

THE BIBLE INITIATIVE



JUDGES-ESTHER



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We believe God is the greatest reality in the universe. His Son, Jesus, is the greatest human to have ever lived. The story of Him saving humanity from sin is the greatest truth the world has ever known. There is only one place to find that story: the Bible -- a book that most acknowledge is important, but far fewer truly engage with regularly.

It is from this place that The Bible Initiative was brought to life. We have a desire to see God's people know God's story, to be fueled by faith in God's Son, and to expand God's Kingdom for His glory. What you're holding is a tool, a resource, to be used alongside God's Word, not to replace God's Word. Our longing is that The Bible Initiative would aid you in reading, studying, knowing, and being changed by the Bible.

We are praying that five things would happen through The Bible Initiative.

1) That God would speak. There is no substitute for the Word of God; He has spoken through Scripture. By meeting Him there, you allow Him the space to speak timeless truth to your heart.

2) That God would transform your heart and life into the image of Jesus. If you come before Scripture humbly, you allow the Holy Spirit room to move you into greater obedience to God.

3) That God would inform your mind of His truth. In the Bible, God has given you everything you need for life, salvation, and holy living.

4) That God would create in you a hunger for Him and His word. We pray that this year in Scripture will not be the end of your engagement with the Bible, but the beginning.

5) That God would lead you to worship. We pray that as you see the magnificence of God and His work to save humanity from sin, you will be left in awe of Him, longing to do nothing more than worship Him with all your life for the remainder of your life.

Inside this book, you will find a reading plan with five days of reading for each week, a brief explanation of that week's section of Scripture, a family devotional and activity, and individual or small group discussion questions. Each of these is designed to aid you and your family in reading, understanding, and applying the truth of the Bible to your everyday life.

-TIM FRITSON

OUR PRAYER IS THAT:

The Word of God would

SPEAK

LOUDER THAN ANY OTHER VOICE

TRANSFORM

OUR HEARTS INTO THE IMAGE OF JESUS

INFORM

OUR MINDS OF THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE

CREATE HUNGER

FOR MORE OF GOD AND HIS WORD

LEAD TO WORSHIP

IN AWE OF THE MAJESTY OF GOD

DAILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are a tool to help small groups or individuals engage with Scripture on a daily basis. We hope that utilizing these questions will help you better understand the Bible. We do not want you to simply talk about the Bible; we want you to understand Scripture and know how to apply it to your lives.

1. What does this passage say? Where does this passage take place within the Bible's overall story?

Summarize the main point of the passage as succinctly as possible.

2. What does this passage mean to its original audience?

Understand the context of the passage by discerning the author's intent for its original audience. Often this may require consulting other study tools or cross-referencing other Biblical passages.

3. What does this passage tell us about God?

Discover what the text tells us about the character of God. Does it say anything about His work through the life and death of Jesus Christ?

4. What does this passage tell us about humanity? What does the text reveal about sin and humanity's need for the gospel?

Analyze the text to see what it reveals about humanity. This question should lead to reflection and self-examination.

5. What does this passage demand of me?

Apply the passage to daily life. Hopefully, the first four questions help you gain an understanding of the meaning of the text. Now you are positioned to correctly apply its meaning.

6. How does this passage change the way I relate to people?

Apply the passage to your relationships with others. We want to encourage discussion on how the text shapes both how you relate to other believers and how you "live on mission" in the world.

7. How does this passage prompt me to pray?

Pray. At our core we want to root our prayers in the Word of God. Hopefully, the previous six questions spark passionate prayer in the lives of believers – both in sanctification and in mission to reach the lost. Seek to walk away from each reading with an action step in mind.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

"For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword." (Hebrews 4:12) This incredible promise is the foundation of our Bible Initiative Family Devotionals. It is our desire that as you read these words together, your hearts and lives will be changed to be more like Jesus.

The Bible tells parents that it is our privilege and responsibility to pass on to our children a living faith in God the Father, through Jesus Christ. How can you do this in the most effective way possible? On the following pages you will find the "Family Soup Recipe." It contains eleven different family ingredients to help make passing the baton of faith as easy as possible for your children to receive, helping them take off and grow in their own life of faith. Be intentional with these ingredients, so they grow strong in your home.

There is a family devotional each week based on one of the eleven ingredients. To prepare:

- 1. Read over the Bible passage and the family ingredient.** Please note: in this section of the Bible Initiative, there may be some verses within a passage that are inappropriate or will need modification for young children. Please read ahead and plan how you want to present the Bible story to your kids.
- 2. Read over the questions and activities.** Decide which will work best for your child and gather simple supplies, if needed.
- 3. Share the story, discuss the questions and do the activity.**

It is that simple. Make it short, intentional, and fun. Enjoy, and let the Bible do its work in your family's hearts.

YouVersion Bible For Kids App

The Kids App is appropriate for toddlers-5th grade

To go along with The Bible Initiative, you can download an additional resource, the YouVersion Bible For Kids App. Throughout the book, weeks with a corresponding video will be marked with a box labeled "Kids App." This is a fun resource for kids because as they watch they can interact with the video by touching the screen. We pray this is helpful as you and your family walk through The Bible Initiative.

Parents, your home is like a bowl of soup. Within the base of the soup are many different ingredients. Each ingredient brings something that no other ingredient can bring. Without any of the needed ingredients, the flavor of the soup will be lacking. Our home “family soup recipe” needs these specific, healthy ingredients to foster the greatest potential for each of our children to know and grow in relationship to God the Father through Christ. This is our chosen recipe as seen in the life of Christ on earth.

FAMILY SOUP RECIPE

- STORYTELLING
- KNOWING GOD
- IDENTITY
- LOVE & RESPECT
- WORSHIP, THANKSGIVING, & JOY
- FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS
- RESPONSIBILITY
- SERVICE
- OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE LIVING
- COURSE CORRECTION
- MODELING

1. STORYTELLING

Children love stories. This sweet ingredient highlights the truth of God’s Word and the way God has been moving throughout history to bring redemption, salvation, and hope through Christ. God is clearly the Hero and He invites us, as His supporting cast, to live our unique part of the story for His glory.

2. KNOWING GOD

God is holy, mighty, awesome, and does not change! The ingredient of knowing God creates the meatiness of our soup. As we as parents uphold and display God’s character, we give our children a rock-solid foundation to stand upon, no matter the circumstances or claims of others.

3. IDENTITY

This tender yet fibrous ingredient adds the flavor of knowing. “What does God think and say about me?” He knit us together perfectly and knows all about us. He loves us. Wherever we are, He is there (Ps. 139). Furthermore once we give our life to Christ as Savior and Lord, we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, and given an inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1), all of which we did nothing to earn. These truths allow children to stand firm against the destructive counter identities the world will throw at them.

4. LOVE & RESPECT

This fundamental ingredient regulates the warmth of the home. Children need love and respect to flourish. Children are to honor and obey; parents are commanded not to provoke (Eph.6:1-4). The Father lovingly sanctifies us. Parents should do likewise. Love and acceptance should never be withheld due to a child’s disobedience.

5. WORSHIP, THANKSGIVING, & JOY

This fragrant flavor can permeate our home. Worship puts our focus on our Creator and Redeemer. We do not have to be in control. A cheerful heart is good medicine (Prov.17:22). Praise and thanksgiving lead us into an awareness of God's presence (Ps.100:4). There is no more secure or delightful place to dwell.

6. FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS

Being a consistent part of a local church is a rich ingredient that we can give to our children. God designed us to live in relationship and to experience Him in ways that can only happen in proximity with other believers. "Living life together" gives our kids, other adults and peers to stand beside them and encourage them throughout their walk with Christ.

7. RESPONSIBILITY

This hardy ingredient is essential for our homes to function well. It motivates each family member to do their part. Everyone must take ownership for one's life, commitments, gifts, and resources before God. Responsibility also extends outside the home to the church and nonbelievers.

8. SERVICE

This lowly ingredient is crucial for our world to see Christ in us. This heart posture asks the question, "What needs to be done?" It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate sensitivity and focus on causes bigger than oneself. It is an antidote for the selfish viewpoint -- "It is all about ME." As Christ-followers, we are to view our lives as living sacrifices that we generously give away!

9. OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE LIVING

This bold flavored ingredient encourages families to step out in faith. It creates a dependence on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen beyond natural abilities and desires. This crucial ingredient will cultivate a generation that, instead of seeking comfort, seeks a radical life of faith in Christ.

10. COURSE CORRECTION

This curative ingredient not only involves consequences, but additional restorative aspects of discipleship as well. It is not bitter; it is not given in anger or self-seeking. Biblical discipline includes: 1) An appropriate amount of pain or restriction, 2) Building up in love, 3) Repentance of sin to God and others, and 4) Discussion and prayer to stay on the corrected path -- all done with the intent of healing and forward progress.

11. MODELING

This gleaming ingredient becomes more polished as we utilize it. What we say we believe is what we do in reality. Modeling spiritual characteristics and actions puts flesh on faith. When I see Christ in my parents, I see how to live like Him.

ADAPTED FROM MICHELLE ANTHONY'S, *Spiritual Parenting*

April 16-22

EASTER

This week we celebrate Easter -- the time of the year we stop to remember the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Rightfully, there is no more important celebration within Christianity. Were it not for Jesus' death on the cross as a substitutionary sacrifice for humanity's sin and His subsequent resurrection from the grave and triumph over death, it would not be possible for us to be saved by faith and made righteous before the Lord. At Easter, we celebrate the historical reality that Jesus Christ was crucified, buried, and resurrected on our behalf!

In response to this reality, we pause from our chronological reading of the Old Testament to concentrate on Old Testament passages that prophesy -- or foretell -- the coming of Christ. The entire Old Testament points to humanity's need for a Savior to save us from our sin. Throughout, specific passages provide great detail about the coming Savior and what He will do. Ultimately, we find the fulfillment of those prophecies in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In fact, Biblical scholars suggest that Jesus fulfilled over 300 specific Old Testament prophecies. The passages listed this week are incredible reminders that God has been working since the beginning of time to save humanity from our sin. In so doing, He gave His only Son so that by faith in Jesus we might have the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life.

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MICAH 5:2,
ISAIAH 6,
7:10-25

②

ISAIAH
9:1-7, 11:1-12:6

③

ISAIAH
40

④

ISAIAH
43:1-44:6

⑤

ISAIAH
52:13-53:12

KEY CONCEPT

PROPHECY:

A DIVINE
REVELATION
OF EVENTS
THAT WILL
CERTAINLY
COME TO
PASS IN THE
UNFOLDING OF
GOD'S WILL

Family DevotionalLk. 23:20-25, 32-49;
Mt. 28:1-10

FAMILY INGREDIENT

WORSHIP, THANKSGIVING, & JOY

Jesus' death, burial and resurrection can alter our eternal destiny. By putting our faith in Christ's acts, we no longer have to be separated by sin from God. Hallelujah! This leads to the family ingredient of Worship, Thanksgiving & Joy. Our parental responsibility and joy is to share the story of Easter. We naturally want to shield our children from painful truth. While horrific details of the crucifixion are not appropriate for young children, the cost Christ paid should not be watered-down. Our sin nature, inherited from Adam, separates all from God (Jer. 17:9). We must clearly explain that their heart, without God's cure, is incurably sick. Follow this with the good news that, through the cross, we all can have a new heart if we humbly accept the gift of salvation. Be sensitive and prepared to pray with your child to confess their sin and belief in Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection!

Family Questions

- Did Pilate think Jesus was guilty of any crime? Why did Pilate give in to their demands? Was Jesus guilty?
- What did Jesus say to His Father about the people who crucified Him?
- Could Jesus have come down from the cross? Why did He allow people to do this to Him? Who was He obeying and at what cost to Himself?
- Jesus told one of the thieves crucified with Him that he would be with Him in Paradise. Why?
- What separates us from God? Read Jeremiah 17:9. What does it say about our heart condition?
- When the women heard that Jesus was alive and then they saw Him, what was their response? What actions show us their joy?

Family Activity

Kids App: "It Is Finished" & "A Happy Sunday"

Supplies: sacks, smooth stones (craft or gardening store), permanent markers and pretty container.

Activity 1: Take a family walk

Gather 1-3 nature items each that represent something about God, or for younger children, something God made. Examples: heart shaped leaf (Jesus loves me), flower (Jesus creates beautiful things). Discuss why items were chosen. Praise Him for each.

Source: Adapted from www.avirtuouswoman.com.

Activity 2: The Stones Cry Out

Before Jesus was crucified, children began to praise Him. When some objected, He said that if the children did not, then the stones would praise Him (Luke 19:40). On stones, write praise words/phrases. Pray and share your praise words with God. Keep stones in a pretty jar and make this activity a part of daily prayer.

Source: Adapted from Beth Ann Weber.

Activity 3: He Died for Me craft

Read Isaiah 53:5. On each family member's palm draw a red, dime-sized dot and write their name beside it. Give thanks to God and remind one another throughout the day that Jesus died for them.

Source: Wendy Schultz Celebrated Family.

Small Group Discussion

- What stood out to you about Jesus this week in your readings of the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus?
- What did you learn about God through the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus?
- What principle is there to follow? Remember a principle is a timeless statement of truth drawn from a passage and used to guide our lives.

April 23-29

JUDGES PT. I

The book of Joshua ends with the Israelites emphatically declaring, “We will serve the Lord.” From the very beginning of the book of Judges, it is clear that the Israelites’ actions do not match their words. In fact, the book of Judges records one of the most vivid, heartbreaking pictures of the Israelite people’s brokenness and sin. It captures, repeatedly, their rebellion against God and His loving commands. Judges is a dark book, full of violence, death, and disobedience. Nonetheless, despite the depth of Israel’s sin, God’s patient and steadfast love is greater. He is always ready to receive His people, should they turn to Him with repentant hearts.

You will find a recurring cycle in Judges, which is represented in the graphic to the right. Seven times throughout Judges, we see the following pattern:

1. The Israelites rebel against God in *sin*.
2. Their sin leads them into *servitude*, or oppression.
3. They repent, crying out to God in *supplication*, or prayer.
4. The Lord brings them *salvation*, or freedom, thanks to the rise of a judge (typically a military leader), who frees the Israelite people and leads them into a time of peace. When the judge dies, the cycle repeats itself.

The picture of God’s patient love in Judges is still true today. Despite the depth and extent of our sin, God’s love is greater. He is always ready to receive those who come to Him with repentant hearts through faith in Jesus.

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JUDGES
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JUDGES
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JUDGES
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JUDGES
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JUDGES
5

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

THE JUDGES CYCLE



There are 12 judges throughout the book of Judges, but listed here are the seven times the nation of Israel goes through the Judges cycle and the people group they are saved from.

- 1 **OTHNIEL vs. EDOMITES**
Judges 3:7-11

- 2 **EHUD & SHAMGAR vs. MOABITES**
Judges 3:12-31

- 3 **DEBORAH vs. CANAANITES**
Judges 4:1-5:31

- 4 **GIDEON vs. MIDIANITES**
Judges 6:1-8:32

- 5 **TOLA & JAIR vs. MIDIANITES**
Judges 8:33-10:5

- 6 **JEPHTHAH vs. AMMONITES**
Judges 10:6-12:15

- 7 **SAMSON vs. PHILISTINES**
Judges 13:1-16:31

JUDGES

JUDGES | REBELLION | CYCLES | RUTH

Family Devotional

Judges 1:1-2, 27-34, 2:1-5

FAMILY INGREDIENT COURSE CORRECTION

Like the Israelite people, we still rebel against God's laws and the goodness of God's laws. Our sinful choices keep us oppressed. We do not always trust Him to change our hearts but instead we attempt to change by our own efforts.

Joshua charged the people to choose to serve the Lord. Then, Joshua promised that the people would experience freedom from their enemies and great blessings! Each must decide, but Joshua's family would serve the Lord.

This is the reason we need the family ingredient of Course Correction. If we or our children do not choose wisely, then consequences are painful. Yet, God continually calls us to return and be faithful. Correcting our children guides them through the steps of painful consequences, loving reassurance, repentance and a corrected, obedient path.

Family Questions

- In Judges 1:2b, what did God promise the people He had given them? Does God ever lie?
- When some of the different tribes attempted to take over the land from the enemy, what happened? Why?
- What instructions did the angel of the Lord give the people in Judges 2:1-2? Did the people obey? What were the consequences of their disobedience?
- The enemies in their land are like sins in our lives. What are some sins that are hard to stop doing?

Family Activity

Activity 1: Minute To Win It Family Night

Challenge: complete actions as many times as possible in 1 minute.

Conclusion: discuss sin's pull and how impossible it seems to resist.

Pray, asking God's Spirit for help.

- **Penny Tower:** How many pennies can you stack? Younger children -- use blocks.
- **Sock It:** How many socks can you toss in container?
- For more challenges, search on Google "holly's home minute to win it bible."

Activity 2: "We Will Serve the Lord" Tactile Picture Craft

Supplies: craft sticks, crayons, paper, cotton balls, paint (optional), glue.

Directions:

1. Color/paint paper blue. Color craft sticks for house.
2. Cut 11" X 1" strips green paper; cut slits partway down grass.
3. Glue craft sticks on paper to form house, draw windows/door.
4. Draw clouds. Add cotton balls. Glue on grass.
5. Discuss and write out Scripture (Joshua 24:15).
6. Family: sign names and pray for God's help.

Small Group Discussion

- What promise is there to claim? The Israelites repeatedly turned to the idols of the surrounding nations despite God's repeated warnings. **ANSWER:** The Israelites were influenced by the culture surrounding them. The appeal to fit in was greater than their commitment to the Lord's promises.
- What appeals to your sin nature and tempts you to turn from God and hope in other things? **ANSWER:** Whatever the world around you worships.

April 30-May 6

JUDGES PT. II

As we begin our second week in Judges, we should remind ourselves of the bigger story of the Old Testament. God led His chosen people, the Israelites, into the Promised Land. Once there, the Israelites were to remove the Canaanites from the land, so as to not be influenced by their false religion and moral corruption. Throughout the book of Joshua, the Israelite people conquer some large cities, but do not complete the job of clearing the Promised Land. This leads the Israelites into periods of sin, adopting the practices of their Canaanite neighbors. Their sin leads to oppression and a need for the Lord's deliverance, which He brings to them through judges.

This week's reading covers two judges: Gideon and Samson. Last week's Judges readings focused on the conquering acts of Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, and Deborah. In this week's passages, the author spends more time highlighting character flaws within Gideon and Samson. Gideon begins by trusting the Lord, but ends his life creating an idol, or false god, for the Israelites to worship. Samson is the least God-honoring judge. He has little regard for the Lord, but God still uses him to win victories over the Philistines. By the end of Judges it is clear that the Israelites are not following the Lord. We are told, "In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25)

Notice one thing from Judges: the Lord can use even overtly sinful people to carry out His will. The Bible is the story of God redeeming His people from sin, and nothing will stop Him from seeing redemption to its completion.

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JUDGES
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JUDGES
7

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JUDGES
8

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JUDGES
13-14

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JUDGES
15-16

9 ERAS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

CREATION	<i>Gen. 1-11</i>
PATRIARCHS	<i>Gen. 12-50</i>
EXODUS	<i>Exodus- Deuteronomy</i>
CONQUEST	<i>Joshua</i>
JUDGES	<i>Judges</i>
KINGDOM	<i>Samuels, Kings, Chronicles</i>
EXILE	<i>Kings</i>
RETURN	<i>Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther</i>
SILENCE	<i>400 years of silence</i>

ERAS CHART ADAPTED FROM MAX ANDERS', *30 Days to Understanding The Bible*

JUDGES

JUDGES | REBELLION | CYCLES | RUTH

Family Devotional**Judges 6:11-24**

FAMILY INGREDIENT
OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE

God is so gracious. He understands our weaknesses and offers His strength in times of doubt. He calls us to be someone we do not think we can be. With Him, we can accomplish seemingly impossible deeds. This leads us to today's main supporting character, Judge Gideon. Our main character, God, approaches Gideon through an angel. The angel finds Gideon hiding in fear of the Midianites. Through the angel, God declares that He is with Gideon, and furthermore, that Gideon is a mighty warrior. God calls him to deliver Israel from Midian's bondage, then directs and reassures him to "go in the strength you have and save Israel." Gideon makes excuses and asks God for a sign that He is the One directing him. God meets him at every doubt. God does this with us today. He calls us to live in the family ingredient, Out of the Comfort Zone. As we seek to bring Him glory, He calls us to deeds that seem beyond our ability. Again, He challenges us to take His message of Jesus and promises that He will be with us and never leave us (Mt. 28:18-20).

Family Questions

- What does God mean when He tells Gideon to "go in the strength you have?" How strong did Gideon feel he was?
- God called Gideon a "mighty warrior." Was he acting like one? Did that anger God?
- Gideon offered a sacrifice to God. How did God show His power? What was Gideon's response?
- Are there deeds God is asking you to do that you do not feel bold enough to do? Discuss and pray.

Family Activity

Activity 1: Who Are the People in Your Neighborhood?

Take a walk around your neighborhood. How many people do you know by name? As you walk, pray, even if you don't know who lives at each house. Remind children that God knows. Extra challenge: go home and make a neighborhood prayer map. Pray regularly.

Source: Adapted from [8 Ideas for Family Prayer on intentionalbygrace.com](https://intentionalbygrace.com).

Activity 2: Give from the Heart

LCF supports Liberty Women's Clinic, where women find free and confidential pregnancy support. The clinic's mission is to save every unborn child and to give eternal hope to every parent. As moms choose to give their babies life, they need support. Discuss the clinic's purpose at an appropriate age level for your child. How could your family support the Liberty Women's Clinic's vision?

Small Group Discussion

- What sin is there to avoid?
- How do we manage the desires of our flesh? Judges 14
- What promise is there to claim? God uses even His people's most tragic sins, character flaws, and weaknesses to work His global purposes for the glory of His Son and for His people's good. Judges 14:4 shows us God's shocking sovereignty over sin.

May 7-13

RUTH & SAMUEL

This week's reading is split between two books: the book of Ruth and the beginning of 1 Samuel. Ruth takes place during the era of the **JUDGES**, while 1 Samuel ushers us into the next era of Old Testament history, the **KINGDOM** era.

The book of Ruth tells the story of the family of an Israelite woman named Naomi. Ruth is Naomi's daughter-in-law. The story highlights the Israelite custom of a *kinsman redeemer*. During Old Testament times, when a husband died, leaving a family and property behind, his closest male relative was to redeem that family by marrying his widow and protecting the family and property. The book of Ruth tells the story of Boaz, an Israelite, a *kinsman redeemer*. God works through the lives of Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz in order to advance His plan to redeem humanity. Remember, God promised that He would bless all the nations through Abraham's descendants. The gospel of Matthew lists Boaz as 10 generations removed from Abraham. He and Ruth are the great-grandparents of King David. Ultimately, Jesus will come from the family line of David. Whereas Boaz is the redeemer of Naomi's family, Jesus is the redeemer of all humanity, paying the price to free us from slavery to sin. From the darkness of the **JUDGES** era comes an important step in advancing the light of God's saving work.

The beginning of 1 Samuel moves us into the **KINGDOM** era. Samuel is neither a judge nor a king, but a prophet, who plays a key role in the anointing of Israel's first two kings. 1 Samuel's opening chapters recount Samuel's birth and calling, as well as Israel's demand for a king to rule over them.

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RUTH
1-2

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RUTH
3-4

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1 SAMUEL
1-2

④

1 SAMUEL
3-4

⑤

1 SAMUEL
5,6,8

KEY CONCEPT

REDEMPTION:
DELIVERANCE
FROM BONDAGE
THROUGH THE
PAYMENT OF A
DEBT

JUDGES

JUDGES | REBELLION | CYCLES | RUTH

Family Devotional

Ruth 1:1-22

FAMILY INGREDIENT IDENTITY

The book of Ruth is the perfect example of the family ingredient of Identity. The story begins with a famine in the land of Israel brought on as a result of Israel's sin. In response, Elimelech leads his family away from Israel to the land of Moab to find provision. In Moab, the people worship the false god, Chemosh. Elimelech dies, both sons marry wives from that land, then both sons become sick and die. What are the women to do? Naomi hears that the Lord has come to the aid of His people. She decides to return to the land of Israel and invites her Moabite daughters-in-law to join her. Will they retain their Moabite identity or choose instead to join the people of Israel? Read closely to learn about these women's decisions and see how God proves Himself faithful to those who trust in Him.

Family Questions

- Why was Israel experiencing famine?
- Ruth and Orpah were both Moabites. What religion did they probably learn as children? Who introduced them to the God of Israel?
- In Ruth 1:8-9, what does Naomi tell her daughters-in-law to do? Why? Do you think that Naomi is doubting God's ability to provide?
- Why do you think that Ruth chose to stay with Naomi? What does it mean that the Lord came to the aid of His people? Has this ever happened to your family?
- Why do you think Orpah chose to stay in Moab?

Family Activity

Kids App: "Wherever You Go"

Activity: Ruth Follows the One True God

Supplies: a blindfold and an item to make drumming sound

Assign roles: Listener, Singer, Drummer, and Holy Spirit

If you only have 2-3 people, replace Singer and/or Drummer with music. Adaptation for younger kids -- only one distraction character. Blindfold Listener. Then have the Singer and Drummer stand on either side of Listener. Holy Spirit person stands behind and further back. On the word "GO," Singer and Drummer begin singing/drumming. "Holy Spirit" softly calls Listener's name. As sounds continue, the Holy Spirit should move closer and become a little louder. When the Listener hears their name, they should stand and attempt to follow the Spirit or raise their hand. Conclusion: How is this like Ruth? Who did she choose as her God? Did she obey God's call? What are some of the things in our lives that distract us? Pray that your family will believe that God calls to you personally and will help you listen for His voice.

Small Group Discussion

- What example is there to follow?
- What do we do when our life plans take an unexpected, unrequested detour?
- How should we respond when clearly-directed paths are interrupted with seemingly counterproductive stall-outs?
- To what can we cling when we find ourselves on a wilderness journey with no end in sight?
- How do we seek satisfaction in Christ alone? What Scripture or promise can you turn to when facing a period of loneliness or uncertainty?

May 14-20

SAUL

Last week, our reading ended with the Israelites proclaiming, “Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.” (1 Samuel 8:5) Despite Samuel’s warnings, they persist in their desire. God speaks to Samuel and says, “Obey their voice and make them a king.”

The first king in Israel is a man named Saul. We meet him in 1 Samuel 9. This week’s reading covers his anointing as king and his fall from that position due to his disobedience to God. Israel longs for a king who is a *deliverer* -- someone who will make sure they are sheltered from the threat of the Philistines and other Canaanite enemies who remain in the Promised Land. In the eyes of the Israelites, Saul brings this protection immediately, defeating the Philistines and leading the Israelites in battle, thus fulfilling his worldly role as king.

But this is not the only thing the Lord desires in a king for His people. The Lord wants a *sustainer* -- a shepherd, someone who will keep His people from straying from Him. God longs to be both the *deliverer* and *sustainer* of His people. Rather than trust in the Divine King, the Israelites choose to hope in a human king. God’s priority is for the king of His people to be a leader who seeks after Him and leads His people to do the same. It is in this area where Saul falls short and forfeits his right to lead Israel. God says, “I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned his back from following Me.” (1 Samuel 15:11) From Saul, the first king in Israel, we learn that God is more concerned with our obedience to Him than He is with our worldly success. From Saul, we also see that the Israelites -- and all humanity -- need a Greater King.

①

1 SAMUEL
9-10

②

1 SAMUEL
11-12

③

1 SAMUEL
13

④

1 SAMUEL
14

⑤

1 SAMUEL
15

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

KINGS OF UNITED ISRAEL

NAME OF KING

YEAR OF CORONATION

SAUL

1051 BC

Saul is the first king of the united kingdom of Israel. His reign begins when the people of Israel cry out for a king following the era of the **JUDGES**.

40 YEARS

DAVID

1011 BC

David is the second king of the united kingdom of Israel. His reign brings peace and security to the Israelites thanks to his military victories.

40 YEARS

SOLOMON

971 BC

Solomon is the final king of the united kingdom of Israel. His reign ushers in a time of unprecedented wealth and prosperity for the people of Israel.

40 YEARS

KINGDOM DIVIDES

931 BC

KINGDOM

UNITED | DIVIDED | NORTHERN | SOUTHERN

Family Devotional**1 Samuel 14:1-15****FAMILY INGREDIENT
STORYTELLING**

Israel is under attack. Due to Philistine domination, only King Saul and his son, Jonathan, even own a sword. The Israelite people, including King Saul himself, have no faith that there can be any deliverance from their plight.

Jonathan's view differs greatly from that of his father. While Saul disobeyed God's instructions and fails to trust God for victory, Jonathan believes that the Lord can save, "whether by many (soldiers) or few." As the Israelite soldiers wait hopelessly on the battlefield, Jonathan calls to his young armor-bearer to go up with him to attack the Philistines, believing that God has the power to save. The Storytelling ingredient is rich in displaying God's power. As the twosome climb the mountain to face the enemy, they believe that God will show them if He wants them to engage in battle. They are overjoyed as they receive God's go-ahead. As they fight, the enemy begins to fall and then God Himself causes chaos to overtake the Philistines. The ground shakes and the soldiers run in terror. Jonathan's trust in God brings freedom to the Israelites. We must rely on God in tough situations to bring us freedom as we call out to Him and walk in trust.

Family Questions

- When Jonathan invited his armor-bearer to go with him to the Philistine outpost, what was Jonathan's intent?
- What did Jonathan believe about God? How do you think his strong belief may have encouraged his armor-bearer to believe?
- Who is someone you know that could use some encouragement that God is powerful enough and loving enough to help them?

Family Activity

An armor-bearer is an officer chosen by a general because of their bravery not only to bear the general's armor but also to stand by them in time of danger (*Easton's Illustrated Dictionary*). In this passage it is clear that Jonathan is a passionate man for the Lord who is leading a young armor-bearer. Additionally, Jonathan has great faith which his armor-bearer chooses to emulate.

Activity 1: Be an Armor-Bearer for Christ

For this activity you will need an individual, full length picture of each family member. Mount on paper. If you have butcher paper you could also draw around each other and decorate. Discuss: If you are God's armor-bearer, how can you use your mind, mouth, hands, and feet to serve Him? Write your ideas beside your picture. God calls us to live bravely for Him and spread the good news of Jesus as we work alongside the Holy Spirit. Pray together that you can be bold and faithful. Read Ephesians 6:10-19 for ideas.

Activity 2: Read Hebrews 11:1-12

Look at verse 1. How does the Bible define faith? Look at a couple of the heroes in this passage. What actions did each of them take to show their faith in a mighty God?

Small Group Discussion

- What sin is there to avoid?
- What is the difference between remorseful and repentant?
- How do we guard our hearts from pride?

May 21-27

DAVID PT. I

Though God has removed the kingdom from Saul, He has yet to name Israel's next king. At this point in Israel's history our focus shifts to David. Throughout his life, David displays a heart that longs to be obedient to the Lord. This precise quality leads God to choose David as king. When the time comes for Samuel to anoint the next king of Israel, all of David's brothers, the sons of a man named Jesse, are brought before him. Though they look the part of king, God tells Samuel not to look at their appearance because "the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7) After seeing and rejecting all of his brothers, it is David, a shepherd, the youngest and smallest of Jesse's family, that God chooses for Israel's next king.

After watching David's most noteworthy triumph, the slaying of Goliath (1 Samuel 17), Saul learns that David is to be the next king of Israel. In response, Saul begins chasing David in order to kill him. Despite Saul's murderous intentions, David refuses to take Saul's life when the opportunities arise, sparing him on multiple occasions. The time from David's anointing by Samuel to his coronation by the Israelites overlaps the end of Saul's reign. Though God has taken the kingdom from Saul and given it to David, he refuses to relinquish his power. The book of 1 Samuel ends with Saul taking his own life while under attack from the Philistines, thus bringing an end to the reign of Saul and officially beginning David's time as king of God's people.

①

1 SAMUEL
16:1-18:9

②

1 SAMUEL
19-20

③

1 SAMUEL
23:15-24:22

④

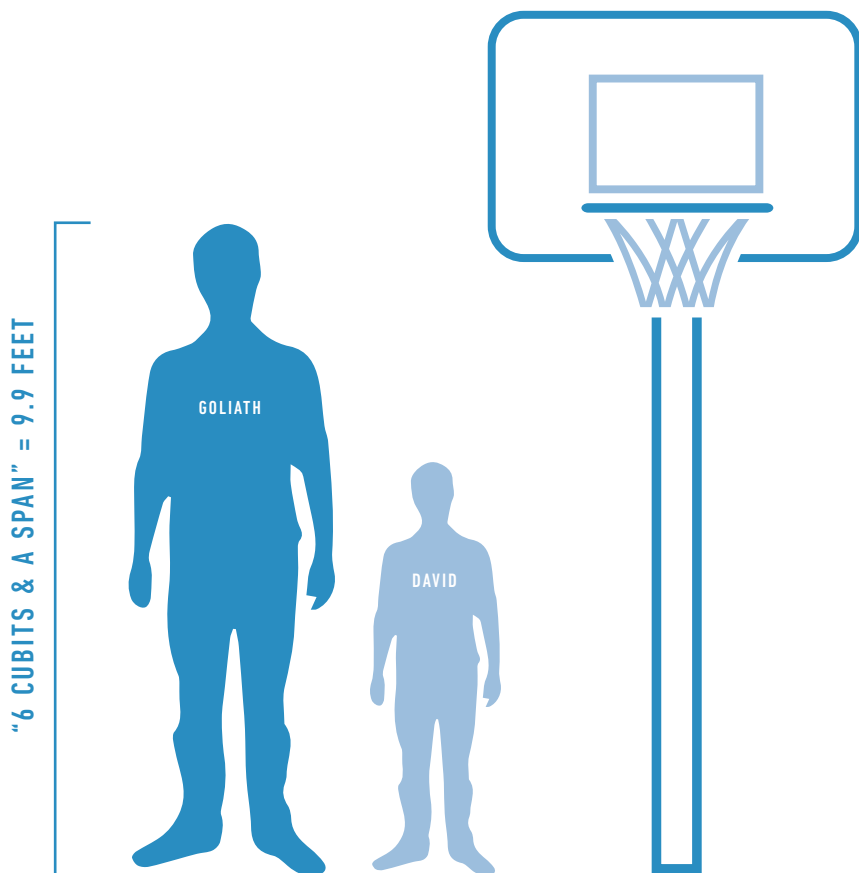
1 SAMUEL
25-26

⑤

1 SAMUEL
31

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

UNDERSTANDING THE SIZE OF GOLIATH FROM 1 SAMUEL 17



GOLIATH'S ARMOR (5000 SHEKELS): 125 POUNDS
HEAD OF GOLIATH'S SPEAR (600 SHEKELS): 15 POUNDS

KINGDOM

UNITED | DIVIDED | NORTHERN | SOUTHERN

Family Devotional**1 Samuel 16:1-13**

FAMILY INGREDIENT
IDENTITY

Our Father God is always actively at work drawing people to Himself. We are created in His image and a unique part of His creation, separate from animals, plants and angels. We are created to glorify Him and enjoy a relationship with Him. This is who we are meant to be.

Society and the enemy have a very different purpose for people. Those who are wealthy, beautiful, intelligent, likeable, etc. are found to be more acceptable. Those who do not meet these worldly standards are sometimes considered lesser people. They may even take foolish actions to change themselves to gain popularity.

In our story today, Samuel is commanded by God to anoint a new king. Directed to the house of Jesse of Bethlehem, his sons appear before Samuel. Samuel carefully considers their outward, visible qualities. That is, until the Lord instructs him that He looks at the heart. Our family ingredient of Identity clearly displays this godly principle: who God thinks you are and what He says about you is true. Believing in this true identity from Him is a safe refuge.

Family Questions

- Which of Jesse's sons did God pick as the new king? Why?
- Describe a time when someone did not get chosen because of the way they looked on the outside? Discuss. Have you ever had that happen to you or done that?
- What can you NOT tell about someone just by looking?
- What would someone NOT KNOW about you just by looking?
- Read 1 Samuel 16:7. What might be different about the way we view a person and God views a person?
- What steps are you taking to develop your inner beauty?

Family Activity

Activity 1: God Looks at the Heart

This activity helps children explore the difference between what people might see on the surface and what God knows about us. God's eyes see our value/gifts even when others do not.

Supplies: litmus paper strips (available at church) and liquids (safe ones for children to touch), e.g. hand soap, lemon juice, water, milk, different drinks. Liquid's PH will change strip's color.

Experiment:

1. **Guess what color the strip will become when you touch it to the liquid. Now, touch litmus paper strips to different liquids.**
2. **Did you guess correctly?**
3. **What qualities do you want God to see when He looks at your inner heart? Draw a large heart outline. Write the positive qualities on dry strips and glue on the heart as a visual reminder.**
4. **Ask God to make your hearts like His and to help you see people's hearts rather than just judging by appearance.**

To view sample, google search: "Creative Children's Ministry God Looks at the Heart."

Small Group Discussion

- What promise is there to proclaim?
- From where does courage come? How do you get it when you need it? (i.e. when some fear towers over you and threatens you, and you feel like cowering and fleeing into some cave of protection.)
- What made David different?
- What is the source of your courage? Courage is not an autonomous, self-generated virtue. Courage is always produced by faith, whether our faith is in God or something else.

May 28-June 3

DAVID PT. II

David's life and reign serve as another of the Old Testament's foreshadows, or types, of Jesus. Though David, like all of humanity, is far from perfect -- he is marked by a sinful nature -- he has a heart that longs to live in faithful, obedient relationship with God. Much of our reading about David throughout 1 and 2 Samuel tells of his success in leading Israel's military victories. In these, we see the Lord's blessing and favor upon not only David, but the entire nation of Israel. David leads them to repeated victory in battle, and regular worship to the Lord (2 Samuel 6). We also discover that from David's line will come a Messiah, the Redeemer, the One whose throne will be established forever.

This week's reading also includes the story of David's adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of her husband, Uriah (2 Samuel 11). Despite this obvious sin, in his repentance, we see David's heart for the Lord (2 Samuel 12). Humanity -- even the best of it -- is broken by sin. But sin does not have to be a person's defining characteristic. Though this sinful and troubling event is the most infamous in David's life, he is later described as "a man after God's own heart." (Acts 13:22) Even in the Old Testament, we see that God looks for a heart of repentance in His people. All that is true for David holds true for us as well. Although it may sometimes feel as if our sins and failures are the most prominent features in the story of our lives, God looks for a heart of repentance. He longs for us to have a heart that confesses sin and, in faith, turns to Jesus, the fulfillment of the promised Messiah from the line of David, as the only source of eternal forgiveness.

①

2 SAMUEL
1-2

②

2 SAMUEL
5-6

③

2 SAMUEL
7-8

④

2 SAMUEL
11-12

⑤

1 KINGS
1:1-2:12

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

DAVID AND JESUS

Throughout the Old Testament, there are various figures who foreshadow Jesus Christ. David is one of those individuals. Below is a chart of some of the similarities between the life of David and the life and work of Jesus.

DAVID	JESUS
<i>Descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Judah</i>	<i>Descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Judah</i>
<i>Spends his life shepherding his father's sheep</i>	<i>Spends His life shepherding His Father's people</i>
<i>Defeats Israel's giant enemy Goliath</i>	<i>Defeats humanity's giant enemy sin</i>
<i>Pursued by Saul with murderous intentions</i>	<i>Pursued by Pharisees with murderous intentions</i>
<i>Becomes king and his throne will endure forever</i>	<i>Is King and His reign endures forever</i>
<i>Called "a man after God's own heart"</i>	<i>Carries out the work of God's heart</i>
<i>Brought peace to his people through military victory</i>	<i>Brought peace to His people through victory on the cross</i>

KINGDOM

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Family Devotional**2 Samuel 7:1-22****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
KNOWING GOD

After King David builds a beautiful palace for himself, he desires to glorify the Lord by building Him a beautiful temple. The prophet, Nathan, gives the go-ahead but then hears from God in a dream that this is not His plan. God still desires to continue to dwell among the people in the Tabernacle, as He has since the time of Moses. However, the Lord is pleased with David's desire to honor Him. God promises He will always be present with David, make his name great, bring rest and blessing to His people, and freedom from oppression. When David dies, one of his sons will rule and build God's temple. He will experience discipline for sin but the line of David will endure forever. God will not withdraw His love. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise. No longer does God "dwell" in a building constructed by human hands, but rather in the hearts of those who ask Him into their lives. This ingredient of Knowing God brings salvation and friendship with God forever!

Family Questions

- Did God command King David to build a temple for Him? Whose idea was it? Why?
- List all the blessings God promised David for his future and the future of the Israelite people.
- Read David's praise to God in 2 Samuel 7:18-19. What question did David ask at the end of verse 18? What do we deserve because of our sinful nature? Read Romans 6:23. What gift does God give us instead in Jesus?
- Read Ephesians 3:17a. What does it mean "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith"? How can Christ come to dwell in our hearts?

Family Activity

Activity 1: Banner Activity

Supplies: paper, slender dowel rods (can substitute stick or long straw), hole punch, markers.

Read Psalm 60:4-5, written by King David. David describes a rallying place to gather before God in the face of his enemy. He encourages us to cry out for rescue and God's power to move on our behalf. At the center of the rallying place, God Himself will raise a banner signifying His triumph. Discuss things that are true about God. Cut out pennant shapes and decorate with pictures or phrases describing these truths and God's power to save. Punch holes in the side of the pennant; thread a dowel through the holes for a handle. Play music and march or dance around the room while declaring His faithfulness. For added fun, use a glow stick for the handle and declare praises under the stars. Alternative idea: Make a family banner. Write letters of last name down the side of the banner; write phrases beside each letter that describe your family's values in Christ.

Small Group Discussion

- What sin is there to avoid?
- How had David come to this?
- Had a man ever been so blessed by God? Every promise to David had been kept. Everything David touched had flourished. Never had Israel as a nation been so spiritually alive, so politically stable, so wealthy, so militarily powerful. And at the peak of this unprecedented prosperity, David committed such heinous sin. Why? How could he have resisted so many temptations in dangerous, difficult days and then yield at the height of success?

June 4-10

SOLOMON

Israel's third king is Solomon, David's son. Before David passes away, he gives his son important advice: "...keep the charge of the Lord your God, walking in His ways...that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn." (1 Kings 2:3)

After having his reign established, Solomon prays that God would make him wise. God grants this prayer. Solomon was renowned as the wisest man alive. He is the author of the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon -- three of the five Wisdom Books in the Old Testament. He was also one of the wealthiest people to have ever lived. His time as king coincides with Israel's greatest period of wealth, safety, and prosperity. He oversees the building of the first temple in Jerusalem, where God's presence dwells among His people.

The overarching theme of Solomon's life is manifested in his failure to heed David's advice -- to walk in the Lord's ways. Before entering the Promised Land, the Lord commanded the Israelites not to intermarry with the Canaanite people (Deuteronomy 7:3). Solomon did not obey this command. In fact, we are told that he "loved many foreign women." Instead of clinging to the Lord, Solomon's heart "clung to these [women] in love." (1 Kings 11:1, 2) In turn, he does not lead the Israelites to worship the Lord alone, but sets up high places, or altars, to the false gods of his non-Israelite wives. A heart that clings to something other than God finds itself ensnared in sin. That is certainly true of Solomon's life, but is also a reality for all of humanity. The end of Solomon's reign marks the end of the united kingdom of Israel and the beginning of the nation's downward spiral toward exile.

①

1 KINGS
2:13-3:28

②

1 KINGS
4:20-34, 6

③

1 KINGS
8

④

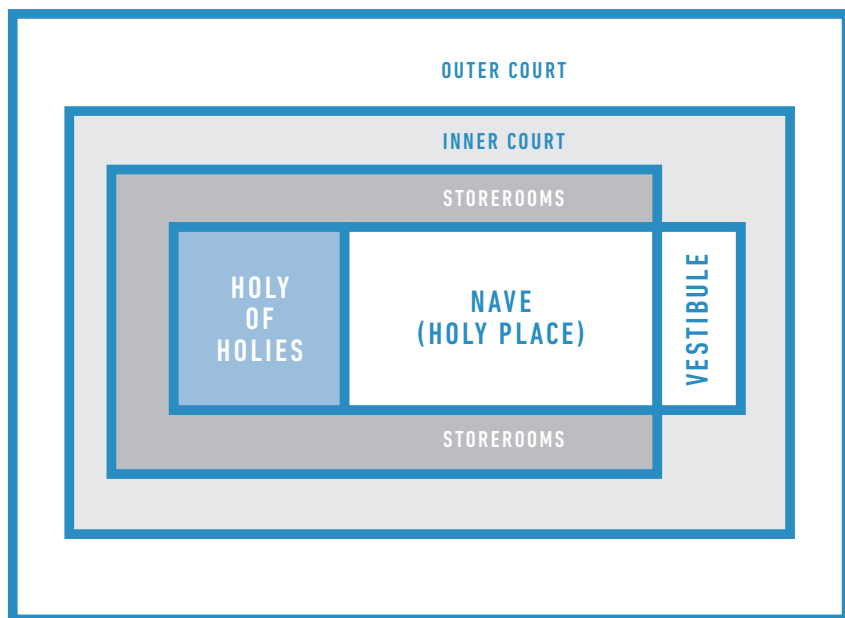
1 KINGS
11

⑤

1 KINGS
12

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

THE TEMPLE, DESCRIBED IN 1 KINGS 6



HOLY OF HOLIES *(also called: Most Holy Place, Inner Sanctuary)*

The place where the ark of the covenant, containing God's presence, was housed.

NAVE *(also called: Holy Place)*

Contained the Altar of Incense, the table for the Bread of the Presence, and 10 golden lampstands. DESCRIBED IN 1 KINGS 7

STOREROOMS

Held materials used for daily functioning of the temple.

VESTIBULE *(also called: portico, porch)*

Entryway to the holiest portions of temple.

KINGDOM

UNITED | DIVIDED | NORTHERN | SOUTHERN

Family Devotional

1 Kings 8:1-11, 52-66

FAMILY INGREDIENT

**WORSHIP, THANKSGIVING & JOY,
FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS**

Our passage today details Solomon's worshipful response to the temple's completion. All of Israel congregates in Jerusalem to join the celebration. Thus, we focus on these rich family ingredients -- Worship, Thanksgiving & Joy and Fellowship of Believers. Solomon worships the Lord, who alone is God, and who has kept His covenant of love. He praises God that none of His promises have failed. He even prays that God would turn their hearts toward Him, realizing their weaknesses. The Israelites' celebration continues for 14 days! There are so many sacrifices, they cannot be contained in one area. As we worship together, we acknowledge God's love and power, as well as our inadequacies. He is God and we are not. Knowing this, we can fall before Him who makes us holy through His Son, Jesus. May our worship as a family and with our church family be uncontainable with joy, overflowing and glorifying to Him.

Family Questions

- What did Solomon build for God? For what purpose?
- What did Solomon do after the temple was completed?
- What was God's response to their worship? Hint: 1 Kings 8:10-11.
- How big is God? Where is He? Does He live in a building?
- God's presence is uncontainable. The sacrifices of Solomon were so large in number that they could not be contained (see verses 62-64). How can we show our uncontainable praise to God?

Family Activity

Worship Activities

Activity 1: Family Worship

In preparation, think of worship songs that your family could sing. Watch the worship video (listed below) together and talk about some of the amazing things God has made. Then, worship and pray. Added twist: after the video, go outside for worship and prayer under the stars. Go to Youtube and enter “Indescribable - Encounter Worship (Chris Tomlin) (Lyrics) HD.”

Activity 2: Balloon Praise

Write things you are thankful for on inflated balloons with permanent marker. Play music and bat balloons around. When music stops, shout thanks to God ending with a big AMEN!

Source: www.flamecreativekids.blogspot.co.uk.

Small Group Discussion

- What principle is there to follow?
- Where do you find your value?
- Do you feel as though God has specifically called you to something?
- In examining your own life, is there an area of your heart that clings to something other than God?

June 11-17

NORTHERN KINGDOM

A significant event happened at the end of our reading last week: the nation of Israel split into two separate kingdoms. Remember that the people of Israel are divided into twelve tribes, named after Jacob's sons. In the middle of 1 Kings 12, following Solomon's death in chapter 11, the tribes form two distinct kingdoms, each choosing to name a different king to rule them. The ten tribes to the north name Jeroboam their king (1 Kings 11:26). From this point forward, as you read in 1 and 2 Kings, the northern kingdom will be referred to as *Israel*. Two tribes in the south -- Benjamin and Judah -- name Rehoboam, Solomon's son, as their king. From this point forward, the southern kingdom is referred to as *Judah*. As an additional point of context, many of the prophets and prophetic books of the Old Testament fall into the time of the divided kingdom, as God sends messengers to warn the Israelites of impending judgment due to their sin and unfaithfulness.

The readings this week jump from 1 Kings into the book of 2 Kings, as we follow the accounts of the kings who reign in *Israel*. Next week we will look at the kings in *Judah*. Other than geography, there is a common link between the 19 rulers of the northern kingdom: none lead the Israelite people into worship of and relationship with the Lord. Instead, they lead the people into greater and greater sin, primarily the sin of idolatry -- the worship of false gods. As time passes in the history of Israel, a common theme becomes clear. No sinful, broken human is able to lead perfectly or save entirely. Not a judge. Not a king. As we read about the kings in the northern kingdom, their sin should not only remind us of our own, but also point us to our need for a holy and perfect Savior.

①

1 KINGS
13:1-14:20

②

1 KINGS
16-17

③

1 KINGS
18-19

④

2 KINGS
13

⑤

2 KINGS
15:8-31

OLD TESTAMENT MOVEMENT

MAP OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM



Ten tribes make up the northern kingdom of Israel: Asher, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Manesseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, Zebulun. Two tribes make up the southern kingdom of Judah: Judah and Benjamin.

KINGDOM

UNITED | DIVIDED | NORTHERN | SOUTHERN

Family Devotional**1 Kings 18:16-39****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
RESPONSIBILITY

Everyone loves a showdown between good and evil. But this is more than that: it is a story showing the reality of God's power to triumph over evil. The story opens with Israel experiencing a severe famine under the rule of wicked King Ahab and an even more wicked wife, Queen Jezebel. Another character enters the scene, the prophet Elijah. Elijah is one of the most well-known prophets of the Old Testament. He verbally challenges the people of Israel, "How long will you waver between two opinions?" Who would the people choose to follow as their God? And then comes the fun part. Elijah challenges the 450 prophets of Baal to prove who is the one true God. This is not done as a rash act, but rather a faith-filled, God-led challenge. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had not taken their responsibility seriously in leading their people to worship the one true God. God calls upon Elijah to take up that responsibility. We exhibit the family ingredient of Responsibility when we lead our family toward God during difficult times. He is powerful and faithful.

Family Questions

- At the beginning of the story, who did the people worship?
- What challenge did Elijah give the false prophets?
- What happened when the false prophets called to their god?
- What happened to Elijah's sacrifice when he called upon the one true God?
- What was the people's response to God's display of power?

Family Activity

Kids App: "Fire From Heaven"

Working together, use paper grocery sacks to make "altar stones" by stuffing sacks with crinkled newspaper or plastic bags. Close with masking tape. Make enough "stones" to build a round altar. Explain that altars were used to give offerings to the Lord to pay for the sins of the people. They were also built where someone talked with God or as a reminder of something that God did at a particular place.

Activity 1: Reenact story

Build altar and surround it with blue paper or blanket for water. Use pool noodles for wood. Make fire with yellow, red, and orange crepe paper. When fire comes, pull out the "water blanket," "wood," and "stones." Everyone cry out, "The Lord, He is God!"

Source: Adapted from Danielle's Place

Activity 2: Game

Write out the words of 1 Kings 18:39, "The Lord, He is God," putting one word on each paper stone. Stand in circle. Pass the stones around circle while you play music. When music stops, everyone scrambles to make an altar with the Bible verse in order. Pray together that you would always know that "The Lord, He is God!"

Source: Adapted from Danielle's Place.

Small Group Discussion

- What example is there to follow?
- What is the key to making a difference for God?
See 1 Kings 19:10, 14.
- If you want to make a difference for God, are you willing to commit to the things that will help you get there? What are those commitments?

June 18-24

SOUTHERN KINGDOM

Whereas last week we read about the kings who ruled in the northern kingdom of Israel, this week our reading turns to the kings of the southern kingdom of Judah. The kings of Judah arise from the family line of David, through which the promised Messiah will eventually come. Though there were no good kings in Israel, this is not the case in Judah. Of the 20 kings who rule throughout the history of Judah, eight of them can be categorized as “good,” striving to lead God’s people into worship of and relationship with Him. This has always been God’s desire -- to live in loving relationship with His people for His glory.

The account of Judah’s kings provides a lesson similar to that of the life of King David. No human is perfect and sinless. Even the “good” kings sin, failing to perfectly uphold God’s will and Law. They are counted as “good” because their hearts long to seek after the Lord and lead His people to do the same. Joash, also called Jehoshaphat, repairs the temple in Jerusalem (2 Kings 11-12); Hezekiah tears down all the high places and altars to false gods in Judah (2 Kings 18); Josiah discovers the book of the Law -- likely Deuteronomy -- and has it read to all the people of Jerusalem, as well as leads the people of Judah to remember God’s work in leading them out of Egypt through the Passover celebration (2 Kings 22-23). In reading about these kings, we see glimpses of what the Lord has always wanted from His people. God wants His people to have hearts that long for Him above all else. The same is true today. Though no human today is perfect or sinless, the Lord desires for humanity to have hearts that continually seek Him, long for Him, and rely upon Him.

①

1 KINGS

14:21-15:24

②

2 KINGS

11-12

③

2 KINGS

16

④

2 KINGS

18-19

⑤

2 KINGS

22:1-23:30

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

THE KINGS & REIGNS OF ISRAEL & JUDAH

Israel

Jeroboam I	931-910
Nadab	910-909
Baasha	909-886
Elah	886-885
Zimri	885
Omri	885-874
Ahab	874-853
Ahaziah	853-852
Jehoram	852-841
Jehu	841-814
Jehoahaz	814-798
Jehoash	798-782
Jeroboam II	782-753
Zechariah	753-752
Shallum	752
Menahem	752-742
Pekahiah	742-740
Pekah	740-732
Hoshea	732-722

722 ————— EXILED TO ASSYRIA

KINGS IN BLUE ARE GOOD
KINGS IN GREY ARE BAD

Judah

Rehoboam	931-913
Abijah	913-911
Asa	911-870
Jehoshaphat	870-848
Jehoram	848-841
Ahaziah	841
Ataliah *	841-835
Joash	835-796
Amaziah	796-767
Uzziah	767-740
Jotham	740-732
Ahaz	732-716
Hezekiah	716-687
Manasseh	687-642
Amon	642-640
Josiah	640-608
Jehoahaz	608
Jehoiakim	608-597
Jeconiah	597
Zedekiah	597-586

586 ————— EXILED TO BABYLON

★ QUEEN

KINGDOM

UNITED | DIVIDED | NORTHERN | SOUTHERN

Family Devotional

2 Kings 11:1-21

FAMILY INGREDIENT
SERVICE

The story today highlights the family ingredient of Service or “What needs to be done?”. The southern kingdom of Judah was under the control of wicked **Athaliah**, mother of the former king. When Athaliah seized control, she proceeded to destroy the royal family. However one son, **Joash**, was saved and hidden away with his **nurse** for six years by his **aunt**. During this time he was in training with his uncle, the priest **Jehoiada**. In his seventh year, it was time to move forward. Jehoiada sent word for the **commanders** to be brought to him. They proceeded to make a covenant and pledge their loyalty to the new king, Joash. Jehoiada instructed them with specific plans for the kingdom takeover. All those involved complied. In this story we see a pattern of people seeing what needed to be done and doing it, all for the Lord. Following this pattern in our family and instructing our children to watch for what needs to be done in each and every situation will train them to obediently follow the Lord’s path.

Family Questions

- Make a list of the **bolded** story characters using face pictures. Indicate by their expression whether they were evil or loved God.
- Look at your pictures. Of those who loved God, what did each do to answer the question, “What needs to be done?”.
- What was the result of their obedience in service?
- Thinking question: Would God’s plans have been stopped if any of these groups of people had not obeyed?

Family Activity

Activity 1: Story Set

Focus on verses 4-12. Work together to make a story set using Legos or pictures of each scene.

Activity 2: Live It Out

Using card stock or magnetic refrigerator magnets, make a display sign reading, "What needs to be done?". Practice answering this question during family chores, as you are leaving or coming home, and as you live life this week. Help each family member see their role.

Activity 3: Service With God's Help

Supplies: dirty pennies, small bowls, salt, vinegar, cotton swabs.
Challenge: Using $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar and a swab, scrub a penny clean. When it doesn't work, challenge them to rub harder. Next, explain that in order to really get pennies clean, help is needed. Add 1 tsp salt to vinegar and stir. Try again and pennies will shine. The salt is like the power of the Holy Spirit. Doing what needs to be done can be challenging. Adding the power of the Spirit takes our efforts and multiplies them to make our lives shine for God's glory.

Source: Adapted from [Mama to 6 Blessings](#).

Small Group Discussion

- What sin is there to avoid?
- Is there an example from which to learn?
- Have you ever made a covenant with God?

June 25-July 1

EXILE

The **KINGDOM** era comes to an end when God sends His people out of the Promised Land and into exile. For years, the prophets have repeatedly warned both Israel and Judah of this imminent possibility. As they leave the Promised Land, we are reminded of Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden. Both stories exhibit God's just judgment of sin.

Exile comes to the northern kingdom of Israel in 2 Kings 17 when the nation of Assyria conquers Samaria, the capital city of Israel. This takes place in 722 BC, following the reign of Hoshea, Israel's final king. We are told the reason God chooses to allow this to happen to His people: "They despised [the Lord's] statutes and His covenant that He made with their Fathers...They went after false idols...and followed the nations that were around them. They abandoned all the commandments of the Lord their God." (2 Kings 17:15-16) The same fate comes to Judah in 586 BC. Because some kings led the people of Judah to worship God, their exile comes later than Israel's. In multiple waves, the Babylonians, led by King Nebuchadnezzar, force the people of Judah into exile. This happens fully and finally in 2 Kings 24-25 when the Babylonians conquer Jerusalem and destroy the Lord's temple.

The end of 2 Kings and beginning of the **EXILE** era leave us wondering about God's promise to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham's line, to deliver His people through a Messiah from the line of David, and to redeem humanity from sin. The Israelites wonder as well, and write about it, which is the reason we included readings from chapters 1 and 5 of Lamentations.

①

EZEKIEL
16

②

2 KINGS
17

③

2 KINGS
24:10-25:21

④

LAMENTATIONS
1

⑤

LAMENTATIONS
5

OLD TESTAMENT MOVEMENT

THE EXILE OF THE ISRAELITES



The northern kingdom of Israel is exiled by the Assyrians in 722 BC. The southern kingdom of Judah is later exiled by the Babylonians in three waves, culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

EXILE

PROPHECY | PROPHETS | EXILES | POWER-CHANGE

Family Devotional

2 Kings 18:28-37;
2 Kings 19:1-19, 35-36

FAMILY INGREDIENT MODELING

Unlike most kings of the southern kingdom, King Hezekiah worships God. He removes the high places of worship to other gods and commits to stay true to God's truth. In this passage, he trusts God against unbelievable odds and Judah experiences God's deliverance in a mighty way.

King Sennacherib, a notoriously cruel king of Assyria, is threatening Judah. He taunts the people with many lies, explaining the reason God will not be willing or able to deliver them. He entices the people to surrender and vividly relates the horror that will come upon them if they refuse. He even declares, "The Lord Himself told me to march against this country and destroy it." God calls Hezekiah to encourage the people to trust Him. Hezekiah displays the family ingredient of Modeling by displaying trust in God to his people. We, as parents, need to model godly responses in the face of adversity. What responses are we modeling?

Family Questions

- What was the people's response after hearing all of the lies of King Sennacherib? Hint: 2 Kings 18:36. Why did they respond that way? Why was this wise advice?
- Who did Hezekiah seek council from? (2 Kings 19:2-7) What did the prophet say?
- When the king receives a threatening letter from the enemy, what does he do with the letter (1 Kings 19:14-19)?
- When the enemy, Satan, tempts us to despair in difficult circumstances, what can we do?

Family Activity

Activity 1: Truth and Lie Activity

On large sheet of paper, draw a happy face and a sad face and label “Happy” and “Sad.” Explain that telling the truth generally makes us happy because it is pleasing to God and lying makes us sad. Discuss some of the different statements in the story in a simplified form. Decide whether they are truth or a lie. Write on the appropriate side and pray that God will help your family to tell the truth.

Activity 2: Trusting God Activity

Supplies: 1 gallon-sized Ziploc bag (don't use off brand), bamboo skewers, shower cap & goggles (optional).

Fill a gallon bag halfway full of water. Ask your children if they trust you. Pick a “victim” volunteer and place the water sack on their head. You can give them a shower cap and goggles for extra fun. Holding the sack in place, challenge your family to think of some things that they worry about. As each one is mentioned, plunge a skewer through the bag of water and out the other side. In each case, comment on how the bag is holding the water. Take turns trying it. Talk about some issues your family is facing that could make you worry. What is worry? What do we do when we are worrying? Does worrying help? What can you do instead? Is God willing and able to handle problems? Write down your needs as a family and pray daily for God's help.

Source: www.imaginefamilyministries.com

Small Group Discussion

- What example is there to follow?
- Do we earnestly pray as the Israelites do in Lamentations 5:21?
- Where do you place your hope?

July 2-8

DANIEL

The book of Daniel is both narrative and prophetic. It tells the story of a few Israelites during the exile, while also providing prophetic sections about Israel's future. All the books of prophecy fit into the narrative of the Old Testament in different places. The book of Daniel takes place during the **EXILE** era of the Old Testament, after Judah and Jerusalem have been conquered by the Babylonians. In fact, the book begins by telling us that Daniel was taken into a training program in Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar hoped to indoctrinate select young men with the language, customs, and culture of Babylon, then send them back among the Israelite people so as to influence the Israelites in the ways of Babylon (Daniel 1:3-7).

The narrative sections follow the life of Daniel and a few other faithful Israelites as they navigate life in Babylon. The prophetic portions tell of Daniel, empowered by the Holy Spirit, interpreting various dreams and visions. All of it helps show us that even though God's people have been sent into exile, He has not forgotten them and is still at work among them. The story of Daniel paints a beautiful picture of an individual following the Lord in a culture that does not know God, living in faithful obedience to the principles of God in a society that has no regard for the person of God, and speaking the truth of God to those who have little interest in hearing from God. Though no human other than Jesus is perfect, we learn much from Daniel, and a few of his contemporaries, as they cling to the Lord despite living in a place that had no regard for Him.

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DANIEL
1-2

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DANIEL
3-4

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DANIEL
5-7

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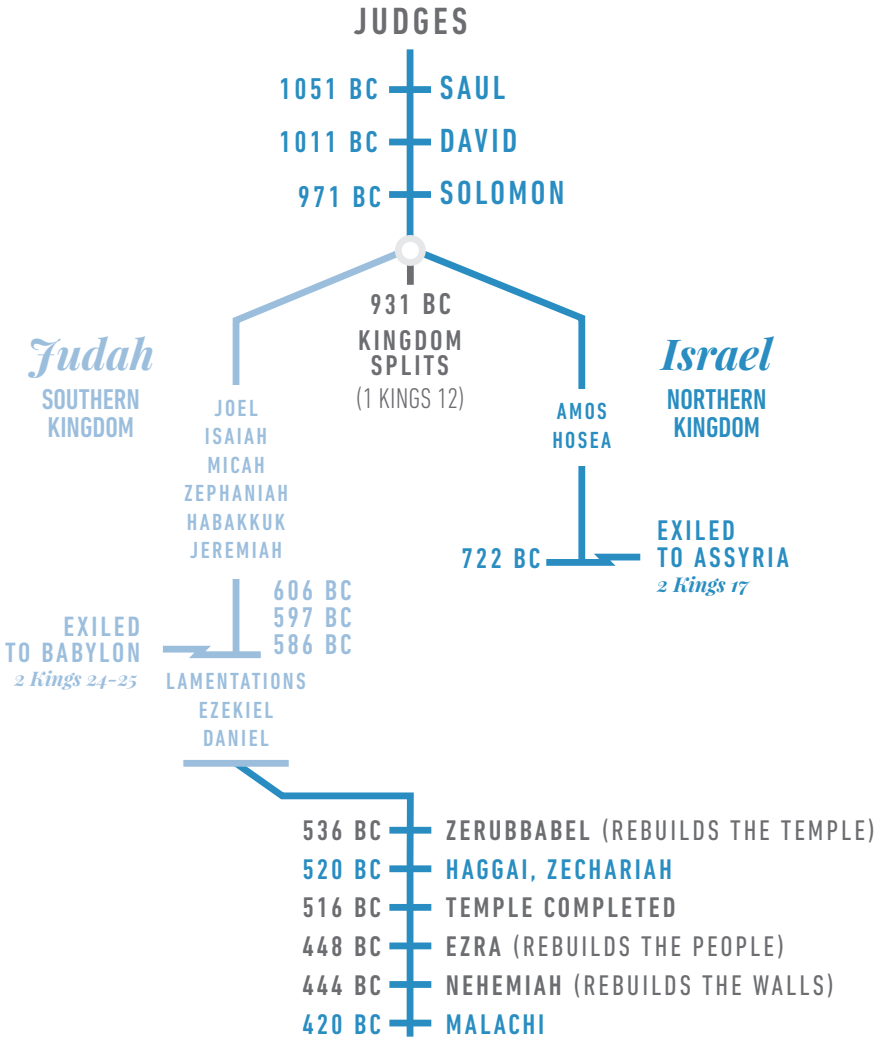
DANIEL
8-9

⑤

DANIEL
10-12

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

UNDERSTANDING THE PROPHETS



This is a visual representation of when the Prophetic books fit into the timeline of Israel's history.

EXILE

PROPHECY | PROPHETS | EXILES | POWER-CHANGE

Family Devotional

Daniel 3:1-28

FAMILY INGREDIENT

FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS

Choices, choices...there are many choices placed before us in life. Some are easy and do not need much thought. Others require deliberation and possibly going against popular opinion to stay true to our principles. In such situations, it is easier to stand when others are standing beside you in agreement.

King Nebuchadnezzar makes a decree that everyone must bow before a huge golden image. Anyone refusing would be thrown into a blazing furnace. Easy choice: bow. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, three young Israelites in exile, choose not to bow. They obey God's law, "Worship the Lord and serve Him only" (Dt. 6:13). They declare God's ability to save. "But even if He does not...we will not worship the image." They stand for truth.

So, they are tossed in the furnace. As the crowd watches, not only are there three men walking in the fire unscathed, but there is a fourth figure looking like "a son of the gods." Most believe that this was Jesus, Himself, walking with them. The king calls the three friends out and they are completely unharmed. Jesus promises He will never leave us. He also provides fellow believers to stand beside us for encouragement and strength.

Family Questions

- Why were the three friends in Babylon? Was it by choice?
- What action did the king want? Why was this wrong?
- Going against the king would have consequences. What were the consequences and what did the three friends say about God's help?
- Why is it easier to obey if others are choosing to obey as well?

Family Activity

Family Drama Activity

Tape strands of orange, red, and yellow crepe paper to small fans. Turn on and tip fans toward ceiling to make fiery furnace. (If you don't have fans, you can tape crepe paper streamers to jumbo craft sticks. Have the children stand around in a circle to make the fiery furnace and wave their streamers up and down to look like flames.)

Re-enact the story, taking turns playing the three friends, the One who looked like “a son of the gods,” and the king. Tell the children to bow before your golden image or they will be thrown into the fiery furnace. The children then say, “No.” Put them in the fiery furnace and have the One who looks like “a son of the gods” join them. Look in and say, “Didn't I throw three men in the furnace? I see four men!” Then tell Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to come out. Then have everyone say, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!”

Family Craft Idea

Color a picture of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and the One who looked like a “son of the gods” in the fiery furnace. Using water colors, blow through a straw dipped in paint to make flame shapes.

Source: Activities adapted from [Danielle's Place](#)

Small Group Discussion

- What example is there to follow?
- Daniel's life exudes discipline. What stands out most to you about Daniel's prayer life?
- How can we commit to discipline like Daniel's?

July 9-15

EZRA

The book of Ezra takes place about 50 years after the Babylonians' final destruction of Jerusalem and removal of the people of Judah into exile. During that time, the Persian empire, led by King Cyrus, conquered the Babylonians. Thus, when our story begins in the year 536 BC, King Cyrus and the Persians are ruling over the exiled Israelite people. The book of Ezra moves us into the **RETURN** era of the Old Testament, focusing on two people and two events: Zerubbabel and the restoring of the temple, and Ezra and the restoring of the Israelite people.

The book opens with King Cyrus, moved by the Lord, issuing the following proclamation: "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all His people...let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel." (Ezra 1:2-3) Zerubbabel leads a group of Israelites back to Jerusalem to begin the process of rebuilding God's temple and reinstating His worship.

The book then moves to an account of Ezra, a teacher of the Law. About 60 years after Zerubbabel began rebuilding the temple, during the reign of the Persian king, Artaxerxes, Ezra leads a second wave of people out of exile to their home in Jerusalem. Thanks to the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra, the book of Ezra ends with God's people once again living in community under His Law, worshipping Him in the Promised Land. There is hope for the Israelites following the despair of their years in exile.

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EZRA
1-2

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EZRA
3-4

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EZRA
5-6

④

EZRA
7, 8:15-36

⑤

EZRA
9:1-10:17

9 ERAS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

CREATION	<i>Gen. 1-11</i>
PATRIARCHS	<i>Gen. 12-50</i>
EXODUS	<i>Exodus- Deuteronomy</i>
CONQUEST	<i>Joshua</i>
JUDGES	<i>Judges</i>
KINGDOM	<i>Samuels, Kings, Chronicles</i>
EXILE	<i>Kings</i>
RETURN	<i>Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther</i>
SILENCE	<i>400 years of silence</i>

RETURN

DESPAIR | TEMPLE | PEOPLE | WALLS

Family Devotional

**Ezra 1:1-11;
Ezra 6:6-10, 15-16**

FAMILY INGREDIENT **KNOWING GOD**

The Father God never forgets His promises and He is always at work redeeming people to know Him and bring Him glory. In the book of Ezra, we have constant examples of God working through the most unlikely foreign kings to accomplish His purposes. The exiled Jews return to their homeland to rebuild their temple and resume worship to Him. Though opposition to His will comes, He is not thwarted. The temple is rebuilt and the people rejoice before God! The family ingredient of Knowing God builds a rich faith in who He is. His decrees will come to pass. Teaching our family to place their trust in Him will pay rich dividends in our children's future walk with Christ.

Family Questions

- In Ezra 1:1, it states that God “moved the heart of Cyrus, king of Persia.” What does that mean?
- What project did the Lord move King Cyrus to do? Hint: Ezra 1:2-4. What does this show us about God's power?
- What did King Cyrus return to the Jews who were going back to their homeland to rebuild the temple?
- Did the Jews encounter any opposition?
- When we are doing something for God, is it likely that we will run into some challenges along the way? Discuss some examples. Pray together that God will help you to know Him better and better so you will not give up.

Family Activity

Activity 1: Rebuilding the Temple

Supplies: building blocks and pillows.

A favorite children's activity from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah is rebuilding the wall and defending it. Divide into two teams. Give one team a small section of room (about three feet long) and have them try to build a wall three blocks high. Meanwhile, the other team tries to steal the blocks. The kids defend with pillows and it is a big messy fun game.

Activity 2: A Place to Worship

Using tables, chairs, blankets, rubber bands, or clothespins, build a temple. One of the first acts of worship in the newly rebuilt temple was to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. After your temple is built, act out the celebration of the feast. Enjoy a snack together and sing a worship song. Traditionally part of the feast included reading Psalm 27. Read Psalm 27:4-6. Pray that God will help you know Him better and share Him with others.

Source: Activities adapted from *Adventures in Mommydom*

Small Group Discussion

- What promise is there to claim?
- How have you humbled yourself before God to seek His help?
- How is fasting the means to humbling ourselves? Ezra 8:21

July 16-22

NEHEMIAH

The book of Nehemiah continues the story of the Israelites' **RETURN** to their Promised Land. Whereas Zerubbabel and Ezra brought people back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and restore the Law, Nehemiah returns with a final wave of Israelites to rebuild the walls surrounding the city. Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, both sent back to Jerusalem during the reign of the Persian king, Artaxerxes. They work alongside one another to rebuild God's people according to His Law and to rebuild the walls of His city.

As was the case for both Zerubbabel and Ezra, Nehemiah faces challenges in the process of rebuilding the wall. But the Lord is faithful in bringing to completion that which He called Nehemiah to do. In just 52 days, despite opposition, Nehemiah and the Israelite people complete the work of rebuilding the city's walls. Once finished, Nehemiah takes a census of all the people who have returned to Jerusalem.

The book finishes with Ezra reading the Law, the celebration of an important Jewish feast, a prayer of confession that reminds the people of the Lord's work beginning with Abraham, and a dedication of the walls. But the final chapter of Nehemiah reminds us that in spite of this joyous moment for the people of Israel, all has not been made perfectly right. They are still sinful and in need of a Savior who will finally and fully fulfill the covenant promises God made to Abraham. Though the people are home in a rebuilt Jerusalem, they need hearts that are made new. That can only happen through the long awaited Messiah, and it will be over 400 years until He arrives in a manger in the small town of Bethlehem.

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NEHEMIAH
1-3

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NEHEMIAH
4-5

③

NEHEMIAH
6:1-7:4, 8:1-18

④

NEHEMIAH
9-10

⑤

NEHEMIAH
12:27-13:11

OLD TESTAMENT MOVEMENT

THE RETURN OF THE ISRAELITES



The Israelites return from exile in three waves, over a span of about 90 years in order to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and reestablish themselves in their Promised Land.

RETURN

DISREPAIR | TEMPLE | PEOPLE | WALLS

Family Devotional**Nehemiah 4, 6:15-16**

FAMILY INGREDIENT

FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS

Miraculously, the exiled Jews are allowed to return. They find the city of Jerusalem in shambles and defenseless with no wall of protection. God calls Nehemiah to lead his fellow Jews to restore their homeland.

The people begin to work. But with obedience often times comes opposition. The Samaritans, led by Governor Sanballat, begin to ridicule. "What are these feeble Jews doing?...Can they bring the stones back to life from these heaps of rubble -- burned as they are?" Discouraging words can slow down or even stop obedient actions. However, because of Nehemiah's encouragement, increased protection, reminders of God's power, and the drive and strength of the Jews working together, the wall is completed. Here, the value of the Fellowship of Believers is apparent. We need each other. Let that be true for your family. Pull in close to your church and small group for help and guidance as your family ministers together in a hurting world.

Family Questions

- What were the people trying to build? Why was that important for their city?
- What are some of the things Sanballat said to discourage them?
- What steps did Nehemiah take to keep the work from stopping?
- What are some ways that you could follow Nehemiah's examples when you are working to accomplish something that God has put before you to do? Are there others in your church family that you could encourage?

Family Activity

Kids App: "The Walls Go Up"

Activity 1: Prayer Wall

To highlight value of prayer, one family dedicated a wall in their home to prayer. Family, friends and small group members write requests/prayers directing on the wall using Sharpie marker. The wall reminds them to stop and pray. Then, when a prayer is answered, they write "thank you" below it. Alternative: use poster board or marker board.

Source: kriscollinssmallgroups.com

Activity 2: Watch Nehemiah story

Google search: "What's in the Bible? Nehemiah story" on Youtube.

Activity 3: Snack Activity

Supplies: gummy bears and rectangular sugar wafer cookies (white, pink, and chocolate). You may need icing or peanut butter for "glue." Put gummy bears in the center of the plate. Using cookies, build a wall around them. As you eat, discuss how you can help others, both in your family and those outside your family.

Activity 4: Craft idea

Google search: "Children's Bible Lesson Nehemiah Rebuilds the Wall."

Small Group Discussion

- What principle is there to follow?
- Do you believe God will respond to your repentance?
- How does Nehemiah's story encourage you to press into the Lord?

July 23-29

ESTHER

Similar to Daniel, the book of Esther tells the story of Israelite people living in exile. Esther takes place in Persia, roughly 100 years after the exile -- when many of the Israelites have returned to Jerusalem with Ezra and Nehemiah. It is the final narrative book of the Old Testament, telling the story of two Israelite people, Esther and Mordecai.

The book of Esther reads like a novel. Through an odd series of events, Esther becomes the queen of Persia. Her cousin, Mordecai, learns of a plan by Haman, one of the king's officials, to kill all the Jewish, or Israelite, people in Persia. The unfolding story is the account of God using Mordecai and Esther to save the Israelites in Persia.

As you read Esther, notice that God is never named -- not once. Nonetheless, the book of Esther shows us that God is always at work, in all circumstances, advancing His will in His world. He delights in using faithful and obedient people to bring about His purposes for His glory. Mordecai states as much in likely the book's most recognizable verse. As Esther is nervously considering her role in saving her people, Mordecai emboldens her by saying, "For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place...And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14) The obvious answer to Mordecai's question is that God knows. He always knows. He knows the ways in which His plans will unfold and who He will use to bring them about. We see God's sovereignty clearly in the story of Esther and we can trust it fully in our lives today.

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ESTHER
1-2

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ESTHER
3-4

③

ESTHER
5-6

④

ESTHER
7-8

⑤

ESTHER
9-10

KEY CONCEPT

SOVEREIGNTY:

GOD HAS
ABSOLUTE
AUTHORITY
AND POWER
OVER ALL OF
HIS CREATION

EXILE

PROPHECY | PROPHETS | EXILES | POWER-CHANGE

Family Devotional**Esther 3:1-6; 4:1-17****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
LOVE & RESPECT

Once again, God is the main character in this story, even though He is never mentioned. The two Jewish characters are Esther, an orphan growing up in exile in the kingdom of Persia, and her cousin Mordecai, who raises her. We also have the Persian king, Xerxes, (who marries Esther), and the wicked Haman.

By the king's orders, everyone is commanded to bow down to Haman. Mordecai refuses. Worship belongs to God alone. This so infuriates Haman that he begins to plot how to kill Mordecai and all the Jewish people. Mordecai calls upon Esther to come to the aid of her people by approaching the king. At the risk of her life (if the king refuses to see her, she will be executed) Esther goes to the king. In this story, we see the love and respect Esther shows to Mordecai. We see the love and respect of Mordecai when Esther requests his help in fasting and praying for her success. We even see Mordecai's love and respect toward God in refusing to bow down. When the family ingredient of Love & Respect is constant in our home, it will lead to love and respect in times of distress.

Family Questions

- Why was Haman so angry with Mordecai? Why did Mordecai refuse to do what Haman wanted?
- What did Haman decide to do?
- Who can change the law to kill the Jews? What does Esther risk in going before the king?
- How did Mordecai encourage her to go to the king?
- What are examples of times you need to be brave when people want you to do things you should not do?

Family Activity

Kids App: "The Brave & Beautiful Queen"

Activity: Teaching Respect through Role Play

It is difficult to find practical ways to teach your family how to be loving and respectful. Here are some fun role plays to try.

- **Let others go first.** Pretend you are at a party, food is served buffet style. Take turns letting each other go first.
- **Give up your chair for adults or others.** Pretend all of the chairs are full when an adult character comes into the room. Practice saying, "Would you like my chair?"
- **Open doors for others.** Take turns opening door for each other.
- **Don't interrupt.** We teach our kids this by having them put their hand on our leg when we are engaged in conversation and they want our attention. We respond by putting our hand on theirs. This indicates that we are aware. I stop my conversation to respond as soon as possible. Role play by engaging one child in conversation and the other child practicing getting your attention in a respectful way.

For more ideas, visit [meaningful mom](#) and search "Teaching Respect Through Role Play."

Small Group Discussion

- What promise is there to claim?
- Esther is one of many people in Scripture that point to Jesus. Esther 9:1 "On the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, the reverse occurred: the Jews gained mastery over those who hated them." And so it happened at the cross. At the very moment when the enemy of God hoped to gain mastery over Jesus, the reverse occurred: Jesus gained mastery over the ones who hated him. What does His sacrifice mean to you?



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