

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

## A SPRINT THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT

With the short amount of time we have, the stories and characters we will look at from the Old Testament will be very limited. What they will do, however, is reveal to us much of what we need to know about God and about ourselves. As you work through each lesson you will be given dates to enter on the timeline on this page to help you visualize how each of the stories connect with one another.



The following events should all be included on this timeline when the packet is completed. Dates for these events will be learned as you go through the ten lessons of the Old Testament. Place the number of each event on the timeline where it belongs, and write the actual year of the event on the list below.

1. Abraham born
2. Abraham leaves his home
3. Birth of Isaac
4. Birth of Moses
5. Creation
6. David becomes King
7. Death of Jacob (Israel)
8. Death of Joseph
9. Destruction of Solomon's Temple
10. Jerusalem's temple rebuilt
11. Jesus Christ is born
12. Joshua and Israel renew the covenant with God
13. Joshua takes Israel into the Promised Land
14. Nation of Israel splits in two
15. Nehemiah fights and prays for Israel as "cupbearer" to the king.
16. Noah is born
17. Period of the Judges begins
18. Saul becomes the first King of Israel
19. Solomon's Temple is built
20. The Exodus
21. The Fall of Israel
22. The Flood

We immediately skip the first two chapters of the Bible, which speak about creation and introduce us to Adam and Eve. Even though we will not spend time now studying these first two chapters I encourage everyone to read them at some time. Among God’s creation, people are His focus. We are made in God’s image or likeness, and so we are worth more to God than anything else He has created. While these events are difficult to put on a timeline, if we take the days and years described in the Bible as they are written, then Adam and Eve were created around 4004 BC.

Lesson One - The Sin: When Life Gets Messed Up – Genesis 3

**Read Genesis 3:1-5** In this section, the serpent is said to be craftier or sneakier than all of the animals God created. Here the serpent talks to Eve (and Adam) in ways that make them question what God has told them. Write down the words that the serpent spoke that encouraged Adam and Eve to:

Question God \_\_\_\_\_

Correct God \_\_\_\_\_

Explain or compromise God’s Word \_\_\_\_\_

Write below at least one way that Satan (or those Satan uses) still encourages us today to:

Question God \_\_\_\_\_

Correct God \_\_\_\_\_

Explain or compromise God’s Word \_\_\_\_\_

What can you do to fight Satan’s lies and arguments? If you need a great example, read Matthew 4:1-11.

**Read Genesis 3:6-7**

As your read, note here the phrases that can describe how we encounter sin today. For instance, Eve saw that the tree “was good for food.” We are sometimes tempted to sin when we see something that is “good for” something. What else do you see here?

**Read Genesis 3:8-13**

What are some ways you have been aware of God's presence even while in the midst of sin? (3:8)

What are some ways you have attempted to hide from God while living a sinful lifestyle? (3:8)

What are some specific ways God might call to us today while we are committing a sin? (3:9)

Describe how being caught in a sin can frighten you. (3:10)

Do you think God really believes our excuses for sin, especially when we try to blame someone else? (3:12)  
Explain your answer.

How can you avoid believing the lies that Satan will tell you? (3:13)

**Final Application:** This event is the story of **every** person. Write below what you have learned about temptation and sin from this story. Also, write **at least** one question you have from this lesson.

After we learn about Adam and Eve, things seem to get even worse. Cain kills Abel (both are sons of Adam and Eve), and ultimately God regrets making mankind in the first place. The story of Noah and the Ark is fascinating, and in it we hear of God making a covenant or promise. He says to Noah that He will never again destroy the whole earth by flooding it, and His promise is accompanied by a sign. God promises to remember his oath every time he sees a rainbow, which He placed in the sky. People lived a lot longer at this time, as can be seen by Noah's life. He was born in 2948 BC and the flood that saved him came in 2348 BC. He lived 950 years, and died just two years before the birth of Abraham, who we hear of in this next lesson.

## Lesson Two - The Call: God Reveals His Plan

Even though people had now become tainted by sin (Genesis 3), God had a plan to bring redemption and restoration to the human race. That plan involved the Hebrews or Israelites, a group of people that claim Abraham as their "father." Abraham (Also called Abram) obeyed God's unusual request to relocate and in return received a blessing that affects us today. Jesus Christ is a descendant of Abraham and thus is the fulfilled promise.

### **Read Genesis 12:1-3**

If you are familiar with the story of Abraham, and the nation of Israel throughout the Old Testament, you will know that Abraham was really not much of a blessing to the nations around him. He and his descendants have been almost constantly at war with someone else. The "blessing" that is spoken of here, and what has made the name of Abraham great as well, was his distant descendant named Jesus. It is through Jesus that all peoples of the earth are blessed, and God promises that blessing nearly 2000 years before Jesus is born.

Do you think that Abraham understood what it was that God was promising here? Explain.

Would you have followed like Abraham does here? Why or why not?

Write a promise that God has made to you, and how or where you heard it. Did God ask anything of you in return?

### **Read Genesis 12:4-5**

Fill in the blanks for excuses that Abram could have used in Genesis 12:4-5.

I'm \_\_\_\_\_ old. I have too much \_\_\_\_\_. My nephew will have to \_\_\_\_\_ along.

Have you ever used your age, possessions, or family to make excuses for not obeying God? What are other reasons someone your age might give for disobeying God? Start by filling in the blanks below, then **add at least two of your own.**

I'm too \_\_\_\_\_. I don't have enough \_\_\_\_\_. My friends might think \_\_\_\_\_.

I have \_\_\_\_\_. My parents \_\_\_\_\_.

Below are the beginning words to verse 4, with “Abraham left” removed. Put your name in the first blank, and in the second blank write something that God has asked you to do.

So \_\_\_\_\_, as the Lord had told him.

**Read Genesis 12:6-9**

Under the headings below, list what was or might have been present during this time.

Obstacles to keep God from fulfilling his promises

Evidence of Abraham’s faith

**Final Application**

Even though the first couple “messed up” and sinned (It only took one sin), God had a plan to provide redemption for humankind. This redemption would come from the sacrifice of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, who would come from the nation of Israel. Understanding this fact is key to making sense of the rest of the Old Testament.

Use a dictionary and write a definition for “redemption” or “redeem” here.

Think of a time in which you “messed up” only to discover that God still had a plan for your life. Write about a time from your life that illustrates this truth.

Do you sometimes feel you are the only one who believes in God? What do you do?

How can you worship God in your “strange land?” Check the day(s) of the week next to the things you can do that particular day that will keep you connected to God and mindful of his promises and presence.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Attend worship with others.
___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Pray.
___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Have a quiet time.
___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Attend a small group Bible study.
___	___	___	___	___	___	___	Listen to Christian music.

Once again there is a lot that happens between the story of Abraham that we just looked at and our current lesson. Abraham waited a long time before he had a son, which was needed to become a great nation like God promised. His son Isaac was born in 1896, 25 years after Abraham had listened to God and left his homeland. Isaac had a son named Jacob whom God later renamed Israel. Jacob had twelve sons of his own. He showed great favoritism towards one of his sons, Joseph, and this led to some troubles with his brothers. Through a series of events, including Joseph being sold by his brothers as a slave, and a severe famine in the land, all of Jacob's family moves to Egypt. During this time both Jacob (1690) and Joseph (1636) die, and all of Israel (name given to the whole family) become slaves in Egypt. After a lengthy period of slavery and oppression, Moses is born in 1572. God calls Moses to lead His people out of Egypt and into the land promised to Abraham hundreds of years before. A small part of Moses' story is contained in this next lesson. The story begins as Moses, who is now 81 years old, is leading the Israelites out of Egypt. The Egyptian army is pursuing them, and the Israelites have come up to the sea where they appear to be trapped. God then tells Moses to stretch out his hands over the sea, and observe how God will deliver them.

### Lesson Three - The Escape: God Shows the Way

#### **Read Exodus 14:21-25**

What do you think it felt like to be an Israelite experiencing the crossing in the middle of the night?

What times in your life have you felt "surrounded" by darkness, depression, or hopelessness?

#### **Read Exodus 14:26-31**

All of us are in a sense walking through the sea of life. The main difference between the Israelites and the Egyptians was that the Israelites were following God's directions and the Egyptians were not. Are you following God's directions for your life right now (obeying parents, not lying, loving God and others, etc.)? *Based on how you are living, how do you feel about "crossing the sea"?*

#### **Read Exodus 15:1-2** (The people's response – the beginning of a song of praise and worship to God)

What does it mean to call God your "strength"?

What does it mean to call God your "song"?

What does it mean to call God your "salvation"?

**Read Exodus 15:20-21**

What can we learn about God from each of these three words?

Prophets:

Tambourine:

Dancing:

How can these elements enhance a worship experience?

**Final Application**

**Fill in the blanks in this brief summary. The letters already filled in spell the final two words.**

Although the Israelites may have felt as if their backs were against the wall, God was always w \_ \_ \_ them. With a body of water on one side and an Egyptian a \_ \_ \_ on the other, it seemed hopeless. Yet they were able to cross on \_ \_ y land. The water was no longer an o \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ to God's people, however, it did present a problem to the army when they found themselves u \_ \_ \_ \_ water! The people praised God with singing, dancing, and a t \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ . Just as he did for the Israelites, God will provide a \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ for you.

How has God delivered you in the past from darkness or trials?

**One More Thing for the week ahead. Do ONE of the following:**

- Exodus 15:2 would make an excellent memory verse. Try to commit this verse to memory this week.
- Moses was a great leader, and yet the people had to make the decision to support and follow him. Write a note of support and encouragement to a leader in your spiritual life.

Following the Exodus there are a number of stories about God leading and taking care of His people. God meets and speaks with Moses, which includes giving His people the Ten Commandments. On numerous occasions throughout this time God's people complained and did not do what God asked of them. While there were often consequences, God also forgave and kept His promises to Abraham and continued to lead His people. This next story begins shortly after Moses and God's people reach the area of land that God had promised to Abraham. Other people were living in the land and twelve spies were sent out to check on both the land and the people living there.

#### Lesson Four - The Refusal: God's Response to Our "No"

#### **Read Numbers 13:25-30 (The spies return from exploring the promised land)**

Just say "no." List here at least ten things that you should say "no" to.

What are some things that you should NOT say no to?

Write the definition for the word "reconnaissance."

What is the good news coming from the spies?

What is the bad news coming from the spies?

Note the enthusiasm and optimism of Caleb. He recognized that regardless of what the future looked like God would be true to his promises. Who do you know that looks at life like Caleb appears to do? How?

When someone brings good news AND bad news, which would you rather hear first? Which are you most likely to remember? Which will more likely influence your next decision?

#### **Read Numbers 13:31-33 (The rebuttal of the 10 spies)**

Compare the spies initial report in verses 27-29 with the report in verses 31-33. How have they changed?

"Can't" may be one of the most devastating words to the work of God's kingdom, and in other areas as well. Give examples of how the word "can't" can derail and alter a persons hopes and plans.

Following the report from the spies, God’s people grumble and complain about Moses. They talk about choosing a new leader who will take them back to Egypt. Moses and Aaron, along with Caleb and a man named Joshua, try again to convince the people to trust God and enter the land. When the people threaten Moses’ life, God tells him that He wants to wipe them all out and start over with Moses. God changes His mind when Moses pleads for the people, and describes God as “slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion.” However, as Moses also declares, God “does not leave the guilty unpunished.”

**Read Numbers 14:26-34 (The rejection)**

**Matching: draw a line from the key words on the left to their correct definition**

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Grumble              | a. The occupation of the generation that would live in the desert |
| 2. Plunder              | b. The amount of time the Israelites would spend in the desert    |
| 3. Shepherds            | c. One of the older generation who would not die in the desert    |
| 4. Forty days           | d. What the Israelites feared would happen to their children      |
| 5. Caleb                | e. The number of days the spies were in Canaan                    |
| 6. Forty years          | f. Where the rebellious generation would meet their end           |
| 7. Nineteen and younger | g. What the Israelites did against God                            |
| 8. Desert               | h. Those who will see the Promised Land                           |

**Choose any three** of the following questions and answer in the space provided.

Why did no one aged twenty and over get to enter the promised land?

Why did everyone else have to wander in the desert for forty years?

Will forty years of wandering help reinforce the lesson about saying no to God?

Is this a fair punishment for those age twenty and older?

Why would Caleb and Joshua be allowed to live longer than their peers?

**Final Application**

The consequences of saying “no” to God sometimes last only a day or two, but can also continue for years. What “consequences” can you think of that can be the result of saying “no” to God?

What has God asked you to do lately? Use the chart below to indicate how God asked, then write details of what the results could be (or already occurred) depending on your response.

How God asked me (circle one):	If I say “yes”	If I say “no”
Reading the Bible		
Listening to Godly friends		
I feel very strongly led		
Other: _____		

Just as God told Moses in the last lesson, the Israelis wandered in the desert for forty years before finally entering the promised land. Joshua, who was briefly mentioned earlier, is now leading the nation. We pick up our story 25 years after they entered the promised land, having conquered those who were living there. Everyone is settled in the land, and now Joshua asks them to renew their covenant with God - to make a pledge or promise to serve and follow the LORD.

### Lesson Five - The Move: Choosing to Follow God

#### **Read Joshua 24:1-7**

Write down one name and one place that are mentioned in these verses. Learn more about these two things by using either a Bible Dictionary or a concordance with further reading. Write at least two sentences about each explaining them.

Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Read Joshua 24:8-13**

Choose either the story of Balaam or Jericho and tell how God provided for His people. You will need to find more information using either a concordance or a Bible Dictionary.

Imagine that you are about to be given your dream car as a gift. You are given the choice of having it delivered to your door today in 837 pieces that you could assemble in 9 months, or someone will do the work for you and deliver the car next week. Which would you prefer? Explain the significance of verse 13 in light of this example.

#### **Read Joshua 24:14-15**

**Now fill in the blanks below with things people tend to worship or value more than God TODAY.**

Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away \_\_\_\_\_, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether \_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_ . But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

**Read Joshua 24:16-25**

List things that God has done for you in the past, and what lesson you learned or could learn from each event. Also list how that lesson will help you in the future. A few examples are listed.

<b>What God Has Done In the Past</b>	<b>What I Learned</b>	<b>What It Means for Future</b>
Made Grandma feel better Helped me find time to study	God does answer prayer He cares about small stuff	He will be there for us in the future He will always care
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Write down an upcoming situation that you are worried about. What lesson in the third column that can offer you peace and assurance?

**Final Application**

In the Lutheran church we do not talk a lot about making a decision to follow Christ. We tend to speak instead about how God calls us and accepts us. However, as seen in this lesson, all of us need to make a conscious decision whether we want to follow or not. Have you made that decision? Explain here why you have or have not done that. If you have chosen to follow, how has your life changed?

IF you have chosen to follow the LORD (Jesus Christ), rewrite the last statement of Joshua 24:15 (But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD) on a note card. Substitute the words “my household” with the names of one or more friends. Hang the rewritten verse in a location where you will see it every day.

After the time of the previous lesson, the Israelites conquered even more territory and occupied the land, just as God instructed them. However, they did not always drive the inhabitants away or tear down their altars to other gods. In other words, they followed God in some areas but not in others. Once again there are consequences for the Israelites. God says that He will no longer drive the inhabitants away for them, and those that remain will be a problem and a snare for them. In the midst of God's anger, he still provided deliverance and hope. This period of history between the conquest of the land and the monarchy to come is characterized by a cycle of (1) disobedience, (2) punishment, (3) crying out to God for help, and (4) deliverance by God.

### Lesson Six - The Vicious Cycle: Been There, Done That

**Do your best to define these words and phrases. Use a dictionary if needed.**

Gathered to their fathers:

Baals:

Provoked:

Plundered:

### **Read Judges 2:8-16 (NIV)**

**Quotes: Fill in the blanks for these quotes from Judges 2:8-15. In the blank to the left of each sentence, rank the sentences in the order in which the event happened.**

- \_\_\_ a. "Israelites did \_\_\_\_\_ in the eyes of the Lord."
- \_\_\_ b. "The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ them over."
- \_\_\_ c. "Another \_\_\_\_\_ grew up, who knew \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord nor what he had done."
- \_\_\_ d. "They were in great \_\_\_\_\_"
- \_\_\_ e. "The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord was \_\_\_\_\_ them."
- \_\_\_ f. "They \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord, the God of their \_\_\_\_\_."
- \_\_\_ g. "Then the Lord raised up \_\_\_\_\_."

There are at least three things that occurred that lead to the rebellion of the Israelites. What are they?

\_\_\_\_\_

While it is this generation of Israelites that rebel, do you think that the previous generation is responsible in any way? Why or why not?

Judges were individuals whom God raised up on specific occasions to deal with specific threats. Beginning in 1410 and up until the time of Israel's first king, these were the leaders of the nation. These individuals were God's gracious gift to prevent the annihilation of his people by the neighboring armies. This provision is an example of God's grace and love even in the midst of his anger.

**Read Judges 2:16-17**

How did the judges come into power?

Exactly what did the judges do?

How did the people respond to these leaders?

**Read Judges 2:18-19**

From these two verses, it appears that the nations cycle of following God and turning away corresponded with the lives of their spiritual leaders, the judges. Since we cannot stop the death of a spiritual leader, what is the best way of breaking this cycle?

For each of us, there is often one or two things that lead up to our disobeying God and sinning against Him. Using a notecard that no one else will see, write down one or two things that you can recognize that lead to your stumbling. Also, write on your card and below one thing you can do or change that might help you avoid these situations. Keep these in mind as you leave this week.

**One More Thing**

For each day of the coming week, place a check next to the items below that you can do to help you serve God and keep from repeating the same sin again and again.

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Read the Bible	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
Pray	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
Sing a praise song	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
Memorize a verse	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
Read a daily devotional thought	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
Attend worship with other believers	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
Share spiritual struggles with a partner	___	___	___	___	___	___	___

After the period where the Israelites were led by the judges, God gave the people a king to rule over them. We will not learn about the first king named Saul, however he began to rule in the year 1050 and he reigned for 40 years. The people of Israel had asked for a king, and God was not pleased. All of the surrounding nations had a king, but God's intention was that Israel would be different, set-apart from the others. God himself was to be their king.

Once again, God allowed the people to make mistakes and to suffer the consequences. Part of the consequences was that were led by both good and evil kings over the course of history. The one we hear about in this story was Israel's second king. David is also the nations most well-known king. He worshipped and served the LORD, and during this time the country prospered. In addition to building a great army and defeating many of Israel's enemies, David also established Jerusalem as the nation's capital and brought the ark of the covenant to the city.

In this lesson, David expresses his desire to build a permanent dwelling for the ark of the covenant. Through the prophet Nathan God told David that instead He wanted to build a "house" for David so that his seed (his family) would rule forever. This promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, a descendant of David.

## Lesson Seven - The Promise: Past and Present

### **Read 2 Samuel 7:1-3**

Write here at least three things about David. Use a Bible Dictionary or other sources if you need ideas.

**Using a Bible Dictionary, describe what the "ark of God" or "ark of the Covenant" was.**

### **Read 2 Samuel 7:4-11**

List examples of what God has done in the past for David and the Israelites.

List examples of what God promises to do in the future for David and the Israelites.

### **Read 2 Samuel 7:11-17**

What are the two ways the word "house" is used in these verses?

In many Old Testament promises, they may be partially fulfilled at the time, but their ultimate fulfillment came in Jesus Christ. Which phrases here refer ultimately to Jesus Christ?

If you were a king, how important would it be to know that your descendants would inherit the throne?

Draw or describe what you think would be an appropriate “house” (church building) for God AND  
 Draw or describe what you think would be an appropriate “house” (personal body, a person’s life) for God

**Read 2 Samuel 7:18-22**

**Circle the best answer for each question below:**

1. When was the last time you “sat before the Lord” for an extended time of reflection:  
     I Never Have              Last Year              Last Month              Last Week
2. How much do you feel God has blessed you?  
     Not Very Much              A Little Bit              About Average              More Than I Deserve
3. How do you respond to God when you don’t get what you want?  
     Very Angry              Disappointed              Don’t Care              Express Gratitude
4. When God’s answer to your prayer is no, is your next worship experience:  
     Skipped              Halfhearted              Routine              Joyful

**Final Application**

The promises God made and kept for David impact us yet today. Write below ways in which the first statement led to the fact of the second statement.

**“God’s promise to David”**

**“God’s presence with us in Christ”**

Each evening this week, reflect on the day and count the number of (1) promises made to you by somebody; (2) promises broken by someone; (3) promises kept by God (he still loves you, the sun rose again, etc)

	Promises made	Promises broken	Promises kept by God
Wednesday	_____	_____	_____
Thursday	_____	_____	_____
Friday	_____	_____	_____
Saturday	_____	_____	_____
Sunday	_____	_____	_____
Monday	_____	_____	_____
Tuesday	_____	_____	_____

It was David's son, Solomon, who finally built the temple for God in 960. While Solomon was blessed with great wisdom, he seemed to lose much of that wisdom the more he wandered away from doing what God asked him to do. Solomon died in 930 and just two years later the nation of Israel experienced so much conflict that it was split into two kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom became known as Israel, and the Southern Kingdom as Judah. Although both countries continued to struggle with their devotion to God, those in the north abandoned Him much more frequently, and the nation was ultimately destroyed in 722 BC by the Assyrians. Those in the south were blessed with occasional kings who were devoted to God and followed him. Today we hear of one of those good kings named Josiah. His father and grandfather were both kings, and both did evil in God's eyes, bringing many idols (false gods) and their practices into the temple.

### Lesson Eight - The Split: God's Word in the Lost and Found

#### **Read 2 Kings 22:1-7**

Write the names of all of the people from verses 1-7 below (including groups like "the supervisors"), then next to the name write one characteristic found in the text (Josiah—did not turn to the right or left). Write small – you will add to this list later!

Do your work habits and performance allow your teachers and other adults to trust you as much as the king trusted the men who supervised the temple renovation? Could your classmates honestly say that you are acting faithfully and honestly on your school work? Explain.

#### **Read 2 Kings 22:8-13 - Add the new names and descriptions to your list above.**

Nobody knows for sure what this book that was found contained. Most likely it was either portions of the book we now call Deuteronomy or a complete copy of the first five books of the Bible (Genesis through Deuteronomy), which are often grouped together under the heading "The Law." In either case, the book that was found contained some of what was recorded as God's Word, just as we view our Bible today.

Based on what you know of Josiah's father and grandfather, how do you suppose this "Book of the Law" could have been lost in the temple?

How might we "lose" (or totally ignore) the Bible today?

#### **Read 2 Kings 22:14-17 - Add the new names and descriptions to your list above.**

Notice here that the prophet that was sought out was a woman. List at least two other women who have made a significant impact on a religious group or in your own life.

As a result of finding the Book of the Law, Josiah led the nation to walk more closely in God's ways. How can the Bible lead to spiritual revival and renewal today?

**Benefits of Reading the Bible:** In the word search below, find nine benefits to reading the Bible. As a bonus, there are two names from the passage spelled backwards.

C	O	R	R	E	C	T	I	O	N	E	W
O	G	L	E	V	L	H	A	P	Q	U	I
N	I	U	V	P	B	F	A	H	J	C	T
F	A	D	I	R	E	C	T	I	O	N	T
E	U	A	V	D	F	A	V	R	S	P	K
S	S	L	A	O	A	S	C	B	Z	O	E
S	X	C	L	I	M	N	B	E	V	E	J
I	S	P	A	T	E	A	C	H	I	N	G
O	H	A	I	K	L	I	H	E	T	O	P
N	I	N	S	P	I	R	A	T	I	O	N

**What are some other benefits to reading the Bible?**

**One More Thing: Take the following survey:**

1. How many Bibles do you personally own? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many Bibles are in your house? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many Bibles does your best friend have? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many Bibles does everyone at your lunch table have combined? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Is "not having a Bible" a valid excuse for you not to read? If you or someone you know does not own a Bible, mention it to your teacher and we will get one for you. It could be the greatest gift you or a friend will ever receive.

Your challenge for this week: Open and read your Bible every morning before you do anything else.

The Bible tells us that no other king “turned to the Lord” as Josiah did - with all his heart. Because of this he ruled the nation for 31 years until the year 610. However, his sons who ruled after him went their own way and did not follow God. Twenty-five years after Josiah’s reign Solomon’s temple was destroyed. All but the poorest of Judah’s citizens were taken captive by the Babylonians. The Book of Lamentations was an attempt to put into words the feelings of the eyewitnesses to this national calamity.

## Lesson Nine - The Consequences: God Punishes, God Forgives

### **Read Lamentations 3:19-24**

Use a dictionary to write definition for the following words:

Affliction:

Bitterness:

Downcast:

Compassion:

Portion:

Remembering the bad times (and even as we experience them) does not have to bring depression. It can also bring hope for the future. What activity from the previous lesson helps us recognize that God’s mercy and love for us is “new every morning” (verse 23).

### **Read Lamentations 3:31-36**

The first four chapters of Lamentations were written as an acrostic. Each new thought began with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Take a blank sheet of paper and write on ten separate lines examples of God’s unfailing love in your life, making sure each example begins with a different letter. After you are done, tear or cut the paper so that each example is on it’s own piece of paper. Give one example you’ve written to ten different people either tonight or some time this week. Write your favorite two examples here:

When others are hurting or down, the tendency for many people is to make things worse by spreading rumors or gossip, further crushing them. God does not crush those who are down, but instead shows compassion. In what ways can you show compassion to those who need it?

### **Read Lamentations 3:37-40**

Our culture today encourages us to blame others for our mistakes, and for the consequences we sometimes receive. Sometimes we even blame God. One reason we do not like to view certain events as punishment is because we would have to admit we did something wrong. It is always easier to blame someone else rather than ourselves.

## The Blame Game

For each example below, write (1) an excuse that blames someone else; (2) why that excuse is unacceptable to God; and (3) how God might discipline you for that particular sin.

Example:

You are caught cheating on a test at school.

- (1) “My parents made me babysit until 11:00 last night, and I didn’t have time to study.”
- (2) You didn’t have to put off studying until the night before the test.
- (3) A failing grade will affect your participation in an extracurricular activity.

You disobey your mom and watch a movie that she told you not to see

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)

You visit a web site that has pornographic pictures

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)

You repeat something unkind or hateful about a teacher

- (1)
- (2)
- (3)

## Final Application

Take a blank note card and pen. Write the following sentence on one side of the card: “God punishes sin but is ready to forgive.” On the reverse side, list a specific sin for which you need to ask forgiveness (you will not have to show this to anyone else). Silently take some time right now (or before going to bed tonight) to ask God for forgiveness. Keep this card with you UNTIL you ask for forgiveness. Afterwards, tear it up – it is no longer a concern for either you or God.

Do you believe that God’s forgiveness is really this easy? Why or why not?

What is one thing in your life right now that you can see is a direct consequence of sin – whether that sin was yours or someone else’s?

Try reading the Book of Lamentations this week. Read one chapter a day and write brief summaries of what you read, concentrating on how God views you.

While the citizens of Judah were held captive in Babylon, the Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Persians. The Persians were willing to let the Jews slowly return to their homeland to rebuild the city of Jerusalem, its walls, and the temple. Those that returned started to rebuild the temple, and that was completed in the year 515. Further rebuilding was allowed partly due to the influence of Nehemiah, who was a “cupbearer” in the king’s court (see Nehemiah 1:1—2:9). As Nehemiah and the exiles began returning home, Nehemiah led the movement to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. However, the leaders in the region, including Sanballat, were strongly opposed to their work. Sanballat wanted to control the area, and this would be much easier to do if Jerusalem remained unprotected and unfortified. Nehemiah fought and prayed for the completion of these walls, which was accomplished in the year 445. The stories of this period of time come near the conclusion of the Old Testament’s account of Israel’s history. It is interesting to note that during the Babylonian Exile, the Jews were to a large extent cured of their idolatrous tendencies. The divine punishment studied in the previous lesson worked, and the stage was set for the birth of the Messiah 515 years after the temple was rebuilt.

### Lesson Ten - The Return: Building With God

The following phrases are the titles to the ten lessons we’ve covered in this packet. Without looking back, try to number them in the correct order. When you are done look back and correct any mistakes you have made.

\_\_\_ The Split            \_\_\_ The Sin            \_\_\_ The Promise            \_\_\_ The Consequences  
\_\_\_ The Refusal        \_\_\_ The Return           \_\_\_ The Move  
\_\_\_ The Call            \_\_\_ The Escape           \_\_\_ The Vicious Cycle

#### **Read Nehemiah 4:1-6**

What makes verses 4 and 5 different from verses 1-3 and 6?

Write the names of the three characters and write brief character description of each.

Have you ever been guilty, like Sanballat, of ridiculing or questioning others’ efforts to do God’s work? Explain.

#### **Read Nehemiah 4:7-12**

What two things were threatened by those who opposed Nehemiah and God’s people?

In verse 9, what two things did Nehemiah do in response to the threat?

What need or hardship are you or someone you know currently facing? Are you taking more than one step to deal with it like Nehemiah did? List any additional steps you might take here.

In these verses, the Israelites had trouble working among the rubble, which was there as a result of the people disobeying and turning from God. What are you doing right now that may be building up rubble in your own life (What are you allowing to get in the way of what God wants you to do)?

**Read Nehemiah 4:13-14**

What did Nehemiah communicate in this section?

What did Nehemiah do in this section?

**How can you prevent discouragement as you partner with God? Nehemiah and the Israelites did it in these ways:**

- 1) They worked with “all their heart” (Nehemiah 4:6)
  - a. How does this relate to your life?
  - b. What has God asked you to do that you are doing only halfheartedly?
  - c. What could change if you tackled that project with all your heart?
  - d. How could such hard work and determination keep you from being discouraged?
- 2) They “prayed” (Nehemiah 4:9).
  - a. How does this principle relate to your life?
  - b. How often do you pray when discouraged?
  - c. How could prayer keep you from being discouraged?
- 3) Nehemiah took action (“posted a guard,” Nehemiah 4:9).
  - a. How does this principle relate to your life today?
  - b. What have you have been praying about but have not taken any action on?
  - c. How could taking action keep you from being discouraged?

**Final Application**

As with the Israelites, all of us go through cycles in our relationship with God. We all fall at times and need our relationship restored and renewed. Write below the name of one person you truly trust, whom you would be willing to be totally honest with as you work to follow and honor God. Your challenge this week is to pray for this person and to ask them if they would be willing to be this kind of a friend.