THE DIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA & EUROPE

The Mar Thoma Church

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FOREWORD

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

It gives me great pleasure that the Sunday School of our Diocese is bringing out a new and revised edition of the Sunday School Curriculum.

People often question the relevance of a Sunday school curriculum of our own, when a number of books are readily available in the market, published by different churches and agencies. But the parents and teachers of our Diocese felt the need for a curriculum which would help the child to study the Bible more deeply and to know more about the faith and practices of our church, taking into consideration the time and place in which they live. Therefore, the pioneers of the Diocesan Sunday School have put in great effort to develop a curriculum, conducive to the culture and practices of the land, without sacrificing the faith, heritage and value system of our church. Moreover, instead of merely teaching the facts, they have designed the activities for each lesson keeping in mind the teaching methodology of this Diocese.

We are grateful to all who worked tirelessly in making it possible and especially for their commitment and vision. Revisions were made many a time considering the feedback from teachers and parents. We do acknowledge all who dedicated their time and talent for bringing out this revised version. I hope this edition will benefit our children and help them get new insights into the fundamental teachings of the Bible, and the faith and practices of the church.

The motto of our Sunday school is 'Come to Jesus, Bring Every Child to Jesus'. It is my prayer that through these lessons, our children may come to a personal encounter with Jesus, make a commitment to follow Him and bring others to His fold.

May God's blessings be with you all!

Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos
Diocesan Episcopa
July 2018

Acknowledgment

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! 2. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, 3. things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. 4. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. Psalm 78:1-4

God bless our Sunday school teachers who take the time and effort each week to prepare and teach each lesson with love and patience.

The Diocese owes a debt of gratitude to the many Sunday school teachers who made this book possible. I wish to take a moment and thank Dr. T. M. Thomas and team for the first edition, Mrs. Shiby George, Mr. Tom Philip, and team for the current edition. Also wish to thank the Mar Thoma Sunday School Samajam, Rev. Ninu Chandy and Mrs. Madhu Blessy with all the help this year.

I thank our Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Isaac Mar Philoxenos for the guidance, leadership, and vision with the curriculum and Sunday school. Also wish to thank Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius for the current curriculum. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Diocesan Sunday School Council members Rev. Larry Varghese, Mr. Thomas Easo, and Mr. George Babu for their commitment and dedication.

We are doing our best in being open and collaborative in all our efforts. The channel of communication is through the Diocese regional representatives, superintendents, and office bearers. The regional representatives have done a great deal of work with the Diocese exam preparations, exam evaluations, VBS, regional conferences, and mission activities.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21. to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21

In His Service!

Reji Alexander

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Jacob Wrestles with God

GRADE 6, LESSON 2

You're about to read and witness the most epic battle in history! Seriously, the one-on-one showdown that all WWE, MMA, and other initialed fighting championships base their 'fights' on - Jacob (a.k.a. "Israel") vs. Mr. Mystery Man (a.k.a. "God"). Whoa…. they even have stage names!

Your creative juices are flowing, and you just gotta make this fight come to life! But what do you do when the skeptics get a hold of your creation, and start questioning the authenticity of this B.C. skirmish?

Genesis 32:24-31 (NRSV)

24 Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. 26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." 27 So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 28 Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. 30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." 31 The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

MEMORY VERSE:

Genesis 32:28 (NRSV)

Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed."

Introduction

You may remember the story of Abraham's famous grandchild, Jacob, as the brother who tricked Esau into selling his birthright. And stealing his brother's blessing. And running away from home. Ah.... you get the idea. Well, now Jacob's past comes back to haunt him, as he's all grown up and forced to return to his home land to face his brother, and his own past sins. But before he gets there, he gets into a wrestling match with none other than God! God has bigger plans, and it involves Jacob learning how to toughen up a bit.

Vocabulary

Prevail: To be victorious, or to prove to be more powerful than others.

Striven: To try and achieve something, or to win at something

Skeptic: A person who questions or doubts someone's opinion.

Activity: The Comic Genius

Bible Exploration

V. 24 - Jacob... wrestled... daybreak

V. 25 - ...hip socket...

V. 26 - ...Let me go...bless me.

V. 27/28 - ... Jacob....Israel...

V. 29/30 - ...Please tell me your name...

V. 31 - ... sun rose...limping...

Extra, Extra: 'Jacob Wrestles' comic is a sensation!

Artist extraordinaire _____ (your name) has created a thought-provoking comic strip that is bound to make you reconsider your stance on the best wrestling match of all time!

Our artist, who has based his/her work on the well known Genesis 32:24-31, managed to capture many of the big issues that we, as average people, deal with every day! We here at Bible News 101 are here to help our readers understand the genius behind the art and the Bible portion.

The heart of the Genesis 32 story is one of change. The easiest one to notice is clearly highlighted in window 4 of our artist's drawing, which is when Jacob's name is changed to Israel. This is big news, faithful readers: the only time God changes someone's name is when something grand is in store for that person!

Another big transition (one that involves a bit of research) is that Jacob goes from being a 'cheater' (Gen 27:21-23) to a person of God (Gen 35:7). What a miraculous personality change! Local witnesses that we interviewed never would have thought that Little Lying Jacob would ever turn around and be able to live a life of honesty.

But learning to always tell the truth is just what God planned, and He did that through teaching Jacob that he should stop trying to 'win' (over his brother), and instead 'lose' to God's plan. Need convincing on that loss? Check out window 2 for our artist's rendition of the secret move that God pulled!

But the biggest change of all, and one that our talented artist has completely captured, is the fact that Jacob, despite being super blessed, still submitted himself completely to God for a blessing, as seen in window 3. The fact that Jacob was able to humble himself proves to us everyday people that Jacob really can change. Perhaps that is what our artist was trying to show us – that only by understanding, submitting, and receiving blessings from God will we grow to greatness.

And for our readers who are confused: Jacob is the son of Issac, who was the son of our favorite Patriarch, Abram, a.k.a. Abraham from lesson 1. Jacob goes on to have 12 sons… who become the 12 tribes of, you guessed it, Israel! Jacob is (another) Patriarch of the Jewish nation. Like grandfather, like son!

So, our faithful readers, next time God puts you in a difficult position, give it your best shot and don't hesitate to ask God for help. He might be putting you there to prepare you for something greater!

For more cutting edge Bible artwork, contact your local 6th grade Sunday School!

Some of your art subscribers are skeptics who do not appreciate your high art! Discuss and answer each as best as you can. "Why not?" is not a good enough answer!

V. 24 - "Uh… a stranger just attacked you! Why are you fighting back?"

V. 25 - "If the 'man' had special hip-break powers, why only use it at the end?"

V. 26 - "Who asks for a blessing after getting his hip joint messed with?"

V. 27/28 - "What's in a name? Why did God change his name? Jacob seems good.."

V. 29/30 - "Why would God want to show up as Mr. Mystery Man?"

V. 31 - "So God never healed him, in the end? Why not?"

Values for My Life

In our Bible story, when faced with a wrestling match, Jacob committed himself 100%. Even after losing, he had the grace to ask for a blessing from the winner.

As a comic book artist, you just had the chance to fend off some tough criticisms by our sceptics - a fight that exists purely in words.

It's this second type of battle that is, in many ways, harder than a simple wrestling match. When people come and question who God is, why He did something, or why He didn't do something... what do you say? Will you run away, like Jacob of the past, or will you stand your ground and give it your best, like Israel? And don't forget- even if you walk away with a scar or two of your own, know that God will always support and guide you. And those scars are just there to help toughen you up for the next big fight!

Learn Malayalam

മല്ലുപിടിച്ചു

Mal-lu-pi-di-chu

"Wrestled"

Faith in Action

I will choose to stand my ground and to accept the challenges placed before me. I will also remember to always rely on God, and to never be ashamed to ask Him for help!

Let's Review!

Fill in the blanks

1. Jacob wrestled with a man until _____.
2. Jacob called the place that he wrestled _____.
3. When Jacob left, he walked _____.

Short Answers

1. Who wrestled with Jacob and how did the fight end?
2. What is his new name and what does it mean?

Remember! "God will **always** win the wrestling match; if we were smart, then the sooner we submit, the better."
~Relevant Magazine

Closing Prayer:

Dear Lord, thank You for teaching us about Your love and fairness through the story of Jacob. Teach us to stand firm in the face of danger, and to accept any challenges that come our way. Also, help us to rely on You in everything we do. In Your precious name we pray, Amen.

Lesson 2 writers: A. Kurian, B. Babu, A. Varughese Lesson 2 editors: Rev. V.M. Mathew, G. Babu, B. Babu Lesson 2 formatting: B. Kurian, R. Mathew Lesson 2 artwork: E. Forgione, A. Mathew, S. Abraham

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Joseph's Brothers Make Some Bad Choices

GRADE 6, LESSON 3

Are you the oldest child, always getting in trouble? How about the middle child, where you feel like you are constantly ignored? Maybe you're an only child, without any siblings to keep the loneliness away. Or perhaps you are the baby in the family, tattling on your bad older siblings, earning a special coat from your parents, and being graced with dreams from God.

If this is you, maybe you might understand Joseph, Jacob/Israel's son. As one of the youngest in the family, Joseph feels like he's pretty special to be gifted with all these blessings. After all, who doesn't like being everyone's favorite kid son? But, will little Joseph be able to maintain his cool when his own jealous brothers do something unthinkably mean?

Genesis 37:Multi-Verse (NRSV)

[2a]This is the story of the family of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers.... [2c]and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. [3]Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. [4]But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

[5]Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

[12]Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. [13a]And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them."

[17b]So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. [18]They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they conspired to kill him. [19]They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer. [20]Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams." [21]But when Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands, saying, "Let us not take his life." [22]Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood; throw him into this pit here in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hand and restore him to his father. [23]So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe, the long robe with sleeves that he wore; [24a]and they took him and threw him into a pit. [25a]Then they sat down to eat; and looking up they saw a

caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. [26]Then Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? [27]Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers agreed. [28]When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

[31]Then they took Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat, and dipped the robe in the blood. [32]They had the long robe with sleeves taken to their father, and they said, "This we have found; see now whether it is your son's robe or not." [33]He recognized it, and said, "It is my son's robe! A wild animal has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn to pieces."

[36]Meanwhile the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard.

MEMORY VERSE:

Psalm 68:20 (NRSV)

Our God is a God of salvation,
and to God, the Lord, belongs
escape from death.

Introduction

In our previous lesson, we learned about Jacob (Israel) losing to God in an all-night wrestling match. Well, looks like his children are just as feisty as he is! Joseph, the second youngest of Jacob's children, tends to get himself into trouble a lot. Joseph's older brothers don't seem to have a lot of patience for his behavior. But, when these big brothers are presented with a choice to fix or destroy the family, will they be able to make the right decision without letting hatred get in the way?

Fun Fact: Joseph is, in fact, not the youngest of the brothers! Actually, it's little Benjamin that has the official title. But we don't hear much about Benjamin till much later in the tale. (Can't wait? Check out Genesis 42.)

Bible Exploration

Discuss: *Does birth order matter? Is being the oldest, middle, youngest, or only child the easiest? Why were Joseph's brothers so angry at Joseph?*

Joseph has a number of older siblings, including some very jealous brothers. Most of Genesis 37 focuses on the choices that Joseph's brothers made. In each instance, they could have made a choice that fixed all the problems, but instead they chose to follow the hateful, vengeful path.

In the next assignment, work through the choices that the brothers made. Brainstorm ideas that the brothers COULD have taken to fix the problem, then write what they actually did. Don't forget to cite the Bible verse that your answers come from!

Vocabulary

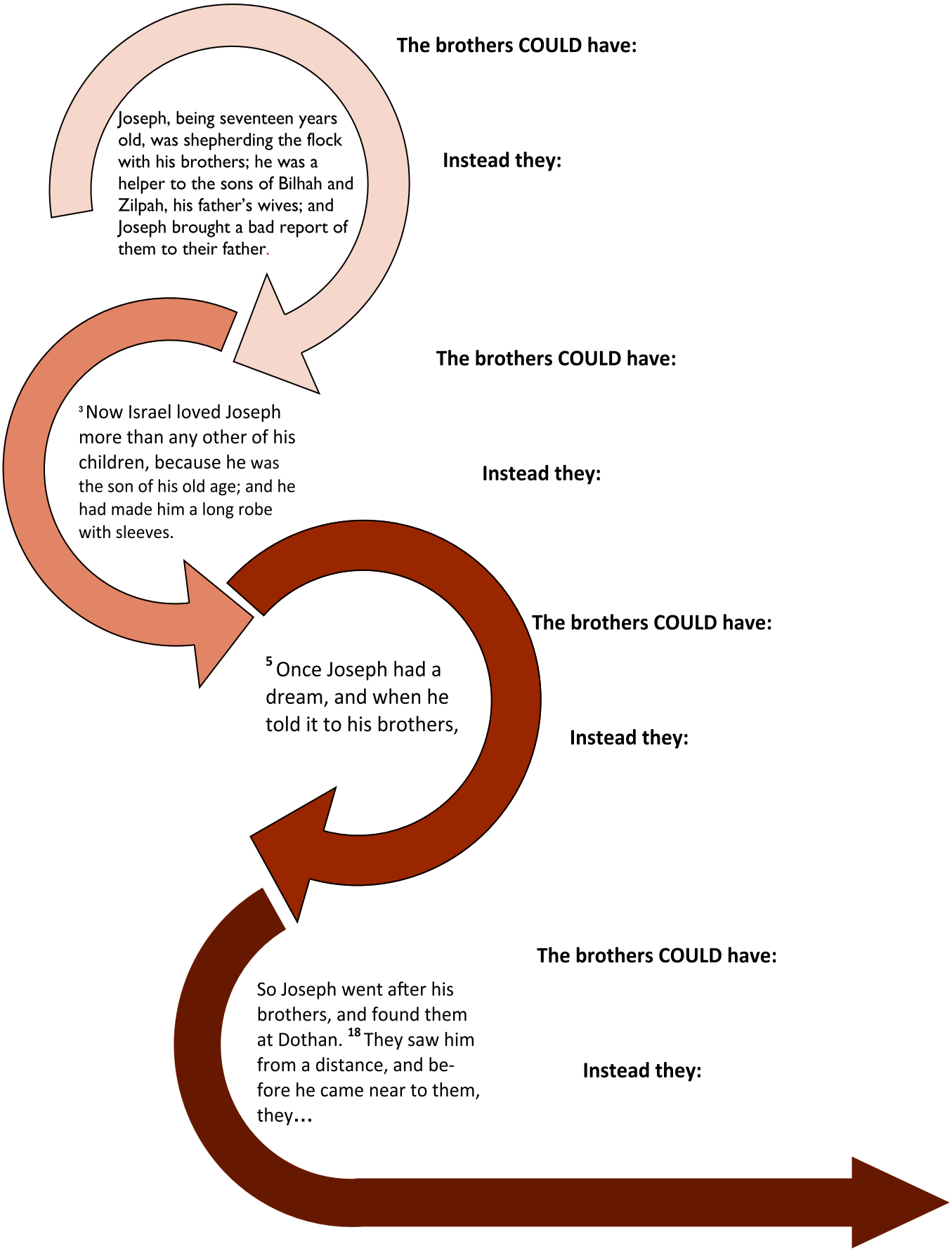
Vengeful: Wanting to hurt someone because that person hurt you. ("Revenge")

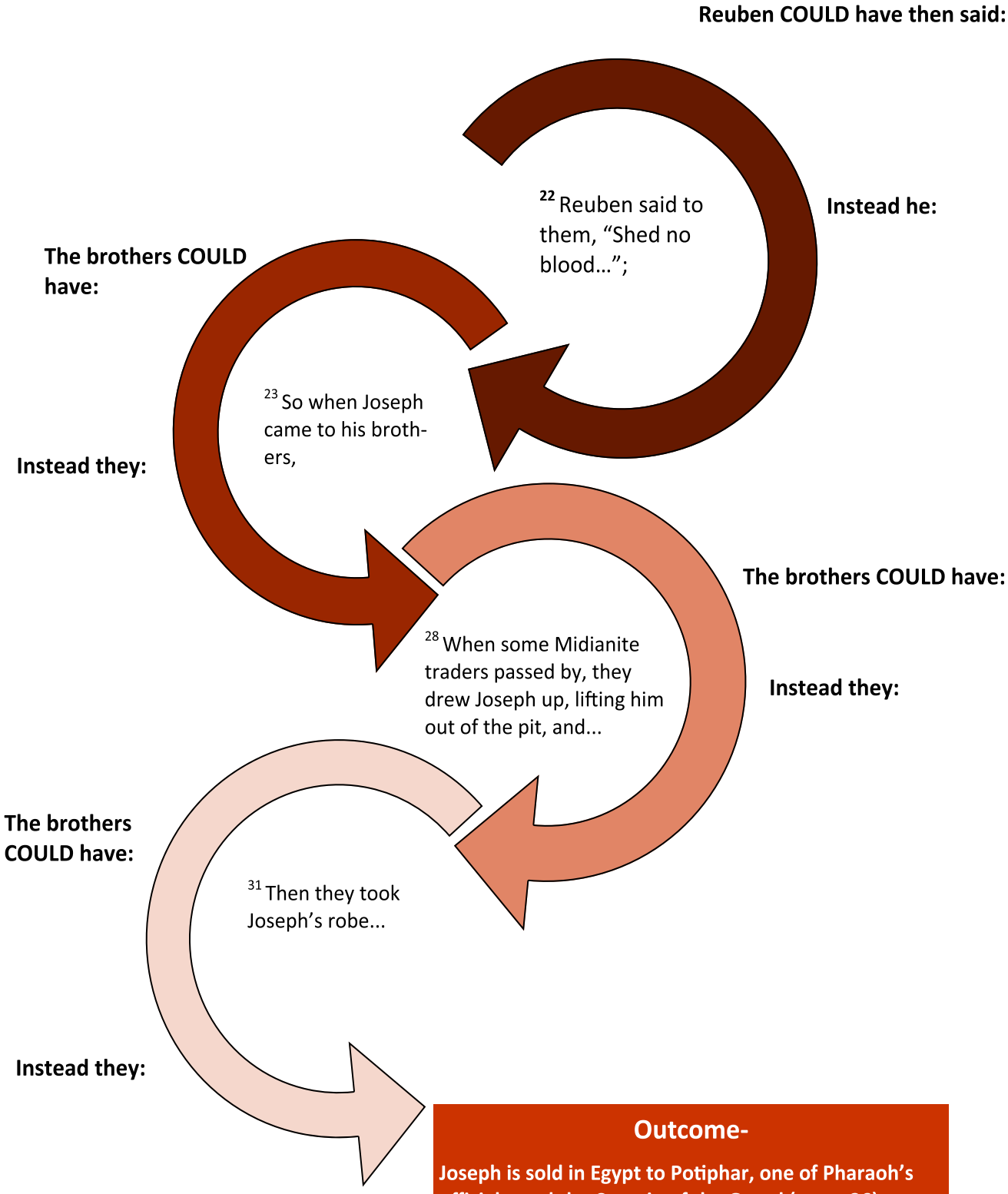
Siblings: Brothers and/or sisters.

Dominion: Being completely in control.

Conspire: Secret plans that aren't usually nice.

No so fun fact: Joseph was undersold. You see, the going rate for slaves at that time was 30 pieces of silver (Ex 21:32). Why would Joseph's brothers price him at 20 pieces of silver? Maybe to get rid of him as fast as they could, with no questions or bartering allowed. Ouch!


Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.
The brothers COULD have:
Instead they:
3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves.
The brothers COULD have:
Instead they:
5 Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers,
The brothers COULD have:
Instead they:
So Joseph went after his brothers, and found them at Dothan. 18 They saw him from a distance, and before he came near to them, they...
The brothers COULD have:
Instead they:



Outcome-

Joseph is sold in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, and the Captain of the Guard (verse 36)

What's going to happen to him???

Values for My Life

Joseph's brothers get a pretty bad reputation for hating everyone's favorite little guy. But think about it - how many times in your life have you been tattled on, been put down, or just simply have been given the 'short end of the stick'? Sometimes we feel like we have the right to act out or hate someone. But God gave us the ability to make our own choices. In the end, our choices should always be what's right according to God, and not what's right according to us. It's tough, but remember, folks: _____! (Luke 1:37... go look that up and fill in the blank.)

Faith in Action

I will make the right choices in life, even when it means that I have to swallow my own pride.

Let's Review!

Fill in the blanks

1. Israel/Jacob sends Joseph to find his brothers. Joseph first travels to _____ before locating them at _____.
2. Joseph is sold to the _____, who came with the Ishmaelite caravan, bound for _____.

Short Answers

1. Why did Joseph's brothers hate Joseph so much? (Give 3 reasons)
2. Is it normal for siblings to get angry at each other? What is not normal about the fighting going on between these brothers?

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, this week we ask that You help us learn how to withhold our anger and frustration at people or situations that we find ourselves in. Teach us to be the better person, to forgive others who have sinned against us, and to not hold onto jealousy, like Joseph's brothers did. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Lesson 3 writer(s): A. Kurian Lesson 3 editors: Rev. V.M. Mathew, A. Kurian, B, Babu, G. Babu Lesson 3 formatting: B. Kurian, A Kurian Lesson 3 artwork: E. Forgione, A. Mathew
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Breaking the 1st Commandment ('Mooo,' er, 'Booo')

GRADE 6, LESSON 4

What's the longest conversation that you've ever had? Moses just might beat the record. See - Moses has just led the Israelites out of the clutches of the Egyptians. After such a daunting and crazy task, Moses retreats up a mountain for some private conversation time with God, which lasts a whopping 40 days! God, with His infinite memory, has a lot of information to share.

The Israelites, meanwhile, seem to have an exceptionally short memory. They get antsy. They get fidgety. Then they start forgetting the True God who led them out in the first place. And then, some poor choices are made!

Exodus 32:1-6, 19-20 (NRSV)

1When the people saw that Moses
delayed to come down from the
mountain, the people gathered around
Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for
us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses,
the man who brought us up out of the land of
Egypt, we do not know what has become of
him." 2Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold
rings that are on the ears of your wives, your
sons, and your daughters, and bring them to
me." 3So all the people took off the gold rings
from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. 4He
took the gold from them, formed it in a mold,
and cast an image of a calf; and they said,
"These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you
up out of the land of Egypt!" 5When Aaron saw
this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made
proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a
festival to the LORD." 6They rose early the next
day, and offered burnt offerings and brought
sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat
down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

19As soon as he came near the camp and saw the
calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot,
and he threw the tablets from his hands and
broke them at the foot of the mountain. 20He
took the calf that they had made, burned it with
fire, ground it to powder, scattered it on the
water, and made the Israelites drink it.

MEMORY VERSE:

Exodus 20:4 (NRSV)

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Introduction

The Israelite people are not exactly on a roll. Seriously, if Almighty God rescued you from the clutches of Pharaoh, and a whole much more besides, you would think that you'd have nothing but thanks, awe, and a bit of fear for Him. Not these Israelites, though. What happens when their patience runs thin?

Bible Exploration

The nation of Israel has been blessed with the chance to see untold blessings and miracles, all thanks to God. It started with the 10 plagues, (see lesson 5) and continued through the escape from Egypt. Can't see where you're going? Don't worry, God will become a blazing pillar of fire to light the way. (Exo. 13:21) A sea blocking the way to the Promised Land? No problem, God will simply part it! (Exo. 14:21-25) Bad guys chasing you? God will make sure they won't bother you any longer. (Exo. 14:26-31) Bitter water is too gross to drink? God's miracle wood can work wonders to the taste buds! (Exo. 15:24) Hungry? How about some fresh manna and quails from Heaven? (Exo. 16) Need more water? Let's split some rocks open for an instant faucet. (Exo. 17:6) You can get the picture - God really treated these Israelites with some special treats!

While journeying to the Promised Land, God summons Moses up Mount Sinai. This is to receive rules that the people of Israel is to live by. One of the more famous instructions that Moses receives is the 10 Commandments! So, this conversation that Moses has with God is pretty important to the people of Israel.

Discuss: If you were an Israelite, and your leader has disappeared to have a conversation with the God who led your family out of slavery, what would you do?

The Israelites, who up until this point had been moaning and groaning over the hardships of free life and how they wish they were slaves again, start badgering Aaron for something new and trendy! See, the Egyptian gods were depicted as physical icons that could be actually worshipped. Sure, their God of Israel **could** become a pillar of fire, but they hadn't seen that miracle, (or their leader Moses,) for 40 days! So, to follow the popular crowd, the Israelites insisted on creating their own 'god' that they could actually see and touch.

Discuss: What did Aaron do wrong in this situation? What could he have done or said to change history?

Aaron was a bit too clever for his own good; he was the one who created the idol, but when it came to identifying it, he stayed silent! Instead, he declared a "festival to the Lord," without specifying the invisible Lord of Israel. As for the Israelites, they arose early, gave this idol the best burnt sacrifices they had, (which happened to all come from God, awkward!) and partied it up!

Moses walks down from Mount Sinai after spending 40 days with God. Ten Commandment tablets in hand, he is expecting his people to be awaiting God's word anxiously. Instead, he walks into a crazy festival for a gold cow baby! How angry is Moses? Angry enough to smash God's precious 10 Commandments on the ground, burn the golden calf, grind it into dust, and force the Israelites to drink water mixed with the gold dust. (Yuck! They are literally eating, er, drinking their own words!) The punishment goes on from there, to include some bloodshed and a plague. (Ex. 32:27-35) Only after this do the Israelites get the point, that their God loves them, will take care of them, but cannot, should not, and will not be replaced by anything!

Fun Fact: Those 10 Commandment tablets that Moses threw down in anger? Know what the first commandment is? Check it out, it would've saved the Israelites a lot of grief! (Exodus 20:2-6)

Values for My Life

The Israelites really messed up big time. After all God had done for them, they still were ungrateful and looking for the next best thing, the new fad, whatever was 'cool'. But, how are we any different? Don't we have things in our lives, in our schools, with our friends, that are considered 'trendy'? How many of them are okay in our lives? How many of them harm our relationship with God, with our loved ones, or with ourselves?

As Christians, we have a duty to always love our God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind! This means, at times being 'uncool,' not going with the flow, but standing up for what's right. Will you be like Aaron, bending to the will of the world? Or will you be a God-Fearing, commandment-honoring, idol-destroying leader after God's own heart? The choice is yours.

Faith in Action

I will love my God with everything in my life, even if it means that I will have to make choices that aren't popular or cool.

Vocabulary

Mold: a container used to give shape to a molten material when it cools and hardens

Calf: a baby cow

Proclamation: an official announcement, often dealing with great importance

Revel: to party it up

Let's Review!

Fill in the blanks

1. Moses goes up _____ _____ to talk to God, and to receive the _____ _____.
2. The Israelites demand that _____ make for them a _____ _____.
3. The golden calf was made from _____.

Short Answer

1. Why did Aaron create the golden calf?
2. What did Moses do with the golden calf?

Another Fun Fact: The Ten Commandments has a nice insurance policy – Full replacement! Check out Exodus 34:1 to see its creation.

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, we thank You for the multiple blessings You have bestowed upon us. Please teach us to worship You always with all of our beings. Help us to stand up to temptation, especially in a world that doesn't always acknowledge You. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Lesson 6 writers: A. Kurian Lesson 6 editors: Rev. V.M. Mathew, G. Babu, B. Babu Lesson 6 formatting: B. Kurian, R. Mathew Lesson 6 artwork: E. Forgione, A. Mathew, S. Abraham
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And those walls came tumbling down!

GRADE 6, LESSON 5

"Mission: Impossible." What do you think of when you hear this phrase? What does the word "impossible" mean, anyway? To Joshua, the word "impossible" might have crossed his mind when God explained how to topple the walls of Jericho, an enemy city of Israel. Maybe you would feel the same way, if you were instructed to march around the city walls of Jericho with nothing but the Ark of Covenant, a bunch of silent warriors, and some trumpets. No ropes, no fires, no cannon balls, no ballistic weapons... So, Mission: Impossible? Or was Joshua already aware of the super secret weapon found in Luke 1:37?

Joshua 6:1-16 (NRSV)

[1]Now Jericho was shut up inside and out because of the Israelites; no one came out and no one went in. [2]The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king and soldiers. [3]You shall march around the city, all the warriors circling the city once. Thus you shall do for six days, [4]with seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. [5]When they make a long blast with the ram's horn, as soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and all the people shall charge straight ahead." [6]So Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and said to them, "Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and have seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark of the LORD." [7]To the people he said, "Go forward and march around the city; have the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD."

[8]As Joshua had commanded the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward, blowing the trumpets, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD following them. [9]And the armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets; the rear guard came after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. [10]To the people Joshua gave this command: "You shall not shout or let your voice be heard, nor shall you utter a word, until the day I tell you to shout. Then you shall shout." [11]So the ark of the LORD went around the city, circling it once; and they came into the camp, and spent the night in the camp.

[12]Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. [13]The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD passed on, blowing the trumpets continually. The armed men went before them, and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while the trumpets blew continually. [14]On the second day they marched around the city once and then returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

[15]On the seventh day they rose early, at dawn, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times. [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."

MEMORY VERSE:

Joshua 6:16 (NRSV)

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!

Introduction

Moses, the fearless trailblazer of the nation of Israel, has passed away, leaving the leadership, (and all of its associated difficulties,) in the hands of Joshua.

Now, Joshua has witnessed the miracles God has done for the people of Israel. So, when God leads Israel to the enemy city of Jericho, and tells Joshua what the battle plan is, Joshua doesn't hesitate to act on them... even though it seemed like it would be a Mission: Impossible.

Bible Exploration

In our last lesson, we learned about the short-term memory of the Israelites, and their journey through the desert to the Promised Land. Cursed by God to wander for 40 years for their disobedience, (Joshua 5:6) the Israelites continue to live their lives questioning God.

As they finally approach the Promised Land, God instructs Moses to send out scouts to explore what lay ahead (Numbers 13:2). Moses selects 12 faithful men, including Hoshea, son of Nun, to make the journey, and to spy on the people who are currently there. Before leaving, Moses changes the name of Hoshea son of Nun to Joshua, or, "The Lord Saves" (Numbers 13:16). We know what a name change usually signifies... great things are about to happen!

Vocabulary

Ark of Covenant: a gold-plated chest where the Ten Commandments were stored, and was symbolic of God

Ram's Horn: called a "Shofar", it is a horn made out of a male sheep's horn, and is used in religious Jewish services. Often called a 'trumpet' in the Old Testament. See Num 29:1 for details on the 'Blow the Trumpet' holiday!

Joshua/Hoshea returnes, reporting:

> 27b *"We came to the land to which you sent us, it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.*
> 28a *Yet the people who live in the land are strong, and the towns are fortified and very large.*

The people of Israel, naturally, start arguing, and ask to be taken back to Egypt so they could live and die as slaves again. (Honestly, can they not think of something else to wish for?) Joshua, along with his buddy Caleb, instead argue for the idea of going to the Promised Land. It was this Trust in God that marked Joshua as the next selected leader (Numbers 27:18).

Moses eventually passes away, leaving Joshua in charge of Israel. When Joshua and the Israelites come upon the city of Jericho, Joshua secretly sends 2 spies to infiltrate and scope out the area. A woman, Rahab, who lived along the thick city walls of Jericho, hides the spies when the King of Jericho comes searching. Thanks to Rahab, the spies are able to get away safely, and report the situation to Joshua (Joshua 2).

Fun Fact: This is not the only time that God gave "Mission: Impossible" directions to bring down city walls. Check out Judges 7; THAT mission involved just 300 people, trumpets, smashing glass jars filled with torches, and yes - shouting.

Joshua has a difficult situation ahead. The entire nation of Israelites had just crossed over the Jordan River, (Joshua 3:17) and in front of them were the imposing walls of Jericho, complete with a sealed door (Joshua 6:1). So, when God appears and offers assistance, Joshua must have been more than accepting. But, Joshua, possibly expecting an army of Angels, or a miraculous door shattering machine, was given something completely different: God's weapon of choice was "**trust.**" Both Joshua and the people of Israel had to trust God in being:

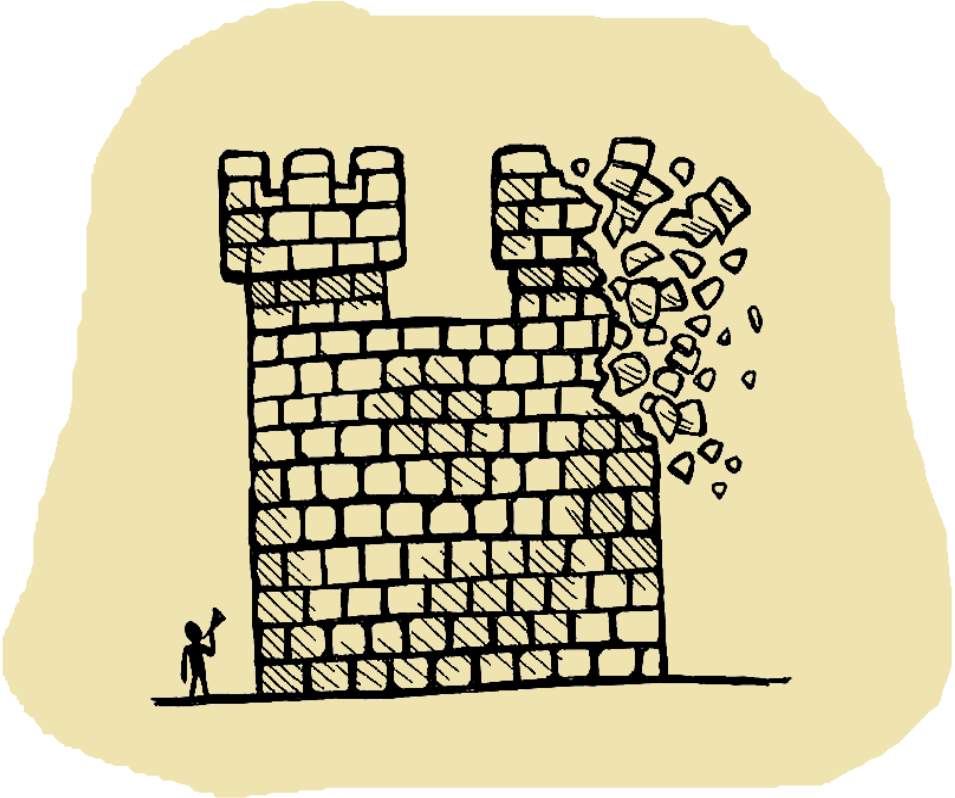
Patient: by walking around the entire city for 7 days in a row, without a rest day, it meant no quick, bloody battle on day 1.

Disciplined: by walking in complete silence, and yelling only at the right time, it meant no grunts of pain or crying from popped blisters.

Confident: displaying to the people of Jericho that they, the Israelites, were in fact the chosen people and that their God would help them.

So, no cannon balls, no fire power, just the Ark of covenant, Ram's horns (also called a 'shofar'), and a healthy dose of patience, discipline, confidence and, of course, trust. As always, God's plan did the trick much better than anything Joshua could have envisioned!

As for Rahab's family: she escaped safely before the destruction of the city, due to her faithfulness to the Hebrew God (Joshua 6:23).



Activity

Make a shofar!

(See teacher guide)

Values for My Life

Joshua, the spy turned spymaster, learned from the best leader of all: Moses. And, like Moses, Joshua made sure to trust in God with everything that he did, including mega plans like the takedown of a city. So how do we, as Children of God, demonstrate this type of trust? If we try to emulate the qualities that Joshua and Israel demonstrated, namely patience, discipline, and confidence, then we will certainly be on the correct pathway to a stronger walk with God. And, our own "Mission: Impossibles won't be so impossible, after all.

Faith in Action

I will trust God in everything that I do, especially when life gives me some impossible challenges.

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, thank You for all of the guidance You have provided for us in our lives. Please help us continue to nurture our patience with Your timing, discipline with our lives, and confidence in You, so that we may be stronger Christians in this world. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Let's Review!

Fill in the blanks

1. Jericho was shut up tight because of the _____.
2. There were _____ priests, blowing _____ trumpets of _____ _____.
3. The priests were also instructed to carry the _____.
4. The Israelites were instructed to not _____ until they were told to do so.
5. On the seventh day, the people rose early, at _____.

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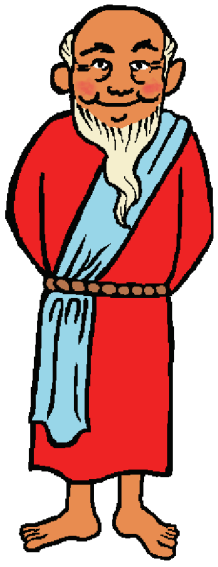
Elijah shows Israel who's the BOSS

GRADE 6, LESSON 7

Elijah has been running for his life after being the bearer of bad news to the wrong person. God has plans for this Prophet, though, and gives him the opportunity to prove an enemy wrong, challenge fellow false 'prophets', and demonstrate to the nation of Israel that the Lord is the one, true God! But first, Elijah will have to be able to swallow his fear and trust in God completely...

1 Kings 18:20-39 (NRSV)

20 So Ahab sent to all the Israelites, and assembled the
prophets at Mount Carmel. 21 Elijah then came near to all
the people, and said, "How long will you go limping with
two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but
if Baal, then follow him." The people did not answer him
a word. 22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I, even I only,
am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets number
four hundred fifty. 23 Let two bulls be given to us; let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it; I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. 24 Then you call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the Lord; the god who answers by fire is indeed God." All the people answered, "Well spoken!" 25 Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many; then call on the name of your god, but put no fire to it." 26 So they took the bull that was given them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, crying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no answer. They limped about the altar that they had made. 27 At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is meditating, or he has wandered away, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." 28 Then they cried aloud and, as was their custom, they cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushed out over them. 29 As midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice, no answer, and no response.



30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come closer to me"; and all the people came closer to him. First he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down; 31 Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, "Israel shall be your name"; 32 with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. Then he made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed. 33 Next he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." 34 Then he said, "Do it a second time"; and they did it a second time. Again he said, "Do it a third time"; and they did it a third time, 35 so that the water ran all around the altar, and filled the trench also with water.

36 At the time of the offering of the oblation, the prophet Elijah came near and said, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. 37 Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." 38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God."

MEMORY VERSE:

1 Kings 18:37 (NRSV)

"Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back."

Introduction

Omnipotent - do you know what that word means? Here's a hint: it describes God 100%. Elijah was fully aware of the Lord's omnipotence, but how to prove it to the people of Israel was a completely different problem, especially since the Israelites started worshipping other gods. How could one man remind a nation of their God's omnipotence, and get them to turn their hearts to the Truth?

Bible Exploration

Meet Elijah, a prophet of God, and our good guy. He was given a job by God to confront the Mean King of Israel, Ahab. It was Elijah who prophesied to Ahab that there would be a severe drought for a long time.

Discuss: Why would a King be angry at God's messenger for delivering bad news?

Meet Ahab, the evil king of Israel who did not follow the Lord, and our bad guy. He married Queen Jezebel, and together they set up altars and temples for Baal and Asherah (false gods) and worshipped them. In fact, Ahab did so much evil that he made the Lord more angry than all the kings of Israel before him! (1 Kings 16:30) Oh, and Ahab didn't like messengers of God who brought bad news… like Elijah.

1 Kings 18 sets the stage by explaining that it has been 3 years since the drought started, and a severe famine has hit the land. Ahab is still king, along with his wife Jezebel. Elijah, who has been in hiding for the past 3 years, is called by God to come out into the public and meet King Ahab, the guy who wanted to kill him. Imagine what Elijah thinks about God's request. After all, he was "Israel's Most Wanted," since he was the initial deliverer of the bad news to the King.

Discuss: If you were in Elijah's shoes, would you have the courage to speak face-to-face with the man who was trying to hunt you down?

Elijah makes his choice: he decides to trust in God's instructions. Elijah challenges Ahab to bring his 450 prophets of Baal against him; it's time for a showdown!

The rest of the story plays out in 1 Kings 18: Elijah sets up a challenge to determine whose god is the true God, complete with identical altars and a selected bull to be sacrificed. The only "twist" is that the lighting of the sacrifice is up to the true God. The prophets of Baal have no success in

Discuss: How do you think you would have reacted after witnessing such a miracle? What if you were a believer of the wrong gods, what then?

getting some divine fire, despite resorting to cutting themselves in the hope that their god would notice! And in the end, "there was no voice, no answer, and no response." (verse 29) Ouch!

Elijah takes the stage. He begins by repairing God's original altar, and has volunteers dump water all over the area! Scientifically, this altar should be impossible to light on fire, right? But… God does the impossible! (Hint: that's why He is Omnipotent.) After a prayer by Elijah, the soaking altar, surrounded closely by Israelites, ignites and is completely burned up!

To put the icing on the cake, Elijah tells Ahab that rain is on the way. The drought that began three years ago with no foreseeable end has now come to a close with this spectacular, and fiery, finish!

Vocabulary

Drought: A long period with little or no rain.

Famine: An extreme scarcity of food.

Oblation: Something being offered to a god / God

Omnipotent: Having unlimited power, and able to do anything.

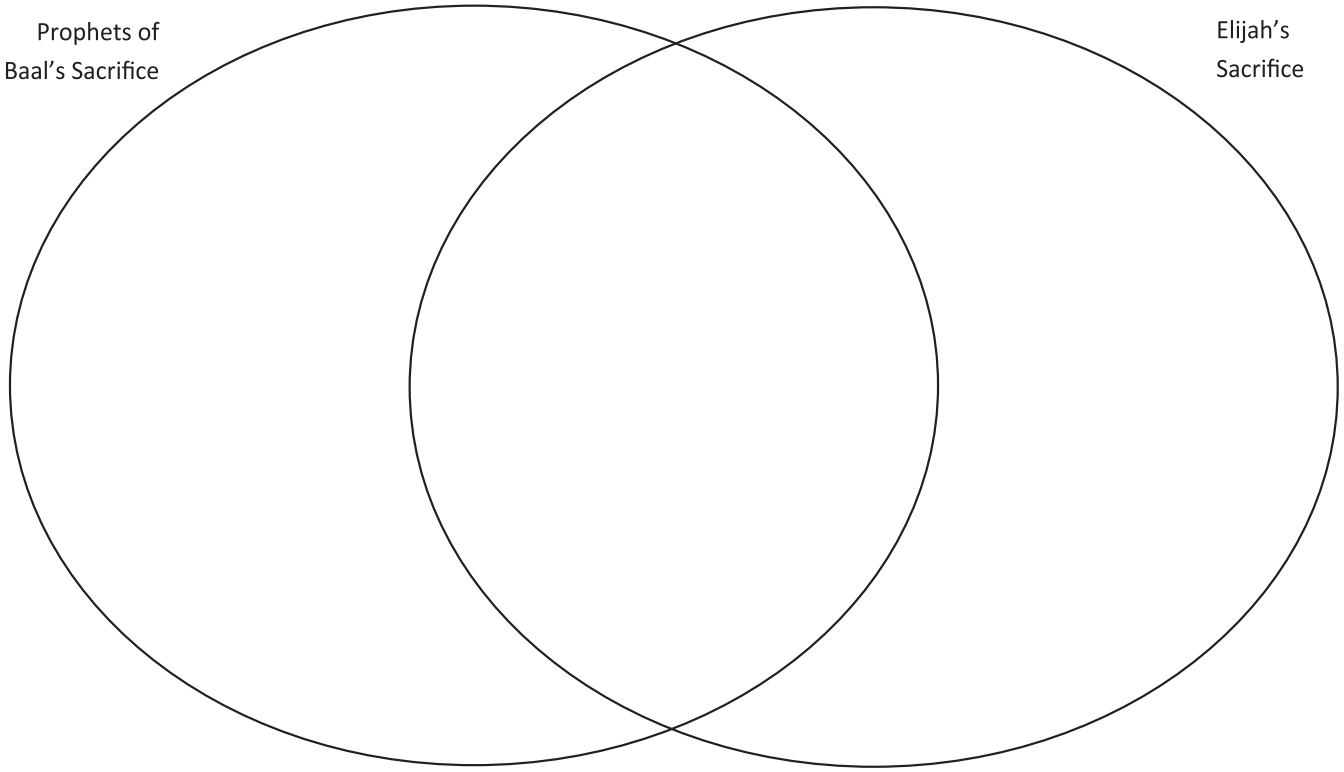
Baal: A false god, was believed to be the god of thunder.

Asherah: A false goddess, was represented by a wooden pole.

Fun Fact: Elijah is one of the only people who did not 'die' at the end of his life. (Check out 2 Kings 2:11 to find out more.) As for the other person who left our world in a non-conventional way? Try looking up Gen 5:21-24.

The Gamechanger

Write details that are similar between the sacrifice of the Prophets of Baal and God's Prophet (Elijah) where the circles overlap.
Write details that demonstrate the differences between these sacrifices in the outer circles.



Values for My Life

We live in a science-driven world. However, science is not here to destroy the notion of God. It's, in fact, there to help us understand and appreciate Him better! This doesn't mean that science can explain everything that happens in the world. Some events just seem to have our Creator's hand on it. Like Elijah's altar, which did not 'spontaneously combust', we as believers and students know that, in this world, sometimes the only logic that makes sense is the fact that we have an Omnipotent and loving Father.

Faith in Action

We may not know all the answers to the impossible questions about God, but we do know that God is able to do the impossible. Let's make a decision to follow God's plan, and to always expect the unexpected!

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, we thank You for the strength and courage you give to us everyday. Teach us to trust in Your wisdom and guidance, and to help lead others to You. Amen.

Let's Review!

Fill in the blanks

1. After Elijah beckoned the Israelites to step closer, he first _____.
2. The 12 stones on the altar that Elijah rebuilt represented _____.
3. Elijah asked for ____ jars of water to be filled ____ times, and poured over the altar.

Short Answers

1. From today's bible passage, describe how different characters displayed faith in God in difficult situations.

2. An Omnipotent God means that events that are not scientifically possible can be made possible with the help of our Lord. Look through the Bible, and find other instances where God allowed the impossible to happen. How about in your own life?

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