

The Intermediate-Senior Quarterly

International Church School Lessons
for Christian Teaching
(AGES 13-17)

First Quarter 2026

September | October | November

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THE SOUL OF A NATION

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STUDIES IN

Joshua,
Judges,
1 Samuel &
2 Samuel

THE LORD'S PRAYER

⁹ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father
which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from
evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and
the glory, for ever.

Amen."

Matthew 6:9-13 (KJV)

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven
and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the
Virgin Mary; suffered under the Pontius Pilate; was
crucified, dead and buried: The third day He rose from
the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on
the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from
thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy, catholic Church;
the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the
resurrection of the body; and life everlasting.

Amen.

**catholic means universal*



September, October, November 2026

WORSHIP PROGRAM

MUSICAL PRELUDE

September: “Bless Be the Tie That Binds,” AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #493, or “Faithful Is Our God,” by Hezekiah Walker, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTqIBTZix5w>.

October: “O God Our Help In Ages Past,” AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #81, or “Trust in God,” by Mark Gutierrez, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_job6IOUOI.

November: “Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah,” AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #82, or “Grateful,” by Hezekiah Walker, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEOW-kQyz6A>.

CALL TO WORSHIP

September: Led by the Sunday School Superintendent (1st Sunday); a clergy person (2nd Sunday); the Christian Education Director (3rd Sunday); and a missionary (4th Sunday).

Leader: “I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” (Psalm 121:1&2 NRSVue)

All: “He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.” (Psalm 121:3&4 NRSVue)

October: Led by the pastor or a minister (1st Sunday); a senior (2nd Sunday); a lay person (3rd Sunday); and a youth (4th Sunday).

Leader: "The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand."
(Psalm 121:5 NRSVue)

All: "The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night." (Psalm 121:6 NRSVue)

November: Led by a girl (1st Sunday); a boy (2nd Sunday); a woman (3rd Sunday); a man (4th Sunday); and a senior (5th Sunday).

Leader: "The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life." (Psalm 121:7 NRSVue)

All: "The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore." (Psalm 121:8 NRSVue)

CHORAL INVOCATION

(Sung corporately)

"He Is Lord," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #689)

MORNING HYMN

September: "I Love to Tell the Story," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #389)

October: "Love Lifted Me," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #429)

November: "And Are We Yet Alive" (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #361)

RESPONSIVE READING

Psalms 87:1-7 NRSVue

Leader: On the holy mount stands the city he founded; the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

People: Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God.

Leader: Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon; Philistia, too, and Tyre, with Cush – "This one was born there," they say.

People: And of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in it," for the Most High himself will establish it.

Leader: The Lord records, as he registers the peoples, "This one was born there."

All: Singers and dancers alike say, "All my springs are in you."

RALLY SONG

"You Are Good," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ul6i6Kz2p2k&list=R-Dul6i6Kz2p2k&start_radio=1, by Israel and New Breed.

STUDY PERIOD

Learners study the lessons in their classes.

CLOSING ASSEMBLY

Class members will commit and dedicate themselves to understanding the importance of unified and faithful people, as well as faithful leaders, so that God's people can be a holy nation unto God.

SUNDAY SCHOOL BENEDICTION

Sunday school is over for another day. Hear us, Heavenly Father, as to Thee we pray. Through the week be with us in our work and play; Make us kind and loving, help us to obey.

Amen.



UNIT I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People

YOUTH TITLE: The Covenant Continues

YOUTH TOPIC: Renewing Our Commitments

LESSON 1: September 6, 2026

YOUTH BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Joshua 1

YOUTH PRINT PASSAGE: Joshua 1:1-11

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

"Tag Your It" - Growing up, almost every one of us played tag. The rules never needed explaining: one person is "it," that person chases you down, touches you, and just like that, the assignment transfers. "Tag, you're it." Now you're the one running.

Life plays the same game--seasons when we're tagged with responsibility we didn't ask for; seasons when we're tagged with trial and trauma we didn't see coming; and seasons when we're tagged with grace upon grace, blessing stacked on blessing.

What's remarkable is how far back in time this game goes and how it shows up everywhere. Nearly 24 centuries ago, the Greek Poet Erinna described children playing a chasing game she called "the tortoise." One child pursued the rest, and the instant a child was caught, the role passed to them. On the other side of the world, ancient India had its own versions of the same idea. Kho kho was already being played by the fourth century BC. Atya patya appears in old Tamil literature from around the same era. Langdi is said to trace back to the Pandya dynasty, over a thousand years ago. Some scholars even believe a Bengali version called gollachut carries an older, heavier memory: laborers under the Indus Valley civilization sprinting to outrun those who controlled them.

That's the picture Psalm 145:4 hands us: "One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts." Long before anybody called it a game, God built this rhythm into His people. Somebody carries the testimony for a while, then reaches back, touches the next generation, and says, your turn now. You tell it. You declare it. You're it.

- What does it mean to be tagged with the task of sharing the Gospel with your own generation? And once you're tagged, how do you actually carry that message forward?

- ▣ What happens to the next generation if you refuse to pass the tag? What “tag” have we received as members of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church? Consider the ministries of James Varick, James Walker Hood, Florence Spears Randolph, and Harriet Tubman.

KEEPIN’ IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

Youth Key Verse: [The Lord said,] “I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9.

God’s Commission to Joshua

¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’s assistant, saying, ² “My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. ⁵ No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall lead this people to possess the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. ⁹ I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Preparations for the Invasion

¹⁰ Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, ¹¹ “Pass through the camp and command the people, ‘Prepare your provisions, for in three days you are to cross over this Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess.’ ”

Joshua 1 opens at a critical point in Israel’s story. Forty years of wilderness wandering are over, Moses is dead, and the people are camped on the eastern

bank of the Jordan with the Promised Land in full view across the water. Joshua, who has spent his whole life as Moses' assistant, is now stepping into the role of the leader of the nation of Israel. Joshua, Chapter 1 is his commissioning; the moment God establishes his authority and sets the tone for everything that follows.

God speaks directly to Joshua and reaffirms the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: the land belongs to them. He tells Joshua, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you." Sit with that tension for a minute. The land is already given, but it still has to be walked into. God's promise doesn't replace human action, it empowers it. God also promises His presence will not change, and three times in nine verses, God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous. That repetition tells us Joshua was wrestling with fear and the weight of replacing a leader as towering as Moses. God doesn't tell strong people to be strong. God tells scared people to be strong. Then God makes it plain that the key to success won't be military strategy; it'll be obedience to the Law, meditating on it day and night, refusing to turn from it to the right or the left.

Joshua doesn't stall after that charge. He doesn't argue the way Moses once did at the burning bush. He immediately orders provisions prepared because in three days, they will cross the Jordan. For 40 years, Israel ate manna that fell from heaven. Now, they're told to prepare their own food. The wilderness season of total dependence is ending, and a new season of active responsibility is starting.

Before the crossing, Joshua faces his first real leadership test with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh, tribes who already had their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan on the condition that their fighting men would still cross over and help conquer Canaan. Their answer is total commitment. They pledge to march ahead of their brothers, affirm Joshua's authority, and then hand his own commission right back to him: "Only be strong and courageous." Joshua 1 holds together two truths we often try to pull apart. God's sovereignty and human responsibility: God has already given the land and already promised the victory, but Joshua and the people still have to walk, obey, and stand united to actually receive what's been promised.

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

Young people played a significant role in the Civil Rights Movement, but what often goes unrecognized is just how young many of the people taking the greatest risks actually were. In 1960, four college freshmen in Greensboro, North Carolina, Ezell Blair Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Rich-

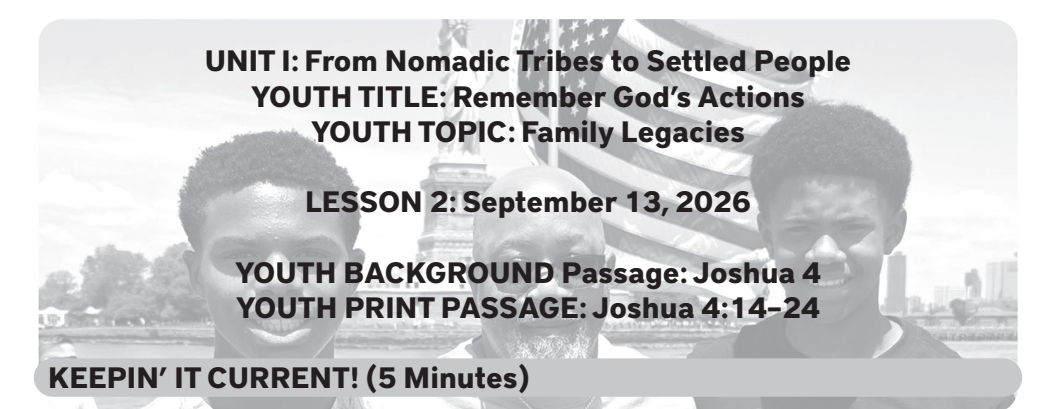
mond, walked into a Woolworth's store and took seats at a lunch counter that were reserved for white customers—only. No organization directed them to do it. They made a decision, and within weeks that decision had inspired students across the country to stage similar demonstrations at lunch counters in their own cities. That movement gave rise to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, known as SNCC, an organization intentionally led by young people. Ella Baker, one of its founding organizers believed deeply that teenagers and college students were fully capable of leading themselves without being directed by older leadership.

Many of these young people understood that their commitment carried real consequences. In 1964, during Freedom Summer, college students traveled to Mississippi to help Black residents exercise their right to register to vote. Three of those volunteers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, were killed by members of the Ku Klux Klan that summer. All three were in their twenties. And, it was not only college students who bore the weight of the movement. In Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, children and teenagers marched through the streets for civil rights and were met with fire hoses and police dogs. The images that circulated through newspapers and television broadcasts across the nation created such widespread outrage that they contributed directly to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Young people, some of them no older than you, helped change federal law simply by refusing to stay home.

John Lewis was 23 years old when he addressed the crowd at the March on Washington in 1963. Diane Nash, one of the most effective strategists the movement produced, was barely in her twenties. These were not seasoned leaders with decades of experience. They were young people who recognized that something important had been placed in their hands and chose to carry it forward. The adults in the movement provided vision and structure, but at a certain point, someone young had to be willing to act. History shows, consistently, that someone young usually did.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- What do you think it takes to do something brave when you know there could be a real cost, the way those Greensboro freshmen or the Birmingham kids did?
- Who's an adult in your life casting a vision right now that you could be the one to actually run with?



UNIT I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People

YOUTH TITLE: Remember God's Actions

YOUTH TOPIC: Family Legacies

LESSON 2: September 13, 2026

YOUTH BACKGROUND Passage: Joshua 4

YOUTH PRINT PASSAGE: Joshua 4:14-24

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

"Feet First" - There is nothing quite like a trip to the beach. Toes in the sand, vitamin D soaking into your skin, a breeze coming off the water, hitting your face just right. You have been planning this trip, looking forward to it, and now you are finally here. But if we are being honest, the trip has not really reached its peak until you stop standing at the edge and go ahead and dive in, feet first, belly flop and all. That is the moment. That is when the trip becomes a memory. The only problem is that sometimes the water is shockingly cold. You have seen it happen, and you have probably done it yourself. Somebody walks up to the shoreline, sticks one toe in, and immediately jumps back shivering like they touched something dangerous. And then they stand there, arms crossed, trying to talk themselves into going back.

Here is what is interesting, though. We have learned that cold water is not just uncomfortable, it is actually healing. A cold plunge reduces swelling and inflammation, relieves soreness in the muscles and joints, and boosts circulation in ways that a warm bath simply cannot. Beyond the physical, water affects the neurological system. It triggers a reset in your brain that cuts through mental fog, lifts your mood, and sharpens focus. What looked like something to avoid on the outside turns out to be exactly what your body and mind needed. The shock was real. The discomfort was real. But, so was the benefit waiting on the other side. You just had to get past the first few seconds.

Sometimes, the next step God is calling us toward feels exactly like standing at the edge of that cold water. It looks uncomfortable. It looks uncertain. It looks like more than we signed up for. The vision is clear, the calling is real, but something about the moment's temperature makes us hesitate. So, we stand on the shore of our own lives, negotiating with ourselves, waiting for conditions to feel a little more favorable, a little more familiar, a little less cold before we commit. But, here is what we have to understand: the opportunity is already in the water. Opportunity is not going to come to the shore and find you. At some point, you have to jump.

As believers, we are called to dream big, cast large visions, and pray prayers that actually match the size of the God we serve. We worship a sovereign God who is able to do anything but fail, which means the water we are afraid to jump into is water He has already been standing in. We can trust Him when we cannot trace Him. We can move when we cannot see the full picture. Stop sticking your toe in. Go ahead and jump in “feet first.”

KEEPIN’ IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- ❑ What is it that keeps us from stepping into the new things God is calling us toward, even when the calling is clear?
- ❑ Why is it easier to stay on the shore of the familiar than to trust God with the unknown?

KEEPIN’ IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

Youth Key Verses: [Joshua said] “When your children ask their parents in time to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.’” Joshua 4:21b–22.

¹⁴ On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him, as they had stood in awe of Moses all the days of his life.

¹⁵ The Lord said to Joshua, ¹⁶ “Command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant to come up out of the Jordan.” ¹⁷ Joshua therefore commanded the priests, “Come up out of the Jordan.” ¹⁸ When the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord came up from the middle of the Jordan and the soles of the priests’ feet touched dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before.

¹⁹ The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. ²⁰ Those twelve stones that they had taken out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal, ²¹ saying to the Israelites, “When your children ask their parents in time to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ ²² then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.’ ²³ For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you

crossed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we crossed over, ²⁴ so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty and so that you may fear the Lord your God forever.”

Joshua 4 recounts the aftermath of a monumental event in scripture. The Jordan River parts, allowing over a million people to cross on dry ground. This Chapter concludes the story by commemorating the miracle and elaborating on its significance.

The passage starts by showing God fulfilling a promise from Chapter 1, where God said God would honor Joshua before all Israel. Verse 14 confirms this, as the people regard Joshua with the same awe they had for Moses. This recognition is important, as leading a million people into enemy territory requires clear, unquestioned authority. God’s endorsement wasn’t only a call; it was a public confirmation of Joshua’s leadership.

Then the river comes back. The priests have been standing in the dry riverbed with the Ark of the Covenant the entire time the nation crossed over. The moment their feet touch ground on the Canaan side, the water rushes back and floods the banks just like before. The river was being held back by God’s divine power, and the moment God’s people were through, it closed behind them.



The people camp at Gilgal on the tenth day of the first month, which is the exact day Israel selected the Passover lambs 40 years earlier before leaving Egypt. The timing is not accidental. Joshua sets up the twelve stones there and explains their purpose to two audiences: Israel’s children, who

would one day ask what the monument meant and needed to hear the story of what God did, and the surrounding nations, who needed to know before a single battle was fought that Israel’s God was not to be tested. As verse 24 puts it, the stones were built so that all the peoples of the earth would know that the hand of the Lord is mighty.

God does not just want God's people to experience breakthroughs. God wants those breakthroughs remembered and retold so the next generation has something to stand on when their own hard moments come.

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

This Chapter carries a paradoxical undertone that is worth examining. On the one hand, there is a clear call to be daring and adventurous, to leap into the unknown and trust God with what you cannot, yet, see. On the other hand, there is an equally strong call to remain grounded in historical narrative, in tradition, in the testimony of what God has already done, and in His Word. Both of those calls live in the same chapter, and they need each other.

You see it in the structure of the text itself. In the opening verses, God instructs the priests to step into the water first, not after the river parts, but before. The miracle was on the other side of their obedience, not in front of it. That is the adventurous side of the Chapter, the willingness to get your feet wet before you can see the dry ground. But then, as the nation crosses over on that same dry ground, God gives a second instruction. He tells them to reach down into the riverbed and pick up twelve stones, one for each tribe, and carry them to the other side to build a permanent memorial. Right in the middle of the miracle, while the waters are still being held back on both sides, God is already thinking about remembrance. He is already planning for the generation that was not there, the children who would one day ask what the stones meant.

These two concepts are a necessary pairing. Adventure without grounding becomes recklessness. Memory without courage becomes nostalgia that never moves. God is calling us to hold both at once, to boldly confront the challenges of the day while remaining sober enough to look back at where we came from and ahead to where we are going. The stones and the river are not in tension with each other. They are working together.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ How do you draw from your past, your ancestors, and your history to fuel your future? What does it look like to look backward in order to move forward with God?
- ▣ Some people find themselves trapped by past hurts, failures, or even traditions that no longer serve them. How do we honor where we come from without becoming hostages to our past?

UNIT I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People

YOUTH TITLE: God's Complicated Promise

YOUTH TOPIC: Fighting among the Nations

LESSON 3: September 20, 2026

**YOUTH BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Joshua 6; 8:26; 10:28-43;
11:1-23; Deuteronomy 7:1-26**

YOUTH PRINT PASSAGE: Joshua 11:6-9, 16-23

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

"Give it All You've Got" - Fear is one of the most powerful emotions we carry, and left unchecked, fear has the ability to stop us from reaching our full potential. Fear is not just a mental experience; it produces real physical responses in our bodies. Your palms sweat. Your heart rate climbs. Your stomach turns. Your mind starts racing through every worst-case scenario before you have taken a single step. And when the pressure hits, most of us default to one of three responses: we fight, we flee, or we freeze.

What makes fear particularly dangerous for believers is that it does not always show up as obvious paralysis. Sometimes it shows up as delay, as endless preparation, as waiting for conditions that never quite feel right. But the effect is the same. When we allow fear to take hold, even when we are genuinely trying to walk in the assignment God has placed on our lives, fear will subtract from our efforts. Fear will shrink what we attempt, limit what we believe, and quietly talk us out of the very things God has already equipped us to do.

Mamie Till exemplifies this more than anyone. In August 1955, her 14-year-old son Emmett was taken from his great-uncle's house in Money, Mississippi, subjected to a brutal beating, and then thrown into the Tallahatchie River with a 75-pound cotton gin fan tied around his neck—all because he was accused of whistling at a white woman. When his body was returned to Chicago, it was swollen and disfigured from water and violence. Mamie Till made a pivotal decision that would change history. She demanded the casket remain open so the world could see what had been done to her son. Thousands of people viewed Emmett's battered body in Chicago, and Jet magazine published the photos, which spread nationwide, shocking the nation's conscience. The Civil Rights Movement gained fresh momentum because a grieving mother chose courage over silence, igniting an unstoppable fire.

KEEPIN' IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ What is the difference between fear that protects you and fear that paralyzes you, and how do you know with which one you are dealing?
- ▣ Think about a moment when fear almost talked you out of something important. What finally made you move, and what would have been lost if you had stayed stuck?

KEEPIN' IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

Youth Key Verse: It was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts so that they would come against Israel in battle, in order that they might be utterly destroyed, and might receive no mercy, but be exterminated, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. Joshua 11:20.

⁶ And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will hand over all of them, slain, to Israel; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire." ⁷ So Joshua came suddenly upon them with all his fighting force, by the waters of Merom, and fell upon them. ⁸ And the Lord handed them over to Israel, who attacked them and chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and eastward as far as the valley of Mizpeh. They struck them down until they had left no one remaining. ⁹ And Joshua did to them as the Lord had commanded him; he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

¹⁶ So Joshua took all that land: the hill country and all the Negeb and all the land of Goshen and the lowland and the Arabah and the hill country of Israel and its lowland, ¹⁷ from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, as far as Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He took all their kings, struck them down, and put them to death. ¹⁸ Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. ¹⁹ There was not a town that made peace with the Israelites except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon; all were taken in battle. ²⁰ For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts so that they would come against Israel in battle, in order that they might be utterly destroyed and might receive no mercy but be exterminated, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

²¹ At that time Joshua came and wiped out the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of

Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their towns.²² None of the Anakim was left in the land of the Israelites; some remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.²³ So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.

Joshua 11 describes the climax of Israel's military efforts in Canaan. Joshua faces a formidable northern alliance led by Jabin, king of Hazor, with an army likened to sand on the seashore, equipped with horses and iron chariots. Before he can grasp the scale of the threat, God speaks: "Do not be afraid. By tomorrow, everyone will be defeated." Then God gives a surprising order: "Don't keep the horses or chariots; hamstring and burn them." Since horses and chariots represented the most advanced military technology, akin to modern tanks, this was a bold command. God wanted Israel's reliance to be on God, not hardware. Joshua obeyed, launching a surprise attack at Merom, scattering the coalition, and following God's instructions with the spoils.

The final section summarizes Joshua's achievements, covering the whole promised land from the south, near Edom to the north at Lebanon's Valley. It emphasizes that organized resistance has been dismantled across the territory. A subtle, yet, important detail is in Verse 18, which states that Joshua fought these kings over an extended period. Although the narrative suggests a swift conquest, it likely took about five to seven years of continuous, arduous combat.



One of the greatest victories of Joshua's military campaign was the destruction of the Anakim. These were the giant warriors who had terrified Israel's 40 spies two years earlier in Numbers 13, causing the entire nation to lose their nerve and wander in the wilderness for a generation. Now, Joshua hunts them down systematically and removes them from the hill country. The people who once made Israel feel like grasshoppers are reduced to a historical footnote, with only a scattered remnant surviving in Gaza and Gath, which sets the stage for a giant named Goliath to show up generations later. The Chapter ends with one of the most peaceful sentences in the entire Book: "The land had rest from war." What God promised, God delivered. The obstacle that once looked impossible became possible with God!

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

There is a principle embedded in the defeat of the Anakim that extends far beyond the military narrative of Joshua 11. For 40 years, these giant warriors represented the single greatest obstacle to Israel's inheritance. When the twelve spies returned from Canaan in Numbers 13, it was the sight of the Anakim that broke their courage and their report that cost an entire generation everything God had promised them. They did not lose their inheritance because God withdrew it. They forfeited it because they allowed what they saw to override what God had spoken.

Joshua represents a different response to the same obstacle. He did not minimize the size of the giants or pretend the threat was not real. He simply refused to allow their presence to determine his obedience. And when the time came, he addressed the Anakim directly, systematically, and completely, clearing them from the hill country that previous generations had surrendered without a fight.

Some of us carry inherited giants, issues passed down through our families longer than we have been alive. Addiction, poverty, broken relationships, and recurring patterns of failure have become so ingrained that no one dares to challenge them, as doing so seems impossible. These are what I call generational giants. Like the Anakim, they have a way of making entire families feel powerless and insignificant in their own narrative.

Joshua 11 emphasizes that the size of the giant was never the main obstacle. Instead, what mattered was the obedience of the people and God's faithfulness. Joshua didn't negotiate with the Anakim or coexist with them; he didn't leave them for future generations. Each new generation faces challenges that previous ones either avoided or couldn't face. The question posed by Joshua 11 is whether we will keep building our lives around the giants, or if we will be the ones to confront and diminish their power, turning the giants into mere footnotes.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- What giant have you inherited from a previous generation that you have accepted as permanent, and what would it look like to finally confront the giant directly, rather than continuing to work around it?
- In what area of your life have you allowed what you see to override what God has spoken, and how do you begin to reverse that?

UNIT I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People
YOUTH TITLE: God's Compassion for Rahab
YOUTH TOPIC: Joining Forces with Unlikely Allies

LESSON 4: September 27, 2026

**YOUTH BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Joshua 2; 6:1-25;
Matthew 1:5; James 2:25; Hebrews 11:31**

YOUTH PRINT PASSAGES: Joshua 2:8-13; 6:16-17

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

"God's Double Agents" - One of the greatest movie genres of all time is the spy genre. James Bond, Mission Impossible, the list goes on and on, and audiences never seem to get tired of them. Within spy culture, there is a particular kind of operative that fascinates us more than any other: the double agent. A double agent is someone who appears to be working for one side while their true loyalty belongs to another. They walk into the room, they wear the uniform, they speak the language, they follow the protocols, but the entire time, their allegiance has already been given elsewhere. The double agent operates within one world while truly belonging to another.

That image not only depicts good cinema but also illustrates how every believer is called to live. Jesus clearly stated in John 17:16, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of it." Each day, we step into systems that were not created by us and do not respond to us. These include education, business, entertainment, media, healthcare, and government, each with its own rules, motivations, and ways of functioning. We must operate within these systems, showing up, clocking in, and following the room's rules. However, if we allow these systems to define who we ultimately serve, we have lost our way.

This is what makes us God's double agents: on assignment in a world we don't truly belong to, carrying out a mission for a Kingdom that others often cannot see. The world will never fully understand us because it cannot see who we are truly serving.

KEEPIN' IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- The metaphor of double agents breaks down at one important point: secrecy. A real double agent depends on staying hidden, on never letting their true allegiance be discovered. But Jesus does not want us to be undercover saints. He does not want our loyalty to Him to be a secret we are

protecting. So how do we hold His word in a world that is constantly pulling us in a different direction? How do we break away from peer pressure and actually do His will, out loud, where people can see it?

- ▣ How do you tell the difference between wisely adapting to the world you are in and quietly compromising who you belong to?

KEEPIN' IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

Youth Key Verse: The city and all in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent. Joshua 6:17.

⁸ Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof ⁹ and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land and that dread of you has fallen on us and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. ¹² Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the Lord that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith ¹³ that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them and deliver our lives from death."

¹⁶ And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city. ¹⁷ The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent.

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

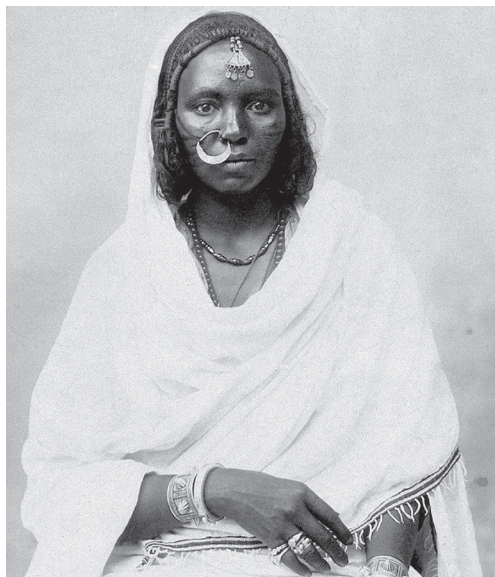
Joshua 2 and Joshua 6 together tell one of the Bible's most remarkable stories: that of Rahab. In Joshua 2, we see her on the rooftop of her house in Jericho, where she has hidden two Israelite spies beneath stalks of flax. As they prepare to sleep, she makes a statement that demands our attention: fear has already struck her people, and everyone's hearts have melted upon hearing of God's actions at the Red Sea forty years earlier and against the Amorite kings east of the Jordan. In short, the news of God's power has spread faster than the advancing army. She then makes a bold declaration: the Lord, her God, is the

true God in heaven above and on earth below. This is significant because she, a Canaanite woman raised in a culture with many gods, acknowledges God's sovereignty before any formal covenant. She pleads for her and her family's safety and requests a sign. The spies give her a scarlet cord to hang outside her window, similar to the blood on the doorposts in Egypt. Staying inside the house marked with that cord ensured that God's judgment would pass over them.



Moving to Joshua 6, we find ourselves on the final day of the Jericho siege. Israel has encircled the city seven times, and on the seventh day, the priests blow their rams' horns. Just before the people shout their battle cry, Joshua pauses to give one last set of instructions. He informs them that the Lord has already secured the victory, speaking of the outcome as a certainty before any walls fall. He then states that Jericho and all within are to be devoted to the Lord for destruction—first fruits of the conquest, meaning Israel cannot take anything for themselves. The entire city is offered to God. Amid this widespread destruction, Joshua makes one exception: Rahab, a possible prostitute, and everyone in her house will survive because she had hidden the Israelite spies.

Compare these two passages side by side, and the differences are evident. Jericho embodies defiance and stubbornness, a city with hearts turned away from God, its once-strong walls now crumbling into ruins. In contrast, Rahab's house symbolizes active faith, a humble heart acknowledging God's sovereignty, and it is the only structure that remains intact while everything else around it falls.

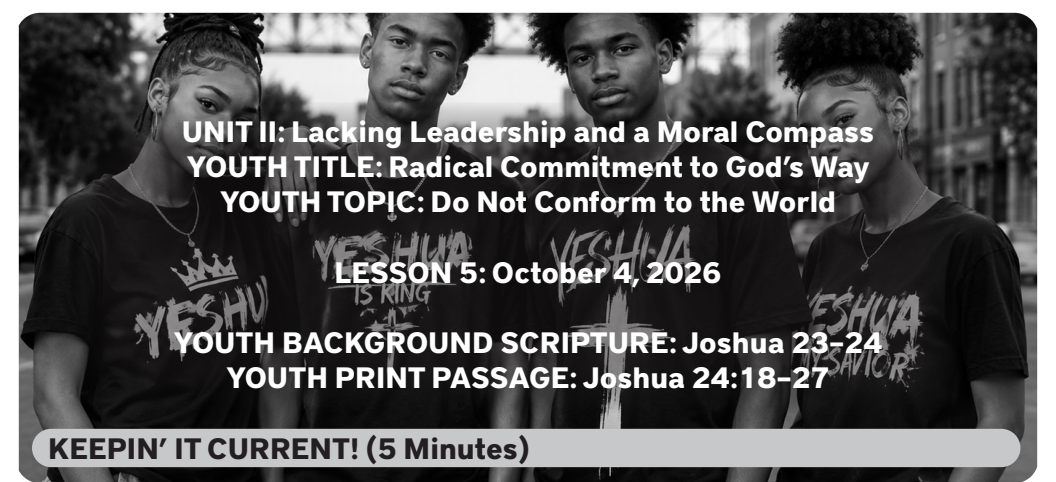


This stark contrast extends beyond the conquest itself. Rahab was saved, joined Israel, and became part of the lineage leading to King David and ultimately Jesus.

This pairing demonstrates that God's judgment is never random. Even in a city doomed for complete destruction due to years of corruption, there remained an opportunity for escape for anyone willing to turn to God in faith. Rahab's scarlet cord shows that your identity is not determined by your origins but by whom you choose to trust.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ Rahab continues assisting the Israelite spies and works to save her family. She travels with the Israelite camp until they accept her as one of their own. She marries an Israelite, has children, and becomes part of the nation she once watched from a distance in fear. Her story extends further: the Gospel of Matthew records that she married Salmon and gave birth to Boaz. This lineage shows Rahab as the great-grandmother of King David.
- ▣ Reflect on what this means. Rahab was a Canaanite woman and a possible prostitute. By societal labels, she probably would have been just a footnote in Jericho's fall, not a significant figure in Israel's history. Yet, she became vital to God's salvation plan, part of David's lineage, and ultimately included in Jesus' family tree, who is called the Son of David. This shows that following God's ways and obeying His Word can open doors you never imagined, including moments like hiding two strangers beneath stalks of flax on a rooftop in Jericho.
- ▣ What labels has the world placed on you that you have allowed to define what you believe God can do through you?
- ▣ Rahab's faith opened doors she could not have imagined from where she started. What door are you believing God to open in your life that currently feels impossible?

A black and white photograph of four young people (three men and one woman) standing outdoors. They are all wearing dark t-shirts with the word 'YESHUA' printed on them. The woman on the far left has a crown graphic above the word. The man in the center has 'IS KING' printed below 'YESHUA'. The woman on the far right has 'SAVIOR' printed below 'YESHUA'.

UNIT II: Lacking Leadership and a Moral Compass
YOUTH TITLE: Radical Commitment to God's Way
YOUTH TOPIC: Do Not Conform to the World

LESSON 5: October 4, 2026

YOUTH BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Joshua 23-24

YOUTH PRINT PASSAGE: Joshua 24:18-27

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

Many young people today feel pressured to participate in viral social media trends or challenges just to feel accepted. Some trends promote cyber and in-person bullying, dangerous behaviors, disrespect toward adults, unhealthy beauty standards, or lifestyles that go against their spiritual values. Even when teens know something is wrong, they often fear being left out, mocked, or “cancelled” if they do not go along with the crowd.

Conforming to the world means allowing culture, trends, popularity, or peer pressure to shape one's identity more than God does. We have to be careful that we are not conforming to the wrong patterns which will lead down the wrong path. In our lesson today, Joshua teaches that following God is a choice to be made even when everyone else is doing something different. In the chapter today, Joshua 24, Joshua gathers the people and challenges them to make a decision: “Choose this day whom you will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15)

Now, we must ask ourselves, what choice will we make and who do we really want to serve?! Would we rather serve the world instead of God?! Sometimes, these decisions can be difficult in this culture. The culture screams loudly, but God is also longing for our heart, mind and soul. God truly wants us to serve Him solely and desires our whole being. You do not have to serve God based upon the ways adults do; but as a young person, there are ways to serve God that are age-appropriate. You can use your energy, passion and time to lift up others. Maybe, you can volunteer in your community or serve on the tech team in your church or assist with children's church. There are many ways to choose God--give it a try.

KEEPIN' IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ What are some pressures young people face to “fit in” today?
- ▣ What does it mean to choose God publicly in your generation?

KEEPIN' IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

KEY VERSE: [Joshua said,] “Put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt and serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:14b.

¹⁸ and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.”

¹⁹ But Joshua said to the people, “You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. ²⁰ If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.”

²¹ And the people said to Joshua, “No, we will serve the Lord!” ²² Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” ²³ He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.” ²⁴ The people said to Joshua, “The Lord our God we will serve, and him we will obey.” ²⁵ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. ²⁶ Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the Lord. ²⁷ Joshua said to all the people, “See, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us; therefore it shall be a witness against you if you deal falsely with your God.”

In today's lesson, Joshua 24:15 encapsulates Joshua's lifelong commitment to live by God's command, and it is a fitting tribute to his character that his last act is to lead the people in covenant renewal (Joshua 24:1–27). Joshua is seen as an ideological forerunner for Israel's kings, especially considering the reforming period under Josiah's reign (Deuteronomy 17:18–20; 1 Kings 2:1–14). Joshua's final words promote the careful observance of the law, but his appeal grows out of a conviction he attempts to model throughout his life. The Book of

Joshua closes with an announcement of the deaths and burials of Joshua and Eleazar, and the burial of Joseph's bones at Shechem.

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

As we noticed, Joshua gathered the people together and challenged them to make a real decision about who they were going to follow. Our lesson showed us that people worshipped false gods, followed a different value system, and lived just the way they chose to live; but Joshua reminded Israel that they belonged solely to God. Once again, Joshua boldly declared, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The people responded by saying that they would serve God, too, because of everything God had done for them. Joshua wanted the people to understand that following God was not about lip service, but it had to show up in the way they lived daily.

Young people, today, face similar pressure to conform to the world in school, extracurricular activities and in the community. Social media, music, trends, TikTok and peer pressure consistently try to shape how teenagers think, act, dress, and treat others. Everything done is weighed with the culture we live in. Whether participating in harmful trends online, disrespecting others because it seems funny, or hiding one's faith to avoid being judged by the crowd, the world often pushes young people to compromise the values that have been instilled by loved ones. One thing that must be noted: Because something is popular does not mean it is correct. We are called to stand-out instead of blending in.

Joshua 24 reminds us that serving God is a choice we must make intentionally, consistently, and wholeheartedly. We cannot allow culture, popularity, or pressure to decide how we show up in the world. Choosing God means choosing honesty when others tell the untruth, kindness when others are mean, and faith when others do not represent God. It takes true courage to live differently; but God honors those who take a stand! Every day, young people must decide, "Will I follow the crowd, or will I follow God?" As Joshua did, we should also be able to say with confidence, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ Create a list of all the things you want right now. What do you notice?
- ▣ Write a prayer of confession that acknowledges our desire for power and prestige and asks for God's forgiveness.

UNIT II: Lacking Leadership and a Moral Compass

YOUTH TITLE: God Works Despite Evil

YOUTH TOPIC: Choosing Badly

LESSON 6: October 11, 2026

YOUTH BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Judges 2

YOUTH PRINT PASSAGE: Judges 2:6-15

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)



Across the United States and perhaps in other countries, educators, community leaders, and faith leaders have been discussing the problem of how many young people are becoming disconnected from organizations and traditions that were important to previous generations-- down through the years. Participation in clubs, extra-curricular activities, civic groups, community service organizations, and religious communities

have declined among many youth. So many just come home and remain fixated on technological devices or games. As a result, some young people struggle to understand the history, values, and sacrifices that helped shape who we are today.

Today's lesson highlights how the generation that entered into the Promised Land witnessed God's power through Joshua's leadership. But once Joshua's generation died, a new generation arose that did not know the Lord or remember what God had previously done for Israel. As a result, the people were disconnected from the stories, experiences, and faith of those who came before them. Therefore, they could not relate and drifted away from God and adopted the practices of the culture. This disconnection leads to disengagement and could end in destruction, if not careful.

Reflecting on this notion causes us to notice that faith, values, and wisdom must be intentionally passed from one generation to the next. When people stop learning the stories and lessons of the past, they can lose their sense of identity and purpose to move forward in life. As a young person living in this contemporary society, do not reject the wisdom of the generations before you. Yes, every generation different experiences; but we can learn from every experience to propel us forward. What are you willing to embrace from the past to impact your future?!

KEEPIN' IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ What are some ways to learn from the faith and experiences of parents, grandparents, church members, or other mentors so that your relationship with God becomes your own?
- ▣ What happens when stories of the past are forgotten?

KEEPIN' IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

KEY VERSES: “The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals.” Judges 2:11.

⁶ After Joshua sent the people away, each of the tribes left to take possession of the land allotted to them. ⁷ And the Israelites served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and the leaders who outlived him—those who had seen all the great things the Lord had done for Israel.

⁸ Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of 110.

⁹ They buried him in the land he had been allocated, at Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

¹⁰ After that generation died, another generation grew up who did not acknowledge the Lord or remember the mighty things he had done for Israel.

¹¹ The Israelites did evil in the Lord’s sight and served the images of Baal.

¹² They abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They went after other gods, worshiping the gods of the people around them. And they angered the Lord. ¹³ They abandoned the Lord to serve Baal and the images of Ashtoreth. ¹⁴ This made the Lord burn with anger against Israel, so he handed them over to raiders who

stole their possessions. He turned them over to their enemies all around, and they were no longer able to resist them. ¹⁵ Every time Israel went out to battle, the Lord fought against them, causing them to be defeated, just as he had warned. And the people were in great distress.

In today's lesson, this short, three-lesson unit on Judges is meant to highlight the lawlessness and disunity of the people as they settled in Canaan. The period of Judges marks a transition from unified leadership under Moses, and later Joshua, and gives a rationale for the people's calling on God to provide them with a king. In the Book of Judges, each designated "judge" was called to lead, but the role tended to be regional or tribal rather than over the whole people of Israel. The attributes of the judges were varied, but there is some overlap in duties. Judges A) resolved local disputes, B) enacted punishment for disobedience, and C) defended the powerless.

A "theology" persists throughout Judges, in which God's Covenant is key. Those who remain faithful and obedient to Yahweh will prosper, but those who neglect God's way will suffer. The theology reveals a cyclical pattern to Israel's history: (1) obedience to Yahweh brings peace and stability to the community; (2) a period of stability seems to weaken the resolve to keep faithful to God's covenant; (3) a breakdown in spiritual well-being is a breakdown in the community, which results in leaving the community open to repression and attacks from external enemies; (4) suffering under enemy oppression, the community repents and returns to God; and (5) God, who is merciful, raises up a leader to deliver the people from their enemies.

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

One of the biggest lessons from the passage today is that we cannot live based upon someone else's faith. The Israelites knew about God because their ancestors had experienced God's miracles, but the next generation failed to develop an intimate relationship with God. The same thing can happen today. The reality is just because your





parents and grandparents go to church, aunts/uncles pray, or the people in your community talk about God—does not automatically mean that you know God, personally. Faith becomes real when you begin talking to God for yourself, reading Scripture in a version you can understand, worshiping in your own way, and making decisions based on what

God says rather than what everyone else does.

This passage also reminds us that what we focus on ultimately shapes who we become. The Israelites began following the customs and beliefs of the culture because they were not focused on God. Young people face similar pressures every day because friends, trends, sports, academics, and entertainment all compete for your attention constantly. None of these things are bad; but when things become more important than God, they can pull you away from the purpose for your life, if you are not careful. Staying connected to God means intentionally making time for God, even when life gets busy. Life should be a balance; and we should pursue things in moderation with our priorities in order.

A practical way to apply this lesson is to create intentional habits that keep your faith growing: Such as setting aside a few minutes each day to pray aloud or in your heart, read a Bible verse, or reflect on what God is teaching you through everyday life experiences. Ask questions in Sunday School, and when you gather with other youth. Discuss your faith journey with trusted adults and receive wisdom. Also, remember that following God is a daily choice that must be made. The generation in Judges drifted away because they stopped remembering and pursuing God; but you can choose a different path by staying connected to God and allowing your faith to grow stronger every day.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- Create a drawing of what it looks like to feel separated from God.
- Role Play: Break into groups and imagine that you are the Israelites who are trying to follow the covenant. How do you shape your society? What gets in the way of your ability to follow the covenant?

A black and white photograph of four young people, two men and two women, dressed as superheroes. They are wearing capes and masks. The person on the far left has a cross on their chest. They are standing in front of a city skyline at night.

YOUTH UNIT II: Lacking Leadership and a Moral Compass
YOUTH GENERAL LESSON TITLE: God Works Through Ehud
YOUTH TOPIC: A Hero Who's Not a Hero

LESSON 7: October 18, 2026

YOUTH BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Judges 3

YOUTH PRINT PASSAGE: Judges 3:15–23, 30

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

Across the country, young people are taking the lead in addressing the youth mental health crisis. In 2026, student-led mental health conferences, advocacy summits, and school-based initiatives have empowered teens to speak up for their peers, reduce stigma, and create safer environments where students can seek help and support concerning their stressors. Young people are not waiting for adults to solve every problem; but they are stepping forward to make a difference in their schools and communities. These young people are using their voice and their authority to bring change.

It is also worth noting that many students have also used social media, student government organizations, and peer-support groups to raise awareness about anxiety, depression, stress, and suicide prevention in the community and their school environment. Their efforts have encouraged schools to provide additional resources, create wellness spaces, and develop programs that support emotional well-being. Rather than remaining silent about problems affecting their generation, these young leaders have chosen to use their voices and influence to bring about positive change around them.

This connects well with our lesson because Israel was suffering under the oppression of King Eglon, but God raised Ehud to act with justice. Ehud did not ignore the problem or assume someone else would handle it. He courageously and confidently responded to God's call and became an instrument of deliverance for his people. In a similar way, today's youth are recognizing challenges such as mental health struggles, physical and cyber bullying, loneliness, and social pressures and are choosing to become part of the solution rather than remaining silent. While the situations are very different, both stories remind us that God can use ordinary people, including young people to bring hope, change, and freedom to others. Sometimes, making a difference begins with one person deciding to stand up, speak out, and trust God to use them. Will that be you?

KEEPIN' IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ What are some challenges facing young people today that require courage and leadership, and how might God be calling you to respond?
- ▣ When you see a friend struggling, what are some practical ways you can help instead of ignoring the situation?

KEEPIN' IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

KEY VERSE: When the Israelites cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud son of Gera, a Benjaminite, a left-handed man. Judges 3:15a.

¹⁵ But when the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud son of Gera, a Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The Israelites sent tribute by him to King Eglon of Moab. ¹⁶ Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges, a cubit in length, and he fastened it on his right thigh under his clothes. ¹⁷ Then he presented the tribute to King Eglon of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man. ¹⁸ When Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent the people who carried the tribute on their way. ¹⁹ But he himself turned back at the sculptured stones near Gilgal and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." So the king said, "Silence!" and all his attendants went out from his presence. ²⁰ Ehud came to him, while he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber, and said, "I have a message from God for you." So he rose from his seat. ²¹ Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into Eglon's belly; ²² the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the sword out of his belly, and the dirt came out. ²³ Then Ehud went out into the vestibule and closed the doors of the roof chamber on him and locked them. ³⁰ So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest eighty years.

In today's lesson, God uses Ehud, as is the case with other examples throughout Judges, to prompt a spiritual revival among the people and to reinvigorate their national identity (e.g., Judges 2:11–19; cf. 3:9; 4:3; 6:6; 10:10). Ehud is an unlikely hero, and we should not lift him up as a role model. He serves as an example of desperate times, as do the other "major judges" named in the book: Othniel (Judges 3:7–11); Deborah (4:1–5:31); Gideon (6:1–8:32); Jephthah (10:6–12:7); and Samson (13:1–16:31). The authors of *Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Birch, Brueggemann, Fretheim, and Petersen; Abingdon Press: Nashville, 1999, p. 208), point out that "The Book of Judges has a quite peculiar notion of a hero—not at all congruent with the conventional

'hero myth.' These heroes are odd, so that their achievements are all to be seen as miracles of God." We see in the Book of Judges an understanding of God's mercy consistent with God's character as portrayed in the whole of Scripture. God rescued the covenant people when their desperation led them to repent, only to falter again, and, yet, God remains faithful and will rescue them time and again. Neither Christian nor Jewish sources offer a conclusion on the authorship of Judges.

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

God often uses unexpected people to accomplish extraordinary things which is a sincere blessing. Ehud, in our lesson, was not the person most people would have chosen to be a hero, but God used him to help free Israel. The reality is that at times young people think they have to wait until they are older to make a difference, but God can use you right now. Sometimes messages unconsciously are presented that youth need to "wait" their turn or you are too young to do something great. These unconscious or even conscious messages have at times crippled or hindered how youth seek to show up in the world. However, the lesson affirms that God can use you—even when you feel that you have limitations confronting your existence.

Being courageous does not always mean doing something dramatic. It does not mean that you seek to be seen or to perform so that others can recognize your ability. However, being courageous can mean standing up against bullying, checking on a friend who seems distressed, speaking truth when others may become fearful to stand up, or asking for help when you need it. Courage is often found in everyday decisions and causes you to be mindful of the ways that your courage is being developed.

This week, ask yourself: "Where is God calling me to make a difference or to bring change?" Like Ehud, you may realize that God has already given you the gifts, voice, and opportunities needed to help bring hope to others. Essentially, you already have what it takes to make a difference in your world. Each of us have heroic capabilities, and it must be unlocked within with confidence unleashed.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- ❑ Create a list of jobs or professions that might deem someone a "hero." How does God work through these people to accomplish God's will?
- ❑ In teams, imagine that you lived in a city entirely by yourself. What would you do? How would you function on your own? Consider our call to rely on God and others, instead of just ourselves.

YOUTH UNIT II: Lacking Leadership and a Moral Compass

YOUTH TITLE: God's Works Are Not Forgotten

YOUTH TOPIC: Religious but Not Righteous

LESSON 8: October 25, 2026

YOUTH BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Judges 17; 18

YOUTH PRINT PASSAGE: Judges 17:1–6; 18:18–19, 27

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

One of the biggest topics affecting young people today is the growing influence of Name, Image, and Likeness (NIL) opportunities in high school and college athletics. Student athletes are now being offered sponsorships, deals, and opportunities to build personal brands. While these opportunities can ultimately provide financial benefits, they have also raised concerns about young people making decisions based solely on money, popularity, or influence instead of values, goals, and character. Youth are becoming conflicted about whether to choose morality over external factors which holds so much tension.

Many coaches, parents, and educators are genuinely concerned that some athletes are choosing schools or teams primarily because of financial incentives, rather than finding the right environment that will best support their academic, athletic, and personal growth. The challenge is not that success or money is bad, but the issue is when those things become the primary guide for decision-making. The balance of good decisions along with practical gain is something that must be taught so that success is driven from within instead of on the outside.



All of this connects to our lesson because Israel had drifted away from God's guidance. The repeated phrase in Judges 17 captures the problem: "Everyone

did what was right in their own eyes.” Instead of seeking God’s direction, people created their own standards of right and wrong. Micah, then made his own shrine and idols, while the Danites similarly pursued what seemed beneficial to them without considering God’s will. The lesson reminds us that when people do what they want, they can easily confuse what is popular, meaningful, or convenient with what is right. Ultimately, God’s people are called to seek wisdom, even when culture encourages them to follow their own desires.

KEEPIN’ IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- What are some situations where young people today are encouraged to do what feels right instead of asking what is actually right?
- How can you tell the difference between a decision that is popular and a decision that honors God?

KEEPIN’ IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

KEY VERSES: In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes. Judges 17:6.

¹ There was a man in the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah.
² He said to his mother, “The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse and even spoke it in my hearing—that silver is in my possession; I took it, but now I will return it to you.” And his mother said, “May my son be blessed by the Lord!”
³ Then he returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother, and his mother said, “I consecrate the silver to the Lord from my hand for my son, to make an idol of cast metal.” ⁴ So when he returned the money to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into an idol of cast metal, and it was in the house of Micah. ⁵ This man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and teraphim and installed one of his sons, who became his priest. ⁶ In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.

¹⁸ When the men went into Micah’s house and took the idol of cast metal, the ephod, and the teraphim, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?” ¹⁹ They said to him, “Keep quiet! Put your hand over your mouth, and come with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one person or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?”

27 The Danites, having taken what Micah had made and the priest who belonged to him, came to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, put them to the sword, and burned down the city.

Judges (e.g., 11:34–40; 18:12–30; 19:22–20:7) includes some of the most graphic and brutal stories in Scripture. While these stories are not part of our lessons, perhaps awareness can remind us that Scripture does not shy away from acknowledging and even describing the depths of human depravity. During the settlement period, Israel had a decentralized government. Each tribe was governed by its own chieftains, allowing local communities to manage their lives. There was likely no centralized control over religious matters, leaving Micah and his household completely independent in shaping the cult in their own household.

That Micah's mother commends Micah to Yahweh suggests she is devoted to the covenant God of Israel, though her actions betray her confusion about what counts as God's prescription for righteousness. The Danites' treatment of Micah (Judges 18) stands as a case study in the brutality that ruled the day. It exposes a time of cruelty in which one tribe of Israel is pitted against another, but Micah's story also gives a picture of the vulnerability of individuals and family groups who are defenseless without a judge to arbitrate on their behalf. This "shrine," or "house of god," was a family shrine or chapel to serve the family's needs in securing divine assistance in conception and childbirth, fertility of flocks and fields, and protection from natural calamities and enemies. In the ancient world, manufacturing images of gods was a complex process that began with the consecration of the materials from which the images were to be made. Micah's installation of one of his sons as his priest posed a direct challenge to the officially authorized Aaronic priesthood, though he does seem to have good intentions. Micah acts kindly and generously toward others and later adopts a Levite because of a conviction that he would then be more closely aligned with the prescribed Law of Moses. This generosity initially brings blessing, though in the end, the ruthless Danites recruit the Levites for their own purposes and then destroy Micah and his household.

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

In Judges 17 and 18, the people of Israel had stopped looking to God for direction and started doing whatever seemed right to them. Instead of asking, "What does God want?" they asked, "What do I want?" As a result, there was confusion, poor decision-making, and a community that drifted further away from God's plan and purpose. In reality, the same temptation exists today with

which we must wrestle. We are constantly bombarded by messages telling us to follow our feelings, do what makes us happy, or choose whatever benefits us the most. It must be noted that our desires are not always wrong but, they should never replace God's guidance in our lives.



As youth, you will face decisions about friendships, relationships, activities, goals, and your future. Sometimes, what God wants for you may not be the easiest, most popular, or even most exciting option. God's will often requires patience, obedience, and trust which may appear to be uncomfortable. The good news is that God sees the bigger picture, even when we do not. While we focus on what feels good right now, God is focused on who we are becoming and the journey ahead.

God's plans are always designed to protect us, grow us, and help us become the people God created us to be.

This is essentially why prayer is so important because prayer is not just asking God to bless our plans, but prayer is inviting God to shape our hearts so that those plans become our plans. As you participate in the Pray in Color activity, think about areas of your life where you need God's direction. Ask God to help you recognize the difference between your desires and His will. Remember, following God's will may not always be easy, but it will always lead you closer to God's true purpose for your life.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ Pray in Color: Use watercolors to connect with God, praying for guidance to discern His will.
- ▣ Discuss: Why is God's will sometimes different from our own desires?

YOUTH UNIT III: Soul of a Nation
YOUTH GENERAL LESSON TITLE: The Lord Calls Samuel
YOUTH TOPIC: An Exemplary Discernment

LESSON 9: November 1, 2026

YOUTH BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 3:1-4:1
YOUTH PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Samuel 3:8-20

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

“An Unexpected Leader”- When people picture a soldier who fought during the era of World War II (WWII), most people do not expect that soldier to be a 15-year-old Black male orphan with a huge afro from Ethiopia, but Jagama Kello breaks many stereotypes. He was born to wealthy parents in Ginichi, Ethiopia on January 29, 1920, and he was raised by his uncle after his parents died when he was about 10 years old. He was raised hearing stories of his warrior family members, including his grandfather, Godana Nemo, who put fear in the hearts of his enemies and who won every battle.

When the Italian government invaded Ethiopia prior to WWII in 1935 to colonize it, he and his elder brother joined the Ethiopian resistance movement to fight for their country's independence. One motivation for this unprovoked attack on Ethiopia was the desire of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini to get revenge for Ethiopia's defeat of Italy in the first Italo-Ethiopian war from 1895-1896. Just as the Ethiopian people had done in the past, they fought back again during the 1930's even though they were outgunned and had fewer airplanes and trained soldiers. There was international outrage as Italy used chemical weapons on Ethiopian soldiers and civilians to gain an unethical advantage.

Jagama, at age 20, went from being a follower to being a leader of nearly 5,000 soldiers by the time Ethiopia defeated the Italians in 1941. Known as “Thunderstorm,” his bravery and negotiation skills caught the attention and admiration of Emperor Haile Selassie, who offered him an opportunity to receive formal military training at Ethiopia's Holetta War Academy, which Jagama accepted.

During his career of exemplary service in the Ethiopian army after his Academy military training, Jagama survived many dangerous missions and received numerous awards for his patriotism and excellence. Eventually he attained the rank of Lieutenant General before he returned to civilian life. In 1991 he founded the Ethiopian Unity party. He lived to be 97 years old, passing away

in April of 2017. <https://socialcasehistoryforum.com/biography/jagama-ke-lo-ethio-biography/> and <https://martinplaut.com/2012/11/05/ethiopian-general-who-fought-fascism-jagama-kelo/>

KEEPIN' IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ Do you have family members who served in the military and do they describe themselves as patriotic? Why or why not?
- ▣ Discuss how knowing positive things about your family history can help you overcome life's challenges. What are some positive things 15-year-olds can do in the community?

KEEPIN' IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

KEY VERSE: Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" 1 Samuel 3:9a.

⁸ The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹ Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

¹¹ Then the Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. ¹² On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³ For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. ¹⁴ Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever." ¹⁵ Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶ But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am." ¹⁷ Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you." ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."

¹⁹ As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

Unit III examines the life of Samuel, a miracle child, whose mother Hannah prayed with all her might to have a child. She promised the Lord that if God allowed her to have child, she would dedicate that child to God's service, and God granted her request. The child, named Samuel by his parents, served God by ministering to the people of Israel as Prophet, Priest and Judge. Lessons 9, 10, 11 and 12 show the pivotal role Samuel played as an exemplary leader advising the people and kings of Israel through challenging times, continuing to point them back to God.

Lesson 9 starts with Samuel as a child serving God, living in the Temple, and being mentored by Eli the priest. Lesson 10 depicts Israel's continued struggle for control of Canaan (1 Samuel 4) and the Philistines capturing the Ark of the Covenant, which was a focus of their worship as the embodiment of the word of God, the presence of God, the protection of God, the power of God and the promise of God for their future.

When Samuel hears a voice calling him, he assumes that the voice is his mentor, Eli. Samuel heard the voice three times and patiently went to Eli each time to see if Eli called him before Eli was able to perceive that the voice must be God. The basic definition of the word "perceive" is to understand things about the physical world around you, and traditionally the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste) were the ways taught by teachers to perceive the world. More recent advances in science have identified up to 33 ways humans can perceive the world which include neurological senses (pain, temperature and balance), emotions, and psychological methods of perception. However, in addition to the physical world that we see and touch, Christians believe people are both a physical body which is temporary and spirit which is eternal.

In order to understand spiritual things, the Bible teaches that God has given His people spiritual gifts one of which is called discernment. Eli did not hear the voice Samuel heard or see signs that the Lord was present such as the Holy Spirit's presence at Pentecost described as a mighty rushing wind (Acts 2:1-4 KJV). Eli, as the high priest who had ministered for many years, was able to use his experience, knowledge of scripture, and the gift of discernment to understand that the voice calling to Samuel was the voice of God.

Eli had made bad decisions when it came to his own sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who did not know God, served as priests under Eli's leadership, and be-

came corrupt and immoral. He knew they were having immoral relationships with women who worked at the entrance of the temple and violating the law by taking more than the portion of the offerings that they were supposed to take due to their greed. Eli would talk to his sons and ask why they were doing evil, but he did not remove them from their positions even though the people complained. Although Eli failed to honor God by removing his sons from their priestly office, he was able to discern it was God calling Samuel and he accepted God's prophetic word from Samuel regarding his punishment for refusing to correct his sons.

Many people who serve as ministers or pastors describe it as a calling from God and are able to understand God's will in various situations in life, but not all who are called have the privilege of hearing the voice of God in the way Samuel experienced it as God's prophet. From Moses to Jonah and Elijah, God used people to communicate when God was pleased, when God judged the people for their sin, and when God was directing people to carry out his plan. Because our triune (three part) God existed as Father, Son (Jesus) and Holy Spirit before the world was formed, Samuel had the opportunity, at an early age, to spend time with God and hear messages from God.



Part of hearing from God or understanding God's word or will in different situations is obedience and spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible Study, and fasting. Many people, unlike Samuel, would have become frustrated after the first two times and ignored any more calls that sounded like Eli. Samuel was determined to be obedient and answer the call, even if it took multiple attempts. Hearing from God is more often a spiritual sense that is developed over time through worship, study, prayer and reading the Bible to understand the right versus the wrong thing to do, say or believe. God wants us to be prepared through spiritual disciplines and willing (having a positive, patient attitude) so we, like Samuel, can have exemplary (a model worthy of imitating) discernment and answer God's call for our life.

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

Both Jagama and Samuel started working in their careers at an early age, gained recognition throughout their country as heroes, and gained the respect of the adults around them. They both were raised by people who were not their parents, but they did not let that difference from others, their own age, discourage them from doing their life's work with excellence and integrity. Jagama chose the life of a soldier, fighting racism and colonization so the people of Ethiopia could be free. Even after leaving the military in his later years, he continued seeking the best for the people of Ethiopia by forming the Ethiopian Unity Party.

Samuel's mother chose a career of ministry for him, inspired by her passion for God, but he was obedient, accepted his call to ministry, whole-heartedly, served faithfully, and learned from his experience with Eli to speak truth to power; even his own mentor Eli, when it was hard and people did not want to hear what God wanted him to say.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ Do you have a mentor or want to have a mentor? Why or why not?
- ▣ List positive things students can learn or experience by having a mentor.
- ▣ The meaning of the name Samuel is "God has heard" because Samuel's birth was an answer to his mother Hannah's prayer. Are there prayers God has answered for you recently? If so and you would like to, please share those answers to prayer.

YOUTH UNIT III: Soul of a Nation
YOUTH GENERAL LESSON TITLE: The Glory Departs
YOUTH TOPIC: Leadership Run Amok

LESSON 10: November 8, 2026

YOUTH BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 4:2-7:2
YOUTH PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Samuel 4:12-22

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

“Good Grief” - There is no right or wrong way to deal with grief. It is a part of life that many people, especially people in the Black community, refuse to discuss. It has been described as mental and emotional suffering arising from different causes, including the loss of a loved one, tragic events creating a sense of individual or community loss, extreme sorrow or deep disappointment at the outcome of life-altering events (e.g., amputation of a limb, terminal diagnosis), divorce or loss of a close friendship. There is no easy way or magic trick to make grief go away, but it is an opportunity to show love, patience and concern for people who are grieving and demonstrate the love God without judging.

Psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, in her book *On Death and Dying*, outlined five stages of grieving that include denial, bargaining, anger, depression and acceptance. There is no standard amount of time to go through the grief process, which can be complicated and prolonged by other life issues such as mental health challenges, financial distress or issues of blame. For many people getting through the grief process does not mean forgetting or no longer being sad, but it is being able to go through life with the hurt, as well as the good and bad memories with hope for the future.

Alica Forneret, in her April 12, 2021 HuffPost article, *“How People of Color Can Experience Grief Differently than White People”* (updated January 23, 2024), rejects the position that grief resources tailored to meet the needs of Black people are racist because the needs and grief process is different for those in marginalized communities. She states that “Providing them with unique support is not disgusting and racist-it is necessary.” Data from the CDC indicates that the Black community homicide rate is eight times higher than in the white community, so the need for resources is greater.

The grief that results from racial injustice and death, due to racial hatred, produce a dual level of grief over the immediate loss and “grieving a loss of hope and safety” for the person directly experiencing the grief and the whole com-

munity (Forneret, 2021). That loss is compounded by the frequency of loss in marginalized communities because “many people of color are forced to witness and contend with loss in front of the entire world. Videos of brutality and hate crimes- like the video of George Floyd’s death at the hands of Minneapolis police - often inundate social media feeds, offering no escape.” (Ibid.) Due to the constant rebroadcasting on the news and videos on social media “our grief is heightened and ever-present as we watch the losses keep rolling in.” (Ibid.)

Grief that prevents one from functioning for days or weeks may require professional help through a medical doctor or therapist. The 988 suicide prevention hotline is available 24 hours. For more resources go to <https://good-grief.org/black-history-month-grief-resources/>

KEEPIN’ IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ If you know a friend is grieving the loss of a family member, what are ways to show you care?
- ▣ Why do you think Jesus cried when he came to see his friend Lazarus’ sisters after Lazarus died?
- ▣ Challenge the class, this week, to look for scriptures that encourage, and share them with others to encourage them.

KEEPIN’ IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

KEY VERSE: [The wife of Phinehas] said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.” 1 Samuel 4:22

¹² A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line, and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with earth upon his head. ¹³ When he arrived, Eli was sitting upon his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. When the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out. ¹⁴ When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, “What is this uproar?” Then the man came quickly and told Eli. ¹⁵ Now Eli was ninety-eight years old and his eyes were set, so that he could not see. ¹⁶ The man said to Eli, “I have just come from the battle; I fled from the battle today.” He said, “How did it go, my son?” ¹⁷ The messenger replied, “Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great slaughter among the troops; your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.” ¹⁸ When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the

side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for he was an old man, and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.

¹⁹ Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. When she heard the news that the ark of God was captured, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth; for her labor pains overwhelmed her. ²⁰ As she was about to die, the women attending her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer or give heed. ²¹ She named the child Ichabod, meaning, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. ²² She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

The scripture from last week's lesson does not mention Eli's sons, Phinehas (pronounced 'fin-neh-aws') and Hophni (pronounced 'HAWF-nai'), by name, but provides a preview of this week's scripture. This week, we see Samuel's prophecy from God to Eli come true about the judgment God made over Eli and his family for their evil deeds. The Ark was more than just a gold covered religious box to be used however the leaders saw fit to use it. The Ark of the Covenant was the word of God, the presence of God, the protection of God, the power of



God and the promise of God. In the scriptures that follow, it shows that the Philistines had more fear and respect for the Ark of the Covenant than Israel's leaders.

The scriptures, found in 1 Samuel 4, show Eli as a much older man (now 98 years old) who has lost his physical sight in addition to his moral

leadership. Even after God's prophecy was given, Eli continued to allow his sons to stay in leadership--where their greed and lust for women who were not their wives, hurt God's people.

Eli's sons went to war with the Philistines without permission from God, also taking the Ark of the Covenant into battle with them without permission, as if it were a good luck charm. There were other leaders in the history of Israel who brought the Ark into battles, such as David, Saul, Moses and Joshua, when he marched around the walls of Jericho, and the walls fell allowing the children of Israel to have victory.

The Ark of the Covenant was Israel's most sacred gift from God to the people of Israel-- representing the presence and power of God. In I Samuel 2:34 it states, "And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die, both of them." Not only did they lose the Ark of the Covenant in that battle they also lost their lives on the same day, just as foretold in scripture. Eli reacted to the news of this horrific loss with such great sorrow that he fell over, broke his neck and lost his life as well. Eli and his sons knew what was right, but chose to do wrong, and people suffered because of their corrupt leadership. Many lives were lost in the battle because of their bad choices, but God did not leave the people of Israel without help or hope forever.

I Samuel 19-22 focuses on Eli's pregnant daughter-in-law and her reaction to the loss of the Ark of the Covenant, and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. She, as many women in the Old Testament, was not referred to by name in the scripture. During that time in history, women who did not have a husband or a powerful father-in-law might become homeless because women were not generally allowed to own property. Without having the protection of a man, women might be forced to work in the fields like Ruth--getting what was left over that the farmers did not harvest--just so she could eat. Rather than worrying about her housing or economic situation, Phineas' widow expresses heartbreak about the people of Israel losing their connection with the presence of God because the Philistines took the Ark. It appears that she prioritized and trusted in God.

Although there is no reference to Phineas' wife as a prophet, she shares a prophetic word for the people of Israel that summarizes her spiritual condition and the spiritual condition of the nation, all in the midst of her physical and emotional agony. With the news of her losses throwing her into the pain of sudden childbirth, even the attempt of the woman (midwife) attending her to lift her spirits with the news that she had given birth to a son did not bring her relief from her grief. She spoke that prophetic word when naming her son Ichabod meaning "the glory has departed."

The concept of glory associated with God is found in both the Old and New Testament. In the book of Genesis, the creation of the world and all that exists, the term glory reflects the nature of God, which is holy, divine and all powerful. Israel lost both their way and the Ark of the Covenant because of leadership, who took for granted and rejected the holiness and sovereignty of God. However, I Samuel 2:35 encouraged the people of God, letting them know that God would raise up "...a faithful priest, that shall do according that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed forever."

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

There are all sorts of circumstances that cause people to grieve. Separation, trauma, rejection, racism, loss of connection and relationships, both personal and spiritual. For people of African descent across the globe, there are common experiences of oppression, slavery, colonization and discrimination. Failed leadership "run amok" (which means out of control, acting in a wild or dangerous way) describes national and state political leadership reversing the civil rights and voting rights gains, allowing the killing American citizens who protest injustice by ICE, and of the sons of Eli using their position as priests to exploit women and take more for themselves from the offerings than the law allowed because of their greed. The losses experienced by people of Israel due to the war by their out of control leadership gave cause for grieving due to the soldiers' loss of life and the loss of the Ark.

No matter the cause of our grieving in life, God has a plan that eventually works things out for the good of those that love Him and are called according to God's purpose. God is not the author of confusion, but God uses the negative consequences from sin and what our enemies mean for evil to reorient our priorities to loving and serving God and helping others.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- ❑ Is it easier to speak out about someone doing wrong when that person is a family member, friend, or stranger? Why?
- ❑ Do you believe that life is harder for those who are spiritually blind or physically blind? Why?
- ❑ Ask the students to take time during the week to think about and write down any of the things they may be prioritizing above God, pray a prayer of repentance, and seek God's forgiveness.

YOUTH UNIT III: Soul of a Nation
YOUTH GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Samuel: God's Prophet and Judge
YOUTH TOPIC: A Virtuous Leader

LESSON 11: November 15, 2026

YOUTH BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 7:3-17

YOUTH PRINT PASSAGE: 1 Samuel; 7:3-11, 15-17

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

"The Power of Fasting" - In both the Old and New Testament scriptures, the people of God, as well as Jesus, used fasting with prayer when faced with difficult circumstances and desperate situations to overcome temptations, illness, spiritual attacks and earthly enemies. Jesus, who is God in the flesh and our only perfect example of a virtuous leader, modeled the importance of fasting and prayer to live a life that is pleasing to God. Although many Christian churches do not have church-wide fasts in modern times, we can still use the power of fasting together with prayer as a spiritual weapon to deliver us from and get victory according to the Word and will of God in the spiritual and physical battles of life. Fasting also helps Christians understand the will of God for our lives in different situations.

Fasting is not a new fad diet, but it is the intentional abstaining from (going without/not having) food or other activities to get closer to God through devoting additional time to prayer and spiritual practices for a spiritual purpose or for understanding God's will for us. Jesus, the only perfect person, was able

to do a total fast from water and food for an extended time to gain the spiritual strength to endure the face-to-face temptation from the devil and to fulfill His to save the world.



There are three basic types of fasts – a complete fast from food and/or water, Daniel Fast (consisting of certain food restrictions), and partial fast from certain activities or during specific hours. (Before fasting, students should get permis-

sion from parents or guardians and consider the impact on school schedules (e.g., testing) or work schedules.) Fasting as a group with church members or family members can provide additional support and encouragement.

Fasting can help block out distractions and create more time during the day for prayer, scripture reading and discerning (getting spiritual understanding) of God's will for our life and destiny. Luke 9:23 describes the importance of prioritizing God: "And he said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.'"

Three important steps to fasting are planning to include prayer and scripture in the fast, committing to a type of fast, and preparing to change your schedule to include the fast. (Those with health concerns or taking medication should consult a doctor first.) Goals for fasting include getting a closer relationship to God. The "Family Fasting Guide" has more information and creative ideas on fasting: <https://lifechurchusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Life-Church-Family-Fasting-Guide-1.pdf>

KEEPIN' IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ What are reasons why it is easier to focus on our own comfort and convenience rather than the will of God?
- ▣ Which would be harder to give up as an activity fast and why: complaining, social media or video games?
- ▣ Encourage students to write a list during the week of their most difficult problems and get permission from their parent/guardian to pick one to spend three hours (either with their parent/guardian or alone) fasting and praying over their top concern in a quiet place with no media, distractions (babysitting) or snacks

KEEPIN' IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

KEY VERSE: Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 1 Samuel 7:15.

"³ And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. ⁴ Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only. ⁵ And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. ⁶ And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

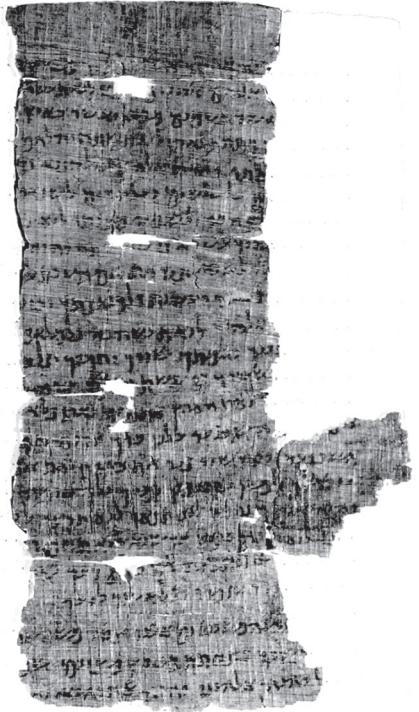
⁷ And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. ⁸ And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.. ⁹ And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. ¹⁰ And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

¹¹ And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar."

"¹⁵ And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. ¹⁶ And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

¹⁷ And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord."

The Israelites had a problem that got them in trouble throughout the Old Testament - wanting to be like everyone else instead of serving God faithfully, following the Ten Commandments and other rules of God, and worshiping God alone. People of other religions and countries carved their own Gods, often small statues of wood or stone, that they could worship in their homes or carry with them like good luck charms. Certain biblical scholars suggest that these "idol worshipers" (people who believed in Gods who were not our true and living God) did this because they believed that these carvings had power and that carrying around these statues would protect them, keep away evil spirits, and cause good things to happen for them. What the idol worshipers did not





understand was the goodness of our true and living God, known as “Yahweh” (one of many names in the Bible used to describe our God), can bless the just (people living for God) and the unjust (those violating the laws of God or serving other Gods). Matthew 5:45b NRSV describes this principle as “for he (your father in Heaven) makes his sun rise on the

evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.” The people, at the time the Book of Matthew was written, understood this like farmers who knew that we need sun and rain to grow crops that God gives us what we need. There were also religious cults that had temples, their own priests, and worshiped idol gods like Baalim and Ashtaroht. Historic accounts of the worship at those and other pagan (idol) temples included acts of immorality, child sacrifice (murder), and prostitution. The worship of Ashtaroht was one of the pagan practices and the groves he built to please his foreign wives that caused Solomon to sin against God and Israel to suffer after his death.

The people of Israel wanted to copy the behaviors and worship of people from foreign nations, many of whom did not like or respect them and worshiped pagan gods. God through Moses, the judges and prophets specifically told the people of Israel not to copy this pagan worship, but they did it anyway. There are many examples in the Old Testament of God having to protect and deliver the people of Israel from their pagan worshipping enemies. God did this because He loved the people of Israel. God loves all people, and God is love. The Israelites’ behavior has been described as a cycle: prosperity, sin and idolatry, divine punishment (often by Israel’s pagan worshipping enemies), and God sending a judge or prophet who leads Israel to repentance and deliverance.

The Book of 1 Samuel 7, the focus for today's lesson, describes one of the times when the people of Israel sinned against the true and living God by worshipping idol gods, and then they had to go back to God for protection against their idol worshipping enemies, the Philistines. The people of Israel were led by Samuel who was now an adult and served as a judge, as well as Israel's spiritual and military leader. During that time, before the death and resurrection of Jesus, people had to go to God through a priest or judge to seek God to obtain forgiveness for their sins and protection from their enemies. When they came to Samuel about the Philistines going to war against them, Samuel instructed the people to "return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroath from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." (1 Samuel 7:3). The Israelites must have been very scared because they did just what Samuel asked; but this was just the first step.

When the Israelites did as Samuel asked—demonstrating that they wanted to do what was right, then Samuel revealed the next step: "... Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh." (1 Samuel 7:5-6).

The Philistine army did not immediately go away when the people of Israel put their trust in God, when they got rid of the idols or when they gathered at Mizpeh, poured out an offering of water, and Samuel prayed. Often, we want to see immediate answers to prayer, but the challenges we face take time for us to get our hearts right and get rid of idols (things or behaviors that distract us from the worship and love of God). God builds our faith through a process that requires our time, attention, repentance and sincerity.

The third and final step came only after the Israelites had trusted God, got rid of their idols, gathered together with Samuel at Mizpeh for prayer, and submitted to Samuel's judgment of for their sin against God. When the Philistines heard about the Israelite's change of heart, it did not scare them off, but they may have considered Israel to be vulnerable because they were gathered together in one place to pray; but Mizpeh means watchtower and God was watching over His people who had humbled themselves and prayed. "And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out

of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him.” (1 Samuel 7:7-9).

The Philistines served pagan gods who could neither see nor hear them, but our God who sees all, hears all, and knows all took charge of the situation to protect His people. Israel faced one of the toughest armies of the time with the best weapons and fiercest fighters, but the Lord stepped in and answered their prayers with thunder, a symbol of God’s power over creation, authority and His presence. After the thunder, verse states “And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar.” The enemy was defeated through faith, prayer and the power of God.

KEEPIN’ IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

Although, we no longer have Samuel here with us today as a judge praying for us, and we may not always be able to contact the ministers and spiritual leaders late at night or in emergency situations, we can reach God directly (24/7) to protect us from our enemies and give us what we need. Even as youth, we have the ability (with guidance from ministry leaders and family members who know God) to fast and pray to overcome difficult situations.

God, who sees all, hears all, and knows all, took charge of the situation when the Philistines were attacking to protect His people then, and God is still protecting those who believe, trust, worship and serve Him, as well as some of those who fail to believe. God will fight our battles when we love God with our whole heart, put God first, and get rid of the idols and distractions that steal our heart and our attention away from Him. We have the example of Samuel and others of how to be virtuous leaders, and pray prayers that allow us to see the power of God at work for our good and the good of others in life’s most difficult situations.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ How do you define prayer and what are good times to pray?
- ▣ Give examples from this and other scriptures on the life of Samuel supporting the description of Samuel as a virtuous leader.
- ▣ When the people of Israel came to Samuel, God’s virtuous prophet and judge, do you think he considered saying No or “I told you so” and blaming them for the problem? Why or why not?

YOUTH GENERAL LESSON TITLE: A King Maker
YOUTH TOPIC: The Making of a King

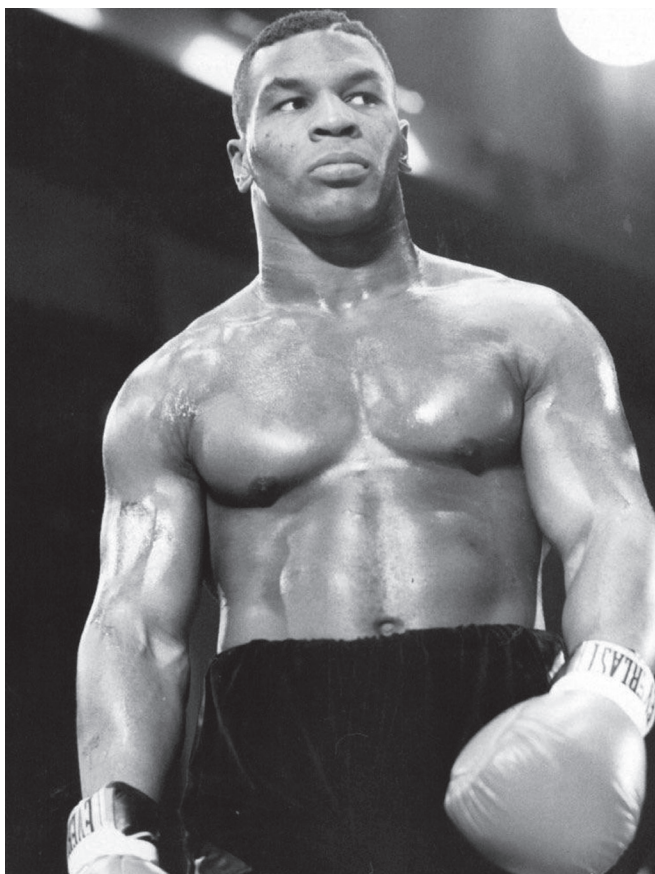
LESSON 12: November 22, 2026

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: I Samuel 15:10-16:13

PRINT PASSAGE: I Samuel 16:4-13

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

“Spiritual Gifts vs. Talents” - On this date in 1986, boxer Michael “Mike” Tyson, at 20 years old, became the youngest man in history to win the title of heavyweight champion of the world, holding the World Boxing Association, World Boxing Council, and International Boxing Federal titles, simultaneously. He defeated the then-title holder Trevor Berbink, 12 years older than him, in two rounds by a knockout. He was called the “Badest Man on the planet” in his early years and later became known as “Iron Mike” and “Kid Dynamite.” At 5’10” with a traditional stance and average reach of 71 inches, his power was in his aggressive style and the power of his knockout punch. Of his first 28 career wins, 26 were by knock out or TKO (technical knockout) many of which were in the first round.



There were probably quite a few talented athletes who could have trained and worked out to have similar opportunities, but Mike’s hard work, determination,

skill, great training, timing, and ability to intimidate his opponents set him apart. His lifetime earnings from boxing are estimated to be over \$30 million, but much of it was lost due to bad decisions about relationships and money, which led to multiple divorces, criminal prosecution and filing bankruptcy. Talent and money have great benefits, but they are temporary and will not produce or substitute for peace, true friends, supportive relationships and the love of God.

Talents result from natural abilities that we have at birth based on our genetics (parents), and there are opportunities in life to develop those talents. In contrast, spiritual gifts, like prophecy, are given by God to help other Christians grow spiritually and the church to reach people with the good news of the Gospel so they can be saved, delivered, and empowered to disciple and encourage others to believe in and serve Jesus. In learning about and using these spiritual gifts, such as prophecy, healing, helps, word of wisdom, giving, and exhortation (encouragement). Learning about and using these gifts helps Christians grow closer to God, encourage and empower other Christians, and experience the love of and fulfillment that only God provides. To learn more about spiritual gifts, go to: <https://mybibleculture.com/spiritual-gifts-of-youth-a-biblical-perspective/?cn-reloaded=1>. And for a link to a free spiritual gifts test for teens: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53a2dbeae4b0097de3319a1d-t/65c1d58ed3976e216be5ec5c/1707201935036/TEENS++Spiritual+Gifts+Survey.pdf>.

KEEPIN' IT REAL (5 Minutes)

- If possible, print out or have available online or by cell phone a list of spiritual gifts. Ask the students to view the list and pick the spiritual gift they would most like to have, least like to have, and why.
- Ask if any of the students have heard people speaking in tongues and why the Bible also discusses interpretation of tongues.
- Describe how the church would benefit if more members were actively using spiritual gifts.

KEEPIN' IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

KEY VERSE: He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one."

“⁴ Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, “Do you come peaceably?” ⁵ He said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is now before the Lord.” ⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” ⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” ⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” ¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.” ¹¹ Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.” ¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.” ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

Before he turned 18 years old, God called and used Samuel as a prophet to hear and communicate God’s will to others. He provided understanding, correction and direction to people who sometimes did not want to hear or follow the will of God. Samuel’s first assignment from God to use his spiritual gifts that appear in scripture is discernment of God’s will by hearing God’s voice as a child— living in the temple—being mentored by the High Priest Eli. His next assignment was to share God’s will in a prophetic word about the future for Eli and his sons. This prophetic word was a judgment by God for Eli’s sin in allowing his sons to continue as priest when he knew that they were cheating people, mistreating women, and living sinful lives. The prophesy given by Samuel came true years later with the sons and Eli dying dishonorable deaths and their family in the next generations would no longer have the honor of serving as priest for God. This must have been very difficult for Samuel, as a child, to share this prophecy of punishment and death with his mentor who was raising him, but Eli knew God had spoken with Samuel and he demanded that Samuel tell him everything God said and threatened him that a worse fate would happen to him (Samuel) if he did not tell the whole truth or left anything out.

In today's lesson, Samuel is now an adult mentor for King Saul who has sinned against God through disobedience. Similar to the bad news Samuel had to deliver to Eli as a child, he now, as an adult, has a prophecy from God that Saul's kingship will be taken from Saul and his family. Samuel's declaration to Saul, "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king" (1 Samuel 15:23, NIV).

Samuel obeyed God and went to Bethlehem to anoint King Saul's replacement, but he could not tell King Saul because King Saul could and probably would have had him killed as well as whomever he anointed. By this time, Samuel was well known and feared by some as prophet, judge and military leader; so, when Samuel arrived, the people were afraid. Certain Bible commentaries reason that, perhaps, they thought they were in trouble with God for some wrong committed. A few other commentaries suggest that his execution of King Agag when Saul refused saying, "'As your sword has killed the sons of many mothers, now your mother will be childless' (Isaiah 15:33 NLT), and Samuel cut Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal." What the elders of Bethlehem did not know was Samuel was on assignment from God to anoint one of Jesse's son to replace Saul as king.

In preparation of his heart, mind and spirit to follow God's instructions to select and anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the next king, Samuel went through a special religious ritual. It is believed that this act of ritual sanctification (setting oneself apart) involved purification through washing himself and Jesse's family with special water, anointing himself and them, and conducting a sacrifice to prepare themselves to enter the presence of God.

Samuel invited each of Jesse's sons to the sacrifice and had them pass by, but Jesse did not include his younger son, David. Samuel's first instinct was to select a tall and kingly looking son because that was the reason the people wanted Saul for their king; but God did not want the new king for how he looked, but for what was in his heart. People may overlook you because of your age, height, disability, side of town where you live or how you look, but those things do not matter to God when He is looking for someone to do His will.

After Jesse called two named sons, Abinadab and Shammah, and seven others, Samuel said, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." (1 Samuel 16:10b-11). It was not until they brought David in from the field—tending the sheep that God said that this is the one to Samuel.

From what outsiders could see, life had not changed for David, who continued serving as a shepherd, caring for his family's sheep. However, scripture described how "the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward." 1 Samuel 16:13a. There are many things that happen to people during their life, but when you encounter the Spirit of the Lord, and it comes on you "mightily," you and your life will never be the same. God is the ultimate change maker, and when you accept Him as Lord of your life, it gives you a peace, joy, power and love like nothing and no one else can.

It is not until years later when the giant, Goliath, the champion of the Philistine army, was threatening Israel when David's brothers were on the battlefield cowering in fear and, David, the shepherd boy comes to bring his brothers a meal, at his father's request and he goes from his brothers belittling him about leaving his sheep unguarded to him boldly taking on Goliath in battle (which his brothers and King Saul were afraid to do), defeating Goliath with his slingshot, and becoming the champion for all Israel.

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

Samuel was obedient, going to Jesse's family, and having them bring David from his post caring for the sheep, and poured the anointing oil over David, but only the Lord God can make a king. Like God chose Samuel and David for work that needed to be done for the people of God, each of us has an assignment given by God to serve God's people. Some people with administrative and pastoral gifts are called to be pastors or lay leadership, while others called have gifts such as healing, faith or giving. We can only do the work, working together, so that God's will is done in our life, our home, our church, our community and our world.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ Pick one person to lead a three 1 minute games of "Simon Says" or "Red Light/Green Light." Was it easy or hard to follow the leader? Why?
- ▣ Brainstorm for 20 seconds things that the students want for the world. Then brainstorm for 20 seconds what God wants for the world. Discuss how those things may be different and the reason for the difference.

YOUTH UNIT III: Samuel: Prophet, Priest, Judge, and King-Maker

YOUTH TITLE: David's Coronation and Capture of Jerusalem

YOUTH TOPIC: Envisioning All-Around Stability

LESSON 13

DATE: November 29, 2026

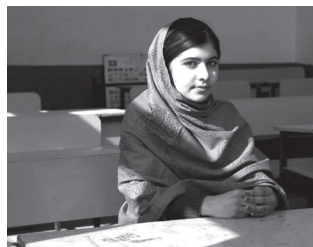
Youth Background Scriptures: 2 Samuel 5:1–6:23; 24:18–25;
Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21; 1 Kings 15:5
Youth Print Passage: 2 Samuel 5:1–12

KEEPIN' IT CURRENT! (5 Minutes)

"Not Too Young to Lead and Inspire" – Malala Yousafzai was born on in January 1997 in Pakistan. She is the daughter of an education activist. So, activism is in her DNA. It so happens that her first name was in tribute to an Afghan folk heroine. And so, perhaps her name – Malala – was a sign that she too was destined to become a heroine and leader.

When Malala was just 11 years old, she began a blog to share her life experiences as a result of the Taliban's occupation of the Swat Valley in Pakistan. The Taliban is an Islamic fundamentalist extremist group. The Taliban does not believe in rights for women and girls. Clearly, Malala is a brave person.

In 2012, when Malala was only 15 years old, she and two other girls were shot by a Taliban gunman as she was riding a bus returning from taking an exam. She was shot in the head specifically as a part of an assassination attempt to silence her voice. Can you believe that? The Taliban tried to assassinate a 15-year-old. Miraculously, she survived the attack.



The attack on Malala sparked an international response of disgust for the Taliban and support for Malala. It was said, at the time, Malala may have become "the most famous teenager in the world." Around the world, governments, feminist groups, and human rights groups, condemned Malala's shooting. Once she recovered, Malala became an outspoken advocate for the rights of girls and women. Two years after she was attacked, Malala became the co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. And at the age of 17, Malala became the youngest Nobel Prize laureate.

After graduating from high school, Malala earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics from Lady Margaret Hall, a college affiliated with the prestigious University of Oxford in England. She addressed the United Nations and had an audience with Queen Elizabeth II in Buckingham

Palace. Malala even met with President Barack Obama and his family, during which meeting she challenged him about his use of drones to attack parts of Pakistan.

Malala is now married. She works as a manager with the Pakistan Cricket Board and remains engaged in as a humanitarian activist. Malala used the tragedy she experienced to demonstrate that teens are not too young to lead and inspire others.

KEEPIN' IT REAL! (5 Minutes)

- ▣ Do you dream about a better world? When you envision a better world, how would the world be different than it is today?
- ▣ Do you believe that youth can lead and inspire others toward a better future? Half of the class should argue that it is possible, while the other half of the class should argue that it is not possible.

KEEPIN' IT BIBLICAL! (20 Minutes)

KEY VERSE: David then perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel. 2 Samuel 5:12.

David Anointed King of All Israel

¹ Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh. ² For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you, 'It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel.' " ³ So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. ⁴ David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. ⁵ At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

Jerusalem Made Capital of the United Kingdom

⁶ The king and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here; even the blind and the lame will turn you back," thinking, "David cannot come in here." ⁷ Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, which is now the city of David. ⁸ David had said on that day, "Whoever would strike down the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind, those whom David hates." Therefore it is said, "The blind and

the lame shall not come into the house.”⁹ David occupied the stronghold and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inward.¹⁰ And David became greater and greater, for the Lord of hosts was with him.

¹¹ King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar trees and carpenters and masons who built David a house. ¹² David then perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

Today, we end our unit on the life, ministry, and ministry impact of Samuel. Though Samuel was a mentor to David and the one who anointed David as king, Samuel died during the reign of Saul. The first seven chapters of 2 Samuel detail David's rise from king over the southern kingdom of Judah, to then rule over all Israel, culminating in the capture of Jerusalem which became the capital city. Think about David's rise from a mere shepherd boy to the king over all of Israel, both the southern and northern tribes. His rise began when he was a teenager just like you.

David's capture of Jerusalem gave Israel a strategic military and economic location and secured Israel's relatively independent status. Israel's primary adversary, the Philistines, had not contested David's rule over Judah from Hebron. Still, the extension of his domain to include the northern tribes posed a threat to Philistine interests that they could not ignore. If we were to continue reading the next chapter after today's bible text, found in 2 Samuel 6, we would see that David strategically recovered the Ark of the Covenant from the Philistines and set it in Jerusalem further securing the city as the capital. The Ark of the Covenant was the most important religious artifact for the Jewish people. Its presence, one could argue, was a sign that God was with the nation of Israel.

It seems that God kept expanding David's territory. As verses 4 and 5 establish, David reigned for forty years. He went from the fields to a palace, from fighting bears to fighting Philistines, from leading the southern kingdom to also leading the northern kingdom. David had God's favor. "And David became greater and greater, for the Lord of hosts was with him" (v. 10). In fact, David's administration included an expanded royal cabinet consisting of three branches: a military office, headed by Joab (2 Sam. 8:16), a priestly office, headed by Abiathar and Zadok (2 Sam. 8:17) and an administrative office jointly run by a court secretary, an historian, and a personal advisor (2 Sam 15:37).

David seemed to understand that he had a God-given purpose— to bring stability to Israel. "David then perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel" (v. 12). When we understand our God-given purpose, it allows us to lead our lives

and others in ways that are pleasing to God. Both David and Malala are examples of this reality.

KEEPIN' IT TOGETHER (5 Minutes)

Do you know what your God-given purpose is? Sometimes, it can feel like parental pressures, school assignments, extra-curricular activities, jobs, and friends and family, can confuse us as to what our God-given purpose is. Even tragedies, like the one that Malala experienced, can seem to make it difficult for us to understand our God-given purpose.

In this, we must stay close to God, even in the midst of the chaos of life, to figure and live out our God-given purpose. Whether you know it or not, God has either already revealed your God-given purpose to you, or God has given you clues on God's plan for your life. When David was fighting bears to protect his sheep, he had no idea that God was preparing him to fight Philistines to protect Israel's people. So, what is it that God already has you doing that is preparing you for your God-given purpose?

Before your life becomes even more complicated, make it a habit to spend some quality time with God, asking God, "What would you have me to do with my life?" Who are possible mentors, like Samuel was for David, who can guide you toward your destiny?

Most times, David placed God at the center of his life, and it showed in his leadership. However, sometimes, David got caught up in his own selfish wants and forgot that God was to be the center of his life. When he did that, there were serious consequences that affected him and others. Even the desire to put God at the center of our lives and follow God's direction is pleasing to Him.

iTHINK! (5 Minutes)

- Using highlighters, identify all the descriptions of David in this passage that describe him as a visionary leader. What do you notice?
- Using Legos or other items, design a community that places God at the "center" of all things. How is this community different from the one we live in?
- Put together a playlist of hymns, Gospel, or contemporary Christian songs that talk about our purpose in God and/or identity as people of God.
- Consider reading more about Malala, as you compare her rise to David's rise. Identify similarities and differences in their life stories.

NOTES

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NOTES

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
6. You shalt not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

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