

# GOD'S CHOICE IS NOT OUR CHOICE

Theme : God's Sovereign Choice

Grade 9 - Unit 2 Lesson 8

## Luke 5:1-11

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, <sup>2</sup> he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. <sup>3</sup> He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. <sup>4</sup> When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." <sup>5</sup> Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." <sup>6</sup> When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. <sup>7</sup> So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. <sup>8</sup> But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" <sup>9</sup> For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; <sup>10</sup> and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." <sup>11</sup> When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

## Matthew 9:9-13

<sup>9</sup> As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him.

<sup>10</sup> And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. <sup>11</sup> When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" <sup>12</sup> But when he heard this, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup> Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."

John 1:43-51

<sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." <sup>44</sup> Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." <sup>46</sup> Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." <sup>47</sup> When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" <sup>48</sup> Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." <sup>49</sup> Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" <sup>50</sup> Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." <sup>51</sup> And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

## Matthew 10:1-4

<sup>10</sup> Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. <sup>2</sup> These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

### Aim:

To understand that God's way of choosing people for His work is beyond man's reasoning

## Student Introduction

If we were starting a school or university, who would we select as teachers? Most likely candidates with college degrees in education. Probably, candidates with some prior teaching experience.

- If we were starting a new nation, who would we select as citizens of that nation? Most likely model citizens of the old nation, people who demonstrate integrity, honesty, and willing to work alongside others.
- If God put you in charge of selecting and if God wanted to lead an exodus of two million people, would you choose an 80-year-old, or someone with a murder on his record?
- Would you choose a prostitute to hide the spies?
- Would you have chosen a defecting rebellious prophet to lead 120,000 people in Nineveh to repentance?
- Would you have chosen a former “Christian hating” Pharisee to model Grace and write most of the New Testament books?
- Would you have chosen a man who denied Jesus three times to be a major spokesperson for the early church?

You see, when God chooses, the people used are often unexpected. God has chosen the despised and many of the losers of the world to follow the One who died on the cross.

In this lesson we will look at an example of God’s choices which were contrary to popular thinking. The first example we

## Bible Exposition

### Jesus Chooses His Disciples

In the Gospels we read about the twelve disciples that Jesus chose over all His disciples to go and be ‘fishers of men’. They were not people we would have selected to spread the Gospel. They were mainly poor, uneducated, peasant folk. Just like us, the chosen twelve had their shortcomings, yet Jesus selected them.



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*The 12 disciples were  
mainly poor and  
uneducated, but Jesus  
chose them anyway*

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## Activities

Find other examples in the Bible where God's choice was not man's choice.

Have each student chose one apostle and research their lives and tell something special about that apostle to the class

- Peter, formerly known as Simon. He was poor, uneducated and a fisherman by profession. Yet, Jesus selected him as the 'rock' on which to found the church.
- Andrew, Peter's brother. He was also poor, uneducated and like his brother a fisherman by profession. He was the one who brought his brother to Jesus. (John 1:40-42)
- James, the son of Zebedee, also known as James the Greater. He and his brother John were Simon's partners in fishing.
- John, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James the Greater. Like his brother he also was a fisherman. Jesus called his brother and him 'sons of thunder'.
- Philip followed Jesus when called. He was instrumental in bringing Nathanael to Jesus.
- Nathanael, also known as Bartholomew was skeptical at first. But after his first encounter with Jesus he was a follower for life.
- Matthew, also known as Levi, was a tax collector. He was hated by the Jews because he collected taxes from his fellow Jews for the Romans.
- Thomas, or Didymus, most infamously called 'Doubting Thomas'. Even though he moved so closely with Jesus he doubted his resurrection. He was the only one of the twelve to travel the farthest to India to spread the Good News.
- James son of Alphaeus, also known as James the Less. Even though the Bible does not mention much about him, it is likely that he too was a lowly, uneducated peasant.
- Thaddaeus, also known as Jude or Judas the son of James. He is believed to have authored the book of Jude.
- Simon the Zealot, could have been chosen because of his zeal or because he belonged to the Zealot party that hated the Roman establishment.
- Judas Iscariot was the one Jesus chose to follow him closely, yet he was the one that betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver.

As can be seen, Jesus selected the most unlikely group of people. But each one had a purpose, even Judas.

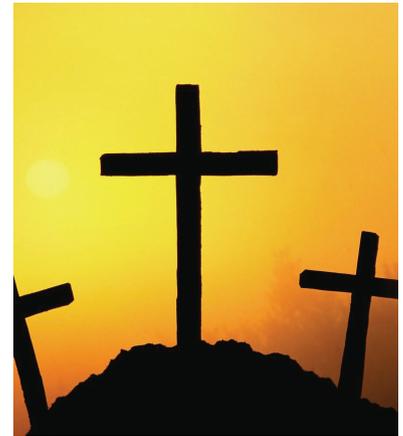
### God's Choice is not Our Choice

In the example we see that God's choice was something very different from the norm. Can we even begin to comprehend

His choices? In Romans 11:34 we read *'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?'* There is no way we can understand the choices God makes. Yet, when we look at the bigger picture, we can see the results of those choices.

Two thousand years after Jesus walked this earth, if we are Christians, it is only because of the missionary work of those chosen disciples.

When we feel that things are not going according to our plans, when tragedy strikes, when we face difficulties, do we simply give up? Have faith that God has a bigger plan. Each of us has a part to play, even Judas Iscariot. Judas' part was to enable fulfilling God's plan by sending Jesus to the cross as the ultimate payment for sin.



## Lesson Review

Who did Jesus select for His twelve disciples? Do we know more about the lives of the chosen twelve?

Are there times in our lives when we feel that things are not working out the way we expect it to? What do we do under such circumstances?

## Values for Life:

- There are times in our life when we feel that things are not going the way we want it to. In times like that, amidst frustration, when we cannot see the big picture, have faith that God has a mighty plan.
- We are but human and in no way can comprehend God's ways. We can think only like humans, yet we need to do our best to trust God.

## Memory Verse:

Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.

**Matthew 9:13**

## Closing Prayer:

O Lord God, there are times in our lives that we doubt and question You. Please guide us through those times and give us patience and faith that even in those difficult times you are walking with us in our every step.

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*Although the Lord's intentions may not appear clear, there is always a reason.*

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# DEPTH OF GOD'S LOVE

Theme : God will be faithful, no matter how unfaithful we are

Grade 9 - Unit 3 Lesson 9

## Psalm 89: 1-14 & 28-37

A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

<sup>1</sup> I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord,\* for ever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

<sup>2</sup> I declare that your steadfast love is established for ever; your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.

<sup>3</sup> You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David:

<sup>4</sup> "I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations." *Selah*

<sup>5</sup> Let the heavens praise your wonders, O Lord, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones.

<sup>6</sup> For who in the skies can be compared to the Lord? Who among the heavenly beings is like the Lord,

<sup>7</sup> a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and awesome\* above all that are around him?

<sup>8</sup> O Lord God of hosts, who is as mighty as you, O Lord? Your faithfulness surrounds you.

<sup>9</sup> You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them.

<sup>10</sup> You crushed Rahab like a carcass; you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.

<sup>11</sup> The heavens are yours, the earth also is yours; the world and all that is in it—you have founded them.

<sup>12</sup> The north and the south\*—you created them; Tabor and Hermon joyously praise your name.

<sup>13</sup> You have a mighty arm; strong is your hand, high your right hand.

<sup>28</sup> For-ever I will keep my steadfast love for him, and my covenant with him will stand firm.

<sup>29</sup> I will establish his line for ever, and his throne as long as the heavens endure.

<sup>30</sup> If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances,

<sup>31</sup> if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments,

<sup>32</sup> then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges;

<sup>33</sup> but I will not remove from him my steadfast love, or be false to my faithfulness.

<sup>34</sup> I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips.

<sup>35</sup> Once and for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David.

### Aim:

To understand that God's love for us is unending and never ending

## Student Introduction

<sup>12</sup> *When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup> He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup> I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings. <sup>15</sup> But I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. <sup>16</sup> Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever. <sup>17</sup> In accordance with all these words and with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.* 2 Samuel 7: 12-17

In the above verses we can see God's promise to honor David with a line of descendants that would continue to rule Israel in response to David's desire to honor God. Thus God was not just promising to establish David's reign as long as he lived but forever. In Psalms

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*'I will establish your descendants forever, and build your throne for all generations'*

**Psalm 89:4**

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## Activities

Ask students as they look back over their lives -

- Where did God's plans differ from their own?
- How have they been blessed by God's plans?
- How has God proven that He did not lie to King David?
- How do you think we should respond to the Lord if we find ourselves under God's righteous judgment?

89, which is believed to be written by Ethan a musician in David's service, we see the Psalmist pleading to God to fulfill this promise when David was encountered with difficulties in his life.

## Bible Exposition

The book of Psalms contains the prayers, hymns and meditations of Israel. These include joyful songs of praise and thanksgiving as well as songs of lamentation and distress. The prayers and songs are addressed to God, usually either pleading for help or bearing witness to God's gracious acts on behalf of God's people. Psalm 89 contains all these contrasting emotions that the psalmist is going through.

In this Psalm, God affirms his faithfulness in keeping His amazing promise to David. He assured David that:

- He would have a place of greatness
- That his offspring would succeed him
- That his kingdom would be established forever

### God's Promise

God made a special promise to David, which is identified in 2 Samuel 7:12-17: someone from David's family would always be king. Ethan wrote this Psalm many years after this promise was made. It is called a 'maskil' - a psalm that teaches us something. We see that the Jews, as a result of their disobedience, would suffer exile in Babylon, have their temple destroyed, and live under oppressive Roman rule before Jesus would be born in the line of David. We see that because God loves His children He always disciplines them for their own good. God designs His discipline as a faithful response to unrepentant sinners which would lead some to repent and seek God's forgiveness. When God makes a promise or a covenant, He keeps it. God sent His son Jesus who fulfilled the law of God and established a new covenant in His blood.

For David, who experienced so much suffering and outright persecution, to acknowledge God's overriding faithfulness through it all, was truly a testimony to his knowledge and appreciation of the Lord's grace and love. He understood that somehow the Lord had a purpose for it and was in control of the situation, and ultimately intends everything for man's good. Faithfulness to the Lord and His standards is a prime necessity for believers. This kind of faith begins and ends in a total trust, which finds such complete confidence in the Lord that the believer can rest his entire life and future in the Lord. The faithful understand that they are in the caring hands of Him who is ever faithful.

## King David as an example for us

King David put his faith in the Lord. He constantly and consistently asked God for His will. King David loved the Lord. He chanted psalms to the Lord that came from his heart. When we are frightened by the emotion around us, we need to appeal to our Lord for guidance. God will keep His Word. His promise is based on His character. He will not change His mind or go back on what He said, like people often do. The throne of David will be established and preserved by the Lord himself. What humans cannot do, God can.

We not only see God's holy character of faithfulness and His actions that flow from it, but the necessity of believers to pursue faithfulness in their lives. We should remain faithful at all times. Even in times of hardship, suffering, and persecution we are to remain confident that a faithful God is available for protection and help.

## Lesson Review

- Who is known to have written Psalm 89?
- What promises did God make to David?
- What does '*maskil*' mean?

## Values for Life:

1. God's everlasting covenant with man is for him to listen to God, hear and obey Him so his soul shall live and God will not turn away from him. He must completely rely on God for everything, and turn to Him for guidance.
2. It is not enough for us just to be Christians. We need to have the faithfulness and loving kindness of the Lord on our tongues at all times.

## Memory Verse:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Romans 8:38-39**

## Closing Prayer:

Almighty God, we thank You that You are always with us, and always loves us. It's good to be with You. Thank You for what we have learned today. Thank you for being with us and for teaching us through the Bible. Help us to remember what You have taught us today and to live it out when we leave. Oh Loving Father, Guide us by Your eternal light. We ask all this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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*King David is an  
example to us all*

- *Faith in the Lord*
  - *Spoke to God  
constantly*
  - *Loved the Lord*
-

# NO WALL CAN KEEP GOD OUT

Theme : God strengthens the faithful

Grade 9 - Unit 3 Lesson 10

## Joshua 6:1-27

Now Jericho was shut up inside and out because of the Israelites; no one came out and no one went in. <sup>2</sup>The LORD said to Joshua, "See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king and soldiers. <sup>3</sup>You shall march around the city, all the warriors circling the city once. Thus you shall do for six days, <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>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." <sup>6</sup>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." <sup>7</sup>To the people he said, "Go forward and march around the city; have the armed men pass on before the ark of the LORD."

<sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>And the armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets; the rear guard came after the ark, while the trumpets blew continually. <sup>10</sup>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." <sup>11</sup>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.

<sup>12</sup>Then Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>On the second day they marched around the

city once and then returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

<sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>As for you, keep away from the things devoted to destruction, so as not to covet and take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel an object for destruction, bringing trouble upon it. <sup>19</sup>But all silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are sacred to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD." <sup>20</sup>So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat; so the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it. <sup>21</sup>Then they devoted to destruction by the edge of the sword all in the city, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys.

<sup>22</sup>Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house, and bring the woman out of it and all who belong to her, as you swore to her." <sup>23</sup>So the young men who had been spies went in and brought Rahab out, along with her father, her mother, her brothers, and all who belonged to her—they brought all her kindred out—and set them outside the camp of Isra-

### Aim:

To understand the nature of God in fulfilling His promise and rewarding obedience

el. <sup>24</sup> They burned down the city, and everything in it; only the silver and gold, and the vessels of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. <sup>25</sup> But Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, Joshua spared. Her family has lived in Israel ever since. For she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

<sup>26</sup> Joshua then pronounced this oath, saying, "Cursed before the LORD be anyone who tries to build this city - this Jericho! At the cost of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest he shall set up its gates!" <sup>27</sup> So the LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was in all the land.

### Student Introduction

Tom & Jerry is an animated classic that was beloved to many children and adults years ago. Why did so many love these animated characters so much? It was the brilliance of its creators William Hanna and Joseph Barbera. A small mouse always managed to get away from the mean, big cat. What would have happened if the cat won? The story would end with its first episode.



We have studied so many incidents where small and weak men or a country win over a powerful (and sinful) person or a country - David & Goliath, Gideon against the Midianites, Moses against Pharaoh and in this lesson Israelites over Jericho. Why does God choose the weak for such missions? God does not want anyone to boast with regard to their own abilities, so He chooses the least, strengthens them and guides their win over the more powerful.

### Bible Exposition

The book of Joshua could also be considered as a book of war. Israel was at war with the Canaanites, but behind these human soldiers, God was waging war against sin. Earlier in Israel's history God was compared to a warrior (Exodus 14:14), but now Israel experienced God's leadership in war like never before.

God instructed the Israelites to march around the walls of Jericho. They circled the city (Verses 3, 4, 6, and 9). The order of the procession was as follows: Soldiers, Priests, The Ark, and then more soldiers. The ark represented the presence of The Lord.

The blowing of the trumpets in Israel reminded the people of God's activity for them. The priests used the trumpets to call the people to follow God, who was going before them in the wilderness. On this occasion, both functions were applicable as the trumpet signaled judgment for the Canaanites, but victory to the Israelites.

The warriors and priests were to remain silent as they circled the city each time except the seventh day. God evidently used this strategy to impress on the people of Jericho, as well

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*The walls of Jericho  
were six feet thick  
and up to 26 feet  
high*

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## Activities

Ask the children to identify times in the Bible in which the 'underdog' was victorious.

What lesson do we learn from these stories of victory?

as the Israelites, that the deliverance was not by human might or power, but was by the spirit of the God. In addition, this might have been part of the strategy to give the king of Jericho a chance to surrender. (Similar to the 10 plagues in Egypt). God commanded the final shout on the seventh day to announce His destruction of the wall. It was the shout of victory and joy for the Israelites. The uniqueness of this approach undoubtedly impressed upon the Israelites their reliance on God for the victory. It involved incredible faith and obedience.

God commanded the Israelites to consecrate all the spoils of this battle to Him since He had given Jericho into their hands as the first fruits of the land. Rahab and her possessions were exceptions because she had aided the spies. The Israelites were to burn cities under the "ban" (Deut. 20:16-18) and to kill their inhabitants, including the cattle. (Leviticus 27:28-29). The only objects they were to spare were metal, gold, silver and vessels from bronze and iron. These they were to place in the treasury of the tabernacle. (Numbers 31:54).

The curse on the person tempted to rebuild Jericho would have discouraged anyone from fortifying again this city that was the symbol of military power. God wanted His people to trust in Him for their security and not to rely on physical defenses. God executed Joshua's curse on Hiel when he rebuilt Jericho's fortifications during the reign of king Ahab. (1 Kings 16:34)

The Jericho battle strengthened Israel's faith in Yahweh. They acted in faith obeying His word and trusting in the outcome God had promised. We also must learn the same from this lesson in history.

## Lesson Review

1. Why did God destroy the city of Jericho?
2. Why did the Israelites burn the city of Jericho and killed all its inhabitants? Why did they spare the metals?
3. What was the curse of Joshua for the City of Jericho?

## Values for Life:

We need to put our faith and hope in God and God alone.

## Memory Verse:

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.

Joshua 6:16



## Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for teaching us about rewards for obedience through this lesson. Many times we go away from Your path and end up in trouble. God, control our thoughts and actions. Restore us as Your disciples and enable us to lead a life that will be pleasing to You, Amen.

# PLACED FOR A PURPOSE

Theme : God has a reason for where we are and what happens around us

Grade 9 - Unit 3 Lesson 11

## Esther 4

When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went through the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry; <sup>2</sup> he went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. <sup>3</sup> In every province, wherever the king's command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.

<sup>4</sup> When Esther's maids and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth; but he would not accept them.

<sup>5</sup> Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what was happening and why. <sup>6</sup> Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, <sup>7</sup> and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews.

<sup>8</sup> Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and charge her to go to the king to make supplication to him and entreat him for her people.

<sup>9</sup> Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. <sup>10</sup> Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mordecai, saying, <sup>11</sup> "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—all alike are to be put to death. Only if the king holds out the golden scepter to someone, may that person live. I myself have not been called to come in to the king for thirty days." <sup>12</sup> When they told Mordecai what Esther had said, <sup>13</sup> Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews.

<sup>14</sup> For if you keep silence at such a time as this,

relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." <sup>15</sup> Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, <sup>16</sup> "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." <sup>17</sup> Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

### Aim:

To understand that there is a purpose in our existence and that we should be ready to speak up do our part in each situation

## Student Introduction

We often hear about the problems that others are experiencing in their life, but we often think that this will not occur in our life. We brush it aside and continue with our life with no care or concern about what is happening around us. We seldom point out the mistakes that others make in the fear of losing our friendship. We try to ignore the hard truths of life and try to behave as though we are immune from all things around us. We are either ignorant about the impact or are complacent to act unless it affects us directly.

Through the story of Esther, we will learn how Esther reacted when she recognized the situation that awaited her and all the members of her community when the King's edict was to be carried out.

## Bible Exposition

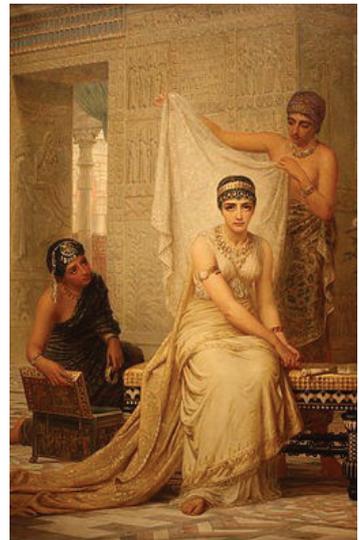
Persian King Ahasuerus is displeased with the behavior of his Queen, Vashti, and based on the advice of his councilors, he banishes her from his palace. Later the king feels lonely and seeks to find the loveliest woman as his new Queen. From amongst many who were brought and prepared for this role, a Jew is chosen. Mordecai brought his cousin Esther before the King and her beauty surpasses that of all the others. Her Jewish name was Hadassah, which means myrtle. The leaves of the myrtle tree releases its fragrance only when it is crushed. Having chosen Esther as his new queen, the king is now happy and enjoys life.

Meanwhile Haman, a chief minister under King Ahasuerus, is given special privileges. One was that all the people were to bow down to him as he passed by. Being a Jew, Mordecai would not bow to anyone except God. This infuriates Haman and he takes it as a personal insult and crime against the entire Persian kingdom. Haman and his wife devise a plan against the Jews and convinces the King to issue an edict for the annihilation of all the Jews on a single day 11 months later.

This lesson focuses on the call to duty issued by Mordecai to Esther after the edict is issued by the King. Esther, is enjoying her life as queen. A date for the mass execution of Jews has been conveyed throughout the kingdom. Mordecai expresses his grief and sorrow at this edict by wearing sack cloth and ashes and wailing bitterly on the streets. Esther sends him clothes to wear, but Mordecai refuses to accept the clothes. Esther sends her trusted eunuch to find out the reason for Mordecai's sorrow. Mordecai explains the details of the situation about Haman promising to pay to the King's treasury in return for issuing this edict and sends a copy of the edict for Esther to read. Mordecai also commands Esther to go to the King and plead for the life of her people.

Esther sends a message back about the Persian law that any man or woman who enters the King's courts without being invited shall be put to death. She is trying to avoid facing the King for two reasons:

1. Does not want to tell the King she is a Jew



## Activities

Discuss the following in small groups or all together :

Identify times in which you stay silent when you see something wrong.

What can you do to be more bold and do the right thing?

Do you believe that God has placed you in certain situations for a purpose?

2. She also fears the law that anyone entering the inner courts without being invited would be put to death.

Mordecai, reminds her that she should not hide under the protection of the palace and escape the edict. Furthermore, if she did not step up, God would deliver his people through other means and she, along with her father's household, may not survive this edict.

Now Esther realizes the greater cause of being placed in the palace as the Queen at this time of tribulation for the entire Jewish community and decides to meet with the King and plead for mercy on behalf of the Jews. She prepares to perish for the sake of her people. She is willing to sacrifice her life for the sake of the Jews and God gives her victory over the evil.

## Lesson Review

1. When did Esther realize she had a bigger role in life beyond her position as queen?
2. How did Esther prepare to face the King ?

## Values for Life:

We should never be ignorant of what is happening around us and always be prepared to stand up against evil. We should seek God's advice and be committed to doing His will without fear for our personal life. When we are willing to be crushed like Hadassah (Esther), the true fragrance of our life will come out for others to enjoy from our good deeds.

## Memory Verse:

For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.

**Esther 4:14**

## Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for our life and the blessings You have provided us. Help us to realize who we are, where we are and what we have needs to be used for Your glory. Let us not be ashamed of You but rather never afraid to tell others that You are our God. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

# CONVERSION OF SAUL

Theme : God can and will use anybody

Grade 9 - Unit 4 Lesson 13

## Acts 8:1-3

That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup> Devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him. <sup>3</sup> But Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison.

## Acts 9:1-19

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" <sup>5</sup> He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>6</sup> But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." <sup>7</sup> The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. <sup>8</sup> Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup> For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

<sup>10</sup> Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." <sup>11</sup> The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, <sup>12</sup> and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." <sup>13</sup> But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; <sup>14</sup> and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your

name." <sup>15</sup> But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; <sup>16</sup> I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

<sup>17</sup> So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." <sup>18</sup> And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, <sup>19</sup> and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

### Aim:

To understand that God can use your life to accomplish His purpose and that there is a difference between being religious and knowing God

## Student Introduction

Franklin Graham is the fourth child of the famous evangelist Late Billy Graham and his wife, the late Ruth Bell Graham. He was born into a spiritually rich family. By the time Franklin was born, Billy Graham was already known around the world as a spiritual leader. Franklin's maternal grandfather, Lemuel Nelson Bell, served as a medical missionary to China for more than 20 years and was also a respected moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. From an early age, Franklin rebelled against his father's saintly ways. He lived a worldly life, which included smoking, drinking, and partying. As Billy Graham's biographer William Martin stated, "He was behaving in ways that were not appropriate, to not only Billy Graham's son but to a young Christian." One day his father looked into his eyes and said, "I want you to know that your mother and I sense there is a struggle for the soul of your life, and you're going to have to make a choice." Franklin began to think about his father's comments.

One night in a hotel room in Jerusalem, Franklin's life changed. In his autobiography, *Rebel with a Cause: Finally Comfortable Being Graham*, Franklin explained his conversion experience: "That night instead of going to the bar for a couple of beers, I found myself alone in my room reading through the gospel of John. When I came to the third chapter, I read not just that Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be born again, but I also grasped that Franklin Graham had to be born again as well." He added "just being the son of Billy Graham won't get me into heaven". With the new commitment to God, Graham began his spiritual journey. The once reluctant Franklin, now follows his father's footsteps, and is very proud of his calling as a witness to the Lord.



Franklin Graham (left) and his father Billy

## Bible Exposition

Little is known of the birth and early childhood of Saul. Saul first appeared in the Bible in Acts 7:58, as a young man who witnessed the stoning of Stephen, the first martyr for Christ. Saul, a devout Jew was born in Tarsus of Cilicia and brought up in the city of Jerusalem. He studied under Gamaliel, an expert in religious law, became well versed in Judaism and its doctrine.

Saul was very proud of his rich heritage. He was *circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;... as to righteousness under the law, blameless.* (Philippians 3:5, 6). As a well-educated man, who was raised in Greek Culture, Saul had a commanding knowledge of philosophy and could have a scholarly conversation with most educated citizens of his time. His Roman citizenship granted him prestige and respect, which saved him many times during his ministry (Acts 16:37).

As a very devout Jew, he held the faith of his fathers as supreme. He couldn't accept any doctrine that was against the Law of Moses, which had led Israel for so many years. However, Jesus came and claimed himself as the Son of God and the Messiah. He also

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***Paul was from Tarsus,  
which is in  
present day southern  
Turkey***

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## Activities

Discuss one of the following—

Find other examples in the Bible where God chose people despite their shortcomings, for His purpose

Discuss the drawbacks of inherited religion based on the stories of Paul and Franklin Graham. Based on this lesson, do you consider yourself as religious or true Christian? Explain.

claimed that He is the only way to God, the Father. Jesus said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6). Jesus also questioned the faith of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, and called them hypocrites. For Saul, Christianity was a threat to his beliefs, his religion, and to the teachings of Judaism. Thus, he developed a fervent hatred for Christ and his followers.

### Stoning of Stephen

Soon after the believers received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-4), the apostles started their ministry following Jesus’ Great Commission; “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Mathew 28: 19-20) The apostles proclaimed the good news and performed many signs and wonders among the people. More and more people accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and were added to the group of believers. The word of God spread as many from the neighboring towns witnessed the apostles performing miracles: healing the sick and curing the tormented impure spirits. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly (Acts 5:12-16)

As the number of believers increased, the apostles decided to choose seven men among themselves who were full of the Spirit and wisdom to hand over the responsibility of waiting on tables (keeping accounts), so that the apostles could focus their attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power was one of the men who was selected for this ministry. Soon Stephen started performing great wonders and signs among the people. Those who were opposed to Christian faith, seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin, while he was preaching the good news. Standing in the Sanhedrin Stephen looked up to heaven, saw God’s Glory and shouted, *“I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”* (Acts 7:56) Hearing this, the members of the Sanhedrin yelled at the top of their voices, rushed at him, dragged him out of the city, and began to stone him. Saul was standing there, giving approval to his death and watching over the garments of those who killed him.

### Rise of Saul

On the day Stephen was stoned, a great persecution broke out against the Christian churches in Jerusalem, and all believers except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Saul set out on a crusade to destroy the Church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. As a deeply religious man, he thought he was doing the will of God by fighting against Christianity.

Moreover, Saul was very proud of his Jewish heritage. He had deep love and appreciation for his Jewish faith. So, he was reluctant to accept any religion that talks against the teachings of Judaism.. His passion for his religion made him blind towards the teaching of Jesus Christ. He was determined to wipe out Christianity

from the face of the earth. To this end, he did everything in his power to stop its growth.

In the meantime, Saul obtained permission from the high priest to visit Damascus to find Christians, whether men or women, and take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. He was not willing to spare any Christian, even those who may have fled to Damascus after Stephen's stoning. His intention to get rid of Christianity was evident in his actions, albeit God had other plans for Saul.

### God's Plan for Saul

The journey to Damascus was a life-changing experience for Saul. As he was approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. This light depicts the radiance of God's glory. Jesus is the light of the world (Acts 9:3b). Here, Saul was blinded by the light - the light of Jesus Christ. Through this light, he experienced the risen, glorified Jesus. He fell to the ground. Then heard a voice talking to him; "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

When Saul set out on his journey to Damascus, he thought he was doing the will of God: the extinction of Christian beliefs and teachings. He didn't realize that he was fighting against God Himself.

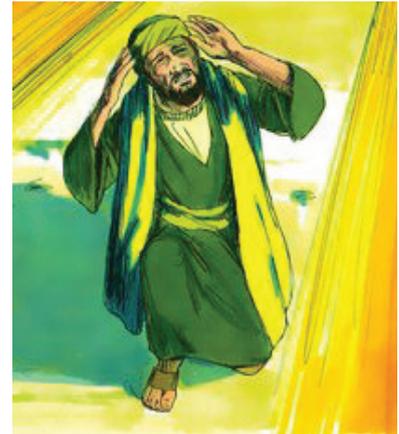
Though he was religious, he never experienced God. He didn't know God. Nonetheless, the question, "Saul, why do you persecute me?" changed Saul's perceptions about everything he thought he knew. Saul, the scholar, religious leader, did not know what was happening to him. His education or religious authority did not help him comprehend the situation. His pride disappeared. He humbled himself and asked; "*Who are you Lord?*" Jesus revealed his identity. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). The church is the body of Christ.

Persecuting Christ's people is persecuting Christ Himself. As a Pharisee, Saul was completely consumed by his religion; thus resisted God's work in Him. He refused the true, living God and His grace.

The Voice asked Saul to get up and go to Damascus, where he would be told what to do. The men traveling with Saul heard the sound but did not see anyone. They took Saul to Damascus. He was blinded for three days; during which time he neither ate nor drank.

In Damascus, God arranged His servant Ananias to help Saul regain his sight and to prepare Saul for His ministry. Knowing Saul, Ananias was reluctant in the beginning to visit Saul. However, when Ananias understood God's purpose for Saul, he immediately visited Saul, laid his hands on him. Saul gained his sight, was filled with Holy Spirit, and got baptized.

No one could have ever imagined the man who set out to destroy early Christians would become a great advocate for Christianity. A Pharisee, descended from Pharisees would become a follower of Christ. However, God had plans for Saul's life. He wanted to use Saul for the glory of His kingdom. As the Lord told Ananias "*he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.*" (Acts 9:15-16).



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*Paul is known as the  
'Apostle of the Gentiles'  
for he was instrumental  
in making the Good  
News accessible to  
non-Jews*

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Saul's radical transformation changed the history of Christian church. He became the greatest missionary of all time. He worked among Gentiles and Jews spreading the Good News of salvation. God used Saul's talents, religious knowledge, the prestige and power he gained through Roman citizenship, and his secular knowledge to gain more people to His kingdom. Paul's transformation showed that nothing is impossible with God.

God has a purpose for each one of us. No matter what our circumstance or background is, He can and will use us to bring glory to His name. For this, we need to accept Him as the Lord and Savior of our life and submit ourselves to His will. Just as God used Paul and Franklin, God is able to use us, as well. Listen to His call and respond. As is written *"Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me."* (Revelation: 3:20) Once He comes in to our life, our life will be transformed. We will become new creation.

### **Being Religious versus Knowing God**

Saul was a man who followed Jewish customs and rules diligently. However, there was a big problem with Saul's religious knowledge and practices. Saul's religion was an inherited religion. He learned the doctrine of Judaism first from his father and then through his education with Gamaliel. He knew the religion; but he didn't know God. He was religious, but he didn't have a personal relationship with God. God was a distant entity to him. By focusing on religion, he failed to know the true, living God. He was spiritually blind. When Saul admitted his shortcomings and accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior, God transformed him and worked through him.

It is not our human heritage that gives us salvation. Salvation does not depend upon our social status, education, financial background, or any earthly possessions. Our heavenly heritage obtained through accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior gives us the new life. Being born to a Christian family doesn't guarantee Salvation. We can be Christians, and yet not know our Lord; we can be Christians and yet be lost, if we don't have a personal relationship God. We don't want to inherit our religion; we need to experience Jesus Christ. Going to church every Sunday, attending Youth Fellowship regularly, being in the choir, and studying His words will help develop a relationship with God. However, one can be a true Christian only through knowing God and living according to His will. As Jesus said *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."* (Matthew 7:21).

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*God has the ability to transform anyone for His ultimate purpose.*

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## **Lesson Review**

1. Explain the spiritual transformation that took place in Saul's life.
2. Before Saul met Jesus Christ, he was religious, but spiritually blind. Explain.

3. How did Ananias become an instrument in Saul's transformation?

### Values for Life:

God's grace can make a powerful difference in our life. God can and will use us if we submit ourselves to His will. God transformed Paul and used him to spread the gospel among Gentiles, kings, and the people of Israel. God gave him the strength, wisdom, and endurance to carry out this mission. Just as Paul, we need to realize that salvation comes from God alone, not from our rich heritage, scholarship, or self-proclaimed righteousness. God can wash away all our sins and make us holy. As God said, *"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool"* (Isaiah 1:18). Our salvation comes from God, God alone. Let us commit our life in His hands, be obedient to his will. God will use us to be a blessing to the people around us, despite our weaknesses.



### Memory Verse:

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

**Acts 9:15-16**

### Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the sacrifice You made on the cross. Help us to realize that salvation comes from You alone and not from our parents or works. Help us to put our entire trust in You, seeking Your will in our life. In Jesus, the name above all names we pray, Amen.