

Faith Family Worship Guide – Week 29

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: Judges 4:1-3; 6:1-10; 10:1-16

Questions:

- In these three passages, what events occurred in all three of these situations?
- How did the Israelites disobey God? In what ways do you disobey God?
- Why did the Israelites continue to disobey God when each time they rebelled they were defeated by one of their enemies?
- Why do we continue to disobey God when we know that there are consequences for our disobedience?
- What should be our response when we sin?
- God forgave the Israelites and delivered them from their enemies, but why is God's forgiveness *not* an excuse to keep sinning?

Bottom Line: God punishes those who disobey Him, and He forgives those who repent of their sins and turn to Him.

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

- God is everywhere and He knows everything.
- Do you think that obedience is important to God?
- Does God know if you want to obey Him?
- Should obedience be important to you?
- Are you sad when you disobey?
- Are you punished when you disobey?
- What should you do when you disobey or do bad things?
- When we are sorry, God forgives us.
- If your heart is right, you will want what God wants. God wants obedience. God loves what is right. God is kind, forgiving, and merciful.

Children

- You would think the Israelites would be dizzy from spinning around and around in the same cycle over and over again. Rebellion, captivity, crying out, salvation; rebellion, captivity, crying, salvation; rebellion...you get the picture.
- Our gracious God disciplines us when we rebel.
- If things were not bad for us when we sin we would probably never repent and turn back to our gracious God.
- Thank God for His discipline.

- Thank God for drawing us back to Himself time and time again.

Students

- If anyone knows about disobedience, punishment, and repentance it's a student. What are a few strange and unusual punishments you have seen? (Putting two arguing kids in the same t-shirt, using social media to publicly punish, etc.)
- List a few ways you've been disobedient in the last week. What was your punishment?
- Discuss a time when forgiveness came before punishment. Now recall a time when punishment came first, then forgiveness.
- What would happen if disobedience were never punished?
- Discuss the following flow: Disobedience → Punishment → Repentance → Forgiveness
- Why are these elements important?

SING

It's important for us to remember the seriousness of our sin. Not so that we live in guilt and shame, but so that we treasure God's grace and forgiveness all the more. So as we continue in worship, let's join together in singing "All I Have is Christ". Written in 2008 by Sovereign Grace Music, the lyrics tell the story of both our sin and the saving work of Christ. The second verse reads:

*But as I ran my hell-bound race, indifferent to the cost
You looked upon my helpless state and led me to the cross
And I beheld God's love displayed, You suffered in my place
You bore the wrath reserved for me, now all I know is grace!*

Praise God that He bore our punishment so that we could experience His grace forever!

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
Judges 4-10 and Acts 8-14

Where We Are In The Story (Judges)

Background of Judges: While authorship of Judges is traditionally assigned 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: Judges 4-5 recount the era when Deborah led as prophet and the judge of Israel. Because Israel was a nation, Deborah's role as a judge was political, not just ministerial. Her leadership often brings up the subject of women's role in society and in the church, but bear in mind that Judges 4-5 is *not prescriptive* of the way things should be. Instead, these chapters *describe* a time in Israel's history when the nation engaged in idolatry and when male leadership was lacking (as seen by Barak's hesitancy). When processing complex issues such as women and ministry, we

must take *all* of Scripture into account and do the heavy lifting of studying the issue in its entirety, not just selecting certain portions of the Bible. Three helpful resources on this subject include the Secret Church on “Family, Marriage, Sex, and the Gospel” by David Platt (radical.net), “What about Women, Paul?” by David Platt (radical.net), and *Two Views on Women in Ministry* edited by Beck and Blomberg.

Deborah summoned Barak with a directive from the Lord to take 10,000 men into battle against a Canaanite king who had 900 iron chariots, which presented terrible odds for Israel. God had assured victory, but Barak wanted Deborah to accompany him and the army into battle. Because he recognized Deborah as a godly woman who spoke God’s words, he wanted her with him on the battlefield. But because of his conditional request, he would not get the honor for his participation in the defeat; instead, God would give honor to a woman (Jael). The events of Judges 4 mirror the Exodus (Ex. 14-15) in that both passages emphasize the military strength of Israel’s enemy (Judg. 4:3, 7, 13; Ex. 14:9, 17-18, 23, 28), God uses bodies of water to destroy their enemies (Judg. 5:21; Ex. 15:6, 10), God confused their enemies (Judg. 4:15; Ex. 14:24), the enemies were completely destroyed (Judg. 4:16; Ex. 14:28), and the narrative was directly followed by songs of praise (Judg. 5; Ex. 15).

Judges 6-9 follow the account of Gideon, the fifth judge listed in this book. At this time, the Midianites have become Israel’s oppressors, and instead of immediately delivering Israel, the Lord first sent a prophet to the people to remind the people of who God is and the consequences of their sin. “The people of Israel cried out to the LORD on account of the Midianites” (Judg. 6:7), but that does not necessarily mean that they were repentant of their sin. The sending of the prophet implies that they needed to be convicted over their sin and not just their circumstances.

Gideon requested several signs from the Lord as a reassurance of God’s identity as Sovereign Lord and of His favor. Gideon’s actions do not necessarily mean that we should ask God for a sign when it comes to any decision we have to make. The fleece situation was not about direction in decision-making; it was about God’s power, which was the motivation behind the *types* of requests that Gideon made. In Judges 6, Gideon destroyed the altar of Baal, and the Canaanites believed that this god controlled the rain and the dew. If God could rule over nature (showing Himself as more powerful than Baal), then He could empower Gideon to lead Israel and to defeat the Midianites.

In Judges 8, the people of Israel attempted to make Gideon their king, but he declined, reminding them that God ruled over them (v. 23). However, he turned around and ordered them to donate gold from the spoil of their victories, and he made a golden ephod out of the gold, which was part of the clothing worn by the high priest. Whatever his motivation for doing this, the golden ephod became an object of worship for the people and for Gideon and his family (v. 27). Furthermore, his son Abimelech later killed all of his brothers except one, Jotham, in order to rule over Israel, and he ruled for three years until God brought an end to his leadership. Regarding Gideon’s actions in Judges 8, Robert Chisholm states in *A Commentary on Judges and Ruth*,

Despite knowing the people’s and his own family’s penchant for idols, he makes an ephod which quickly becomes an object of worship. By marrying many wives and giving one of his sons a royal name [the “melech” in Abimelech means “king”], he acts as if he is a king. While giving lip-service to the Lord’s kingship, his actions contradict his words and set the stage for new depths of civil strife and chaos (p. 295).

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 states 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: With the advent of the church after Christ's ascension, Acts depicts many situations where believers had not yet received the Holy Spirit or where the apostles would lay hands on individuals and pray for them to receive the Spirit. With this particular subject, it is important to remember that the Holy Spirit indwells the believer *at the moment of salvation*. Acts depicts a unique time of transition in salvation history, but the activity of the Spirit has not ceased since this time. With regards to Acts 8, either these people were not yet regenerated (converted), or they had not yet received the Spirit because the promise of His coming could not be fulfilled until Christ had ascended. Because this began the spread of the Christian faith outside of Jerusalem into Samaria, there is also a sense in which the delay in receiving the Spirit supported the unity of the church as the apostles were able to ratify the work of the Spirit among the Samaritans. A similar situation in Acts 10 led Peter to recognize and affirm God's work among the Gentiles. Many denominations build entire doctrines about the Holy Spirit based on what they see in Acts alone, but when studying the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (or any doctrine, for that matter), we must look at *all* of Scripture. Two helpful resources on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit include the Secret Church on "Exploring the Holy Spirit" (radical.net) and *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem.

Acts 10 records two visions that prepare Peter and Cornelius to cross the barrier between Jews and Gentiles as the gospel spread beyond the Jews. Dietary differences and circumcision were just two of many differences that prevented Jews from socializing with Gentiles (doing so would make a Jew unclean), and such barriers would have to be eliminated if these two groups were to form one unified body of believers. A vision was necessary for Peter to accept such an invitation from Cornelius in the first place. His vision consisted of a sheet coming down from heaven, and in it were all sorts of clean and unclean animals (as defined by levitical law) with God telling him not to regard common things as profane. Peter understood that this vision applied not only to food but also to people (see Acts 10:28), which is why Peter accepted Cornelius' invitation. This led to Cornelius' household hearing and receiving the gospel (Acts 10:34-48).

In Acts 11, Peter defends the acceptance of the Gentiles in the community of faith when believers in Jerusalem criticized him for eating with uncircumcised men. Why was this such a big deal? Table fellowship with Gentiles involved eating food that either was unclean or had not been tithed on. Furthermore, to accept hospitality from a Gentile meant associating with someone who was not circumcised, and circumcision was a sign of the old covenant, marking the person as a member of the covenant community. To a Jew, Gentiles did not need to be treated as full members of the covenant community without them also bearing the physical sign of the covenant community – circumcision.

Acts 9-14 also describes the conversion of Saul (a.k.a. Paul) and the first of Paul's missionary journeys. The church at Antioch served as his home base, his sending church, and it was first in Antioch that believers became known as "Christians" (Acts 11:26). In his first journey, Paul set out with Barnabas and John Mark from Antioch to Salamis (on the island of Cyprus), Paphos, Perga (in modern day Turkey), Antioch Pisidia (in Turkey – this is different from the Syrian Antioch that served as their home base), Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Attalia, and back to Antioch in Syria. Paul's routine involved visiting the Jewish synagogue upon arrival to a city and preaching the gospel there. While many Jews and God-fearing Gentiles believed, Paul and his compatriots regularly faced opposition from the Jewish authorities. During this journey, Jews in Lystra stoned Paul and left him for dead (Acts 14:19). The fact that Paul was able to rise up and reenter the city on the same day as being stoned and the next day travel to Derbe implies a miracle occurred that enabled Paul to recover so quickly.

Acts 8-14 depict the opposition faced by the early church. Saul, as well as unbelieving Jews, ravaged the church because they thought it propagated blasphemy about Christ being the Messiah and because they became jealous about the popularity of Christianity and its proclaimers. Opposition also came from those whose industry was threatened by the faith, such as the businessmen who owned the spirit-possessed slave girl in Philippi (Acts 16:16-24). Despite the attacks from unbelieving Jews and also unbelieving Gentiles, the gospel continued to be proclaimed, and the church continued to grow.