

Faith Family Worship Guide – Week 31

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 21:27-36; 23:11-24; 26:27-29; 28:16, 30-31

Questions:

- Why would God allow such a famous, godly preacher like Paul to be arrested and imprisoned?
- What does the word “persecution” mean?
- Why does God allow His people to be persecuted for their faith?
- Because of his imprisonment, who was Paul able to share the gospel with?
- What types of responses do unbelievers have when a Christ-follower shares with them about Christ and salvation? Why do they have such responses?
- How should we respond when unbelievers make fun of us, hurt us, or imprison us because of our beliefs?

Bottom Line: God permits His people to suffer so others can hear the gospel.

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

- Who created you?
- Who loves you and always takes care of you?
- How do you feel when someone is mean to you or makes fun of you?
- Explain that some people in are made fun of because they love Jesus.
- How would you feel if that happened to you?
- What happened to Paul in the scripture we read?
- Remember God is always with you and He will help you in all situations. How do you know God is with you?

Children

- Talk with your children about what persecution means.
- We don’t face the same kind of persecution as Paul did.
- We do have difficult times sometimes. Discuss these with your children.
- Some of our church’s missionaries are in dangerous places where they could face persecution like Paul.
- Pray with your children for these missionaries.

Students

- Have you ever seen someone endure persecution for following Christ?

- What are your feelings toward those who persecute Christians?
- What was Paul's response to the accusations made against him? (He declared his innocence and shared the gospel.)
- Even though we do not experience this kind of persecution in our community today, many Christians around the world do. How should we react to this reality? What would you want someone to do for you if you were in Paul's position?

SING

The hymn, *Jesus, Firm Foundation*, is a solid song that helps us remember one of the main tenets of our faith. In times of struggle, pain, or even joy it can be easy to forget that we have placed our faith in a foundation that is unshakeable and 100% reliable.

The chorus that was added to this hymn by writers Bryan Brown, Jason Ingram, and Tony Wood perfectly and simply encapsulates our cornerstone, "How firm our foundation. How sure our salvation. And we will not be shaken. Jesus, firm foundation." This song reminds us of the truth that as long as we hope in Christ, no matter the circumstance, we can rest assured that God is working for our good.

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

WHERE WE ARE IN THE STORY

Readings for August 4-10

Judges 18-21, Ruth 1-4, and Acts 22-28

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: The phrase "there was no king in Israel" signifies a critical issue for the nation in Judges 18-21 (18:1; 19:1; 21:25), especially as we read about the idolatry of the people, the immorality of a priest, the homosexual tendencies of the Gibeonites, the rape and death of the priest's concubine, the civil war with the tribe of Benjamin, and the abduction of the women of Shiloh. In fact, Judges 19's similarity to Genesis 19:1-11 compares the immorality of the Israelites to that of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, demonstrating the need for divine judgment. At this point in Judges, God provides no commentary regarding the people's actions, but this does not mean that He approves in any form or fashion. Israel's flagrant violation of God's laws is one reason why so many Israelites died in the civil war against Benjamin. While the people did come to Him about whether or not to attack Benjamin, they only sought God when they wanted something from Him. Even then, God did not abandon Israel. He remained present and faithful but gave them over to their sinful desires. The nation's leadership crisis – no prophet, judge, or king – must be rectified if the nation is to continue.

Where We Are In The Story (Ruth)

Background of Ruth: Ruth 1:1 identifies the events of the book as occurring during the era of the judges in Israel. As

Judges definitively ends by stating that there was no king in Israel, Ruth provides the lineage for Israel's impending royal line, and the genealogy of Matthew 1 lists her as an ancestor of King David and Jesus. While we do not know the author of this book, the Hebrew Bible (the Tanak) places Ruth between Proverbs and Song of Solomon instead of after Judges, which would mean that a reader would see the description of the Proverbs 31 woman then read about a female ancestor of the Messiah. This book emphasizes both the mercy of God and His sovereignty in working all situations according to His purpose.

This Week in Ruth: Ruth 1 introduces the reader to the main characters of this book and to the challenges that they face. Contrary to the book's title, *Naomi* is actually the central figure of the story whose bitterness turns to hope and joy, and the book demonstrates how she experiences the loss of her family and how God cares and provides for her through Ruth and Boaz. While Naomi felt rejected by God when she became a needy widow, this book clearly shows that God cares for both Naomi and Ruth, even though they had no idea at the time that He was orchestrating their deliverance, even in how He used a famine to send them back to Bethlehem where Ruth would just "happen" to glean in the fields of Boaz, their extended relative (Ruth 1:6; 2:3, 20).

In *A Commentary on Judges and Ruth*, Robert Chisholm notes the pattern of an individual asking for God to reward a particular individual for their kindness or faithfulness, then God answering that prayer (pp. 564-566). This pattern indirectly demonstrates God's activity in the lives of Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi, and how He hears the prayers of His people and responds according to His will.

- In Ruth 1:8-9, Naomi prays a blessing over her daughters-in-law who were attempting to return with Naomi to Israel. While we do not have any further mention of Orpah after this chapter, Ruth marries Boaz in Ruth 4.
- In Ruth 2:12, Boaz asks that God reward Ruth for her care of Naomi, and he ends up being the one to provide for her as his wife.
- Ruth 2:19-20 tells how Naomi issues a blessing on Boaz for his care of his extended family, and God provides for Boaz both a wife and descendants (Ruth 3:11; 4:13).
- Boaz blesses Ruth again in Ruth 3:10 for following the custom and law of the Israelites in seeking out a kinsman redeemer to continue her husband's legacy instead of seeking other men, and God does bless her with a husband and children.
- In Ruth 4:11-12, the people of the city pray a blessing on Ruth and for Naomi's descendants to be prosperous and successful. Ruth and Boaz have a child, Obed, who was the grandfather of King David and an ancestor of the Messiah.

Ruth 2:20 identifies Boaz as a kinsman redeemer for Ruth and Naomi. Leviticus 25:25-49 describes such a redeemer as one from the family who would recover family property or family members who had been sold to pay off debt, and Deuteronomy 25:5-10 provides laws concerning a levirate marriage, which is when a male family member would marry the childless widow and produce offspring with her who would carry on the name of her deceased husband. This was "to perpetuate the brother's name in Israel" (Dt. 25:7). So this male family member had the right to purchase or acquire the property that had belonged to the family, to continue the family name, and to care for the widow. The concept of a kinsman redeemer ultimately finds its fulfillment in Christ, for He has the right and the power to redeem us from our sin and despair (Eph. 1:7-8).

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 describes the advent of the church.
- Acts 6:1-9:31 portrays the persecution and the growth of the church.
- Acts 9:32-12:24 details the inclusion of the Gentiles into the faith.
- Acts 13:1-19:20 follows the missionary journeys of Paul.
- Acts 19:21-28:31 chronicles Paul's journey to Jerusalem where he is arrested, tried, and sent to Rome for an

audience with Caesar.

This Week in Acts: Acts 22-28 details the events that occur after Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, and it demonstrates how God provided unique opportunities for government and religious leaders to hear the gospel. As prophesied, these trials did lead to Paul's eventual death, although he is still alive and awaiting an audience with Caesar in Rome as Acts closes. Acts 22 picks up with Paul's address to the crowd who had protested for his arrest, and he uses this opportunity to tell about Jesus' appearance to him and his conversion on the Damascus road and to explain how God had called him to witness to the Gentiles. At this, the crowd called for his death. The tribune called for Paul to be flogged and questioned about the crowd's claims and desire to kill him, but Paul questioned the tribune's ability to arrest and flog him since he was a Roman citizen. Legally, Roman citizens were exempt from being flogged by a flagellum, which was a leather thong attached to a wooden handle, and at the end of the leather were pieces of bone and metal. This instrument would cripple and often kill its victims. Paul had been beaten before with rods but not with this instrument of torture. Paul's citizenship brought his release, but the tribune ordered that he appear before the council, the Sanhedrin (the same group who had brought Jesus to Pilate to be crucified), to account for the grievances against him.

Because of the demographic present at his appearance before the Sanhedrin, Paul changes his approach and identifies himself as a Pharisee. The Sanhedrin consisted of a minority of Pharisees (religious leaders who believed in the resurrection of the dead) and a majority of Sadducees (rich, elitist religious leaders who maintained the Temple and who rejected belief in there being a resurrection of the dead). By identifying himself as a Pharisee, Paul gained support from that portion of the Sanhedrin and caused a disagreement among those present regarding what happens after death. Because of the violent dissension this caused, the tribune sent Paul to the barracks, and when a plot to kill Paul was unearthed, the tribune sent Paul to Felix the Governor. The high priest, Ananias, brought a charge against Paul before Felix, and when Paul gives his defense, he distinguishes between what he believes ("the Way") and Judaism and explains that he stands before Felix because of a doctrinal difference regarding the resurrection of the dead (Acts 24:21). Felix and his third wife Drusilla interacted often with Paul and heard him explain Christianity during his two years in custody, and Felix left Paul in prison to mollify the Jews and in hopes that Paul would offer him a bribe. But Paul outlasted Felix who was succeeded by Festus and who reexamined Paul's case, and during this reopening of the case, Paul appealed to Caesar instead of risking going back to trial in Jerusalem.

Before being taken from Caesarea to Rome, King Agrippa and his sister Bernice visited Festus who relayed to them the particulars of Paul's case, and Paul shared his testimony with them, asked King Agrippa whether or not he believed in Christ (Acts 26:27-29), and expressed his desire that all who heard the good news would believe. If he had not appealed to Caesar, Agrippa and Festus would have released him, but Paul legally had to be sent to Rome. Although shipwrecked on the island of Malta on the journey to Rome, Paul arrived and spent two years waiting to appear before Caesar, but during this time, he testified about Christ to Jews and to Gentiles with many trusting in Christ for salvation. His arrest enabled him to share the gospel in Rome. In Acts 1:8, Jesus had instructed His followers to testify about Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth, and Acts 28 describes how the gospel spread beyond Israel throughout the Roman Empire.