

Faith Family Worship Guide – Week 30

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 16:16-34

Questions:

- Why does God allow bad things to happen to His people, especially when they are being faithful to Him?
- Will God respond to our hurts the way that we want Him to?
- How can we trust Him when we do not know *why* He allows certain things to happen to us?
- How should we respond when people make fun of us or mistreat us because of our faith in God?

Bottom Line: God cares about us, and He has a purpose for everything that happens in our lives.

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

- Does God know everything that happens to you?
- Is He always in control?
- Who was in jail in the story we read?
- What did Paul and Silas do when they were in jail?
- Did God use their situation and turn it into something good?
- Do you need to get mad or upset when something happens that you might not like?
- Why should you trust God?
- How can you learn to trust God more?

Children

- Take turns reading through Acts 16:16-34 with your children.
- Why were Paul and Silas punished? How did God use their imprisonment to bring about something good?
- Have you ever been through a really hard time that you didn’t understand, but then God brought about something good in the end? Give an example of such an experience.
- Have you ever been through a really hard time that did not seem to bring any good?
- What did Paul and Silas witness God do at the end of the passage we read?
- Sometimes the story doesn’t end well like in Acts 16, and if we keep reading in the book of Acts, we will see that Paul and Silas remained faithful, even when really hard things happened. They didn’t know how everything would end, but they trusted God through it all.

- Now, imagine a beautiful painting or drawing, maybe one hanging in your house. Think about this painting when it was just a blank page. Do you think the artist knew what it would look like before he painted it? Do you think he had the end result in mind?
 - If you had seen the painting before the artist began drawing or when there were just a few shapes and colors on the page, do you think you would know what it would look like in the end? Would you be able to picture it?
 - Only the artist knows how the painting will look in the end. He is in charge of it, and he has the plan in mind.
 - Life is like a painting in that we don't know how everything will end. We don't know how all the bad things will be made right. But God is in charge of the painting, and we can trust him even when things don't make sense. He is the artist, and He knows exactly how the painting will look at the end.
- Just like Paul and Silas, we can trust God to turn every bad situation around, even if we never see the end result.

Students

- Picture yourself as a fellow prisoner with Paul and Silas in Acts 16:25-26. What would you be wondering or feeling?
- In verse 25, how is the response of Paul and Silas to their persecution different from the way most people would react? In verse 26, what happens to the prison? What does this tell us about God?
- What does the jailer realize in verse 30? Why is the question he asks such an urgent one? How would you have answered the jailer's question?
- Do you think we complicate the answer to this question sometimes? Discuss.
- How do Paul and Silas respond to his question in verses 31–32?

SING

This week's song is "The Lord Our God" by Jason Ingram and Kristian Stanfill. Inspired by the story of the Israelites and their journey to the Promised Land, this song is a reminder and declaration of God's faithfulness to His people. We can trust that no matter what circumstance we find ourselves in, we can know that God is good. He is faithful to keep His promises.

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 11-17 and Acts 15-21

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 introduces 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 provides accounts of twelve judges in Israel's history.
- Judges 17-21 describes the moral descent of Israel and how the nation demonstrated little difference from their pagan neighbors.

This Week in Judges: Judges 11 starts with an unlikely character – the son of a prostitute who is the black sheep of the family and who is driven out by them, and from there, he goes from a dysfunctional family to a band of outlaws (11:1-3). Understandably, he hesitated when the same group of men who had cast him out later asked him to lead them in battle against the Ammonites. The Ammonite king had an erroneous understanding of history. He thought that Israel had taken

his land when they were coming out of Egypt, which is why he was attacking them and trying to retrieve the land (11:12-13). Jephthah tries to peacefully resolve the conflict by explaining the history of what really happened, which is that Israel had asked permission from King Sihon to pass through Ammonite land on their journey from Egypt to Canaan, and he not only refused to let them pass, he attacked them (see Dt. 2:26-37). Israel defeated the Ammonites and, as a result, took the land. Jephthah demonstrated Israel's right to the land historically, legally, and theologically in his argument.

Judges 11:29 tells us that the Spirit was with Jephthah, but in the very next verse, Jephthah expresses uncertainty about God giving him success against the Ammonites (this can be seen in the use of the word "if") and makes a foolish vow to sacrifice to God whatever first comes out of his home when he returns from battle in victory (most likely thinking it would be an animal or even a servant). When his daughter, his only child, walked out, Jephthah had a choice. God had already stated His abhorrence of human sacrifices (Dt. 12:31), and in Leviticus 27:1-8, He had provided instruction on what a person was to do if they were unable to fulfill their vow. Obviously, God would not want him to kill someone in order to keep a vow, so Jephthah's actions illustrate how paganism had infiltrated the thinking of the Israelite people and how he thought God would act like the fickle pagan gods worshipped by the nations around them. His deficient faith brought great tragedy to his family and affected his leadership.

The civil war between the men of Gilead and the Ephraimites in Judges 12 only emphasizes the moral deterioration of Israel, for instead of focusing on the conquest of Canaan, they had begun to fight each other. The life of Samson further demonstrates the moral downfall of the nation, particularly as he intentionally and explicitly broke two of the three parts of his Nazirite vow (13:7; 14:8-9; 16:18-22), sought marriage to a Philistine woman (14:1-15:8), and visited a prostitute (16:1). Unlike the previous instances of foreign oppression in the book of Judges, there is no mention of the Israelites crying out to God when they were dominated by the Philistines, and the Philistines lorded over them for forty years, which is the longest span of oppression mentioned in Judges. So God sent Samson to rescue a people who had not sought deliverance, and Judges describes him as an imperfect leader who served his own physical appetites more than he served God. In his commentary on Judges and Ruth, Robert Chisholm states: "In some respects Samson represented Israel...Despite his miraculous beginning and tremendous God-given potential, he missed his calling to be God's consecrated servant. He became a humiliated prisoner on foreign soil, but in the end was vindicated by God when he desperately begged for divine intervention" (433).

Judges 17 further describes the moral descent of the nation. First, an Israelite steals money from his mother (17:1-2), and the mother takes some of the returned silver (not all of it like she vowed) and makes an idol out of it (17:3-4). They blatantly disregard the second command from God to not make any idols (Ex. 20:4). Then, the family creates a household temple to this god and assigns one of the family members to be a priest of this god (17:5). As if to explain the apostasy, the author of Judges states: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6). To make matters worse, Micah hires a Levite, a priest, to be an advisor and a priest of this household god, and the Levite agrees (17:7-13)! The next two chapters in Judges will continue to follow this family and household god.

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: When Peter shared his report with the church in Jerusalem, they rejoiced in God's work among the Gentiles (Acts 10:18), and Acts 15 tells of the Jerusalem Council in which the elders and apostles of the early church had to decide on doctrine regarding the Gentiles and circumcision. Would they force every male Gentile believer to become

circumcised as they had done with Gentiles who had converted to Judaism? Peter argued that God saved and accepted the Gentiles and imparted the Holy Spirit to them without circumcision, so why should they require something of them that God had not specified? Barnabas and Paul report what they had witnessed God doing among the Gentiles, and James quotes Amos 9:11-12 as he reiterates God's plan to restore the house of David included Gentiles among those who would seek the Lord. The Council ruled that the Gentiles need not be circumcised, but to promote unity and the opportunity for table fellowship between the Jews and Gentiles, the Council encouraged the Gentiles to abstain from sexual immorality, things that have been offered to idols, bloody food, and things that had been strangled.

From the Jerusalem Council came the decision to send Judas and Silas to relay the results of the Council to the church at Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. While at Antioch, Paul and Barnabas disagreed about whether or not John Mark should accompany them on their next missionary journey. Scripture does not inform us as to why John Mark left Paul and Barnabas at Perga (see Acts 13:13), but Acts 15:38 indicates that Paul did not agree with John Mark's reasoning to the extent that Paul thought he should not be included in their next journey. Their disagreement led them to separate with Barnabas taking John Mark with him to Cyprus and Paul taking Silas with him to Syria and Cilicia, so instead of one missionary expedition, there were now two, which enabled more people to hear the gospel. Whatever contention Paul had with John Mark, when Paul wrote 2 Timothy at the end of his life, he included instruction for Luke to bring Mark with him to Rome to visit Paul "for he is very useful to me for ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11), which indicates that reconciliation and partnership in the gospel had been reestablished between the two men.

Paul's second missionary journey included traveling back through Derbe and Lystra to encourage the believers there, and it was here that Paul met Timothy, who would become like a son to Paul and who would later lead the church at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:2-3; 2 Tim. 1:2). Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised after the Jerusalem Council ruled that circumcision was not necessary for the Gentile believers? In his commentary on Acts, F.F. Bruce explains, "By Jewish law Timothy was a Jew, because he was the son of a Jewish mother, but because he was uncircumcised he was technically an apostate Jew. If Paul wished to maintain his links with the synagogue, he could not be seen to countenance apostasy" (p. 304). Since Paul initially visited the synagogue when sharing the gospel in a new city, he was attempting to avoid an issue that would have caused division and would have hindered the people from hearing the message he was proclaiming. So Timothy's circumcision was done to prevent any barrier to people initially hearing the gospel.

The conversion of Lydia in Acts 16 is ironic. Paul had originally intended to travel to Bithynia in Asia when God gave him a vision telling him to go to Macedonia (the region north of Greece). His first convert in Europe was a woman from Thyatira (modern Turkey) named Lydia. To demonstrate the diversity of the early church, this church at Philippi initially started with a successful Asian businesswoman, a former demon-possessed slave girl, and a Philippian jailor and his family. From Philippi, Paul and Silas traveled to Thessalonica in Greece, and their proclamation of the gospel in the synagogue there led to such an uprising in the city that they were described as the "men who have turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). Having only been in the city for a few days, there was little time to disciple the believers in the way of faith, but in 1 Thessalonians 1, Paul commends the church in Thessalonica for diligently taking the proclaiming God's Word in surrounding regions despite persecution and for how their lives had been visibly altered because of their faith. The Spirit of God was faithful in growing this new set of converts, even when they came to the faith from outright paganism and experienced persecution because of their decision to follow Christ.

If you look at a map of Paul's missionary journeys, you can see that he was strategic in his choice of cities. He worked east to west (Syria to Cilicia to Asia to Greece to Rome), taking the gospel to areas that had yet to be reached, and he chose large population centers, often port cities, where the gospel could easily be disseminated into surrounding areas and beyond. This is why he spent a longer amount of time in cities such as Corinth and Ephesus, for their location meant a greater opportunity for the gospel to be advanced. He also sought to revisit churches that he had helped found, and the epistles in the New Testament written by Paul give evidence of his continued nurturing of these groups of believers even when he was not able to be present with them.

Acts 20-21 presents the beginning of the end of Paul's ministry. The Holy Spirit led Paul to Jerusalem and had testified to him that imprisonment and suffering was before him (Acts 20:23). Acts 20-21 describes Paul's submission to God's will and willingness to suffer and to die "for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). The rest of Acts chronicles the events surrounding Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and his journey to Rome where he waited to appear before Caesar.