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Moses Had Two Mommies

Jochebed & Pharaoh's Daughter

Once on a quiz show, contestants were asked, "Who was the mother of Moses?" None of them were able to provide the correct answer. The correct answer would be: Jochebed. She was the mother of Moses. Wait a moment. The answer is not complete for Moses had two mommies (not mummies). If you have any doubts about this answer, please familiarize yourself with the Exodus account.

Before reading the passage below a little bit of background information is in order. When the book of Exodus opens, the chosen seed of Abraham are slaves in Egypt. They were first brought to that ancient civilization a few hundred years previously by Joseph when he was second ruler of the empire. Now, he is all but forgotten by the Egyptians. But God has not forgotten His people and hears their cries in Heaven. Pharaoh has decreed that the male sons of the Israelite slave population be killed by the midwives when they are born. The midwives, Puah and Shiphrah (who may have been the head midwives for the Israelites), refused to comply (Ex. 1:15,16). Next, Pharaoh orders "every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive" (Ex. 1:22).

"And a man of the house of Levi went and took as wife a daughter of Levi. So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months. But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river's bank. And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him. Then the daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river. And her maidens walked along the riverside; and when she saw the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid to get it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the baby wept. So she had compassion on him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?" And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the maiden went and called the child's mother. Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses, saying, "Because I drew him out of the water" (Ex 2:1-10).

Jochebed Moses' Birth Mother

Jochebed Feared God

Jochebed was Moses' biological mother. Could you image pregnant Jochebed's heart wrenching fear: "What if my baby is a boy? What can I do?" She may have been able to hide a newborn for three months, but there came a time when hiding a baby would not be possible. She and her husband would have had a healthy fear of what the government could do to them for their disobedience. However, they feared God more than man.

The apostles were arrested more than once in Jerusalem for preached Jesus death and resurrection. The Sanhedrin "called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18). They went right back out to the public an continued their preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus. Again they were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men'" (Acts 5:29). A proper fear

of God will lead men like the apostles and women like Jochebed to obey God's commandments.

Jochebed Faith in God

Was Jochebed foolish or a fanatic for disobeying the government? Or was she just being faithful to her God? According to Hebrews Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed, were acting out of faith. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command" (Heb. 11:23). From where did such a powerful faith come? "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). So, they either were counting on God's promise to Abraham concerning his numerous "seed" or God had let them in on the idea that Moses was to be the savior of the children of Abraham.

Later on in the history of God's people three friends of Daniel were commanded by the government to bow down and worship the image made by Nebuchadnezzar. When they did not do so the king gave them a second chance. "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up" (Dan. 3:16-18).

Jochebed Trusted God

Whether or not God gave Jochebed the plan to put Moses in the ark and hide him along the banks of the Nile, this student of the Bible cannot say for sure. Nonetheless, one can only image this was one of the darkest days in the life of Jochebed. When caught between the death treats of a hostile king and spare the life of her son she made the only real choice: trust in God.

The pitch-lined ark turned out to be a cradle of safety for baby Moses. Ironically the crocodile-infested Nile was safer than the arms of Moses' mother. Pharaoh wanted all male babies put in the river. So she complied. But chose a safe location and stationed her daughter to watch what happened. At this time Moses' sister, Miriam was about ten years of age and his brother, Aaron, would have been about three.

Part of trusting in God is waiting on God to act. Think about poor Jochebed waiting at home hoping to her good news from Miriam. How relieved she must have been when none other than Pharaoh's daughter came and rescued her son. Her trust in God gave her back he baby. She was able to raise him for the first couple of years in her home before giving him over to Pharaoh's daughter.

Jochebed Glorified God

Moses' mother not only saved his life and was able to continue to care for her baby, but her fear, faith, and trust in God brought Him glory. Perhaps by the providence of the same God who saved her son she was give her name. Jochebed in Hebrew means "Yahweh is glory." You can be certain this grateful God fearing mother glorified the name of God as her baby was returned to her.

Jochebed Raised Her Children for God

Many mothers have raised their sons to be successful in business and daughters to excel in life. Jochebed had three children who became great for God. Her daughter, Miriam, was a prophetess and gifted musician for Israel. Her oldest song, Aaron, was Israel's first high priest and the founder of the Aaronic priesthood. And Moses was one of the greatest national leaders and legislators this world has ever known.

A grade-school teacher was giving a science lesson. First, she showed her students how a magnet could pick things up, such as, a nail or a paper clip. Next, she asked her students, while holding up the magnet, "My name begins with the letter M and I pick up things. What am I?" One young student quickly answered, "You're a Mother!!"

Jochebed was Moses' biological mother. However, Moses had two mommies. The daughter of Pharaoh took him into the royal palace to raise him as her own. Both mothers played an important role in the plan of God to save the Israelite slaves from Egyptian bondage.

Pharaoh's Daughter, Moses' Adoptive Mother

An Instrument of God

How did the princess show up at the right time to save baby Moses? Why was it her and not one of the Egyptian soldiers? Were it not for the providential hand of God, Moses most likely would not have survived his first year of life. God used the princess to accomplish His work in providing His chosen people as a savior and lawgiver. God has altered the lots of nations with small developments. He can do the same for those of us who love Him today. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8:28).

Showed Compassion for a Child

Notice the princess "had compassion on" baby Moses. Her natural love for a helpless child overcame her superiority of royalty and prejudice against a slave race. It was out of compassion which moved her to draw Moses out of the water. His name means "drawn out of the water" (Ex. 2:10).

Whereas the princess' father was pro-death to all male Israelite babies, she was pro-life. His government decree was for Moses to die. We need more women to look upon babies born and yet to be born with greater compassion. Legislators in Texas proposed a law that offered pregnant mothers the opportunity to see ultrasounds of their unborn children. Why? Perhaps if they could see the baby and watch it move they too would have compassion and spare its life.

Educated Moses

In Stephen's sermon he said, "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22). Pharaoh's daughter supplied Moses with the best education the schools of Egypt could offer. This would have given Moses an opportunity to have special skills and knowledge he could use to both rescue and later lead the children of Israel.

Moses was...

▲ Returned by God

God literally gave Jochebed's child back to her. She saved her baby and was even paid to care for him till he was weaned. This meant that for the first three years of his life she was his paid nurse. She was blessed twofold by God for her faith.

▲ Redirected to God

All the knowledge and wisdom Moses could have received from Egyptian academia could not give him the knowledge of the true God. His princess mother could not have told him the stories of his forefathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. She would not have shared with him God's promises to them. Yet his Israelite mother could have shared her faith and told him what God had done for her. She could have helped him identify with His people. "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Heb. 11:24). It happened to Moses according to the proverb: "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Moses became the kind of man he was because of the type of mother he had.

Consider a poetic piece written by Harriett W. Gillis called "Jochebed, a Mother."

She never heard of Mother's Day, nor ever felt the need. Content was she to train, and clothe her little world of three. How unpretentious! No career! Just answering childhood's questions, and telling of the Hebrews bold in faith and courage for the Lord. Of kissing bruises and washing tired, dirty feet, demanding prompt obedience and teaching prayer to God. Just homely tasks, but faithfully performed. Yes, done so well that nigh to forty years in Pharaoh's court could not erase the imprint made. And Moses made his choice because long years before his mother had made hers!

▲ Revenger For God

The life of Moses can be divided into three periods, three forty-year periods: Pharaoh's palace after he was drawn out, the desert where he was disciplined for forty years, and the wilderness where he delivered God's people. Ironically, the baby saved by Pharaoh's daughter is the same who destroyed Pharaoh. He had decreed death upon the male babies of the slaves and God through a slave baby declared God was sending a plague of death upon the firstborn of Egypt. "And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the female servant who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the animals" (Exodus 11:5).

Just a cursory glance at Bible history reveals that God has had a special care and use for babies in His plans. He sent special babies like Moses, Isaac, Joseph, Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist, and especially Jesus into the world and changed mankind's condition for the best each time. Only God is powerful and wise enough to use the weakest and most needed of humanity to bless all weak and needy men and women.

God saved baby Moses from the murdering decrees of a king. He would later save baby Jesus from King Herod who gave orders that all the children in Bethlehem should be slain (Matt. 2;16). Jesus told the people "for if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me" (John 5:46). Moses had prophesied to the people, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear" (Deut. 18:15).

Questions:

1.	How did the	Israelites e	end up in	Egypt and	how did they	end ur	slaves to	th Egyptians?
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- 3. Why did Jochebed hide Moses for three months?
- 4. How did Jochebed demonstrate her faith in God?
- 5. Give other examples of men and/or women of faith who would rather refuse the sinful demands of their government and obey God?
- 6. Where did Jochebed put Moses?
- 7. Who stayed and watched what happened to baby Moses? What did happen?
- 8. What is the meaning of the name "Jochebed"? Who does this meaning relate to her story?

9.	List the three children of Jochebed and what they would go on to accomplish?
10.	Who was Moses' other mother?
11.	How did the princess show up at the right time to save baby Moses? Why was it her and not one of the Egyptian soldiers?
12.	What motivated her to take care of Moses?
13.	Where was Moses raised and what special benefits did this afford him?
14.	How did Jochebed get baby Moses back?
15.	What benefits could Moses' biological mother give him the Egyptian princess could not?
16.	What is the irony of Moses being saved by the Egyptian Princess?
Application 1.	cation & Discussion: What dangers threaten our children today?
2.	What thinks can we do to help protect our children from harmful actions of this world?
Home	work: Do whatever you can to protect your children for the wicked actions designed by the world to harm them.

Heroic Obstetricians

Puah & Shiphrah

Fatherhood has been under attack in this country for some time. Now, motherhood is in the cross hairs. The role mother's play in raising their own children is becoming subservient to the goals of society. Mother's Day has even been devalued.

Contrary to the beliefs of some, the Bible exalts motherhood and the role of women in the scheme of redemption. Strong women, such as, Ruth, Esther, Mary, etc. were not only great role models for women of all generations but for the salvation of all generations that came after them. Exodus records a short story about two valiant women whose profession put them in direct conflict with the plans of the most powerful man on earth. Puah and Shiphrah were Hebrew midwives who were blessed with motherhood because they were saviors to the mothers of the Israelite slaves. Without these two women, who were faithful to their profession and God, we would not have had Moses.

The story of Puah and Shiphrah comes after the death of Joseph and the rise of a Pharaoh who did not know him. The Egyptians had enslaved the Israelites. However, the slave population had exploded and gave grave concern to Pharaoh. He planned to work the Israelites hard, leaving them with little energy to raise more children. The plan failed. The Hebrews population continued to grow. The Egyptians "made their lives bitter with hard bondage in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor" (Ex. 1:14).

Since the plan to work the Israelites to the point of exhaustion did not slow down the increase of their numbers, Pharaoh initiated another plan. Calling for two Hebrew midwives he commanded them, "When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live" ((Ex. 1:16). This plan was simple, the midwives were to execute full-term abortion based on the gender of the baby. The mothers would not suspect Pharaoh and the murder of their child could be concealed as a delivery complication. After a couple of generations the female slaves would have to marry Egyptian men and the Israelite people would become extinct as a people and God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be foiled by the plans of man.

Papyrus from ancient Egypt shows that midwifery had been a well-established female occupation in Egypt since the time of Abraham. Although we think of a hospital with male doctors delivering babies on operating tables and special beds, historically, most babies were delivered by women who served as midwives. It was not until after the Civil War that male doctors took up obstetrics on a regular basis. For most of history it was considered indecent for men to attend the birth of a child no matter what their profession. In same cultures even the father's were not permitted by midwives to be present during the birth of their children. Another notable difference is the use of birthing stools or chairs (cf. Ezekiel 16:4). Puah and Shiphrah were probably the heads over all the Hebrew midwives and did not have to deliver all the babies of what would have been a population of nearly a half a million women at this time.

How would these two lone women respond to the mighty command of Pharaoh? "But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive" (Ex. 1:17). When the Egyptians did not notice a decrease in the slave population, Pharaoh summoned the head-midwives back to his throne for them to give an account, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are lively and give birth before the midwives come to them" (Ex. 1:19). This was not a lie for the midwives intentionally planned to be late. Slave women were

not a delicate as the women of Egypt but were vigorous. Although they did not lie, they risked their lives by disobeying Pharaoh. Why is this story in the Bible? It shows two Hebrew women of great faith and God rewarding them for fearing Him instead of fearing Pharaoh. "Therefore God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very mighty. And so it was, because the midwives feared God, that He provided households for them" (Ex. 1:20,21). According to scholars these ancient midwives were probably barren. They helped save the families of their fellow Israelites and so God blessed them with a family.

Since the midwives fouled Pharaoh's plan for full-term gender specific abortion or infanticide, he initiated his final solution. Pharaoh implements genocide of all male Hebrew babies. By his royal decree "Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, 'Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive" (Ex. 1:22). This story demonstrates the fact that Satan is not easily deterred. In the garden he was cursed, but the curse spoke of his determination to fight. God said, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Gen. 3:15). Ever since the sin in the Garden Satan has sought to stop God's plan. His enmity with women are seen when the son of Eve, Cain, kills his brother, Abel. Yet God answered with Seth (Genesis 4:8, 25). The wicked queen Athaliah sought to kill all the royal offspring. A brave woman named Jehoshabeath, the king's daughter, saved a son of David, Joash. Through him the Savior would come (2 Chronicles 22:10-11). Even after Jesus was born, Herod the Great commanded that all the male children of Bethlehem be destroyed. God protected them by sending Joseph to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-18). So we have come full circle. The scheme of redemption comes back to Egypt were a former monarch sought to kill the male babies. Again, it is the fear of God that defeats the plans of Satan.

Fearing God Means...

Puah and Shiphrah were heroic obstetricians because they "feared God" even more than they "feared" Pharaoh. Fearing God means you have courage to fear no man. They did have each other. Each one was able to encourage or put the courage in the other as they made their decision to defy the royal edict and carry it through.

Since Puah and Shiphrah were accountable not only for themselves but for all the Hebrew midwives they encouraged them to fear God. *Fearing God means leading others to do right*. All the evil needs to do to triumph is not to awaken within the godly a sense justice and righteousness. However, the leadership of good men and women must do this else many good people will remain passive and indifferent.

Fearing God means the innocent need not fear you. In our country today, partial birth abortion is fast becoming a reality. In this form of infanticide the abortion doctor induces labor on a mature baby and kills it as it is delivered. Our leaders from the president on down should be the first to protect the most innocent lives under their jurisdiction. Instead, like Pharaoh of old, they are the first to attack them.

Pharaoh's concern was focused on male babies who might grow up to become a powerful slave army. He should have been more concerned about two barren Hebrew midwives. Better yet, he should have feared God. Fearing God means the ungodly should fear you. One day Pharaoh would fear one of these male babies who would grow up to become Moses.

Fearing God means obeying God rather than man. The midwives were wise enough and brave enough to fear God. Although the Bible clearly teaches all righteous men and women to obey their rulers, a time will come when the governmental authorities must be disobeyed (Rom. 13:1f; 1 Pet. 2:13). When the apostles were commanded to cease preaching the resurrected Christ, Peter and the rest of the apostles said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). In China where abortion is in some cases required by the government, what would a God-fearing Christian do? In countries where people are not permitted to share the Good News unless they want to spend a good deal of time in prison, what would righteous men and women do? Those who truly fear God will never offer blind obedience to men.

Because Puah and Shiphrah protected the families of their fellow-Israelites God blessed them with their own families. While Pharoah was using slave labor to build two cities, God was using two midwives to build a nation and as a reward He built them a home. God is a "rewarder of those who seek him" (Heb.11:6). Fearing God means God will reward the obedient.

During a play a little boy forgot his line. His mother was close enough so she tried to mouth the words to

him. He did not understand. Finally, she whispered loudly, "I am the light of the world." With a big smile and a loud voice the boy proclaimed, "My mother is the light of the world." And so they are. The world has a savior because of two women who would be blessed with motherhood for fearing God and protecting other women and their babies.

Questions:

10.

1.	Which women in the Bible played an important role in the Scheme of Redemption (Plan of Salvation through Christ)?
2.	What is the historical setting for the story of Puah and Shiphrah?
3.	What was Pharaoh's first plan to keep the increase Israelite slave population under control?
4.	What command did Pharaoh give to Puah and Shiphrah?
5.	How could Pharaoh's plan foil the Scheme of Redemption?
6.	How would these two lone women respond to the mighty command of Pharaoh? Why?
7.	Did these midwives lie to Pharaoh? Explain?
8.	How did God bless these midwives?
9.	Who is Jehoshabeath and how did she help stop the Devil's plan to interfere with the Scheme of Redemption?

True False Fearing God means you have courage to fear no man.

11.	Why should Pharaoh have feared God and the two midwives instead of baby boys?
12.	Who else in the Bible feared God instead of man?
Applic	cation & Discussion:
1.	These two women were brave enough to risk their lives for innocent children. What c ould New Testament Christians to protect innocent babies from abortion?
2.	In what ways does God bless us today when whe fear and obey Him?
Home	work: No matter the situation always fear God about man.

The Kryptonite that Zapped Samson's Strength

Delilah

How many judges of Israel can you name? Did you think about Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon or perhaps the most famous of them all, Samson?

The story of Samson cannot be told without including the woman who brought the He-man down to destruction. Delilah was to Samson what Judas was to Christ. Although her name means "delicate" or "dainty one" the lust filled, womanizing Samson was no match for this seductress. The story of this couple is as well-known as Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. However, it is not a story of love but of lust. This couple may have not had many virtues to emulate, but they do teach modern man a great deal about the power of lust.

Lust will make a man (or woman) a sex addict. Each time we see Samson getting himself into trouble the text begins with the account of Samson seeing a woman. When Samson is first introduced in the Bible it foretells of this he-man with the she weakness. "Now Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in the Timnah of the daughters of the philistines" (Judges 14:1). Next, he goes down to Gaza to visit a prostitute. "Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there" (16:1). The men of the city planned to kill him. Instead, Samson gets up and takes the gates of Gaza and carries them off to a hill facing Hebron some 40 miles away.

We do not have a description of Delilah. Was she a Philistine or an Israelite? She must have been a looker. Samson took notice of her. Since he valued women only for their outward appearance and a tool to gratify his lust, she must have been like kryptonite to his will power. We can easily surmise that they were intimately involved since he spent a bit of time with her in her inner chamber. True ladies of any age just don't do that. This woman would prove to be Samson's fatal attraction. Out of control lusts tend to blind a man to the possible consequences of fornication.

Lust made Delilah greedy. She was promised 1100 silver shekels from the five Philistine lords if she could find the secret to Samson's strength. This is by no means a small sum of money. It is like being paid over one hundred years worth of wages. In today's market it was worth about \$5,500,000. There was not much of a contest for the heart of Delilah. She had to choose between all that money or a womanizer who could up and see another woman and chase after her. After all, no one could conceive of Samson being the marrying type that could settle down and raise a family.

Lust destroyed Samson's convictions. His godly parents had raised him from the womb to be a Nazirite. The vows he was raised with included three simple negative commands: 1) do not eat or drink anything from the vine, yet he was constantly visiting Israel's countryside known for its choice vineyards; 2) do not come in contact with dead bodies, yet he returns to the carcass of the lion he had slain to retrieve for himself and his parents some honey; and 3) no haircuts. Samson looked weird, acted weird around dead things, and had a strange diet.

Lust terminated Samson's strength. Delilah's plan to get at the source of his strength was to "entice him." She was looking for an opening some vulnerability. The major power of lust is the enticement of natural desires. "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth

death" (Js. 1:14,15). As a woman, she was a lethal weapon on a mission to terminate Samson. "For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil" (Prov. 5:3). His weakness was lusting after beautiful women. Other men and women have weaknesses, such as, alcohol, drugs, smoking, materialism, work, fame, etc. All are different, some are not even wrong within themselves. However, lusting after these things can bring down many mighty men and women.

Lust nagged Samson to death. The Bible does not give us a description of Samson. Most artist show him to be a muscle-bound, mountain of a man. In fact, when people saw him they wondered, "Where does that guy get all of his great strength?" Samson must have looked more like Barney Fife of the *Andy Griffith Show* than Lou Ferrigno from the *Incredible Hulk*.

So, Delilah began to beg Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you" (16:6). First, he lies to her by suggesting that new bow strings could bind him. Next, he continues to toy with her by promising that new ropes would do the trick. He shows signs of being worn down when he gets dangerously close to the truth with his seven long locks being woven into a loom. Thrice deceived, Delilah was now going to pull out a woman's weapon of masculine destruction, "How can you say 'I love you'? And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death" (16:15-16). His first wife nagged him for the secret to his riddle (14:16,17). For Samson it was Deja Vu all over again. He had not learned his lesson. Joseph was persistently pestered by Potipher's perverted partner, yet he did not surrender. Remember the proverb which says, "A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike; whoever restrains her restrains the wind, and grasps oil with his right hand" (Prov. 27:15,16).

Lust addicted Samson to sin. He was so addicted to women he could not see how they kept playing him. First, his wife tricked him for the answer to the riddle, the prostitute at Gaza had to of let someone know he was in town, and Delilah tried four time before she was able to pry the truth from his lips. Lust is powerful. No matter how strong you think you are, you just keep going back to it.

Lust weakened Samson. Finally, he gives into the nagging and tells Delilah the source of his strength. Once empowered with his secret she sends for the Philistines once more and more importantly for the money. After Iulling him to sleep on her lap a Philistine comes in and gives him a quick haircut. Surely he must have been sweating bullets with each snip of Samson long locks. Samson was about to learn what a very bad hair day really meant.

Delilah cried out to Samson, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" So he awoke from his sleep, and said, "I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!" But he did not know that the Lord had departed from him" (16:20). Samson's strength was not in his hair but in his God. His weakness was not his baldness, but his lust for loose "ladies." Perhaps, singer Tom Jones captured the inner struggle of Samson when he sang the lyrics to his hit, Delilah:

My, my, my, Delilah Why, why, why, Delilah I could see that girl was no good for me But I was lost like a slave that no man could free

Lust bound Samson. The one thing that could bind the mighty man was nothing external but his internal weaknesses. He could not break the bonds of lust, now he is bound by his enemies. He could conquer the Philistines and snap any rope, but he could not break his passions. He went around and around chasing lose women, now he is bound to go around and around to grind in prison.

Lust blinded Samson. Samson could not control his lust which began every time he saw a woman. Ironically, the Philistines put out the troublesome wandering eyes. Now he could be bound and controlled. Lusts will blind a man to the head on collision that takes the lives of a family of four, but it opens them wide to see the tempting bottle of booze. The lustful man's eyes are keen to see the scantily clad temptress, but blinds him to the sexually transmitted disease that will take away his life.

The truth is lust can be defeated. As three thousand Philistines gathered in the Temple of Dagon

to celebrate their victory over Samson and to blaspheme his God, they forgot to send Samson back to the barber. He prayed to God for his strength to avenge his eyes. As a result many Philistines died when the temple collapsed. Though Samson was not the most spiritually-minded hero, but he did find a place in the great Hebrew Hall of Faith (Heb. 11:32-34).

Lessons for the Ladies

There are some good lessons for the ladies to learn from this tragic "love" story. First, Mamas, don't let you boys grow up to marry Delilah. Neither Samson or Delilah were good for each other. Second, true feminine charm and the appeal of love are gifts received from the Creator. Do not misuse them for selfish gain. Next, silver and gold aren't very good company. They will not love you in return or keep you warm and safe at night. No matter how bad Samson was, no one should be sold out at any price. Furthermore, the love of a man is to be treasured. Wives should value the love, the life, and the loyalty of their husbands. "The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain" (Prov. 31:11). Finally, weaknesses need to be strengthened, not exposed. It is always wise to keep the scissors out of reach of those who are too irresponsible. Instead of exploiting a man's weaknesses for your own gain, try encouraging his strengths for your mutual benefit. "Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands" (Prov. 14:1).

A bit of advice for all those struggle with the power of lust. A wise man once said, "stop flirting with sin, it may kiss you back!"

Questions:

5.

6.

1.	Explain how the story of Samson and Delilah is not a love story but a story of lust.
2.	What was strong man Samson's great weakness?
3.	How much money was Delilah promised if she betrayed Samson? What was this amount equivalent to?
4.	What is involved in a Nazirite vow?

What strategy did Delilah employ to get Samson to give up the secret of his strength?

How did Samson violate all three aspects of this vow?

7.	How d	id Samson toy with Delilah concerning his strength?
8.	Why h	ad the Lord departed from Samson?
9.	How d	id Samson's love for Delilah end up binding and blinding him?
10.	How d	lid Deliliah misuse her feminine charms?
Applio	cation 8	& Discussion:
1.	If you	could go back in time before Samson began to go bad what advice would you give him?
2.	If you	could go back in time what advice would you give Delilah?
Home	work:	Women should not be exploited and they should not exploit by men. Help teach the young men and women what to look for in a mate and how to treat them properly.

Just Call Me "Mephibosheth"

2 Samuel 9:1-13

How do you pronounce "Mephibosheth." It is pronounced *Me phib o sheth*. I don't know anyone by that name. No one I know is that good of a speller. Who was he other than a good speller? Mephibosheth means "one who scatters shame." He was the son of David's friend and brother-in-law, Jonathan, and the grandson of King Saul. After all the descendants of Saul were killed, he was the lone survivor of the first royal dynasty of Israel.

Why study this seemingly obscure character from the Old Testament? Because we all have a lot in common with Mephibosheth.

How We Are like Mephibosheth

♦ Lamed by a Fall

The story goes that when "Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel; and his nurse took him up and fled. And it happened, as she made haste to flee, that he fell and became lame. So his name was Mephibosheth" (2 Samuel 4:4). It was an accident. His nurse did not mean to cause the boy harm. However, he would be a cripple from this fall for the rest of his life.

All of us have been at one time or another crippled by sin. Sin keeps us from walking with God. Sin hinders us on our journey to Heaven. Spiritually, speaking we are hopelessly handicapped by the guilt and consequences of sin.

♦ Looked for by the King

After David became King he asked, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?...Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?" (2 Sam. 9:1,3a). "And Ziba said to the king, 'There is still a son of Jonathan who is lame in his feet'" (2 Sam. 9:1,3a).

It was not crippled Miphibosheth who was looking for the King's help. Instead, it was King David who went in search of him in order to show mercy and grace.

Jesus, the King of kings, explained His motive for coming into the world. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The world was filled with sinners in need of a Savior but not conscious of the need. Jesus "was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him" (John 1:10). God is seeking sinners, but sinners are not looking for Him. We are lost, God is not. God cares enough to seek us out to show favor.

♦ Located in a Far Country

Next, King David asked, "Where is he?' And Ziba said to the king, 'Indeed he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar" (2 Samuel 9:4). This city is located east of the Jordan River. It is known was a desolate barren land. In fact, Lo Debar means "place of no bread."

In the Parable of the Lost Sheep, the lost sheep was found far away from the fold. It required an effort to search for a time to bring it back. The prodigal son wasted his money in a far country. Remember God is not the one who abandons us or moves away. As sinners, we leave Him.

In truth He is not too far away. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Is. 59:1-2). In his sermon on Mars' Hill Paul

told the Athenians, "they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). No distance is to great for God.

♦ Loved Because of Another

"Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, 'Mephibosheth?' And he answered, 'Here is your servant!' So David said to him, 'Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually"(2 Sam. 9:6-7).

Paul explains why God has sought for and accept us: "to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

♦ Loyalty to a Promise Saves

David blessed Mephibosheth because of the loyalty which existed between him and Jonathan. They had made a pact or covenant to look after each other's families. Jonathan said to David, "And you shall not only show me the kindness of the Lord while I still live, that I may not die; "but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the Lord has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth" (1 Samuel 20:14,15). Jonathan was now dead. But David's loyalty to the covenant He made was still valid.

In Genesis 12 God had made a Covenant with Abraham that through his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The Seed was Jesus Christ. All the promises going back to Genesis 3:15 are fulfilled by Christ. Jesus came to fulfill all the Law and the prophets (Matt. 5:170. Jesus said, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me" (Luke 24:44).

♦ Life Sustained by Grace

When a new royal dynasty arose in a nation, the new king will quickly execute all those of the previous one to solidify his power. David did not seek Mephibosheth for execution, but sustain his life by showing grace. Mephibosheth knew that he had done nothing to deserve this royal treatment. He said to David, "What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?" (1 Sam. 9:8). His grandfather, King Saul, had sought to killed David many times over.

We too need to be aware of our unworthiness as sinners who are dead in our trespasses and sins. But God has shown us undeserved kindness. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8).

♦ Lacking Strength

Mephibosheth was in not condition to repay David. He could not even begin to really care for himself. However David supplied him with all he needed.

Like Jonathan's son we too are languid. "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6).

♦ Lavished with Instant Riches

David give Mephibosheth Saul's estate. He thus went from rags to riches in a moment.

God saves us from sin the moment we obey the Gospel and have our sins washed away in baptism. He instantly bestows on us every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). We have a peace that surpasses all understanding, unsearchable riches, and joy inexpressible and full of glory. We have a direct line to the throne of grace via prayer. The blood of Christ continues to cleanse as we confess our sins. Our crown does not fade away. Our inheritance can never be stolen.

♦ Lunch at the King's Table

David next restored Mephibosheth to the Palace of the King. Again he has a right to eat at the king's table. David promised "he shall eat at my table like one of the king's sons" (2 Sam. 9:11).

Jesus longs to dine with us. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Rev. 3:20,21).

Learned to Be Faithful

Just how did Methibosheth respond to King David's kindness. He would remain loyal to David even during their dark days in the Kingdom when civil war displaced both him and his benefactor. He would suffer persecution but remain faithful. A lesson all Christians need to learn. Despite the difficulties of being a Christian, we must remain true and loyal to the one who have shown us such undeserved kindness.

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Questi	Questions:					
1.	How was Mephibosheth related to David?					
2.	How did Mephibosheth become lame? How have we become spiritualy lame?					
3.	Who was looking for Mephibosheth and why?					
4.	Is God seek for us to show mercy and kindness? Why?					
5.	Where was Mephibosheth found?					
6.	How have we become distant from God?					
7.	Why did David want to show kindness to Mephibosheth?					
8.	What promises has God made which result in His seeking to bless use with kindness?					
9.	What blessings did David bestow upon him?					
10.	Did Mephibosheth consider himself worthy of David's gracousness? Explain.					

11.	How did Menhihosheth rena	y or react to David's kindness?
11.	i iow did iviehilibostietii teha	y or react to David's kiridiless:

Application & Discussion:

- 1. What gracious undeserved blessings to we have from God? How should we respond?
- 2. How can we be more like David in this story?
- 3. In what other ways might we be like Mephibosheth in our relationship to God?

Homework: Take time this week to recognize all the kindness and mercy God has shown to us even though we have not earn anything.

The King Who Lost a Kingdom

King Rehoboam

It is approximately 930 BC and Rehoboam has become King. Rehoboam had big shoes to fill. King David, his grandfather, was a man after God's own heart. His father, Solomon, was the richest and wisest of kings in all the world. His father built an empire and knew great fame and power among the nations. However, his extensive building projects had over taxed his subjects and now all eyes were on Rehoboam.

Coronation of the New King

The coronation of the new king was to take place at Shechem (2 Chron. 10:1). This is where Abraham had built an altar (Gen. 12:6-7) and Joshua delivered his farewell address. It was situated in a valley between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. A good place for anointing a new king for it was not in Judah or Benjamin but in the land of Ephriam.

Conflict for the New King

During the coronation at Shechem Rehoboam was faced with conflict. Solomon's taxes and labor force policies has been too much of a burden upon the people. They appealed to Rehoboam for relief (2 Chron. 10:2-4). It sounds like they are giving the new king an ultimatum: "Listen to us or lose us." However, they were not asking for the elimination of taxes, just that he would lower taxes.

Consultations by the New King

Wisely Rehoboam does not make an on the spot decision. He takes three days to consult with others about the situation (2 Chron. 10:5-11). Probably the best decision of his life.

First, the new King sought the counsel of the old men who had advised his father. They instructed Rehoboam to become a servant king to the people and listen to them. But no king wants to be a servant but to have many servants to serve him.

Wanting a second opinion Rehoboam turns to his peer group. These are the young men who grew up with the prince. Rehoboam was already forty-one years old (2 Chronicles 12:13) and the Jews often counted anyone forty and under as young men. These young men had lived during a time of great peace, ease and prosperity. They were out of touch with the life and needs of the people.

Careless Choice of the New King

Instead of being a servant to the people, Rehoboam chose to treat them like his slaves (2 Chron. 10:12-15). Rehoboam liked the young men's advice. He would show the people that his little finger (the weakest member of his body) was stronger that his father's waist or loins (the seat of a man's strength). If they thought Solomon's whips stung just wait till they felt the sting of Rehoboam's scourges. In other words, "brace yourself Israel you have not seen what I can do."

Civil War Between the Kingdoms

This is not the first time there had been a civil war between Judah and the rest of Israel. Ish-bosheth, the son of King Saul, had ruled over Israel for two years before his death (2 Sam. 2:8-10). Absolom revolted and turned most of Israel against his father. In addition, following Absalom's revolt and David's return to power, the northern tribes briefly supported a rebel named Sheba (2 Sam. 19:41-20;22).

When Rehoboam sends his chief tax collector to Israel as a show of force, the determined will of Israel starts the war by killing the King's servant. Rehoboam escapes with his life to Jerusalem. He then gathers 180,000 chosen warriors to go fight against the northern tribes to restore Israel and unite the nation again. However, the word of God came to the prophet Shemaiah to tell Rehoboam not to go up or fight against the northern tribes. The reason is very clear. "Every man return to his home, for this thing is from me" (2 Chron. 11:4). However we find in 2 Chron. 12:15 "there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days."

The rending of the kingdom of Solomon in the days of Rehoboam was a fulfillment of prophecy found in 1 Kings 11:11-13. God was merely using the king's foolish stubborn pride to bring it about. Rehoboam acted foolishly, but God's sovereign will was accomplished. Sometimes God uses our sins for His purposes. The Prophet Ahijah had already been sent to Jeroboam to dramatically prophecy that God would give him the ten tribes of Israel by tearing a new outer garment in twelve pieces and giving him ten (1 Kings 1:31-32).

Confirming the Kingdom

Wisely Rehoboam begins to fortify the cities of Judah and Benjamin. When the priests and Levites are rejected by Jeroboam, they move to Judah. The result of a mass influx of godly men "strengthened the kingdom of Judah...strong for three years, because they walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years" (2 Chron. 11:17).

Corruption of the Kingdom

Just as the kingdom of Solomon was brought down by the marrying of foreign, pagan women, so history repeats itself (2 Chron. 11:13-17; 12:14). Rehoboam was the son of a heathen woman, His mother was Naamah, a distinguished Ammonite woman. Rehoboam had multiple wives as well, although he limited himself to eighteen wives and sixty concubines. But he sought many wives for his sons.

Just as idolatry provoked the jealousy of God in Solomon's day, in the days of Rehoboam Judah "built for themselves high places, sacred pillars, and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. And there were also perverted persons in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel" (1 Kings 14:23-24). The word translated "perverted persons" comes from the Hebrew qadesh, meaning one practicing sodomy and prostitution in religious rituals. Practicing idolatry included the explicit sexual rituals of Canaanite religion (1 Kings 14:23-24).

The final nail in the coffin of Rehoboam's reign came when he rejected God's Word. "Now it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself, that he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel along with him" (2 Chron. 12:1).

Consequences for the Kingdom

Although Solomon's kingdom enjoyed an alliance with Egypt through marriage, the Pharaoh who was Solomon's father-in-law had been overthrown by Shishak. God sent this new Pharaoh to plundered

Rehoboam's palace and the Temple (2 Chron. 12:2-8).

God sent the prophet Shemaiah to warn them, "Thus says the Lord: 'You have forsaken Me, and therefore I also have left you in the hand of Shishak" (2 Chron. 12:5). The king and all his officials humbled themselves. They admitted that the Lord is just. God stayed the hand of the Pharaoh but Judah became subservient for Egypt for a time.

The King of Egypt took the five hundred gold covered shields of Solomon. Rehoboam had these replaced with bronze shields (2 Chron. 12:9-11). When these were used at a distance in ceremonies, the bronze would shine like gold if well polished. Thus in a short time they would go dull. The shields represented the spiritual state of the people and hypocrisy. There is a mere appearance of purity from a distance.

Concluding Remarks

At his death Rehoboam receives the standard obituary (2 Chron. 12:13-16). After ruling for seventeen years his report card is on the negative side. "And he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord" (2 Chron. 12:14).

Application

The first application from what is learned concerning Rehoboam's reign is the need to seek out and follow wise advice. The first thing we should do is go to God in prayer. There is no mention of Rehoboam consulting God during the time he was seeking advice. Why do we need counsel from others? "Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Prov 15:22). "Listen to counsel and receive instruction, That you may be wise in your latter days. There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD's counsel -- that will stand" (Prov 19:20-21; also see Proverbs 18:1-2; 11:14; 12:15). To whom should we go for counsel? "Wisdom is with aged men, and with length of days, understanding" (Job 12:12). "He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm" (Prov 13:20).

The second lesson is the need to practice servant leadership. This type of leader does not answer the people harshly like Rehoboam. "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Prov. 15:1). He had been advised to be a servant to them. "If you are kind to these people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be your servants forever" (2 Chron. 10:7). A ruler who is willing to serve the people will soon have subjects who are willing to serve him. (Matt. 20:25-28). Jesus illustrated servanthood dramatically when He stooped to wash His disciples' feet. Rather than grasping a scepter and wielding a scourge, Rehoboam should have reached for a bowl of water and a towel.

Questions:

- 1. Who was the father and grandfather of Rehoboam? What challenges might this present? What benefits?
- 2. What issue came up a Rehoboam's royal coronation?

3.	Whose advice did Rehoboam seek? Whose advice did he go with?	
4.	What answer did Rehoboam give to the people who were seeking tax relief?	
5.	What did the people do to Rehoboam's tax collector?	
6.	What happened between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel?	
7.	How are these events a fulfillment of the prophecy in 1 Kings 11:11-13?	
8.	How and why was the kingdom of Judah strengthened?	
9.	In what ways did Rehoboam follow in his father's footsteps?	
10.	Who did God send against Judah and what did he do?	
11.	What assessment is given of Rehoboam's reign?	
Annlic	eation & Discussion:	
1.	How should we as Christians go about in seek advice?	
2.	Describe what servant leadership should look like in a New Testament church?	
Homework: Seek wise advice that helps you be of service to the needs of others.		

Seeking and Then Forsaking The Lord

King Asa

Burglars in suburban Marcy were carrying the TV set from the house down the driveway when the next-door neighbor called out: "Hey, are you going to fix her television set?' And the burglars called back, "yes." And the neighbor asked, "Mine needs fixing, could you take it, too?" And the burglars said, "be glad to." And they did.

Often we seek assistance from the wrong source. King Asa is both a contrast and comparison to this. The first three kings of the nation of Judah were Rehobaom, Abijam and Asa. Asa was the godly son of a godless father, Abijah. At first he sought God's help, later in life he forsook the help that God had to offer.

Seeking the Lord

He did what was right in the sight of the Lord (11). This means he followed the ways of the Lord, not his own ways. He is compared to David a great honor among the kings of Judah.

Today, some are presumptuous enough to settle what is good and right in their own eyes. Some like instrumental music, hand clapping, candle lights, etc. Some partake of the Lord's Supper only once a year. As aillustrates what it is to do right in the sight of the Lord: We must oppose and expose all evil and sinful practices.

He attacked the enemies of God. First, he attacked religious homosexuals, (12). The term "sodomites" refers to those perverted persons, who were often associated with Pagan idolatry. These were temple prostitutes. Yes, old Asa was a homophobic king. In contrast there are many denominations today that not only tolerate Gay Christians, but support them in their sins. Some churches are marrying them. The state of California is trying to pass a law not to recognize gay marriages. This is in reponse to San Francisco which passed laws to permit marriages.

Next, he attacked false religions (12). As a did all he could. His heart was right but his efforts did not meet with complete success, v. 14. Later there was a second attack on idolatry (2 Chr. 15:8). Today, many wish to leave other religions alone. God is not pleased with those who have the "live and let live" mentality. Those who truly sought God in the Old and New Testaments not only were intolerant of false gods and religious but actively attacked them in public forums.

Then this noble King attacked sin among his own family (13). His grandmother was Queen Mother and in a powerful position. She established a pagan "grove" which was devoted to the grossest licentiousness. He was impartial. Asa's religion was not just a religion of convenience inherited from his forefathers. His religion was one of conviction. He did not allow his family relationships, even with own grandmother, to become more important than God. Some even today who will allow their family, mother or father, to keep them from doing right. Many attend denominations simply because their grandparents or parents did. Such are not worthy of Jesus (Mt. 10:37).

Finally, he restored proper worship. Azariah said they were without the true God, there were no teaching prophets, and without law. Today, we must restore the New Testament Church. This involves: 1) Removing false doctrines and traditions of men. 2) Going by the Law: Book, chapter and verse. 3) Bible preaching and teaching.

He gave back to God (15). His father failed to give to God from the spoils of war with the Ethiopians. This example of making up failure to give in the past may seem to be required of Asa.

However, it shows the depth of his genuine seeking. Making restitution for past failures and injustices is often a part of true repentance. Just think of all the money that would be given if all the past failures to give were to be collected this Sunday. Most Christians would do well to remember God when He blesses us today. When one's ship comes in to you remember the one to created the sea. When you get a raise do you remember to give God a raise.

Sought God 's help against his enemies (2 Chr. 14:9f) The first ten years of his reign were occupied with abolishing idolatry and establishing religious reforms. Zerah the Ethiopian came against Judah with a million man march and 300 chariots. He prayed before battle with the Ethiopians, "Lord, it is nothing with thee to help". Most kings would have tried to seek aliances with foreign powers. When confronted with threats to we seek the aid of carnal mind friends or the all-powerful God.

He listened to the prophet of God (2 Chr. 15:1-7). Azariah a prophet came to encourage him to do even more than before. We must listen to the forth-tellers of God, failure to do so is to fail to listen to God.

He lead the people in a covenant with God (2 Chr. 14:4; 12-15). As a first lead by example, but then by command. True spiritual leaders bring people closer to God, not just close to themselves.

Forsaking the Lord

He did what was right in his eyes (17f). Baasha, King of Israel, conducts a 'cold war' against Asa's Kingdom. Israel captured Ramath which was 5 miles from Jerusalem. By its command of the high road, to prevent his subjects from falling away to the kingdom of Judah, or even from going up to Jerusalem to worship; in fact, to isolate Judah and to blockade it capital. Asa's decision was to seek foreign aid. Although the object was of his effort right, The means were wrong. His alliance was successful, but do the ends justify the means? His was zeal without trust in God. Foreign allegiance often became the bane of kings.

He robbed God (18). He took the temple treasures he had given previously and hired Ben-hadad to fight against Israel. Many, like Asa, give and take as is convenient. This is the sin of Ananias and Siphira, (Ac. 5:1-11). Give as you have prospered, not hold back as you have problems.

He sought help of men against his enemies (19; 2 Chr. 16:7-9). Sought an alliance with Benhadad king of Syria. We must not use carnal weapons to fight for the faith (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

He lead the people in an alliance with their enemies (2 Chr. 16:6). Thus, leading them away from trusting in God promised to fight for them.

He refused to listen to God's prophet, (2 Chr. 16:10). Although, he had listened to a previous prophet sent by God, he rejects Hanani, whom God sent to rebuke him. He did not like the message of God, so he persecuted the messenger. Just as Stephen was stoned because of his message (Ac. 7:51-60). Or as the Jews Crucified God's Son. Today, men love to fire the rebukers and keep those who will scratch their itching ears (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

He attacked God's people (2 Chr. 16:10) Hanani was imprisoned and persecuted the people. He did not seek the Lord, 2 Chr. 16:12. Again, Asa sought the aid of mere men (physicians) rather than God. Ironically, Asa means physician. This is not a slight against seeking medical treatment, one must remember the ancient art of medicine was more superstition and idolatry, than science. He died with a terrible illness in the feet because he did not seek the Lord. Remember, God will punish all who do not seek Him (2 Th. 1:7-9).

Asa's life is one of contrast: seeking then forsaking. Everything he sought, he later forsook. Are you seeking the Lord? Do not forsake Him. Are you forsaking the Lord? Start seeking Him? "But you, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!" (2 Chr. 15:7).

Questions:

1.	Who was Asa?
2.	Asa obedience is compared to whom?
3.	List the enemies of God whom King Asa attacked?
4.	What did he restore?
5.	What did he give back to God?
6.	How did he respond to the million man army of the Ethiopians?
7.	Who was Azariah?
8.	How did Asa react to Baasha attack?
9.	What did he do with the temple treasures?
10.	How did Asa respond to Hanani?
11.	How did Asa die?

Application & Discussion:

- 1. List various problems people normally face day by day. Beside them list who they normally go to in order to resolve these problems. Explain why the Lord is the best and primary source of help in all these situations.
- 2. Starting strong in serving the Lord seems easy, being faithful till death is hard. What does a Christian need to do to keeping seeking the Lord faithfully throughout all his life?

Homework: Remember the days when you first sought the Lord and never forsake him.

Will Anyone Weep at Your Funeral?

King Jehoram

Most people would like to know that they will be missed when the die. They want be to remembered fondly as a good person. One little girl said after the funeral of her friend, "It was easier to be good when she was around." However, when King Jehoram of Judah died no one cared. Literally, the text could be translated, "he departed without any feeling of loss." No big fancy memorial service for this king.

Jehoram received a very negative review by the chronicler of the kings of Judah in 2 Chronicles 21:1-20 (also see 2 Kings 8:16-24). He reigned from 849-842 BC. During this time God is at work preserving the royal line of King David, so the Messianic prophecies could be fulfilled. Wicked men and women were striving to destroy God's plans. The greatest opposition came from the alliance with the "house of Ahab" through marriage.

Perversions of Jehoram

• His Slaughter (21:1-4)

As firstborn Jehoram had been marked for kingship, but the father's love have been shared among all his sons. King Jehoshaphat had placed his six younger sons in fortified cities of Judah. Jehoram saw this as a threat to his royal authority and killed his brothers. This was just the first of several acts of violence against the royal family.

• His Spouse (21:5-7)

Jehoram's father, King Jehoshaphat allied himself to King Ahab of Israel to war against the Syrians. This alliance was sealed with Jehoram's marriage to Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah. As her mother had introduced Baal worship into the kingdom of Israel, so Athaliah would bring her pagan religion to Judah. This would leave a lasting negative legacy on the next few generation of David's house.

His Shrines (21:11)

With his pagan wife as a major influence, Jehoram began to set up the altars of worship for Baal in the high places. Just as it had happened in the northern kingdom to the daughters of Israel so the daughters of Judah became prostitutes for the groves of Ashtoreth. In verse eleven it says that Jehoram used His royal power to "compelled Judah thereto." His posterity would spend a great deal of their time and energy removing these idols and abominations from Judah.

Preservation of Jehoram

Although Jehoram was evil, the Lord did not bring down the house of David. Why? Because of the Davidic covenant He had made. "Yet the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever" (2 Chron. 21:7). This lamp of David refers God promise to give to David's family the territory of Judah when the ten tribes were given over to Jeroboam. God promised, "And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there" (1 Kings 11:36). Just as we will leave a light on our the

house when we are gone to give the impression that someone is home, so God had a burning lamp in David's house to indicate that is was to always to be occupied the line of David would not be extinguished until the Messiah came. This was not a positive statement about Jehoram but about God and His promise to the king's forefather, David. "The light of the righteous rejoices: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out" (Prov. 13:9).

The Edomites had been brought under the rule of Judah at one time. Now they are revolting. When Jehoram took his army into Edom to quell this rebellion he was surrounded and had to fight his way out of the trap (21:8-10). This too is a sign that God was going to show him grace because of the promise made to David.

Prophecy Against Jehoram

A letter is sent from the prophet Elijah to Jehoram (21:12-16). Like most prophecies announcing judgment in the Old Testament this letter begins claiming God as the source and authority behind the message; an denouncement of the transgression is given, and then punishment is pronounced.

This letter was most likely one of the last public acts of the great prophet Elijah. As God has sent warnings of Judgment against King Ahab and others through His prophet now it is the King of Judah's turn to receive his just condemnation. Jehoram wanted to follow the ways of the kings of Israel and also murder his brothers, so now, he can suffer the fate of such kings. Although he is accused of leading the people of Judah and Jerusalem into spiritual and even physical harlotry with pagan idols the people were also responsible in that they "prostitute themselves" (NIV) that is they "made themselves prostitutes." Sexual immorality has often accompanied spiritual adultery with the pagan idols.

The pronouncement of punishment against Jehoram was swiftly fulfilled with the capture of the royal family and the plundering of the royal treasures. In all this there is no sign from the king that he repented of his ways and pleaded for God's mercy.

Punishments for Jehoram

Loss of Territory: Rebellion

The fulfillment of God's punishments against Jehoram are described in verses sixteen through twenty. Because of his rejection of God and acceptance of foreign gods, Jehoram lost his foreign territory's of Edom and Libnah. He was never able to regain them. Libnah was located on the south-west border of Judah and was a city controlling the western foothills.

Loss of Possessions

Jehoram having lost these two territories which may have served as buffer zones, the Philistines and Arabs now took advantage of his situation and invaded and plundered as far as the king's palace.

Loss of Family

Jehoram was deprived of possessions, wives, and sons (except his youngest son). The sons and wives eventually were killed except for Ahaziah. Ironically, he killed his brothers to gain their possessions and secure his kingdom. Now he has lost his family and his possessions. If the king had killed his brothers to gain their possessions, now these were lost.

Loss of Health

God further took away his health by afflicting him with a terrible disease wherein he suffered day by day. His intestines were slowly coming out of his body. One can only imagine the great physical pain that was add to the king's great emotional distress over his other losses.

Loss of Life

The king's deadly disease would go on for two years before he died. Jehoram's reign was cut short as he died a the age of forty years.

Loss of Legacy

The Chronicler concludes his recounting of Jehoram's reign over Judah: "He was thirty-two years

old when he became king. He reigned in Jerusalem eight years and, to no one's sorrow, departed. However they buried him in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings" (21:20).

Principles Learned From Jehoram

Evil Reaps Just Judgement

A just God does not allow the evil of a leader of His people to go unpunished. When Jehoram lost the favor of God He lost everything. If man will not obey God, man will be punished by God. Sowing a life of wickedness will result in reaping some very wicked consequences. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).

Sow a thought and you reap an act; Sow an act and you reap a habit; Sow a habit and you reap a character; Sow a character and you reap a destiny.

Samuel Smiles (1812-1904)

A Wicked, Godless Life Leaves No Lasting Legacy

At the time of his death Howard Hughes was the richest man in America. At his death he weighed only ninety pounds. He had wasted away on drug abuse. No one came to mourn his death. "Howard Hughes' death was commemorated in Las Vegas by a minute of silence. Casinos fell silent. Housewives stood uncomfortable clutching their paper cups full of coins at the slot machines, the blackjack games paused, and at the crap tables the stickmen cradled the dice in the crook of their wooden wands. Then a pit boss looked at his watch, leaned forward and whispered, "O.K., roll the dice. He's had his minute" (Time, December 13, 1976).

Like Hughes, King Jehoram, the fifth king of Judah, died and no one mourned his death. The way he treated God and people in life, determined how he would be treated when his life had ended. It was as if the people of Jerusalem were saying by their lack of lament: "We are glad to see the last of him." He was not buried in the sepulcher of the kings. A wicked king like Jehoram would have desecrated the sepulcher of the Kings. Since he chose to walk after the ways of the house of Ahab and not David he would not be buried with the royal family.

How will you be remembered? Will anyone weep at your funeral? Will mourners accompany your body to the grave? Or will people be glad to see you go? C.H. Spurgeon said it well: "A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you, and were helped by you, will remember you. So carve you name on hearts, and not on marble." (Via Steve Farrar, Family Survival in the American Jungle, Multnomah Press, 1991, p. 48). Perhaps you would like Mark Twain's comments as well: "Let us endeavor so to live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry."

Questions:

- 1. What did Jehoram do to his brothers?
- 2. Who did Jehoram marry? Who were his in-laws?
- 3. What did Jehoram compel Judah to do?

	4.	what promises had God made concerning King David?
	5.	Who sent a letter to Jehoram and why?
	6.	What territories did Jehoram lose?
	7.	What happened to Jehoram's family?
	8.	What disease afflicted Jehoram and for how long?
	9.	Who does the chronicler sum up the reign of King Jehoram?
	10.	Who was Jehoram's father? Was he a good or bad King of Judah?
Application & Discussion:		
	1.	Explain how King Jehoram reaped what he had sown? Where is the passage in the New Testament which teaches this? How does this apply to Christians?
	2.	What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind.
Homework: Live your life so that you will be greatly missed when you are gone.		

The Most Wicked Woman in the Bible

Athaliah 2 Kings 8:16-11:16; 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:15

Bible, Bible in my hand who was the most wicked woman in all of Israel's land? Who was the worst wife? Who was the worst grandmother? Who was the worst queen? Athaliah is perhaps the answer to all these questions. She is referred to as "that wicked woman" (2 Chr. 24:7).

Athaliah became queen over all of Judah because of a politically arranged marriage between the children of the evil King Ahab of Israel and the good King Jehoshaphat of Judah. Jehoshaphat was a godly king who "did not turn aside from doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord" (1 Kings. 22:43). Arranged marriages were nothing novel or immoral. Abraham arranged the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah. Yet, as a good king Jehoshaphat should have avoided giving his son over to a marriage to the prodigy of Ahab and Jezebel.

Athaliah's mother was the evil and murderous Jezebel. She was a princess of Sidon who brought Baal worship with her and planted it in Israel. After the great defeat of her prophets by Elijah on Mount Carmel, she had sought out and killed many of the sons of the prophets. To pacify the greed of her husband for Naboth's vineyard, he simply had Naboth killed. The father of Athaliah was considered the most wicked king Israel ever endured. Jehu was sent by God to eliminate his dynasty. Ahab was killed in battle with an arrow. Jehu had Jezebel cast from her window to the street later her dead body was eaten by dogs. While Jehu was delivering God's judgment against the royal house of the north, Athaliah was about to exterminate the house of David in Judah.

"Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. Then Jehoram his son reigned in his place" (2 Chr. 22:1). As soon as Jehroam began his reign he adopted the practice of the heathen kings and had all rival heirs to his throne executed (2 Chr. 22:4). It is of little doubt that Athaliah was the one who stirred up her husband to do this great evil (1 Kings 21:25). Jehoram did not walk after the righteous ways of his father or the godly example of David, instead "he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for he had the daughter of Ahab as a wife; and he did evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Chr. 22:6). After all, like mother, like daughter. Her mother promoted Baal worship in Israel, now she does the same in Judah "For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God, and had also presented all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord to the Baals" (2 Chr. 24:7).

As God punished the household of Ahab and the wickedness of his daughter in Judah would not go unnoticed. God punished Jehoram with war (2 Chr. 21:16,17). A terrible disease was sent upon him by God. "After all this the Lord struck him in his intestines with an incurable disease. Then it happened in the course of time, after the end of two years, that his intestines came out because of his sickness; so he died in severe pain. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning for his fathers" (2 Chr. 21:18,19). Dead at age 40, Jehoram would not be missed. No one was seems to have regretted his passing. No fancy funeral or stone monument would be prepared in his honor or for the remembrance of his ignoble reign. "He was thirty-two years old when he became king. He reigned in Jerusalem eight years and, to no one's sorrow, departed. However they buried him in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings (2 Chr. 21:20).

With the death of his father, Ahaziah became king at age twenty-two. Immediately, the scriptures

inform us, "His mother's name was Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri, king of Israel" (2 Kings 8:26). Why mention the king's mother and great-grandfather? "Omri did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all who were before him" (1 Kings 16:25). His son, Ahab married the wicked Jezebel and produced the queen-mother Athaliah. His famly's spiritual heritage was notoriously evil. This did not mean he had to follow in their footsteps. Yet his evil ways led to his early demise. When Ahaziah sought to war with Jehu he killed the princes of Judah, then Jehu "searched for Ahaziah; and they caught him (he was hiding in Samaria), and brought him to Jehu. When they had killed him, they buried him, 'because,' they said, 'he is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart.' So the house of Ahaziah had no one to assume power over the kingdom" (2 Chr. 22:9).

Within about a years time Jerusalem is facing another funeral and an empty throne. Athaliah was no longer the king's daughter, the king's wife or even the queen-mother. What is a wicked woman to do now that she was no legitimate claim to power. "Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs of the house of Judah" (2 Chr. 22:10). She obviously did not like the sound of being hailed the "queen-grandmother." I once met a grandmother who was a Christian. She bragged openly about paying for her daughter to have an abortion. However, Athaliah sought to wipe out all her grandchildren just to become queen.

If Athaliah was successful the entire linage of David would come to an end. God's promises to him and through him could not come to fruition. By the grace and power of God a single surviving grandchild of Athaliah was saved by his paternal aunt. "But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons who were being murdered; and they hid him and his nurse in the bedroom, from Athaliah, so that he was not killed" (2 Kings 11:2). With her husband, Jehoiada, the high priest, Jehosheba raised the young prince, Joash, for six years while his grandmother continued her reign of darkness over the Kingdom of David. The hope of God's people is on the verge of extinction. No darker or evil time had been in all the history of God's chosen people. Satan was about to claim victory.

When Joash was age seven, his uncle, Jehoiada, organized a coup. This made Joash the youngest king in Judah's history. Jehoiada won the support of the army by giving them the weapons of David that had been stored in the temple (2 Kings 11:10). The coronation of the young king was set for the Sabbath. "they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and said, "Long live the king!" (1 Kings 11:12). "Now when Athaliah heard the noise ... she came to the people, into the temple of the Lord" (2 Kings 11:13). Realizing what was happening Athaliah tore her robes in an act of grief and anger and began to scream. "Then Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the army, and said to them, 'Take her outside under guard, and slay with the sword whoever follows her.' For the priest had said, 'Do not let her be killed in the house of the Lord.' So they seized her; and she went by way of the horses' entrance to the king's house, and there she was killed" (2 Kings 11:15,16). The woman who killed without mercy died without mercy. She had no one left of her family to extend mercy but a seven year old king.

After the coronation came the reformation. "And all the people of the land went to the temple of Baal, and tore it down. They thoroughly broke in pieces its altars and images, and killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the Lord" (2 Kings 11;18). True worship had been restored in Judah and peace and quiet had finally been restored to Jerusalem. It happened according to the true proverb, "When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices; and when the wicked perish, there is shouting" (Prov. 11:10).

The story of Athaliah makes for some interesting reading. It would be an exciting movie for the big screen. Nonetheless, what does this Old Testament story have to do with New Testament Christians serving God today. "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). What current day applications can we make from the reign of Athaliah?

Parents Set The Course of Their Children's Lives

Parents pass on their system of morality to their children by the examples they set. Knowing the parents and maternal grandfather of Athaliah makes the evil events in the family of Jehoram easy to predict. In a home where prayer is seldom said before eating a meal. A home where the parents never turn to God in prayer when they face a crisis or when they have something for which to be thankful. Children who grow up in homes without godly priorities, love for God's family, the church, a respect for and knowledge of the Word of God will not turn out to be great spiritual leaders of the next generation. Parents "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

Choosing a Godly Spouse Should be High on our Checklist

In the history of some godly families there are rare occasions when a strong Christian will marry a non-Christian and eventually lead them to Christ during the course of their marriage. However, this appears to be the exception not the rule. It is especially difficult to pick an immoral spouse from a family that has had a history of godlessness and try to change them into a God fearing spouse and parent via marriage. When Abraham sent his servant Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac, he did not send him off to the rich, beautiful, or socially elite. He sent him to distant relatives because he knew they were godly people.

Once a grandmother overheard her five year old granddaughter "playing wedding." The wedding vows went like this: "You have the right to remain silent, anything you say may be held against you, you have the right to have an attorney present. You may kiss the bride." Sadly enough this is how some marriages end all because someone thought it wise to marry a child of the Devil. Beware! If you do marry a child of the Devil, you are certain to have trouble with your father-in-law.

Selfish Ambition Brings Certain Destruction

Athaliah did not serve God, but Baal. Baal worship like new contemporary worship of today is self-centered. A true leader of God's people cannot serve selfish ambitions and hope to please God or His people (Js. 3:16).

What is Acceptable is not Always Right

One should never confuse what is socially acceptable with what is right. It may have been acceptable for a new king to kill off all rivals to the throne. However, whatever is legal is not moral. Today abortion, gambling, pornography, etc. is legal and acceptable in parts of society. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Prov. 16:25).

God's Will, Will Prevail

Evil objectives collapse under their own wait, God's purposes will always come to fruition. Even the most wicked woman in the Bible could not wipe out God's plan to save man through the seed of David. "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations" (Ps. 33:11).

Questions:

- 1. Who were Athaliah's parents?
- 2. Explain the wickedness of her parents?

3.	What had Athaliah done to the Temple?
4.	Why do you think the Bible mentions King Ahaziah's mother and great-grandfather?
5.	What happened to Ahaziah?
6.	How did Athlaliah obtain the throne of Judah?
7.	Who was the one surviving heir to the throne of David?
8.	Who saved him from Athlaliah?
9.	How old was Joash when he became King?
10.	How did Athaliah react to the coronation of her grandson?
11.	What became of Athaliah?
12.	What happened in Judah after she was removed from the thorne?
Applic	cation & Discussion:
1.	How can parents help to counteract the evil example of relatives and ancestors?
2.	How can parents help their children to wisely chose a spouse?
Home	work: Consider ways you can live so as to be a lasting, blessed influence for your descendants.

What Can One Little Girl Do?

Naaman's Israelite Servant Girl 2 Kings 5:1-17

The Bible has stories about young, little heroes. There is David who took down the giant Goliath with a stone in a sling. Samuel who was called by God at a young age. Daniel and his three friends risking their lives in the Babylonian court to be faithful to God. Paul's nephew who saved the apostle by exposing a plot against him. Jesus as a twelve year all prodigy asking and explain the Law in the Temple at age twelve. And then we come to our text in 2 Kings 5:1-17 where a little slave girl helps saves the life of her master, Naaman.

Mary Hallet reminds us that "one of the most amazing things about Bible stories is their sheer restraint. With one or two deft strokes of a pen scene is painted, a character is sketched, or an incident described..." What can we determine about the influence of one little girl?

• She Was Considered Insignificant

She was a slave and a child. Therefore, she was of little consequence in the household. The Hebrew term for "little" refers to that which is insignificant or worth less than other things in the same environment. So insignificant is she, her name is not given. However, she knows about the prophet Elisha. In the story she is serving Naaman's wife having been captured during a Syrian raid into Israel.

The master of the house is quite significant. He is the commander-in-chief of a powerful army in Syria. When he speaks, others jump to attention and follow his commands. But he has the fatal disease called leprosy. And finds himself taking advice from a young Jewish slave girl. The king thinks enough of Naaman to write a letter for him to the enemy, the King of Israel. Hopefully, the Jewish king will help Naaman find a cure.

Just because the world might view someone an insignificant does not mean they cannot make a difference for God in this world.

She Felt Compassion for Others

This Israelite maiden felt compassion for Naaman. She had a sense of pity which moved her to find a way to help. It is true she could have focused on the wrong done to her by this enemy who was a Gentile. The Syrians had likely torn her away from her family at a young age. Perhaps she knew he had killed or enslaved her family members. Her dreams of a normal life have vanished. However, she did not allow these to created a kind of resentment barring her from helping.

Perhaps she was moved by seeing the far worse condition of her master. The small patch of white scaly skin and white hair had spread from his head or beard. His fingers were falling off and part of his nose was gone. He had controlled his house and an army and now leprosy controlled his life. It had cost him everything. Soon it would cost him his life. His standing in society was now below the lowest little slave in his house.

All men need compassion for their hopeless sinful condition which can lead to eternal death unless a cure can be found. Like leprosy sin starts off small and finishes big. "Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death" (James 1:15). It also spreads, destroys and isolates. These too need to be told of a prophet of God who came out of Israel. He is more than a prophet, He is the Son of God, who has the ability to remove the guilt of sin (Acts 3:22-23; I Pet. 2:24).

She Seized an Opportunity

This little girl saw an opportunity to help and seized the moment. Life had handed her a bag of lemons and she was determined to make lemonade. As an optimist she saw hope and a positive outcome in the midst of calamity.

Today, we need to reach out to others in sin with optimistic hope by sharing the Good News One survey reported the top five reasons why people do not reach out to others as follows: "I don't know enough"; "I'm not an evangelist"; "I don't want to appear to be pushy"; "I don't know any non-Christians"; or "My walk with God isn't all it should be."

In the New Testament the Apostle Andrew was ready to seize opportunities to bring people to Jesus. He brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus. He brought a little boy with a sack lunch of five loaves to two fish to Jesus and 5000 plus were fed. He even brought to Jesus Gentiles who were seeking an audience with the Son of God. Most people would not even see these opportunities.

She Demonstrated Confidence in God's Power

In verse three notice the astonishing example of her faith: "If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy." Whether she had met the prophet or seen him do miracles or just heard of him, we do not know. Her faith in God to perform miracles was based on her faith in the Creator. She would have learned of the ten plagues of Egypt, Moses parting the Red Sea, bringing forth water from a rock, etc. The Master would have been amazed at the great faith of this little girl.

Her faith is even more astounding when you consider her situation and the lack of encouragement from her parents and her people.

Most would have claimed her hope to be in the impossible. But God does not know the word "impossible" and neither do those who have faith in Him. "With God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

She Exhibited a Great Influence

This little Jewish slave managed to have a positive influence on many. She influenced Naaman's wife to listen to her and bring her hope to Naaman. He in turned used this to influence the kIng of Syria to send him to the King of Israel. She was not one to hide her light under a bushel. She let it shine, shine, shine. Without her influence Naaman would not have been cured and would have died without ever experiencing the grace of God. He also went on to have faith and worshiped the one true God.

Young people do not need to diminish the impact of their influence on others. They are not just the church of tomorrow, but an example of a new generation of little shining lights today in a dark world. Paul told Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word,

in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

• She Brought Glory to God

The girl's influence brought glory to God. The Hebrew word for "glory" in the Old Testament has the simple meaning of "heaviness" or "weight". Thus to indicate something of value or worth. We might say something is of "great weight" in importance or that it is "heavy." *Doza* is the Greek word for "glory". It means "an opinion." Naaman changed his opinion about the weightiness of the God of Israel. When we bring glory to God we are making God look good. The effect of her good deed was recognized by Jesus, *There were also many lepers in Israel in the prophet Elisha's time, yet not one of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian*" (Luke 4: 27).

Without this little slave girl sharing the good news of salvation from leprosy, we would have never had the example of Naaman's obedience that led to salvation. At first he rejected Elisha's directions to go dip seven times in the river Jordan. When he obeyed God's Word and rose up out of the water's of the Jordan the seventh time. Only then did he found himself completely free of leprosy. We too can have the leprosy of sin washed away in water baptism (Acts 22:16). First, we need to hear the good news of the cure from someone. Perhaps, even a little servant girl.

Questions:

1. Make a list of other young people of the Bible who left an good example.

2.	Why would the slave-girl of our story be considered insignificant?
3.	How did she show compassion?
4.	Who was Naaman? What was wrong with him?
5.	List others in the Bible who seized the opportunity to show compassion when they were not required or expect to help.
6.	How did she demonstrated her faith?
7.	Who was the prophet she spoke of?
9.	List all those she influenced in this story?
10.	What is the Hebrew word for "glory"? How does this definition relate to one's view of God? Who all glorified God in this story?
Applio	cation & Discussion:
1.	Compare the malady of leprosy to the sinners spiritual condition in sin. How can we show mercy to those in this condition?
2.	Make a list of other young women of the Bible and their contributions.
Home	work: Encourge the little girls in your life to have faith in God and show kindness to others.

The Other Jesus

Barabbas

What do you have in common with a man guilty of treason, theft, and murderer? We are talking about, Jesus, not Jesus Christ, but Jesus Barabbas. He escaped death row with an innocent man talking his place on the torturous cross. He was released to the streets while Jesus took his place on the cross between two thieves. Barabbas is the type of our substitute. We all need a substitute for our crimes (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Christ is that substitute for us just as He was physically for Barabbas.

Who Was Barabbas?

According to the gospel accounts he "was a robber" (Jn. 18:40); "Barabbas - on who for a certain insurrection made in the city, and for murder, was cast into the prison...he, for insurrection and murder had been cast into prison" (Lk. 23:19,25). "Barabbas, bound with them that had made insurrection, men who in the insurrection had committed murder" (Mk. 15:7). "They had then a notable prisoner called Barabbas" (Mt. 27:16). Robbery, insurrection, and murder were all capital offenses.

His name literally means "son of Abba". Abba means Father (patronymic). He was the son of Father. We are all the sons of the heavenly Father, who is our Creator. Jesus Barabbas the son of the Father versus Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Pilate now attempts to release Jesus based upon a custom during the feast. "Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished" (27:15). With a stroke of genius Pilate offers up the most vile prisoner and offers the people a choice between "a notorious prisoner called Barabbas" (27:16) and Jesus who was a peaceful Rabbi doing many good works.

Not much is known about Barabbas except was is mentioned in the Gospel accounts. John said "Barabbas was a robber" (Jn. 18:40). More details come from Luke: "Barabbas - one who for a certain insurrection made in the city, and for murder, was cast into the prison...he, for insurrection and murder had been cast into prison" (Lk. 23:19,25). And Mark says, "Barabbas, bound with them that had made insurrection, men who in the insurrection had committed murder" (Mk. 15:7).

There are three reasons given in the context as to why Pilate sought to release Jesus instead of just giving into the Jewish leadership's demands. First, he was impressed on how Jesus calmly remained silent midst all the hateful accusation. Next, he knew enough about what had been going on between them and Jesus to know "they had handed Him over because of envy" (27:18). Jesus entry into Jerusalem on a colt being hailed "Son of David" a term for Jewish royalty and His cleansing of the temple would have become known to him. Jesus was more popular with the populous than the Pharisees and the rest of the Jewish leadership. Another reason had to do with a message sent to him while still contemplating the charges against Jesus "while he was sitting on the judgment seat" (27:19a). "His wife sent to him, saying, 'Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him" (27:19b). There is nothing to suggest this was a dream of divine origin. She too would have known of Jesus and Pilate rising early in the morning to judge Him. Romans were very superstitious when it came dreams. This would be enough to make Pilate more cautious and remind him of his role in ruling with Roman justice.

Pilate's wife was Claudia Proculla. Marrying her was a wise political move for she was the

granddaughter of Caesar Augustus. According to the apocryphal writing called the *Acts of Pilate*, she became a convert. The Greek Orthodox claims her as one of their saints. Of course, there is no real credible evidence beyond this tradition.

Pilate was most likely surprised when he offered the people "whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" (27:17) and they chose Barabbas. But the Jewish rulers where not going to leave anything to chance. So they "persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus" (27:20) crying out concerning Jesus "Let Him be crucified!" His attempt to release Jesus has failed.

Pilate was not one to give up so easily. He"sought the more to release him" (John 19:11,12). However, instead of having the courage to release a man whom he had declared to be innocent three times ("I find no fault" -John 18:38; "I find in him no fault at all" -John 19:4; "I find no fault in him" -John 19:6), he instead gave into his fears. "When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it" (27:24). Pilate was perhaps using a legal rule from the Law of Moses in an effort to show the Jews knew he was innocent of Jesus' murder. In Deuteronomy 21:1-9 a murder was to be investigated by the elders of the closest town. If no suspect could be found they "shall wash their hands over the heifer...Then they shall answer and say, 'Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it. Provide atonement, O Lord, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel'" Pilate was far from innocent. He knew we was delivering up an innocent man to be killed. All the water in the world would not wash away his guilty conscience.

Pilate could not pass off his responsibility to do justice by simply saying, "you see to it." This is what the chief priests tried to do in telling Judas "What is that to us? You see to it!" (26:4). Pilate was indicating they take Him and just do what they wished.

The people responded with a rash vow, "His blood be on us and on our children" (27:25). Some forty years later at the fall of Jerusalem some thirty thousand young men would be crucified upon the walls of Jerusalem according to Josephus. This verse is not a prophecy of eternal condemnation upon all generation of Jews. Nor is it to be misused to support anti-semitic attitudes and violence.

Pilate was motivated to give up the fight and released Jesus when they called into questions this loyalty to Rome. "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar" (John 19:12). "Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified" (27:26).

We Are Like Barabbas

Like Barabbas we are all thieves. We rob God of our souls, worship, hearts, contribution, time, talents, children, etc. (Mal. 3:8,9).

Like Barabbas we are all murderers. In the first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter accused all his listeners of killing the Son of God (Acts 2:36). This became a reoccurring message in many of the early sermons of the apostles (Acts 3:14,15; 5:28). It is our sins which put Him on the cross to die for us. The Hebrew writer warns the we can crucify Him again by falling away from grace (6:6).

Like Barabbas we are all rebellious and insurrectionists. We have rebelled against His commandments and have been insurrectionists against His Lordship.

Like Barabbas we are notable prisoners. The sinful life we live makes us slaves (2 Peter 2:19; Romans 6:17,18).

Jesus Christ Our Substitute

Barabbas was on death row without hope. On the way to crucifixion he is detoured to Pilate's Hall. Where he can catch a glimpse of the man who will take his place. A man whom Barabbas never asked

or even desired such help.

He hears the masses of people who begin to call his name. "Barabbas, Barabbas, release unto us Barabbas!" The Jews were given a choice of a prisoner to be released on the Passover. (No extra Biblical sources refer to the custom of releasing a prisoner on the Passover). Pilate gave them a choice, "Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" (Mt. 27:17). Contrasting a known villain to Jesus of whom both Herod and Pilate found no fault showed Pilate's desire for them to release Jesus. The rulers of the Jews were persistent (18). They persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas (20). Pilate wants to know what to do with Jesus. They cried, "Let Him be crucified!" (23). Pilate responds, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; I will therefore punish Him and release Him" (Lk. 23:22). Pilate bows to the mob rule. Barabbas freed, Jesus hanged. Imagine Barabbas' joy as he was released to the streets of freedom, Jesus to path of death.

Christ as the Substitute for All Mankind

To be our substitute He left heaven and became human (Heb. 10:4); He learned obedience (Heb. 5:8,9); He was tempted, but remained sinless (Heb. 4:15); and He died for us (I Pet. 2:22-25).

We need a substitute, else we die in our sins. God gave His Son (Jn. 3:16). Christ, the Son of God, gave His life (Jn. 15:13,14). This was all done for us like Barabbas. While we were robbers, rebellious, and murderers Christ died for us without our request or our pleading (Rom. 5:6-8). Nonetheless, it was our sins that put Him on the cross. Many years ago Rembrandt painted the crucifixion of Jesus Christ with the hateful Jews crowded around the cross mocking the suffering Savior. In the crowd he painted the face of a well known man of his day. A man who wouldn't be born for another 1,400 years. It was Rembrandt's own face. Why? Did He want Christ crucified? No! He merely recognized what all of us need to realize, that it is our sins and rebellion which put Christ on the cross. All our faces belong in the crowd around the cross.

We don't know whether Barabbas ever took advantage of Jesus Christ being his substitute, but that matters little. The real important questions is: Will you? If you found yourself on Death Row and someone died to provide a pardon for you, wouldn't you do all you could to secure that pardon? Once pardoned, would you return to the same old way of life which put you on death row in the first place? Or would you turn your life around and make the most our your second chance at life? It's all up to you, Jesus Christ has done His part. Obey the gospel and be pardoned from the sin which brings death (Romans 6:23).

Questions:

- 1. Who was Barabbas?
- 2. What are the three reasons Pilate sought to release Jesus instead of Barabbas?
- 3. Who had a dream about Jesus and what affect did it have?
- 4. Who did the crowd pick to be released? Why?

5.	How many times did Pilate declare Jesus to be innocent?
6.	What did Pilate finally say and do in regard to the people demand?
7.	How are we like thieves?
8.	How are we like murderers?
9.	Are we prisoners? How?
10.	Are we rebellious and insurrectionists? In what way?
11.	How is Jesus a substitute for all mankind like He was for Barabbas?
Applic	cation & Discussion:
1.	If you had been Barabbas, how would you want to have reacted to Jesus taking your place on death row and being crucified for you? How might that have changed your life?
2.	How does mob, Peter, the centurion, John, the thieves on the cross, etc. represent us?
Home	work: Share the story of the other Jesus who Jesus Christ had died in his place with the lost, so they can see Jesus has died also for them.

Apostle of Christ to Son of Perdition

Judas

Who would ever think of naming their son "Judas"? However, this name was once considered very honorable among the Jews. Even in the first century when two of Jesus disciples bore such a name. "Judas" is the Greek form is the name "Judah". Judah is the very tribe through which the Messiah came. The name meant "praise". Judas Maccabaeus became a great hero of the Jews in the post-Old Testamnt and pre-New Testament ear. He led the rebellion to free the Jews from the oppression of Greek rulers. The name was a good name until Judas Iscariot became the Benedict Arnold of the Bible by betray Jesus for a mere thirty pieces of silver. This is why you have never heard of a man named Judas.

Apostle

Judas did not become an apostle of Jesus be accident or by his own design. Jesus personlly handpicked his along with the other eleven (Mk. 3:14-19a). Like the other Judas had been a disciple of Jesus before he was chosen for the apostleship. Apostles are those who are sent out one behave of another. Like an ambassador who is selected by the President to represent his interest to a foreign nation. So the apostles were sent out into the world to represent the will of the King concerning His coming Kingdom. Like there rest of the twelve Judas was given supernatural and miraculous powers (Mt. 10:8). He watch Jesus perform miracles and teach for three and a half years just like Peter, Andrew, and Matthew. It is interesting that in all the list of the apostles Judas is uniformly listed last. Matthew lists states "...and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him" (Matt 10:4). Like the others Judas could have been one of the foundation stones (Eph. 2:20). But Judas, one of the chosen, chose a different path.

Treasurer

We do know know what Judas' background and skills were. Yet Judas was trusted with carrying and safeguarding the "bag"(Jn. 12:6). In Luke 8:3 we learn that some women contributed to the support of Christ and His disciples. One might think a better choice would have been Matthew. But no one but Jesus seems to have trusted any publican in the first century. Perhaps Judas had designs on becoming the "Secretary of the Treasury" in Christ's coming Kingdom. A perfect possition for a greedy man seeking material wealth through graft.

■ Lover of Money

When Jesus came to Bethany Mary took and anointed Jesus with some very expensive oil. Judas rebuked Jesus for allowing this waste. "Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it" (Jn. 12:4-6). His concern for the poor was a hypocritical poly. As a thief he has no real regard to use any money for the needs of others (Jn. 6:71; 12;5-6; 13:10;18-25). It is true that three hundred denarii was a great deal of money. To put it into perspective one denarius was equivalent to a day laborer's daily wage. To this oil was worth about a years earnings for an average person of the day.

Judas should have paid more attention to all of Jesus' warnings about covetousness and the love of money. The cares and riches of the world was choking the very spiritual life out of Judas.

■ Traitor

It was after Jesus counter rebuke to Judas about Mary's anointing of Him that Judas went out to

betray Jesus. "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?' And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him" (Mt. 26:14-16). The word "betray" means "to deliver up." By over valuing money Judas under valued His Savior. Instead of God to Jesus with his problem of greed, he sought out the chief priests. These were long time enemies of his Master.

For his betrayal Judas received a reward. Thirty pieces of silver to betray innocent blood (Mt. 27:4). The Law of Moses warns, "Cursed is the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person" (Dt. 27:25).

Afterward Judas went to the Passover meal as if all was normal. Later that night he would lead a parade of men to betray Jesus.

Regreter

Apparently Judas still had a consceinece for later he had regrets when he saw what was to become of Jesus. "Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Mt. 27:3-5).

Judas came to the realization that he had sold himself for a mere thirty pieces of silver. This was not what Jesus was worth, but the value he placed upon his relationship with Christ. At the time this amount of money was equivalent to about four months of wages. In the Law of Moses is was the price paid for a slave who have been gored by an ox (Ex. 21:32).

Judas gave the money back to the priests but this was not enough to undo his betrayal or spare his Lord. It was enough money to buy a burial field for strangers (Mt. 27:3-10). Nor was this enough money to warrant and concern by the priests for Judas' soul.

The guilt of receiving blood money was too much for Judas to endure. Money did not bring him fame or pleasure only pain. Giving back the money would not clear his conscience and it did not represent true repentance from the heart. He could have repented. He could have return to Jesus. But his was not a repentance unto salvation (2 Cor. 7:9,10). Thirty pieces of silver could not obtain for Judas what Jesus' forgiveness gave to Peter. So Judas went out and found a way to end the pain of his regrets by hanging himself.

■ Murderer

If guilt could be removed from the soul by suicide then all men would be so tempted. Judas' solution to his regretful betrayal was that "he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Matt 27:5). Luke explains with additional details: Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out" (Acts 1:18). First, he hung himself. After a couple of days under the hot Judean sun, the rope or branch broke and when his bloated body hit the ground it burst open.

Suicide is the coward's way of dealing with problems. It is an act of self-murder. A permanent solution to a temporary problem.

Damned

Who is who in Hell? Luke tells of Judas' eternal destiny, he went "to his own place" (Ac. 1:16,17; 22). Jesus had promised the twelve: "I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:1-3). Jesus died and ascended to heaven to prepare a place there for them. Judas hung himself to prepared a place for himself. He laid up treasure in hell by coveting the thirty pieces of silver.

Son of Perdition

On the night Jesus was to be betrayed by Judas, He referred to Judas as a "son of perdition" in His lengthy intercessory prayer. Jesus prayed to God: "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12). The Greek term for "perdition" means "waste."

Why did Judas betray Jesus? Well it was for greed. But he was overcome with the temptation of covetousness by the Devil. "And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of

Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him" (Jn. 13:2).

Earlier in His ministry Jesus asked His disciples, "did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70). Was Judas a devil or demon? Judas could cast out devils (Mt. 10:1-15) and Jesus said in Matthew 12:22-28 that Satan does not cast out Satan. So the answer has to be "NO." In another Gospel it is said that "Satan entered his heart" (Lk. 22:3). Judas allowed Satan to "enter into him" (Jn. 13:3,27). Satan merely rang Judas' doorbell. But it was Judas who answer the door and exited the Devil a warm welcome into his heart. When Ananias and his wife lied about the contribution they were giving for needy saints, Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?" (Ac. 5:2). The same think can happen to us today. Notice the Peter said that they always had a choice to do the right thing. But when they refused to repent God struck them dead (Acts 5:3-11).

Judas was indeed part of the apostleship of Jesus. Luke explains, "to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place" (Ac. 1:25). You cannot fall form something you do not have. Notice John says, "Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him" (John 6:64). John did not say that Judas was a devil form the beginning. Jesus knew he would fall for temptation. Just as Jesus knew Peter would deny Him.

The story is told that when Leonardo Da Vinci was painting his masterpiece "The Last Supper" he sought long for a model for his Christ. At last he located a man in one of the churches of Rome who was lovely in life and features, a young man named Pietro Bandinelli. Years passed, and the pointing was still unfinished. all the disciples had been portrayed save one - Judas Iscariot. Now he started to find a man whose face was hardened and distorted by sin and at last he found a beggar on the streets of Rome with a face so villainous he shuddered when he looked at him. He hired the man to sit for him as he painted the face of Judas on his canvas. when he was about to dismiss the man, he said, "I have not yet found out your name." "I am Pietro Bandinnelli," he replied, "I also sat for you as your model of Christ."

It can be a very short distance between the high calling to be an apostle of Jesus and a betrayer for the devil. Judas fell because He made the wrong choices.

Questions:

1.	Have you ever heard of a man named Juda	s? Why?
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- 3. Why was Judas not a good treasurer for Jesus and the apostles?
- 4. Was Judas really concerned about the poor?
- 5. What motivated Judas to betray Jesus?

0.	what do you think Judas regretted betraying Jesus?
7.	Was Judas guilty of murdering Jesus? Explain.
8.	Explain why Judas is called the "son of perdition"?
9.	What role did Satan play in Judas' betrayal of Jesus?
10.	What prophecies did Judas' actions fulfill?
Applic	cation & Discussion:
1.	What should Judas have done with his regret?
2.	How do we betray Jesus today?
3.	What warnings and roadblocks did Jesus give Judas to keep him from failing for the Devil's temptation?
Home	work: Examine your relationship and attitude about Jesus to see if you are too much like Judas.

The Most Popular Thief in Town

The Penitent Thief on the Cross

A preacher of a generation ago began a sermon entitled "The most Popular Thief in this city". When trying to teach people that baptism is necessary for salvation they argue "What about the thief on the cross? He was not baptized; yet the Lord saved him. Since this is true, people today can be saved without being baptized?" Was the thief on the cross saved? Assuredly, yes! The question is not, "Was the thief on the cross saved" but, "Is the thief a New Testament example of gospel conversion?"

The Penitent Thief

There is a lot that can be learned from the few words spoken by the penitent thief.

It appears that at first he too railed at Christ with the others. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. (Matt. 27:42). Notice this saying to the thief took place before the three hours of darkness, the earthquake, and before the veil of the temple was torn in two. Fortunately, this thief came to his senses and realized that railing at Jesus was not the way to go. He needed mercy and was justly condemned criminal.

He professed his belief in Jesus' innocence. His belief may have resulted from seeing the events leading up to the cross. He may have seen Pilate wash his hands and declare Jesus' innocence. The soldiers mocking him as "king of the Jews". He may have heard His words to the women of Jerusalem He may have saw Simon bearing His cross. Additionally, he may have noticed Jesus' refusal to drink the alcoholic concoction that would have dulled His senses and his pain on the cross. He could see the inscription: "This is the King of the Jews".(23:48). He had just heard Jesus say, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (23:34). Perhaps he wanted to avail himself of this forgiveness. As a boy he may have remembered the Messianic prophecies or remembered seeing or hearing about Jesus's miracles and claims.

The penitent thief may have started out just like the other thief, but he had a change of heart. As a result, he rebuked his partner in crime. He demonstrated a reverential fear of God's judgment which was due him. As a result he was willing to confess his sinfulness and accept his consequences of his criminal behavior. His was an utterly hopeless situation which he had brought upon himself. In contrast he was able to affirm Jesus' innocence. Perhaps he had been able to witness some of the trial of Jesus before Pilate. The governor did pronounce Jesus as innocent no less than three times.

The thief was able and willing to pronounce his new found faith in Jesus in this very public forum on Calvary. Not conforming to the mob's popular opinion of Jesus, he was instead was willing to confess Him as Lord and recognize him as the Messiah. By mentioning the coming Kingdom of Christ the thief manifested his faith in Jesus at the King. Jesus came preaching, as did John, repentance because the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. This is amazing in that Jesus was about to die and the Jews believed in a militaristic Messiah who would over thrown the Roman yoke. Yet here is Jesus right next to him and both are about to die on Roman crosses. This man may have had a belief in life after death. No one survived crucifixions by a trained Roman guard. He believed that Jesus could save him even while hanging on that cross. He no longer saw Jesus as someone who needed saving. He saw a Savior.

Jesus Saves the Penitent Thief

Why?

What was Jesus' motive for saving the thief? The thief did not earn it or deserve it in any way. Jesus could have said, "I'm in agony dying for men's sins, Don't bother me now. Besides you're not good enough. You have said so yourself. You deserve to perish. You railed at me like th others. You blew your chance." Jesus knew that there was no way for the thief to be saved without His mercy and grace. Pink wrote concerning the penitent thief, "He could not walk in the paths of righteousness for there was a nail through either foot. He could not perform any good works for the was a nail through either hand. He could not turn over a new leaf an live a better life for he was dying." Jesus mission statement read: "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

When? "Today"

It was very late for someone to be saved but not too late. He was saved that day. Jesus did not delay.

Jesus was not promising him some concept of "soul sleep". After all, he would be with Jesus in Paradise. He would know that very day that Jesus had fulfilled this promise when he met him all the other side of death. He would not slumber in unconsciousness until the day of the resurrection. Jesus did not offer him a time to spend in purgatory in route to paradise. Purgatory is not a Biblical concept. Men do not go to a place of suffering to "burn off" their sins in hope of one day going to be with Jesus in Paradise. Jesus' forgiveness of the thief was complete and immediate. Jesus gave a promise to the thief of the assurance of eternal salvation. If He failed with the thief how can anyone have hope in the afterlife.

Where? "Paradise"

The Greek word for "paradise" is a transliteration of the Persian word meaning "the king's garden of pleasure and delight." It is not the grave. Paradise is not Heaven. Christ didn't go directly to heaven. After His resurrection He said that he had not yet ascended to the Father (Jn. 20:17). Peter declared that he went to hades (Acts 2:27,31). Hades is the realm of the dead consisting of Tartarus for the wicked in torment (2 Pet. 2:4; Lk. 16:19f) and Paradise for the righteous. Paradise is "that part of Hades which was thought to be the abode of the souls of the pious until the resurrection." (Thayer, p. 480). It is also known as "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22). This "man who was our Lord's last companion earth" was His "first companion at the gates of paradise" (Lutzer 5).

How?

How did the this criminal end up in paradise. He did not receive last rites or Holy Communion. He did not get baptized in the likeness of Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:2f). He died under the Old Law. We cannot be saved like the thief. After all, Jesus was still on the cross when the promise was made. Jesus had power on earth to forgive sins (Matt. 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:23-24). Grace was granted by God. So get your eyes off the thief. And look upon the man in the middle. Only He can save you.

The Thief May Have Been Baptized

John the Baptist could have baptized him (Mt. 3:5,6; Mk. 1:4,5). Jesus or rather his disciples could have baptized him (Jn. 4:1,2). If one is going to use the thief as his authority to prove that one can be saved without baptism, he must be able to prove that the thief at least had never been baptized. Since this cannot be proven they can only assume such. Thus, their assumption is based upon assumption. Surely, one cannot assume his way into heaven.

Christ Had Authority While on Earth to Forgive Sins

Several other examples exist where Christ forgave the sins of men and women prior to His death upon the cross. Based upon the faith of four friends of the palsied man, Jesus said, "Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5). He wasn't told to be baptized neither was he told to believe on Christ, nor to repent to be forgiven. The Pharisees accused Him of blasphemy (v. 9). Jesus then healed the man thus affirming that He had authority on earth to forgive sins (v. 10). Next, a woman who was a notorious sinner

came to Christ, and He also said to her "Your sins are forgiven" (Lk. 7:48-50). After Zaccheus, a publican, promised to return all that he had wrongfully extracted from taxpayers, Jesus remarked, "Today salvation has come to this house..." (Lk. 19:9). The rich young ruler came to Jesus inquiring how he could inherit eternal life. Jesus reminded him of the Ten Commandments. Informing Christ he had kept these from his youth, he wanted to know what else he lacked. Jesus replied, "Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Lk. 18:22). Now, why not tell everyone to sell all his goods and give to the poor in order to receive eternal life? Why not use the Rich Young Ruler instead of the Thief on the Cross as a proof text on being saved today? While being crucified by the Romans for the unbelieving mob of Jews, Christ cried, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Lk. 23:34).

While on earth Jesus could dispense salvation or goodness on anyone he chose upon any condition. The who and why were at His discretion. Note, among the various examples above there are various conditions and some were blessed unconditionally.

Consider the following illustration: Prior to a man's death, he may do with his property as he chooses, but after death, his goods are bestowed according to the terms of his Will. The thief lived before the Will of Christ was probated. Thus, these events during His ministry on earth are not cases of gospel conversions.

One Truth Doesn't Nullify Another

Their effort to be saved like the Thief in effect attempts to nullify all the other passages which clearly command baptism as essential to one's salvation. Does the Word of God contradict itself? If so, then that would make God a liar. Yet, God isn't a liar though many men have and are promoting falsehoods (Rom. 3:4). The fact is, Jesus said "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16).

He Wasn't Required to Believe in the Resurrected Savior

An essential aspect of the Gospel of Christ is the doctrine of the resurrection. Without it our faith would be in vain. No true Christian can be faithful to his Lord and not believe in His resurrection (I Cor. 15:1-4). Those who believe they can be saved like the thief need to consider the three fundamental facts of the Gospel: 1) Christ died for our sins; 2) He was buried and 3) He rose again the third day. The Thief had not heard any of the gospel because none of this had taken place yet.

Furthermore, how can anyone to really think they have the same faith the thief had? "He believed on the Lord at the time when even His staunchest disciples had forsaken Him and fled. He believed on Him and confessed Him as "Lord" while others were reviling Him. He believed while suffering torment, humiliation, and inevitable death. He confessed before Christ bitterest foes. He confessed Christ in the moment of Christ's deepest humiliation. Where in the history of the world was there ever a more daring exhibition of faith, or nobler confession made under more difficult circumstances than was his?" (J.B. Coffman, Commentary on Matthew).

The Thief Wasn't Required to Be Baptized into Christ's Death Because Christ Hadn't Died

Although he could not have obeyed Christ's commandment to be baptized, you and I live on this side of the cross, thus Romans 6:3-6 is a commandment which we must obey: "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of

the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."

So get your eyes off the thief and look upon the Man in the middle. Only He can save you.

The Thief Lived under the Old Law Not under the New

The New Testament or Gospel is compared to a will in Heb. 9:15-17. The requirements of an effective will are: 1) A Testator who must be of age and in right mind. Christ is that testator (Lk. 3:23). 2) A legacy, that is, something to bequeath. Christ has given us salvation (Jn. 10:10; 2 Cor. 8:9). 3) Heirs are the individuals who receive certain benefits of the estate. Christ wants the whole world to be the beneficiaries (Mt. 11:28; Tit. 2:11; Rev. 22:17). 4) Con-ditions are also important, however, a will may or may not be conditional. Recipients of Salvation must be obedience to the gospel. 5) Witnesses are necessary. The Apostles of Christ serve this capacity (Lk. 24:33; Ac. 1:3,8,21, 22; 2:32; 26:16-18). 6) The death of the testator is a logical essential to the probation of a will (Jn. 19:30,33,34). 7) Executors, who at the death of he testator must administer the estate according to the terms of the will. This the Holy Spirit did through the apostles (Jn. 14:26; 16:13; Lk. 24:49). Forty days after his resurrection and just prior to his ascension (Ac. 1:3), Christ told his apostles what the conditions of pardon were in His Will (Mt. 28:18,19; Mk. 16:15,16; Lk. 24:46,47).

Prior to the death of Christ the Old Testament was in force. The one who made the testament was yet alive and was not yet bound by the terms of the testament. After He died, the testament was in effect. The Old Covenant was done away with at the cross (Heb. 7:12; Col. 2:14). Furthermore, once a covenant has been confirmed "... no one annuls or adds to it" (Gal. 3:15).

The Will of Christ is seen executed in the examples of conversion found in the book of Acts: Pentecostians (Ac. 2:36-39); Samaritans (Ac. 8:12,13); the Eunach (Ac. 8:35-39); Saul of Tarsus (Ac. 9:6; 22:16); Cornelius (Ac. 10:47,48); Lydia (Ac. 16:11-15). Jailor (Ac. 16:31-34); and the conversion of the Corinthians (Ac. 18:8). The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written to produce faith in Christ. The book of Acts was written to answer the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Go then to the book of Acts, not the thief on the cross, for gospel examples of conversion. When you study these scriptures notice the uniformity of requirements existed in the cases of conversions in the book of Acts, that is, in all cases baptism was essential to their salvation.

A Will or law cannot be retroactive. A court cannot condemn a person for not obeying a certain law before it came into existence. The American Constitution says, "No...ex post facto law shall be passed" (Art. I, Sec. 9). No "Ex Post Facto" law exists in Christ's Will.

In the secular field there are many laws applicable to us today that were not applicable to our ancestors. For example, there is Income Tax. It was legalized with the passing of the 16th Amendment to the Constitution in 1913. Today, you can't argue: "since my great-grandfather paid no income tax, I therefore do not have to pay any?" Or "George Washington and Abraham Lincoln did not pay this tax." Many of our ancestors didn't have to carry any driver's license or social security numbers. We cannot say we don't have to be baptized because the Law was changed.

Suppose that a man who has made his will meets a person who asks for one of his cars. Out of the kindness of his heart he gives this person a car; for while he is yet living he can give whatever he wishes to whomsoever he wills. Later the man dies. The individual who received personal assistance from the man cannot now receive anything from the man's estate, unless he fulfills the conditions set forth in the will. Suppose he should go to the executor and say, "I demand something from the man's estate." "But," the executor would reply, "you do not meet the conditions for receiving anything from the estate." "He gave me something while he was living," argues the man. "Perhaps he did," answers the executor, "but we have his will now, and it is in effect."

In the Ensign Fair R. L. Kilpatrick used the counter argument which follows: "First, to say that the

thief did not live under N.T. law implies that salvation is by 'law,' which is not the case ...Secondly, it reverses the roles we normally assign to 'old law' and 'new law'; that is, we assign justice to the law of Moses and mercy to the law of Christ, which is correct (Jn. 1:17), but here it is reversed..." (July, 1979). The New Law is referred to as "the perfect law of liberty"(Js. 1:25) "which is able to save your souls" (v. 21). Furthermore, God used the law "of Moses" as a "schoolmaster" to bring us unto Christ. But now that the faith (the law of Christ) is come, there is no longer a need for the "schoolmaster" (Law of Moses) (Gen. 3:23-27).

In no way can men be saved like the Thief today. We are living on this side of the cross of Christ, and the thief lived on the other side of it.

Today, all men live under the gospel; he under the law. All sinners live under the great commission; he was dead and buried nearly two months before the Great Commission was given. We have commandments he never had, namely, to be baptized in the likeness of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:2-6). His salvation does not provide a pattern of salvation for us today, any more than it did for those under the Law of Moses. It was an exception to the rule, and not the rule itself. One might as well argue that Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, etc. were not required to be baptized. Only if Christ or His Gospel pointed to these as examples for us to emulate would they have any bearing upon what we must do to be saved. The Gospel did point to Noah's salvation by water. Baptism is the antitype to his salvation. Water baptism is said to "now save us" (I Pet. 3:20,21). What those who appeal to the thief on the cross need to find is where anyone after the death of Christ was given salvation without baptism.

What if a man died and left a will that said, "He that believes in me, and is immersed in water, shall receive from my estate \$100,000". Would you comprehend what conditions you needed to fulfill to inherit the money. No one can receive that kind of money by merely immersing himself in water. Only by the good grace the testator will such a person receive the inheritance. Likewise, Christ has promised: "He that believes and his baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16). Won't you avail yourself of the grace of God and meet the conditions of salvation today?

Questions:

1	1 W	hν	ძი	some re	efer to	the	penitent the	nief or	n the	cross a	ıs "t	he most	nonu	lar tl	nief	in ¹	town"	?

- 2. Who all said this to or about Jesus, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him" (Matt. 27:42)?
- 3. What sort of things did the penitent thief witness at the crucifixion that may of influence his attitude and belief concerning Jesus?
- 4. True False The penitent thief on the cross expressed a belief in Jesus as the Messiah but he showed not signs in accepting the idea of life after death or the coming Kingdom.

5.	What was Jesus' motive for saving the thief?
6.	What is "paradise"?
7.	Is it possible the penitent thief had been baptized? Explain.
8.	List several others whom Jesus forgave sins during HIs earthly ministry?
9.	Did He require any of these to be baptized in water to be forgiven? Explain.
10.	Could the penitent thief have professed belief in the historical resurrection of Jesus (Romans 10:9-10) before his death? Explain.
11.	Could the penitent thief have been baptized in the likeness of Christ death, burial, and resurrecton (Romans 6:3-5)? Explain.
12.	Which Law or Covenant of God was in effect at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus and the two thieves?
13.	According to the New Testament Gospel plan of Salvation are all alien sinners commanded to be baptized (Mark 16:16)?

Application & Discussion:

1.		ould you go about explaining the truth to someone who claims they can be saved just like ef on the cross without baptism"?
2.		s the possiblity of "death bed confessions" in like of the penitent thief's last minute promise ation. Should he be an example for us to wait to be saved in the last hours of your life? า.
Homev	vork:	Share the Good News that it is possible to be with Christ in Paradise today, but not without being baptized.

Raising Timothys

Eunice & Lois

How many of you have mothers? Should be most of you. Motherhood is not just a very common job but hard work. Let's face the facts, if being a mother was easy us Dad's would do it. What makes a mother's job hard is that she is handicapped. Mothers only have two hands. At least mother's prove that evolution is not true, if it were true mothers would have developed that third hand by now.

Mothers find it hard to find some "me" time. If they want to get their family's attention all they have to do is sit down and look comfortable. To a mother silence is not golden - it is suspicious. All a mother wants is an hour alone in the bathroom. All she gets is a macaroni necklace for Mother's Day and has to lock the bathroom door for an hour and eat the necklace when she got hungry.

Having A Son Like Timothy

♦ Timothy Was a Christian

It was on the occasion of Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 14:1) he came through Lystra. Timothy was converted by Paul at this time about AD 45. Some believe Paul may have recovered from his stoning at Lystra in Timothy's home.

♦ Timothy Had a Good Reputation

On Paul's second missionary journey "he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek" (Acts 16:1-3). He had a good reputation among the brethren which he would maintain throughout his life. "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold" (Prov. 22:1).

♦ Timothy Had a Spiritual Father

Paul referred to him as "Timothy, my dearly beloved son" (2 Timothy 1:2) Spiritually Paul was like a father to him. Perhaps, Timothy's Greek father was dead or was did not become a Christian.

♦ Timothy was on Paul's Prayer List Every Morning and Evening

In his second letter "to Timothy, my dearly beloved son" Paul told him "...without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day" (2 Timothy 1:2).

♦ Timothy Was Paul's Like-minded Twin

In his letter to the Philippians Paul wrote "I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man like minded, who will naturally (sincerely) care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, as soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord I also shall come shortly" (Philippians 2:19-24).

♦ Timothy Was Paul's Co-Sufferer

During the writing of 2 Timothy Paul's son in the faith was a young preacher ministering to the congregation in Ephesus. Paul wrote this letter while chained in the Roman Mamertime prison located just across the street from the Roman Senate. Paul believed that his execution was at hand. "Therefore

do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Timothy 1:8). According to the Hebrew writer Paul's desire came to fruition: "know that our brother Timothy has been set free,..." (Heb. 13:23). Tradition says that Timothy died as a martyr for his faithfulness as a bishop in the reign of Domitian.

♦ Timothy Was Paul's Progeny

Paul realized that the time and work of the Apostles was quickly coming to an end. He had ben grooming his son in that faith for years to take on the duties of ministering to the saints. His final letter in effect was saying: "Timothy - I've run the race, I'm handing off the baton to you!"

Would you like to have a son like Timothy? Are our homes those that might produce such a mature Christian? What did it take to make Timothy the man he became?

Teamwork

It is most likely that Timothy's father was not a Christian or even a proselyte of Judaism. He grew up in a religiously divided family. Fortunately, both his mother and grandmother had been faithful Jews and became Christians. They were able to team up and teach him the truth found in the Old Testament. It is a joy to be a grandparent and having taught her daughter the God's Word, Lois is now able to share in the training of her grandson.

Demonstrate a Genuine Faith in Our Life

Paul told Timothy it brought him great joy "when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also" (2 Tim. 1:5). The term used here for "genuine" is translated from the Greek term from which the word "hypocritical". It literally means "without a mask" or un-hypocritical, undisguised, unfeigned or sincere. The faith of Lois, Eunice and then Timothy was not a mere costume or Sunday clothes they just put on to pretend to be a Christian. Their faith was the same seven days a week and where ever they went. They exemplified for Timothy a genuine faithful life for him to imitate.

Four preachers were arguing over Bible translations. One said he preferred the King James Version because of its beauty, eloquent old English. Another said he preferred the American Standard Bible for its literalism, the way it moves the reader from passage to passage with confident feelings of accuracy from the original text. A third man preferred Moffatt because of its quaint, penetrating use of words, the turn of a phrase that captures the attention of the reader. After giving the issue further thought, the fourth scholar admitted, 'I have personally preferred my mother's translation.' When the other scholars chuckled and asked, "Your mother translated the Bible? He responded, 'Yes, she translated it. She translated each page of the Bible into her own life. It is the most convincing translation I ever saw.'

Instill a Genuine Faith in Your Children

Paul was confident that before he ever met and began to work with Timothy that Lois and Eunice had already laid a firm foundation. However, Timothy did not just inherit their faith. His faith was his very own. Remember "God has no grandchildren."

William Frederick Dunkle Jr. has pointed out "that of the 69 kings of France only three were really loved by their subjects and that these were the only ones reared by their mothers instead of by tutors or guardians." Mothers and fathers it is not the job of the preachers, elders, deacons or Bible class teachers to raise up your children in the faith. You must instill a genuine faith in your children.

Don't leave it to the Sunday School teacher to do your job for you!

Teach Them God's Word

When did Eunice start on Timothy? Paul told Timothy you "must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:14-15). So parents need to start early. In fact the word "childhood" there in verse 15 is literally, "infancy." Children are being introduced to academics earlier and earlier. So why not begin to teach them to walk and talk like Christ from infancy.

In Deuteronomy six Jewish parents were told to "teach these things diligently to your sons and daughters when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up..." Timothy would have heard the stories of the great faith of men like Moses and Abraham, the fall of the walls of Jericho, David's victory over Goliath, Daniel in the den of lions.

Let Them Go Serve God

Imagine raising up a godly son and they comes along a missionary who takes him away on a long dangerous mission for the Lord. Lois and Eunice had to give up the son to serve the Lord. It was like Hannah sending Samuel off to Eli to serve God in the tabernacle. She said, "therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord." So they worshiped the Lord there" (1 Sam. 1:28).

Mothers should never underestimate the power of their influence. Remember salvation of the their soul is the goal.

Questions:

- Where was Timothy from? How might Paul have first met Timothy and his family?
- 2. What kind of reputation did Timothy have?
- 3. In what way was Paul a father to Timothy?

A Mother's Finished Product

I took a piece of plastic clay And idly fashioned it one day-And as my fingers pressed it, still It moved and yielded to my will.

I came again when days were past
The bit of clay was hard at last.
The form I gave it, still it bore,
And I could change that form no more!

I took a piece of living clay, And gently fashioned it day by day, And molded with my power and art A young child's soft and yielding heart.

I came again when years were gone: It was a man I looked upon. He still that early impress bore,

- 4. According to Paul's letter to the Philippians what special connection did he have with Timothy?
- 5. What other things did Paul and Timothy have in common?
- 6. How did Eunice and Lois demonstrate a genuine faith to Timothy?
- 7. When did Lois and Eunice begin to teach Timothy the Word of God?

When and how should mother's teach their children the words of salvation?
What missionary journeys did Timothy accompany Paul?
What letters are address to Timothy? How man letters of Paul mention Timothy by name?
If there had not been a Lois and Eunice, would there have been the missionary and preacher Timothy? Explain.
ation & Discussion:
What can grandmother's do to help raise the next generation of faithful young people?
How can parents motivate and assist their grown children to serve the Lord and His church?
work: Find a Lois and Eunice near you and thank them for their service.

Who Are Your Heros?

A Texan was trying to impress on a Bostonian the valor of the heroes of the Alamo. "I'll bet you never had anything so brave around Boston," said the Texan. "Did you hear of Paul Revere?" asked the Bostonian. "Paul Revere?" said the Texan. "Isn't he the guy who ran for help?"

Regardless of who you think is a great example of a genuine hero, we all need our heros. Fred Smith in his book *You and Your Network*, wrote:

We cannot live fully without heroes, for they are the stars to guide us upward. They are the peaks on our human mountains. Not only do they personify what we can be, but they also urge us to be. Heroes are who we can become if we diligently pursue our ideas in the furnace of our opportunities. Heroes are the personification of our ideals, the embodiment of our highest values.

Some businesses hire people based, in part, on who they list as their heros. Tells us who your heros are and we can understand what kind of man or woman you aspire to be.

Researchers for the *World Almanac and Book of Facts* asked two thousand American eighth-grade students to name prominent people they admired and wanted to be like. Those most frequently mentioned by the teens as their heroes were sports celebrities and movie stars. This is by no means startling news to most of us. Most of these are not really heros or heroines, but merely entertainers. I remember as a child, I had many heroes. On television I would sit watch Andy Griffith, the Six Million Dollar Man,, Daniel Boone, Batman & Robin, and Archie Griffin play for the Buckeyes.

Most heros of today are materialistic, popular, and carnal. They dazzle us, whereas real heros enlarge us. They are a superficial fantasies. They are not real people. A few years ago disc jockey in Jacksonville Florida ask teenagers who their heroes were. The top three heros were: Prince, Madonna, and Michael Jackson. Today heroes are: Bruce Jenner, Kim Kardashian, etc.

Beside these the list of favorites would include athletes, movie stars, and any body who makes money, such as, Elon Musk or Bill Gates. These have made a name for themselves, but that by no means indicates that they have a good name. "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold" (Prob. 22:1). Present day heroes are a far cry from the heros of the Bible or the heros of the early church which were those who were martyrs for the cause of Christ.

Our youth of today could be spiritual leaders of the next generation, if they only had heros with godly character instead of all these celebrities who are nothing but moral pygmies (not that all those who are celebrates lack moral character). They need heros who are good examples to emulate and righteous enough to respect. In Hebrews 11 we find people listed in Faith's Hall of Heroes. Real heros of faith are aggrandized such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, etc. (Hebrews 11:1-40a). However, you never see posters of these heros plastered all over the walls of some teenager's room.

Just what do you look for in a hero?

Someone who is **charitable.** These self-sacrificing men and women will spend their whole lives serving the needs of others and never realize the benefits of their labor in this life. Consider the life of Jim who labored to translate the Bible for a small tribe of stone age illiterates.

Jim was voted the most likely to succeed. It's too bad Jim had it made. Personality, initiative, a college degree with honors, everything was his for the asking. Now look at him back-packing

across a jungle river, giving his life to a preliterate people barely out of the stone age, painstakingly creating a written alphabet from a previously unrecorded babble of sound. Working night and day translating the pages of the New Testament, exposing the senselessness of superstition and ignorance, relieving the pain and introducing the possibility of health, building a bridge of understanding to a neglected people and to think Jim could have been a success.

In this "me" generation with a "give me" mentality, self-denial of this type is rare. However, one does not have to run off to a remote jungle somewhere to find heros. Look at the selflessness of those that serve you, your parents, your teachers, etc.

There are many selfless men and women who demonstrated great charity in the Bible. Nehemiah was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes of the Medo-Persian Empire. He left that prestigious position to go to the broken down city of Jerusalem to rebuild its walls. Moses, although a prince of Egypt, cast his lot wint the fellow Israelites. "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward" (Heb. 11:). Paul left his religion and his position as a "pharisee among pharisees" to go in missionary journeys and spread the world. Of course, Jesus left Heaven to come be the servant Savior for the lost world.

You should look for heros who **make the right choices**. Think about Moses who had a choice to be with God's people instead of enjoying the passing pleasures of sin in the Egyptian royal court (Heb. 11:24,25). Daniel who risked his life by refusing to eat unclean food provided from him by the great Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzer. What about Joseph who consistently said "NO" to the constant tempting by Potiphar's wife.

Yes, there are those famous singers like Lady Gaga and Taylor Swift and somany other who are heros to of today, because they sing so beautifully such touching love songs. However, some of singers know nothing of love or commitment. They only hop in bed with one person than another using them but never loving them.

There are those athletic heros and heroines who can do great physical feats with their bodies. Yet, these same bodies are being destroyed by powerful drugs, because these "heros" cannot make the right choices off the court or field.

There are also the beautiful talented actors and actresses who make you laugh, cry and gasp as they portray characters who have far more character than they will ever have.

When shopping around for heros put **character** or **integrity** on your list. Think about it! Does it require deep moral character to make a touchdown, a home run, a hit single or give an award winning performance. When God sent Samuel shopping among the homes of ancient Israel to find a replacement for Saul, He did not look at physical stature, maturity or popularity. God looked into the heart and found a man who became a hero to many generations in the young lad, David. A hero without character is not a hero. But these heroes with integrity can be hard to find. For in the Scriptures God says in Ezekiel 22:30 "I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none." When you go to the amusement park, they now have signs that say, "you must be this tall to ride this ride." When you measure a hero he must measure up to the stature of the spiritual traits consistent with the Word of God. This is what is meant by moral pygmies. If your heroes set the bar too low, that is, below God's standard those who admire them till only strive to be as good as their amoral heroes.

One more trait to look for in a hero comes to no surprise and that is, **courage.** Consider the following men and women of Hebrews 11. By faith...

- Noah to build an ark, 7
- Abraham to leave home, 8
- Abraham to sacrifice Issac, 17

- Moses to leave Egypt, 27
- Rahab to keep spies, 31
- Daniel to stop the mouths of lions.

All of these had to have great courage to act in faith as they did.

Perhaps the greatest hero of all should be none other than Christ. He had the courage to die for wicked men and women on the cross (Rom. 5:6-8). Will Rogers once noted, "The main thing about being a hero is to know when to die". What greater hero for all mankind could their be?

Recently at camp one of our lessons dealt with heros. One of the exercises required the boys to list their heros. To my surprise one listed his father at the top. No, this dad was not rich. He was not a great athlete. He never had a hit single or sold an album. Yet to this young man he was a hero. One day that young man will be someone's hero because he was wise enough to chose the right kind of hero to emulate in his life.

Will Rogers also said, "We can't all be heroes because someone has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by." Perhaps, we all can be heros. If Christ is who we most admire and who we most want to be like in life, then as we wear the name Christian we are destined to be a hero to many like-minded souls who will influence in our lives.

souls \	who will influence in our lives.
Quest 1.	ions: Who are the most likely heroes of the world in our day?
2.	What is the difference between having a famous name and a good name?
3.	List some great heroes of the Bible who were charitible and selflessly serve their God and fellow man.
4.	List some men and women of the Bible who made great choices.
5.	Why are many of those today who have great singing voices and sing such moving love songs but are not suitable heros?
6.	Why are do many actors and actresses make for poor heros?

7.	What	was the main reasons God reject King Saul and chose King David to replace him?
Applio		A Discussion: qualities does should a Christian look for in a suitable Biblical Hero?
2.		avid's sinful mistakes. List is admirable qualities. Why is he promoted in the Bible as such in view of his serious sins?
Home	work:	Make a list of seven Biblical heros and find a way this week to emulate their virtuous qualities in your daily life.