19)? Can this apply even to “good” people who believe in God (Luke 18:10–14)? Is this a danger for you?
2. Have you ever suffered or been humiliated because of your own pride?

DAY 3

God humbled Nebuchadnezzar through His judgment • Daniel 4:28–37

READ

Daniel 4:28–37

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 4:28–37

It had been a year since the dream. Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten. Maybe he thought it was only a bad dream, not a message from God. Either way, a year later he ignored the dream's message and boasted about his own power and glory (Dan 4:30). So God immediately made his mind like an animal's. Can you imagine if that happened to you? Nebuchadnezzar traded his palace for a field,

his officials for cattle, his banquets for grass, his rich robes for hair matted like eagles' feathers, and his elegance for nails overgrown and blackened like birds' claws (4:33). Nebuchadnezzar's proud head hung in disgrace. But after seven years, he looked to heaven, admitting that God was Might and he was not. So God graciously restored his understanding, just as He had promised. Nebuchadnezzar was thankful, not bitter, over his suffering, because God's discipline had rescued him from his own terrible pride. So Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed the message for all to hear: God humbles everyone who is proud (4:37).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. Did the king humble himself before God?
No. He boasted about all that he had done.
2. What happened to the king?
Nebuchadnezzar's mind became like an animal's. His hair became matted like eagles' feathers. His nails became overgrown, and he ate grass like a beast.
3. Did Nebuchadnezzar stay that way?
No. After seven years, he humbly looked to heaven, and God restored him as promised.

DISCUSS 

1. You don't need to be a king in order to boast about yourself. How are you tempted to honor yourself with the glory that belongs only to God?
2. How long does it take you to admit that you are wrong? When your pride is humbled, are you thankful or upset?

DAY 4*Faith like a child • Matthew 18:1–4***READ** 

Matthew 18:1–4

EXPLAIN **The truth of Matthew 18:1–4**

Humility is so important because it is the attitude of faith. To have faith, you must be humble. You must see your weakness, your inability to save yourself, and your desperate need for Jesus. You must be like a little child (Matt 18:3). In other words, you must be dependent, as an infant depends wholly on its mother with nothing of its own to offer. So you must realize that you are weak, and helpless, and all you can do is trust, looking to Jesus to supply all your needs. When Jesus said this, the disciples had been arguing about which one of them was the greatest (cf. Mark 9:34; Luke 9:46). But they had it all wrong. It is not the super spiritual but the poor in spirit who are blessed (Matt 5:3). It is not those who think they are righteous, but those who hunger and thirst for righteousness who are blessed (5:6). So give up your pride. It might hurt to do it, but it is worth it. When you look to Christ as your only hope, then His blessing will overwhelm you with grace you could never earn.

ASK 

1. What must you become like to enter Christ's kingdom?
Like a little child.
2. In what way must you become like a little child?
Humble, dependent, like an infant who trusts his parents to provide and is unable to survive on his own.
3. Why is humility so good?
Because the humble heart is empty and ready to receive the grace of Christ.

DISCUSS 

1. How do your parents provide for you? How does God provide for His children?
2. Why are the proud excluded from God's kingdom? Is there sin in your life that you are too proud to confess? Now is a good time to humble yourself, confess, and enjoy forgiveness.

DAY 5

Jesus washes the disciples' feet • John 13:1-5

READ

John 13:1-5

EXPLAIN

The truth of John 13:1-5

If you knew you had just one day left to live, how would you spend it? Jesus spent it serving his disciples. He humbly began to wash the disciples' feet (John 13:1, 5). To those seated around Him, this was unthinkable humiliation. This was a job done by the lowest ranking slave, not the honored guest. It was not even something the disciples considered doing for each other, for, as Luke points out, they were too busy arguing about who was the greatest (Luke 22:24). Yet Jesus took the position of the lowest slave in order to show what true love looks like. He did in spite of Judas' coming betrayal and His own coming suffering and death (John 13:2-3). At the time when you might expect the disciples to be caring for the needs of their Master, Jesus set aside His needs and concerns in order to care for theirs. In so doing, He loved "his own...to the end" (13:1). He loved his disciples to with full and perfect love. If you are a follower of Jesus, you should be marked by this same kind of humble, selfless love.

ASK

1. What did Jesus do for His disciples?
He washed their feet.
2. When did He do this?
The day before He died on the cross.
3. Why were the disciples shocked when Jesus began to wash their feet?
Washing feet was something done by the lowest ranking slave.
4. Why did Jesus wash His disciples' feet?
To show that love is humble and selfless.

DISCUSS

1. Why do you do good things for others? Because you care for them and want to serve them, or because you hoped that you will be noticed? What can you do this week to show selfless love to your family or friends?
2. Your failure to love condemns you. But what has Christ's selfless love accomplished for you to remove your guilt (Phil 2:5-8)?

NEXT WEEK

God judges Belshazzar for his pride

Daniel 5:1-31



SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON
WEEK 36

God judges Belshazzar for his pride

Daniel 5:1-31



DAY 1

Belshazzar challenged God's authority • Daniel 5:1-4

READ 

Daniel 5:1-4

EXPLAIN 

The truth of Daniel 5:1-4

His army had been beaten, and he was surrounded by a large enemy army. So what did Belshazzar do? He throw a part (Dan 5:1)! He wanted to show he wasn't afraid, maybe to try to boost the morale of his soldiers. He trusted in the city's impressive walls: two sets of double walls encircled the city, each one from 11 to 25 feet thick. Confident in his man-made security, Belshazzar called for the cups from God's temple (5:2). It was a wicked offense—their lips touched vessels holy to the living God as their tongues praised lifeless idols (5:4). Hadn't Belshazzar heard what happened when his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar was proud? Belshazzar intentionally mocked the God of Israel as if He were powerless before Babylon's empty-headed gods. Like all mockers, he enjoyed despising God. Like many before him, Belshazzar was *proud, puffed up, honoring himself, trusting his own strength and abilities*, not God. However, those who challenge God's authority are foolish. Because they ignore His warning about the danger and destruction of pride, they will be humbled (Prov 29:23). God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (Jas 4:6).

ASK 

1. Did Belshazzar listen to Nebuchadnezzar's warning to be humble?
No. Belshazzar did not listen; he was proud.
2. Why was Belshazzar so proud?
He trusted in the thick walls and in his idols made out of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.
3. How did Belshazzar intentionally mock God?
By using God's holy vessels for his drunken party.
4. What happens to those who challenge God's authority?
They are humbled by God.

DISCUSS 

1. Have you heard people speak badly about God? What are some other ways that people challenge God's authority today?
2. Do you brag (either with your mouth or in your own head) about your own abilities? What does that bragging sound like to God?

DAY 2

God condemned Belshazzar's pride • Daniel 5:5–28

READ

Daniel 5:5–28

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 5:5–28

Have you ever been so scared your legs were shaking? That's how scared Belshazzar was when he saw a hand appear out of nowhere and write on the wall! It only became worse when none of his wise men could interpret the message (5:6–9)—if Nebuchadnezzar were around he would have told him so (Dan 2, 4). So who did they call? Daniel, again. And again Daniel first magnified God before interpreting. He proclaimed God's authority over Belshazzar and rebuked him for ignoring what he clearly knew. Belshazzar knew that Nebuchadnezzar's authority had come from the Most High God (5:18–19). He knew that God humbles the proud as He humbled Nebuchadnezzar (5:20). He knew that even Nebuchadnezzar had submitted to God's authority (5:21). Yet he knowingly refused to humble his heart (5:22). Daniel then explained that God had ordained the very days of Belshazzar's life and reign, and both had come to an end (5:26). His life had been evaluated by God, and it was found to be deficient (5:27; 1 Sam 2:3; Ps 62:9). As a result, his kingdom would be divided and given to others (Dan 5:28).

ASK

1. What did the king see during his meal?
A hand writing a message on a wall.
2. How did the king feel when he saw this?
Very, very afraid. His legs were like jelly.
3. Who suggested that Daniel be brought in to interpret the message?
The queen—possibly the queen mother, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.
4. What was God's message to Belshazzar?
The days God had given to Belshazzar were over, his life was not valuable, and his kingdom would be divided.

DISCUSS

1. Do you listen to the warnings of your parents and others who are older than you?
2. Are you better than Belshazzar? How does God evaluate you apart from Christ (Rom 3:10–18, 23)? How does He evaluate you if you are in Christ (2 Cor 5:21)?

DAY 3

God judged Belshazzar • Daniel 5:29–31

READ

Daniel 5:29–31

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 5:29–31

Sometimes God's promises do not seem like they will come true. Would Belshazzar really be defeated that very night? What about Babylon's massive walls? It turns out Belshazzar made a mistake when he trusted his walls (Dan 5:30–31). History records that the Medo-Persian army diverted the Euphrates River that and entered Babylon where the river flow under the city walls. The seemingly invincible city fell in just one night. So don't try to rebel against God!

Any rebellion against the God of Heaven is doomed to be unsuccessful, because all of man's planning and conspiring against God comes to nothing (Ps 2:1). God looks down upon man's rebellion from heaven and laughs (2:4). All rebellion against God is empty, and less than empty, for God will punish His enemies with a rod of iron, crushing all those who set themselves against Him (2:9). But God's punishment is not immediate. As He did for Belshazzar, God provides an opportunity to repent (2:10–12). Those who lay aside their rebellion and humbly declare their allegiance to the King of kings will find refuge from God's righteous anger (2:12).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. How long before Belshazzar was killed and his kingdom conquered?
It happened that same night.
2. How did the Medo-Persian army enter Babylon?
Through the river bed under the city's walls.
3. What does God do when He looks down and sees man's rebellion?
He laughs (Ps 2:4).
4. How did Belshazzar's death show God's authority?
God had promised to raise up the Medes to destroy the Babylonians because of what they did to His temple (Jer 51:11).

DISCUSS 

1. Are there any areas of your life where you've begun to trust in yourself? What does God think about your self-dependence (Jer 17:5-6)?
2. Are there any areas of your life where you are rebelling against God? When you do rebel, do you respond when you are warned to repent?

DAY 4*Why do the nations rage? • Psalm 2:1-12***READ** 

Psalm 2

EXPLAIN **The truth of Psalm 2**

Why do the nations rage? Don't they know what happened to Belshazzar? Don't they realize who they are fighting against? Nations today continue to "rage" against God and "plot" together against Him. They want to throw off God's rule. They want to be free from His control. They even put aside their own differences to unite in rebellion against God (Ps 2:1-3). However, all their planning is worthless (2:1). God laughs at them (2:4), because the King of heaven does not fear the kings of earth. But there's nothing funny about this for the rebel nations, because God pours out swift and terrifying wrath upon them (2:5). God Himself will set His King in Jerusalem, His Son—Jesus Christ (2:7; cf. 2 Sam 7:8-16). His rule will not be challenged (Ps 2:9). While the nations deserve God's wrath, what is amazing is that God still provides an opportunity to repent (2:10-12). Though He is the one that has been offended and rejected, He still desires the nations to return to Him. And "blessed are all who take refuge in him" (2:12).

ASK 

1. What do the nations do?
They rage in rebellion against God.
2. What does God do when He hears?
He laughs, because they can't do anything to Him.
3. What does God eventually do to them?
He terrifies the nations in His wrath.
4. Does God punish the nations right away?
No. He gives them an opportunity to repent.

DISCUSS 

1. Has the country you live in set itself in rebellion against God? If so, list the ways your nation has rejected God's authority.
2. Why is it pointless to rebel against God?

DAY 5

To Jesus be all glory, majesty, dominion, and authority • Jude 24–25

READ

Jude 24–25

EXPLAIN

The truth of Jude 24–25

The power of Christ is a terror to rebel nations, but it is the greatest blessing to those who take refuge in him (Ps 2:12). If you are in Christ, God will not allow you to fall away from the gospel. He guarantees your salvation. He is both willing and able to protect you from abandoning the faith (John 10:28–29; 1 Pet 1:3–5). The Son will not lose any the Father has entrusted to Him (John 6:37–40). One day He will present you “blameless,” completely free of sin, in God’s presence. Don’t you rejoice to hear this? Jude does! He breaks forth in praise of the only God, our Savior, who saves you now and will glorify you in the future. So join Jude and give praise God for His “glory,” “majesty,” “dominion,” and “authority” (Jude 25). Delight that you belong to Christ, for He rules with absolute power, (Heb 1:3; 8:1), reigns over all the nations (Ps 66:7), and is supreme over all (Phil 2:9–11). Do exactly the opposite of Belshazzar, and ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name (Rev 4:10–11; 5:12–14).

ASK

1. Who guarantees the salvation and glory of believers?
God.
2. Does Jesus lose any of those who belong to Him?
No.
3. Can anyone challenge God’s authority?
No. He rules over the nations in unchallenged supremacy.
4. How should you respond to Christ’s power?
By praising Him for His great glory, majesty, dominion, and authority.

DISCUSS

1. Do you feel like you’re always trying (and failing) to keep yourself in God’s favor? How does the truth of Christ’s power allow you to rest in Him, not in your own ability?
2. Is your life marked by praise for God? Create a list of specific ways you can worship God this week (in word, action, and thought).

NEXT WEEK

God delivers Daniel from the lions’ den

Daniel 6:1–30



SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

WEEK 37

God delivers Daniel from the lions' den

Daniel 6:1-30



DAY 1

Government officials plotted against Daniel • Daniel 6:1-9

READ

Daniel 6:1-9

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 6:1-9

How could these people not like Daniel? For decades the 80 year-old Daniel had proven to be a wise and faithful counselor, a man of integrity. Many kings had been blessed by his service (1:20; 2:48; 5:12), so Darius was smart to want to promote him to the highest position (6:3). But Daniel's fellow administrators were jealous (6:4). They didn't like it that Daniel was more honored than they were. But Daniel's character was so spotless that even his enemies couldn't find anything to accuse him of! So what do wicked men do to good men? They make the good look like evil (Isa 5:20). They pretended to act in the king's best interests, acting as if the law they proposed was for the good of the whole empire (6:8-8). Their flattery worked, and the king signed the document into law (6:9). This is how the wicked often act, turning to deceit and unjust laws to oppress the righteous (Ps 109:3; Isa 10:1). This is what they did to Jesus (Luke 23:2), and this is what they will do to you if you do what is right (John 15:20).

ASK

1. What did even Daniel's enemies recognize about him?
That he was faithful and faultless.
2. How did they plan to make Daniel look bad in the eyes of the king?
They made a law that would make something good (prayer to God) seem bad (illegal).
3. How did they get the king to sign the law?
They flattered him and lied that this law was for the good of the empire.

DISCUSS

1. How would a close friend or family member describe your character?
2. Have you ever flattered, lied, or slandered to get what you want? Have you ever been slandered by others? How should you respond (1 Pet 3:13-17)?

DAY 2

Daniel stayed faithful to God • Daniel 6:10–18

READ

Daniel 6:10–18

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 6:10–18

What is able to stop you from praying? A little tiredness or busyness is often enough to stop many Christians from praying. But not even the threat of death could change Daniel's habit of prayer (Dan 6:10). He was uncompromising, unwilling to stray from his commitment to God. Instead of compromising, he pleaded with God in prayer (Dan 6:11). When you are falsely accused, you should also devote yourself to prayer (Ps 109:4). Why? Because God is powerful. He alone is a rock of refuge and mighty stronghold (62:7). Not even King Darius could save Daniel. The king realized his mistake, but now he was trapped (Dan 6:14–15). Darius realized that Daniel's life depended entirely on the power of God (6:16). Perhaps Darius had heard how Israel was rescued from Egypt, or how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were saved from the fiery furnace. Perhaps Daniel's own testimony convinced him that this God was not like the other so-called gods. So Darius fasted all night, humbling himself for Daniel's sake before the power of Daniel's God (6:18).

ASK

1. What did Daniel do when he heard the king's decree?
He went home and prayed three times a day, just like before.
2. Why was Daniel thrown into the lions' den?
He chose to obey God rather than the law of the Medes.
3. Could the king save Daniel?
No. Even Darius realized only God could.
4. What did the king do the night that Daniel was in the lions' den?
He fasted and stayed awake all night.

DISCUSS

1. Do you act differently depending on who is with you? Do you act like a different person when no one is watching? Have you begun to make compromises in your life?
2. How committed to prayer are you? How much is enough to stop you from praying?

DAY 3

God showed His power to the new king • Daniel 6:19–28

READ

Daniel 6:19–28

EXPLAIN

The truth of Daniel 6:19–28

The king was so concerned about Daniel that he rushed to the lions' den at dawn's first light (Dan 6:19). Now he would find out: did Daniel's God have the power to rescue him (6:20)? Yes! By shutting the lions' mouths, God proved His own power and Daniel's integrity (6:21–22). Daniel was completely uninjured because he trusted God (6:23). Thus God used Daniel's faith to display His glory, just as He had done when He

rescued Daniel's three friends from the fire (3:26–27). God also displayed His glory and power by destroying the wicked. Daniel's accusers, including their families, suffered the exact fate they had planned for Daniel (6:24). Like Nebuchadnezzar so many years earlier, Darius responded to God's awesome display of power by glorifying Him (6:26–27; cf. 3:28–29). He ordered everyone in his kingdom to tremble in fear before God, and you should do the same. Why? Because He is not imaginary and powerless like a lifeless idol. He is alive and real. He alone is powerful to deliver, unlike even the most powerful human king. And unlike any human kingdom, His kingdom lasts forever.

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. How do you know the king was concerned about Daniel?
He fasted and stayed awake all night, then rushed to the lions' den first thing in the morning.
2. Did God protect Daniel?
Yes. God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths
3. What did Daniel say when he spoke with the king?
Daniel gave God the glory for his safety.
4. How did king Darius respond to Daniel's deliverance?
The king praised God and said that others should fear Him also.

DISCUSS 

1. How do people respond after watching your life? Do they give glory to God? Are you quick to give God the glory in all things?
2. Why is God worthy of your trust and praise?

DAY 4*By faith Daniel stopped the mouth of lions • Hebrew 11:33***READ** 

Hebrew 11:32–40

EXPLAIN **The truth of Hebrew 11:32–33**

Daniel shows us what it means to live by faith. Throughout his sixty-five years in Babylon his life was characterized by godliness (Dan 6:5), prayer (6:10), and faithfulness (6:16, 20). Because of his steadfast commitment to God, he, along with many others, accomplished great things for God's kingdom (Heb 11:33). Like Samson (Judg 14:5–6) and David (1 Sam 17:34–36) before him, Daniel stopped the mouths of lions (Dan 6:22). And like Samson and David, Daniel did not do this in his own strength—it was God's power that delivered him. When God delivered him, Daniel had an opportunity to personally proclaim God's power (6:21–22). Although the Medo-Persian Empire was magnificent, it was nothing compared to God's unending kingdom. Even Darius, a pagan king, was greatly impacted by God's display of power through Daniel (6:25–27). So also may your life and faithfulness to God lead to opportunities to proclaim God's power. And what is the ultimate display of God's power? The gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:16). So live in such a way that you can proclaim His power to make sinners righteous through faith in Jesus.

ASK 

1. Why was Daniel able to accomplish great things for God?
His faith was steadfast.
2. What other men stopped the mouths of lions?
Samson and David.
3. Did Daniel deliver himself from the lions in his own strength?
No. God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths.
4. When God rescued Daniel, what did Daniel have an opportunity to do?
Personally proclaim God's power.

DISCUSS 

1. Hebrews 11 is often called the "Hall of Faith." Can you think of any men or woman that you know that might be listed in a modern-day Hall of Faith?
2. Daniel reminds us that our lives have tremendous potential to impact others with the gospel. Identify those you interact with on a regular basis and ask God for opportunities to share the gospel with them.

DAY 5

The gospel of Jesus is the ultimate display of God's power •
1 Corinthians 1:22–24

READ

1 Corinthians 1:18–24

EXPLAIN

The truth of 1 Corinthians 1:22–24

Stopping lions is pretty powerful, but there is something much more powerful—the gospel. To the world, it does not seem powerful. God has chosen to reveal salvation through preaching the cross, and this message is foolishness to the so-called “wise” of this world (1 Cor 1:21). He does it this way so that no one can boast before God. But the world wants a different message. Some seek miraculous signs. Others seek fancy human wisdom (1:22). But neither group truly seeks after God. Both have rejected the revelation made available to them: the miraculous birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—God’s message and method of salvation. But even though the cross of Christ is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, it is actually the greatest display of God’s power and wisdom. Why? Because only the message that the cross represents has power to save those who believe. It was on the cross that Jesus proved God’s power and victory over sin, Satan, and death. This is why Paul preached “Christ crucified”—it is the only message that saves (1:23).

ASK

1. Why has God established that salvation be received through the preaching of the cross?
So that no one can boast before God.
2. Does the world truly seek after God?
No. They seek to exalt themselves and their own so-called “wisdom.”
3. What is the greatest display of God’s power?
The message of the cross: victory over sin, Satan, and death by the death of Christ.
4. Why was Paul resolved to preach only “Christ crucified?”
Because this is the only message that saves.

DISCUSS

1. Talk about a time when you were viewed as foolish by the world for your beliefs about Christ.
2. Can the wisdom of Christ be combined with the wisdom of the world? Why must the teachings of evolution be excluded from God’s account of creation in Genesis?

NEXT WEEK

God brought about
the restoration of the
temple

Ezra 1:1–6:22



SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON
WEEK 38

God brought about the restoration of the temple

Ezra 1:1–6:22



DAY 1

God moved Cyrus to allow the Jews to return home •
Ezra 1:1–2:70

READ 

Ezra 1; 2:64–70

EXPLAIN 

The truth of Ezra 1:1–70

God used Cyrus for His plan, but what was God's plan? To have a people of His own, who would dwell in His presence and worship Him. He rescued Israel from Egypt for this purpose (Exod 19:5–6), and 480 years after that, He provided the temple as the place where this would happen (1 Kings 6:1). At the temple God lived among His people (8:11) and His people entered His presence through prayer and worship (8:30–53). Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the temple, but when God moved Cyrus to issue a decree for the people to return and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:2–4), He showed that His plan had not changed. He moved the hearts of His people—especially many priests—to restore them to Himself (1:5). He even moved Cyrus to restore the original vessels Solomon had made for temple worship (1:7–11). He was undoing what Nebuchadnezzar had done (2 Kings 25:14–15), just as God said He would (Jer 27:22). So in 537 BC, Zerubbabel and 50,000 Jews, along with 8,000 animals and the holy vessels, returned and settled in Judea (Ezra 2:1, 64–65).

ASK 

1. What was God's original plan for Israel? *God called them to worship Him as His kingdom of priests and holy nation.*
2. How was Solomon's temple part of this plan? *God chose to be present and worshiped at Solomon's temple.*
3. What did God promise through Jeremiah? *He promised that after 70 years in exile, Cyrus would allow Israel to return to their land.*
4. How did God keep this promise? *God caused Cyrus to issue a decree, and He caused some Jews to decide to return.*

DISCUSS 

1. How was the return from exile like a second exodus? (Consider God's power over rulers, entrance into the promised land, possession of gold, and the overall purpose.)
2. How is Cyrus' decree an illustration of God's complete power and control over all things?

DAY 2

God enabled temple worship to be restored • Ezra 3:1–13

READ

Ezra 3:1–13

EXPLAIN

The truth of Ezra 3:1–13

If the Jews were afraid of the enemies surrounding them (Ezra 3:3), why didn't they build walls first? Because they trusted God for protection and put worship first. They had their first holy assembly in 70 years (3:1), and they built the altar first so that they could offer the proper sacrifices and observe the proper festivals as soon as possible (3:2–6; Lev 1:3–17; 23:24–44). Working out from the altar, they next laid the temple's foundations. Again God used Cyrus (Ezra 3:7), confirming again His plan to have a people specially chosen to worship Him. Even so, this temple was not like Solomon's temple (3:12). It was smaller and less ornate, and it also lacked God's glory residing within (Hag 2:1–4; Zech 4:9–10). But it was still a sign of God's presence with His people (Hag 2:5), and a sign of an even more glorious temple to come in the millennial kingdom (Hag 2:7; Ezek 40–48). Ultimately, Solomon's temple, the second temple, and the millennial temple all point forward to the perfect fulfillment when God and the Lamb will themselves be the temple (Rev 21:22).

ASK

1. How long had it been since Israel had gathered together for a holy assembly?
Seventy years.
2. What did the people build first and second?
First, the altar. Second, the temple's foundation.
3. Why did they build the altar (not walls) first?
To put worship of God first.
4. Why did some men weep after the temple foundation was laid?
Because the new temple did not come close to the glory of Solomon's temple.

DISCUSS

1. Is God's purpose for you the same as it was for Israel? Why is it important to prioritize worship? How do you prioritize worship in your family?
2. When you are faced with the pressures of life, do you trust God and put worship first? Can you think of times you have let your own human activity get in the way of worship?

DAY 3

God enabled the temple to be completed • Ezra 4:1–6:22

READ

Ezra 4:1–5; 4:24–6:22

EXPLAIN

The truth of Ezra 4:1–6:22

There are always enemies to God's people and true worship (Ezra 4:1–2). In this case, the enemies were the Samaritans. The Samaritans managed to halt work on the temple for 16 years (4:24). When the people finally resumed work, Tattenai asked the Jews if they had permission to build (5:3). Yet again, God was in control. Not only did He allow work to continue while Tattenai communicated with Darius (5:5), but He also worked through the politics to make things even better

(5:6–6:5). Through Darius, God prohibited anyone from interfering (6:6–7), and He caused the Jews' enemies to provide for all the costs (6:8–10). Blessed by God's providence and encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (5:1), the people finished the temple in 516 BC, 20 years after it was begun (6:13–15). The people realized that the actions even of the world's most powerful kings (6:14–15) were ultimately controlled by God to accomplish His word (6:22). They also knew the appropriate response: worship. That's why they celebrated the Passover (6:19–22), because God's purpose in restoring His people is so that they will worship Him.

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. Who discouraged the Israelites from building the temple?
The Samaritans.
2. How did God overcome the opposition?
He caused Darius to make the Samaritans pay for the temple.
3. How did God display His sovereign power in the Jews' return and rebuilding of the temple?
God used three of the world's most powerful rulers to fulfill His word (Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes).

4. How does Israel's return and new temple encourage us today?
It shows us that we can trust God to make us His special people to worship Him forever.

DISCUSS 

1. What are some ways God's people are opposed today? Why must you be careful to worship and serve only with other genuine Christians?
2. What were you saved for (1 Pet 2:9–12)? (Hint: it is more than just getting out of hell or getting into heaven.)

DAY 4*Jesus and the Samaritan woman • John 4:1–26***READ** 

John 4:1–26

EXPLAIN **The truth of John 4:19–26**

Have you heard of Samaritans before? Who were they? The Samaritans were born from Jews left in the land who married Gentiles brought into the land after the fall of the northern tribes. They worshiped of the true God with worship of pagan gods (2 Kgs 17:26–34), so Israel's leaders wisely refused to unite with them in worship (Ezra 4:2–3). But centuries later, Jesus, a Jew, was willing to cross all social and religious boundaries in order to speak to this sinful Samaritan woman (John 4:7, 16–18). The woman asked Jesus to clarify a disagreement between Samaritans and Jews: Is God to be worshiped on Mount Gerizim (Samaritans) or in Jerusalem (Jews) (4:20)? Jesus answered that He was beginning a new era of worship. In the past, worship was focused around a chosen place (4:21). But now true worshipers worship God in spirit and truth (4:24). Through Christ and the Holy Spirit dwelling within believers, true worship depends not on a place but upon the state of your heart (4:24). So through Christ, all people, whether Jew, Samaritan, or Gentile, can be united in pure worship.

ASK 

1. Who were the Samaritans?
The children of Jews and Gentiles who married together and mixed their religions together.
2. Why did Israel's leaders reject the Samaritans' offer to help rebuild the temple?
In order to protect the purity of their worship.
3. Where did the Samaritans worship?
Mount Gerizim.
4. How can Jews and Samaritans now worship together?
When they are united in Christ and worship in spirit (a right heart) and truth (according to the Bible).

DISCUSS 

1. When you go to church, are you actually worshipping? What are some things you can do before church to ready your heart and mind for worship? Can you worship outside of church?
2. True believers are one in Christ. But what are some differences between you and your fellow Christians that can cause you wrongly to look down on them?

DAY 5

God and the Lamb will be the temple • Revelation 21:22–27

READ

Revelation 21:22–27

EXPLAIN

The truth of Revelation 21:22

Christians worship in spirit and truth, not at a particular place (John 4:21, 24). So does the temple matter anymore? Yes, because it stands for God's purpose from beginning to end. The temple is wherever God is with His people, a place of holiness and worship. This is how it was in Eden before sin. This is how it was with the tabernacle and Solomon's temple, and Zerubbabel's temple also represented God's presence with His people. Today God is present in the "temple" of individual Christians (1 Cor 6:19) and the church as a whole (1 Cor 3:16). Someday there will also be a glorious temple in the millennial kingdom (Hag 2:7; Ezek 40–48). But after that, God's original purpose will be completed when Eden is made new (Rev 22–5). When you enter heaven, you will enter the ultimate temple. It will not be a physical structure; rather, God and the Lamb will themselves be the temple (21:22). And since His presence will completely fill the New Heaven and New Earth (21:3), the whole place will be filled with His holiness and the worship of His people forever.

ASK

1. What is God's purpose for mankind from beginning to end?
To worship in His presence in perfect holiness.
2. What are the different temples mentioned in the Bible?
Eden, the tabernacle, Solomon's temple, Zerubbabel's temple, Jesus (John 2:19), Christians, the church, the millennial temple, the temple in heaven (Rev 11:19), God and the Lamb in the New Creation. In all these God was or is present with His people..
3. Who will be in the final temple?
Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Christians).

DISCUSS

1. How is God present among His people right now (John 14:16–17)?
2. Are you amazed that God desires to spend eternity with us? How should you respond (Pss 15:1–2; 27:4–5).

NEXT WEEK

God guided Israel to repentance

Ezra 7:1–10:44



SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON
WEEK 39

God guided Israel to repentance

Ezra 7:1–10:44



DAY 1

God provided for Israel's worship • Ezra 7:1–28

READ

Ezra 7:1–28

EXPLAIN

The truth of Ezra 7:1–28

A physical temple is only good if people worship there with right hearts. But in the 50 years between Ezra 6 and 7, the hearts of the Jews strayed from God. Since God was still committed to having a people to worship in His presence, God providentially raised up the right leader to bring the hearts of His people back to Him. Ezra was a priest skilled in the law of Moses (Ezra 7:1–6), and God provided people to return to Jerusalem with Ezra (7:7–10). While the group that returned with Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple, this second group returned to ensure that the temple was functioning properly. Like Zerubbabel, Ezra succeeded because “the good hand of his God” gave them success (7:6). This phrase is often repeated (cf. 7:9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31) to emphasize that it was by God’s *sovereign* hand that the people were able to return. Ezra recognized God’s *unrivaled power* over Artaxerxes (7:27; Prov 21:1) and over himself (Ezra 7:28). This gave Ezra courage, so he prepared the leaders of Israel for the journey to Jerusalem (7:28).

ASK

1. Why did the Israelite’s hearts need to be restored?
Because God’s purpose in bringing them back to the land was so that they would worship Him.
2. What man did God prepare to restore Israel?
God prepared Ezra, a priest who studied, obeyed, and taught God’s law.
3. What did the king give Ezra?
The king gave permission to any Jew who wanted to return to Jerusalem. He also gave silver and gold and articles for temple service.
4. What phrase repeatedly emphasizes that it was God’s power that restored His people?
“The hand of God” (Ezra 7:9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31).

DISCUSS

1. What kind of people do you follow? What makes someone a good leader? Why is it important to have a good leader?
2. How does God’s unrivaled power give you courage to obey Him?

DAY 2

God protected Ezra on his journey to Jerusalem • Ezra 8:1–36

READ

Ezra 8:1–36

EXPLAIN

The truth of Ezra 8:1–36

God is determined to have a people devoted to worshipping Him, so by His great power He makes sure His plan will happen. He raised up the right man, and now He provided for the trip to Jerusalem. First, He gathered the people (Ezra 7:28b–8:14). Second, He supplied Levites for worship in the temple (8:15–20). Third, He protected the people (8:21–26). The journey to Jerusalem was dangerous, but Ezra was determined to make it without any help from Artaxerxes' soldiers. Ezra believed in the sovereignty of God, and his life proved it. He did not want to do anything to confuse the king concerning his trust in God's ability to protect the people on the return to Jerusalem (8:22). So the people, urged on by Ezra, depended on God alone through prayer and fasting (8:21–23). God answered, so Ezra and those with him were able to aid the people and the house of God (8:31–36). As with all that came before, this divine deliverance came at "the hand of our God" (8:31).

ASK

1. How did Ezra find Levites willing to return?
Ezra got the help of Israel's leaders, but ultimately it was by the good hand of God.
2. Who was missing from the group, and why were they important?
The Levites. The Levites were the only ones who could assist in temple worship.
3. Why did the Jews fast and pray?
Fasting and prayer were acts of utter dependence on God to protect them on the journey.

DISCUSS

1. If you believe God is sovereign, how will your life show it?
2. How has God protected and provided for you? Do you talk about this with others, so that they will see God's power?

DAY 3

God prompted the people to repent • Ezra 9:1–10:44

READ

Ezra 9:1–10:19

EXPLAIN

The truth of Ezra 9:1–10:19

God knew why He was bringing Ezra to Jerusalem, but Ezra did not know until now, when he heard the sad news: just a few generations after the first return under Zerubbabel, the Jews had begun to intermarry with the people in the land (Ezra 9:1–3). Even the priests and Levites were guilty. Israel was supposed to be a holy nation (Exod 19:5–6), pure and set apart to worship God. God had forbidden intermarriage because

foreign wives inevitably led Israel to worship foreign gods (Exod 34:10–17; Deut 7, 23). In desperation, Ezra threw himself upon the mercy of God (Ezra 9:3–15). He identified himself with his people as he prayed with true humility and utter brokenness over sin. Ezra entrusted himself completely—no matter the consequences—to the God who is "just" (9:15). Many of the people truly repented. They were broken over their sin (10:1–5) and committed to turn away from their sin (10:6–15). Three months later, in time for the Passover celebration, the Jews had completely separated themselves from the surrounding people (10:16–17). They were ready to worship God.

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. How had the people sinned?
They had married foreign women, which led them to worship foreign gods.
2. What did Ezra do when he heard?
He was very sad, trembled, and confessed the sins of the people.
3. Why was Israel's sin especially bad?
Even after God graciously restored them from exile, they turned to the same sin that had begun Israel's fall (1 Kings 11).
4. How did the people respond?
They repented.

DISCUSS 

1. How do you respond to sin in your family, church, or community? What things can you imitate from Ezra's response?
2. How do you know the people repented? What elements of true repentance do you see (confession, sorrow, getting rid of the sin, turning to God)? When you "apologize," do you truly repent?

DAY 4*Rightly handling the word of truth • 2 Timothy 2:15***READ** 

2 Timothy 2:15

EXPLAIN **The truth of 2 Timothy 2:15**

Only some are called to be teachers of the church like Timothy (1 Cor 12:29; 1 Tim 2:12; Jas 3:1). But every Christian, including you, is called to teach God's word in some way (Deut 6:7; Col 3:16; Titus 2:3–4). Ezra shows you the preparation that is required (Ezra 7:10). First, he diligently studied God's word. So like him, be a hard worker, rightly handling God's word (2 Tim 2:15). Do not misrepresent God. Work hard to get it exactly right. Be diligent to guard against false teaching (2:14, 16–17). Second, Ezra put God's word into practice in his own life. This does not mean you have to be perfect before teaching, but you embrace God's word for your own life and show good fruit (Matt 7:5, 16). Third, as you know and do, then teach. Perhaps you will one day do so as an elder over the church (1 Tim 3:2), but even if not, you are still called to serve as a priest of God (1 Pet 2:5). Only when every believer is faithful to teach others will the church be what it is called to be (Col 3:16).

ASK 

1. What was Ezra's pattern of preparation?
He studied God's word, obeyed God's word, and taught God's word (Ezra 7:10).
2. Why is it important to study and obey God's word before teaching others?
So our words and actions match God's word; so we're not a hypocrite (Matt 7:5).
3. What does it mean to accurately handle God's word?
It means to work very hard to get it right.
4. Who is called to teach?
All Christians are called to teach one another (Col 3:16).

DISCUSS 

1. What are some jobs where it's important to be accurate? What happens when someone does something inaccurate in a job like this? Are the consequences greater when dealing with God's word?
2. Since you are called to teach God's word in some way, what steps can you take to be able to do so?

DAY 5

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion •
Philippians 1:6

READ

Philippians 1:1–11

EXPLAIN

The truth of Philippians 1:6

God made sure to complete His work in Israel by returning them to the land and restoring their hearts to Himself, and one day He will finish that work (Rom 11:26). So you can trust that God does the same for you, if you are His. By His sovereign grace He saved you, and by His sovereign grace He restores and reforms you over and over again. So when you feel like you are too weak and doomed to fail, run to Him in prayer as Ezra did and receive mercy and grace for every need (Heb 4:16). Like Ezra, you must work hard to grow in godliness, but your hope is in the grace of God at work in you (1 Cor 15:10). Your hope is not in yourself, but in your God who will complete His work in you (Phil 1:6). And this hope will not fail, because when God saves, He never fails to finish the job (John 6:40, 44; Rom 5:10). He faithfully keeps all those He saves until the “day of Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 3:10–15; 2 Cor 5:9–10).

ASK

1. Who completes God’s work of salvation?
God Himself.
2. Why don’t we need to fear concerning God’s work of salvation?
Because God will not fail to bring His work to completion.
3. When is God’s work of salvation brought to completion?
The “day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6).
4. How are believers rewarded?
According to the faithfulness of their ministry on earth (1 Cor 3:10–15; 2 Cor 5:9–10).

DISCUSS

1. Describe a time you started something but were unable to finish it. Why is this never true of God?
2. When you are carrying something heavy, does it slow you down? If you live as if your salvation depends on your own efforts, will you be more or less successful in serving God?

NEXT WEEK

God led Nehemiah to
reconstruct the wall

Nehemiah 1:1–7:73a



SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON
WEEK 40

God led Nehemiah to reconstruct the wall
Nehemiah 1:1–7:73a



DAY 1

God prepared Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem • Nehemiah 1:1–2:8

READ 

Nehemiah 1:1–2:8

EXPLAIN 

The truth of Nehemiah 1:1–2:8

God provides for His people in many ways. In this case, He provided by giving Israel another godly leader. He had sent Ezra to reform the people, and now He was calling Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's broken down walls (Neh 1:3). Like Ezra, Nehemiah cared deeply for God's people and God's city (1:4). Like Ezra, he was a man of prayer because he trusted God's sovereignty (1:5) and promises (1:7–9). Like Ezra, he confessed Israel's sin (Deut 4:25–28). Nehemiah called upon God to remember His people, not because they deserved it, but because God had made them His people (1:10) and promised to restore them (Deut 30:1–3). God was already at work answering Nehemiah's prayer. As cupbearer, Nehemiah guarded the life of the king against poison, so he was already trusted. Then when God provided a chance to speak, Nehemiah took it (2:1–3). During the conversation, Nehemiah continued to depend on God, showing what it means to pray without ceasing (Neh 2:4; 1 Thess 5:17). When Artaxerxes chose to provide for all his needs (Neh 2:5–8), Nehemiah knew God had done it (2:8).

ASK 

1. What was wrong with Jerusalem?
Its walls were still knocked down.
2. Who was the man God sent to rebuild the walls?
Nehemiah.
3. What did Nehemiah do when he heard the news about Jerusalem?
He was very sad, confessed sin, and prayed to God for help.
4. What was Nehemiah's job?
He was the king's cupbearer.

DISCUSS 

1. What godly leaders has God put into your life? Are you thankful God has provided for you in this way?
2. God is ready, willing, and able to forgive our sin when we confess it before Him (1 John 1:9). What are some reasons we put off confessing our sin?

DAY 2

God encouraged Nehemiah to work responsibly •
Nehemiah 2:9–4:23

READ

Nehemiah 2:9–4:23

EXPLAIN

The truth of Nehemiah 2:9–4:23

If God makes sure His plan happens, does that mean we can just sit back and do nothing? No, because one of the ways God accomplishes His plan is by our hard work. In fact, Nehemiah worked hard because he knew God would make it happen. So when opposed by Samaritan enemies, Nehemiah did not give up (Neh 2:9–10). Instead, he acted wisely, inspecting the city's walls under the cover of darkness before revealing his plan (2:11–18). He also wisely reminded his enemies that the Jews had the king's permission and God's protection, while Israel's enemies had neither (2:20). God's gracious power also encouraged the people (2:18). You can see this in their prayer: they stood firm because they trusted that God would fight for them (4:4–5, 14, 20; Josh 10:42). As with Nehemiah, their faith did not make them stop working. Instead, it motivated their work. They worked hard to complete the wall (2:18; 3:1–32), they vigilantly stood guard (4:1–3, 7–8, 11), and they prepared a plan in advance in case of attack (4:18–23). So God's sovereign power motivates His people to act.

ASK

1. Why were Nehemiah and the Jews encouraged to rebuild the walls?
They knew God was with them and would help them succeed.
2. What did Nehemiah's enemies think about the walls being rebuilt?
They were furious.
3. How did Israel's enemies try to stop the walls from being rebuilt?
They planned to join together and fight against Jerusalem.
4. How did the people respond to Sanballat's mocking and threat of attack?
They trusted God to fight for them, and they also stood guard.

DISCUSS

1. Are you willing to take more risks when you know your parents are there to help you succeed? Compare this to God's people and their trust in Him.
2. Nehemiah and the Jews worked wisely and diligently. How would you describe your family's work ethic? Do you thoughtfully plan? Do you work hard?

DAY 3

God protected Nehemiah until the wall was completed •
Nehemiah 5:1–7:73a

READ

Nehemiah 5:1–6:19

EXPLAIN

The truth of Nehemiah 5:1–7:73

When God raises up godly leaders, Satan tries to tear them down. Nehemiah was a godly leader. He showed this when he confronted the Jews who were loaning money to their countrymen, then enslaving them when they could not pay the exorbitant interest (Neh 5:1–5). These Jewish leaders ignored God's law (Lev 25:36–37) because they did not **fear** God (Neh 5:9). So Nehemiah urged them: with enemies all around, wasn't this a

time to be in awe of God, be afraid of just punishment, and give God the honor He deserves? They could say nothing against Nehemiah (5:8), for his life confirmed his words (5:8, 10, 14–15). As Nehemiah lived with integrity, God protected him from Satan's attacks. God kept Nehemiah from falling into Sanballat's trap (6:1–4). He strengthened Nehemiah when Sanballat spread lies about him (6:5–9). He enabled Nehemiah to discern the false prophecies designed to discredit him (6:10–13). Finally, the wall was completed in just 52 days, and the confidence of Nehemiah's enemies crumbled. Even they realized that God's sovereign hand had helped Nehemiah accomplish His purpose (6:15–16).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. What did the rich Jews do?
They were oppressing the poor Jews by making them pay high interest.
2. How did Nehemiah stop the rich Jews from sinning?
He rebuked them, called them to fear God, and proved it by his integrity.
3. How else did Nehemiah's enemies try to stop the wall?
They tried to trap Nehemiah, they spread lies, and they tried to ruin his character.
4. How long did it take to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem?
The wall was finished in 52 days.

DISCUSS 

1. What are some ways you demonstrate a healthy fear of God? How does this shape your character? How does your character (reputation) either strengthen or weaken what you say?
2. How does Satan try to stop you from doing God's will? Who is able to give you victory (1 Cor 10:13; 1 John 4:4)?

DAY 4

: An overseer must be above reproach • 1 Timothy 3:2

READ 

1 Timothy 3:1-7

EXPLAIN **The truth of 1 Timothy 3:2**

What does it mean to be above reproach? It means to be like Nehemiah. No one could bring a valid accusation against him. His fellow Jews could say nothing harmful about him (Neh 5:8), for he spoke with integrity. His life backed up his words. He was generous (5:8, 10) and selfless (5:14-15), two godly qualities that gave weight to his words. Even his enemies were unable to bring a charge against him. Because he lived by faith in God, Nehemiah never gave his enemies an opportunity to slander his character or question his courage. As a result, even the enemies acknowledged God's glory (Neh 6:16). Every elder in the church must be like Nehemiah (1 Tim 3:1-2), but all Christians, including you, are called to this too (Phil 2:15). That way, when people slander you, they will be put to shame and the name of Christ will be honored (1 Pet 3:16). Like Nehemiah, do what is honorable, so that even the enemies of God will acknowledge His glory (2:11).

ASK 

1. How is Nehemiah an illustration of a godly leader?
He was above reproach. No one, not even his enemies, could find anything bad about him.
2. Did Nehemiah provide a good example for his people?
Yes. He acted with integrity (sincerity, honesty) in every situation.
3. What does God require of every leader in His church?
That they be above reproach, free from any obvious sin.
4. What is the result of living with integrity?
God is honored, and even His enemies acknowledge His glory.

DISCUSS 

1. Are there any areas of your life that are not above reproach?
2. Why does God hold church leaders to such a high standard?

DAY 5

Created in Christ Jesus for good works • Ephesians 2:10

READ

Ephesians 2:1–10

EXPLAIN

The truth of Ephesians 2:10

As God's power motivated the Jews to work hard on the walls, so God's power in your life produces good works through you, if your faith is in Him. So when you grow weary, remember where your strength lies. God is your help and your shield (Ps 33:20), your rock, salvation, and fortress (62:2). If you fear Him and trust Him, you will never be shaken (62:6). He is with you wherever you go (Matt 28:20), empowering you to accomplish the good works that He has prepared for you (Eph 2:10). These good works do not earn your salvation; rather, they are the result of your salvation, produced by God's grace in you (2:8–9; cf. Phil 2:12–13; Jas 2:16–26). These works are evidence that you are God's disciple (John 15:8). So as you grow in godliness and do good works, you will boast in God alone (Eph 2:9), because you know that every good work comes from Him (Jas 1:17). Anything good that you do is simply evidence of His grace in you (1 Cor 15:10a). So go and work hard, because God's grace is with you (1 Cor 15:10b).

ASK

1. Are your good works the basis of salvation?
No. They prove that salvation already exists.
2. Who has prepared good works for believers?
God. He planned them before time began.
3. Should believers boast about their good works?
No. They come from God; He has prepared them.

DISCUSS

1. When you get tired of doing good, do you have any favorite Scripture passages that remind you of God's grace and power to help you?
2. Do you enjoy doing good, even if it is hard at times? When you do good, is it because you love God (as opposed to doing it just because you feel like you have to)? If you answer no to either of these, have you considered whether you are truly saved?

NEXT WEEK

Israel refused to be ruled by God

Nehemiah 7:73b–13:31



SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON
WEEK 41

Israel refused to be ruled by God
Nehemiah 7:73b–13:31



DAY 1

*The people recognized their own sinfulness •
 Nehemiah 7:73b–9:37*

READ 

Nehemiah 7:73b–9:37

EXPLAIN 

The truth of Nehemiah 7:73b–9:37

When you read the Bible, does it cause you to feel pain or joy? When Ezra read God's word to the people, it did both. Less than one week after finishing the walls, Ezra read from morning till noon (Neh 8:2–3). The people wept because they realized that they had broken God's law (8:9). But since Jewish feast days were joyful events (Deut 12:12; 16:11), the people were encouraged to rejoice that day and not weep (Neh 8:9). And they did rejoice, because even when it convicts of sin, God's law also fills the heart with joy (Neh 8:12; Ps 19:8). So they joyfully celebrated the Feast of Booths (Neh 8:13–14). But after the celebration, the people were heartbroken over their sin (9:1). After another three hours reading the law, they spent three more hours worshiping and confessing (9:3). When they remembered how gracious and righteous God, they realized how great their rebellion was (9:32–35). But it also gave them hope to turn once again to God for mercy (9:36–37). So God's word brings pain by exposing sin, but it gives joy by offering forgiveness (1 John 1:8–9).

ASK 

1. What did Ezra read to the people on the holy day?
He read God's word.
2. How long did Ezra read?
For four hours! Then later for three more, plus three more hours of worship and confession!
3. What did the people do when they heard the Law read?
They cried. They realized they had broken God's Law and despised God's mercy.
4. Why did the people rejoice?
Because it was a feast day celebrating God's power to deliver.

DISCUSS 

1. Do you spend significant time reading God's word? How does God's word make you feel? What do you do about it?
2. Do you feel the same way as God does about your sin?

DAY 2

The people reaffirmed the Mosaic Covenant •
Nehemiah 9:38–13:3

READ

Nehemiah 10:28–11:2; 12:27–13:3

EXPLAIN

The truth of Nehemiah 9:38–13:3

God restores those who repent. We already saw the first two parts of repentance: grief and confession of sin (Neh 8:9; 9:3). Now we see the next two: turning from sin and turning to God. They did this by recommitting themselves to the Mosaic Covenant (Neh 9:38). They specifically turned away from sins that they were prone to and instead committed to honoring God. First, they rejected foreign marriage to guard the holiness of God's people (Neh 10:30). Second, they honored the Sabbath to trust and rest in God alone (10:31). Third, they provided for the temple to worship God by atoning for sin and serving Him (10:32–39). Because they repented, God restored them. He completed the settlement of the land, just as He had promised (Neh 11; Deut 30:2–3). This was the final stage of the return from exile. Now the altar, temple, and Jerusalem were rebuilt, the people were reformed, and the land was resettled. The story ends with celebration, showing that repentance results in joyful restoration (Neh 12:27–43) and a right relationship to God (12:44–13:3).

ASK

1. What does the people's recommitment to the covenant show about repentance? *Repentance is not just being sad or even just admitting sin. It is also choosing to turn away from wrong and turn toward right.*
2. What three commitments did they make? *To separate from foreigners to guard pure worship. To keep the Sabbath to guard true faith. To give for the temple to guard ongoing worship.*
3. What was the result of their repentance? *Joy and restoration to a right relationship with God.*

DISCUSS

1. When your parents discipline you for disobedience, do you just go through the motions, or do you choose to radically turn away from sin?
2. Can you describe a time when you repented? Did it lead to joy?

DAY 3

The people returned to their sin • Nehemiah 13:4–31

READ

Nehemiah 13:4–31

EXPLAIN

The truth of Nehemiah 13:4–31

How could the people so quickly do exactly what they said they would not do? During Nehemiah's absence in Persia (Neh 13:6; 2:6), they turned from God. First, they neglected the temple (13:10). Second, they violated the Sabbath (13:15–16). Third, they intermarried with foreigners (13:23–24). Nehemiah's rebuke was violent. He threw out Tobiah's things (13:8), closed the gates on the Sabbath and threatened to attack the foreign merchants (13:19–21), and

physically beat men who had married foreigners (13:25). Does this seem too harsh? Nehemiah was motivated by faithful love for God and God's people; he understood the deadly danger of these sins (13:14). While Nehemiah was faithful to the end, the people were not. Though the people had committed to turn away from sin, they showed their repentance was false when they broke their promise. Nehemiah had led the people to rebuild the city's walls, but he could not give them new hearts. So the last recorded portion of Old Testament Scripture—Nehemiah 13—shows that Israel still desperately needed the new hearts promised in the New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34).

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. Did the people keep their promise?
No. When Nehemiah was in Persia, the people returned to the exact sins they had promised to avoid.
2. How did Nehemiah respond to the people's sin?
Violently. He understood the deadly dangers of their sin.
3. What does the people's failure in the end show about repentance?
True repentance requires God Himself, by the Holy Spirit, to change our hearts.

DISCUSS 

1. Why did the people return to their sin (Jer 31:31-34)? Is there a pattern of sin in your life without any long term progress? What do you need (John 3:3)?
2. Those who love God rightly hate whatever is opposed to God. Out of love for God and His people, do you hate and oppose sin in yourself, your family, your church, and your community?

DAY 4*God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins • 1 John 1:6-9***READ** 

1 John 1:1-10

EXPLAIN **The truth of 1 John 1:6-9**

So long as you are engaged in sin, you cannot enjoy fellowship with God or with other Christians (1 John 1:6-7). But we sin so often! How can we enjoy any fellowship? The solution is not to deny or hide your sin (1 John 1:8). If you refuse to recognize your sin, you will only deceive yourself. So what should you do to have fellowship? Confess your sin, often and regularly. Confession is saying the same thing about your sin as God does. You confess when you agree with God concerning the guilt and offense of our sin. This is what you do to be saved in the first place (Matt 19:16-22), and this is what you continue to do. Your life must be a life of ongoing repentance. So don't try to hide the wrong things you have done. Instead, seek God's forgiveness by admitting how you have violated God's law (Ps 32:5). When you do, you will receive God's mercy (Prov 28:13), for God is faithful and just to forgive you and cleanse you (1 John 1:9). So confess, and you will enjoy walking in God's light.

ASK 

1. What do you lose when you are sinning?
Fellowship with God and other Christians.
2. Is anyone on earth sinless?
No. Only Jesus was sinless on earth.
3. What do all genuine Christians do?
Continually confess sin.
4. What does it mean to "confess" sin?
To say the same thing about sin that God does.
5. Why is it worth it to confess?
Because those who do are forgiven and washed clean.

DISCUSS 

1. What are some ways you make excuses for your sin or try to make it seem not so bad?
2. When you feel like you have sinned again and again, how does this passage give you hope?

DAY 5

Those who walk according to the Spirit • Romans 8:4

READ

Romans 8:1–11

EXPLAIN

The truth of Romans 8:1–11

This passage is the hope we need after seeing Israel's repeated failure to repent! After Nehemiah 13, we wonder, "Is it possible for anyone to change?" But now Nehemiah's sadness can end! The New Covenant has come through the blood of Christ (Luke 22:20). So what the Law or Nehemiah could not do—save people from their sin—God did. When He came to earth as a man, He became a sin offering to end sin's power over everyone who comes to Christ (Rom 8:1, 3). If Jesus has freed you from the condemnation of sin, He has also freed you from the power of sin, so that you are now able to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law (8:4). How can you keep the law? Not by your strength, but by depending on the power of the Holy Spirit living in you. The Spirit has changed your heart. He has written God's law on your heart, giving you the inclination and ability to obey (Jer 31:33–34; John 3:1–8). Now you can enjoy the lasting repentance and faith that come as a gift from God (Eph 2:8; 2 Tim 2:25).

ASK

1. What was the Law powerless to do?
Save people from their sin (Rom 3:20).
2. How was the New Covenant established?
By the blood of Jesus.
3. How can you fulfill the righteous requirement of the law?
By walking according to the Spirit.
4. What does the Spirit do for all who come to Christ?
He gives them a new heart, one that has the desire and ability to obey..

DISCUSS

1. What would you say to someone who claims to be a Christian but shows no lasting desire to obey God?
2. What would you say to a Christian who is discouraged and feels like he is unable to grow in holiness?