

# **GOD'S COVENANTS WITH PEOPLE**

Dear Teacher,

We can grow in our relationship with God as we study and read the Bible with our students! 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 Bible. 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 loves us, will we choose to follow 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 loyal to us even when we make mistakes.

This quarter highlights the message: we must choose to follow God! The way we live should reflect God’s Word. Our love for God and others can make change our world. 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 upset, we turn to God. When we make bad decisions, we turn back to God. And when we succeed, 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 the Bible did!

Grace & Peace,

UMI Editorial Team

# TOOL TIME

## ON KEEPING PROMISES

Why is a promise important? A promise, in some way, is a little stronger than just a word. When a person begins his or her sentence with the phrase “I promise,” they add strength to what they are saying. A promise is a spoken agreement that is meant to make follow through certain. People make promises when they want to build confidence in the other person that what they say is true. Promises build trust. The more a person keeps his or her promise, the more others can depend on their words. Children are encouraged to make promises they are more able to keep. They don’t understand the weight of verbal agreements, and might grow up thinking that lying is acceptable. It is absolutely true that some people don’t keep promises. In spite of how much power is added to one’s word with “I promise,” that phrase does not force the person to keep it. People still have choices, and unfortunately decide to break their promises. This quarter teaches about God’s faithfulness after He makes a promise and His consistency in being a promise keeper.

# A QUICK LOOK

Lesson	Date	Theme Title	Scripture	In My Heart	Last Jam
1	9/3	Blessing for All Nations	Genesis 12:1–9	Genesis 12:2	You are blessed to be a blessing!
2	9/10	Obedying God's Law	Exodus 20:18–26	from Exodus 20:24	Rules are created for my good!
3	9/17	Living as God's Just People	Leviticus 19:9–18, 33–37	Leviticus 19:18	The world is your neighborhood!
4	9/24	People Grumble	Numbers 11:1–6, 10–15	Numbers 11:4–6	Each day provides its own gifts.—Chinese proverb
5	10/1	The Heart of the Law	Deuteronomy 10:12–22; 16:18–20	Deuteronomy 10:12–13	Reflect God's love in all you do.
6	10/8	God Is Victorious	Joshua 6:2–3, 4b, 12–20b	Joshua 6:16	The battle is not yours; it's the Lord's.
7	10/15	Listen to God's Judges	Judges 2:11–19	Judges 2:17	A deaf ear is followed by death, and an ear that listens is followed by blessings.—African Proverb.
8	10/22	God's Covenant with David	2 Samuel 7:1–13	2 Samuel 7:16	I will trust God in good and bad times!
9	10/29	Josiah Brings Reform	2 Kings 22:8–10; 23:1–3, 21–23	2 Kings 23:3	God loves to use young people to bring revival and renewal to His people!
10	11/5	The Ark Comes to Jerusalem	1 Chronicles 15:1–3, 14–16, 25–28	1 Chronicles 15:3	Every believer needs reminders of the presence of God.
11	11/12	Nehemiah: The Captive Cupbearer Rebuilds a Nation	Nehemiah 2:11–20	Nehemiah 2:18	With God, I can make a big difference in my world!
12	11/19	A Time for Courage	Esther 3:2–3, 5–6a; 4:7–16	Esther 4:16	God has given me courage so I will stand tall for Jesus!
13	11/26	When Tragedy Occurs	Job 1:14–15, 18–19, 22; 3:1–3, 11	Job 2:10	I will continue to honor God, even in tough times!

# 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.

# HE GAVE HIS LIFE

## WEEKLY THEME:

A BLESSING FOR ALL NATIONS

## BASED ON:

Genesis 12:1–9

## LESSON AIM:

By the end of this lesson, students will:

**KNOW:** Learn the story of God's call and promise to Abram.

**FEEL:** Reflect on the joy Abram's and Sarai's faith gave them from obeying the Lord.

**DO:** Decide what they are willing to sacrifice to claim the promises of God.

## TARGET

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 (Genesis 12:1–9).

## TOOLS

Student magazines, Bibles, and pencils

## OPEN THE LESSON

Ask your Jammers the following questions:

1. Do you think it's hard to be obedient? Why or why not?
2. How important are promises to you? Do you make them? Do you keep them?
3. Do others make promises to you? Do they keep them? If they don't, how does that make you feel?

## REALITY CHECK

### He Gave His Life

*"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"* Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Dr. King was the man," Lance whispered to himself as he read Dr. King's autobiography in the library with his younger sister, Pat. Lance had a homework assignment in his African-American history class and was doing some research on his favorite hero, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Lance, who is Dr. Mark King?" asked five-year-old Pat.

"No Pat, his name is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.," laughed Lance. "He was the president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. He helped Black people get equal rights during the '50s and '60s."

Lance went on to tell his sister that Dr. King was also a preacher and a teacher of God's Word. He told her that Dr. King loved reading books, singing, riding a bicycle, and playing football and baseball as a young man. He also explained that Dr. King successfully taught and practiced nonviolence.

"You know what else?" Lance asked Pat.

"Dr. King went to Morehouse College when he was only 15 years old!"

"I like him," smiled Pat. "Is he still alive?"

"No," Lance said. "He was shot and killed because someone didn't like the good things he said and did for Black people. He gave his life for God's people, and today he is known all around the world."

## SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Name three things you remember from the "Reality Check" story about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
2. What cause did Dr. King stand for?
3. What does it mean to be nonviolent?
4. Give examples of how to resolve problems without physical violence.

Recite this verse: “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2, NIV).

Use “Target” to help you teach this lesson as the students read the Scripture dramatically, with lots of enthusiasm.

Things change when God comes. Jammers will learn how God changed Abram's name to Abraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah, after they were obedient to the call.

Jammers are given tips how to obey the Lord when He gives a command.

1. Have confidence that the Lord will take care of you at all times.
2. Have strong faith in the words of God.
3. Have stubborn strength to stand no matter what the circumstance.

Jammers will use “Word!” to help them answer these questions.

1. Name three commands God gave Abram.
  1. Leave your country.
  2. Leave your people.
  3. Leave your father's house OR Go to the land I will show you.
2. Name three promises God made to Abram.
  1. I will make you a great nation.
  2. I will bless you.
  3. I will make your name great OR You will be a blessing.
3. Name Abram's three acts of obedience.
  1. Abram left as the Lord told him.
  2. He took his wife and nephew.

- Jammers will break into three groups and make a list of everything their family would need to move to a state they've never visited before.

Jammers will learn that faith is believing without seeing tangible results but still believing that it will happen. Abram was given direction by God without knowing where he was going, but he believed. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream of equality for everyone and won great victories as a result, even though he eventually lost his life for the cause.

Jammers will evaluate their lives to see what they are willing to sacrifice to claim the promises of God.

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# 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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## 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

## Say It Correctly

Canaan. **KAY**-nuhn.

Haran. **HAY**-ran, -ruhn.

Moreh. **MOH**-ray.

Sichem. **SHEE**-kem.

## Notes

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# DANGER: NO SWIMMING

## WEEKLY THEME:

OBEYING GOD'S LAW

## BASED ON:

Exodus 20:18–26

## LESSON AIM:

By the end of this lesson, students will:

**KNOW:** Understand the ways that God tested the Israelites to convince them to obey His laws.

**FEEL:** Be motivated to obey God's laws.

**DO:** Identify specific actions to show that they are committed to obeying God's laws.

## TARGET

If your city had no laws, many people would do whatever they wanted. While that sounds fun, the truth is that many of these acts would hurt the person doing them as well as others. God used Moses to communicate His laws, known as the Ten Commandments and the “book of the covenant,” to the Israelites. The only way for the Israelites to experience life with God to the fullest was to follow His laws. As youth engage with this lesson, they should feel motivated to obey God's commandments, honor His name, and honor their covenant with Him.

## TOOLS

Student magazines, Bibles, pencils or pens

## OPEN THE LESSON

1. Consider creating opportunities for students to earn incentives. Feel free to create a system based on the JAM Points Vouchers sheet provided in the *Teaching Success Kit*. For example, students may be rewarded based on completing tasks, such as reading their Bible during the week, completing the assignment from the previous week's JAM Session, etc.
2. Follow up on last week's JAM Session activity. Ask volunteers to share their reflections.
3. Ask Jammers: Do you think that laws and rules are a good thing? Why or why not?
4. Research laws in your city or state about children, curfew, etc. Read these to Jammers, and ask what they think about the laws.

## REALITY CHECK

### Danger: No Swimming

“Come on you guys, let's go for a late night swim!” Nate said to Patrice and Tony, as they were returning to the campgrounds. “They won't miss us.”

“No, Nate! Let's follow the rules,” Tony said, as Nate briskly walked toward the lake. They were at a special weekend for a “College Prep Boot Camp,” an event for high school juniors to give them all the information they needed to prepare for college. Representatives from colleges near and far were in attendance, including several historically Black colleges and universities. The camp also included time for recreational activities.

They had two rules to follow that week: 1) Be back in their cabins by 8 p.m. and 2) Do not swim in the prohibited areas. There was no need for Nate to break the rules.

“There's a reason for the rules and I don't want to ruin this weekend by breaking them,” Patrice said, as Nate continued to walk. “I'm going back to the main hall.”

Patrice and Tony were in a difficult position, but they wanted to do what was right. They headed back to the campground and hoped that Nate would change his mind and come back, too.

The sign clearly read, “Danger: No Swimming.” It was nighttime and the only light was coming from the moon. Nate dove into the murky waters anyway.

When Patrice and Tony made it back to camp, they told a counselor that they were worried about Nate being at the lake alone at night. Thankfully,

the counselor arrived just in time to rescue Nate from being pulled under by the strong currents.

E—Encourage others to follow the rules.  
S—Seek to obey God’s commandments.

## SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What would you have done if you were Nate? Patrice? Tony?
2. Have you ever had to choose between doing what was popular and what was right? Do you think you made the correct choice?

## PRESENT THE SCRIPTURES IN MY HEART

Recite this verse: “Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you” (from Exodus 20:24, NIV).

## WORD!

Encourage students to take turns reading the Scripture aloud. Consider using “Target,” Open the Lesson,” and the *Teaching Success Kit* to help you teach this lesson. Also consider using methods like showing a short video, dressing up in character, inviting a guest speaker, or taking the class outside.

## SIDEBAR

### Obeying God’s Law

The last time Israel experienced a sign of thunder and lightning was during the plague of hail sent on Egypt (Exodus 9:23–26). The stipulations of the “book of the covenant” consisted largely of expansions and expositions on the Ten Commandments. The people of Israel requested a mediator to stand between them and God. This role was first fulfilled by Moses, later by priests, prophets, kings, and—ultimately—Jesus. Moses let the people know they didn’t have to fear that God would kill them. God was testing them so they would be governed by reverence for the Lord.

## EXPLORE THE MEANING

### How to Follow Rules

- R—Remember that rules are created for our benefit.  
U—Understand that you are capable of abiding by the rules.  
L—Listen attentively to ensure that you understand the rules.

## GOT IT!

### A. God’s Ways Work

Jammers will use “WORD!” to answer questions.

1. What did Moses say in verse 20? **“Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.”**

2. The people were curious when they saw the thunder and lightning. **False; they were afraid.**

3. What did the Lord say to Moses in verse 22? **“Tell the Israelites this: ‘You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven.’”**

4. The Lord told Moses to make gods of silver and gold. **False**

5. The Lord said to make an altar of earth or stones. **True**

### B. Rules Work

Divide students into two groups. Group A will discuss what the world would be like without rules. Group B will discuss why rules are important. Each group will share their key points with the class.

## JAM SESSION

### Be Obedient to the Law

Without obedience to law, people live in chaos, hurting themselves, others, and their environment. Where can people get a law that they will obey? God delivered the commandments to the Israelites while showing divine and holy power. God tested them to persuade them to obey the laws of the covenant. In today’s story, Nate willingly broke the rules for his own enjoyment and it almost cost him his life. Thankfully, his friends followed the rules and were able to play a role in saving his life. Are there ways that you can rescue others from the potential consequences of breaking rules?

## NEXT STEPS FOR APPLICATION JAM ON IT!

### The Ten Commandments

This week, Jammers are encouraged to design a poster that features the Ten Commandments and post it where they can see it every day.



# 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 Baebelelein, 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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