

Faith Family Worship Guide – Week 28

MEMORIZE

- For those with 1st-5th graders at Brook Hills, focus on the verses that they are memorizing in Children’s Ministry for this unit.
 - 1st Grade – Matthew 22:37-39
 - 2nd Grade – Matthew 5:14-16
 - 3rd Grade – Proverbs 3:5-7
 - 4th Grade – Proverbs 4:10-15
 - 5th Grade – 1 John 4:9-12

READ

As our church reads through the Bible for the next two years, each day will include a chapter from both the Old Testament and the New Testament. As a family, decide if you want to read one or both of these passages. The Faith Family Worship Guide will look ahead to the readings for the upcoming week.

Read: Acts 2:41-47

Questions:

- What types of things are the Christ-followers doing in these verses?
- Why did the believers do these things?
- As the believers lived this way, what happened as a result (see v. 47)?
- Why do you think people were daily trusting in Christ as their Lord and Savior?
- What do these verses teach us about how we should live and interact with others? Why should we do these things?

Bottom Line: Trusting in Christ as Lord and Savior changes our hearts, which shows in the way we live and treat other people.

SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions were created by the age-group ministry leaders as a way to help parents better communicate the biblical truths discussed in the Family Worship Guide. These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions, and any other means necessary, to help their children discover the truths of God’s word and worship him together.

Preschool

- Is Jesus kind, caring, and loving to everyone?
- Why did God send Jesus from heaven to earth?
- What does God ask us to do? Trust and believe in Jesus. Turn away from our sin and commit to follow Him.
- In the verses we read from Acts, what did the people in this church do together? 1. They wanted to learn about God. 2. They ate together. 3. They prayed together. 4. They looked for miracles. 5. They spent time together. 6. They shared with others. 7. They looked for needs that others had. 8. They were glad. 9. They praised God. 10. They grew in number.
- What is a team? Did the people from this church act like a team? Yes, they worked hard together to love God and love others.
- If we are on Jesus’ team, how should we act?
- Does Jesus want us to be a team like the people from the early church?
- It is important for us to remember what Jesus wanted the early church to do. He wants us to do the same thing. Jesus wants to use our lives for His glory. If we all follow the example of Jesus and the people from the early church, we are obeying God and helping others know about Him.

Children

- How can you tell if a person is a Christian? What are some things they might do or say that might set them apart from people who aren’t Christians?

- Read Acts 2:41-47.
- These verses tell us a lot about how some of the first Christians lived. What are some of the things these verses say they did?
- Do you think that Christians live this way today? Why or why not?
- What do you think it means to be devoted to something or someone?
- These Christians were devoted to learning and understanding more about Christ and then living their lives for him.
- What is the difference between saying we follow Christ and actually living like we love him and are devoted to him?
- What is one thing you can do this week to demonstrate that you follow Christ?

Students

- This passage says the early church was devoted. What does it mean to be devoted?
- What are some things our family is devoted to? Make a list.
- Begin to play the “What If” game and let the family play out different scenarios. What if you found a hundred dollar bill? What would you do with it? What if you woke up this morning and a cuddly lion cub was sleeping at the foot of your bed? What if everything you touched turned to chocolate? Come up with some of your own questions.
- Now read Acts 2:45 and ask what if our faith family began to look like this? What would happen? How would our church change? How would our neighborhood change?
- What if our family acted out this verse for two days? Do you think anyone would notice?

SING

Continue in worship by singing “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us”. Rejoice in what the Lord has done for us and how He changes our lives.

Visit our website for a link to this song: www.brookhills.org/gathering/this_week.html.

WHERE WE ARE IN THE STORY

Readings for July 14-20

Joshua 20-24, Judges 1-3, and Acts 1-7

Where We Are In The Story (Joshua)

Background of Joshua: While authorship of this book is unknown, the book’s name derives from the name of its main character, Joshua, who was Moses’ successor in leading the people of Israel. His name means “Yahweh delivers” or “Yahweh saves,” which is an apt title of the book since it describes *God’s* work in defeating the nations of the Promised Land and giving the land to His people. Joshua presents the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give their descendants the land of Canaan, and it describes the military conquests that brought this to pass. Written as a historical book for Israel, Joshua also emphasizes God’s sovereignty, omnipotence, and faithfulness to His word, and Joshua 21:43-45 provides a fitting summary of God’s character as One who keeps *all* of His promises.

Structure of Joshua:

- Joshua 1-5 describe Israel’s preparations before taking the Promised Land.
- Joshua 6-12 depict the military conquests of the nation.
- Joshua 13-21 explain the distribution of the land among the tribes, highlighting the fulfillment of God’s promises to His people.
- Joshua 22-24 record Joshua’s final instructions and exhortations to the nation before his death.

This Week in Joshua: Joshua 20-21 describes how Israel kept the Lord’s instructions regarding the cities of refuge and the cities and pasturelands allotted to the Levites (see Ex. 21:12-14; Num. 35:1-29; Deut. 4:41-43; 19:1-10). Forty-eight cities were set aside for the Levites, and six of these were also cities of refuge. Teaching the people about God was one function of a priest, and this could more easily be accomplished by living among the Israelites throughout the land. Levi also lacked its own tribal allotment of land because of the judgment on Levi in Genesis 49:6-7 for his violence against the Hivites in Genesis 24.

Joshua 21 mentions three groups among the Levites: the Kohathites, the Gershonites, and the Merarites, and while each

of these groups were still Levites, they were also the descendants of Levi's sons, Kohath, Gershon, and Merari. At the time that God spoke these words to Joshua, Israel did not yet possess all forty-eight of these cities, but as they conquered, they knew God's prescription for how to divvy out the land. Joshua 21:43-45 presents the fulfillment of God's promises to Joshua in chapter one and His covenant with Israel to give them the Promised Land, and it stands as a testament to God's faithfulness and His power. It rightly credits God for the accomplishment of taking the land and defeating Israel's enemies.

In Joshua 22, Joshua releases the people of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, so they could return to their allotted land since they had faithfully helped the other tribes possess their inheritance. When these tribes arrived in their land, they built an altar to the Lord. When the rest of the nation heard this news, they sent Phinehas and ten tribal chiefs to address the rebellion, for they feared another reprisal of what happened at Baal-peor (Num. 25:1-18) or with Achan after Jericho (Josh. 7:1-26) because God had instructed them to only have one altar for sacrifice (Deut. 12:13-32). However, it was a miscommunication, for the Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassehites built the altar as a memorial that they had fulfilled their commitment to help the other tribes conquer the Promised Land. They did not build it as a place to worship or sacrifice offerings in replacement of doing so in the Lord's sanctuary. Therefore, the Reubenites and the Gadites called the altar "Witness," for it represented their unity with the other tribes. Because the Jordan River formed a natural boundary line between the eastern tribes (Reubenites, Gadites, and Manassehites) and the rest of the nation, they worried that future generations would either cease to worship the Lord in His sanctuary or that the western tribes would reject the eastern tribes as heirs of the promises to Israel.

Joshua 23-24 fast-forwards an indefinite amount of time (possibly 25 years) when Joshua makes his farewell and gives a charge to Israel's leaders and to the nation. As God had urged him to heed His Law in Joshua 1, Joshua urges Israel's leaders to do the same (Josh. 23:6-8). He reminded the people of God's promises, of God's faithfulness to give them the Promised Land, and of the blessings and curses associated with the covenant. The book concludes with a covenant renewal ceremony in which the Israelites affirm their fidelity to their covenant with God, and it describes the death of Joshua and Eleazar the priest (Aaron's son) as well as the burial of Joseph's bones per his instructions (Gen. 50:25).

Where We Are In The Story (Judges)

Background of Judges: While authorship of Judges is traditionally attributed to Samuel, we do not know who wrote this book. Judges presents Israel's cycle of idolatry, judgment, repentance, and deliverance that occurred between the death of Joshua and the establishment of Israel's monarchy (Josh. 2:11-19). Throughout this book, God remains faithful to His covenant, but Israel receives judgment that comes as a result of God's promises to *punish* His people for their disobedience. However, Israel's depravity emphasizes the scandal and the greatness of God's mercy and forgiveness. While God raises up twelve men and women during this time period to lead His people, *He* remains the ultimate Judge and Savior of Israel.

Structure of Judges:

- Judges 1:1-3:6 introduce the reader to the circumstances after Joshua's death and gives an overview of the cycle Israel would follow as God raised up judges to deliver and to lead His people.
- Judges 3:7-16:31 provide accounts of twelve judges in Israel's history.
- Judges 17-21 describe the moral descent of Israel and how the nation demonstrated little difference from their pagan neighbors.

This Week in Judges: Unlike after the death of Moses, when Joshua died there was no named successor set in place to lead the people of Israel. The people began with an encouraging start, for they "inquired of the LORD" as to who should lead them to fight against the Canaanites (1:1). But their fidelity to the Lord quickly dissipated. At the time of Joshua's death, several other nations still inhabited the Promised Land, and Joshua 1 describes the tribes of Judah and Simeon assisting each other in defeating some of these inhabitants, including the king of Jerusalem. At the same time, the tribe of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites from the city (1:21), and Manasseh, Ephraim, Zebulun, Asher, and Naphtali also "did not drive out the inhabitants" of the land (1:27-33). Their inability to conquer these nations would later lead to them being influenced by their pagan neighbors and drawn into idolatry.

Judges 1:19 mentions Israel's inability to drive out the inhabitants of the plain because of their chariots of iron, but Judges 2:1-5 clarify that the real reason for their failure was the Israelites' idolatry (Judg. 2:1-5). Because of their sin, God

judged the nation of Israel by making the Canaanite inhabitants a proverbial thorn in their side who would entice them to sin (2:3).

Joshua 2:6-10 reiterate the death of Joshua, the distribution of land to the tribes of Israel, and the birth of a generation who had not experienced God’s provision in the wilderness or faithfulness in battle. Observe the contrast between the descriptions of the different generations of Israelites in Judges 2:6-9 and 11-15:

Judges 2:6-9

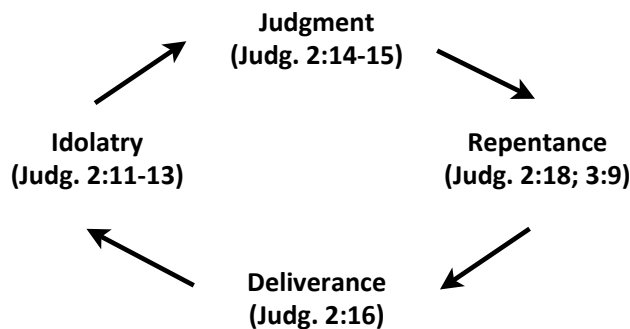
They “went “ to take possession of their inheritance (2:6).
They “served the LORD” (2:7).
They “buried” Joshua in his land (2:9).

Judges 2:11-15

They “did what was evil in the sight of the LORD (2:11).
They “served the Baals” (2:11).
They “abandoned the LORD” (2:12).
They “went after other gods” (2:12).
They “bowed down to them” (2:12).
They “provoked the LORD to anger” (2:12).
They “abandoned the LORD” (2:13).
They “served the Baals and the Ashteroth” (2:13).

While they had not experienced God’s miraculous guidance firsthand as their parents and grandparents had, this younger generation was not ignorant of His acts; however, they lived as though they were unaware of His greatness and power. As Pastor Timothy Keller states in *Judges for You*, “when a whole generation turns away, we have to expect that the parents have failed to model real faith and disciple their children” (33).

The term “judge” implies a judicial role, and while Deborah seems to have acted in this role, the judges in this book act more as military leaders and as individuals who instruct the people in the way of the Lord. Judges 2:16-23 describe the cycle that is depicted in the graphic below, and the book as a whole describes the “Canaanization” of Israel. Instead of being a kingdom of priests who witness to the surrounding nations, Israel acts just like them. Because of Israel’s habitual idolatry, God determined to test Israel by leaving the remaining Canaanite nations in the land (2:20-3:6). Would Israel choose to follow God even when tempted by their neighbors to worship other gods? Anytime God tests His people, it is for their benefit, not His. He knows their hearts and the future. But when He tests us, we learn more about our own strengths and weaknesses, and we come face-to-face with the status of our functional faith in God.



Judges 3 lists three judges in Israel’s history: Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. God would use the judges to conquer remaining nations in the land while He also allowed these nations to bring His judgment on His people for their idolatry. Othniel, a nephew of Caleb (3:9), prevailed over the king of Mesopotamia (3:7-12), and Ehud defeated the king of Moab and subdued the nation (3:12-20), which inhabited the region on the southeastern border of the Dead Sea. Shamgar led the nation against the Philistines (3:31), and while he freed Israel from them, he did not completely eradicate this nation.

Where We Are In The Story (Acts)

Background of Acts: As with the Luke’s Gospel, Luke wrote Acts to a man named Theophilus to describe the events that occurred after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, and Luke 1:1-4 state the purpose of both Luke and Acts: to provide a narrative of the truth from eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word. Acts details the thirty years following the resurrection of Christ and describes the spread of the gospel throughout Asia and Europe.

Structure of Acts:

- Acts 1-5 describe the advent of the church.
- Acts 6:1-9:31 portray the persecution and the growth of the church.
- Acts 9:32-12:24 detail the inclusion of the Gentiles into the faith.
- Acts 13:1-19:20 follow the missionary journeys of Paul.
- Acts 19:21-28:31 chronicle Paul's journey to Jerusalem where he is arrested, tried, and sent to Rome for an audience with Caesar.

This Week in Acts: In the forty days after His resurrection, Jesus taught His followers about the Kingdom of God and instructed them to wait in Jerusalem until they had received the Holy Spirit (1:1-8). The disciples still thought in terms of an earthly king who would free Israel from the Romans, and Jesus directs them to focus on the task given to them by God – to be His witnesses “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of all the earth” (1:8). Acts 1-7 depict how they fulfilled this call in Jerusalem, Acts 8-11 describe the expansion into Judea and Samaria, and the rest of the book shows how God's people spread the gospel to the nations.

After Jesus' ascension into Heaven, the disciples returned to the Upper Room in Jerusalem (this may or may not be the same room in which they celebrated the Passover with Jesus). The apostles viewed the replacement of Judas Iscariot as a matter of Old Testament prophecy, hence the quotations from Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8 in Acts 1. In relation to the selection of a twelfth disciple, F.F. Bruce states in his commentary on Acts, “The total of twelve was significant: it corresponded to the number of the tribes of Israel, and may have marked the apostles out as leaders of the new Israel” (44).

Pentecost occurred fifty days after the Passover and was the feast where the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were brought to God, and it was on this day that God sent the Holy Spirit to indwell in His followers. Acts presents a turning point in salvation history. No longer is God's presence among His people as with the tabernacle or among His people as when Christ walked upon the earth. Now, the presence of God would dwell *in* the believer. Just as the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus during His earthly ministry, this same Spirit would indwell and empower God's people as they ministered in Jesus' name.

Wind and fire accompany the filling of the Spirit, which alludes to Ezekiel 37:9-14 and Luke 3:16-17, and the Spirit led these believers to prophesy and worked through them to where everyone heard them speak in their native language. The speaking of tongues that occurred on Pentecost differs from the type of tongues mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14, for the tongues mentioned in Corinthians involves speech where someone with the gift of interpretation has to translate what the speaker uttered.

Peter preaches the first sermon in Acts 2. He begins by refuting the charge of drunkenness (2:12-13), explains that the people were witnessing the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy that God would unleash His Spirit on His people, then delivers the reason for this demonstration of power – the proclamation of Jesus' identity as Messiah and Lord. Peter called the people to repent of their sins and to be baptized (2:37-41), and 3,000 people trusted in Christ as Lord and Savior on that day. Acts 2:42-47 describes the actions of this new community of believers. Based on the teaching of the apostles, they fellowshiped, worshipped, and served together.

Acts 2:43 mentions that “many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles,” and Acts 3 describes one of these miracles – the healing of a lame beggar. This demonstration of power pointed to the authority of the One whose name they invoked, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and Peter used this miracle to transition into telling the crowd about Christ. Their sermon in the temple did not go unnoticed by the religious leaders (keep in mind that these were the same religious leaders who had crucified Jesus only weeks before), but Peter and John used this opportunity to share the gospel with the people who had crucified the Messiah.

In contrast to Barnabas who willingly sold his belongings and gave the money to the apostles (4:32-37), Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and pretended to give all of the proceeds when they had kept a portion for themselves. As a result of their attempt to deceive the apostles and, ultimately, God, they died. They were free to give however much they desired, so it was their lie that warranted such judgment. This incident demonstrates that even the idyllic early church of Acts 2:42-47 contained imperfect people. Especially because this was a new era of salvation history, it was important to impress upon the believers the importance of honesty and obedience and to give warning as to attempts to

deceive the Spirit and the church.

Acts 5-7 depict the persecution of these early believers by the Jewish religious leaders, and they seized Stephen, who was chosen to assist the apostles and who was performing many miracles among the people. As they had done with Jesus, the religious leaders had invoked the charge of blasphemy against Stephen, utilizing false witnesses to make these claims (6:11-14). Stephen's defense consisted of explaining God's plan of salvation from Abraham to Solomon and how His presence is not confined to a building (specifically the temple), and Stephen pointed out how the Israelites had historically persecuted the prophets and even the Messiah Himself. As a result of His assertion of Christ as the Messiah (which they deemed blasphemy), they stoned and killed Stephen. But despite the persecution of Stephen and other believers, God's church continued to grow.