

ADULT BIBLE STUDY IN SIMPLIFIED ENGLISH

STUDY GUIDE

Rescued and Forgiven

WRITERS

Janet Roberts Amy Barker Jennifer Carson Phyllis Merritt

BAPTISTWAY PRESS • Dallas, Texas • baptistwaypress.org

Adult Bible Study in Simplified English Study Guide

Rescued and Forgiven

Copyright © 2018 by BAPTISTWAY PRESS®

All rights reserved.

First edition: May 2018

Permission is granted for a church to make as many copies of this publication as needed for use within its ministry. Copies of this publication are not to be sold, distributed, or used in any other manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of brief quotations.

BAPTISTWAY PRESS® is registered in U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the New Life Bible, Copyright © 1969, 1976, 1978, 1983, 1986 by Christian Literature International. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Abbreviated as NLV.

Adult Bible Study in Simplified English is published by BaptistWay Press. These quarterly studies follow the same curriculum plan as the BaptistWay Adult Bible Study curriculum.

Teachers may wish to purchase BaptistWay Adult Bible study materials as additional resources. These may be ordered through your church or directly:

Order online at: baptistwaypress.org

Order by phone: (U.S. toll free): 1-866-249-1799

Mon to Fri, 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Central Time)

Order by email: baptistway@texasbaptists.org

Additional contact information:

Baptist General Convention of Texas

7557 Rambler Road, Suite 1200

Dallas, TX 75231-2388

(888) 244-9400

Twitter: [@texasbaptists](https://twitter.com/texasbaptists)

Facebook.com/texasbaptists

This free, online curriculum is made possible by your gifts to the [Mary Hill Davis Offering®](#) for Texas Missions

BAPTISTWAY PRESS®

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Executive Director, BGCT

David Hardage

Director, Great Commission Team

Delvin Atchison

Publisher, BAPTISTWAY PRESS®

Bill Billups

Director, Office of Intercultural Ministries

Patty Lane

LANGUAGE MATERIALS TEAM

Study Guide Writers

Lessons 1-3: *Janet Roberts*

Hunters Glen Baptist Church, Plano, Texas

Lessons 4-5: *Amy Barker*

First Baptist Church, Belton, Texas

Lessons 6-7, 11-13: *Jennifer Carson*

First Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas

Lessons 8-10: *Phyllis Merritt*

Columbus Avenue Baptist Church, Waco, Texas

Study Guide Editors

Lessons 1-3: *Laura Mayfield*

Fielder Church, Arlington, Texas

Lessons 4-5 & Team Coordinator: *Cindy Dake*

First Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas

Lessons 6-7, 11-13: *Emily Martin*

Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas

Lessons 8-10: *Amy Barker*

First Baptist Church, Belton, Texas

These lessons use the New Life Version (NLV) of the Bible. You can read it online at www.biblegateway.com and at www.studylight.org. BibleGateway has a free app available for iPad, iPhone, Android phones, and Kindle Fire. If you prefer a hard copy of the NLV, go to barbourbooks.com (search for "New Life").

Rescued and Forgiven

Introduction

What do you think of when you hear the word *rescued*? Do you think of a firefighter getting someone out of a burning building? Do you think of a police officer stopping a speeding car before it hits someone? Have you read a news story about someone pulling a scared person from a flooded river?

What about the word *forgiven*? Do you think of someone forgiving another person who has treated them badly? Do you think of a parent who welcomes home their grown child who has sinned greatly? Do you think of a person who erases the loan made to a friend?

This may be a surprising truth: We all need to be rescued. We all need to be forgiven.

The whole story of the Bible focuses on rescue and forgiveness. God provides both. Our sinfulness means we need to be rescued. Our sinfulness means we need to be forgiven. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as our rescuer and our forgiver.

The Bible lays out the plan for God's rescue and forgiveness through the stories of people in the Old and New Testaments. This Bible study will take you through 13 great examples of rescue and forgiveness.

The people living around us need to know of God's rescue and forgiveness. You can be the one who tells them of His love. calling you to meet their physical and spiritual needs. How will you respond?

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. Whoever puts his trust in God's Son will not be lost but will have life that lasts forever” (John 3:16).

About the Writers

Janet Roberts wrote lessons 1-3. She has taught ESL since 1976, trains teachers, and teaches English in other countries. She has four children, two granddaughters, and one grandson. She attends Hunters Glen Baptist Church in Plano, Texas.

Amy Barker wrote lessons 4-5. She lives near Moody, Texas, and is a member of First Baptist Church in Belton. She is a homeschooling mom who enjoys baking bread, making homemade soaps, and knitting.

Jennifer Carson wrote lessons 6-7 and 11-13. She and her family attend First Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas. Jennifer is a homeschool mom and a former English teacher.

Phyllis Merritt wrote lessons 8-10. She has been teaching ESL since 1970 in the U.S. and teaches English in China almost every summer. She and her husband are active at Columbus Avenue Baptist Church in Waco.

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson Overview

Lesson 1	God Gives All We Need	Genesis 22:1-19
Lesson 2	God Changes All for Good	Genesis 37:14-28; 50:15-21
Lesson 3	Rescued by One in the Family	Ruth 2:1-12, 17-23; 4:1-14
Lesson 4	God Heals a Humbled Man	2 Kings 5:1-5, 9-19
Lesson 5	God Is a Shepherd for His People	Psalms 23
Lesson 6	Rescued from Trouble	Psalms 27:1-14
Lesson 7	God's Good Plan	Jeremiah 29:1-14
Lesson 8	Daniel: God Rescues a Faithful Follower	Daniel 6:1-11; 16-26
Lesson 9	Hosea: A Picture of God	Hosea 1:2-10; 3:1-2; 14:1-9
Lesson 10	Jesus Rescues a Son	Mark 9:14-29
Lesson 11	New Life in Jesus	John 3:1-18
Lesson 12	Praying for Rescue	Acts 12:1-19
Lesson 13	A Second Chance	Philemon 1-21

Rescued and Forgiven

Word List

Lesson 1

blessing: to bring good to others

descendants: your children and your children's children and all the children after them

miracle: something impossible for people to do; only God can do it

Lesson 2

evil: the bad that is in the world at all times

protect: to keep safe; to keep from being hurt

revenge: to return a wrong that was done; to give back the same or worse

Lesson 3

disaster: something (flood, tornado, fire) that happens quickly and causes much suffering or loss to many people

harvest: the gathering or picking of crops

widow: a woman whose husband has died

Lesson 4

courtesy: being kind and polite; good manners and respect for others

offended: to be angry; to have your feelings hurt by the actions of another person

restored: to make something be the way it used to be

Lesson 5

satisfaction: a happy feeling because of something you did or something that happened to you

preferences: choices; liking one thing rather than another

individually: separately and not as a group

Lesson 6

confidence: a strong feeling that something will happen or that something is true

kidnapped: to take someone away, usually to keep them as a prisoner

tragedy: a very bad event that causes great sadness and often involves death

Rescued and Forgiven

Word List

Lesson 7

advice: an opinion or suggestion about what someone should do

phobia: an extremely strong fear or dislike of someone or something

sturdy: built in a strong way or made to last a long time

Lesson 8

jealous: wanting what others have

Lesson 9

idol: something made with hands that is worshipped instead of God

Lesson 10

demon: an evil spirit that can possess a person and seek to harm him. Demons oppose God and want people to go against God. They are not as powerful as God.

Lesson 11

celebrity: a person who is famous or well-known

criticize: to say words of disapproval; to talk about the problems or faults of someone

mission: a task that someone is given to do

Lesson 12

escape: to get away from a dangerous place or situation

persecuted: to be cruelly or unfairly treated because of one's race or religion or politics

Lesson 13

authority: the power to give orders; to have control over something or someone

commanded: gave an order; forced someone to do something

reputation: the way in which people think about someone or something

request: to formally ask for something

Rescued and Forgiven

Word List in Alphabetical Order

advice: an opinion or suggestion about what someone should do (Lesson 7)

authority: the power to give orders; to have control over something or someone (Lesson 13)

blessing: to bring good to others (Lesson 1)

celebrity: a person who is famous or well-known (Lesson 11)

confidence: a strong feeling that something will happen or that something is true (Lesson 6)

celebrity: a person who is famous or well-known (Lesson 11)

commanded: gave an order; forced someone to do something (Lesson 13)

courtesy: being kind and polite; good manners and respect for others (Lesson 4)

criticize: to say words of disapproval; to talk about the problems or faults of someone (Lesson 11)

demon: an evil spirit that can possess a person and seek to harm him. Demons oppose God and want people to go against God. They are not as powerful as God. (Lesson 10)

descendants: your children and your children's children and all the children after them (Lesson 1)

disaster: something (flood, tornado, fire) that happens quickly and causes much suffering or loss to many people (Lesson 3)

escape: to get away from a dangerous place or situation (Lesson 12)

evil: the bad that is in the world at all times (Lesson 2)

harvest: the gathering or picking of crops (Lesson 3)

idol: something made with hands that is worshipped instead of God (Lesson 9)

individually: separately and not as a group (Lesson 5)

jealous: wanting what others have (Lesson 8)

kidnapped: to take someone away, usually to keep them as a prisoner (Lesson 6)

miracle: something impossible for people to do; only God can do it (Lesson 1)

mission: a task that someone is given to do (Lesson 11)

offended: to be angry; to have your feelings hurt by the actions of another person (Lesson 4)

phobia: an extremely strong fear or dislike of someone or something (Lesson 7)

protect: to keep safe; to keep from being hurt (Lesson 2)

revenge: to return a wrong that was done; to give back the same or worse (Lesson 2)

persecuted: to be cruelly or unfairly treated because of one's race or religion or politics (Lesson 12)

preferences: choices; liking one thing rather than another (Lesson 5)

reputation: the way in which people think about someone or something (Lesson 13)

restored: to make something the way it used to be or to make it like new (Lesson 4)

request: to formally ask for something (Lesson 13)

satisfaction: a happy feeling because of something you did or something that happened to you (Lesson 5)

sturdy: built in a strong way or made to last a long time (Lesson 7)

tragedy: a very bad event that causes great sadness and often involves death (Lesson 6)

widow: a woman whose husband has died (Lesson 3)

Rescued and Forgiven

Memory Verses

Lesson 1

“Good will come to all the nations of the earth by your children and their children’s children. Because you have obeyed My voice.” (Genesis 22:18)

Lesson 2

“You planned to do a bad thing to me. But God planned it for good, to make it happen that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” (Genesis 50:20)

Lesson 3

“May the Lord reward you for your work. May full pay be given to you from the Lord, the God of Israel. It is under His wings that you have come to be safe.” (Ruth 2:12)

Lesson 4

“He leads those without pride into what is right, and teaches them His way.” (Psalm 25:9)

Lesson 5

“And my God will give you everything you need because of His great riches in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)

Lesson 6

“The Lord is my light and the One Who saves me. Whom should I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom should I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1)

Lesson 7

“ ‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord, ‘plans for well-being and not for trouble, to give you a future and a hope.’” (Jeremiah 29:11)

Lesson 8

“For He is the living God and He lives forever. His nation will never be destroyed and His rule will last forever. He saves and brings men out of danger, and shows His great power in heaven and on earth. And He has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.” (Daniel 6:26b-27)

Lesson 9

“I will bring My people back to Me. I will not hold back My love from them, for I am no longer angry with them.” (Hosea 14:4)

Lesson 10

“The one who has faith can do all things.” (Mark 9:23b)

Lesson 11

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. Whoever puts his trust in God’s Son will not be lost but will have life that lasts forever.” (John 3:16)

Lesson 12

“Do not worry. Learn to pray about everything. Give thanks to God as you ask Him for what you need.” (Philippians 4:6)

Lesson 13

“If we tell Him our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins. He will make our lives clean from all sin.” (1 John 1:9)

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 1: God Gives All We Need

Bible Text

Genesis 22:1-19

Memory Verse

“Good will come to all the nations of the earth by your children and their children’s children. Because you have obeyed My voice.”
(Genesis 22:18)

Word List

blessing: to bring good to others

descendants: your children and your children’s children and all the children after them

miracle: something impossible for people to do; only God can do it

Not long ago, I went to China to visit friends and to meet with other English teachers. A dear friend invited me to stay with her for a few days before the meetings started. I often call her my Chinese “daughter.” Just before I left for China, something changed, and I would not be able to stay at her home. I had no idea where I would be sleeping for the first three nights!

I knew that my “daughter” was looking for a place for me to stay. I had to trust that God would help her. People from other

countries are not welcome in every hotel there, so it can be hard to find a room.

When I arrived, my sweet “daughter” texted me that she had found the perfect place. A bridesmaid from her wedding was moving from one apartment to another. The bridesmaid remembered me from the wedding. She was happy to let me stay in her old apartment while she and her family stayed in the new apartment.

Not only did I have an apartment to stay in, but it was not going to cost anyone anything. What a gift! God is so good to give us what we need, and He often does it in a special way.

The First Test (Genesis 22:1-2)

God told Abraham to leave his home country when he was 75 years old. God said He would show Abraham where to go (Genesis 12). Abraham listened and obeyed.

When Abraham arrived in a country called Canaan, God said, “This is your land.” God promised Abraham many **descendants**. God promised to give his descendants the land of Canaan and make them a great nation.

These were great promises from God. But Abraham and his wife, Sarah, did not have any children. They had to wait another 25 years. When their son Isaac was born, Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 (Genesis 21:1-8; 17:17). They were too old to

have a baby.

Isaac was their **miracle** from God. He was the son God had promised them. All God's promises would come true through him.

Abraham and Sarah loved Isaac. Then God told Abraham to kill Isaac and burn him on an altar as an act of worship. How could God do that? It was a test. Would Abraham listen and obey this time?

The Right Answer (Genesis 22:3-10)

Abraham listened and obeyed right away. He cut wood to take. Abraham and Isaac, two servants, and the donkey left for Moriah first thing in the morning. We do not know what Abraham said to Sarah, or if he left early without telling her anything.

Abraham had faith to believe that "God was able to bring Isaac back to life again" (Hebrews 11:19). Abraham had learned to obey God in all things. He knew that God would not make promises He did not keep. He did not know what would happen, but he knew God meant it for good for him and his family. He trusted God. He had faith.

They walked for three days before God showed Abraham the place to go. In faith Abraham told the two servants to wait for him and Isaac to return. He believed the promises God had given him about Isaac.

Abraham carried the knife and the fire.

He asked his son to carry the wood for the burnt gift to God. Isaac could see that they would be giving a burnt gift to God. They had done it before. The other times they had also brought an animal with them.

Isaac asked his father where the lamb was for the burnt gift. His father told him that God would provide the lamb. Abraham may have answered Isaac this way because he did not want to scare him. He may also have thought that God really would give them a lamb. Whatever happened, he would obey God.

Abraham built an altar. This means he put large rocks on top of each other with a flatter rock on the top. He put the wood on that.

The next part must have been so hard to do. He took a rope, tied up his son, and put him on top of the wood. Isaac must have been very afraid. Abraham then took the knife and put it up in the air getting ready to bring it down and kill his son.

God did not tell Abraham that it was a test. Abraham may have wondered why God would ask him to kill his son that he loved so much. He had to decide who he loved more, God or Isaac. He decided to obey God and watch to see what God would do next.

The Wonderful Gift from God (Genesis 22:11-19)

What God did next was another miracle. It shows how God gives all that we need. God's angel told Abraham to stop just before he brought the knife down. He had passed the test. There was no doubt that he would obey God and put Him first.

Abraham must have been very happy when he saw the ram caught in the bushes. God gave him a ram to kill instead of his son that he loved so much! Because he knew this was a great gift from God, Abraham gave the place a name. He named the place "The Lord will give us what we need."

God knew that Abraham loved Him because he obeyed. It had been very difficult for Abraham, but he had done the right thing. Now God wanted Abraham to know how much He loved him. God told Abraham that He would bless him and all his descendants.

Things to Think About

1. How do you decide if you are hearing God telling you something? How can you be sure?
2. Tell a story about a time you obeyed God by doing something unusual. What happened?
3. What has God asked you to do that you have not done yet? Will you do it soon?
4. How has God given you all that you need? Tell what you needed and what God did.

God also told Abraham that his descendants would be a **blessing** to all the world because he obeyed (Genesis 22:18). The world has been blessed by Abraham's descendants. The biggest blessing was God's gift of Jesus, who was one of Abraham's descendants. Jesus came, died and rose again so the whole world could be saved. Now that is a wonderful gift!

Things to Remember

Trusting God is not hard when life is easy. When life gets hard, our faith and trust are tested. Like Abraham, we have things and people that we love, but we need to always put God first. We need to know that God is the One who gives us all we need.

God will never ask you to give your child as a burnt gift on the altar. He may ask you to give up things that you have always trusted in. If you love something or someone more than God, He may show you a different way.

Think about your life. Is God testing you? Do you love God more than anything else? Is there anything or anyone else you trust to give you all you need? Put your life and trust in God only. He loves you and wants the very best for you.

Genesis 22:1-19

1 Later God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” Abraham said, “Here I am.”

2 God said, “Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love. And go to the land of Moriah. Give him as a burnt gift on the altar in worship, on one of the mountains I will show you.”

3 So Abraham got up early in the morning and got his donkey ready. He took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac. He cut wood for the burnt gift. And he went to the place where God told him to go.

4 Abraham looked up on the third day and saw the place far away.

5 He said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey. I and the boy will go to that place and worship, and return to you.”

6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt gift and had Isaac carry it. He took in his hand the fire and the knife. And the two of them walked on together.

7 Then Isaac said to Abraham, “My father!” Abraham answered, “Here I am, my son.” Isaac said, “See, here is the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for the burnt gift?”

8 Abraham said, “God will have for Himself a lamb ready for the burnt gift, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.

9 Then they came to the place that God told them about. Abraham built the altar there, and set the wood in place. Then he tied rope around his son Isaac, and laid him upon the wood on the altar.

10 And Abraham put out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.

11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham! Abraham!” And Abraham said, “Here I am.”

12 The angel of the Lord said, “Do not put out your hand against the boy. Do nothing to him. For now I know that you fear God. You have not kept from Me your son, your only son.”

13 Then Abraham looked and saw a ram behind him, with his horns caught in the bushes. Abraham went and took the ram, and gave him as a burnt gift instead of his son.

14 Abraham gave that place the name “The Lord will give us what we need.” And it is said to this day, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be given.”

15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time.

16 He said, “I have promised by Myself, says the Lord, because you have done this and have not kept from Me your son, your only son,

17 I will bring good to you. I will add many to the number of your children and all who come after them, like the stars of the heavens and the sand beside the sea. They will take over the cities of those who hate them.

18 Good will come to all the nations of the earth by your children and their children’s children. Because you have obeyed My voice.”

19 So Abraham returned to his young men. And they got up and went with him to Beersheba. Abraham made his home there.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 2: God Changes All for Good

Bible Text

Genesis 37:14-28; 50:15-21

Memory Verse

“You planned to do a bad thing to me. But God planned it for good, to make it happen that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”
(Genesis 50:20)

Word List

evil: the bad that is in the world at all times
protect: to keep safe; to keep from being hurt
revenge: to return a wrong that was done; to give back the same or worse

Family life can be hard. Someone in the family can have too much pride. Others in the family can be jealous. Some can be angry. Others can choose to do the wrong thing. Someone in the family can leave and not come back.

Others in the family can lie, which hurts everyone. Someone can become so sad that they want to die. Some can be guilty of hurting others in the family and not caring. All these things can happen in families.

What if all these things happened in the same family? This is the true story of Joseph and his father and brothers. This story helps us understand that bad things can happen to good people, and God can change bad to good. God rescues and forgives, giving life instead of death.

Joseph Leaves (Genesis 37:14-17)

Joseph had one younger brother. They had ten more brothers and one sister. All the children had the same father but different mothers. Joseph was the oldest son of his mother, Rachel.

His father, Israel (Jacob), loved Joseph more than the other sons. His father gave him a special coat that he made to show his love.

Joseph had a dream that his brothers bowed down to him in honor. Then he had another dream that his brothers and his father bowed to him in honor. When Joseph told them about the dreams, his brothers were very angry and very jealous.

Joseph's brothers took the sheep far away to feed them. Israel sent Joseph to check on the brothers and the sheep. He asked Joseph to find them and then come back to tell him how they were doing.

Joseph did not find his brothers where he thought they would be. A man said that they had moved on to feed the sheep. Joseph found them in a different place.

Joseph's Brothers Choose Evil (Genesis 37:18-28)

His brothers saw him coming and their hatred was strong. Most of them wanted to kill him. Their father was not there to **protect** Joseph, so they could choose to do **evil** against their brother.

The oldest brother, Reuben, did not want to kill Joseph. He told his brothers to throw Joseph into a hole. But Reuben planned to save Joseph from the hole later and send him back home to their father. The others listened to Reuben. They tore off Joseph's special coat and threw him in a hole.

The evil brothers sat down to eat while Joseph was alone and afraid in that empty hole. They did not care about Joseph. While they were eating, some traders came by on their way to Egypt.

Another brother, Judah, had an idea. Why kill Joseph and feel guilty about his murder? Why not sell him to these traders and get money for him? They would tell their father that a wild animal had killed his special son.

While Reuben was gone, they sold Joseph to the traders. They let their father think that he was dead. They never told their father the truth until many years later.

Joseph Could Punish (Genesis 50:15-17)

Life for Joseph in Egypt was very hard. He was put in prison for something he did not do. He stayed in prison for many years.

Joseph asked God many times to get him out of prison. He asked those leaving prison to help get him out. But God was with him in prison, and everything he did went well.

Joseph learned to understand the dreams of others while he was in prison. The Pharaoh (main ruler of Egypt) had a dream that he did not understand. A servant who had been in prison said that Joseph could help Pharaoh understand the dream. Pharaoh took Joseph out of prison.

Pharaoh's dream was very important. Joseph told him what it meant. There would be a many years with no food. Pharaoh made Joseph a ruler to get ready for this time of trouble. Joseph had a good plan. When the time of trouble came, Egypt had enough food, but other countries did not.

Joseph's family also had little food in their country during this time. His father sent his brothers to Egypt to get food. His brothers, who had sold him, bowed down to him because he was a ruler. They asked him for food for them and their families. They did not know it was Joseph, but he knew who they were.

Joseph did not take **revenge** on his brothers. They needed his help, and he gave them food. Pharaoh heard that Joseph's family had come for help. He invited them to move to Egypt where they would have food and land.

Many years later, the sons of Israel thought that Joseph would finally take revenge on them. They thought he had been waiting until after their father died. They told Joseph what their father said before he died. He told them to beg Joseph to forgive them. Their words made Joseph sad that they still felt guilty after so much time.

Joseph Forgives All (Genesis 50:18-21)

Joseph told his brothers that God had made this plan for his life. They wanted to harm him, but it was God who brought him to Egypt. God wanted to make him an important person so he could help others. God used

Joseph to save the lives of his family and many others during a time of no food.

The bad thing that they did to him was used by God to bring good to many people. Joseph could not punish them since God had such a good plan. God had this good plan before they made their bad plans.

God gave Joseph two dreams about it when he was a young man. The dreams had told the truth about what would happen. The brothers did bow down to him when they asked for food.

Joseph forgave all the evil things that his brothers had done to him. He forgave them for making their father sad by saying that he was dead. He showed his forgiveness by caring for them and for their families. He spoke kind words to them.

Things to Remember

The life of Joseph is a clear example of how God can take whatever happens and turn it into good (Romans 8:28). This is not always easy to see when life is hard. Bad things do happen, and evil is in the world. But God is always with us through good times and bad times. He never leaves us. We can trust God to change bad to good in His perfect time!

Things to Think About

1. Has there been a time when your family or others hurt you badly?
2. When have you seen God change bad things into blessings?
3. Sometimes it feels like God is not there. Have you ever felt that way? What did you do?
4. What seems like forgiveness to you? When someone says it or shows it?
5. How did God show you that He was with you in your hard times?

Genesis 37:14-28, 50:15-21

14 Then Israel said, “Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock. Then come and tell me.” So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

15 A man found him walking through a field, and asked him, “What are you looking for?”

16 Joseph said, “I am looking for my brothers. Tell me where they are feeding the flock.”

17 And the man said, “They have moved from here. For I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” So Joseph followed his brothers and found them at Dothan.

18 When they saw him far away, before he came near them, they made plans to kill him.

19 They said to one another, “Here comes this dreamer!

20 Now come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the deep holes. Then we will say that a wild animal ate him. And we will see what becomes of his dreams!”

21 But Reuben heard this and saved him from their hands, saying, “Let us not kill him.”

22 Reuben then said, “Do not put him to death. Throw him into this hole here in the desert. But do not lay a hand on him.” He wanted to be able to save Joseph and return him to his father.

23 So when Joseph came to his brothers, they tore off his coat, the coat of many colors that he was wearing.

24 And they took him and threw him into the hole. The hole was empty and had no water in it.

25 Then they sat down to eat. When they looked up, they saw a group of Ishmaelites coming from

Gilead. They were taking spices and perfumes on their camels to Egypt.

26 Judah said to his brothers, “What do we get by killing our brother and covering his blood?”

27 Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him. For he is our brother, our own flesh.” And his brothers listened to him.

28 Some Midianite traders were passing by. So the brothers pulled Joseph up out of the hole. And they sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and they took Joseph to Egypt.

.....

50:15 When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “It may be now that Joseph will hate us, and pay us in return for all the wrong that we did to him!”

16 So they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Before he died, our father told us,

17 ‘You say to Joseph, “Forgive the wrong-doing of your brothers and their sin. For they did a bad thing to you.”’ Now we beg you, forgive the wrong-doing of the servants of the God of your father.” Joseph cried when they spoke to him.

18 Then his brothers came and fell down in front of him and said, “See, we are your servants.”

19 But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God?

20 You planned to do a bad thing to me. But God planned it for good, to make it happen that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

21 So do not be afraid. I will take care of you and your little ones.” He gave them comfort and words of kindness.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 3: Rescued by One in the Family

Bible Text

Ruth 2:1-12, 17-23; 4:1-14

Memory Verse

“May the Lord reward you for your work. May full pay be given to you from the Lord, the God of Israel. It is under His wings that you have come to be safe.” (Ruth 2:12)

Word List

disaster: something (flood, tornado, fire) that happens quickly and causes much suffering or loss to many people

harvest: the gathering or picking of crops

widow: a woman whose husband has died

A woman is rescued from a burning building by a fireman. A man is rescued from his car by his neighbors during a flood. A child is rescued from the bad person who took him by a policeman. We see stories about these kinds of rescues on TV. The woman, man, and child are the ones being rescued. The fireman, neighbors, and policeman are the rescuers.

Many problems in the world cause rescues. They are not all **disasters**.

The true story of Ruth starts with a family that did have a disaster. There was no food in Judah because it had not rained. The father decided to move to another country where there was food. He took his wife, Naomi, and their two sons to Moab.

There the father, Elimelech, died. There the sons found wives. About ten years later, both sons died. Naomi was left alone with her two daughters-in-law. Women in that day could not own land or earn money even if they were **widows**. These three widows had no man to work for money to buy food.

The women planned to leave the country of Moab. They would go back to the country of Judah, where Naomi still had family. Judah had rain again, and there was a lot of food.

Ruth Meets the Rescuer (Ruth 2:1-12)

Naomi decided that she should go alone and let her daughters-in-law go back to their parents' homes. They were still young and could marry again. But Ruth did not want to leave Naomi. She wanted to go wherever Naomi went. She believed in the God of the people of Judah, the One true God.

So Naomi and Ruth went to Judah. They had no money to buy food. The poor and those from other countries could gather grain behind the workers during the **harvest**. This was a law that God had made to take

care of those who had no money (Deuteronomy 24:19-22). Ruth was happy to work hard for food for Naomi and herself.

Ruth worked all day with little rest in the field of Boaz. Boaz saw that she was new to that town and from another country. He asked who she was. He learned that she was part of his family through her husband.

Boaz told Ruth to harvest grain in his field only. He told her that he and his workers would protect her. He also told her she could drink water with his workers. God had given her a place to get food for herself and Naomi.

Ruth did not understand why Boaz was so kind to her. She asked him why he would care about a stranger from another country. Boaz answered that he had heard how kind she was to her mother-in-law. He said that God had given her food and safety because of her love and care for Naomi. He did not tell her that he was family to her.

Ruth Tells about the Rescuer (Ruth 2:17-23)

Ruth returned to Naomi with her basketful of barley. Naomi asked her which field she had harvested in. When Ruth said that the field was owned by Boaz, Naomi was very happy. Naomi told Ruth that Boaz was a part of their family.

Ruth also told Naomi that Boaz had been kind to her. He had told her to work

close behind his workers. Naomi helped her understand that this was the best plan. Going to another field could be dangerous for her.

Naomi knew that this rich family member could become their rescuer. Boaz could buy her late husband's land. He could marry Ruth. He could give them a home, and they would not have to be poor. He could do this, but would he?

Ruth Is Rescued (Ruth 4:1-14)

Naomi told Ruth how to show Boaz that she was interested in being his wife. Boaz understood the meaning of what Ruth did. He agreed to the plan. But there was another man in their family who was a closer relation. This man had the first right to buy the land and take Ruth as his wife. This was a law that God had made to take care of widows.

Boaz went to the gates of the city to meet with this man. In their country, this was the way to talk and decide what would be done. Other men at the gate would listen and watch. They would understand the problem and remember what the two men decided.

Boaz asked the other man if he wanted to buy Naomi's land. The man said yes. Boaz then told him that if he bought the land, he must also marry Ruth. They would have children who would later own the land. The man decided not to do this. He gave Boaz the right to buy the land and marry Ruth.

God blessed Boaz and Ruth. They had many descendants. They were the great-grandparents of King David (Ruth 4:17). Jesus was also one of their descendants, so the whole world was blessed through them.

Things to Remember

Jesus told us ‘You must love your neighbor as you love yourself’” (Matthew 22:39).

Ruth loved Naomi and left everything to stay with her. Boaz showed his love for family as he rescued the two widows, Naomi and Ruth. Ruth was from another country and Boaz was kind to her. Boaz loved others the way Jesus told us to.

God’s family is made up of all the believers from many different countries. We do not look alike or act the same. But we are all called to show kindness and love to everyone. Loving others includes telling them that Jesus loved and rescued them!

Things to Think About

1. How has God rescued you during hard times in your life?
2. How did you feel coming to a new country? Did anyone show kindness to you?
3. How can you rescue someone in need?
4. How does your home country help widows, the poor and people from other countries?

Ruth 2:1-12, 17-23; 4:1-14

1 There was an in-law of the family of Naomi’s husband there whose name was Boaz. He was a very rich man of the family of Elimelech.

2 Ruth, the Moabite woman, said to Naomi, “Let me go to the field to gather grain behind someone who might show favor to me.” Naomi said to her, “Go, my daughter.”

3 So Ruth went and gathered in the field behind those who picked the grain. And she happened to come to the part of the field that belonged to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

4 Now Boaz was seen coming from Bethlehem. He said to the people gathering the grain, “May the Lord be with you.” And they said to him, “May the Lord bring good to you.”

5 Then Boaz said to his servant who was watching over those who gathered grain, “Whose young woman is this?”

6 The servant who watched over those who gathered grain said, “She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab.

7 She said, ‘Let me gather food behind the others who gather among the grain.’ So she came and has stayed from morning until now. She has rested in the house a short time.”

8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Be careful to listen, my daughter. Do not go to gather grain in another field. Do not leave this one. But stay here with my women who gather grain.

9 Keep your eyes upon the field where they gather grain. Go behind them. I have told the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars. Drink the water the servants have put there.”

10 Then she fell with her face to the ground and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your eyes? Why do you care about me? I am a stranger from another land.”

11 Boaz said to her, “I have heard about all you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband. I have heard how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth to come to a people you did not know before.

12 May the Lord reward you for your work. May full pay be given to you from the Lord, the God of Israel. It is under His wings that you have come to be safe.”

.....

17 So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gathered. It was enough barley to fill a basket.

18 She picked it up and went into the city to show her mother-in-law what she had gathered. Ruth gave Naomi what she had left after she was filled.

19 Her mother-in-law said to her, “Where did you gather grain today? Where did you work? May good come to the man who showed you favor.” So Ruth told her mother-in-law, “The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz.”

20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he receive good from the Lord, Who has not kept His kindness from the living and the dead.” Then Naomi said to her, “The man is near to us. He is of our family.”

21 Ruth, the Moabite woman, said, “He told me, ‘You should stay close to my servants until they have finished gathering all my grain.’”

22 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law Ruth, “It is good that you go out with his women servants, my daughter. Then no danger will come upon you in another field.”

23 So she stayed close to those who worked for Boaz until the end of the time of gathering grain. And she lived with her mother-in-law.

.....

4:1 Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there. He saw the in-law of the family that he had spoken about pass by. So Boaz said, “Come here, friend, and sit down.” So the man came and sat down.

2 And Boaz took ten of the leaders of the city and said, “Sit down here.” So they sat down.

3 Then Boaz said to the close in-law, “Naomi has returned from the land of Moab. She is selling the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.

4 I thought I should let you know about it. Buy it in front of those who are sitting here, and in front

of the leaders of my people. If you will buy it, then buy it. But if not, tell me you do not want to buy it, so I may know. For you have the right to be the first one to buy it. And I am after you.” The man said, “I will buy it.”

5 Then Boaz said, “The day you buy the field from Naomi, you must take Ruth, the Moabite woman, also. She is the wife of the dead man. You must keep alive the name of the dead man on his land.”

6 Then the close in-law said, “I cannot buy it for myself because it might be that my own children would not be able to own my land later. Take it for yourself. I give you my right to buy it, for I cannot buy it.”

7 This is what was done before in Israel to show that the buying or trading of land was decided upon. A man would take off his shoe and give it to another. This would make sure what was decided.

8 So he said to Boaz, “Buy it for yourself.” And he took off his shoe.

9 Then Boaz said to the leaders and all the people, “You have seen today that I have bought from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech, to Chilion and to Mahlon.

10 And I have taken Ruth, the Moabite woman who was Mahlon’s wife, to be my wife. I will keep alive the name of the dead man on his land. His name will not be forgotten among his brothers or from the gate of his birth-place. You have heard this today.”

11 All the people in the gate and the leaders said, “We have heard it. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, who together built the house of Israel. May you become rich in Ephrathah and be known by all in Bethlehem.

12 May your house be like the house of Perez, the son of Judah and Tamar, because of the children the Lord will give you by this young woman.”

13 So Boaz took Ruth. She became his wife, and he went in to her. The Lord made it possible for her to have a child and she gave birth to a son.

14 The women said to Naomi, “Thanks be to the Lord. He has not left you without a family this day. May his name become known in all of Israel.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 4: God Heals a Humbled Man

Bible Text

2 Kings 5:1-5, 9-19

Memory Verse

“He leads those without pride into what is right, and teaches them His way.” (Psalm 25:9)

Word List

courtesy: being kind and polite; good manners and respect for others

offended: to be angry; to have your feelings hurt by the actions of another person

restored: to make something the way it used to be or to make it like new

Every day, people fill social media with news from their lives. We write posts about birthdays, anniversaries, and special events. We proudly share pictures of our loved ones. We brag on their good qualities and what we love about them. We tell of the good things going on in our lives. And many of us have lots of good things to share.

Sharing and celebrating God’s good gifts in our lives is a fine thing to do. We

honor Him when we are grateful for what He has given us. But we can also grow proud in our successes. We can begin to think we deserve such good things. We can take pride in ourselves and all we have. How easily we grow proud!

But pride is dangerous. Pride can make us forget what God has done for us. It can keep us from obeying His commandments. Pride can cause us to reject the things that will help us. We do not like to humble ourselves. But God’s commands often require humility to obey them. God is humble. And He wants to see humility in us.

Again and again, the Bible warns us about the dangers of pride. Many verses speak of pride. And many stories teach about pride. One warning comes in the story of Naaman. His story reminds us that God’s gifts often come in unexpected ways. It warns us not to let our pride cause us to lose His blessings. It teaches us that humility brings great rewards.

Naaman Had a Problem (2 Kings 5:1-5)

Naaman was a successful captain in the Syrian army. His men had won many battles for his king. He had earned his king’s respect and admiration. He had wealth, power, and influence. Naaman had reason to be proud.

But Naaman did not gain his success completely on his own. He had help. The

Bible states that God caused Naaman to win his battles. God caused the king to respect Naaman. God was working in Naaman's life without Naaman even knowing Him.

However, Naaman had a problem. He had a terrible skin disease. Skin diseases were greatly feared in that day. It was easy to pass these diseases from person to person. People who had this disease were often avoided. Many times, they were sent to live alone. This disease could steal all that Naaman had. In time, it would take away his family and friends, his career, his wealth, and eventually, his life.

Surely Naaman had tried to find a cure for his disease. He knew what this disease would do to him in time. He was a wealthy man of great power. He had probably tried all the best medical treatments. Yet nothing had cured his disease.

A servant girl of Naaman's wife offered one more possibility. She told of a man of God in Israel, her homeland. She said this man could heal Naaman. The general listened. He had surely tried everything else. Why not try one more time? So, he gathered a great gift of gold and silver, and he started out for Israel.

Naaman Humbled Himself (2 Kings 5:9-13)

When Naaman arrived in Israel, he expected a proper greeting. Instead, he stood waiting outside Elisha's home. The man of

God did not come out to greet him. Instead, he sent a simple message with instructions.

Why did Elisha act this way? Was he trying to be rude? Or did he have another reason for not seeing the sick man? Naaman wanted the man of God to heal him. But Elisha could not heal him. Only God could do such an act. Elisha knew Naaman would be healed. But he wanted Naaman to know where the healing came from.

Naaman was **offended** when the man of God would not see him. He was a proud man. He was usually treated with respect and **courtesy**. The message told Naaman to dip in the Jordan River seven times.

Naaman expected special treatment. This instruction seemed too simple. The Jordan River was dirty. Why should he dip himself in a river in Israel? He must have thought of rivers in his own homeland. Maybe they would be even better. Naaman left Elisha's home angry and insulted.

Once again, however, Naaman's servants offered advice, and Naaman listened. Naaman had been instructed to do something quite simple. It would be easy to do. Could Naaman at least try it because it offered a chance for healing? So, despite the insult to his pride, Naaman decided to follow Elisha's advice. He humbled himself and went to the Jordan River.

Naaman Received Healing

(2 Kings 5:14-19)

How quickly was Naaman healed? Did his skin slowly get better as he dipped himself in the river each time? Or did it heal suddenly on the final wash? We do not know. But we do know that when he walked out of the water, his disease was cured. And we know the healing could have come from only one place. God had healed Naaman.

Naaman also knew God had healed him. Now he knew that God was the One True God. He could not say it was the man of God who had done it. He had not seen Elisha at all. Only God could do this amazing thing.

Naaman returned to Elisha to offer his thanks and a gift. This time, Elisha did come out and greet him. But Elisha refused the gift. He would not take payment for God's miracle. He did not want Naaman to make a

mistake about how he had been cured. God alone had healed Naaman.

Naaman had received healing for his body. But he had also received a greater gift. He had been given the gift of faith. Naaman came to Israel not knowing God. He left knowing the One True God. He had humbled himself. And he had been rewarded for it. His future was **restored**. He could go back home to live a healthy, normal life. But now he had an even greater future. Now he had a future with God.

Naaman's pride could have cost him this healing. He could have turned away and rejected Elisha's advice. And he would have returned to his home exactly as he was – proud yet sick. But Naaman returned home a cured man. He had learned a great lesson. His healing came as he humbled himself before God. He received a cure for his skin as well as a cure for his heart.

Things to Think About

1. Did Naaman have reason to be proud? Why or why not?
2. In what things do you take pride? Do you have reason to be proud? Why or why not?
3. Do you have a problem for which you need healing? What are you doing about it?
4. Has someone ever offended your pride? If so, how did you respond?
5. Has God ever asked you to humble yourself? If so, how did you respond?
6. What help or healing might pride be keeping you from receiving?

Things to Remember

We can learn from Naaman's story, too. We all have things we take pride in. We all have parts of our lives that need healing. We must not let our pride keep us from listening to God's wisdom. If we are willing to humble ourselves before God, He can heal us.

2 Kings 5:1-5

1 Naaman the captain of the army of the king of Syria was an important man to his king. He was much respected, because by him the Lord had made Syria win in battle. Naaman was a strong man of war, but he had a bad skin disease.

2 Now the Syrians had gone out in groups of soldiers, and had taken a little girl from the land of Israel. She served Naaman's wife.

3 And she said to her owner, "I wish that my owner's husband were with the man of God who is in Samaria! Then he would heal his bad skin disease."

4 So Naaman went in and told his king, "This is what the girl from the land of Israel said."

5 The king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman went and took with him silver weighing as much as ten men, 6,000 pieces of gold, and ten changes of clothes.

2 Kings 5:9-19

9 So Naaman came with his horses and his war-wagons, and stood at the door of Elisha's house.

10 Elisha sent a man to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times. And your flesh will be made well and you will be clean."

11 But Naaman was very angry and went away. He said, "I thought he would come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God. I thought he would wave his hand over the place, and heal the bad skin disease.

12 Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away very angry.

13 Then his servants came and said to him, "My father, if the man of God had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash and be clean'?"

14 So Naaman went down into the Jordan River seven times, as the man of God had told him. And his flesh was made as well as the flesh of a little child. He was clean.

15 Then Naaman returned to the man of God with all those who were with him. He came and stood in front of Elisha and said, "See, now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. So I ask you now to take a gift from your servant."

16 But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives, before Whom I stand, I will take nothing." Naaman tried to talk him into taking it, but he would not.

17 Naaman said, "If not, I ask you, let your servant be given as much dirt as two horses can carry. For your servant will not give burnt gifts or kill animals on the altar in worship to other gods any more. I will only give gifts to the Lord.

18 But may the Lord forgive your servant for this. My king goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there. He rests on my arm and I put my face to the ground in the house of Rimmon. When I put my face to the ground in the house of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive your servant."

19 And Elisha said to him, "Go in peace." So Naaman went away from him a short way.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 5: God Is a Shepherd for His People

Bible Text

Psalm 23

Memory Verse

“And my God will give you everything you need because of His great riches in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:19)

Word List

satisfaction: a happy feeling because of something you did or something that happened to you

preferences: choices; liking one thing rather than another

individually: separately and not as a group

Tori is a young goat on our farm. She was born too early, and her twin did not live. She was the tiniest goat we had ever seen. We had cats that were bigger than she was!

Tori has now grown some. She lives with other goats, cows, large dogs, and a donkey. She is the smallest of them all. Yet she doesn't seem to notice. Tori shows no fear around the bigger animals. She walks all around them, even under them sometimes!

She is a small goat with a big personality.

The people on the farm understand our responsibility to care for our animals. We feed them. We make sure they have clean water to drink. We treat them when they get sick or injured. We give them a safe place to live. But we do not just care *for* our animals. We also care *about* them. We laugh at the funny things they do. We enjoy taking care of them. And we know them each by name.

King David of Israel knew about being a shepherd. He worked as a shepherd when he was a boy. When David wanted to write a song about God, he chose a picture he knew well. David wrote that God is a shepherd to His people.

Even people who do not raise sheep understand this picture. Psalm 23 has become one of the best known and most loved psalms of all time.

The Shepherd Provides for His Sheep (Psalm 23:1-3)

David began his song about God by using God's personal name. We read the word *Lord* and think it means “boss” or “master.” But to David, this was God's special name. This is not a song about a far-away boss. This is a song about a personal God.

David might have written, “The Lord is a shepherd.” It would be true. God *is* a shepherd. But David chose to write, “The

Lord is *my* shepherd.” Again, David was showing his personal relationship with God. And this relationship would provide everything that David would need in his life. We all have physical needs, emotional needs, and spiritual needs. David says God takes care of them all.

In verse 2, the fields of green grass show us a shepherd giving good food to his sheep. This is a picture of **satisfaction**. A green field is a place where sheep can eat and find rest. The quiet waters give the sheep clean water to drink. A good shepherd provides for his sheep’s physical needs.

We see another quality of God’s care in verse 2 as well. Like us, animals can be picky about what they like and do not like. Some animals like to drink from running water. But sheep like to drink from still water. They are afraid of running water. In this verse, we see the shepherd leading his sheep to drink from the water they like. This shepherd knows his sheep and what they like. And he gives attention to their **preferences**. He cares for their emotional needs.

Does God care about our hunger and thirst? Does He see our need for rest? Yes, He does! Does He care about our likes and dislikes? Does He know our emotional needs? Yes, He does! In fact, God knows what we need even better than we do. He provides exactly what we need. And sometimes He

even gives us more than just what we need.

He gives us what we want as well.

But God knows that our greatest need is a spiritual need. We need guidance. We need to be made new. We need a relationship with Him. God provides for these needs as well. Another way to say the first part of verse 3 is, “He restores my soul.” To restore something means to make it the way it used to be or to make it like new. Your soul is the part of you that lives forever. Your soul will either live *with* God or *without* Him. God cares about your soul.

Life is hard. Our lives get busy, and we get tired. Sometimes bad things happen, and we get hurt. Other times, we make bad choices, and we feel guilt. But God can meet every one of these needs. He can keep our souls healthy, even when life is hard. He can lead us on the way of living right with Him. God can meet our every need.

The Shepherd Protects His Sheep (Psalm 23:4-5)

We all go through troubles. God knows about the dangers we face. He sees our pain. And He knows that sometimes pain makes us stronger. So, God does not take away all our troubles. Instead, He goes through them with us. He walks with us like a good shepherd. And He protects us from danger.

The shepherd uses tools to protect his flock. One is a walking stick or staff. A shepherd can use this stick to touch his sheep to guide them. This is a gentle touch to redirect them. Some shepherd sticks have a hook at the end. This can help the shepherd to lift a sheep that has fallen. The shepherd can also use his stick to fight off the flock's enemies, such as wolves, foxes, or bears. It can be a weapon in the strong arm of a shepherd. It is used to protect the sheep.

The shepherd also uses oil to protect his sheep. Sheep are often troubled by insects. A good shepherd pours oil on the heads of his sheep to protect them from these insects. This is an act of tenderness and care. It is done one sheep at a time. The shepherd takes time with each one of his sheep to care for them. This is how God cares for us, one

by one. He gives us each what we need and when we need it. God cares for us **individually** and personally.

The Shepherd Is Present with His Sheep (Psalm 23:6)

The good shepherd cares for his sheep, giving them food and water. He protects his sheep from dangers and enemies. But the best thing a shepherd does for his sheep is to spend time with them. David spent time with his sheep to know what they needed and to watch over them. And David knew that God does that for us as well. God's greatest gift to us is the gift of His presence. He lives with us.

And when we spend time with God, we experience goodness. The Bible says, "Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God" (James 1:17). God is good. And wherever God is, good things follow.

We also see His loving-kindness as we live with God. He gives us things that we do not deserve. He gives us things that we cannot earn for ourselves. God's pours His loving-kindness on us simply because He loves us.

We experience God's goodness and loving-kindness to prepare us for living with Him forever. God's plan for our souls is to go on forever with Him. So He cares for our souls. His tender care makes us want to live with Him forever, too.

Things to Think About

1. What is the difference between caring *for* someone and caring *about* someone?
2. David used the picture of a shepherd to talk about God. Can you think of modern images that give pictures of God as well?
3. What are some of your physical needs right now? How do you see God providing for your needs?
4. What emotional needs do you have? How is God meeting those needs?
5. Can you think of a time when God guided you through a difficult time in your life? What did you learn then that could help you the next time?
6. What fears are you fighting today? How can this psalm give you comfort and strength?

Things to Remember

We all have needs. God knows this. Our God is a personal God. He cares about our physical needs, and He gives us the protection and care we need. He also cares about our emotional needs. He cares about how we feel, and He walks with us through our troubles. But best of all, God cares about our future. He wants to go on living with us forever. So He heals us and makes us new. God really is the Good Shepherd. We can trust Him completely.

Psalm 23

- 1 The Lord is my Shepherd. I will have everything I need.
- 2 He lets me rest in fields of green grass. He leads me beside the quiet waters.
- 3 He makes me strong again. He leads me in the way of living right with Himself which brings honor to His name.
- 4 Yes, even if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not be afraid of anything, because You are with me. You have a walking stick with which to guide and one with which to help. These comfort me.
- 5 You are making a table of food ready for me in front of those who hate me. You have poured oil on my head. I have everything I need.
- 6 For sure, You will give me goodness and loving-kindness all the days of my life. Then I will live with You in Your house forever.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 6: Rescued from Trouble

Bible Text

Psalm 27:1-14

Memory Verse

“The Lord is my light and the One Who saves me. Whom should I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom should I be afraid?”
(Psalm 27:1)

Word List

confidence: a strong feeling that something will happen or that something is true

kidnapped: to take someone away, usually to keep them as a prisoner

tragedy: a very bad event that causes great sadness and often involves death

Life can be very hard sometimes. For example, my husband lost his job a few years ago. He did not work for many months. We had trouble paying our bills. It took a long time for him to find a new job. We had to move to a new city so he could find work. Some time later, our son was in a serious accident. A young boy lost his life in that accident. Months after that, my father became

very sick with cancer. He died later that year. My family has been through many hard times.

Sometimes life is full of trouble.

Sometimes life is full of pain. Sometimes life is full of loss. Many people live through **tragedy**. Many people suffer deeply. Life is full of these kinds of things. Job was right. He described life as a “short time” that “is full of trouble” (Job 14:1).

Many people in the Bible faced deep trouble in their lives. Joseph was his father’s favorite son. Yet he was **kidnapped** by his brothers and sold as a slave. Job was a man who pleased God. Even so, Job lost his family and everything he owned. David was chosen to be king over God’s people. But David’s enemies tried to kill him. David had to hide from his enemies for many years. He fought many battles. He faced many troubles. In his life, David had many reasons to be afraid. But David remembered the truth about God. He remembered that God had power to rescue him.

In times of trouble, it is easy to lose hope. It is easy to be filled with fear. But it is important to follow David’s example. We can remember God’s power to rescue us. We can remember God’s goodness. And we can remember God’s faithfulness to His people. Then we can be sure that God is with us in times of trouble.

God's Power to Save (Psalm 27:1-6)

In Psalm 27, David's words describe how he felt in the middle of many troubles. David knew who God was. He understood the truth about God. He took time to remember that truth. David described God in three different ways.

First, David compared God to a light. The world seems like a dark place sometimes. It can be hard to find the light of God's goodness in the middle of our troubles. David was facing serious troubles. His enemies wanted him dead! But he did not let the darkness of his troubles blind him. Trouble did not keep David from seeing God's light.

Second, David recalled that God is "the One Who saves" (v. 1). David understood that God's power was stronger than any trouble he faced. He knew that God had power over all things. God has power over sin. David experienced God's power to forgive his sins. God has power over our enemies. God gave David victory over his enemies many times in battle. God's power is stronger than anything David faced. And it is stronger than anything we may face today.

Finally, David said that God is the "strength of [his] life" (v. 1). The Hebrew word for "strength" suggests the image of a strong tower. A strong tower is used to defend against one's enemies in battle. David knew

God would defend him in times of trouble.

David trusted God to keep him safe.

David remembered God's light, power, and strength during the hard times in his life. Because he did this, he did not lose hope in the middle of his troubles. Understanding the truth about God helped David when nothing else could. These truths gave David courage and kept him from fear.

David's Prayer for Help (Psalm 27:7-12)

David's confidence in God was strong. But so were his troubles. David wanted to trust God. But his troubles made him doubt God's power at times. David did a wise thing with his doubts. He told them to God. David trusted God enough to say what he was feeling. He did not lie to God about his doubts. He did not pretend that his feelings were different. However, David's choices and actions were not based on his feelings. His actions were based on his faith in God. He chose to trust God. He chose to talk to God in prayer.

This does not mean we will never have feelings of doubt. Knowing God means we will have courage to make choices based on truth. We will have strength to act apart from our doubts. Like David, we can pray and wait for God to answer us. Like David, we can be sure that God will rescue us from our troubles.

We can trust God, even when we have feelings of doubt.

Hope in God's Goodness (Psalm 27:13-14)

David placed his hope in God. David looked at his troubles and doubts. Then he looked at God. He remembered God's loving-kindness to him in the past. He remembered God's loving-kindness to His people in past times. David chose to keep his focus on God. Focusing on God gave David the strength to keep trusting God. It gave him great hope in the middle of hard times.

If David had focused on the wrong things, he would have lost hope. He would have been covered up in his doubts. He would have given up in fear. Only those who wait for the Lord will see God's power to save. Those who give in to doubt and fear will lose the battle. God's goodness and God's mercy are always stronger than fear

and doubt. We must make them the focus of our lives.

Things to Remember

David's words teach us some important truths. First, We can trust God in the middle of life's worst troubles. Understanding the truth about God will help us trust Him. We must remember that He has power over all things. He is a strong defender and a light in dark times.

Second, God can be trusted completely, even with our doubts. When we tell Him our doubts, He can make us strong. He can give us courage to act in faith. He can help us overcome fear.

Finally, our strongest hope comes from God. His loving-kindness in times past shows us His goodness. We can have deep confidence in His love and in His power. Even in times our trouble, His power is greater than any trouble we face.

Things to Think About

1. How can our understanding of God help us in times of trouble?
2. David described God as light and as strength. How would you describe Him?
3. What do you do when you doubt God?
4. How do you know that you can place your hope in God?
5. Can you describe a time when you experienced God's presence and power in the middle of strong troubles?

Psalm 27:1-14

1 The Lord is my light and the One Who saves me. Whom should I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom should I be afraid?

2 When sinful men, and all who hated me, came against me to destroy my flesh, they tripped and fell.

3 Even if an army gathers against me, my heart will not be afraid. Even if war rises against me, I will be sure of You.

4 One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I will look for: that I may live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to look upon the beauty of the Lord, and to worship in His holy house.

5 For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in His holy tent. In the secret place of His tent He will hide me. He will set me high upon a rock.

6 Then my head will be lifted up above all those around me who hate me. I will give gifts in His holy tent with a loud voice of joy. I will sing. Yes, I will sing praises to the Lord.

7 O Lord, listen to my cry. Show loving-kindness to me and answer me.

8 You have said, "Look for My face." My heart said to You, "O Lord, Your face will I look for."

9 Do not hide Your face from me. Do not turn Your servant away in anger. You have been

my Helper. Do not turn away from me or leave me alone, O God Who saves me!

10 For my father and my mother have left me. But the Lord will take care of me.

11 Teach me Your way, O Lord. Lead me in a straight path, because of those who fight against me.

12 Do not give me over to the desire of those who hate me. For people who tell lies about me rise against me, and breathe a desire to hurt me.

13 I would have been without hope if I had not believed that I would see the loving-kindness of the Lord in the land of the living.

14 Wait for the Lord. Be strong. Let your heart be strong. Yes, wait for the Lord.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 7: God's Good Plan

Bible Text

Jeremiah 29:1-14

Memory Verse

“ ‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord, ‘plans for well-being and not for trouble, to give you a future and a hope.’ ” (Jeremiah 29:11)

Word List

advice: an opinion or suggestion about what someone should do

phobia: an extremely strong fear or dislike of someone or something

sturdy: built in a strong way or made to last a long time

Fear is a powerful force. Some people have very strong fears. Some are very afraid of heights. Some are very afraid of large spaces. Some are very afraid of water. Others are very afraid of spiders or snakes. Very strong fears like these are called **phobias**. A phobia is not a normal fear. A phobia can control someone's life. This happens when fear becomes the focus of someone's life. A phobia can keep a person from living a

normal life. This happens when fear becomes the center of everything a person does.

Not everyone understands phobias. But everyone understands fear. Fear is a part of life. In fact, fear can be a helpful thing. For example, fear of a car crash can make people drive safely. Fear of disease can make people choose a healthy way of life. In fact, the Bible explains a healthy fear of God. A healthy fear of God helps us to obey God and grow in wisdom (Psalm 111:10).

In this world, many things cause people to fear. This has always been true. Jeremiah was one of God's early preachers. The people in Jeremiah's time lived in a dangerous time. Large enemies surrounded their small kingdom. God's people were afraid about what could happen to them. They had many fears about the future. But Jeremiah had an important message for people living in fearful times. He wanted God's people to know that God has good plans for His people. He wanted people to know that God is always working for the good of His people. He wanted people to know that God can be trusted, even in hard times. He wanted God's people to understand that they should never be controlled by fear.

A Fearful Time (Jeremiah 29:1-3)

When Jeremiah was God's messenger, there were three important nations around

God's people in Judah. Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt all battled for power. In fact, Assyria defeated God's people in Israel about 200 years before Jeremiah's time. Sadly, the Babylonians defeated God's people in Judah during the time of Jeremiah. Many of God's people were taken away from Judah to live in Babylon. They were forced to serve King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon.

These things happened because God's people were not faithful to God. They did not follow God's ways. They did not live in ways that pleased God. Their sin brought God's punishment on their nation. God gave them over to their enemies. Their lives would be different. They would live far from home. They would lose their nation. They would lose their freedom.

Still God's people did not understand. Many false preachers said that things would change soon. They gave God's people false hope (Jeremiah 28). But Jeremiah kept preaching what was true. He said that these things happened because of Judah's sin. He said that this punishment would last a long time. Many people were afraid of Jeremiah's words. They were afraid about the future. They wondered what their lives would be like in Babylon.

An Unwanted Message (Jeremiah 29:4-9)

God's people did not want to hear what Jeremiah had to say. It was easier to listen to false preachers who told them nothing bad would happen. Jeremiah knew this was not true. So he gave God's people some strong **advice**.

Jeremiah told them how they should live in Babylon. He said they should not live in tents. Instead, he said they should build **sturdy** homes. He said they should work the land and take care of it. Then they could grow food to feed themselves for a long time. He said they should not wait to build their families. Instead, they should marry and have children while they were away from Judah.

Jeremiah also gave special instructions about how God's people should live with their neighbors. Jeremiah knew God's people would stay in Babylon many years. He knew they needed peaceful friendships with their new neighbors. This would help them become strong and have success in their new home. Jeremiah warned them not to listen to anyone who gave a different message. He knew a different message could cause much harm.

Hope for the Future (Jeremiah 29:10-14)

Jeremiah's warning about life in Babylon was not God's only message. God still had plans for His people. Their time of punishment would not last forever. They

would not always live in Babylon. These hard years would come to an end at the right time. God had a special future planned for His people. He wanted His people to be ready for the future He planned for them.

God knew they needed to prepare their hearts. He wanted them to call on His name. He wanted them to pray. God wanted His people to seek Him and to look for Him. And God looked forward to the time when His people would return to Him.

The things God brings into the lives of His people do not always seem good. Punishment does not seem good to us. Pain and suffering do not seem good. Hard times of trouble do not seem good to us. But even in those things, God's purposes are always good. His heart towards His people is loving. Because of this, we can be sure His plans for us are good. We do not have to fear the future when God is in control.

Things to Remember

What causes you to fear? Jeremiah was writing to people who had many reasons to live in fear. They needed to hear God's truth. Jeremiah was a faithful man. He shared God's truth with God's people even when others worked against him. He knew that the light of God's truth always rescues us from the darkness of fear.

Many times, we are fearful because we focus on the wrong things. If we focus on the hard things that happen all around us, it is easy to fear. But we can change our focus. If we focus on God's good plans for us, fear will no longer control in our lives. This does not mean that our struggles will go away. But it does mean that we will experience God's love and His presence in the middle of our struggles. This will give us hope for the future.

Things to Think About

1. In what ways does fear control you?
2. Why was Jeremiah's message for God's people unwanted?
3. Why did God use Jeremiah to instruct His people to "work for the well-being" of their enemies while in Babylon?
4. Why is it hard to trust that God has good plans for us when we are afraid?
5. What actions can we take to show that we are seeking God with all our hearts?

Jeremiah 29:1-14

1 These are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the man of God sent from Jerusalem to the leaders, the religious leaders, the men of God, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem to Babylon.

2 (This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the king's servants, the rulers of Judah and Jerusalem, and the able workmen had left Jerusalem.)

3 The letter was sent with Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. It said,

4 "This is what the Lord of All, the God of Israel, says to all of His people who have been sent from Jerusalem to Babylon:

5 'Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their fruit.

6 Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters. And take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, that they may give birth to sons and daughters. Become many there, and do not let your number become less.

7 Work for the well-being of the city where I have sent you to and pray to the Lord for this. For if it is well with the city you live in, it will be well with you.'

8 For the Lord of All, the God of Israel, says, 'Do not let the people among you who tell

what is going to happen in the future and those who use their secret ways fool you. Do not listen to their dreams.

9 For they speak false words to you in My name. I have not sent them,' says the Lord.

10 "For the Lord says, 'When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you and keep My promise to you. I will bring you back to this place.

11 For I know the plans I have for you,' says the Lord, 'plans for well-being and not for trouble, to give you a future and a hope.

12 Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.

13 You will look for Me and find Me, when you look for Me with all your heart.

14 I will be found by you,' says the Lord. 'And I will bring you back and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have made you go,' says the Lord. 'I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you away.'

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 8: Daniel: God Rescues a Faithful Follower

Bible Text

Daniel 6:1-11; 16-26

Memory Verse

“For He is the living God and He lives forever. His nation will never be destroyed and His rule will last forever. He saves and brings men out of danger, and shows His great power in heaven and on earth. And He has saved Daniel from the power of the lions.” (Daniel 6:26b-27)

Word List

jealous: wanting what others have

One Sunday, our young son had a little fever and needed to stay home from church. My mother said she would take care of him while I went to teach. She taught him his own Sunday School lesson. When we came home,



Gregory had made a lion out of clay. He told us how his grandmother had taught him about “the lion that did not eat Daniel.”

We still have that lion and remember how God saved Daniel. Daniel’s story teaches a

lesson that everyone needs to hear.

Daniel had lived under the rule of many kings who did not worship God. The Babylonians had conquered the Jews and taken over their country. They had carried many people away to Babylon. First, they took away the smartest, healthiest, and best. As a young man, Daniel was one of the first people carried away to Babylon.

During this time, Daniel and his friends were often tempted to give up their faith in God. They were tempted to live like those who did not believe in God. But they never worshiped false gods. They were always faithful to God.

Daniel was known as a person who could be trusted. All the kings had trusted him. Daniel had served them well. Even when Daniel was an old man, he was still serving both God and the king faithfully.

A Plan to Harm Daniel (Daniel 6:1-9)

A new king, Darius, came to power. He chose three men to be the leaders over 120 captains who ruled the country. Daniel was one of the three. Then Darius made Daniel leader over all. The others became **jealous**. They decided to find a way to destroy Daniel. They knew Daniel was a good man who was loyal to the king. They also knew that he loved God more than anything else.

These men tricked the new king to

make a new law. The law stated that no one could pray to anyone other than King Darius for thirty days. Anyone who did not pray to Darius would be thrown into a hole where lions were waiting to eat them. Daniel's enemies knew that he would not obey this law. It was a trap.

Obey God or Obey Man? (Daniel 6:10-16)

Daniel had always prayed to God. He prayed *only* to God. He prayed every day, three times a day. He chose to be faithful. He knew his life was in danger if he continued to do what he had always done.

Maybe Daniel could have tried to hide his faith. He would only have to do it for thirty days. Perhaps it would have been easier than what he did instead. But Daniel chose to obey God. He did not hide. He prayed three times a day in front of his open window.

His enemies were watching for Daniel to disobey the law. They quickly went to tell the king. They called Daniel "one of the people brought from Judah." They wanted to divide the king from his friend, Daniel.

The king was sad when he learned what his new law meant. Daniel would die. The king tried all day to think of a way to save Daniel. But he could find no way. Daniel's enemies reminded the king that nobody could change the law, not even the king.

Daniel Thrown to the Lions

(Daniel 6: 17-28)

The law was signed, and the king could not change it. There was only one thing the king could do. The king had to obey his own law. He had to send Daniel to the lions.

Daniel was put in the hole with the lions. He had to stay all night. The king said, "May your God, Whom you are faithful to serve, save you." Darius hoped Daniel would not die. He would see whose law would be more powerful. Was it the law Darius wrote, or was it God's law? They would not know until morning.

A large rock was put in front of the hole. The king used his ring to mark the stone. The other leaders also used their rings to mark the stone. It could not be moved.

The king could not sleep that night. He did not want to eat. As soon as the sun came up, he went to where Daniel and the lions were. The king called to him with a troubled voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, Whom you always serve, been able to save you from the lions?" These were the same words the king had spoken when Daniel was put with the lions.

Daniel answered, "O king, live forever. My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths." Daniel's trust in God did not stop when the officials arrested him for praying. Daniel had trusted God all through the night

in the lion's den. And God had rescued Daniel from the lions.

What had happened? The hungry lions did nothing to Daniel. Daniel explained to the king that God had sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths. The angel stayed with Daniel while he was with the lions. The lions did not hurt Daniel because God knew Daniel was not guilty. Daniel had done nothing wrong to the king. All night the king had been worried. But Daniel did not worry because his God was with him.

The king was very pleased. Daniel was brought up out of the hole in the ground. Everyone could see that Daniel had not been hurt at all. They knew Daniel had been rescued because he had trusted in his God. The Lord saved Daniel from certain death because he was faithful. God rescued Daniel.

Things to Think About

1. What do you do to worship God that you would still do, even if you would be punished?
2. What habits do we need so that we can be faithful to the Lord?
3. What keeps you from serving God with all your heart, like Daniel? Are there things you need to take out of your life?
4. Many people do not know Jesus, and we can tell them about Him. Are there others who need to see your walk of faith?
5. Daniel did not have to pray to Darius. He could have hid for thirty days whenever he prayed to God. Are there times you feel tempted to keep others from seeing your faith?

Now the king made a new law, and he said, "I make a law that all those under my rule are to fear and shake before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God and He lives forever. His nation will never be destroyed and His rule will last forever." Darius gave honor to the real God. He knew that God had saved Daniel from the lions. Nobody else could have done that.

The king knew the men who had tricked him into punishing Daniel, so he punished them. The king's servants threw the evil men and their families to the lions. The lions killed them before they reached the bottom. This shows that the lions were hungry. Yet the lions had not hurt Daniel even though they were hungry. God had saved Daniel.

Things to Remember

God does not promise that we will never suffer. Daniel endured many troubles throughout his life. But God was with Daniel through all of them. Daniel trusted God, and God was with him through every trouble. God promises to be with us through our hard times as well. We can trust Him.

Daniel's faith saved him. His faith also helped others to worship and praise God. Those who meant harm for Daniel were punished. When we put our trust in God, others will see how trust can help them, too.

Daniel 6:1-11

1 It pleased Darius to choose 120 captains to rule over the people. They would rule over the whole nation.

2 And three leaders were to rule over them, and Daniel was one. The captains were to answer to them, so that the king might suffer no loss.

3 Then Daniel showed that he could do better work than the other leaders and captains because a special spirit was in him. So the king planned to give him power over the whole nation.

4 Then the leaders and captains tried to find a reason to complain against Daniel about his duties over the nation. But they could not find any reason to complain or anything to blame him for, because he was faithful and honest and did not do anything wrong.

5 Then these men said, "We will not find anything to say against Daniel unless it has to do with the Law of his God."

6 So these leaders and captains came as a group to the king and said, "King Darius, live forever!

7 All the leaders of the nation, the captains, the important men and the rulers have spoken with each other and have agreed that a new law should be made. The king should make a law that must be obeyed, saying that anyone who asks something of any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, must be thrown to the lions.

8 O king, make this law now and write your name on it so that it may not be changed. It will be by the law of the Medes and Persians, and cannot be changed."

9 So King Darius made the law and wrote his name on it.

10 When Daniel knew that the king had written his name on this law, he went into his house where, in his upper room, he had windows open toward Jerusalem. There he got down on his knees three times each day, praying and giving thanks to his God, as he had done before.

11 Then these men came as a group and found Daniel praying and asking favor from his God.

Daniel 6:16-26

16 So the king had Daniel brought in and thrown into the place where lions were kept. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, Whom you are faithful to serve, save you."

17 And a stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the hole. The king marked it with his own special ring and with the rings of his important men, so that no one could save Daniel.

18 Then the king went to his beautiful house and spent the night without food and sleep. And nothing was brought to make him feel better.

19 The king got up at sunrise and went in a hurry to the place where lions were kept.

20 When he came to the hole in the ground where Daniel was, he called to him with a troubled voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, Whom you always serve, been able to save you from the lions?"

21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever!

22 My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths. They have not hurt me, because He knows that I am not guilty, and because I have done nothing wrong to you, O king."

23 Then the king was very pleased and had Daniel taken up out of the hole in the ground. So they took Daniel out of the hole and saw that he had not been hurt at all, because he had trusted in his God.

24 Then the king had those men brought to him who had spoken against Daniel. And they threw them with their wives and children into the hole with the lions. Even before they hit the bottom of the hole, the lions went after them and crushed all their bones.

25 Then King Darius wrote to all the people of every nation and language who were living on the earth. He wrote, "May you have much peace!

26 I make a law that all those under my rule are to fear and shake before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God and He lives forever. His nation will never be destroyed and His rule will last forever."

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 9: Hosea: A Picture of God Who Rescues

Bible Text

Hosea 1:2-10; 3:1-2; 14:1-9

Memory Verse

“I will bring My people back to Me. I will not hold back My love from them, for I am no longer angry with them.” (Hosea 14:4)

Word List

idol: something made with hands that is worshipped instead of God

When we travel, I like to take pictures. When I look at them, I think, “That is a beautiful mountain, or a beautiful baby, or a kind old woman.” We can use pictures to tell a story. And we can use pictures to teach a lesson. When God wanted to teach us about His love, He showed us a picture of the marriage of Hosea and Gomer.

Hosea’s story was a picture of God’s love for His people. Hosea lived in the 8th century before Christ. He was one of God’s Early Preachers. God wanted Hosea to understand how He felt when Israel was not

faithful to Him. God wanted Hosea to tell this news to the people of Israel.

There were six different kings during Hosea’s life. It was a time when people had many things they needed. But they did not do what God wanted. Poor people were being cheated and hurt. God was not being obeyed.

Hosea wanted the people’s gifts of worship to really mean something to God. He wanted people to obey God. If they did that, they could know God in a true way. If I made a movie about Hosea, I might call it: *The Man Who Never Stopped Loving and the God Who Never Stopped Loving*.

Hosea’s Wife and Children (Hosea 1:2-10)

The name Hosea is like the name Joshua. It means “God is our Savior.” God told Hosea to marry a woman named Gomer. She gave birth to three children. Later, she left Hosea for another man. Gomer’s act was a picture of the way Israel had turned away from God. So God gave Hosea something more than words to give the people. Hosea’s marriage was a picture of God’s message.

The first child of Hosea was named Jezreel, which means “God scatters.” This was a message from God that the people of Israel would be scattered from their land.

The second child, a daughter, was named “Lo-Ruhamah,” which means “no mercy, no loving-pity.” The time for God’s

punishment had come. God's people would not receive mercy because they had followed false gods.

The third child was a son who was called "Lo-Ammi," and this name means "not my people." Israel no longer had a promise from God.

God gave these names to Gomer's children. These names were a lesson to show what would happen to Judah and Israel in the future. The nation of Israel would end when God judged the people. God would punish them for their sin.

Hosea Bought Gomer Back (Hosea 3:1-2)

Hosea's wife was unfaithful, and she left him. She cheated on Hosea with another man. Then she became a slave. But God told Hosea to go find Gomer and pay the price to get her back. Hosea put his love into action by going to get Gomer. The marriage of Hosea and Gomer gives us a picture of God's love. God still loves His unfaithful people. We remember how Jesus paid the price for us when He died on the cross for our sins.

Gomer did nothing to deserve Hosea's love. In the same way, Israel did not deserve God's love. The time would come when they would return to God. They would be sorry for their sins and repent in a true way. God would show them His goodness. He would answer their prayers for forgiveness.

New Life for God's People

(Hosea 14:1-9)

Hosea reminded the people again of their need to return to God. In the past, the people of Israel would bring a gift to God to pay for their sin. Now Hosea told them they must find the right words to say.

A gift offering is not important unless someone is sorry and turns from wrong. It is important for our words to be true. It is important that we mean what we say when we say we are sorry. This is how God will forgive sin. Then God will forget the sin.

The people understood that they could not look for help from other nations. War horses could not help them in a battle with God. They needed to know that the **idols** they had made and worshiped were not the One True God. Their only hope was to trust in the One True God and to turn away from sin.

In verse 4, God spoke clearly to His people. He made promises to Israel. His people would not need to be afraid. They would not need to think about God's anger. Israel could not buy God's love. God promised Israel many more blessings instead of anger and judgment.

God's blessings are like a picture of a beautiful garden. Earlier, in Hosea 5 and 13, God is shown to be like a lion or an angry bear. Now Hosea says that God will bring blessings that will come like water and plants

and trees. Water is often a picture of new life in much of the Bible.

Because God brought life, Israel could grow and bloom like a lily. The new life would last because it had strong roots like a cedar. The people would be strong in the Lord. The olive tree was a good place for shade and a good tree for fruit.

In the future, it would be God Who protects Israel. God would provide shade for Israel. Israel could be safe when they were sorry for wrong-doing, and then they would enjoy new life.

God asked Israel to throw away her false gods made with hands. All good things come from God. He is like a tree of life. The people of Israel could be free through Him. God always has enough to give.

Things to Think About

1. Turning away from God is not just an Old Testament problem. In what ways have you felt like turning away from God?
2. How do you think Hosea was able to obey God and pay for Gomer in the slave market when she had been unfaithful to him?
3. How could God love us so much that He sent His one and only Son to die in our place?
4. Have you found this to be true, that when you say yes to God, you must say *no* to the world?
5. How does the book of Hosea show forgiveness by Hosea? What does it teach about God's willingness to forgive us?
6. Has someone done a wrong to you? Do you need to offer forgiveness? How will you do that?

Hosea finished his book by telling the people to be wise in the future so they would not turn from God again. The ways of God are right. Only a silly person would not listen to God. There will be trouble for people who do not obey. But a wise person will keep the laws of the Lord. He will choose the right way.

Things to Remember

God wanted Israel to know how He felt when they did not obey Him. Hosea's story teaches us a lesson. Gomer's unfaithfulness hurt Hosea. We can bring God pain in the same way. When we turn away from God, He is sorrowful.

Hosea bought his wife back. This is the way God loved Israel. And it is how He loves us still today. He wants to be with us, and He wants for us to know Him.

Hosea saved Gomer when he paid for her to be free. God saved us when Jesus paid for our sins on the cross. We can return to God, and He will let us serve Him. We cannot let anything take first place over God. When we put God first, we will know God's love.

Leaving God out of our lives is dangerous. The only safe place is to be near God. He knows what is best for us. He will take care of us if we are near Him. We can follow the ways of God that are right. This is the picture of how we must live our lives.

Hosea 1:2-10

2 When the Lord first spoke through Hosea, the Lord said to him, “Go and marry a wife who is not faithful in marriage, and have children from that woman. For the land is guilty of not being faithful to the Lord.”

3 So he married Gomer the daughter of Diblaim and she gave birth to his son.

4 And the Lord said to Hosea, “Name him Jezreel, because I will soon punish the people of Jehu for the killing at Jezreel. And I will put an end to the ruling power of the people of Israel.

5 On that day, I will break the power of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.”

6 Then Gomer gave birth to a daughter. And the Lord said to Hosea, “Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have loving-pity on the people of Israel and forgive them.

7 But I will have loving-pity on the people of Judah. I, the Lord their God, will save them. But I will not save them by bow, sword, war, horses, or horsemen.”

8 When Gomer had finished nursing Lo-ruhamah, she gave birth to a son.

9 And the Lord said, “Name him Lo-ammi, for you are not My people and I am not your God. The Gathering of Israel and Judah

10 “Yet the number of the people of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ it will be said to them, ‘You are the sons of the living God.’

Hosea 3:1-2

1 Then the Lord said to me, “Go again and love your wife, even when she is loved by another and is not faithful. Love her as the Lord loves

the people of Israel, even when they turn to other gods and love cakes of dried grapes.”

2 So I bought her for fifteen pieces of silver money and ten baskets of barley.

Hosea 14:1-9

1 Return to the Lord your God, O Israel, for you have fallen because of your sin.

2 Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to Him, “Take away all sin, and receive us in kindness, that we may praise You with our lips.

3 Assyria will not save us. We will not ride on horses. And we will never say again, ‘Our god,’ to what we have made with our hands. For those who have no father find loving-kindness in You.”

4 “I will bring My people back to Me. I will not hold back My love from them, for I am no longer angry with them.

5 I will be to Israel like the water on the grass in the early morning. He will grow like the lily, and have roots like the cedars of Lebanon.

6 His young branches will spread out and his beauty will be like the olive tree. His smell will be like the cedars of Lebanon.

7 Those who live in his shadow will grow like grain and like flowers of the vine. He will be known like the wine of Lebanon.

8 “O Ephraim, what have I to do with false gods? It is I Who answer and take care of you. I am like a green cypress tree. Your fruit comes from Me.”

9 Whoever is wise, let him understand these things and know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, and those who are right and good will follow them, but sinners will not follow them.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 10: Jesus Rescues a Son

Bible Text
Mark 9:14-29

Memory Verse

“The one who has faith can do all things.”
(Mark 9:23b)

Word List

demon: an evil spirit that can possess a person and seek to harm him. Demons oppose God and want people to go against God. They are not as powerful as God.

My mother had strong faith. Someone once told her how much he was worrying about his son. Mother was praying for this boy, too. But she said, “Sometimes you have to stop worrying and leave something for God to take care of.”

In this lesson, we see a father who wanted Jesus to heal his son. He knew that Jesus could heal his son. But his faith was weak. He learned that Jesus’ power was stronger than his weakness.

Followers with No Power (Mark 9:14-20)

Jesus had taken His special friends, Peter, James, and John up a mountain. Jesus’ clothes became very white. Moses and Elijah came and spoke with Jesus. Peter, James, and John saw Jesus’ glory. Then they heard God’s voice from a cloud, “This My much-loved Son. Listen to Him.”

Jesus told these friends not to talk about what they had seen on the mountain. Together they returned to the rest of Jesus’ followers, who were waiting below. When they arrived, they found a large crowd. The teachers of the Law were arguing with Jesus’ other followers.

The crowd rushed to see Jesus. They were surprised when they saw Him. Perhaps Jesus still looked special after He had been honored on the mountain. We remember that Moses’ face was shining when he came down from Mount Sinai. Maybe the same thing happened to Jesus.

Jesus asked them what they were arguing about. He knew the answer, but He wanted to hear what they had to say.

The father of a boy came and told Jesus about his son. The boy had a **demon** and could not speak. Sometimes the demon would throw him down. The boy was getting weaker. His life was in danger. The father wanted very much to get help for his son.

Then the father told Jesus that he had asked Jesus' followers to put out the demon. They had tried to help the boy. But they could not do anything.

Jesus spoke to all the people. He wondered about their weak faith. He ordered them to bring the boy to Him. As soon as the boy came near Jesus, the demon tried to control the boy again.

The young man was like a doll in the teeth of a wolf. The demon knew Who Jesus was. It threw the boy to the ground, causing him to shake, roll around, and foam at the mouth. The boy's father must have been very worried. Every time this happened to his son, he felt great sorrow. His son was being used against Jesus by the demon.

Jesus and the Demon (Mark 9:21-23)

Jesus spoke with the father. He asked how long the son had been this way. The father told Jesus that the boy had been like this since he was a child. He had often fallen into a fire or into water because the demon had tried to kill him.

The father was worried for his son. He asked Jesus for His help, "If you can do anything..." Jesus asked the father why he had used the word *if*. That word showed that he did not really understand Jesus' power. Jesus told the father that he needed faith. With faith, everything becomes possible.

The Son is Healed (Mark 9:25-26)

The father felt new hope. He said, "Lord, I have faith. Help my weak faith to be stronger!" He was honest and humble. He spoke the truth. He said what many Christians feel. We trust Jesus. But we are not sure we trust Him all the way.

It may sound like Jesus was saying that we must have strong faith to receive His help. He said, "The one who has faith can do all things." But Jesus healed the son after the father told Him his faith was weak. The father confessed his lack of faith and asked for the gift of more faith.

Jesus' followers were there. The teachers of the Law were there. But only this father told Jesus of his great need. This is saving faith — faith in Jesus instead of oneself. The faith of this father may have been weak, but he was honest about it. He asked Jesus for help with his unbelief. Jesus gave him what he asked for. His faith was stronger than the faith of Jesus' followers.

Like the father, we believe, but there are times we also doubt. The father told Jesus that his belief needed help. We need to do this too. We need to be honest about our doubts. Even if our faith is weak, Jesus can still use it to show His power. He asks us to believe, and then He helps us even when our faith is weak.

People always want to look when something unusual is happening. The crowd

rushed to see what Jesus was doing. Then they saw what faith can do. They saw Jesus rescue a son.

Jesus gave an order that the demon should leave the boy forever. There was a struggle when Jesus made the demon leave. The boy was very weak. So people thought that he was dead. But Jesus took the son by his hand and helped him up.

Why the Followers Failed (Mark 9:28-29)

Jesus' followers waited until Jesus was alone. They wanted to know why they had not been able to throw out the demon. Earlier Jesus had sent them out in pairs and given them power over demons (Mark 6:7). They had done mighty works. Why could they not do one now?

Things to Think About

1. Think about a time when you had something very difficult in your life. Did you believe God could rescue you? Did you trust Him to rescue you? Was there a difference? If so, what was it?
2. Do you have any difficult thing in your life now? Do you believe God can rescue you? Do you trust Him to rescue you now?
3. Jesus said, "The one who has faith can do all things." Read the following Bible verses to see other times Jesus said the same thing: Matthew 19:26, Mark 10:27. Also read Luke 1:37.
4. Have you ever doubted God? What helped you overcome your doubt?
5. Have you tried to help others in the name of Jesus but seemed to fail? Do you understand how the followers felt?

Perhaps they had forgotten whose power had done those great deeds. They did not have the power to put away demons. Only God has the power to defeat the power of evil.

Jesus reminded His followers that they should have prayed first. Instead of praying, they had argued with each other. Prayer helps us know God better. The prayer of faith is necessary before anyone can do great things for God. Going without food to pray more can also help us know God. When we know God better, we are able to do God's will.

Things to Remember

The father did not ask for his own healing, but for that of his son. He had faith to come to Jesus, even though he told Jesus his faith was weak. Jesus listened and healed his son. Jesus also healed the man's faith.

It is good to know that Jesus helps us even when our faith is weak. It is not wrong to ask for more faith. God wants us to do this. When we ask for more faith, we are saying that we know that Jesus is the only One Who can take care of us.

God welcomes our prayers asking for help in believing. If prayer is powerful enough to send away demons, it can help us overcome faith that is weak. Faith in God begins as we tell Jesus how we feel and ask for His help.

Mark 9:14-29

14 When Jesus came back to His followers, He saw many people standing around them. The teachers of the Law were arguing with them.

15 The people saw Jesus and were surprised and ran to say hello to Him.

16 Jesus asked the teachers of the Law, "What are you arguing about with them?"

17 One of the people said, "Teacher, I brought my son to You. He has a demon in him and cannot talk.

18 Wherever the demon takes him, it throws him down. Spit runs from his mouth. He grinds his teeth. He is getting weaker. I asked Your followers to put the demon out but they could not."

19 He said, "You people of this day have no faith. How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to Me."

20 They brought the boy to Jesus. The demon saw Jesus and at once held the boy in his power. The boy fell to the ground with spit running from his mouth.

21 Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" The father said, "From the time he was a child.

22 Many times it throws him into the fire and into the water to kill him. If You can do anything to help us, take pity on us!"

23 Jesus said to him, "Why do you ask Me that? The one who has faith can do all things."

24 At once the father cried out. He said with tears in his eyes, "Lord, I have faith. Help my weak faith to be stronger!"

25 Jesus saw that many people were gathering together in a hurry. He spoke sharp words to the demon. He said, "Demon! You who cannot speak or hear, I say to you, come out of him! Do not ever go into him again."

26 The demon gave a cry. It threw the boy down and came out of him. The boy was so much like a dead man that people said, "He is dead!"

27 But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him and he stood up.

28 When Jesus went into the house, His followers asked Him when He was alone, "Why could we not put out the demon?"

29 He said to them, "The only way this kind of demon is put out is by prayer and by going without food so you can pray better."

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 11: New Life in Jesus

Bible Text

John 3:1-18

Memory Verse

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. Whoever puts his trust in God’s Son will not be lost but will have life that lasts forever.”
(John 3:16)

Word List

celebrity: a person who is famous or well-known

criticize: to say words of disapproval; to talk about the problems or faults of someone

mission: a task that someone is given to do

News spreads quickly when a famous person dies. It is always surprising when we hear about the death of a **celebrity**. In 2018, several famous people died. Della Reese was a famous actress and television star. Winnie Mandela was a famous leader from South Africa. Stephen Hawking was a famous scientist.

It is always shocking to hear someone famous has died. It seems hard to believe. Famous people are often rich. They are often powerful. They are often popular. It seems

like they have what we all want. But like everyone else, they do not live forever. Whenever I hear that someone famous has died, I wonder, “Did he know Jesus?” I think, “Did she have forgiveness of her sins? Did he have new life in Jesus? Will she be in heaven?”

In February 2018, a famous man died. His name was Billy Graham. People around the world heard him preach God’s words from the Bible. He did this for over 50 years. He travelled everywhere telling people how Jesus can rescue them from the punishment of sin. Billy Graham did more than talk about Jesus. He *knew* Jesus and lived to please Jesus. When I heard Billy Graham had died, I was sad. But I did not think what I usually think when a famous person dies. As a young man, Billy Graham asked Jesus to forgive his sins. Billy Graham had new life in Jesus Christ. Today, Billy Graham is enjoying God’s presence in heaven.

In today’s lesson, we read Jesus’ words that teach how anyone can have new life in Him. Jesus’ words are not just for the powerful. They are not just for the rich. They are not just for the famous. They are for everyone. They are for you and me.

What Did Nicodemus Need? (John 3:1-3)

In John 3, Jesus met an important man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a proud

religious man. He worked hard to keep all the Jewish laws. He was a leader of the Jews. He was well-known. Many people respected him. He was a powerful man. He probably seemed like the kind of man who had everything.

Still, Nicodemus came looking for Jesus. He came at night. There could be many reasons for this. Maybe he knew that night time was the least busy time of day. This would give him time to talk to Jesus. Maybe he did not want others to see him talking to Jesus. After all, Jesus often **criticized** religious leaders like Nicodemus. And the proud religious law-keepers who were Nicodemus' friends did not like Jesus. No matter the reason, it seems an important fact. It is even said again when Nicodemus visited Jesus' grave some time later. John 19:39 records that "the first time he had come to Jesus had been at night."

Nicodemus spoke to Jesus with respect. He called Jesus "Teacher." He knew Jesus came from God. He believed Jesus had power that came from God. Something about Jesus made Nicodemus want to know more. That is why he came to Jesus.

Maybe Nicodemus did not know what he wanted from Jesus. Maybe he did not know why he came to see Jesus. He did not even ask Jesus a question. Still, Jesus knew what Nicodemus needed. Nicodemus was a powerful and popular man. He was religious

and respected. But he needed what every person needs. He needed new life. Jesus told Nicodemus: "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the holy nation of God" (v.3).

Who Can Give New Life? (John 3:4-14)

Nicodemus had a hard time with Jesus' words. People are born as babies. A grown man cannot become a baby again! But Nicodemus was thinking about his physical life. This is the life we live with our bodies. Jesus was talking about spiritual life. This is the life we live with our hearts and our minds.

Jesus explained that a baby is given physical life from his mother's body. But spiritual life can only come from the Spirit of God (v.9). This was a strange thing for Nicodemus to hear! He had used his physical life to do many religious things for God. But he had missed something important. Jesus wanted Nicodemus to have new spiritual life. This is the kind of life we need to enter the kingdom of heaven (v. 12). Jesus had been sent from God. Jesus had known God's presence heaven. Heaven is the place filled with God's presence. There is no sin in heaven to separate us from God. Sin cannot exist in heaven.

New life starts with the forgiveness of sin. In order for God to forgive sin, Jesus had to die and be "lifted up" to death on the cross (v. 14). Jesus did not stay dead. He came alive

again. He defeated sin and showed His power over sin and death. This is the same power Jesus still uses to give new spiritual life. New life can only be found in Jesus.

Who Can Come to Jesus? (John 3:15-18)

The good news is that Jesus' power is for everyone! "Whoever puts his trust in God's Son will...have life that lasts forever" (John 3:16). God loves us so much that He sent His only Son for us. God's love is so great that He watched Jesus die a painful death He did not deserve. Jesus did that so our sins could be forgiven. He did that so we would not be found guilty for our sins. He did that so that we would not face the punishment for our sins (v. 18). Jesus still gives new life.

Nicodemus was a powerful and important man. Jesus offered him new life. Jesus did not come just for rich and powerful and important people. He did not come just for people of one race. Jesus came to offer

new life to all people everywhere. Ask Jesus to forgive your sins and give you new life today!

Things to Remember

God wants to save people from the punishment of sin. Each one of us needs God's forgiveness for our sins. Then we can have new life in Him. This life kind of life will last forever, even when our life on earth is over. God loves every person He created. He wants to save each person from the dark power sin. Have you been born again?

God's **mission** to rescue people from sin is now the mission of God's people. God uses His people to tell others about new life in Jesus. People everywhere need new life. Do you know someone like Nicodemus who needs to be "born again?" (v. 3). Tell them today how God can rescue them. Tell them about the hope of new life.

Things to Think About

1. Why do you think Nicodemus came to Jesus?
2. If you met with Jesus, what would you say to Him? What would you ask Him?
3. How did you realize that you needed new life in Jesus?
4. What would you say to someone who needs new life in Jesus?
5. What is your church doing to be part of God's mission to rescue people from sin? How can you be part of these things?

John 3:1-18

1 There was a man named Nicodemus. He was a proud religious law-keeper and a leader of the Jews.

2 He came to Jesus at night and said, “Teacher, we know You have come from God to teach us. No one can do these powerful works You do unless God is with Him.”

Jesus Tells of the New Kind of Birth

3 Jesus said to him, “For sure, I tell you, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the holy nation of God.”

4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? How can he get into his mother’s body and be born the second time?”

5 Jesus answered, “For sure, I tell you, unless a man is born of water and of the Spirit of God, he cannot get into the holy nation of God.

6 Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh. Whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 “Do not be surprised that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

8 The wind blows where it wants to and you hear its sound. You do not know where it comes from or where it goes. It is the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit of God.”

9 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can this be?”

10 Jesus said, “Are you a teacher among the Jews and do not know these things?

11 For sure, I tell you, We are talking about things We know. We tell of what We have seen. Yet you do not take Our words to be true.

12 I tell you about things of the earth and you do not believe them. How will you believe if I tell you things about heaven?

13 “No one has gone up into heaven except the One Who came down from heaven. That One is the Son of Man *Who is in heaven.

14 As Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.

15 Then whoever puts his trust in Him will have life that lasts forever.

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. Whoever puts his trust in God’s Son will not be lost but will have life that lasts forever.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to say it is guilty. He sent His Son so the world might be saved from the punishment of sin by Him.

18 Whoever puts his trust in His Son is not guilty. Whoever does not put his trust in Him is guilty already. It is because he does not put his trust in the name of the only Son of God.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 12: Praying for Rescue

Bible Text

Acts 12:1-19

Memory Verse

“Do not worry. Learn to pray about everything. Give thanks to God as you ask Him for what you need.” (Philippians 4:6)

Word List

escape: to get away from a dangerous place or situation

persecuted: to be cruelly or unfairly treated because of one's race or religion or politics

Corrie ten Boom was a young woman in Europe during World War II. The Nazi party was in charge of Germany. The Nazis put all the Jews in prison camps. Corrie ten Boom lived nearby in the Netherlands. She was not Jewish. Her family was Christian. Her family tried to help Jews **escape** the Nazis. Her family hid Jews in a secret room of their home. They did this so Jews would not be taken to prison camps. They risked their lives to do this.

But the Nazis found out what Corrie and her family were doing. The Nazis arrested Corrie's family and many others. Corrie and her sister were sent to the same prison camp. Very bad things happened in these camps. People were beaten, starved, and killed. There were many reasons for Corrie to be afraid.

It was a very hard time for Corrie. But Corrie and her sister kept trusting in God. Sadly, Corrie's sister died in prison on December 16, 1944. Twelve days later, God did a miracle. The prison camp set Corrie free. No one knows why it happened. Maybe the prison made a mistake. Whatever the reason, God used His power to make it happen.

Several days later, all the female prisoners who were Corrie's age were killed. God truly rescued Corrie ten Boom. Corrie spent the rest of her life telling how God rescued her. She wrote her story in a book. She travelled many places to speak about her story. Corrie later moved to California. She died there in 1983 on her 91st birthday.

In today's lesson, we will read about another time God rescued one of His followers. Today's lesson will remind us about the importance of prayer. It will remind us of God's power to help in hard times.

The Church Prays in Hard Times

(Acts 12:1-5)

After Jesus died and rose again, things were very hard for the early church. Many of them were **persecuted**. The Jewish religious leaders worked against Christians. Roman leaders worked against Christians, too. Years earlier, Herod Antipas cut off the head of John the Baptist. He also killed James with a sword. Religious leaders threw stones at Stephen to kill him. It was a dangerous time for Christians.

When James died, Peter became a strong leader among the Christians. King Herod wanted to kill Peter, too. So Herod put Peter in prison. This happened during the time of a special religious gathering to remember how the Jews left Egypt. While Peter was tied up with chains in prison, the church gathered together and prayed. They prayed for God to use His power. They did not know what God would do. But they prayed faithfully for Peter.

God Rescues Peter (Acts 12:6-12)

In prison, Peter was guarded by two soldiers. He might not have known his friends were praying for him. Peter might have felt alone. He might have felt afraid. No matter how he felt, Peter was trusting God. We know this is true because of his actions. Peter was not crying. He was not yelling for help. He was not fighting the guards. He was not trying

to escape. Instead, Peter was sleeping. Peter was resting because he knew God's goodness and power. He trusted that no matter what happened, God was with him.

An amazing thing happened while Peter was sleeping. An angel came to Peter and stood next to him. A bright light shone in the prison, but the guards did not see it. The angel woke up Peter. The chains fell off Peter's hands! Then the angel led Peter out of the prison. Peter walked out of the prison with no one stopping him. Maybe they didn't even see him. Every door opened for Peter. As soon as Peter was outside, the angel left him.

God did a great miracle to help Peter escape. At first, Peter thought it was a dream. But later, Peter knew that God's power rescued him from prison. God kept the Romans and the Jews from hurting Peter. God rescued Peter and kept him safe. Peter knew just where to go when he left the prison. He knew that Christians gathered together in Mary's house.

Peter Tells About God's Power

(Acts 12:13-19)

Peter went to Mary's house and knocked at the gate. A servant girl named Rhoda came to the gate. She saw Peter. She knew everyone in the house was praying for Peter. Joy filled her heart when she heard his

voice. She was so happy, she ran back to the house to tell the others. In her joy, she forgot to let Peter inside!

No one believed Rhoda's good news. They thought she was crazy. They thought she did not understand what she saw. They thought it might be an angel. They did not understand that God had answered their prayer. When they came to the gate, they were very surprised to see Peter.

Peter greeted them. He told them how God's power rescued him in prison. Peter told them to share the good news with other Christians. But Peter could not stay at Mary's house. He knew Herod's guards were probably looking for him. He did not want his friends to be in danger. So Peter left quickly.

The writer of Acts tells us that the prison guards were very troubled. They would likely be punished for losing their prisoner. Herod looked for Peter, too. Herod even killed the guard who let Peter escape.

Later, an angel of the Lord killed Herod. He was eaten by worms and died (Acts 12:23).

Things to Remember

In the beginning of Acts 12, Peter and other Christians faced hard times. By the end of Acts 12, God destroyed Peter's enemies. Acts 12 reminds us that God has power over all things, even the strongest enemy. God's power is unlimited. God's power often shines brightest when the darkness of evil makes us think there is no hope.

When God does miracles, we may not understand how or why He does them. When He chooses not to do a miracle, we might not understand that, either. But like Peter and Corrie ten Boom, we can always trust that God is with us in hard times. In the words of Corrie, "We have nothing to fear because Jesus is Victor, and He will never let us down. With Jesus, even in our darkest moments, the best remains. And the very best is yet to be."

Things to Think About

1. What qualities do you admire about Corrie ten Boom from her story?
2. How do you respond when people make things hard for you because of your faith?
3. Why is it important to gather with others for prayer?
4. Have you ever felt that God rescued you in some way? What happened? What role did prayer play in that experience?

Acts 12:1-19

1 At that time King Herod used his power to make it hard for the Christians in the church.

2 He killed James, the brother of John, with a sword.

3 When he saw that it made the Jews happy, he took hold of Peter also. This was during the special religious gathering to remember how the Jews left Egypt.

4 Herod took Peter and put him in prison and had sixteen soldiers watch him. After the special religious gathering was over, he planned to bring Peter out to the people.

5 So Peter was held in prison. But the church kept praying to God for him.

6 The night before Herod was to bring him out for his trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers. He was tied with two chains. Soldiers stood by the door and watched the prison.

7 All at once an angel of the Lord was seen standing beside him. A light shone in the building. The angel hit Peter on the side and said, "Get up!" Then the chains fell off his hands.

8 The angel said, "Put on your belt and shoes!" He did. The angel said to Peter, "Put on your coat and follow me."

9 Peter followed him out. He was not sure what was happening as the angel helped him. He thought it was a dream.

10 They passed one soldier, then another one. They came to the big iron door that leads to the city and it opened by itself and they went through. As soon as they had gone up one street, the angel left him.

11 As Peter began to see what was happening, he said to himself, "Now I am sure the Lord has sent His angel and has taken me out of the hands of Herod. He has taken me also from all the things the Jews wanted to do to me."

12 After thinking about all this, he went to Mary's house. She was the mother of John Mark. Many Christians were gathered there praying.

13 When Peter knocked at the gate, a girl named Rhoda went to see who it was.

14 She knew Peter's voice, but in her joy she forgot to open the gate. She ran in and told them that Peter was standing outside the gate.

15 They said to her, "You are crazy." But she said again that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his angel."

16 Peter kept knocking. When they opened the gate and saw him, they were surprised and wondered about it.

17 He raised his hand and told them not to talk but to listen to him. He told them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. He said, "Tell all these things to James and to the other Christian brothers." Then he went to another place.

18 In the morning the soldiers were very troubled about what had happened to Peter.

19 Herod looked for him but could not find him. He asked the soldiers who watched the prison about Peter. Herod said that the soldiers must be killed because Peter got away. Then Herod went down from the country of Judea to the city of Caesarea to stay for awhile.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Rescued and Forgiven

Lesson 13: A Second Chance

Bible Text

Philemon 1-21

Memory Verse

“If we tell Him our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins. He will make our lives clean from all sin.” (1 John 1:9)

Word List

authority: the power to give orders; to have control over something or someone

commanded: gave an order; forced someone to do something

reputation: the way in which people think about someone or something

request: to formally ask for something

Slavery was outlawed 150 years ago in the United States. It was an evil practice. It left deep scars on our country. Slavery in the United States was based on race and wealth.

Slavery existed in the Roman Empire, too. It was not based on race. But it was based on wealth. Many people were slaves.

Historians think there may have been 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire.

In the Roman Empire, slavery was a hard fact of life. Many Christians were probably slaves. Some Christians were slave-masters. Slaves who ran away from their masters faced strong punishment. They could be killed. Paul understood these things. This does not mean that Paul agreed with slavery. But it does mean that slavery was part of the world in which Paul lived.

Onesimus was a slave. Philemon was his master. Philemon was also a Christian. Paul was a friend to both Onesimus and Philemon. Onesimus ran away from Philemon. After Onesimus ran away, he became a Christian. His life changed. He began to help Paul in his ministry.

Paul knew things were bad between Philemon and Onesimus. But Paul wanted things to be different. He did not want them to live as slave and master anymore. He wanted them to live as Christian brothers. He wanted them to have a second chance. So Paul worked to help this happen.

Paul had experienced God’s grace. Philemon and Onesimus had also experienced God’s grace. By God’s grace, each one had been rescued from the punishment of sin. Now, Paul wanted them to share God’s loving-favor, or grace, with one another.

A Good Friend (Philemon 1-7)

Paul's letter to Philemon is different from his other letters in the Bible. Paul wrote his other letters to large groups of Christians. This letter was written to one person. Paul's other letters are full of advice about many things. This letter is about one problem.

Paul greeted Philemon with words of support. He prayed Philemon would have God's loving-favor and peace. Philemon was a good friend to Paul. He was a leader in the church at Colossae. Philemon had a strong **reputation**. He was known for loving others. He was known for trusting God. He was a joy and comfort to many people. His life was pleasing to God and to others.

Paul understood Philemon's personal strengths and good qualities. Philemon's friendship was a blessing to Paul. He was happy that Philemon was his brother in Christ.

A New Brother (Philemon 8-16)

Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter. Maybe Onesimus was in prison, too. One thing is sure, Onesimus became a Christian (v. 10). Paul cared deeply for Onesimus and knew he was in trouble. Before he became a Christian, Onesimus ran away from Philemon. Paul knew that a master could kill a slave who ran away.

Paul might have helped Onesimus become a Christian. Maybe Onesimus heard Paul preach about how Jesus can rescue people from the punishment of sin. Clearly, Paul now loved Onesimus as his own son.

When Onesimus was a slave, he was useful to Philemon. When he ran away, he was no longer useful. When Onesimus became a Christian, he became useful to Paul. Paul wanted Onesimus to stay with him. But Paul knew that Onesimus was Philemon's servant. So he sent Onesimus back. To help Onesimus, Paul made an important **request**.

Paul had much authority in the church. Paul could have **commanded** Philemon to give Onesimus to him. But that might have caused anger and sadness between the three men. Paul was wise. He saw a better way.

Paul understood the power of God's grace and loving-favor. He knew that God could bring forgiveness to the hearts of men. He knew that men could extend God's forgiveness to each other. So Paul asked Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother in Christ. He asked Philemon to treat Onesimus as a co-worker in ministry. And he instructed Onesimus to serve God together with Philemon. This would change their relationship forever.

A Fresh Start (Philemon 17-21)

Paul urged Philemon to take Onesimus back. He promised to pay any money Onesimus cost Philemon when he ran away. Paul let Philemon know how much joy this would bring him. He even reminded Philemon how much he owed to Paul. Paul tried hard to influence Philemon with his words. In the end, Paul trusted that Philemon would grant his request about Onesimus.

Paul's wise words and actions gave Philemon and Onesimus a second chance. This was important to Paul. It was a picture of God's grace. It showed how God acts toward each of us. God made people. But people do not want to live under God's **authority**. So people run away from God. They live life their own way. They follow a life of sin. But God offers forgiveness for sins.

The Bible says that "if we tell Him our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins" (1 John 1:9).

Things to Think About

1. With which man do you most closely identify: Paul, Onesimus, or Philemon? Why?
2. What risks did Onesimus face? What about the risks Philemon took in receiving him? And Paul in writing the letter?
3. What are you willing to risk in order to help others? What are you not willing to risk?

God can "make our lives clean from sin" (1 John 1:9). We can come back to God. He can give us a fresh start. He can give us a second chance. This is what Paul wanted to happen with Philemon and Onesimus.

Things to Remember

Paul's letter to Philemon gives clear instructions about a real life problem. So what do we learn from Paul's letter to Philemon?

- **Forgive one another.** People sin against each other. They hurt one another. But God can bring forgiveness. He can bring people together.
- **Help one another.** Paul saw the problem between Philemon and Onesimus. He took action to help. He made a difference in their lives.
- **Share God's grace.** These three men knew they had received God's grace. God rescued each of them from the punishment of sin. Paul encouraged them to share God's grace with one another.

Follow the example these men set. Forgive. Help. Give grace. Then others will see God's power when they look at your life. Your life will be like Philemon's. It will point people to God's grace. It will help them understand that God gives second chances!

Philemon 1-21

1 This letter is from Paul. I am in prison because of Jesus Christ. Brother Timothy is also writing to you, Philemon. You are a much-loved workman together with us.

2 We are also writing to the church that meets in your home. This letter is also for our Christian sister Apphia and it is for Archippus who is a soldier together with us.

3 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you His loving-favor and peace.

4 I always thank God when I speak of you in my prayers.

5 It is because I hear of your love and trust in the Lord Jesus and in all the Christians.

6 I pray that our faith together will help you know all the good things you have through Christ Jesus.

7 Your love has given me much joy and comfort. The hearts of the Christians have been made happy by you, Christian brother.

8 So now, through Christ, I am free to tell you what you must do.

9 But because I love you, I will only ask you. I am Paul, an old man, here in prison because of Jesus Christ.

10 I am asking you for my son, Onesimus. He has become my son in the Christian life while I have been here in prison.

11 At one time he was of no use to you. But now he is of use to you and to me.

12 I am sending him back to you. It is like sending you my own heart.

13 I would like to keep him with me. He could have helped me in your place while I am in prison for preaching the Good News.

14 But I did not want to keep him without word from you. I did not want you to be kind to me because you had to but because you wanted to.

15 He ran away from you for awhile. But now he is yours forever.

16 Do not think of him any longer as a servant you own. He is more than that to you. He is a much-loved Christian brother to you and to me.

17 If you think of me as a true friend, take him back as you would take me.

18 If he has done anything wrong or owes you anything, send me the bill.

19 I will pay it. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will not talk about how much you owe me because you owe me your life.

20 Yes, Christian brother, I want you to be of use to me as a Christian. Give my heart new joy in Christ.

21 I write this letter knowing you will do what I ask and even more.