

# Inteen<sup>®</sup> Teacher

## God's Covenants with People

Dear Teacher,

We can grow in our relationship with God as we study the scriptures together! In this quarter, our theme is “God’s Covenants With People.” We will learn about how covenants were the foundations for God’s relationship with His people throughout the scriptures. Staying committed to God can be challenging because we have so many distractions. We are constantly bombarded with things in the world that can easily become our gods. As you read the stories and scriptures this quarter think about the question: who are you following? God has already chosen us; will we choose God?

We will begin with our relationship with God as creator and promise keeper. Then see His relationship with Abraham and Sarah as their leader and Lord in Genesis. We will learn about God as the one who freed Israel from slavery and provided for them in the wilderness in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. We will see that God protects us and helps us despite our flaws in Joshua and Judges. Finally, we will learn that God faithfully gives hope for a better future and uses people to build it in Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. We will see that God keeps His promises even when we don’t keep ours throughout this quarter. God is faithful and calls us to faithfully follow Him.

This quarter highlights the message: we must choose to follow God! The way we live must be centered and rooted in God’s Word. Our love for God and others can change our communities. Finally, we end the quarter with Job remembering that following God doesn’t mean life will be perfect. It means that even when we feel overwhelmed by life, we turn to God. When we make bad decisions, we turn back to God. And when we see success, we thank God. As you go through this quarter, I pray you will be more open to God meeting you where you are. May you come to know God as your creator, liberator, leader, protector, provider, and friend as the people in this quarter did!

Grace & Peace,

UMI Editorial Team

# ROAD FROM SELMA WAS PAVED WITH THE Blood of Martyrs

**Standing with your brothers and sisters pursuing peace as a nation**

*(Excerpts from UrbanFaith.com)*

**O**n the 50th anniversary of the marches from Selma to Montgomery, a Baptist deacon, a minister, a Unitarian laywoman, and an Episcopal seminarian are being remembered for sacrificing their lives.

They were just four of the thousands of Americans who came to Selma 50 years ago, heeding the call of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. for people of conscience to join in protesting the plight of African Americans in Alabama at the height of the Civil Rights Movement.

The four martyrs are largely unknown, but they're being remembered for sacrificing their lives for the rights of others. The names of all four are etched in the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Ala., along with 36 others—starting with Mississippi minister George Lee, who died in 1955, and ending with King, who was assassinated in 1968.

"The gravity of his call for justice in the South became punctuated even more graphi-

cally by these deaths," said Montgomery historian Richard Bailey.

## **THE BAPTIST DEACON: JIMMIE LEE JACKSON**

"His death is what really precipitated the march from Selma to Montgomery," Bailey said. Jackson was a 26-year-old deacon of his Baptist church in Marion, Ala., and had been active in local protests.

"He actually attempted to register to vote about five times before his death," said Brandon Owens, staff research associate at the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University.

Jackson was fleeing police who attacked protesters after a peaceful demonstration. He was shot inside a Selma cafe at the hands of an Alabama state trooper while trying to protect his grandfather and mother on Feb. 18, 1965, and died eight days later.

Angered by his death—a pivotal scene



in the film *Selma*—some protesters wanted to lay Jackson’s body at the foot of the Alabama Capitol.

In his eulogy for Jackson, King called many—including his fellow clergy—to account: “He was murdered by the indifference of every white minister of the Gospel who has remained silent behind the safe security of his stained-glass windows.”

### **THE UNITARIAN MINISTER: THE REV. JAMES REEB**

“Four men came at us from across the street,” recalled the Rev. Clark Olsen, now 81 and living in Asheville, N.C. “One of them was carrying a club and swung it at Jim’s head.”

Reeb, Olsen, and another White Unitarian Universalist minister had just met and decided to eat dinner together on March 9, 1965, after the second canceled “Turnaround Tuesday” march. All three had traveled to Selma to answer King’s call for ministers to join him there. They were about to return from supper to the church where there was a meeting with King when the White men shouted at them: “Hey, you niggers!”

Reeb, a 38-year-old father of four, was taken to a Birmingham hospital and died two days later.

King delivered Reeb’s eulogy, and hours later, President Lyndon B. Johnson mentioned Reeb’s death and the violence of Selma when he addressed Congress to introduce the Voting Rights Act: “Many were brutally assaulted; one good man, a man of God, was killed.”

### **THE UNITARIAN LAYWOMAN: VIOLA LIUZZO**

“Her affiliation with Unitarians did influence her decision to drive south,” said her daughter, Sally, of her mother’s trek from Detroit. “However, even if she was not involved in any church, she would have went anyways; that is who she was. She loved her country and knew segregation was not right; she wanted a better world for her children.”

Liuzzo, 39, a mother of five, drove her 1963 Oldsmobile to Selma and had planned to stay for a week. “She came here because she was civil rights-minded,” said Bailey. “She wanted to help.”

She died on March 25, 1965, shortly after the conclusion of the last of the three marches from Selma. She was killed by shots fired from a car of Ku Klux Klansmen—who spotted a White woman and a Black man in a car together—as she drove another civil rights worker from Selma to Montgomery.

### **THE EPISCOPAL SEMINARIAN: JONATHAN DANIELS**

“He pulled me out of the way and the bullet hit him instead,” said Ruby Sales, now 66, recalling the day. August 20, 1965 was the day that Daniels saved her life and lost his.

They had just been released from jail, where they were held with other civil rights workers who were protesting the exploitation of Black sharecroppers by White plantation owners in Fort Deposit, Ala. Daniels, 26, and Sales were in a group of people who stopped at a store to buy a soda. A White special deputy sheriff aimed a gun at Sales, and Daniels took the shot.

Daniels, the valedictorian of his class at the Virginia Military Institute, had left his Episcopal seminary in Cambridge, Mass., and trekked to Selma, like others, answering King’s call after the first “Bloody Sunday” march. But unlike many who left, he stayed and worked on voter registration in Lowndes County and also pushed for the integration of a White Episcopal congregation in Selma.

“He was not there because he had no other options in life,” said Sales, founder of the SpiritHouse Project, a social justice nonprofit in Atlanta. “He was there because he chose to be there.”

King said of Daniels, according to a VMI website: “One of the most heroic Christian deeds of which I have heard in my entire ministry was performed by Jonathan Daniels.”

# The Entire Bible in One Year

## Quarter At-A-Glance – September 2023

### **September 3, 2023: Week 1 Genesis Blessing for All Nations Genesis 12:1–9**

The Lord instructs Abram to take his family to another country and promises to make him a great name and nation. Abram obeyed the Lord and went toward the Land of Canaan.

### **September 10, 2023: Week 2 Exodus Obeying God's Law Exodus 20:18–26**

Without obedience to the law, people live in chaos, hurting themselves, others, and their environment. God delivered the commandments to the Israelites while showing divine and holy power that tested them to convince them to obey the laws of the covenant.

### **September 17, 2023: Week 3 Leviticus Living as God's Just People Leviticus 19:9–18, 33–37**

This chapter begins with a call to reflect on the nature of God: "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" (v. 2, NKJV).

### **September 24, 2023: Week 4 Numbers People Grumble Numbers 11:1–6, 10–15**

During times of trouble, what happens when we forget our blessings? When God brought the people out of slavery in Egypt and provided for them in the desert, Moses and the people complained repeatedly, loudly, and often about their hardships. They had forgotten what God had done for them.

### **October 1, 2023: Week 5 Deuteronomy The Heart of the Law Deuteronomy 10:12–22; 16:18–20**

The principle underlying justice in this passage does not originate in humankind, but in the nature of God. Loving God involves more than a sentimental response; it means serving God with one's heart and soul.

### **October 8, 2023: Week 6 Joshua God Is Victorious Joshua 6:2–3, 4b, 12–20b**

At God's command, Joshua and the children of Israel marched around Jericho for seven days. On the final day as Israel conquered the city, God miraculously caused the walls to collapse.

### **October 15, 2023: Week 7 Judges - Ruth Listen to God's Judges Judges 2:11–19**

This passage is an introduction to the book of Judges, which explains Israel's recurring cycles of national apostasy.

### **October 22, 2023: Week 8 1-2 Samuel God's Covenant with David 2 Samuel 7:1–13**

This lesson is based on the story of David's desire to build a permanent structure for the Ark of God, a house for the Lord. Instead, God promises to establish David's dynasty including a descendant who would build the temple and establish his kingdom forever.



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**October 29, 2023: Week 9 1-2 Kings  
Josiah Brings Reform**

**2 Kings 22:8–10; 23:1–3, 21–23**

During the repair of the temple, the Book of the Covenant was found and brought to King Josiah. Upon reading it and realizing God's Word was not being followed, Josiah called the people together, read the Book of the Covenant to them, and led them in a renewal of the covenant, pledging to follow the Lord and keep His commands.

**November 5, 2023: Week 10 1-2 Chronicles  
The Ark Comes to Jerusalem**

**1 Chronicles 15:1–3, 14–16, 25–28**

King David was seeking to deliver the Ark of the Covenant to a temporary tent where it would be housed. The ark itself is a symbol of the importance of worship in the lives of God's people.

**November 12, 2023: Week 11 Ezra - Nehemiah  
Nehemiah: The Captive Cupbearer Rebuilds a Nation**

**Nehemiah 2:11–20**

People are often contemplative before they make major decisions. How does one or should one react after careful consideration of a major decision? Nehemiah set out to rebuild the wall after praying and surveying the ruins.

**November 19, 2023: Week 12 Esther  
A Time for Courage**

**Esther 3:2–3, 5–6a; 4:7–16**

Haman was infuriated when Mordecai refused to bow down to him. In retaliation, he ordered not only that Mordecai be killed, but all the Jews of the kingdom. Mordecai gave this message to Esther, the queen, who was his cousin/niece. Mordecai told Esther to plead the cause of the Jewish people before the king.

**November 26, 2023: Week 13 Job  
When Tragedy Occurs**

**Job 1:14–15, 18–19, 22; 3:1–3, 11**

These Scripture passages deal with the age-old question, "Why do Christians or good people suffer?" It acknowledges the fact that even God said that Job was "perfect, upright, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). However, these facts did not keep Job from being tried in the crucible of suffering.

# STARTING OVER

## A BLESSING FOR ALL NATIONS

### LESSON AIM:

*By the end of the lesson, teens will:*

(1) learn the story of God's call and promise to Abram, (2) reflect on the joy Abram's and Sarai's faith gave them from obeying the Lord; and (3) decide what they are willing to sacrifice to claim the promises of God.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

Bible, student magazines, pencils or pens, and a 500-piece puzzle in a plastic bag.

### OPEN THE LESSON

A. Tell the students they have ten minutes to work together and complete a puzzle. Empty the contents of the bag and encourage them to do their best, despite the fact they don't have a guide.

B. Divide the students into groups of five and have them brainstorm to create a list of things they would need if they were about to move to a place they have never been.

### PRESENT THE SCRIPTURES

When faced with decisions to make in life, we sometimes feel lost and confused. We know that the pieces of our lives fit together like a magnificent puzzle and that God is in control, but we often become frustrated when things aren't going the way we want them to. We feel that if God would just give us a sign, show us where we're going, or simply let us peek at the final draft of His master plan, we would be all right. We would have all the faith and confidence we need to rest assured that everything really is going to work out just fine.

It's time for us to realize that God didn't work that way in Abram's day, and God doesn't work that way today. God expects us to trust Him, to obey Him, and to believe

what He said—even when we think it makes no sense. Abram willingly gave up his home, his livelihood, and everything that was familiar to him simply because he wanted to receive the blessings God promised him. We should be willing to do the same.

Today's lesson is about the blessings that come as a result of our obedience to God. Abram not only followed life-changing instructions from God, but he also believed that God could do the impossible. His example is one that all should follow.

### EXPLORE THE MEANING

Have the students read out loud and discuss the story "Starting Over," the Scripture passages, and the "Scripture Discussion." Then have the students answer the questions in the "Check It" and "Think It" sections to make sure they understand the lesson. Talk to them about questions they may have about the passages.

### NEXT STEPS FOR APPLICATION

Refer to the "Do It" section of the student book. Before the students begin the activity, have them discuss why God's call to Abram and Sarai would be difficult for an established, elderly couple. Offer them the following challenge: "If an elderly couple could joyfully give up everything to answer God's call, shouldn't the rest of us be able to do the same?" Then, have the students begin the activity.

## WORSHIP GUIDE

*For the Superintendent or Teacher*

*Theme: A Blessing for All Nations*

*Theme Song: “I Surrender All”*

*Scripture:* Genesis 12:1–9

Song: "The Blessing of Abraham" by Donald Lawrence

*Prayer:* Use the Lesson Aim

FROM THE STUDENT MAGAZINE

## Starting Over

Ambre and her dad had been on the road. She was only two when the tornado hit their home and changed their lives forever. Her mother had died. Her father was so moved by the people who worked for Disaster Relief that he joined the organization. He and Ambre went from state to state, wherever people were in need of help. Now it was time to go back home.

Ambre stood in her room staring at the blank walls. Tears stung her eyes, but she refused to let them fall. “You’d think I’d be used to packing by now. This time it’s just not the same.”

Her dad stuck his head in her room. “You say something?”

"Just thinking out loud."

He stepped in and helped her tape a box. "What's on your mind?"

"You don't want to know."

He raised an eyebrow.

Ambre plopped down on her bed. “I don’t want to settle down. I like having these adventures and being able to help people.”

He sat down and wrapped his arms around her. "I know, but this season has come to an end for us."

She rolled her eyes. "It's not like there aren't going to be any more disasters."

He smiled. "I'm sure there'll be plenty, and when you're old enough, you can pick up where I left off. In the meantime, I'm sure

there are tons of people in our hometown who could use some help.”

### Scripture Discussion

Abram, who we know as Father Abraham, was a man of great faith. Though he was advanced in years, God instructed him to pack up his bags along with everything else he owned. God told Abram to leave his comfortable, quiet life and go to an undisclosed location.

There aren't very many people who would trust God the way Abram did. He had no clue where he was going or what was in store for him. However, because Abram chose to believe God and follow God's instructions, we are able to benefit from God's blessings and promises that have been fulfilled.

## NOTES

[illegible]

# Genesis

## A BLESSING FOR ALL NATIONS

Focal Verses • GENESIS 12:1–9

### Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: ANALYZE the story of God’s call and promise to Abram; EMBRACE the joy that Abram and Sarai’s faith gave to them from obeying the Lord; and DECIDE what we are willing to sacrifice to claim the promises of God.

### In Focus

Warren and his wife, Deloris, have been married for over 25 years and live a very comfortable life. Warren is a respected corporate executive and community leader, and Deloris is a College Professor. Both are active and faithful members of their church and within their circle of friends. Lately, they both had been thinking about doing more for God, even in distant lands. One day during Warren’s morning devotion, he felt in his spirit that it was time to leave. When he felt it again as he was shaving, he immediately stopped what he was doing and inquired of the Lord. He knew in his spirit that it was time to move on to a new workplace assignment, which might include moving to another country to make a greater impact for God on the world. At work that morning, he learned that the company was in fact reorganizing. They were expanding operations to compete globally, and he was tapped to run overseas operations.

*As we will see with Warren and Deloris, and Abram and Sarai in today’s lesson, a decision to follow God’s command continues to reap a reward for those who by faith in Jesus Christ become His seed.*



### Keep in Mind

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2, KJV).



## Focal Verses

**KJV** **Genesis 12:1** Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him: and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had

gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

9 And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

## The People, Places, and Times

**Abram.** The significance of God's call for a nation through Abram was that up to this point, there was no distinction between people and races in the manner that we think of today. After the Flood, the people were dispersed at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9). The Bible depicts a detailed review of Shem's descendants—Noah's eldest son. It is out of Shem's lineage, through Abram, that God would call out a people unto Himself to be witnesses in the earth of His greatness. They would receive the blessing for serving the one true and living God in the midst of universal idolatry. Ultimately, Abram's seed through 42 generations would bring forth the Messiah who would reconcile the world back to the Father (Matthew 1:1–17). Abram exemplifies the faith necessary to obtain righteousness and access to the promises of God through Jesus Christ.

**The Land of Canaan.** The Hebrew word for "Canaan" (*Kena'an*, ken-AH-an) means

low region or lowland. Its name denotes that the country resides west of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, between those waters on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. Named after Noah's fourth son Ham, the land was given by God to Abram's posterity, the Children of Israel, as promised. In modern geography, Canaan is now Palestine.

## Background

In the preceding chapter (Genesis 11:10–32), we learn of Abram's lineage as a descendant of Noah's son Shem. In Genesis 9:26, Noah prophesied over Shem, after he and his brother Japheth covered his nakedness, declaring that he would be blessed and that Canaan would be his servant. Genesis 11 ends with Abram's father, Terah, leading his family's migration from his native land Ur of the Chaldees to make their way to the land of Canaan, but instead, the group settles in Haran (Genesis 11:31). It is noted in verse 32, however, that Terah remained in

Haran until his death. Geographically, scholars maintain that Haran was perched between Ur and Canaan, so they were in the middle of their intended destination. Terah's name was believed to mean "delay," and as referenced in a review of Israel's history (Joshua 24:2), he was an idol worshiper. We will see why Abram and Sarai's faith and obedience were pivotal to the blessing for all nations as God separates him from his people.

## At-A-Glance

1. God's Call for a Blessed Nation (Genesis 12:1–3)
2. Abram's Response to God's Call (vv. 4–6)
3. God's Promise of Generational Blessings (v. 7)
4. Abram's Obedience in Answering God's Call (vv. 8–9)

## In Depth

### 1. God's Call for a Blessed Nation (Genesis 12:1–3)

Abram was the youngest son of Terah. He was a descendant of Noah's son Shem. According to Stephen's account in Acts 7:2–4, the God of glory appeared to Abram while he was in Mesopotamia, which was before he settled in Haran. Therefore, when Abram heard God's call in Genesis 12:1, this was his second encounter with the Lord Jehovah, and it's believed to be not long after his father's death. Abram was told to leave his country and his family and uproot his home to go to a place the Lord would soon reveal. The Scripture does not indicate that there was a discussion after this command was given, but that Abram moved at God's word. Abram was surrounded by people, including his own family, who were polytheistic (worshiped multiple gods).

For him to hear the voice of the true and living God was monumental. Because of his obedience, Abram is forever etched as "the father of faith." With this second encounter, however, God made Abram a promise to bless him and make him a great nation, to make his name great and for him to be a blessing (v. 2). This promise from God was astounding due to Abram's age (v. 4), and as first noted in Genesis 11:30, his wife Sarai was barren. God gave Abram further motivation to adhere to His command with the pronouncement of future blessings. For leaving his father's house, Abram would receive a father's blessing—a namesake. God told Abram His sovereign promise to fulfill His word to make a great nation from him and to make his name great. Abram went from not having any children and with no hope of ever being a father to having the promise of an entire nation coming from his loins.

In Genesis 12:3, God established His relationship and the power of this connection by stating that He would bless those who blessed Abram and curse those who cursed him. God's presence is marked in the lives of those chosen by Him. Verse 3 ends with the most important component of this promise: God commits to blessing all the families of the earth through Abram. Abram's seed birthed three world religions; Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Ishmael) all lay claim to him as father. However, the ending of this verse points to the coming Christ who would bring salvation and restoration to the world. Abram's seed is the divinely appointed channel through which blessing would come to all humankind by faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:6–7, 14).

### 2. Abram's Response to God's Call (vv. 4–6)

Abram followed God's spoken command and departed from his familiar surroundings to a place unknown. Abram, after having departed once with his kindred from his native land of Ur, was once again a nomad at the age of 75,

leaving Haran. He took with him his wife, all their possessions, his nephew Lot, and his servants. We can imagine how very unsettling it must have been for Abram to be uprooted again and to move everything he owned to answer God's call. However, in spite of the circumstances, Abram walked in obedience and trusted God based on what God had revealed to him. He went forward and began the journey. His father, Terah, stopped short his migration to Canaan (see Genesis 11:31, NIV). When God declares a call on your life, not everyone is privy to seeing the revelation of God's plan. Therefore, even close relatives may need to be left behind.

In Genesis 12:6, Abram arrives in Canaan and the land is already occupied by the Canaanites. He is yet again a stranger in a strange land. He was put in an uncomfortable position by coming into a land that was promised to him but was already inhabited, which could have been a reason to give up. But Abram continued to follow God and remain confident he heard God correctly. Oftentimes, when God gives us a directive, it may not come with full disclosure of the details—like what we have to go through to get to the promise. Just like Jesus, Abram teaches us to keep moving forward by focusing on God's promise (Hebrews 12:2).

### 3. God's Promise of Generational Blessings (v. 7)

In this instance, rather than just speaking to Abram, God appeared in the form of a theophany—God appeared in human form. Some scholars believe this appearance was Christ in His pre-incarnate state. He showed Abram once again the land He was going to bless Abram with and reinstated His promise to give him seed or offspring. Abram yet again heard a word from the Lord declaring that he would not only receive this land that is already occupied but that his children would live in it. In response to God's appearance, Abram built an altar unto the Lord. The proper

response to God's presence and confirmation of His promise is worship. Abram had God's continued assurance that he would receive that which God had spoken, and by making a personal appearance, it further sealed the guarantee.

### 4. Abram's Obedience in Answering God's Call (vv. 8–9)

Abram continued to move forward at God's command and thus declared his own allegiance to serve God alone. In spite of the culture around him, which had a god for everything, Abram is the father of a monotheistic religion that is based on a relationship with the true and living God. Abram pitched his tent, and wherever he pitched his tent, he built an altar unto the Lord. He remained in constant contact with Him through worship and prayer as he called on the name of the Lord. Abram lived a disciplined life of worship and walked in obedience by listening for the voice of the Lord God. Abram's faithful response to God's promise to make him a great nation required a close relationship and strict adherence to God's instructions. Abram would have been shortsighted if he thought only of the personal impact of this promise, but because the call was greater than he could ever imagine, he was willing to make the sacrifice with his wife by his side.

### Search the Scriptures

1. What was God's instruction to Abram (Genesis 12:1)?
2. What was God's promise to Abram (vv. 2–3)?
3. What was Abram's response to God's call (vv. 4–5)?

### Discuss the Meaning

How would you respond if God told you to uproot your life and leave behind all you know to follow Him with only a promise of what's to come?



### **Liberating Lesson**

Today, we are reaping the benefits of the blood, sweat, and tears of our heroes and heroines of the Civil Rights Movement, as well as the ancestors before them who sacrificed so that we might have the freedom to be whatever God called us to be. Like Abram, Dr. Martin Luther King did not live to see the fullness of this vision of freedom, but he moved at God's Word and did as he was instructed, walking in love. He trusted God and sacrificed his own personal comfort and gain by believing that God would do what He said. We can continue to honor Dr. King's legacy by showing our willingness to submit to God's plan no matter where it takes us as we serve others and strive to move toward lives of freedom.

### **Application for Activation**

As you reflect on today's lesson, what has God promised in your life that will bless you and others now as well as in generations to come? What are you willing to risk to follow through with God's plan and bring Him glory, even at the risk of your own comfort? Pray and assess your own ambitions, goals, and interests to see if they line up with God's Word. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you about anything that needs adjustment.

### **Follow the Spirit**

What God wants me to do:

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### **Remember Your Thoughts**

Special insights I have learned:

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## Say It Correctly

Canaan. **KAY**-nuhn.  
Haran. **HAY**-ran, -ruhn.  
Moreh. **MOH**-ray.  
Sichem. **SHEE**-kem.

## Daily Bible Readings

### DAY 1

Genesis 1–3

### DAY 2

Genesis 4–7

### DAY 3

Genesis 8–11

### DAY 4

Genesis 12–15

### DAY 5

Genesis 16–18

### DAY 6

Genesis 19–21

### DAY 7

Genesis 22–24

## Notes

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# CELL PHONE IDOL

## OBEYING GOD'S LAW

### LESSON AIM:

*By the end of the lesson, teens will:*

(1) recognize the ways that God tested the Israelites in order to convince them to obey the divine laws; (2) understand the importance of obeying God's laws and aspire to do so; and (3) implement steps on how they can show God they are serious about obeying His laws.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

Bible, student magazines, paper, pencils or pens

### OPEN THE LESSON

Open today's lesson with a game. In this game, there is one leader, but one person will not know who the leader is.

Form a circle. Choose a student to step outside the room. Without the student outside knowing, choose someone to be the leader. The leader will begin by doing one motion, for example, patting his or her leg, and all the other students will join in. Then the person outside will take a seat within the circle to watch the group. Then the leader changes their motion, and the group as quickly as possible follows the leader. The person must try to figure out who is leading the group. Do a few rounds and have fun!

End of Activity Reflection: We can tell who we are following by our actions. Who are you following? Open the lesson.

### PRESENT THE SCRIPTURES

In today's Scripture passages, the Israelites were overwhelmed by the presence of God as He displayed His power and majesty. They trembled with fear when God descended on Mount Sinai. God's dramatic appearance reminded the Israelites of His awesome power.

Though they abandoned God for man-made idols, He never abandoned them. He gave Moses specific instructions for how they were to live as a new, set-apart nation.

And God promised that when and where His laws were obeyed, He would cause His name to be remembered. They would remember His name by experiencing His provision and protection. Through His divine interaction, the Israelites would have a daily reminder of the nature, presence, and power of God. But the first law that was necessary to their success as a people was to fear God above all other gods.

### EXPLORE THE MEANING

Have the students read out loud and discuss the story "Cell Phone Idol," the Scripture passages, and the Scripture Discussion. Then have the students answer the questions in the "Check It" and "Think It" sections to make sure they understand the lesson. Talk to them about questions they might have about the passage.

In today's story, Cassie made it clear that only one thing was important. She chose to ignore the request from her mom, the people around her, and ultimately that special time designated to worship God. Ask your students about what other things in today's world are often used as idols.



## NEXT STEPS FOR APPLICATION

Your students are constantly being pressured to worship other gods, false gods, through devoting all of their attention to something earthly and material. Encourage your students to review their own habits. Ask them if they can go an entire day without being on their phone and checking their social media pages. Have them pray to God, asking for help.

## WORSHIP GUIDE

*For the Superintendent or Teacher*

**Theme: Obeying God's Law**

**Theme Song:** "Trust and Obey"

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:18–26

**Song:** "You Are God Alone"

**Prayer:** Dear Lord, please reveal to me those things in my life that I value more than You. Jesus, give me the courage, wisdom, and strength to put these things in their right place or let them go. Help me to have the desire to keep You first. In Jesus' name, amen.

## FROM THE STUDENT MAGAZINE

*Cell Phone Idol*

It was Sunday morning, and Cassie reclined on the couch, gazing at her cell phone, and skimming her social media accounts.

"Honey, please put your phone away," Cassie's mom said. "It's time to go to church."

Cassie sighed and reluctantly put her phone in her purse. But once she was in the car, she whipped it out again and began texting her friends.

As Cassie and her mom walked into church, Mom greeted the other church members and began chatting with them, but Cassie kept her head down with her eyes glued to her phone. It was like she was entranced by it and couldn't look away.

"Cassie!" Mom said, scowling. "Put the phone away—now!"

Rolling her eyes, Cassie once again put her phone in her purse and sat down with her mom in the sanctuary. She wanted to obey her mom, but she was expecting an important text message from her friend.

During the service, Cassie's mom noticed a blue glow out of the corner of her eye. She turned her head and caught Cassie looking at her phone again.

Frustrated and disappointed, Mom snatched the phone from her daughter's hands and tucked it inside her purse.

"You've just lost your phone privileges, young lady," Mom whispered.

*Scripture Discussion*

In today's Scripture passage, the Israelites trembled with fear when God descended on Mount Sinai. They were so scared that they wanted Moses to speak to them on God's behalf rather than experience Him for themselves. But Moses encouraged the Israelites and told them to not be afraid.

When God spoke to Moses, He warned the people about having any other god except the true and living God. The display of thunder and lightning was a mere glimpse into His greatness and proof of His power. God wanted them to know that He alone was supreme and deserved to be worshiped. He forbade the use of idols or gods made of silver and gold. Instead, God wanted the Israelites to build an altar made of soil and sacrifice burnt offerings on it to Him. Just like He was set apart from other gods, so were the Israelites set apart as a distinct people.

Cassie allowed her phone to be a distraction and a governing factor in her life. Her phone dictated how she interacted with others and controlled her thoughts and actions. It was her god. Created things are not meant to rule us; we are meant to rule them.

# Exodus

## OBEYING GOD'S LAW Focal Verses • EXODUS 20:18-26

### Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will: EXPLORE the divine manifestations and warnings that accompanied the giving of the Ten Commandments; ASPIRE to live in more perfect obedience to God's laws; and SHARE one way to show God that we are serious about obeying His laws.

### In Focus

Arron and Regina were married right out of school and rented a walk-up apartment near Regina's parents' brownstone. After several years of paying their bills on time, raising their credit score, and saving what they could, they decided it was time to buy their first home. They found an inexpensive house in the best school district in the city and set off to see the loan officer at the only African American bank in town.

"Banks are imposing, and bankers intimidate me," Regina told Aaron the morning of their appointment. "Don't worry," Aaron replied, "we are also meeting my uncle, who invests in real estate, and he can help us understand the documents and explain our rights and obligations. As for the bank building, those marble columns, high ceilings, and ornate wooden desks are all meant to assure us that the bank is solid, stable, and invested in our community." Excited, yet a bit apprehensive, Regina held Aaron's hand tightly as they walked through the massive brass and glass doors of the local bank.

On their way back to their apartment, Regina commented, "I feel so much better. The people at the bank were welcoming and willing to trust us with this loan. Let's pray together, right now, that God will help us to honor our part. Let's ask God to enable us to show the bank that their trust in us is well placed."

*Describe a time when someone didn't do their part to honor an agreement. In this lesson, we will find out how the Israelites were called to honor their covenant agreement with God.*



### Keep in Mind

"In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee"  
(from Exodus 20:24, KJV).

## Focal Verses

**KJV** **Exodus 20:18** And all the people saw the thundering, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

**19** And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

**20** And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

**21** And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

**22** And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

**23** Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

**24** An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and they peace offering, they sheep, and thine oxen: In all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.

**25** And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.

**26** Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon

## The People, Places, and Times

**Moses.** Moses plays a prominent role in the events of this passage. Born a Hebrew slave, Moses was later raised in the home of the Pharaoh, God chose Moses to return to Egypt and lead the Hebrew people out of slavery. In the process, God shaped and molded Moses into His faithful servant who became an outstanding leader of His people.

**Mount Sinai.** The events of this passage take place at Mount Sinai, often referred to as “the mountain of God.” It is believed by some to be located about fifty miles north of the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula, in an area now controlled by Egypt. On this mountain, Moses met God in the burning bush, and here God called Moses to go to Egypt and lead His people out of slavery (Exodus 3). Many years later, the prophet Elijah would return to this mountain (which is also called Horeb) and hear from God in the gentle whisper of a still, small voice (1 Kings 19:8–13).

*How would you evaluate Moses’ relationship with God? Did God direct Moses’ life in ways that helped Moses mature and become the leader that He needed?*

## Background

The events of this Scripture take place in the third month after God had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. For nearly three months, a vast multitude of men, women, and children had been slowly moving across formidable deserts. All the miraculous events that God had ordained in Egypt, including the night of the Passover and the parting of the Red Sea, were certainly still fresh in their minds. In the past few months, they had seen the presence of God in the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day. They had been miraculously fed by the manna and quail. God had provided water when none was to be found. The Israelites were constantly aware of the presence and power of God in their midst. Now they were camped at the foot



of Mount Sinai, where God would once again show His mighty power and give the Law to His people through their leader Moses. Through the process, the people would learn more about God and what He expected of them.

*How would you evaluate the importance of the Ten Commandments in the lives of the Israelites, as well as all modern-day believers?*

### At-A-Glance

1. God Makes His Presence Known (Exodus 20:18)
2. The People Show Reverent Fear (vv. 19–21)
3. God Encourages Proper Worship (vv. 22–26)

### In Depth

#### 1. God Makes His Presence Known (Exodus 20:18)

For three months, God had made His presence known through miraculous physical phenomena such as the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. He led them to stop at Mount Sinai, where He would give His people the Law.

The Israelites' stopping at Mount Sinai mirrors what happens in a believer's life. We worship the Lord and come to know who He is before we are given commands to obey. The Law outlined how they were expected to live as His people in relationship with Him and in relationship with each other. They were expected to fulfill these covenant requirements. This is in line with the commands that Jesus put forth as the first and second greatest commandments for us—to love God and to love people.

It was important for God to make sure His people knew that it was He, Almighty God, the God of their fathers, who was giving the Law.

So He used spectacular divine manifestations to cause them to respond in fear and reverence to keep their covenant commitment. He used smoke, thunder, the sound of heavenly trumpets, and lightning. God's manifestation of His presence had the desired effect. The presence of God and the recognized authorship of His commands also cause us to reverence God, receive His words, and obey them.

*What has caused you to fear and revere God lately?*

#### 2. The People Show Reverent Fear (vv. 19–21)

The people withdrew in fear, knowing they were truly in the presence of Almighty God. Yet Moses told them, "Fear not, for God is come to prove you" (v. 20). What Moses was telling them was that they should not withdraw from God in terror; God intended to use this experience to instill in them a reverent awe of Him. It was as if God were saying, "I want you to know I really mean business here!" Thus, "fear of the LORD" would prompt His people to want to keep the Law, and never sin. God also used the divine manifestations to underscore the importance of His commands that He would be their only God, and that they were never to make any idols. After all they had seen, heard, and experienced, it is hard to imagine that any of the Israelites would ever consider following any other god! They had heard His voice and seen His power, yet they had not seen Him in any physical shape or form. But God knows the fragility of human nature, and no matter how many times they experienced God's miracles and presence, they turned to idols. It is the same way with us. We often forget who God is and turn to less-than-satisfactory idols.

*What motivates you to modify your behavior and respond to God in obedience?*

### 3. God Encourages Worship (vv. 22–26)

Finally, God gave instructions on the building of altars to be used in worship. While this command seems unusual to us, it was fitting for the culture of the time. From the beginning, God has always desired worship, and at that time worship included sacrifices and burnt offerings. What God wanted to make clear with the commands of verses 24–26 was that the altars were to be temporary and portable. They were not yet in the Promised Land, and their focus was to be on the object of their worship rather than the place of their sacrifice. The stones were to be unhewn, perhaps so that no one would be tempted to carve the stones into some image or idol. And the altars were not to have steps leading up to them so their sacrifices would be made in humility and modesty. Again, the focus was then, and is now, on the object of our worship, not on the means, place, or structure.

*How and where can we create opportunities to worship God in addition to Saturday and Sunday worship services?*

### Search the Scriptures

1. Moses says that God appeared in the way He did so the people would not sin (Exodus 20:20). How does God's presence keep us from sinning?

2. Why did God want them to make an altar of unhewn stone (v. 25)?

### Discuss the Meaning

In this Scripture, we learn a lot about God, His power, and His desire for us to live in obedience and fellowship with Him. What can we do to achieve and keep a proper attitude of awe, reverence, fear, and love for Him?

### Liberating Lesson

Places such as banks, courtrooms, and churches are intentionally built to inspire awe,

respect, and even proper fear in us. And in those places, we often enter into agreements where we make certain promises and receive certain privileges. The awe, respect, and fear generated by our surroundings, as well as our faith in God, should prompt us to live up to the promises we have made, and joyfully comply with agreements into which we have entered. In this way, we will enjoy more blessings and peace in our relationship with God and with our neighbors.

Some years ago, Tavis Smiley helped to develop a book titled *The Covenant with Black America*. The book outlines strategies for the betterment of the African American community. This book addresses the problem on a structural level, but there also could be a solution to improving the African American community on a personal level. We need to tackle some of the weightier economic, educational, and health issues that plague our communities. At the same time, we also need to fear God and treat Him with reverence and respect. We need to live up to the agreements we have made in our churches, businesses, and relationships.

*How can we prioritize our relationship with God and seek to improve our dealings with others?*

### Application for Activation

God's greatness and awesomeness compel us to honor our commitment to Him. Here are some ways we can remember to honor Him and what He has done in our lives:

- Go outdoors and look up at the sky to remind yourself of the greatness of God.
- Bring a special offering in thanksgiving to God.
- Spend time each morning reading God's Word and writing down a Bible verse on a card that you take with you.

## Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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## Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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### Sources:

*The Holy Bible, King James Version.* Zondervan, 1992.

*Life Application Study Bible, New Living Translation.* Tyndale, 1996.

Enns, Peter. *The NIV Application Commentary, Exodus.* Zondervan, 2000.

Kaiser, Walter C. Jr. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Exodus.* Frank Baebelele, gen. ed. Zondervan, 2000.

*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.* Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1990.

## Say It Correctly

Hewn. HEE-yoon.

Altar. AL-ter.

## Daily Bible Readings

### DAY 8

Genesis 25–26

### DAY 9

Genesis 27–29

### DAY 10

Genesis 30–31

### DAY 11

Genesis 32–34

### DAY 12

Genesis 35–37

### DAY 13

Genesis 38–40

### DAY 14

Genesis 41–42

## Notes

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