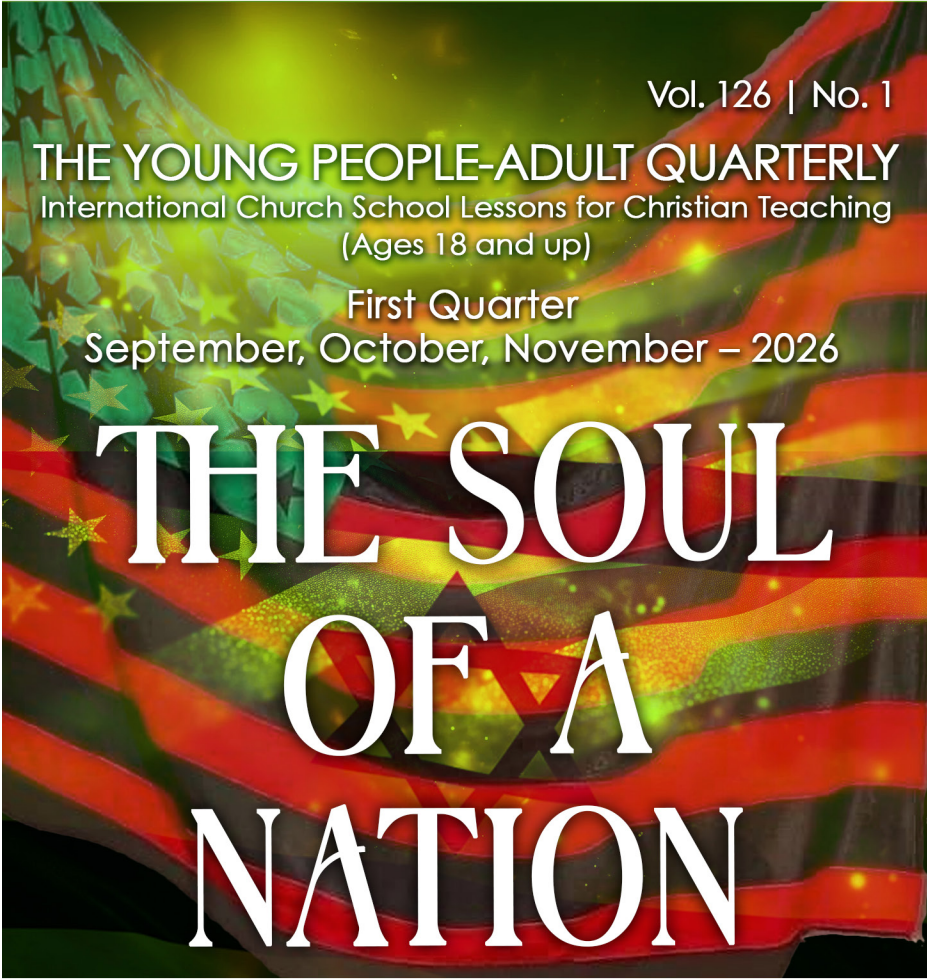




Vol. 126 | No. 1

THE YOUNG PEOPLE-ADULT QUARTERLY

International Church School Lessons for Christian Teaching
(Ages 18 and up)

First Quarter

September, October, November – 2026

THE SOUL OF A NATION

STUDIES IN

Joshua, Judges,
1 & 2 Samuel



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THE LORD'S PRAYER

⁹ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father
which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

¹⁰ Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth,
as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from
evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and
the glory, for ever.
Amen."

Matthew 6:9-13 (KJV)

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven
and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the
Virgin Mary; suffered under the Pontius Pilate; was
crucified, dead and buried: The third day He rose from
the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on
the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from
thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy, catholic Church;
the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the
resurrection of the body; and life everlasting.

Amen.

**catholic means universal*



September, October, November 2026

WORSHIP PROGRAM

MUSICAL PRELUDE

September: "Bless Be the Tie That Binds," AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #493, or "Faithful Is Our God," by Hezekiah Walker, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sTqIBTZix5w>.

October: "O God Our Help In Ages Past, " AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #81, or "Trust in God," by Mark Gutierrez, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_iob6IOUOI.

November: "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah," AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #82, or "Grateful," by Hezekiah Walker, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yEOW-kQyz6A>.

CALL TO WORSHIP

September: Led by the Sunday School Superintendent (1st Sunday); a clergy person (2nd Sunday); the Christian Education Director (3rd Sunday); and a missionary (4th Sunday).

Leader: "I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1&2 NRSVue)

All: "He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." (Psalm 121:3&4 NRSVue)

October: Led by the pastor or a minister (1st Sunday); a senior (2nd Sunday); a lay person (3rd Sunday); and a youth (4th Sunday).

Leader: "The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand."
(Psalm 121:5 NRSVue)

All: "The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night." (Psalm 121:6 NRSVue)

November: Led by a girl (1st Sunday); a boy (2nd Sunday); a woman (3rd Sunday); a man (4th Sunday); and a senior (5th Sunday).

Leader: "The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life." (Psalm 121:7 NRSVue)

All: "The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore." (Psalm 121:8 NRSVue)

CHORAL INVOCATION

(Sung corporately)

"He Is Lord," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #689)

MORNING HYMN

September: "I Love to Tell the Story," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #389)

October: "Love Lifted Me," (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #429)

November: "And Are We Yet Alive" (AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal, #361)

RESPONSIVE READING

Psalms 87:1-7 NRSVue

Leader: On the holy mount stands the city he founded; the Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

People: Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God.

Leader: Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon; Philistia, too, and Tyre, with Cush – "This one was born there," they say.

People: And of Zion it shall be said, "This one and that one were born in it," for the Most High himself will establish it.

Leader: The Lord records, as he registers the peoples, "This one was born there."

All: Singers and dancers alike say, "All my springs are in you."

RALLY SONG

"You Are Good," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ul6i6Kz2p2k&list=R-Dul6i6Kz2p2k&start_radio=1, by Israel and New Breed.

STUDY PERIOD

Learners study the lessons in their classes.

CLOSING ASSEMBLY

Class members will commit and dedicate themselves to understanding the importance of unified and faithful people, as well as faithful leaders, so that God's people can be a holy nation unto God.

SUNDAY SCHOOL BENEDICTION

Sunday school is over for another day. Hear us, Heavenly Father, as to Thee we pray. Through the week be with us in our work and play; Make us kind and loving, help us to obey.

Amen.



Adult Unit I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People

Adult Title: The Covenant Continues

Adult Topic: Renewing Our Commitments

Lesson 1: September 6, 2026

Devotional Reading: Daniel 10:18-21

Adult Background Scripture: Joshua 1

Adult Print Passage: Joshua 1:1-11

Home Daily Bible Reading

Aug 31	M	Romans 8:31-39	More Than Victorious
Sept 1	T	Genesis 13:14-18	See What God Has Promised
Sept 2	W	Deuteronomy 34:1-12	The Promised Land Revealed
Sept 3	Th	Hebrews 4:1-10	God's Promised Rest
Sept 4	F	Hebrews 10:14-18	God's New Covenant
Sept 5	Sa	Psalms 27	Whom Shall I Fear?
Sept 6	Su	Joshua 1:1-11	Be Strong and Courageous

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Leaner

Celebration – “Standing on the Promises” - #260 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Joshua 1:1-11 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

God's Commission to Joshua

¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses's assistant, saying, ² “My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. ³ Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. ⁴ From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory. ⁵ No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall lead this people to possess the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go.

⁸ This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. ⁹ I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Preparations for the Invasion

¹⁰ Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, ¹¹ "Pass through the camp and command the people, 'Prepare your provisions, for in three days you are to cross over this Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess.' "

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

FALL TITLE: The Soul of a Nation

Quarter Proposition (all ages)

God restores order where there is chaos by offering rescue and redemption so that we are assured of God's desire to help us set things right.

Quarter Synopsis: Beginning with a study of Joshua, this quarter looks at Israel's entry into the Promised Land (Unit I). Establishing Israel's presence in Canaan is as much a spiritual task as a military or political task. Still, Joshua never achieved unity for God's people by any measure. What Joshua leaves undone at the end of his life sets the stage for the period of Judges. The three lessons on Judges (Unit II), highlight Israel's propensity to ignore God and God's ways. Living without God's Law meant "all the people did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 17:6). In the five lessons of Unit III, we meet Samuel. His faithfulness to the Lord as prophet and judge plays a pivotal role in Israel's history. It sets the stage for the glorious reign of King David. As God's anointed ruler, David will unite Israel geographically, politically, and spiritually. Noteworthy, too, is the contrast of David, who "did what was right in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 15:5) against the backdrop of the godliness and disorder the people experienced in the period of Judges.

God instructs the Israelites to live in accordance with the covenant by reorienting their lives in response to God's goodness, so that Israel may live in right relationship with God.

Unit I Synopsis

Unit I, “The Covenant Continues,” explores Israel’s transformation from a nomadic people to a nation-state. To begin, God renews God’s covenant with Joshua and a new generation of Israelites (Lesson 1) in Joshua 1. In moving into the land (Joshua Chapter 4), Joshua leads Israel to remember all the ways and times God has provided for them, including crossing the Jordan (Lesson 2). The Book’s core (Chapters 6–12) outlines Israel’s systematic defeat and destruction of other nations. This issue is problematic as it has been used throughout the church’s history to support imperialism and slavery. Lesson 3 offers an opportunity to unpack this violent narrative—the battles are not about Israel destroying other nations but about God fulfilling God’s promise of land (Joshua Chapter 11). While there is a thread of nationalism within the Bible, there is also a thread of universal love and acceptance, as represented by Rahab in Joshua, Chapters 2 and 6 (see Lesson 4). Lesson 5 moves to the end of Joshua’s life and the Book’s close (Joshua 24). Joshua concludes his life by imploring the people of Israel to remember their identity as the people of God.

Unifying Biblical Summary

God commissioned Joshua to assume leadership of Israel as successor to Moses, instructing him to be strong, courageous, and obedient to the Law, and in return, God would be with Joshua, granting him success in conquest.

Break into small groups and respond to and discuss the following questions and issues: 1. What attitudes and concerns usually develop in a person who is chosen to follow in the footsteps of a strong leader who has for one reason or another left the position of leadership? Are there fears and reservations? How does one overcome these feelings and assume the leadership role? 2. What expectations do we usually have of new leadership coming into the role after a cherished former leader resigns or retires? How should we respond to the new leader? 3. In the religious arena, for instance, what difficulties exist for new pastors, Christian education directors, Sunday School teachers and others taking on leadership roles that have been fulfilled by strong persons? How can we make things easier for such persons? Discuss other similar issues of taking on leadership roles in Christian communities.

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Joshua 1:1-6: The Book of Joshua is named for the main character in the historical events that unfold in the Book. Joshua is not the author of the Book of Joshua. He picks up where Moses left off, leading Israel to the Promised Land. Joshua’s leadership is described throughout the Book by many comparisons to Moses. The Book of Joshua is an interpretation of past events,

and the author is concerned to understand that period of Israel’s history in the context of God’s covenantal instructions with a view to inspiring the present and future faithfulness of God’s audience. In the Book of Joshua, named for the main character and not the author, the story picks up where Deuteronomy left off—with the death of Moses. Joshua then moves from God’s commissioning of Joshua in light of Moses’s death to ancient Israel’s military efforts designed to occupy land inhabited by the Canaanites (see Joshua 3:10). Following several battles, such as the famous one in Jericho where the city walls “came a-tumbling down” as the old spiritual says, the people of Israel began to apportion the land among their various family groups (tribes). The Book affirms Joshua’s leadership by picturing him being like Moses.

Joshua 1:7-11: Contemporary readers of Joshua continually wrestle with historical and ethical issues, such as the notion of holy war and the herem (i.e., destruction as a sacrificial act of devotion to God). From a historical standpoint, scholars wonder if ancient Israel occupied the land gradually or settled relatively quickly after a few large military battles. Also, since we read about Canaanites later (e.g., Matthew 15:22), we wonder if the ancient Israelites committed genocide by killing all of the inhabitants of Canaan. Considering these concerns from our modern vantage point, we must not respond to Joshua’s conquest narrative with anti-Semitism. We must also be sensitive to current geopolitical realities, such as the pressures facing many Palestinians today. Joshua reminds us that God keeps promises and anticipates the coming Messiah, who, according to Matthew 1:5, has the non-Jewish heroine Rahab in His family lineage. Rahab, whom we meet in Joshua 2, is a sex worker who emerges as a model of faithfulness and a recipient of God’s grace.

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

Discuss the following points and questions: God calls all kinds of people to be leaders. Moses and Joshua are two examples, but God also calls children (Samuel and Jeremiah). Discuss what appears to be standards by which God selects leaders?

Discuss how the following appears to fit the patterns of God’s choices of leaders and give examples you may be aware of: Age is not what is most important to God; being strong, courageous, and faithful are important to God.

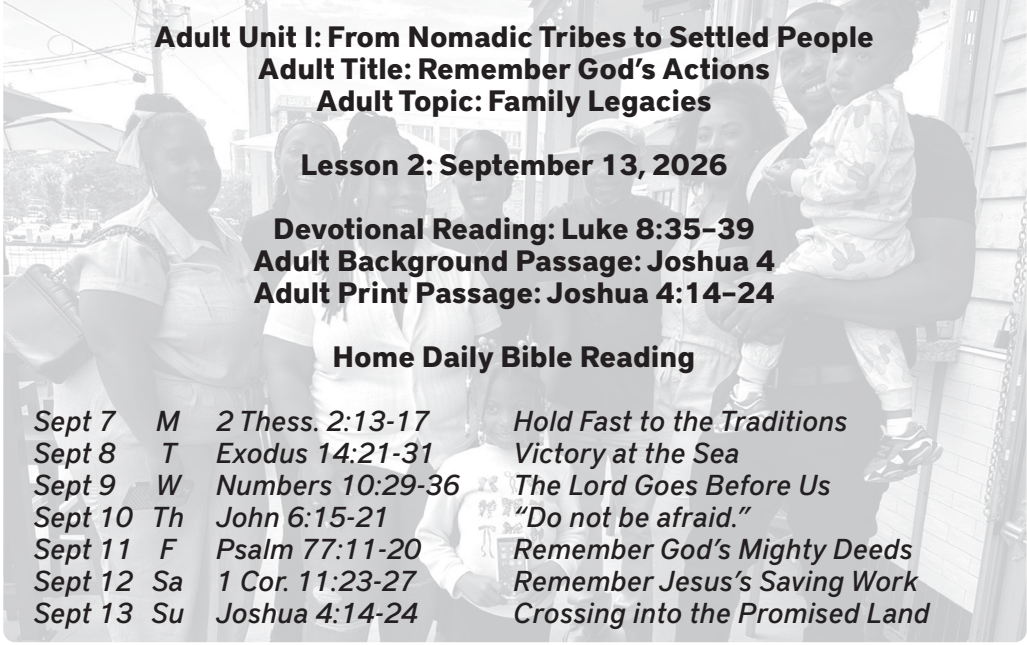
God gave Joshua instructions so he could be confident to take his army into battle. Even though we may not lead armies, how do you witness God continuing to give us instructions on how to be faithful in our everyday lives and calling us to be strong and courageous.

Discuss how we may measure up to the call of God on our lives.

iTHINK: (5 – 7 min.)

1. Ask each participant to imagine they are one of the Israelites who has journeyed through the desert with Moses. Have them write a journal entry about how they feel after Moses' death. What kind of comfort do they need? Secure volunteers to share what they wrote.
2. Discuss how God responds to the people's loss. How does God calling Joshua to leadership help or not help the people deal with the death of Moses and the journey they are facing? How else does God provide for the people in Joshua 1?
3. Ask each participant to write or draw, describing or sketching an image of Joshua as a leader, using the description of God's call to leadership in Joshua 1:1–11. Ask volunteers to share the characteristics they noted in their description or sketch.
4. Make a list of qualities that would be helpful in a leader--based on the situation that the Israelites are facing. Rank these qualities in order of importance to the situation faced by the Israelites. How are these qualities or the ranking of these qualities similar to and/or different from the qualities we look for in a leader today? (Save the list of helpful leadership qualities to use again in Lesson 11, November 15, 2026).
5. Review the promises God made in God's covenant with God's people: Genesis 17:1–8; Genesis 26:2–5 and Genesis 28:13–15. Then review the requirements for the people to keep the covenant: Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 6:4–9. Discuss how God fulfills His part of the covenant according to Joshua 1:1–11. Then discuss how the people are expected to live into their part of the covenant in Joshua 1:1–11.
6. Ask the group to help you come up with a definition of courage. How does God's presence in our lives help us to be courageous?

Key Verse: [The Lord said,] **"I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."** Joshua 1:9



Adult Unit I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People

Adult Title: Remember God's Actions

Adult Topic: Family Legacies

Lesson 2: September 13, 2026

Devotional Reading: Luke 8:35-39

Adult Background Passage: Joshua 4

Adult Print Passage: Joshua 4:14-24

Home Daily Bible Reading

Sept 7	M	2 Thess. 2:13-17	Hold Fast to the Traditions
Sept 8	T	Exodus 14:21-31	Victory at the Sea
Sept 9	W	Numbers 10:29-36	The Lord Goes Before Us
Sept 10	Th	John 6:15-21	"Do not be afraid."
Sept 11	F	Psalms 77:11-20	Remember God's Mighty Deeds
Sept 12	Sa	1 Cor. 11:23-27	Remember Jesus's Saving Work
Sept 13	Su	Joshua 4:14-24	Crossing into the Promised Land

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Learner

Celebration – "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing" - #29 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Joshua 4:14-24 (*Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

14 On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him, as they had stood in awe of Moses all the days of his life.

15 The Lord said to Joshua, **16** "Command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant to come up out of the Jordan." **17** Joshua therefore commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan." **18** When the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord came up from the middle of the Jordan and the soles of the priests' feet touched dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before.

19 The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. **20** Those twelve stones that they had taken out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal, **21** saying to the Israelites, "When your children ask their parents

in time to come, 'What do these stones mean?' ²² then you shall let your children know, 'Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.' ²³ For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you crossed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea,[a] which he dried up for us until we crossed over, ²⁴ so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty and so that you may fear the Lord your God forever."

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

God instructed Joshua and the people to gather twelve stones from the Jordan River to establish a memorial of their successful crossing of the Jordan on dry ground. This may call to mind how important memorials are and how they function in our families. Make a list of important landmarks or events in your family history and share with others in the group. Discuss why these occasions are important, what they meant or mean to your family, and how you have memorialized them. Share examples of rituals you perform to remember special occasions such as holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, etc. What is special about these rituals? How do they help to honor and remember the original occasion?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Joshua 4:14-19: "Joshua's exaltation is in fulfillment of 3:7. See Exodus 14:31. God's powerful faithfulness to His promises has the effect of exalting the one whose leadership is based on those promises.... The crossing of the Jordan River, the river marking the boundary of the Promised Land, was an occasion of wonders comparable to the crossing of the Red Sea (4:23; compare. 3:7; 4:14). The great significance of these wonders is indicated in 4:24. They were to remain a testimony for all peoples and for all time that the hand of the Lord is powerful. The prominence of the ark of the covenant relates the power of God to the promises of God that are at the heart of the covenant. Chapter 3 gives the events in order; ch. 4 returns to and elaborates on several points, especially the memorial of stones at Gilgal" (ESV Reformation Study Bible). Some research on the biblical location of Gilgal suggests the name may have served as a generic title for a camp or religious site and may not necessarily reference an exact geographic location. This is a constructive possibility since biblical references have differing views on its location (for example, see <https://www.HolyLandSite.com/gilgal>). The explicit connection of God's saving act in parting the Red Sea in Exodus (Exodus 14) is also visible in God's redemptive intervention in parting the waters of the Jordan River (Joshua 4).

Joshua 4:20-24: During the Jericho campaign, the Jordan crossing is remarkable as an act of worship. The people pause to recognize God’s provision and to liturgically mark the place of entry in God’s Promised Land with twelve stones. There is a clear intention to provide a spiritual/theological interpretation of the crossing for future generations (Joshua 4:6–7, 20–24). The “twelve stones” used to build the stone memorial at Gilgal are symbolic representations of the twelve tribes of Israel. This intentional representation is included again in the Book of Judges. “The wonders of chapters 3 and 4 will have effects far beyond the immediate generation and far beyond the Israelite people (2:10; 5:1; compare Genesis 12:3). The wonderful works of God in the Bible are expected to affect those who hear about them as powerfully as those who see them (Exodus 10:2; and supremely John 20:30, 31). The knowledge of God and His purposes has been the objective of these wonders (3:7, 10). This goal is now shown to apply to all peoples. This knowledge does not necessarily imply salvation (Exodus 14:18) (Ibid.). When God parted the Jordan, it gave the people an assurance of His faithfulness because He parted the Red Sea and made a way to escape from slavery in Egypt. We are instructed to remember God’s saving actions through memorials and rituals so that we can fully understand God’s steadfast love for us.

ELEVATE: (5-10 min.)

Break into small groups and challenge one another in your group with the following tasks and suggestions: God always makes a way out of no way. When we recall God’s acts of faithfulness for us in the past, how can it bolster our faith in times of struggle and give us a sense of assurance that God is with us into the future? Discuss the truth or falsehood of the statements: Faith is personal but not individualistic. Faith is always lived out in community. Discuss worship as one of the ways in which we practice faith with others and a way we rehearse and remember God’s faithful actions of the past. Discuss the truth or falsehood of the following: Faith is learned from the example of those who live it out and is passed on from generation-to-generation. Can we shape our lives so they are a memorial of thanksgiving to God for all that He has done, is doing, and will do? Are the following statements true? “There are people all around us who show us how to give thanks and praise to God. Sometimes, the only way others may know and trust that God is faithful is by the way we live.” Explain your answers.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Ask participants to share examples of rituals they perform to remember special occasions such as holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, etc. What is

special about these rituals? How do they help to honor and remember the original occasion?

2. Now, ask participants to share examples of rituals we (the faith community) perform to remember God's acts of salvation (make sure the list includes sacraments such as communion and baptism; liturgies such as the Lord's Prayer; rituals that your church performs to celebrate Lent, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost, Advent, Christmas, etc.). What is special about these rituals? How do they help us to honor and remember God's steadfast love for us? What do we learn or remember about God from each of these rituals?
3. Compare the two. What are the similarities and the differences? Then, ask participants to close their eyes and visualize a church ritual that is special to them. What do they feel and think during this ritual? How do they experience God through this ritual? Explore why the Passover celebration fell into disuse and Hezekiah's restoration of it.
4. Discuss why it would be important for the Israelites to tell their children about the Jordan crossing. What details of the crossing would be important to pass on? What would telling the story teach the children about God?
5. What is the role of storytelling in establishing and maintaining the culture of a particular community? Ask participants what role storytelling played in their understanding of family or community's history. What do they know about family or community based on the stories they have been told? What do they know about themselves based on stories they have been told about family or community? What do we teach our children when we tell them stories about family, community, or faith community? Respond to Hezekiah's reforms from the perspective of Judahites and show what they see, feel, and think.
6. Ask participants to think about a time they experienced God's steadfast love in their life. How might they commemorate that time to remember it? What ritual or memorial could they develop to honor that experience? How might they share that experience with others or pass it on to future generations? Ask for volunteers to share their ideas.

Key Verses: [Joshua said] **"When your children ask their parents in time to come, 'What do these stones mean?' then you shall let your children know, 'Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.'" Joshua 4:21b-22**

Adult Unit I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People
Adult Title: God's Complicated Promise
Adult Topic: Fighting among the Nations

Lesson 3: September 20, 2026

Devotional Reading: Psalm 108

**Adult Background Scriptures: Joshua 6; 8:26; 10:28-43; 11:1-23;
Deuteronomy 7:1-26**

Adult Print Passage: Joshua 11:6-9, 16-23

Home Daily Bible Reading

Sept 14	M	Deuteronomy 7:1-11	Live as God's Treasured Possession
Sept 15	T	Deuteronomy 7:12-26	God Will Love, Bless, and Multiply
Sept 16	W	Philippians 4:10-19	Strengthened in Every Circumstance
Sept 17	Th	2 Cor. 10:1-5, 15-18	Armed for Spiritual Warfare
Sept 18	F	John 16:23-33	Christ Has Conquered the World
Sept 19	Sa	Joshua 10:40-11:5	God Fights for God's People
Sept 20	Su	Joshua 11:6-9, 16-23	God Brings Victory

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Learner

Celebration – “God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand” - #530 AME Zion
Bicentennial Hymn

Declaration – Joshua 11:6-9, 16-23 (*Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

⁶ And the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will hand over all of them, slain, to Israel; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.” ⁷ So Joshua came suddenly upon them with all his fighting force, by the waters of Merom, and fell upon them. ⁸ And the Lord handed them over to Israel, who attacked them and chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and eastward as far as the valley of Mizpeh. They struck them down until they had left no one remaining. ⁹ And Joshua did to them as the Lord had commanded him; he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

Summary of Joshua's Conquests

¹⁶ So Joshua took all that land: the hill country and all the Negeb and all the land of Goshen and the lowland and the Arabah and the hill country of Israel and its lowland, ¹⁷ from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, as far as Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He took

all their kings, struck them down, and put them to death. ¹⁸ Joshua made war a long time with all those kings. ¹⁹ There was not a town that made peace with the Israelites except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon; all were taken in battle. ²⁰ For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts so that they would come against Israel in battle, in order that they might be utterly destroyed and might receive no mercy but be exterminated, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

²¹ At that time Joshua came and wiped out the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their towns. ²² None of the Anakim was left in the land of the Israelites; some remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod. ²³ So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Joshua led Israel in the battle against the Canaanite nations in response to God's guidance and with God's promise of victory.

When facing opposition and struggling hard to rise above your struggles, do you ever wonder if God is with you? Discuss with the group and get responses to the question. 1. Do you have experiences that cause you to wonder whether you are doing the right thing in your efforts to succeed in life? If so, what do you do in your uncertainty? 2. Are there times when you have to make decisions about the right path to take and each pathway seems to involve some sort of questionable action? 3. Times such as these may require you to choose the lesser evil, do you think? Discuss this with your group.

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Joshua 11:6-9: The Book of Joshua's core (Chapters 6–12) outlines Israel's systematic defeat and destruction of other nations. This issue is problematic as it has been used throughout the church's history to support imperialism and slavery. Lesson 3 offers an opportunity to unpack this violent narrative. The Book was written after Israel settled in the land, focusing on defining communal identity as the people of God. As such, the battles Israel remembers and records should not be interpreted as glorifying the physical destruction of other nations, but rather as upholding and advocating for spiritual purity. These chapters are written as a theological reflection on God's promise of land, heritage, and blessing (Joshua 11). In hindsight, after their settlement in the Promised Land, Israel deeply regretted the subsequent neglect of God's covenant in

favor of assimilating into Canaanite culture and religious practices. The history recorded in Joshua is most helpfully interpreted in the context of King Josiah's reforms (see 2 Kings 21–23 and 2 Chronicles 33–35). The ESV Reformation Study Bible comments that despite the repulsive violence, “the text seems to ring with praise to God. This is so because the destruction is the true and just judgment of God on sinners (Genesis 15:16; cf. Leviticus 18:24–27; Deuteronomy 9:4, 5), through which He fulfilled His gracious promises to Israel (note the connection between salvation and judgment in Exodus 14:13, 14 and Revelation 19:1, 2). These accounts of destruction, no less than anything else in the Book of Joshua testify to God's faithfulness to His promises (compare the curse in the promise in Genesis 12:3) and prefigure His final judgment on those who reject His grace (Matthew 25:46; Hebrews 9:27; 10:26–31).”

Joshua 11:16–23: Another commentary notes: “Much about the Book of Joshua is repulsive, starting with ethnic cleansing, the savage possession of the land and genocide of native people, and the massacre of women and children.” What a provocative statement that may make some of us uncomfortable? These atrocities were not simply condoned but ordered by God. (See more on this topic in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Volume II. Abingdon Press: Nashville, TN, 1998, p. 578. Robert B. Coote is the author of the section on Joshua. The commentary promotes a deeper study of Joshua rather than a dismissal of its complex texts so that we, as people of faith, might grapple with ignorance, fear, and conflicts over religious purity that cut across all times and places.). Very few verses of Joshua are used in the ecumenical preaching lectionary. The current lectionary highlights three segments: crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3), the Passover at Gilgal (Joshua 5:9–12), and renewal of the covenant at Shechem (Joshua 24). With respect to the hardening mentioned in verse 20, we should be reminded that “The relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility is seen in the divine hardening of hearts to achieve God's purposes. God's sovereign act does not overthrow either His justice or human responsibility (Exodus 10:1, 2; Romans 9:14–29)” (*The ESV Reformation Study Bible*).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

Like Joshua, God is with us in our triumphs and in our struggles by guiding us each step of the way so that we can be faithful in all we do and praise God. Comment on the following assertions: 1. God keeps His promises and asks us to do the same. God's continuing presence with us is a gift. Even when life is hard or difficult, we still strive to be faithful, and God is with us every step of the way. 2. When we are afraid, we can remember that with God standing with us, we can conquer our fear and turn to Him for strength. God never leaves us alone--but is always available to guide us. 3. Prayer, reading scripture, and

being in community with other Christians can help us know God is with us and will help us through our struggles. 4. God is pleased when we are faithful in worship, service, and our relationships with others. Every part of our lives is a living witness to who God is. 5. Our very lives, even without using words, testify to our commitment according to God's priorities.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Divide the class into groups and ask them to look up the words Canaan and Canaanite in concordances, Bible dictionaries, and commentaries. Ask each group to report back about what they learned. Be sure to point out to the group that Canaanites are still being mentioned in the New Testament (Matthew 15:22), which shows that they were not eliminated by the Israelites under Joshua's leadership. Save any information that the groups gather about Canaanite worship practices for use in Lesson 5, October 4, 2026.
2. Research a variety of commentaries to understand the diversity of perspectives on the Old Testament promise of "land" to God's people.
3. What does God require as a path to reconciliation in settings where conflict is entrenched and holding people's lives in bondage?
4. Read 2 Kings 22–23:25 and/or 2 Chronicles 33–35:19. Discuss the reforms that King Josiah made and why they were necessary.
5. Share with participants the ideas discussed in the Bible Background and Analysis section, particularly the information about when the Book of Joshua was likely written. Discuss how the Joshua narrative might help promote the communal identity of the Israelites and encourage faithfulness to God. Discuss how the narrative emphasizes the fulfillment of God's promise of land in Genesis 17:1–8; Genesis 26:2–5 and Genesis 28:13–15.
6. Ask participants to read some or all of the following passages: Leviticus 19:34–35; Deuteronomy 10:19; Deuteronomy 24:17; Matthew 25: 31–45. Then, encourage participants to draw an image or write a description of how the passages encourage people to treat those who are from a different culture (referred to here as aliens or strangers). How do these images or descriptions compare with the treatment of the Canaanites that is advocated in the Joshua passage?

Key Verse: It was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts so that they would come against Israel in battle, in order that they might be utterly destroyed, and might receive no mercy, but be exterminated, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. Joshua 11:20

Adult Unit I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People
Adults Title: God's Compassion for Rahab
Adults Topic: Joining Forces with Unlikely Allies

Lesson 4: September 27, 2026

Devotional Reading: Matthew 25:31–46

**Adults Background Scriptures: Joshua 2; 6:16–25; Matthew 1:5;
James 2:25; Hebrews 11:31**

Adults Print Passages: Joshua 2:8–13; 6:16–17

Home Daily Bible Reading

Sept 21	M	Joshua 2:1-7	<i>Welcoming Strangers</i>
Sept 22	T	James 2:18-26	<i>Faith without Works Is Dead</i>
Sept 23	W	Psalms 67	<i>May the Nations Know God's Salvation</i>
Sept 24	Th	Heb. 11:1-2, 29-31	<i>Faith to Live By</i>
Sept 25	F	Acts 10:34-48	<i>God Shows No Partiality</i>
Sept 26	Sa	Joshua 2:8-14	<i>Rahab's Faith in Israel's God</i>
Sept 27	Su	Joshua 6:6-17	<i>Rahab Is Spared</i>

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or learner

Celebration – “O Zion Haste, Thy Mission High Fulfilling” #380 *AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal*

Declaration– Joshua 2:8–13; 6:16–17 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively*)

⁸ Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof ⁹ and said to the men, “I know that the Lord has given you the land and that dread of you has fallen on us and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea[a] before you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below. ¹² Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the Lord that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith ¹³ that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them and deliver our lives from death.”

¹⁶ And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets,

Joshua said to the people, “Shout! For the Lord has given you the city.
¹⁷ The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction.
Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live
because she hid the messengers we sent.

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)



In return for her and her family’s safety, the prostitute Rahab protected the spies Joshua sent and assisted the Israelites in their conquest of Jericho.
1. Under what conditions and states of mind do we fear and reject those we do not know? Is it because others are different from us in so many ways? Are there other reasons? 2. By the same token, what do you think draws us to those we do not know and even induces us to trust them? For instance, is it because we see how others can be of assistance to us?

3. In what ways are we as humans like one another and in what ways are we different? How do we overcome our differences and find common ground? What are the advantages of doing so?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Joshua 2:8-13: The biblical account of the time from Joshua to Nehemiah portrays a patriarchal, male-dominated culture in which women were seen as peripheral to society. Rahab is a Canaanite woman from Jericho who is historically identified as a “prostitute.” It is possible that the Hebrew word *zona* could also be translated as “innkeeper,” which fits with the context of this story in which she is portrayed as a landlady. Joshua reminds us that God’s promises to Israel also anticipate the coming Messiah, who, according to Matthew 1:5, has the non-Jewish heroine Rahab in his family lineage. Rahab, who Joshua 2:1 describes as a prostitute, emerges as a model of faithfulness and a recipient of God’s grace. Through God’s grace, she has superior knowledge. Rahab knows what God wants Israel to know (3:10), that the promise of God is true. The cause of Rahab’s knowledge, and the Canaanites’ terror, was the news of

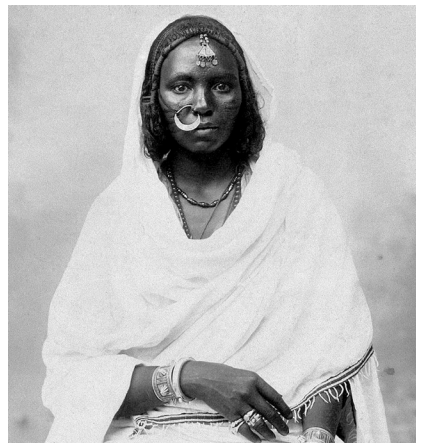
what God had already done for Israel in faithfulness to His promises. The mercy she requests for saving herself and her family presupposes the certainty of the promise of God. It is no less than deliverance from the coming wrath (compare 1 Thessalonians 1:10). God's use of Rahab speaks volumes with respect to the abundance of God's grace and mercy in his regard for all peoples in his creation.

Joshua 6:16-17: The "destruction" devoted to the Lord (Joshua 6:17) relates to God's anger over idolatry. There was a death penalty law in place for the sin of worshipping other gods. See other instances of this phrase in Exodus 22:20, Numbers 21:3, and Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6. It should be noted that "The essential elements for a theological understanding of the conquest are indicated in this account of Jericho, the first city to be destroyed. The destruction of the Canaanites, no less than the crossing of the Jordan, is the powerful work of God in faithfulness to the covenant, (note the role of the ark of the covenant in chapters 6 and 3-4. The fearful judgment of God is working to bring about the promised deliverance of His people ..., an important biblical theme (e.g., Exodus 14:13-14; Revelation 19:1-2). Furthermore, that the grace of God is not restricted to Israel (Genesis 12:3) is evidenced by the experience of Rahab and her household (v. 25). God is not simply anti-Canaanite.... Judgment does not exclude grace. The mercy [Rahab] sought in 2:12 will be extended to her" (*The ESV Reformation Study Bible*). Rahab may be remembered as a woman of great intelligence, resourcefulness, and initiative. The aid she gives the spies indicates her savvy political awareness and bravery. Her curiosity and sensitivity to spiritual things draw her to Israel's God as the "God in heaven above and on earth below" (Joshua 2:11).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

We can learn about how God works through unlikely means by studying the stories of God's acts of salvation so that we can recognize God's hand in the events of our lives. Consider and respond to the following:

1. Even though Rahab was very different than Joshua and God's people, God saw the goodness in Rahab and used Rahab's gifts for good. Rahab manifested God's radical welcome and hospitality.
2. God is not limited by our human biases. When the Holy One claims us to be God's own people, God also chooses us to serve others. The two always



go hand-in-hand. 3. The evidence of God's presence and work is all around us and in us; we must slow down enough to look and see it. When we fail to see each person as created in the image of God, it is easier to see the differences instead of the ways we are related because God created and claimed us. 4. God calls the Church to welcome all people, regardless of the labels society may place on them. 5. God's values and priorities are often different from those of the society. Our goal as God's people is to realign society's values and priorities to be consistent with God's.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Read Matthew 1:5 and discuss what it means that of the four women named on Jesus' family tree, two of them were not Israelites (Rahab, a Canaanite and Ruth, a Moabite). Then, read Hebrews 11 and James 2:25-26, paying attention to the mention of Rahab. What does it say about God's acceptance and love that a Canaanite prostitute is honored as a model of faith? How is this different from the way people from other cultures are treated or represented in the rest of the Book of Joshua?
2. Read or listen to the first verse of the hymn "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" by William Cowper. How does God work in a mysterious way in the story of Rahab? How does Rahab contribute to God's work? How do the spies contribute to God's work?
3. Listen to or read the lyrics of the song "Go Wash In the Beautiful Stream" by Charles Albert Tindley and/or read the story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1-19. How did God work through unlikely means in this story? What people or events did God use in this story?
4. Ask the group to suggest other stories in the Bible that show God working through unlikely situations or people or ask them to list their favorite Bible stories and then examine each story for ways God is working and who or what God uses to do God's work.
5. Encourage participants to write a journal entry about what it might be like to be used by God for His work, just as He used Rahab. What might get in the way of God using us for His work? How can we overcome such obstacles?

Key Verse: The city and all in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent. Joshua 6:17

Adult Unit I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People
Adult Title: Radical Commitment to God's Way
Adult Topic: Do Not Conform to the World

Lesson 5: October 4, 2026

Devotional Reading: Jeremiah 31:27-34
Adult Background Scripture: Joshua 23-24
Adult Print Passage: Joshua 24:18-27

Home Daily Bible Reading

Sept 28	M	Joshua 23:1-11	Hold Fast to the Lord
Sept 29	T	Joshua 24:1-13	Reaffirming the Covenant
Sept 30	W	1 John 1:8-2:5	Obey Christ's commandments
Oct 1	Th	Luke 9:57-62	No Turning Back
Oct 2	F	Matthew 22:34-40	The Greatest Commandments
Oct 3	Sa	Psalms 25:12-22	God, Redeem Your People
Oct 4	Su	Joshua 24:18-27	We Will Serve the Lord

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Leaner

Celebration – “Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us!”- #278 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Joshua 24:18-27 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

¹⁸ and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God.”

¹⁹ But Joshua said to the people, “You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. ²⁰ If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.”

²¹ And the people said to Joshua, “No, we will serve the Lord!” ²² Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” ²³ He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.” ²⁴ The people said to Joshua, “The Lord our God we will serve, and him we will obey.” ²⁵ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. ²⁶ Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and he took a large stone and set it up there under

the oak in the sanctuary of the Lord.²⁷ Joshua said to all the people, “See, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us; therefore it shall be a witness against you if you deal falsely with your God.”

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Unit II Synopsis

Unit II, Lacking Leadership and a Moral Compass. Judges is a difficult book in the Bible. After Joshua warns the Israelites to stay true to their faith and remember their identity, the people fall into apostasy, seemingly forgetting Joshua’s warning. The Israelites recognize their sinful ways, repent, and call on God when trouble ensues. As soon as God intervenes, they turn away. Lesson 6 addresses the cyclical pattern of apostasy, repentance, and divine rescue that repeats throughout the Book of Judges and is exemplified in Chapter 2. Lesson 7 shows God’s faithfulness in raising leaders despite Israel’s unfaithfulness (Judges Chapter 3). Lesson 8 demonstrates the book’s theme, “everyone did what was right in his own eyes,” as depicted in Chapter 17. Despite God’s faithfulness, the people consistently fall back into religious impurity and lawlessness. The pattern of leadership in Judges highlights the fact that “Israel had no king,” which ultimately forms the rationale for Israel’s petition for a king in 1 and 2 Samuel.



God provides a way for Israel to return to faithful relationship by choosing to turn away from serving their own interests and priorities, so that God can set them on a path toward restoration and reconciliation.

Think on, respond to, and share your thoughts on the following in the general group: 1. What commitments should be held and exhibited by a successful leader? What foundations

should be the basis of such commitments? 2. What commitments do you hold dear on which your life depends? Are there models in your life that influenced you



in making decisions about these commitments? For instance, Civil Rights Legend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said often to adherents in so many words, “If a person has nothing for which he or she would die for, he or she has no reason to live.” What do you think of this expression of commitment? More precisely, King stated, “If a man hasn’t discovered something he will die for, he isn’t fit to live,”

thus reflecting his belief that true fulfillment comes from dedication to causes greater than oneself such as he demonstrated in his lifestyle.

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Joshua 24:18-21: Joshua 24:15 expresses Joshua’s lifelong commitment to live by God’s command, and it is a fitting tribute to his character that his last act is to lead the people in covenant renewal (Joshua 24:1–27). Joshua is seen as an ideological forerunner for Israel’s kings, especially considering the reforming period under Josiah’s reign (Deuteronomy 17:18–20; 1 Kings 2:1–14). Summarizing chapters 22–24 of the Book of Joshua, the ESV Reformation Study Bible states, “The book closes with three chapters about Israel’s faithfulness, following God’s faithfulness that has been the main subject so far (21:43–45). The human response demanded by God’s remarkable grace is the recurring theme of the final chapters. Each chapter begins with Joshua summoning the people (22:1; 23:1–2; 24:1), and focuses on the faithfulness God now requires of them” Joshua’s paradoxical statement that the people “are not able to serve the Lord” comes true all too soon. “It is based on the holiness of God, who cannot be approached casually (Psalm 15:1; 2; Ecclesiastes 5:1, 2). Also, Joshua warns the people because he knows their rebelliousness himself Only a people separated from ‘pagan’ ways (Leviticus 18:3; 20:26) can serve the God who is holy, entirely separate from other gods (Leviticus 19:2)” (Ibid). Joshua asserts that “God’s dealing will change from grace to judgment (Genesis 6:7). In another sense God never changes (1 Samuel 15:29), since His promise has always included the threat of judgment (23:15; Genesis 6:6)).... The people reject the possibility [indicated] or predicted in v. 20” (Ibid.) and assert their loyalty to God.

Joshua 24:22-27: We witness: “At the end of his life, Joshua led Israel in a reaffirmation of the covenant, much as Moses did before he died (Deuteronomy 32:46). As with Deuteronomy, there may be an analogy between this covenant renewal and the kind of treaties that were typically used to formalize relations between powerful sovereign nations and weaker client states. These treaties, called ‘suzerainty treaties,’ commonly included elements like those found in Joshua 24, such as a historical prologue reviewing the care given by the powerful party to the client (vv. 2–13); a prohibition of any outside alliance (vv. 14, 23); and provision for a written document (vv. 25, 26). There are also significant differences between such ancient treaties and Joshua 24” (Ibid.). Joshua asserts, when “[the people] are accused of forsaking the Lord the case against them will be supported by their decision on this occasion.... [He thus] formalized the relationship (compare Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 4:23; 29:1)....[The statutes and rules] would specify the content of Israel’s obedience to the Lord.... Compare how the stones at Gilgal were to provide a testimony to what God had done (4:20–24)” (Ibid.). Joshua’s final words promote careful observance of the Law, but his appeal grows out of a conviction he attempts to model throughout his life. The Book of Joshua closes with an announcement of the deaths and burials of Joshua and Eleazar, and the burial of Joseph’s bones at Shechem.

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

We can make worship a priority in our lives by identifying the idols that distract us from God so that we will not be diverted from faithful living. God invites us to worship.

Break into small groups and ponder and discuss with one another the following issues and assertions: 1. Our call is to follow in God’s ways, not the world’s ways. 2. Adults in positions of power may see themselves as spiritually independent, but the life of faith asks us to walk humbly and worship God as the ultimate authority. 3. God is always faithful, and we can trust that He will always lead us in the right ways. We can make a conscious choice every day to be faithful and serve God. 4. We can do our part in maintaining a healthy relationship with God by worshipping Him, loving and serving Him and our neighbors, and taking care of ourselves. 5. Being in community with other people who worship, love, and serve God is part of a healthy relationship with Him and a reflection of His glory. 6. Faith communities exist so that people can encourage, listen, and learn from each other so that we all grow together in love for God and our neighbor.

1. Show the class one or more worship bulletins from your church services. Discuss the different parts of the service and the ways you worship God in each part. What is important about each part of the service?
2. Invite participants to share ways they spend time with God when they are not at church. Ask each participant to reflect on the worship practice (communal or personal) that is the most meaningful to them. Ask them to write a journal entry about this worship practice. Why is it meaningful to them? What does it teach about God? What do they think and feel when experiencing this worship practice?
3. Discuss any information your class gathered in Lesson 3, September 20, 2026, about Canaanite worship practices, and/or research local gods such as Baal, Anat, Asherah, Dagon, and El in a Bible dictionary. Discuss why Joshua would need to warn his followers about worshipping these gods.
4. Work with the group to write a definition of the word ‘idol.’ Help them to think of idols as anything that takes our focus away from putting God first in our lives. Write down the definition you create and save it to use again in Lesson 8, October 25, 2026. Ask participants to give examples of idols the Israelites might have worshipped in Joshua’s time. Then, ask them to give examples of idols we might worship in our time. Write these down and save this list to use again in Lesson 8, October 25, 2026.
5. Read Joshua 23–24. According to this passage, what were the Israelites to do to be faithful to God? Review Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 6:4–9. What do these passages add to the understanding of how the Israelites were to remain faithful to God?
6. Provide magazines and catalogs and ask participants to search for images of what faithful living looks like in our time and context. If your class meets virtually, ask participants to search the internet for images of what faithful living looks like. Ask for volunteers to share what images they found. Ask if they were searching for specific images, and if so, what were they? If your class searched the internet, what words or phrases were used in the search?

Key Verse: [Joshua said,] “Put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt and serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:14b

Adult Unit II: Lacking Leadership and a Moral Compass

Adult Title: God Works Despite Evil

Adult Topic: Choosing Badly

Lesson 6: October 11, 2026

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-14

Adult Background Scripture: Judges 2

Adult Print Passage: Judges 2:6-15

Home Daily Bible Reading

Oct 5	M	Romans 5:1-10	Christ Died for All
Oct 6	T	Romans 5:11-21	Grace Abounds Despite Our Sin
Oct 7	W	Deuter. 12:1-14	Worship God in the Chosen Sanctuary
Oct 8	Th	Deuter. 12:20-32	Reject Unworthy Forms of Worship
Oct 9	F	Colossians 3:1-11	Reject Earthly Desires
Oct 10	Sa	Colossians 3:12-17	Clothe Yourself with Godliness
Oct 11	Su	Judges 2:1-15	God Is Faithful Anyway

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Leaner

Celebration – “Trust and Obey”-#443 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Judges 2:6-15 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

Death of Joshua

⁶ When Joshua dismissed the people, the Israelites all went to their own inheritances to take possession of the land. ⁷ The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel.

⁸ Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of one hundred ten years. ⁹ So they buried him within the bounds of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

¹⁰ Moreover, that whole generation was gathered to their ancestors, and another generation grew up after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

Israel's Unfaithfulness

¹¹ Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals, ¹² and they abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were all around them

and bowed down to them, and they provoked the Lord to anger. ¹³ They abandoned the Lord and served Baal and the Astartes. ¹⁴ So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the power of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. ¹⁵ Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them to bring misfortune, as the Lord had warned them and sworn to them, and they were in great distress.

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Though presented with many opportunities to follow God's way, the people of Israel chose disobedience and were forced to face the consequences of defeat and distress in territory occupied by their enemies.

Discuss the following questions: Is the old saying true that to err is human, to forgive, divine? What generally serves to encourage and inspire human beings to be consistent and not waver in behavior? Is it fear of punishment or some sort of consequences? Is it benefit of promised reward, or is it an inward desire for moral character for one's own sake? Can you think of examples that reflect your answers?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Judges 2:6-12: This short, three-lesson unit on Judges is meant to highlight the lawlessness and disunity of the people as they settled in Canaan. The period of Judges marks a transition from unified leadership under Moses and later Joshua and gives a rationale for the people's calling on God to provide them with a king. Like Joshua, the Book of Judges is best understood in the context of Deuteronomy. See Britannica, <https://www.Britannica.com/topic/biblical-literature/The-Deuteronomic-theology-of-history>. In the Book of Judges, each designated "judge" was called to lead, but the role tended to be regional or tribal rather than over the whole people of Israel. The attributes of the judges were varied, but there was some overlap in duties. Judges A) resolved local disputes, B) enacted punishment for disobedience, and C) defended the powerless. (See more in A Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Introduction, p. 13–16 of this Guide.). Verses 6-9 are similar to "Joshua 24:28–31 and introduces the pattern for the cycles of the judges that follows. One generation was to declare God's wonders to the next (Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:1–6). Later psalmists [say of] them (Psalm 44:1–3; 78:2–8). If God's people knew what He had done they would obey the commands of His covenant. But the leaders—heads of families, priests, and judges—failed to keep the covenant or to tell the next generation about God's mighty deeds" (ESV Reformation Study Bible).

Joshua 2:13-15: A Deuteronomic “theology” persists throughout Judges, in which God’s Covenant is key. Those who remain faithful and obedient to Yahweh will prosper, but those who neglect God’s way will suffer. The Deuteronomist theology reveals a cyclical pattern to Israel’s history: (1) obedience to Yahweh brings peace and stability to the community; (2) a period of stability seems to weaken the resolve to keep faithful to God’s covenant; (3) a breakdown in spiritual well-being is a breakdown in the community, which results in leaving the community open to repression and attacks from external enemies; (4) suffering under enemy oppression, the community repents and returns to God; and (5) God, who is merciful, raises up a leader to deliver from their enemies. “Israel’s evil is summed up in worship of false gods (v. 2 note). They chose Baal, the Canaanite storm god, and rejected the Lord, who had brought them through the Red Sea and was the true Lord of the storm. ‘Baals’ is plural because Baal was worshiped differently in each Canaanite locality.... Israel’s enemies and oppressors had no power over God’s people unless God allowed it. Israel’s conquest is now reversed, as people from outside Canaan (Arameans, Moabites, Midianites, Amalekites, and Philistines) oppress Israel, the new inhabitants of the land (3:8–12; 4:2; 6:1; 10:7; 13:1) The hand of the Lord was associated with the saving power of God (Exodus 3:20; 6:1; 13:3; Deuteronomy 4:34). Now, the same hand was turned against them in punishment. The Lord was faithful both to bless and to judge. When God rescues His people, He rescues them from their enemies as an act of grace. It is His own judgment that allows enemies to prevail, and in rescuing us He must turn this judgment aside” (Ibid.).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

God shows love for humanity by being faithful to God’s covenant with God’s people so that God’s people can return to God after they have strayed.

Break into small groups and discuss the assertions and questions that follow:

1. The very essence of who God is—is love. God will never do anything that is inconsistent with His core being—love. God’s love for humanity is evident in His fidelity, despite our rebellion. Can you confirm this from experience?
2. The primary way in which God relates to humanity in Scripture is through covenants. Abraham’s covenant was unconditional. God initiated the covenant and promised land and a great nation from his offspring. The people did not have to do anything to receive the covenant but live faithfully as a sign of their gratitude.
3. The covenant with Moses was also divinely initiated; but it was conditional. God freed humanity from bondage, claimed them as His own people, guided them through the wilderness, and took them into the Promised Land. The people had to keep all the commandments (not just the 10) and especially

worship no other gods. 4. Repeatedly, Israel broke the covenant by worshipping other deities and failing to keep the commandments. 5. Even though God could have, by all rights, walked away, He remained faithful to the covenant and sent leaders to call the people back to faithfulness. 6. The Law continued to be a guide for how to live with one another in community and in right relationship with God.

iTHINK: (5 – 7 min.)

1. Ask participants: How do you know that God loves you? Who taught you about His love? What Bible stories do you know that demonstrate God's love?
2. Review the theme of covenant that has been discussed this quarter. (See Lesson 1, September 6, 2026, or read Genesis 17:1–8; Genesis 26:2–5; and Genesis 28:13–15. Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 6:4–9). Make a list of God's promises and another list of the people's responsibilities under the covenant. How has God fulfilled His part of the covenant in the lessons you have studied this quarter? (Lesson 1: raising leaders to guide the people; Lesson 2: providing safe passage to the promised land; Lesson 3: giving people courage and strength to enter the land; Lesson 4: working through unlikely means to provide for God's people)
3. Read Judges 2:16–3:6. How do you reconcile this scripture with what you read in Lesson 3 (Joshua 8:26; 10:28–43; 11:1–23). What reasons are given in Judges 2 to explain why there are still Canaanite people living in the land? How does this relate to God's faithfulness to the covenant?
4. Compare the list you made earlier in the lesson (about the people's responsibilities under the covenant) with what is happening in Joshua 2. How are the people failing to uphold their part of the covenant?
5. Ask participants to describe what straying from God might look like in 2026. How would it be similar to or different from the way the Israelites strayed from God? What might be the consequences? How would it feel like (or has it felt like) to cry out to God and be heard? What might it be like (or has it been like) to return to God?
6. Sing or listen to Amazing Grace or another appropriate song. Ask participants to write a song or poem about what it might be like (or has been like) to be heard by God or to find the way back after being separated from Him.

Key Verse: The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. Judges 2:11

Adult Unit II: Lacking Leadership and a Moral Compass

Adult Title: God Works Through Ehud

Adult Topic: A Hero Who's Not a Hero

Lesson 7: October 18, 2026

Devotional Reading: Ecclesiastes 7:1–13

Adult Background Scripture: Judges 3

Adult Print Passage: Judges 3:15–23, 30

Home Daily Bible Reading

Oct 12	M	Philippians 1:21-30	Courage to Live or Die
Oct 13	T	Matthew 5:11-16	Let Your Light Shine
Oct 14	W	Psalms 84	A Humble Servant of God
Oct 15	Th	Hebrews 4:11-16	Let Us Strive for God's Rest
Oct 16	F	Hebrews 6:1-12	God Will Not Overlook Your Work
Oct 17	Sa	Judges 3:1-7, 12-14	God Tests God's People
Oct 18	Su	Judges 3:15-23, 30	Restoring Rest to the Land

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Learner

Celebration – “I Am Thine, O Lord” - #77 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Judges 3:15–23, 30 (*Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

¹⁵ But when the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud son of Gera, a Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The Israelites sent tribute by him to King Eglon of Moab. ¹⁶ Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges, a cubit in length, and he fastened it on his right thigh under his clothes. ¹⁷ Then he presented the tribute to King Eglon of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man. ¹⁸ When Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent the people who carried the tribute on their way. ¹⁹ But he himself turned back at the sculptured stones near Gilgal and said, “I have a secret message for you, O king.” So the king said, “Silence!” and all his attendants went out from his presence. ²⁰ Ehud came to him, while he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber, and said, “I have a message from God for you.” So he rose from his seat. ²¹ Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into Eglon’s belly; ²² the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the sword out of his belly, and the dirt came out. ²³ Then Ehud went out into the vestibule and closed the doors of the roof chamber on him and locked them.

³⁰ **So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest eighty years.**

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

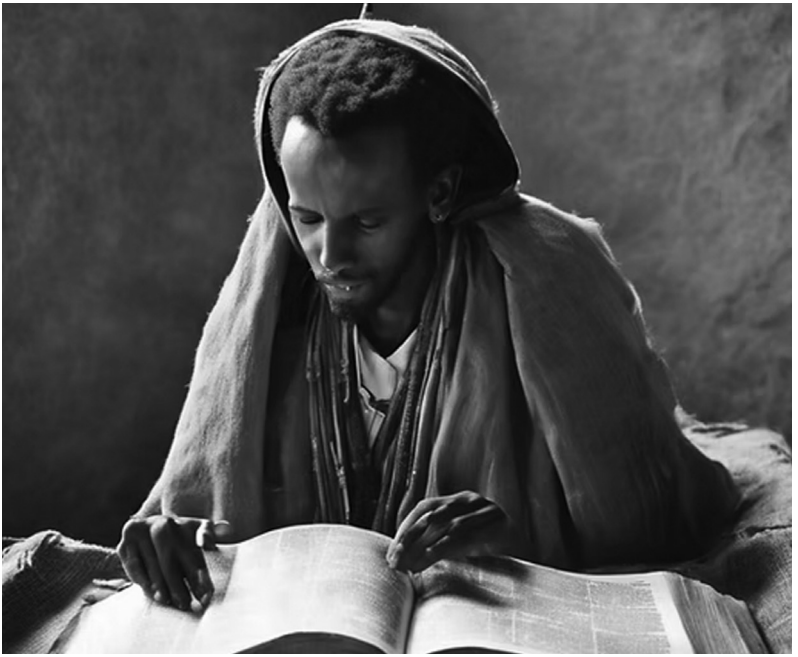
Despite unfaithfulness in following God's way, God was faithful in raising up judges to rescue Israel from the immediate threat faced from the enemies. Discuss issues of human error and forgiveness such as how many times people should be forgiven for misbehavior. What should be the attitude of persons who are wronged toward those seeking forgiveness? What is the role of humility under such circumstances? Should we consider the sincerity of those making apologies? How should we feel about apologizing when we have wronged others? What about parents and children in this regard? Is this apology and forgiveness situation especially significant? How about apologies and forgiveness among other family members?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Judges 3:15-19: God uses Ehud, as is the case with other examples throughout Judges, to prompt a spiritual revival among the people and to reinvigorate national identity (e.g., Judges 2:11-19; cf. 3:9; 4:3; 6:6; 10:10). Ehud is an unlikely hero, and we should not lift him up as a role model. He serves as an example of desperate times, as do the other "major judges" named in Judges: Othniel (Judges 3:7-11); Deborah (4:1-5:31); Gideon (6:1-8:32); Jephthah (10:6-12:7); and Samson (13:1-16:31). The authors of Theological Introduction to the Old Testament (Birch, Brueggemann, Fretheim, and Petersen; Abingdon Press: Nashville, 1999, p. 208), point out that "The Book of Judges has a quite peculiar notion of a hero not at all congruent with the conventional 'hero myth.' These heroes are odd, so that their achievements are all to be seen as miracles of God." The Bible Panorama states: "Ehud, of the tribe of Benjamin, is the son of Gera. He frees Israel from Eglon, king of Moab, the Ammonites, and the Amalekites. He takes the initiative in seeking a private meeting with Eglon. Being left-handed and having concealed his sword on his right side under his garments, he kills Eglon."

Judges 3:20-23, 30: We see in the Book of Judges an understanding of God's mercy consistent with God's character as portrayed in the whole of Scripture. God rescued the covenant people when their desperation led them to repent, only to falter again, and, yet, God remains faithful and rescue them time and again. "The story of Ehud humiliates the oppressor of God's people" (ESV Reformation Study Bible). After killing their king, Ehud "then leads Israel in triumph over the

Moabites. Eighty years of rest follow eighteen years of forced service to King Eglon" (Bible Panorama). In verse 20, Ehud changes his message to "I have a message from God for you." "The secret message of v.



19 here becomes a divine message. It was not a false word, but the true word of God working against the same rod raised up by God to punish His people. Eglon was useful as a tool of God's wrath against Israel, but now that wrath comes back upon him" (ESV Reformation Study Bible).

ELEVATE: (5-10 min.)

God continues to work in the world by calling imperfect people into faithful service so that God's divine plan can come to fruition. Discuss the following: 1. After Joshua, God called a series of leaders for the Israelites who were judges and warriors. Why do you think the people God called, and still calls, as leaders are ordinary people whom God gives the ability to become extraordinary leaders through their faithfulness? 2. Comment on the fact that the judges were to follow God's lead and show the Israelites how to be faithful to God's ways, but they often chose the world's ways instead of God's. 3. Consider Ehud as an example that God takes the ordinary to do extraordinary things. Consider the following regarding Ehud: Ehud was an unlikely judge. He didn't look like the people's image of what a warrior/leader/judge should look like. But, God saw the potential in Ehud, his desire to please God, and gave him the gifts and strength to lead Israel. 4. Consider and give example of the following: God will always make a way out of no way. Just when you think all is lost, God shows up and leads us to new faithfulness. 5. Consider and elaborate on the following: God's purpose will be worked out through ordinary people and experience.

While we may not be able to see the whole plan, we can trust that God is using each of us to work God's purpose out.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Create a definition of the word 'hero.' Ask participants to draw or describe the ideal hero. Secure volunteers to share what characteristics might be included in the image or description.
2. Make a list of biblical heroes (Moses, King David, Rahab, etc.). Describe the good qualities and the faults of each hero. Include Ehud in the list and be sure to mention the fact that being left-handed allowed him to hide his sword on his right thigh, where it would not be expected or noticed. Discuss how Ehud compares to the definition you created for the word 'hero' and/or the images and descriptions created by the participants.
3. For each biblical hero on the list, describe how the heroes accomplished God's work. Compare the accomplishments with the list of good qualities and especially their faults. Include Ehud in the discussion (after Ehud's action the land was at peace for 80 years). Discuss the ways these heroes accomplished God's work despite their faults.
4. Search (hard copy or online) magazines, newspapers, or catalogs for images that portray ideals of perfection. Are these ideals realistic? Describe some of the pressures we may feel to be perfect in the different roles we play in our lives, in our careers, as parents, as spouses, in our appearance, etc. How do such pressures affect performance, relationships, and self-esteem?
5. Read Micah 6:8; Matthew 25:31-45; and Mark 12:28-31. How does God expect people to contribute to God's plan for the world?
6. Read Exodus 3:9-11; 4:1, 10; Judges 6:11, 14-15; Jeremiah 1:4-6; and Luke 5:8. How did these leaders view themselves or their ability to accomplish what God was calling them to do? Were they successful in accomplishing the tasks?

Key Verse: When the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud son of Gera, a Benjaminite, a left-handed man. Judges 3:15a

Adult Unit II: Lacking Leadership and a Moral Compass
Adult Title: God's Works Are Not Forgotten
Adult Topic: Religious but Not Righteous

Lesson 8: October 25, 2026

Devotional Reading: Deuteronomy 6:10–16
Adult Background Scriptures: Judges 17; 18
Adult Print Passages: Judges 17:1–6; 18:18–19, 27

Home Daily Bible Reading

Oct 19	M	Exodus 20:1-7	No Other Gods but the Lord
Oct 20	T	1 Corinthians 8:1-6	One God and One Lord
Oct 21	W	Matthew 4:1-11	Worship God Alone
Oct 22	Th	Isaiah 44:9-20	There's Nothing There!
Oct 23	F	Isaiah 44:21-28	Return to the Lord
Oct 24	Sa	Luke 16:13-17	No One Can Serve Two Masters
Oct 25	Su	Judges 17:1-6	The People Cast Off Restraint

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Learner

Celebration – “I Need Thee Every Hour” - #466 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymn

Declaration – Judges 17:1–6; 18:18–19, 27 (*Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

Micah and the Levite

¹ There was a man in the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah.

² He said to his mother, “The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse and even spoke it in my hearing—that silver is in my possession; I took it, but now I will return it to you.” And his mother said, “May my son be blessed by the Lord!”

³ Then he returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother, and his mother said, “I consecrate the silver to the Lord from my hand for my son, to make an idol of cast metal.” ⁴ So when he returned the money to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into an idol of cast metal, and it was in the house of Micah. ⁵ This man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and teraphim and installed one of his sons, who became his priest. ⁶ In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.

¹⁸ When the men went into Micah's house and took the idol of cast metal, the ephod, and the teraphim, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?" ¹⁹ They said to him, "Keep quiet! Put your hand over your mouth, and come with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one person or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?"

The Danites Settle in Laish

²⁷ The Danites, having taken what Micah had made and the priest who belonged to him, came to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, put them to the sword, and burned down the city.

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

God's faithfulness is infinite, yet, the people consistently fell back into religious impurity and lawlessness instead of keeping covenant promises to God. Discuss what in society leads to anarchy. What are the problems people face in anarchy? What are the ways to avoid or cure society of anarchy? What do you prefer, centralized or decentralized government? What would you suppose is the ideal form of government? Consider such forms as democracy, plutocracy, communism, monarchy, theocracy.

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Judges 17:1-5: Judges (e.g., 11:34-40; 18:12-30; 19:22-20:7) includes some of the most graphic and brutal stories in Scripture. While these stories are not part of our lessons, perhaps, awareness can remind us that Scripture does not shy away from acknowledging and even describing the depths of human depravity. During the settlement period, Israel had a decentralized government. Each tribe was governed by its own chieftains, allowing local communities to manage their lives. There was likely no centralized control over religious matters, leaving Micah and his household completely independent in shaping the cult in their own household. Chapters 17 and 18, "recounting the Danite idolatry, is part of the conclusion to the Book of Judges. The phrases, 'In those days there was no king in Israel' (17:6; 18:1), and 'everyone did what was right in his own eyes' (17:6) are repeated in the last section of the narrative cycles (19:1; 21:25). Without a king the people were miserable" (ESV Reformation Study Bible). That Micah's mother commends Micah to Yahweh suggests she is devoted to the covenant God of Israel, though her actions betray her confusion about what counts as God's prescription for righteousness. This "shrine," he sets up or "house of god," was a family shrine or chapel to serve the family's needs in securing divine assistance in conception and childbirth, fertility

of flocks and fields, and protection from natural calamities and enemies. In the ancient world, manufacturing images of gods was a complex process that began with the consecration of the materials from which the images were to be made. “However well-intentioned, consecrating this silver in this way violated the second commandment (Deuteronomy 5:8), an indication of the spiritual ignorance of the period” (Ibid.).

Judges 18:18-19: The Danites’ treatment of Micah (Judges 18) stands as a case study in the brutality that ruled the day. It exposes a time of cruelty in which one tribe of Israel is pitted against another, but Micah’s story also gives a picture of the vulnerability of individuals and family groups who are defenseless without a judge to arbitrate on their behalf. Micah’s installation of one of his sons as his priest posed a direct challenge to the officially authorized Aaronic priesthood, though he does seem to have good intentions. Micah acts kindly and generously toward others and later adopts a Levite because of a conviction that he would then be more closely aligned with the prescribed Law of Moses. This generosity initially brings blessing, though in the end, the ruthless Danites recruit the Levites for their own purposes and then destroy Micah and his household. The Danites were truly doing what was right in their own eyes. They were making the rules up as they went along and dominating without regard for God’s Law.

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

We can discern between God’s will and human desires by learning more about God and ourselves so that we can follow God faithfully. God’s faithfulness remains true. Break into small groups and respond to and discuss the validity of the following assertions: 1. In scripture and throughout God’s story in history, we can see God’s purpose and best intention for humanity and creation. 2. By studying scripture together with other Christians, we learn to view the world through the rule of love (all of scripture is to be understood through the dual commandment to love God and neighbor. If our interpretation is not consistent with the love of God and neighbor, we took a wrong turn somewhere). 3. John Calvin teaches the more we learn and know about God the more we learn and know about ourselves and vice versa. 4. Wrestling with our lives and the events of our world through the lens of our faith deepens our understanding and relationship with God. 5. These foundational understandings strengthen our ability to resist the ways of the world and help us make choices that are pleasing to God. 6. When our actions are inconsistent with God’s love, then we are not following God faithfully. Discernment, in community, is the best way to determine how to follow God faithfully. God is pleased with and praised by us when we choose to follow in His ways.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Read Exodus 29:4–9 and Numbers 3:5–13 and/or research ‘Levites’ in a Bible Dictionary. Prepare a visual presentation about or discuss the priestly responsibilities of the Levites.
2. Read Judges 17 and 18. Identify the ways Micah and his mother desired to honor God as well as the ways their misguided attempts led to disobedience. How could they have changed their behavior to be obedient to God?
3. Recall the definition of ‘idol’ and the list you made of idols that might distract us from God in Lesson 5, October 4, 2026. Discuss the definition and list, then add to them if you choose. Discuss how idols might encourage us to confuse human desires with God’s will. How can awareness of idols help prevent confusion?
4. Ask participants to write a journal entry about how Micah’s story might relate to the religious and political uncertainty of the time, captured in the Key Verse: In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes, Judges 17:6. Ask participants to consider what role our reliance on religious leadership plays in our determination of faithful living. Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts.
5. Ask participants to recall discussions you have had this quarter about what God desires for His people and what it means to be faithful to Him. Remind participants of scripture iscu discussed, such as Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 6:4–9. Micah 6:8; Matthew 25:31–45; and Mark 12:28–31.



Key Verse: In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes. Judges 17:6

Adult Unit III: Samuel: Prophet, Priest, Judge, and King-Maker
Adult Title: The Lord Calls Samuel
Adult Topic: An Exemplary Discernment

Lesson 9: November 1, 2026

Devotional Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:11–22
Adult Background Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1–4:1
Adult Print Passage: 1 Samuel 3:8–20

Home Daily Bible Reading

Oct 26	M	Amos 3:1-7	<i>God Speaks through the Prophets</i>
Oct 27	T	Hosea 12:7-14	<i>The Prophets Warn and Guide</i>
Oct 28	W	1 Cor. 12:1-11	<i>Gifts for the Common Good</i>
Oct 29	Th	1 Cor. 14:1-5, 26-31	<i>Weigh the Words of the Prophets</i>
Oct 30	F	Isaiah 6	<i>"Here am I; send me!"</i>
Oct 31	Sa	Ephesians 4:1-13	<i>Live Worthy of Your Calling</i>
Nov 1	Su	1 Samuel 3:8-20	<i>Speak, for Your Servant Is Listening</i>

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Leaner

Celebration – “Where He Leads Me”- #631 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – 1 Samuel 3:8-20 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

⁸ The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹ Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’ ” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” ¹¹ Then the Lord said to Samuel, “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. ¹² On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³ For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. ¹⁴ Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever.”

¹⁵ Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶ But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” He said, “Here I am.” ¹⁷ Eli said, “What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.” ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, “It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him.”

¹⁹ As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. ²⁰ And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Unit III Adult Guiding Proposition

God is constantly at work in Israel by calling unexpected leaders to serve God so that Israel may be transformed to reflect God’s will for all people.

Unit III Synopsis

Samuel is an exemplary leader. Throughout Israel’s history and into the New Testament, Samuel exemplifies one who walked faithfully with God (Jeremiah 15:1, Hebrews 11:32). Lesson 9 introduces Samuel (1 Samuel 3) as one who responded to God’s call at an early age. Lesson 10 (1 Samuel 4) reflects Israel’s continued struggle for control of Canaan. There is both spiritual and political significance to the Philistines’ capture of Israel’s sacred Ark of the Covenant. In Lesson 11 (1 Samuel 7), the Ark is recovered and marks an occasion in which Samuel shows his capacity to serve as God’s prophet and judge by calling Israel to spiritual renewal and military readiness. Lesson 12 brings the study to a pivotal moment in Israel’s history (1 Samuel 16) as Samuel clandestinely anoints David as God’s chosen king. The Unit closes with a leap forward in history to the time of David’s coronation as king and his capture of Jerusalem (2 Samuel 5), which will form the seat of worship and government for Israel from that day forward.

Eli helped Samuel learn that God was calling him to serve Israel as a priest and a prophet. Respond to the following questions: 1. What does one do when called to or assuming leadership under the authority and guidance of another leader whose character and principles are in question, or who shows poor leadership qualities? How does one treat such a leader? With respect? With criticism and dishonor? Would you accept leadership under such a person? Explain your answers.

1 Samuel 3:8-14: The ESV Reformation Study Bible points out, in summarizing 1 Samuel 1-7, “God rules and delivers His people before the time of the monarchy. He does so by raising up Samuel (chapters 1–3), intervening directly against the Philistines (4:1–7:1), and giving Samuel victory over the Philistines (7:2–17)”. 1 Samuel picks up where Judges ends (see 1 Samuel 12:9–11) and continues the Deuteronomic perspective (e.g., 1 Samuel 12:14, 15, 20–25). Samuel was a pivotal character in Israel’s history who takes on the roles of judge, priest, and prophet (see 1 Samuel 3:19–4:1a). He was the last of the judges and made a transition from judge to prophet. Earlier in the Book, (chapter 1) we get the role that his mother unknowingly played in initiating his important function in God’s service. Samuel mother, Hannah, had previously been childless but prayed fervently for a child. When God answered her prayer, she vowed to the Lord to dedicate Samuel to the service of the Lord. At about age 4, Samuel came to serve under Eli, the priest (1 Samuel 1:22–25; 3:1). According to 1 Samuel 3:19, “As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.” In chapter 3, we find the Lord calling upon Samuel early in his life to fulfil his mission as prophet. But he was at an age when he was unable to recognize when God was calling. The first three times the Lord called Samuel, the boy responded to Eli. Eli understood what was happening and instructed Samuel to respond to the Lord if he called again. The boy, Samuel, did not expect to be given the call to prophesy against his overseer priest, of course. He must have been astonished by it. 1 Samuel 3:13 indicates blasphemy on the part of the sons of Eli. “If Eli’s sons were cursing God they were committing an offense worthy of death (Leviticus 24:15, 16). Eli, in view of his position as high priest, should have taken action to restrain his sons once verbal rebuke proved ineffective. [The reference to the unacceptableness of an atonement offering in verse 14 is made clear]: While there was provision to atone for unintentional priestly sins (Leviticus 4:1–12), the sins of Eli’s house were clearly acts of open defiance (Numbers 15:30–31). They had scorned the normal means of atonement, that is, sacrifice and offering (2:17, 29)” (Ibid.).

1 Samuel 3:15-20: In pressuring young Samuel to reveal what the Lord had said to him, Eli must have sensed that it had something to do with his own situation with his sons. In being told the truth, he was not resistant. “Eli humbly accepts his rejection and confesses God’s right to rule in the affairs of men. His words establish a benchmark by which later characters in the narrative should be judged: Saul (20:30, 31) and David (2 Samuel 15:25, 26)” (Ibid.). 1 Samuel 3:19 – 4:1 and 7:13-17 spotlight Samuel’s nationally recognized ministry as a prophet and judge. For further study, see Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books, published by InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove: IL, 2005.

After telling Eli everything (3:11–18), Samuel’s credibility as a prophet spread throughout Israel. God continued to speak to Israel through Samuel (3:20–21). “From the perspective of the books of Samuel, it is God’s presence with someone that makes the difference between success and failure.... Samuel thus passed the test of a true prophet (Deuteronomy 18:21, 22).... While Samuel’s responsibilities as judge would take him on a circuit of the central hill country (7:15–17), his reputation as a prophet spread throughout ‘all Israel’ (2 Samuel 3:10; 17:11; 24:25; 1 Kings 4:25)” (Ibid.).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

We become better at listening to God by learning about the ways God calls God’s people so that we can discern God’s call in our own lives. Respond to the following assertion and questions in the group, as a whole: 1. Would you say that the following is true: God called Samuel to serve even though he was young; and God calls us to serve in our varying vocations? 2. Using Samuel’s response to God’s voice, “Speak Lord for your servant is listening” helped him hear God’s voice. Can we listen for God’s call when we pray and through the voice of others? 3. Would you agree that God calls us to serve no matter our age or place in life? Elaborate and give examples. 4. Elaborate on the truth or falsity of the following: A call to serve God is always a call to serve others. We are God’s partners in making this world closer to what God wants. 5. Would you agree with the following: We can join in God’s ongoing work of transformation by saying, “yes,” when God calls? Give examples to support the statement.

iTHINK: (5–7 min.)

1. Ask participants to write a journal entry about what it means to listen to God, what helps them listen to God, and what is difficult about listening to God. Ask for volunteers who are willing to share their thoughts.
2. Teach participants about a new spiritual practice (different from the one you taught last week). Consider including a practice related to nature, such as a prayer walk, or walking a labyrinth. Ask participants how we can understand more about God through the world God created.
3. Read Samuel 3:1–4:1 and discuss why it was difficult for Samuel to understand what was happening.
4. Read other biblical call stories such as the call of Moses, Exodus 3:1–12; the call of Isaiah, 6:1–10; and the call of Jeremiah, Jeremiah 1:4–10. Make a list of the similarities and differences in these call stories. Discuss how

the experiences in the biblical call stories are similar to or different from ways we might hear from God.



5. Ask participants to think about whether they feel they have a calling or if they have ever felt called to do something. (Make sure they understand that a calling doesn't have to be a call to ministry but can be anything that gives them a sense of purpose or meaning or that they feel passionate about.) How did they know this was something they were called to do? How is being called to do something different from wanting to do something or feeling you should do something?
6. Ask participants to draw or write an image or description of the ways the Biblical leaders responded to their calls (reluctance, humility, listening, praising God, confessing their sins, saying, "Here I am," etc.). Ask for volunteers to share their images or descriptions.

Key Verse: Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" 1 Samuel 3:9a

Adult Unit III: Samuel: Prophet, Priest, Judge, and King-Maker
Adult Title: The Glory Departs
Adult Topic: Leadership Run Amok

Lesson 10: November 8, 2026

Devotional Reading: Psalm 29

Adult Background Scripture: 1 Samuel 4:2-7:2

Adult Print Passage: 1 Samuel 4:12-22

Home Daily Bible Reading

Nov 2	M	Rev. 21:1-4, 19-27	<i>Bask in God's Eternal Glory</i>
Nov 3	T	Ezekiel 10:1-7	<i>The Glory of the Lord</i>
Nov 4	W	Ezekiel 10:15-19; 11:22-25	<i>God's Glory Leaves the Temple</i>
Nov 5	Th	Galatians 6:1-10	<i>We Reap What We Sow</i>
Nov 6	F	1 Samuel 6:13-18	<i>Rejoice in God's Glory</i>
Nov 7	Sa	2 Corinthians 5:1-10	<i>God's Judgment Is Sure</i>
Nov 8	Su	1 Samuel 4:12-22	<i>When All Is Lost</i>

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Learner

Celebration – “Take Time to Be Holy” - #467 *AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal*

Declaration – 1 Samuel 4:12-22 (*Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

Death of Eli

¹² A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with earth upon his head. ¹³ When he arrived, Eli was sitting upon his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. When the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out. ¹⁴ When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, “What is this uproar?” Then the man came quickly and told Eli. ¹⁵ Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were set, so that he could not see. ¹⁶ The man said to Eli, “I have just come from the battle; I fled from the battle today.” He said, “How did it go, my son?” ¹⁷ The messenger replied, “Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great slaughter among the troops; your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.” ¹⁸ When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken, and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.

¹⁹ Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. When she heard the news that the ark of God was captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth, for her labor pains overwhelmed her. ²⁰ As she was about to die, the women attending her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer or give heed. ²¹ She named the child Ichabod, meaning, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband. ²² She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Israel's enemies captured the Ark of God due to the poor leadership of Eli and his sons, a sign to the people that the glory of the Lord had departed from Israel. Consider the significance of responsible leadership of a people at all times, in times of peace and harmony and in times of trouble and hardship. What is the responsibility of parents in disciplining and training their children? What responsibilities do parents have for their children's behavior? Should law enforcement, for instance, hold parents responsible for the behavior of their children?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

1 Samuel 4:12-19: Samuel disappears from view after Chapter 3, but returns to the spotlight in Chapter 7. While Samuel continues to lead Israel, both politically and spiritually, the seeds of transition from judges to a more centralized government are being planted. "The Philistines are one of the 'Sea Peoples' named in Egyptian texts from the time of Rameses III. By the time of the judges (Judges 3:31; 13-16), the Philistines had settled along the coastlands of southern Canaan in a league of five cities: Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron, Gath, and Gaza (6:17; Judges 3:3). The Philistines often tried to expand their territory, and in the time of Samuel and the early monarchy, they were in direct conflict with the Israelites to the north and east" (ESV Reformation Study Bible). The Ark of the Covenant represented the essence of God's presence among the people. The elders believed the Ark's presence would protect Israel from her enemies; but in 1 Samuel 4 that veil of protection is lost. The Philistines defeat Israel, Eli's two sons die, and the Philistines capture the Ark of the Covenant. In the wake of these terrible losses, Eli, now old and without sight, falls over backward, breaks his neck and dies. "Earlier rebuked for honoring his sons more than the Lord (2:29), Eli now shows a concern for the ark of God that surpasses his concern for his own sons (vv. 17-18).... Not the news of heavy losses suffered by the Israelites, nor the news of the death of his own sons (v. 17), but the announcement that the Ark of God had been captured prompted the reac-

tion that resulted in Eli's own death.... [As he had judged Israel for decades], there is no necessary contradiction in Eli's being described as both priest and judge (Deuteronomy 17:8–12; 19:17; 1 Chr. 23:2–4; 2 Chronicles 19:8; Ezekiel 44:24). 'Judged' associates him with the leaders God raised up between the death of Joshua and the institution of kingship. Eli's 40-year tenure of leadership would have overlapped the exploits of Samson (Judges 13–16) and possibly also the activity of the judges mentioned in Judges 12:8–15" (Ibid).

1 Samuel 4:20–22: The Ark's capture and delivery to the land of the Philistines becomes a sign to both sides of the battle lines that Israel's God was inferior to Dagon, god of the Philistines. This inevitably moves Israel to centralize its military under a unified leader rather than rely on the regional governance of judges. When the wife of Phinehas (4:19–22) hears the tragic news that the Ark of God is in the hands of the enemy she goes into labor." In despairing recognition of the complete defeat, loss of loved ones, and capture of the Ark" (Bible Panorama), she names her child, Ichabod, meaning "The glory has departed from Israel" (v. 21). The Asbury Bible Commentary calls to attention some interesting insight concerning Israel's use of the Ark of the Covenant and regard or disregard of God's prophet Samuel. "As presently shaped, the text emphasizes that God's newly appointed prophet was disregarded. Since the Ark story centers on Israel's attempt to ascertain God's will (4:3) and to ensure God's presence in battle, and since when Samuel eventually spoke he called for repentance, the present literary shaping highlights Israel's neglect of prophetic ministry. Initially, it is unclear why Israel has been defeated (4:2–3). It is also unknown whether being accompanied by the Ark will make a difference (cf. 3:3; 4:3–4). Granted, the Philistines and Israelites obviously believed the ark mattered (4:5–9). But the notation that Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas, were with the Ark, makes one wonder whether their predicted fate was imminent (compare 2:25, 34; 3:11–14; 4:4). In fact, Hophni and Phineas were killed. Further, instead of being benefited by the Ark, Israel suffered more than seven times the casualties of the first battle (4:10–11; compare v.2). One might conclude at this point that the Ark was a meaningless relic of Israel's condemned priesthood. Indeed, did not the Ark's capture illustrate that this sacerdotal symbol had no efficacy, while the death of Eli's sons demonstrated the power of God's prophetic Word that had been spoken by the man of God and Samuel?"

ELEVATE: (5–10 min.)

God's teachings are important because they help us to know God and God's will so that we can be right with God. The Israelites built an Ark of the Covenant to house the tablets given to Moses on Mt. Sinai when he received the commandments. They believed that this was a physical representation of God's presence and contained the teachings of God (called the Law or the Torah). The Law was like a constitution for the people of God that showed them how to live as God's people. 1. We still look to scripture to help us know God's will and how

to live faithfully. 2. As Christians, God's self-giving act of Incarnation is what mends our relationship with God and keeps us connected. 3. Living according to God's will is a way in which we say "thank you" to God for all the ways God provides for and loves us. 4. Like our ancestors in faith, pleasing God, and walking in the Divine's ways is a tangible witness of our love for God.

iTHINK: (5-7 min)

1. Research the Ark of the Covenant and discuss the contents, the design, the purpose, and the symbolism of the Ark. Make sure to mention that the Ark may have held the tablets with the Ten Commandments, and that the Ark symbolized God's presence for the Israelites.
2. Discuss why the people might value the tablets with the Ten Commandments. Remind the group of the discussions you had earlier in the quarter about the people's responsibilities in being faithful to the covenant with God. What makes God's teachings so valuable that the people carry the tablets of the Ten Commandments around with them? (They were God's instructions for how to be right with God.)
3. Read Psalm 119: 1-8, 97-112, 169-176. Create a list of all the gifts associated with knowing and following God's teachings. Create a list of the different words that are used as synonyms for God's teachings.
4. Recalling your discussion earlier about the symbolism of the Ark of the Covenant, point out that the Ark of the Covenant represented or pointed to God's teachings, God's covenant, and God's presence. Ask the group to suggest some possible reasons the Israelites brought the Ark of the Covenant to the battle and some reasons why the Philistines were afraid when they did so. Then ask the group to suggest some possible reasons why Phinehas's wife said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."
5. Ask participants to write a journal entry about rituals or symbols that help them remember God's teachings or recognize God's presence. How are the rituals or symbols helpful in understanding more about God? How are the rituals or symbols helpful in encouraging faithfulness to God? Why would it be dangerous to confuse the ritual or symbol with God?
6. Re-read the verses from Psalm 119. According to these verses, how does God's teachings help us to be in a good relationship with God? What behaviors does the author of this Psalm describe that might help us to be closer to God?

Key Verse: [The wife of Phinehas] said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured." 1 Samuel 4:22

Adult Unit III: Samuel: Prophet, Priest, Judge, and King-Maker
Adult Title: Samuel: God's Prophet and Judge
Adult Topic: A Virtuous Leader

Lesson 11: November 15, 2026

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
Adult Background Scripture: 1 Samuel 7:3-17
Adult Print Passage: 1 Samuel 7:3-11, 15-17

Home Daily Bible Reading

Nov 9	M	2 Peter 3:9-13	<i>Though We Sin, God Is Patient</i>
Nov 10	T	Colossians 2:8-15	<i>Avoid Worldly Entanglements</i>
Nov 11	W	Deuteronomy 20:1-9	<i>The Lord Gives You Victory</i>
Nov 12	Th	James 1:1-12	<i>Remain Steadfast under Trial</i>
Nov 13	F	Psalms 34:15-22	<i>God Hears and Rescues</i>
Nov 14	Sa	2 Chronicles 7:12-16	<i>God Will Hear and Forgive</i>
Nov 15	Su	1 Sam. 7:3-11, 15-17	<i>Cry to God for Deliverance</i>

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Learner

Celebration – “Take My Life, and Let It Be” - #470 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymn

Declaration – 1 Samuel 7:3-11, 15-17 (*Read together by the class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

Samuel as Judge

³ Then Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Astartes from among you. Direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” ⁴ So Israel put away the Baals and the Astartes, and they served the Lord only.

⁵ Then Samuel said, “Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you.” ⁶ So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord. They fasted that day and said, “We have sinned against the Lord.” And Samuel judged the Israelites at Mizpah.

⁷ When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. ⁸ The Israelites said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, and pray that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” ⁹ So Samuel took a

sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord; Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him. ¹⁰ As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel, but the Lord thundered with a mighty voice that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were routed before Israel. ¹¹ And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them down as far as beyond Beth-car.

¹⁵ Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. ¹⁶ He went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places. ¹⁷ Then he would come back to Ramah, for his home was there; he administered justice there to Israel and built there an altar to the Lord.

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

God provided Israel with Samuel's wise and faithful leadership as prophet and judge, calling Israel to spiritual renewal and military readiness.

Discuss how you would define a virtuous leader. What is usually the impact of a strong and virtuous leader on the people under her or him? What do good leaders tend to do to help calm our fears, find signs of hope in moving forward? What particular leaders have you known to act wisely and guide the people in conquering fears and facing up to threatening situations?

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

1 Samuel 7:3-9: Israel's repentance at Samuel's urging is a repetition of its behavior on many occasions before. The period of the judges is marked by cycles of prosperity, sin and idolatry, divine punishment at the hands of an invader, and the raising of a judge who leads in repentance and deliverance. Samuel was probably a contemporary of Samson, who judged Israel for 20 years (mostly around Judah) and battled the Philistines. (See Judges 13–16.) Samson's death was likely only a short time before the Israelites gathered at Mizpah. "Samuel the man of prayer was able to accomplish what Samson the man of strength could not accomplish" (James E. Smith, OT Survey Series: The Books of History, © 1995). While some archaeologists have concluded that the worship of Ashtoreth was part of the ancient worship of Yahweh, this passage makes it clear that while such practice did sometimes occur, it was a perversion of the true worship of Yahweh. Partly because the worship of Baal and Ashtareths involved sexual acts, idolatry in Israel was labeled spiritual adultery. With Shiloh having suffered destruction at the hands of the Philistines in the aftermath of the Israelite loss in Chapter 4, Israel could no longer sacrifice there. Mizpah, "A town in Benjamin seven miles north of Jerusalem and eight miles northeast of Kiriath-jearim..., played a prominent role in Israel before the monarchy (10:17; Judges 20:1; 21:1, 5, 8). It was one of the regular stops in Sam-

uel's circuit (v. 16). The name, meaning something like 'place of watching,' implies a high vantage point and was given to a number of sites (e.g., 22:3)" (ESV Reformation Study Bible). "The words and actions (v. 4) of the Israelites give evidence of true repentance. The time is ripe for the Lord to deliver His people from their Philistine oppressors. The response of the Philistines to the convocation at Mizpah (v. 7) provides an opportunity for this deliverance" (Ibid).

1Samuel 7:10-10-11, 15-17: As in the Book of Judges, the Lord intervenes on behalf of Israel when they repent from their sin. Repentance, in this historical context, is often accompanied by confession of sin and fasting as signs of penitence and pouring out of water as a sign of contrition. Samuel could visit the three cities mentioned on his circuit and return home to Ramah in a trip of 35-40 miles. While Samuel "judged Israel all the days of his life" (v. 15), his role was less official in his latter years, as Saul was then reigning as king. The statement that the Lord thundered against the Philistines "dramatically recalls the earlier words of Hannah that 'the adversaries... shall be broken to pieces; against them he will thunder in heaven' (2:10; compare 2 Samuel 22:14). Hannah's words are immediately preceded by the statement that 'not by might shall a man prevail' (2:9). Human strength is of little consequence when the Lord decides to act" (Ibid.). "As Samuel sacrifices, the Philistines draw near, but the Lord sends loud thunder and puts them into great panic. The men of Israel pursue and slaughter them.... Samuel, knowing that the Lord alone has delivered them, wishes Israel to remember this and sets up a stone called Ebenezer. This means, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.' With a godly leader, renewed repentance, and wholehearted commitment of the people, it is inevitable that God's great grace and intervention change things. The Philistines are subdued so they do not invade Israel again, and their towns are recaptured. Israel also delivers the neighboring territory from the Philistines and there is peace with the Amorites. Samuel's godly ministry as judge over Israel is lifelong. He performs his task, both on a circuit and in his hometown of Ramah, where he builds an altar to the Lord" (Bible Panorama).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

A good leader responds to the people's cries for help by guiding the people back to God—so that the relationship between God and God's people can be restored. Samuel grew up to be a wise and faithful leader. He became a prophet—giving and interpreting God's word to the people. He also was a priest—he led them in worship. With this thinking in mind, break into small groups and express your thinking on the following: 1. God calls leaders who will be faithful to God's priorities. 2. When God calls us to leadership, God gives us the gifts we need. It is our choice how we use those gifts. 3. God's expectation of faithful leaders is that they will make decisions based upon God's best intentions for the whole people of God. A faithful leader helps reorient people and society according to God's priorities. 4. Leadership is not just telling people what to

do, it is inviting people to join God's ongoing work in the world. 5. God calls leadership who walk and work with God's people to bring out the best in all of us. 6. Leadership in God's realm is mutual and reciprocal not hierarchical.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Show the group the list you made in Lesson 1, September 6, 2026, of leadership qualities that would be helpful based on Israel's situation at that time. How has Israel's situation changed? What leadership qualities would be helpful for the current situation? How are their needs under Samuel's leadership similar to and different from what they needed in a leader under Joshua in Lesson 1?
2. Read 1 Samuel 7:3–17. How does Samuel demonstrate faithfulness to God? How does Samuel encourage the people to be faithful to God? Ask participants to draw an image or write a description of how the people responded when Samuel encouraged them to return faithfulness to God. Ask for volunteers to share their image or description.
3. Discuss how the people of Israel, with Samuel's encouragement, showed their faithfulness to God. How is this similar to or different from how we demonstrate faithfulness to God in our context?
4. Ask participants to think about a time that they felt distant from God. What caused them to feel this separation? How did they find their way back to God? Or if they are still feeling distant from God, what is one step that they could take to move closer to God? Ask if anyone feels comfortable talking about their experience.
5. Read Matthew 6:7–13. Ask the group why they think Jesus encouraged us to ask for forgiveness when we pray. What role does confessing our sins play in building and maintaining our relationship with God?
6. Ask the participants to imagine that they, like the people of Israel, need God's help. Encourage participants to think about what is needed o help with and how they might ask God for help. Offer some time for people to walk around inside or outside of the church (or their homes if you are teaching virtually) to think about this. Give them a time when they need to return to the group. When participants have returned, ask them to imagine they have cried out to God for help and God has responded. Encourage participants to write a journal entry about how it feels to know that God cares and is on their side.

Key Verse: Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 1 Samuel 7:15

Adult Unit III: Samuel: Prophet, Priest, Judge, and King-Maker
Adult's Title: Samuel: A King Maker
Adult's Topic: The Making of a King

Lesson 12: November 22, 2026

Devotional Reading: Micah 6:1-8
Adult's Background Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:10-16:13
Adult's Print Passage: 1 Samuel 16:4-13

Home Daily Bible Reading

Nov 16	M	Proverbs 29:1-14	<i>Blessings of a Righteous Ruler</i>
Nov 17	T	Daniel 2:16-22	<i>God Deposes and Sets Up Kings</i>
Nov 18	W	Luke 4:14-21	<i>Anointed for God's Service</i>
Nov 19	Th	1 Samuel 15:10-23	<i>God Rejects Saul</i>
Nov 20	F	Matthew 12:14-21	<i>God's Righteous Servant</i>
Nov 21	Sa	John 7:14-24	<i>Do Not Judge by Appearances</i>
Nov 22	Su	1 Samuel 16:4-13	<i>God Looks on the Heart</i>

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or learner

Celebration – “Trust and Obey” - #443 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – 1 Samuel 16:4-13 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively*)

⁴ Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, “Do you come peaceably?” ⁵ He said, “Peaceably. I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely his anointed is now before the Lord.” ⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” ⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” ⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.” ¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any of these.” ¹¹ Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Sam-

uel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him, for we will not sit down until he comes here.” ¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The Lord said, “Rise and anoint him, for this is the one.” ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Samuel obediently and carefully followed God’s instructions in selecting, from among Jesse’s many sons, the one whom God had chosen to anoint as king to replace Saul. Discuss problems we may have with making right choices, knowing when we make the right choice, in whatever role, we have the responsibility of functioning in such a way. What means or methods do we use for making choices under various circumstances? Is there usually a format to follow in various situations? Do we usually depend on our own personal judgment, or do we seek others to assist in making choices? Does prayer play a role in the process? Share these thoughts with one another.

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Back story: In Joshua, Judges, and 1 Samuel, God raises up judges/prophets to provide military and spiritual leadership on an as-needed-basis and with limited oversight in a region. David’s rise took place gradually throughout Saul’s lifetime, as described in 1 Samuel 17-31. In 1 Samuel 10:25, Samuel outlines the rights and duties of kingship. The prophet was often God’s mouthpiece to the king. The king was to serve as God’s representative and to carry out God’s instructions as received through the prophet. When Saul does not listen to God’s instruction (1 Samuel 15:10-31), God rejects him as king.

1 Samuel 16:4-7: Samuel’s fear (16:2) should be considered in light of 1 Samuel 15 and Samuel’s declaration that God had rejected Saul as king. Saul would be suspicious of any unusual activity on Samuel’s part and clearly already showed an inclination toward violently protecting his kingship. (See Deuteronomy 21:1-9 for a possible Levitical rationale backing Samuel’s reason for going to Bethlehem.). In ancient narrative, the initial introduction of an individual should give insight into his or her character, but here, the only description is God’s dismissal of the outer appearance of David’s brothers in favor of David’s unidentified quality of the heart (16:7): the point of the story is that God’s assessment is to be our model, not our own list of qualifications. “The reference to ‘stature’ as a false measure of an individual’s qualification to be king, along

with the notice that this son of Jesse is ‘rejected,’ is reminiscent of Saul, who was notable for his height (9:2; 10:23) but was rejected (15:23, 26)” (ESV Reformation Study Bible).

1 Samuel 16:8-13: God’s approval of David’s character is not explained here but should be understood considering David’s own words in Psalm 40:6-8, where David expresses his understanding that God wants wholehearted loyalty and sincere obedience, not religious observance without love. Although the eyes of most are on David’s character, Samuel’s role reminds us of his experience as a child (1 Samuel 3), learning to listen to God’s voice with the intent to obey. This entire account is presented as a series of contrasts to Saul’s selection as king and should be read against 1 Samuel 10: God chooses this king versus the people’s choice; the external versus the internal qualities; and the presence of God versus the absence of God in the chosen individual. Note also the implicit comparison between David and Moses: 2 Samuel 7:8 and Exodus 3:1. Like Moses, David was not the first choice of God’s people (Samuel would have chosen Eliab; see also Exodus 2:14; 5:20-21). Comparisons and contrasts should be noted of the manner in which David is acclaimed by the Spirit as seen in verse 13: “David’s endowment with the Spirit ‘from that day forward’ sets him apart from Saul (and also Samson) upon whom the Spirit descended only sporadically” (ESV Reformation Study Bible).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

Samuel obeys God by anointing David as king so that God’s chosen leader could come to power.

Break into small groups and share responses to the following issues and questions: 1. God directed Samuel to visit Jesse, who had many sons, and from them, God would choose the new king. Discuss the character of Samuel in following God’s directions in selecting a new king to anoint in place of Saul. How important was his unquestioning obedience in following God’s orders? 2. David, the youngest, was the least expected son. Do you think God was concerned that the choice of David would expand our understanding of what it means to be a leader? Explain your answer by discussing how this happens with us. 3. Samuel knew he was following God’s will when he anointed David. Does God sometimes surprise us with what he wants of us? Yet do you think trusting God is an important part of being faithful? Explain your answer. 4. Is discerning God’s will always done best in community? When we try to do it by ourselves, do we possibly mistake our will for God’s will? If so, can you think of examples of this? 5. Is it important that we are satisfied when we have trusted people of faith to discern with us so we can be assured our decisions reflect

God's intentions? Explain your answer. 6. Even though many doubted, even his own family, David was the right son to be chosen, God knew and Samuel listened. Can we see God's intentions for us by reading through the whole sweep of scripture and not just a few verses here or there? Explain your answer.

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Read 1 Samuel 15:10–16:13. Discuss the reasons Saul was rejected by God as king of Israel. What reason does Saul give for his behavior (15:24). Compare Saul's behavior to Samuel's behavior in this passage.
2. What does this passage indicate about Samuel's feelings regarding God's instructions to anoint one of Jesse's sons. Discuss how Samuel's feelings relate to Samuel's behavior.
3. Compare 1 Samuel 15:22 to Amos 5:22–24; Hosea 6:6; and Micah 6:6–8. Ask participants to write a journal entry about what they learned from the passages about the kind of obedience God seeks from His people.
4. Ask the group to research the word 'anoint' in concordances, Bible dictionaries, and commentaries and report back. Based on research, ask the group to explain the significance of Samuel anointing David? Share information with the group about what ritual the denomination performs to commission leaders (blessing, anointing, ordination, consecration). What happens during the commissioning and what is the significance?
5. Ask any members of your group who are commissioned leaders in your church (deacons, elders, pastors, lay leaders, etc.) to share thoughts about their experience of being selected and commissioned as leader. What are the responsibilities? How does it feel to be chosen?
6. Recall some of the discussions from this quarter about characteristics of good leaders. How do the characteristics discussed compare to the criteria God uses to choose leaders, according to 1 Samuel 16? How might things be different if we could choose leaders the same way God chooses leaders? Read Isaiah 11:1–3. Compare the verses to 1 Samuel 16:13. What does the presence of the Spirit of the Lord accomplish?

Key Verse: [Jesse] sent and brought [David] in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him, for this is the one." 1 Samuel 16:12

Adult Unit III: Samuel: Prophet, Priest, Judge, and King-Maker
Adult's Title: David's Coronation and Capture of Jerusalem
Adult's Topic: Envisioning All-around Stability

Lesson 13: November 29, 2026

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 12:18-29

Adult's Background Scriptures: 2 Samuel 5:1-6:23; 24:18-25;

Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21; 1 Kings 15:5

Adult's Print Passage: 2 Samuel 5:1-12

Home Daily Bible Reading

Nov 23	M	Psalm 2	God Defends the Chosen King
Nov 24	T	Acts 13:21-24, 32-39	Heir of God's Promises to David
Nov 25	W	Romans 11:23-29	A Deliverer out of Zion
Nov 26	Th	Isaiah 33:15-22	God's City Stands Forever
Nov 27	F	Psalm 132:8-18	The Lord Has Chosen Zion
Nov 28	Sa	Luke 24:44-49	From Jerusalem to the Nations
Nov 29	Su	2 Samuel 5:1-12	God Establishes David's Kingdom

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Leaner

Celebration – “The Church’s One Foundation” - #304 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – 2 Samuel 5:1-12 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

David Anointed King of All Israel

¹ Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Look, we are your bone and flesh. ² For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you, ‘It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel.’ ” ³ So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. ⁴ David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. ⁵ At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

Jerusalem Made Capital of the United Kingdom

⁶ The king and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, “You will not come in here;

even the blind and the lame will turn you back,” thinking, “David cannot come in here.” ⁷ Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, which is now the city of David. ⁸ David had said on that day, “Whoever would strike down the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind, those whom David hates.” Therefore it is said, “The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.” ⁹ David occupied the stronghold and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inward. ¹⁰ And David became greater and greater, for the Lord of hosts was with him.

¹¹ King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar trees and carpenters and masons who built David a house. ¹² David then perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel.

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)



David’s coronation as king and his capture of Jerusalem established his position as a visionary leader for Israel’s political and spiritual stability. Discuss what the group think of as visionary leadership. What are the characteristics of such leadership? Explain your answers. Consider saying, “In unity there is strength.” What is the importance of bringing about unity and how difficult a task is unity for any leadership? How does this relate to certain enemies who use the principle of “divide and conquer”? Why do some people fall victim to the tactics of “divide and conquer”?

2 Samuel 5:1-6: Though Samuel was a mentor to David and the one who anointed David as king, Samuel died during the reign of Saul. The first seven chapters of 2 Samuel detail David's rise from king over the southern kingdom of Judah, to then rule over all Israel, culminating in the capture of Jerusalem which became the capital city. "David's first act as the Israelite king was to capture Jerusalem, which was foreshadowed earlier (compare 1 Samuel 17:54). Though Jerusalem was considered impregnable, David effortlessly took the city, illustrating either that the inhabitants' confident words were sheer bluster or that David's strength was extraordinary (2 Samuel 5:6-8). Once in the city, he fortified it. And he got even stronger because God was with him (5:9-10; cf. 1Sa 16:18; 17:37; 18:12, 14, 28; 20:13)" (Asbury Bible Commentary). "The covenant establishing David's rule over the northern tribes likely consisted of regulations for the kingship (compare 1 Samuel 10:25), including their rights and responsibilities to one another and to the Lord (2 Kings 11:17). That this covenant did not end the sense of separate identity felt by Israel and Judah is evident in the revolt of Sheba (20:1), and particularly in the dissolution of the united kingdom under Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:16). David's capture of Jerusalem gave Israel a strategic military and economic location and secured Israel's relatively independent status. Jerusalem was at the intersection of major trade routes and had access to well-water.

2 Samuel 5:7-12: Jerusalem was "A city of great antiquity (occupied as early as the third millennium B.C.), Jerusalem was in Benjamin, near the northern border of Judah. The city had earlier been conquered by Judah (Judges 1:8), but neither Judah nor Benjamin had been successful in permanently dislodging its Jebusite inhabitants (Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21). David may well have thought that Jerusalem's strategic location and relatively independent status made the city well suited to the establishment of a national capital that would not imply favoritism toward any particular region. The Jebusites' taunt, whether suggestive of overconfidence or simply of a determination to fight to the last man (even be he blind or lame), reflects the hostility between the Jebusites and David (see v. 8)" (ESV Reformation Study Bible).

The Philistines had not contested David's rule over Judah from Hebron. Still, the extension of his domain to include the northern tribes posed a threat to Philistine interests that they could not ignore. (In 2 Samuel 6, David will strategically recover the Ark of the Covenant from the Philistines and set it in Jerusalem, further securing the city as the capital.) According to the Dictionary of Old Testament: Historical Books (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove: IL, 2005), David's administration included an expanded royal cabinet consisting

of three branches: a military office, headed by Joab (2 Samuel 8:16), a priestly office, headed by Abiathar and Zadok (2 Sam. 8:17) and an administrative office jointly-run by a court secretary, an historian, and a personal advisor (2 Samuel 15:37). After David's capture of Jerusalem, "Another king immediately recognized David's status and built David a palace as a present. This was not the first time foreign rulers saw him as Israel's potential or actual king (compare 1Samuel 21:10-15). However, though elevated in diplomatic prestige, David regarded his kingship in theological perspective: 'David then perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel' (2Samuel 5:11-12)" (*Asbury Bible Commentary*).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

God provided stability for God's people by raising David as king so that David could unite Israel.

Discuss the following issues and questions: 1. As God's people settled into this new land, God knew they needed a king to help them stand strong. God provides us with what we need personally and communally. Elaborate on God's choice of a visionary leader who brought together both faith and might. 2. God saw in David the ability to lead God's people into this new phase of their life together. God anointed David and installed him as the King



to bring all the people and tribes together. Does God always see in us what we often cannot see in ourselves and calls us to trust that God will give us what we need to do the job God has in mind for us? Explain this and give examples. 3. Think of and elaborate on examples of how David follows God's will and plac-

es God at the center of his life. 4. Discuss examples of how David shows his commitment to and love for God by worshiping and praising God in addition to his political might. 5. Elaborate on the fact that God's vision of a united Israel becomes a reality because of David's leadership.

iTHINK: (5–7 min.)

1. Look back over the curriculum you have studied this quarter. Write the events studied in each lesson on index cards, one event per card. Pass out the cards to group members and ask the group to work together to put the cards in chronological order. Discuss the many changes Israel has been through in the lessons studied this quarter. Why might people be looking for a strong leader who can provide stability?
2. In 2 Samuel 5 David is referred to as "The Shepherd of my people Israel." What does a shepherd's job entail, and what does this imply about David's leadership?
3. Read Psalm 23. What does the shepherd do in this Psalm? Ask participants to reflect on what it might be like to have a leader who guides and protects like a shepherd.
4. Invite participants to rewrite Psalm 23 in their own words, describing the ways God provides comfort and support. Ask if anyone is comfortable sharing their creation.
5. Show a map of Israel during King David's reign. Point out Judah, Israel, and other places mentioned in 2 Samuel 5, as well as the lands David conquered during his reign. Discuss the significance of the fact that David united this land and these people. Reflect on the reasons David was considered a great king.
6. Ask the group to research Jerusalem. Encourage the group to look for information about any advantages for David in choosing this as his capital. Explain the meaning of the word Zion, often used as a synonym for Jerusalem. Read one or more of the Psalms praising Zion (e.g. 48; 84; or 126). What do these Psalms say about Zion? Why do the people revere Zion?

Key Verse: David then perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel. 2 Samuel 5:12

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THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
6. You shalt not kill.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Published quarterly for \$3.50 per copy by The A.M.E. Zion Publishing House, 3225 West Sugar Creek Road, Charlotte, NC 28269.

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