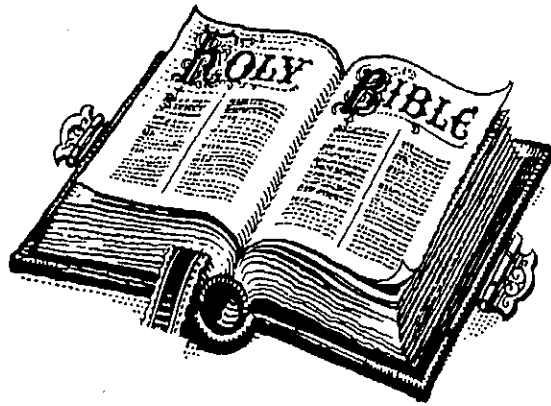


# A FAITHFUL MAN, WHO CAN FIND?



**A Study of Ordinary People Who  
Become Effective Workers In  
The Kingdom of God**

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

VICTOR CAMPBELL

NORTH MAIN CHURCH OF CHRIST  
VIDOR, TX



# A Faithful Man, Who Can Find?

## INTRODUCTION

"Most men will proclaim everyone his own goodness – but a faithful man, who can find?" The title of our study, *A Faithful Man, Who Can Find?* is taken from Proverbs 20:6. Our purpose will be to explore the Bible to see what our God means by the term "a faithful man."

The verse indicates very clearly that the Lord is looking for this "faithful man"; therefore we will be looking to define what or who a faithful man is according to God's word. The Hebrew word for "man" that is used here is not limited to the male; it is a general word that simply means "a human being." It is often used of "mankind."

As we determine the answer to this question—what God means by "a faithful man"—we will be applying this definition to ourselves to see how each of us, individually, male and female, fit the Lord's description of faithfulness, and how we can become more effective workers in the Kingdom.

We will see where we need to improve if we find we are lacking in a particular area of faithfulness, and we will find the answers to our dilemma in our study of the Bible. God has revealed to us throughout the Old and New Testaments what He means by a faithful man.

We will study the characteristics of some faithful men and women. We will look at their weaknesses and strengths. We will learn how God used these ordinary people to bring about His objective in producing salvation for those of us here in the classroom, and to the whole world.

What do we personally want to achieve from this study? Right now, and as we progress throughout this course of study over the coming weeks, we will each keep a sheet of paper that we will use to write down our thoughts as to what we want to become in the Lord's sight. It will be okay to add to your list. In fact, the sheet should be out at all times during our study so that as we personally learn something about our own character, we can immediately write it down on our personal character sheet. No one will be asked to reveal what they have written on their sheet. No one will be embarrassed if they do not want to reveal what they have written to the class. Our objective is to improve our skills in leadership in support of our brethren and to improve our disposition as servants to each other and to God.

To help in our personal character notes we have included some scriptures to provoke our thinking. These are not all inclusive, but simply to get us started. You may come across additional scriptures as we progress in our study or in your own personal study. If you find some scriptures that help you personally, you may want to share them with the class.

Our class will be very structured, and we will have an eye on our time usage during class. Some discussion will be allowed, but if I determine that the discussion is not germane to our study, I will kindly, softly and gently guide us back on track.

Some other ground rules for our class:

Diligent attendance to every class will be essential to your individual success and to our overall success. If you have to miss, try to call me beforehand so we all will be aware, and someone can be assigned to catch you up on what was taught in

the class session that was missed. Do your very best to be on time. There will be times when being late is unavoidable. However, if we have a mind to be in class 5 or 10 minutes early, it will help us get started and continue on a good footing.

This will be a no blanks class. We don't want to see blanks where answers should be. Obviously, this means you must be prepared for the lesson before class. This will also be a great help to the success of the whole class.

When you have pre-studied the class material, your attention in the class will be much better and your comments will be on track and more helpful to us all.

Keep your personal character sheet with you in your class book and keep it updated as we go along. Remember no one is to be embarrassed in this class, so let's not be tempted to look over anyone's shoulder to see what they have written. If someone wants to share what they have written during class, then they must share it with the whole class, not with just the person next to you. That's okay when class is over, but not during class.

Each one of us should team up with someone else in the class so that we can be a help to one another; to call each other to encourage being on time, and having our lesson prepared.

Remember, we want to become the faithful people that God is looking for. The ground rules are easy to comply with, so let's do our very best to be a help to each other.

Our opening scripture tells us very clearly what or who the Lord considers not to be a faithful man.

- "Most men will proclaim everyone his own goodness." Proclaiming our own goodness is opposed to God's will as to what a faithful man is.
- 1Corinthians 2:16 - *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*
- Romans 11:34 - *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counselor?*
- Matthew 7:22 - *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*
- Matthew 7:23 - *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

To avoid this sin of self glory we must set our minds on giving God all the glory. A faithful man will serve God with humility, as Paul told the Ephesian elders that he served the Lord with all humility of mind (Acts 20:19).

A faithful man will renew his mind "*And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect, will of God* (Romans 12:2).

The faithful man will be willing to renew his mind not only for his own salvation but for the salvation of others. By his own example, he will be proving to others the acceptable and perfect will of God.

There is work for all of us in the Kingdom. How will you contribute? Will you be a leader? Will you be a support person? Will you be an encourager? Will you be a personal worker? Let's all examine ourselves throughout this study and make the improvements and adjustments needed in our own personal character to be that faithful person that God seeks.

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**PERSONAL CHARACTER WORK SHEET**

*"O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter?" saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel. Jeremiah 18:6.*

*Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? Romans 9:21.*

*But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Isaiah 64:8.*

The purpose of the personal character worksheet is to encourage each class member to make personal notes about what they have learned, either in the class or from personal study. As we progress from week to week in our study, our minds will be provoked to make a personal examination of ourselves and thereby identify areas of service to God where we know we can improve. We will also learn of our personal strengths which can be applied to helping each other grow as faithful servants of God. Some of your strengths you will already know about. But if we do a thorough study of ourselves, we may uncover strengths that we have, but were not aware of. Feel free to share any of your thoughts and notes with the class. However, it is not required.

You will find two copies of your personal character worksheet in the back of this book. They are laid out similarly to what you find below. There is a line on the left to write down what you learned about yourself. There are two lines on the right for things that you want to do to change. There is also a box at the bottom where you make special notes or write scriptures that will help you with your anticipated changes.

**PERSONAL CHARACTER WORKSHEET**

Areas Where I Need To Improve  
***Here is what I learned about myself!***

What I Will Do To Improve  
***Here is my plan of action!***

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## ABRAHAM

### The Friend Of God

Our first character study is of Abraham, who is described as God's friend in James 2:23. Let's look at Abraham's character traits to see how, or if, they are similar to our own.

We learn in James 2 how strong Abraham's faith was in that he offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God. He knew that God was able to raise Isaac up from the dead, Hebrews 11:19. But Abraham demonstrated his faith in God in many ways, doing what God commanded of him, in most cases, without question.

At age 75, Abraham left his homeland and traveled extensively throughout the region from Haran as far as Egypt at God's command, not knowing where he was going. God promised him the land of Canaan, even though it was already inhabited. God promised that he would become a great nation and that through Abraham's seed, God would send a Savior. However, at this time, Abraham was 75 years old, and his wife, Sarah, was 65 and barren.

We learn of Abraham's courage in that he rescued his nephew Lot from captivity with 318 of his own servants after pursuing the king who held him captive, Genesis 14:14-15. We see his commitment to righteousness and allegiance to God, the possessor of heaven and earth, when he refused a reward from the king of Sodom. Abraham would not give the king of Sodom the opportunity to say he had made him rich, Genesis 14:21-23.

If we didn't go any further in studying Abraham's character, we might conclude that Abraham was some kind of super person, highly skilled in leadership and endowed with special knowledge of God. It would be hard, if not impossible, for us to see how we could possibly measure up to someone like Abraham. But let's look further into his character traits.

Although we have learned of Abraham's great faith, God has revealed to us another side of Abraham's character, the side of him that struggled with fear and doubt for his own safety. Also, he struggled with his lack of trust in that he withheld his intentions from God. Abraham was afraid for his own life, so much so that he instructed his wife to lie to Pharaoh that she was his sister. Because of this deceit, God brought plagues upon Pharaoh, Genesis 12:11-20. Abraham had in fact planned the deceit from the time he left Haran with Sarah, Genesis 20:13. He again succumbed to his fear for his life by telling King Abimelech that Sarah was his sister, which had some truth to it. Sarah was actually Abraham's half-sister. But Abraham omitted to tell him that she also was his wife, Genesis 20:1-13. We see

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that each time Abraham lied about Sarah it brought trouble to him, but God protected him from the consequences of his sin.

Abraham allowed Sarah to influence him to take her handmaid, and the handmaid bore him a son, Ishmael, Genesis 16:1-4. This was done without God's counsel, though it was a common practice in those days. Abraham believed God and trusted in His promises, Romans 4:19-21. Abraham and Sarah thought that they would expedite the promise that God had made. At this point (Genesis 16), Abraham did not yet understand that the promise would come through Sarah, though he would soon learn that, Genesis 17:16.

In another incident, we see more about the positive side to Abraham's character. Regarding the matter of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, we learn about Abraham's compassion toward his fellow man and his willingness to plead to God on their behalf, Genesis 18:22-32.

Observations:

- Abraham was not raised to know God. His father, Terah, was an idol worshiper. Yet, we see something about Abraham's character in spite of his upbringing in a home of idolatry. Abraham had a mind toward God. God knew him. God speaks of Abraham in Genesis 18:19. "*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.*"
- Some of us in this class were raised by godly parents, but some of us were raised by parents that did not have a mind for God. Thus, we were not raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, Ephesians 6:4. Some of us have this in common with Abraham.
- When we obeyed the gospel, we determined that we would obey God, not really knowing what was ahead for us. As babes in Christ, we were willing to submit to God's will and be led by Him, Romans 12:2.
- Abraham was told that he would someday possess the Land of Canaan; Abraham was convinced that God would keep His promise, Genesis 13:17-18. We have been promised heaven. We have not seen it, but we have faith in God's promise to bring us there.
- Do we have the same courage that Abraham had to go after and rescue the lost for the Lord? Our congregation has grown and our aim is to keep growing by seeking the lost and bringing them to safety in the body of Christ.

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- Abraham petitioned God for mercy for the righteous people of Sodom and Gomorrah. We are to pray for our brethren not only locally but the world over.
- Abraham was weak and sinned. Here also we have much in common with Abraham. But just as God knew Abraham and forgave him, God knows us. We must avoid sin, but when we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
- In spite of Abraham's failings, God was still able to bring about His plan of salvation through His servant.
- God had found a faithful man in Abraham, an ordinary man with whom we have a lot in common. The faithful man that God seeks is not a superman, but rather an ordinary man who will submit to His will.

**Questions:**

- (1) Because Abraham had a mind to do God's will, was it always easy for him? Explain your answer.
- (2) Describe some of the physical hardships Abraham had to undergo in order to follow God.
- (3) Describe some of the mental hardships he had to undergo in order to follow God.
- (4) God spoke directly to Abraham to remind him of His promises to him. Do we have a disadvantage because God does not speak directly to us? Explain your answer.
- (5) Do we see any prerequisites or conditions made by Abraham before he decided to follow God? If so, what were they?

(6) Do we try to make deals with God regarding how much we will commit to him before we follow him? What are some things like this that people might do?

(7) In spite of Abraham's triumphs and failures, God knew Abraham and had confidence in His servant. Do you believe that God can have the same confidence in you as His servant? Why, or why not?

(8) Because of Abraham's very close relationship with God, did he or did he not need the blood of Christ for his salvation? Explain your answer.

(9) Do you believe that God is still working among His people (us) to bring about the fulfillment of His plan of redemption? If so, how?

(10) What is the most basic thing (or things) that you have in common with Abraham or Sarah?

## JACOB

### Developing Integrity

*And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of, Genesis 28:15.*

These are the words that God spoke to Jacob in his dream after He had repeated the Nation Promise which had been promised earlier to Abraham.

The character study of Jacob is the subject for our lesson.

Jacob was born a twin to his brother, Esau. Jacob is described as a plain man, dwelling in tents, in contrast to his brother Esau who was a man of the field, a cunning hunter. Their father, Isaac, loved Esau because he brought venison for him to eat, Genesis 25:27-28. Esau was the first born, being that he emerged from the womb first, Genesis 25:24-26. God revealed Abraham to us as a man with good character traits; Abraham did as God commanded and left his homeland not knowing where he was going, but simply trusted in God. By contrast, God reveals Jacob to us as a young man who was envious of his brother Esau and who manipulated Esau to give up his birthright. Jacob took advantage of his brother's hunger and offered him pottage in exchange for his birthright, Genesis 25:29-34.

Rebecca, Jacob's mother, convinced him to deceive Isaac into giving him the blessing that he intended to give to Esau, his brother, the first born. Jacob disguised himself as his brother and lied to his father, who was blind, saying that he was Esau, Genesis 27:24.

Although Isaac realized that he had been deceived, he would not revoke his blessing from Jacob and give it to Esau, Genesis 27:35-37. Jacob became afraid for his life, believing that Esau would kill him, and then fled to the family homeland of Haran to find a wife at Isaac's bidding, Genesis 27:43-45.

Jacob dreamed of a ladder going into heaven with angels going up and down on it. He heard God's voice telling him that God would not leave him and that He would bring him back to the land of Canaan, Genesis 28:15.

Jacob awakened and vowed to God that if God would provide for him and bring him back to his father's house in peace, then he would serve God, Genesis 28:18-28.

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Jacob found Rachel and it was love at first sight. He went to her father, Laban, and agreed to work for him for seven years for Rachel to become his wife. But, after seven years, Jacob was deceived by Laban into marrying Leah, Genesis 29:21-30.

Now we see how Jacob has changed, and we see the better side of his character. Although he was lied to and deceived into taking a wife he did not want, Jacob agreed to work for Laban another seven years for Rachel to be his wife.

Jacob worked for Laban for a total of 20 years before he left with his wives and sons to go back to Canaan. During this time, Jacob has come to realize how God has protected him and bestowed blessing after blessing upon him. Although he was deceived by Laban, Jacob left as a very wealthy man with lots of cattle, Genesis 31:1-55.

We see how Jacob's character was strengthened by his devotion to God. Now we see a man who, instead of lies and deceit, has become a man of integrity; he now does more than is asked of him and holds no animosity toward Laban, though Laban lied to him time and time again. We see how God's influence has transformed Jacob into a good man, faithful to God.

A significant event occurred in Jacob's life as he left Laban and started his journey back to Canaan. His brother Esau had sent a band of 400 men to meet him. Jacob was afraid that Esau would slaughter him and his family, Genesis 32:1-7. Jacob divided his group into two parts, so if Esau killed one part, the other might survive. Jacob prayed a fervent prayer to God, asking God to protect him from Esau. Jacob knew his own unworthiness and that he did not deserve the least of all the mercies and truth showed to him, Genesis 32:9-11. Jacob sent his group on ahead of him and he was left alone, Genesis 32:22-30. Jacob wrestled with God's servant, determined to get his blessing. Finally, God's servant blessed him and gave Jacob the name of Israel—which means having power with God and man or having prevailed.

Jacob's fears of meeting Esau were unfounded. Esau has also become a changed man, holding no grudge against Jacob for what he had done to him in the past, Genesis 33:1-11.

The rest of Jacob's life was devoted to God. Although he went through many trials, he remained faithful to God. If we were to further study the events of his life, we would see that he instilled in his son Joseph a devotion to God which strengthened Joseph to endure many years of suffering.

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### Observations:

- How do we compare to Jacob? Do we have to resist envy and jealousy? Do we strive to resist the sin of deceit? Do we seek solace in God when trouble comes our way?
- We see how God took Jacob, a “deceiver”, and molded him into a man of integrity, a man who desired God’s blessings so much that he wrestled with an angel all night long to get God’s blessing, Genesis 32:24-26.
- Jacob, after being told by God to go to Bethel, took away all the idols from his household that they had brought with them when they left Haran and built an altar to God. We see Jacob’s fear and humble submission to his brother Esau when they finally met again.
- Even though Jacob had experienced God’s grace and mercy, he still was very much afraid for his own life and that of his family when he went to meet Esau.

### REVIEW

#### Before:

- Jacob – Envy for what was his brother’s.
- Conspired with his mother to deceive Esau.
- Acted on his plot to lie to Isaac about who he was.
- Became afraid of Esau for what he had done.

#### After:

- Sought God’s protection.
- Sought a wife and found Rachel.
- Agreed to work for seven years for Laban, her father.
- Deceived by Laban and Leah.
- Continued to work for Laban for a total of 20 years.
- Did no harm to Laban for what Laban had done to him.
- Humbled himself to his brother Esau.
- Continually gave honor and praise to God.
- Obeyed God’s commands to him through the rest of his life.
- Became an effectual servant to God, submitting to God’s will, bringing about the birth of his chosen nation.

**Questions:**

- (1) Was Jacob's desire for God to provide and protect him different from our petitions to God when we pray? (See Matthew 6:9-13 – the prayer of example.)
  
- (2) Although Jacob was very fearful to meet his brother after being gone for many years, what character trait do you see in him as he resolved to meet him?
  
- (3) When Jacob actually saw his brother, what do we see in his character now that was not present when he was a young man?
  
- (4) What can we learn from Jacob's character in how he reacted to being deceived by Laban?
  
- (5) Although Laban was rich and powerful and also a deceiver, who—between Laban and Jacob—was more in control of his emotions and reactions?
  
- (6) What leadership qualities do we learn from Jacob?

(7) When we consider Jacob's early life, particularly his dealings with his family—Rebecca, Isaac and Esau—do we see any of his character traits that are similar to what we have had to deal with ourselves?

(8) At what point(s) in Jacob's life do we see a change coming about?

(9) Jacob's eventual service to God was ... (circle one)

(a) short lived (b) sporadic (c) consistent (d) reliable (e) long lived

What made you answer as you did?

(10) Will you allow yourself to be molded and used in God's service as Jacob the faithful man of God did? If so, are there any changes you need to make? Why not mark those changes on your Personal Character Worksheet and then form a plan to act?

## JOSEPH

### A Man In Whom The Spirit Of God Is

A PLACE FOR NOTES AND  
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Joseph, Jacob's son by Rachel, endured hardship and injustice at the hand of his brothers; the brothers lied to Jacob saying that he had been devoured by a wild beast. Instead, he was sold to become a slave to Potiphar. In Egypt, Joseph was again betrayed; he was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and thrown into prison. During all of his suffering, Joseph did not at any time seek revenge or harbor any malice toward his persecutors, Genesis 37, 39.

The Lord was with Joseph and whatever he did, the Lord made him prosper, Genesis 39:23.

Eventually, Joseph was released from prison and elevated to the number two position in all of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, Genesis 41:43. Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream, saying that he himself could not answer, but that God was able to answer Pharaoh's dreams with an answer of peace, Genesis 41:16.

Pharaoh gave Joseph the authority to prepare Egypt for seven years of plenty and seven years of famine.

Joseph at age 30 was given a wife, Asenath, and she bore him two sons.

When the famine came, Jacob and his sons in Canaan heard about the corn in Egypt. Jacob sent ten of his sons to Egypt to buy corn, but did not send Joseph's brother, Benjamin, with his brothers, Genesis 42:1-4.

The ten brothers appeared before Joseph in Egypt, bowing before Joseph with their faces to the earth Genesis 42:1-38. Joseph remembered a dream he had before his brothers sold him into slavery, that his brothers would be in obedience to him (Genesis 37:8-9). The brothers did not recognize their brother Joseph, and Joseph did not reveal himself to them. Joseph accused them of being spies. Joseph arranged with his brothers for them to go back to Canaan and bring their youngest brother, Benjamin, to Egypt—but they had to leave one of the brothers, Simeon, as a captive in Egypt. The brothers still did not recognize Joseph. Joseph did not speak directly to them but spoke through an interpreter. However, Joseph was overcome with emotion and turned away from them and wept, Genesis 42:24. Joseph secretly arranged to have the money the brothers had paid for the corn put back into their sacks.

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When all the corn had been eaten and the famine continued, Jacob sent his sons back to Egypt with Benjamin to buy more food, Genesis 43:1-14. The brothers appeared before Joseph again, and again they bowed their heads to the ground and made obeisance, Genesis 43:15-34. Once more, Joseph was fraught with emotion and hurried away to weep after seeing his brother Benjamin. Joseph ate with his brothers and gave more food to Benjamin to eat than the others. At this meal, Joseph arranged the seating from the oldest to the youngest. The brothers were amazed at this, still not knowing who Joseph was.

They left the next day after buying more corn, Genesis 44. Joseph again arranged for their money to be secretly put back into their sacks. But this time, he had his silver cup put into Benjamin's sack, Genesis 44:2. Joseph sent his steward after them to search their sacks and find the cup in Benjamin's sack, and bring them back to Joseph. Joseph told them that he would keep Benjamin as his servant and told the brothers to return to their father. Judah pled with Joseph not to keep Benjamin but to let him take his place.

At this point, Joseph was unable to keep himself from his brothers any longer and broke down and revealed himself to his brethren. Genesis 45. Joseph assured his brothers that they should not be afraid for selling him into slavery because it had been God's will that he come to Egypt to preserve their lives from the famine.

Pharaoh told Joseph to give his brothers provisions and for them to go back to Canaan to bring their father to Egypt to live in Goshen. God once again spoke to Jacob and assured him of the nation promise and told him to go to Egypt that God would be with him, Genesis 46. He also told Jacob that Joseph would touch his eyes (that is, shut his eyes when he died).

Jacob died in Egypt and Pharaoh allowed Joseph to fulfill his promise to Jacob to bury him in Canaan in a cave which Abraham had bought, Genesis 50. Joseph's brothers thought that after Jacob died Joseph would seek revenge for what they had done to him. But Joseph told them not to fear, saying "Am I in the place of God"? He told his brothers that even though they had done evil to him that God meant it for good in order to bring it about to save his people.

**Observations:**

- God works His plan for Jacob and his sons to be the beginning of His chosen nation by allowing Joseph to become captive and sent to Egypt.
- Joseph demonstrated time and time again his absolute trust in God to carry him through all trials that came upon him.

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- Joseph was shrewd and astute in dealing with his brothers as a means to test them.
- Joseph gained the confidence and respect of Pharaoh and the Egyptian people.
- Joseph did no harm to his brothers for what they did to him.

**Questions:**

- (1) Through all of his suffering, do we see Joseph blame God for his troubles? Why do you think this was?
  
- (2) Other than Joseph's dreams about his brothers bowing before him and his ability to interpret dreams, do we see any other special talents that Joseph had to prepare him to become second in command of one of history's greatest nations?
  
- (3) Where did Joseph get the ability to interpret dreams? Since we don't have the ability to do such things today, does that mean God can't use us in His purposes?
  
- (4) Do you think that Jacob's upbringing of Joseph prepared Joseph for what he would have to endure (i.e. did Joseph know about God at age 17)?
  
- (5) What does God provide for us personally to help us endure hardship and distress?
  
- (6) Do we see at any time Joseph taking any personal glory for what he had become (that is, the second in command over all Egypt)?

- (7) Was Joseph's leadership ability suddenly endowed upon him, or did it develop over the time before he came before Pharaoh?
  
- (8) Are there any indications that Joseph had special abilities from his birth?
  
- (9) Is it a matter of weakness in Joseph's character that he did not reveal himself to his brethren, putting money and the silver cup in their bags? Explain your answer.
  
- (10) Do we see in the account in Genesis that Joseph was some kind of super person, or was he just an ordinary man who submitted himself to God and allowed God to use him?
  
- (11) Reading the Bible record, can you find any sins in Joseph's life? If you can find none, does this mean Joseph was without sin? (Support your answer with a Bible verse.)

## MOSES

### The Reluctant Leader

A PLACE FOR NOTES AND  
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When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai and told him he had been chosen to lead His people out of Egypt, Moses asked God, "who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt", Exodus 3:11.

After God assured Moses that He would be with him, Moses asked God another question; he wanted to know what he should say when the children of Israel asked who sent him and asked what God's name was. God's reply was that he should tell them "I AM hath sent me unto you".

But Moses still objected, saying to God, "They will not believe me nor listen to my voice. Moses was sure that the people would reject his claim that the Lord had appeared unto him, Exodus 4:1ff. God told Moses that He would give him signs that would prove God was with him.

Even after God had demonstrated His power to Moses, Moses still objected, saying that he is slow of speech and of a slow tongue, Exodus 4:10. God's anger was kindled against Moses, but God told him that He would send Aaron his brother to be his spokesman unto the people, Exodus 4:16. Finally Moses was convinced and asked his father-in-law, Jethro, to let him go so that he could return unto his brethren in Egypt. But notice that Moses still seems to have some doubt, as he told Jethro that he would go to see if his people were still alive, Exodus 4:18.

Moses, although at first reluctant, became God's statesman and ambassador, appearing before Pharaoh to deliver God's message to let His people go. Pharaoh responded with wickedness towards the people of Israel. They complained to Moses that Pharaoh abhorred them and would kill them with the sword, Exodus 5:21-23. We see again Moses' reluctance when he asks God "why is it that thou hast sent me?" And we see his doubt when he tells God "neither hast thou delivered the people at all."

We see time and time again God's patience and longsuffering with His servant Moses. Moses was told again by God to go unto Pharaoh and to tell Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go out of his hand, Exodus 6:11. Moses responds to God by saying "Behold the children of Israel hath not hearkened unto me, how then shall Pharaoh hear

me?" Exodus 6:12. But we see Moses' confidence grow as God continued to assure him of His power and to demonstrate it, until finally Pharaoh let the children of Israel go, Exodus 12:5-51.

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We see a dramatic change in Moses as the people fled from Egypt, with Pharaoh's army of chariots in pursuit. The people become afraid and complained to Moses that he should have left them in Egypt to serve the Egyptians, Exodus 14:1-12.

Now we see the once-reluctant servant of God encouraging the people to "stand still and fear not" for they would see the salvation of the Lord; the Egyptians, whom they feared, would soon be gone and they would see them no more. He told them, "The Lord shall fight for you and you shall hold your peace, Exodus 14:12-14.

At the command of God, Moses stretched out his hand and rod over the sea and divided it, enabling the whole multitude of Hebrews to pass through the sea on dry land. The Egyptian army went into the sea after them—the Lord allowed the children of Israel to cross—but told Moses to again stretch out his hand to bring the water down upon the Egyptians; thus the Egyptians all drowned, Exodus 14:21-29. When the Israelites saw the great work performed by God, they feared the Lord and believed the Lord and His servant Moses, Exodus 14:31.

Moses was the leader of the people for the next 40 years. After crossing the Red Sea, Moses led them to Mt. Sinai where God gave Moses all the ordinances that the people were to live by.

Moses was not too proud to take advice from Jethro, his father-in-law. Moses had become overwhelmed with the governing of the people, Exodus 18. Jethro advised Moses to govern in a more effective way by appointing men to govern the people over the smaller issues and only to bring before Moses the hardest cases, Exodus 18:19-26.

Though Moses led the people for 40 years, he did not lead the people into Canaan. When Moses brought the people to Canaan (several months after the Red Sea crossing), he sent 12 spies into Canaan to bring back a report about how the land was defended, Numbers 13. Two spies gave a good report that they could take the land, but the ten other spies gave Moses a bad report, telling him that they could not take the land because of the giants that lived there. Caleb and Joshua encouraged Moses and the people to go into Canaan and take it. But the people refused, saying that they wanted to return to Egypt. God became angry with them and said He would destroy them.

Now we see the strength of Moses' character and how God had molded this once-reluctant, doubtful servant into a leader of the people—a leader who would have the courage to

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petition God on the people's behalf. Moses with wonderful eloquence made a plea to God for the people, saying if God were to kill the children of Israel, then the nations around them would say the Lord was not able to bring His people into the land. Moses pleaded with God to pardon the people and let them live. God then honors Moses by saying, "I have pardoned according to thy word," Numbers 14:20. But God told Moses that the people must stay in the wilderness for 40 years, and that they would wander in the wilderness until they were all dead, except for the young children and two men, Joshua and Caleb, Numbers 14:29-38.

Moses himself was forbidden to go into the Promised Land because of his disobedience to God at the waters of Meribah, Numbers 20:1-13.

**Observations:**

- God was able to mold Moses, however reluctant he was to become one of His leaders. It eventually turned out that Moses was one of the greatest leaders.
- Moses seemed quite content to lead a quiet life in obscurity, tending his sheep and being married to Jethro's daughter.
- Even though God spoke directly to Moses, Moses still seemed reluctant to serve God. Moses was not like others whom God spoke directly to whose response was "speak your servant listens" (1 Samuel 3:10), or "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6).
- While Moses was convinced of God's power, he was still not altogether convinced that he was the right man for the job.
- Moses became a great leader of the people with on-the-job training.
- Moses did not allow power to go to his head and was not too proud to take the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro.

**Questions:**

- (1) Did Moses think that he knew more than God about himself? Explain your answer.
- (2) Do we think that we know more than God about our own character and lack of ability?
- (3) When we study the discourse between God and Moses on Mt. Sinai, why do you think Moses was reluctant to willingly and enthusiastically accepted the task God gave him?
- (4) Do we expect God to work according to our timetable? Explain your answer.

- (5) Did Moses expect God to work according to Moses timetable? Explain your answer.
- (6) Did Moses become the great leader that he was of his own accord? Explain your answer.
- (7) Do you think Moses was surprised when he saw the power of God manifested in Egypt? Why, or why not?
- (8) Did God want Moses to take some initiative in leading His people? – see Exodus 14-15.
- (9) Do we wait for God to open doors for us, or should we take the initiative to speak to people?
- (10) Do you think God used Jethro in guiding Moses, rather than speaking directly to Moses Himself?
- (11) Moses pleaded for the people to God. What other great leader pleaded to God on behalf of the people?
- (12) Moses died with the people still in the wilderness. What evidence do we have in the New Testament that tells us Moses is in heaven?

## JOSHUA

### Follower Turned Leader

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God's selection of Joshua to be a leader of His people differs somewhat from the leaders that we have studied thus far—Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Moses. Where these men had no previous experience in leadership, we find that Joshua as minister or servant to Moses was being well prepared for leadership during the time of the wandering in the wilderness. We first learn of Joshua in Exodus 17 when Moses selects him to lead an army against the Amalekites. The Amalekites were defeated as Moses' hands were held up by Aaron and Hur until sunset.

God told Moses to record the event and to tell Joshua that God would put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven, Exodus 17:14. We can learn of the relationship between God and Joshua developing when Moses and Joshua went into the tabernacle; there, God spoke to Moses as a friend, face to face. Moses left the tabernacle, but Joshua stayed, Exodus 33:11.

Joshua, Caleb, and ten other men were chosen by Moses to spy out the land of Canaan. Joshua and Caleb are the only two that come back with a good report, telling the people that they could take the land. However, the other ten men persuaded the people that they could not take the land. The people wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb, and God's anger was kindled against the people.

God vowed that none of the adults among the Israelites would enter the Promised Land, except Caleb and Joshua, Numbers 14:31. God describes Caleb and Joshua as wholly following the Lord, Number 32:12.

Moses asked God to set a man over the congregation, that the people would not be as sheep without a shepherd, who would go before the people to lead them, Numbers 27:17. God told Moses to take Joshua and lay his hands on him and to set him before the priest and the congregation, and that he was to have charge over them, and that Moses' honor should be put upon him, that all the congregation may be obedient, Numbers 27:18-23.

God had, on numerous occasions, told Moses to encourage Joshua to be strong and of good courage, for he must go with the people into the land which the Lord had sworn unto their fathers to give them, Deuteronomy 31:7.

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Moses died and God spoke to Joshua, Moses' minister, telling him to go over the Jordan and take the land that God had promised, Joshua 1:4. God told Joshua to keep the law, not to turn from it to the right hand or to the left that he may prosper.

Joshua went on to lead the people in battle after crossing the Jordan (which God parted for them). The first city they conquered was Jericho. As the Israelites attempted to take the next city, Ai, they stumbled. There is no record that Joshua or the Israelites consulted God, but rather that they took it upon themselves to send an army against Ai. They were defeated at Ai, Joshua 7:2-5.

After all of the assurances from God and encouragement from Moses, Joshua lost heart at this point and fell on his face and called upon God, saying they should not have come over the Jordan, Joshua 7:6-9. God told Joshua to "**Get the up! Wherefore liest thou upon thy face?**" God revealed to Joshua that the people had sinned by keeping some of the spoils from Jericho, which God had specifically commanded them not to do. Joshua, upon God's command, found the person who had disobeyed and put him and his family to death, Joshua 7:11-26. God then told Joshua to go up and take Ai. Joshua and the Israelites utterly destroyed Ai.

On a second occasion, Joshua made a judgment without the Lord's counsel. Joshua and the people allowed themselves to be deceived by the Gibeonites into believing that they were from a far off country, Joshua 9. These people knew that all the kings were about to do battle with Joshua and the Israelites. They were afraid of being destroyed and Joshua made a treaty with them not to destroy them. Later, Joshua found out that that story was not true, but rather than destroy them because he and his princes had made an agreement with them, he assigned them to being bond servants to all of Israel.

Joshua led the people to victory after victory; and after dividing the lands amongst the people, he died at age 110 years old.

**Observations:**

- o Even with all the training given to Joshua by Moses, and even though Joshua was a successful leader of his people, he did fail when he attempted to do things without God's counsel. Should we in our daily lives go it alone? How important is prayer in our daily lives? Should we adopt the attitude that God doesn't need to be bothered with everything that we attempt to do? After we have prayed, how can we get God's input and guidance in all that we do?

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- (7) As leaders in the congregation today, why must we guard against overconfidence?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (8) How do we guard against making the mistake of overconfidence and trusting in our own judgment?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (9) What lesson do we learn from Joshua's losing heart and confidence in God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (10) If we fail by making poor judgments, does that mean that God cannot use us any longer?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (11) After studying Joshua, what do you learn personally from his leadership?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (12) How will what you have learned from Joshua help you to become a leader in God's congregation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- (13) In our assemblies, we have a couple of songs that we sing about Joshua. What are those songs and what messages do they have for us?

## DAVID

### Shepherd, Soldier, King

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Our next character is young David, the shepherd boy who killed Goliath single-handedly with a sling shot. Do you remember how King Saul was reluctant to let David fight Goliath? The story is found in 1 Samuel 17. David convinced Saul that he could defeat Goliath, because he had in the past killed a lion and a bear single-handedly. On both of those occasions, David gave glory to God, not to himself, 1 Samuel 17:36-37. David defeated Goliath, and once more gave glory to God.

David's great victory prompted Saul to appoint him to lead his armies, 1 Samuel 18. The text tells us that David behaved himself wisely, and that David was a popular leader. But Saul became angry and resentful when he heard the song sung by the women of Israel that King Saul "killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

Saul plotted to kill David, but David carefully avoided being near him, 1 Samuel 18:11. Saul seemed to go back and forth in his view of David; sometimes he seemed to be for him and other times he was against him. Saul feared David because of God's presence with David. Saul gave his daughter to David in marriage, and made a pact with him that David would fight the Lord's battles. But Saul secretly wanted David to be killed by the Philistines, rather than having to kill David himself. However, David prevailed against the Philistines and was again victorious.

David and King Saul's son, Jonathan, developed a very strong bond with one another, 1 Samuel 19. Jonathan warned David that Saul was plotting to kill him; but Jonathan was able to counsel his father and convinced him not to have David killed. The fickle king soon changed his mind. David continued to win in battle against the Philistines, and again Saul became envious and tried once more to kill David. However, David slipped away and escaped from Saul.

David became a hunted man, with Saul's army pursuing him in order to kill him. Although Saul pursued David to kill him, David, on at least two occasions, had opportunity to kill Saul, but refrained from killing God's anointed king.

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King Saul's sons were killed in a battle against the Philistines, 1 Samuel 31. Saul was also gravely wounded and fell on his own sword to prevent his dying at the hand of the Philistines. David was informed of this by an Amalekite who claimed he had taken Saul's life, 2 Samuel 1. The Amalekite lied, possibly hoping to receive something from David. David did not deal gently with the man who claimed to have killed God's anointed. His lie cost him his life.

David lamented greatly over the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, 2 Samuel 1:17-27.

Upon Saul's death, David was made king of Judah, but Saul's surviving son, Ishbosheth, was made king over the remainder of Israel. Though Ishbosheth was king, it was not by God's authority, 2 Samuel 2-4. Eventually David became king over both Judah and Israel, 2 Samuel 5:3.

God made His covenant with David, 2 Samuel 7:1-17. Some parts of this covenant were fulfilled in Solomon, David's son. Other parts were fulfilled in Christ. Make sure to read this entire section. David's glory and greatness in battle were unequalled in Israel. He continued to defeat all the enemies of Israel. His kingdom expanded as far north as Damascus.

David remembered his friend Jonathan who had died in battle. As an act of kindness to Jonathan and the House of Saul, David restored all the land that Saul's family had lost; it was restored to Jonathan's disabled son. David did the same thing with others who had been good to him.

David was a great king, but he was not without faults. We all know the story of David and Bathsheba, how that David committed adultery with her, 2 Samuel 11. David had caused Bathsheba to become pregnant, but wanted to hide his sin. He brought her husband, Uriah, home from battle, hoping that Uriah would sleep with his wife and think that the baby Bathsheba was carrying would be his. Uriah did not sleep with his wife. David then plotted to have Uriah killed in battle. The plan worked; Uriah was killed but the story was not over.

God revealed David's sin through his prophet Nathan, 2 Samuel 12. Nathan illustrated by means of a story to David. David, thinking that Nathan's story was about someone in his kingdom, wanted the man in the story killed for his wickedness. Nathan then charged David of

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being that man. David repented of his sin. The baby born to Bathsheba was sickly and soon died. Afterward, David married Bathsheba. It was from Bathsheba that Solomon came—who was to be the next king of Israel.

### **Observations:**

- David as a young man did not fail to give God the glory for what he was able to do. (Slaying the lion or bear).
- God was with David in all that he did and preserved David from Saul's anger and jealousy.
- David honored Saul as God's anointed, no matter how evil Saul was in trying to do harm to David.
- David had a very comfortable relationship with God, not overconfident, but reverent, always viewing himself as a servant to God and also to King Saul.
- David sought God's counsel in every conflict that he faced, and with God's guidance, achieved his objectives.
- David allowed his lust to overtake him and did a complete turnaround from God, allowing his own selfish desires to take him down to the lowest wickedness. He had no respect for Uriah, and ultimately arranges for Uriah's death in order to attempt to hide his sin. David was a man who was close to God, and was promised by God an everlasting kingdom. David was shown time and time again God's faithfulness, yet fell prey to his own lust.
- When forced to face his sin, he immediately repented and sought God's forgiveness with deep sorrow and a contrite heart.
- David did not let his period of disobedience hinder him in his future service to God. He did not let it render him ineffective for use in God's service. **He allowed God's grace and mercy to restore him.**

### **Questions:**

- (1) David did not rely on his own ability to defeat Goliath. Why not?
- (2) David behaved wisely in his dealings with King Saul. What do you believe it means to behave wisely?
- (3) What usually happens when leaders like David and Joshua or King Saul do things without God's counsel?

- (4) How can we as leaders in the congregation get God's counsel?
  
- (5) Is it important for us to seek the counsel of other Christians in conducting ourselves in leadership roles?
  
- (6) Which is the more correct statement?
  - (a) David respected Saul and did not hurt him because he liked Saul.
  - (b) David respected God's anointed and would do nothing to harm him.
  
- (7) Because we learn of David's sin with Bathsheba and God's ultimately forgiving David, how should we view this regarding our own conduct as leaders in the congregation?
  
- (8) Did David's sin as leader of the people cause damage only to himself and Bathsheba? Who else was affected by it?
  
- (9) Was God's plan for David to rule as king hindered by David's fall into sin? Explain your answer.
  
- (10) We should allow God to mold us to be His faithful servants, but if we fall and become damaged, is God able to repair and continue to use us in His service? Explain your answer.
  
- (11) What would be the main obstacle for us to continue to serve after we have failed in God's service?

## NAOMI AND RUTH

### Your People Shall Be My People

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Naomi and Ruth were women God used to bring about His plan, Ruth 1. Naomi, the widow of Elimelech, lived in Moab with her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. Naomi was an Israelite, but Ruth and Orpah were Moabites. Both of Naomi's sons died. Naomi urged both daughters-in-law to go back to their own people. Orpah went back to her own family, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi and went with her back to Bethlehem in Judah. Ruth committed herself to Naomi to stay with her and even die with Naomi. They arrived in Bethlehem at the time of the barley harvest. Naomi was very bitter over the loss of the three men in her family.

Naomi's deceased husband was a relative of Boaz, a man of wealth, who had fields of barley to be harvested. Ruth asked Naomi to let her go glean grain from the fields as the workers harvested. Gleaning was a provision that was made under the Law of Moses as a means of helping the poor, Leviticus 19:9-10. The field that Ruth picked to glean happened to be Boaz's field, Ruth 2:1-3.

Boaz noticed Ruth in the field and inquired of his servants who she was, Ruth 2:4-23. Boaz was told that she was a Moabite, Naomi's daughter in law. Boaz determined not to let Ruth go to any other field, and even instructed his servants to allow some of the good grain to fall by Ruth and not to rebuke her when she picks it up. When Ruth went home to Naomi and told her what happened, Naomi realized that Ruth had gleaned Boaz's field, who was Naomi's near relative. Ruth continued to glean in Boaz's fields until the harvest was completed.

Naomi decided that since Boaz was a near kinsman, he would make an excellent husband for Ruth, Ruth 3:1-18. This would not only take care of Ruth in her widowhood, it would also make it possible that a son could be raised up in Naomi's family. See Deuteronomy 25:5-6. The Law of Moses made provision that if a man died, leaving no heir, that a brother (or other near relative) was to take the widow as a wife and raise up an heir for his brother. Boaz was willing to play that part, and Naomi was eager to promote that plan. As you read the story, you can see that Boaz was attracted to Ruth and allowed her to stay nearby him during the night in the winnowing floor. Boaz intended to go forth with the plan, but there was problem—there was another relative who was closer to Naomi's deceased husband, and he would have first claim to Ruth.

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Boaz, who was not the primary next of kin, sought out the first kinsman in the gate of the city and explained to him that Naomi had a parcel of land to sell and, according to the law, it was to be redeemed or bought by a kinsman, Ruth 4:1-22. Boaz told the kinsman that if he did not want to buy the land, it would fall to Boaz to purchase the land and to care for Ruth. The kinsman refused to purchase the land because he believed it would affect the inheritance he would give to his own sons; he asked Boaz to take the responsibility. Boaz declared to the elders that he not only bought back the land, but also would take Ruth as his wife. Boaz and Ruth had a son, Obed, who became the grandfather of King David, through whose lineage our Lord Jesus Christ was born.

**Observations:**

- Through the Holy Spirit, God reveals to us a glimpse of how He brought about part of His plan to bring us His Son, our Saviour.
- By using Naomi and Ruth, we learn how God blesses the two women who are in dire distress by bringing them back to Judah.
- We see how through His providence God arranges through a chain of events for Ruth, a Moabite, to become part of the lineage of our Saviour.
- We have to be impressed by Ruth's determination and loyalty to her mother-in-law, Naomi. She leaves her own country, trusts in God, and is willing to share in Naomi's hardships. Nothing was going to deter Ruth from staying by her mother-in-law's side, no matter what may come. She was even willing to stay with Naomi until death, Ruth 1:17.
- Notice that although Naomi was destitute, even to the point that she believed that God had dealt with her harshly, Ruth still demonstrated the utmost respect for her by asking her permission to go glean in the fields.
- Ruth worked hard in the fields to scrape together a few bits of grain left by the harvesters to feed Naomi and herself.
- It's clear from the scriptures that both of Naomi's daughters-in-law worshipped strange gods, but Ruth chose to serve the true God, Ruth 1:15-6.

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- (8) Why did Boaz go into the city, Ruth 4:1?
- (9) Do we see at any time God's direct contact with Ruth, Naomi or Boaz? Explain your answer.
- (10) Do you think that Ruth had any inclination that God would use her as His servant to help bring the Lord our Saviour into this world?

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**OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT**

Many women (and some men) believe that women cannot be useful in the Kingdom of the Lord because "all the important jobs are for men." What is wrong with that kind of thinking? Write a short paragraph below on the value of women in the kingdom.

## BARNABAS

### Son of Exhortation

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We first read of Barnabas in Acts 4:36. Barnabas was a native of the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea. Barnabas apparently became a disciple on or shortly after the day of Pentecost when Peter addressed the Jews in Acts 2:14ff. Barnabas was one of the disciples who brought his possessions and laid them at the apostles' feet for distribution amongst the brethren of the church, Acts 4:32-37. The apostles gave Barnabas his name, his first name being *Joses*. The meaning of Barnabas is *son of consolation* or *exhortation*. Apparently, Barnabas was a person who motivated others by exhorting those around him to obey the gospel and to be faithful, so much so that the apostles gave him this name.

It was Barnabas who took Paul to the apostles in Jerusalem after Paul's conversion and convinced the apostles that Paul had seen the Lord in the way and had spoken to Him, Acts 9:27.

Barnabas was sent by the Jerusalem church to Antioch to help in the great work that was going on there concerning the preaching of the gospel and making known the name of the Lord Jesus, Acts 11:20-22.

Barnabas was glad when he saw God's grace amongst the brethren and exhorted them to cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart, Acts 11:19-24. He is described by Luke as being a good man full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and that as a result of his work, many people were added to the Lord.

Barnabas traveled to Tarsus to find Saul (Paul) who had gone to his hometown after being in Jerusalem for a period of time, Acts 11:25-26. He took Paul with him back to Antioch and they both worked together with the brethren in the church and taught many people. It was in Antioch that the disciples of the Lord were first called Christians. Paul and Barnabas were sent by the Antioch church with relief to the Jerusalem church because of a great famine that had come upon the earth, Acts 11:27-30.

After returning to Antioch (Acts 12:25), the Holy Spirit commanded that Paul and Barnabas be sent out by the Antioch church on a preaching mission, Acts 13:1-3. They went to Seleucia and then to Cyprus. John Mark was also with them.

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While in Cyprus, they confronted a false prophet who was with the proconsul, an important man in the government, named Sergius Paulus, Acts 13:4-12. Sergius Paulus requested Barnabas and Paul to come and teach him. However, Elymas, the false prophet, tried to turn Sergius Paulus away from them. It was at this point that Paul blinded the false prophet. As a result, Sergius Paulus believed the gospel.

Paul and Barnabas went on into Asia Minor preaching to the Jews in Antioch in Pisidia (not the same Antioch they had come from), Acts 13:13-52.

After preaching the gospel, many of the Jews followed Paul and Barnabas, but many of the Jews did not believe and charged them with blasphemy. But Paul and Barnabus confronted them and told them that because they had rejected the gospel and had judged themselves unworthy of eternal life, they would now take the gospel to the Gentiles. Many Gentiles believed, but the Jews continued to oppose Paul and Barnabas and threw them out of the city. Leaving the city, they both shook off the dust from their feet and continued on to Iconium.

Paul and Barnabas continued through the region preaching and working miracles. The people were so impressed by the miracles of healing that some of them wanted to worship Paul and Barnabus for what they had done, but Paul and Barnabas told them that they were simply men, just like them, Acts 14:1-20.

Paul and Barnabas continued to be persecuted by the non-believing Jews as they traveled. Paul was stoned and left for dead, but he recovered and Paul and Barnabas traveled into Derbe, and then back to Antioch where they had left from. They reported to the church all that had transpired, Acts 14:21-28.

In Acts 15 Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to discuss the matter of Gentile conversion. It is clear from the teaching in this chapter that God accepted the Gentiles on the basis of the gospel and that they did not need to keep the Law or be circumcised.

After being in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch. After some time had passed, Paul decided to go out again and visit the brethren who had been converted on the first preaching trip. As he and Barnabas were about to go on this trip, a sharp contention arose between them about whether or not to take John Mark with them, Acts 36-41. John Mark had gone with them on the previous journey, but for some reason he had quit, Acts 13:13. Paul did not want to take him again, while Barnabas thought otherwise. Thus, Paul continued on without Barnabas and John Mark, taking Silas with him instead. Barnabas took John Mark with him to Cyprus, Acts 15:39.

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Many years later, Paul wrote in Galatians that Barnabas was caught up in discrimination against the Gentiles in that he separated himself from the Gentiles in order not to offend the Jews who taught circumcision, Galatians 2:12-14.

Observations:

- Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus and possibly was among the first converts in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.
- Being a Levite, he was of the chosen tribe to serve in the tabernacle of the congregation and was probably well-taught and grounded in the scriptures.
- Barnabas demonstrated that he was an encourager, a motivator, somebody who had great patience and compassion for his fellow workers.
- Barnabas also seems to have a special talent with insight to be able to discern a person's true character in that he accepted Paul as a fellow Christian very early after Paul's conversion.
- Also, Barnabas embraced John Mark when Paul rejected him, taking John Mark with him to work in the spreading of the gospel.
- As we read through the book of Acts, it becomes clear that although becoming a Christian first and being a man of learning and knowledge of the scriptures, Barnabas for the most part, even though a fellow worker, submitted to Paul's authority as an apostle.
- Barnabas was able to bring harmony and cooperation to the brotherhood as a motivator and peacemaker.

Questions:

- (1) Do we see in people today, Christian or non-Christian, the talents that Barnabas had and demonstrated? (Do we know of anyone in our personal life that had some of the character traits of Barnabas)?

- (2) What is the very first character trait of Barnabas that is revealed to us? Can you describe someone in the church today who has this same trait?
  
- (3) How would you describe Barnabas? Explain why you chose your particular answer.
  - (a) Strictly a follower.
  - (b) A take-charge person.
  - (c) A servant with initiative.
  
- (4) Is there any indication that Barnabas was well prepared for what God had in store for him as a servant? What indicators would you point to?
  
- (5) In general, how does Barnabas' background as a Levite compare with the background of some of the apostles, i.e., Peter, James, John and Andrew?
  
- (6) We read in the Bible how Barnabas was sent out by the Jerusalem church and the Antioch church. What does this tell us about Barnabas' willingness to submit to church leadership?
  
- (7) What kind of character trait do we see in Barnabas regarding his dealing with John Mark, Acts 15:36-39? Why is this character trait important?
  
- (8) Did Paul, the apostle, miss something about John Mark's character that Barnabas saw as profitable to the cause of Christ? If so, what?

- (9) Is the role of leadership in Christ's church always seen as a person who is in the forefront at all times, that is, someone who is before the congregation? Explain your answer.
- (10) Character-wise, do we see in Barnabas "the faithful man" that the Lord is looking for? Make a list of all the good characteristics you find in Barnabas.
- (11) In spite of all the good things that might be said of Barnabas, there are also some negative things. What things can you find?

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**OPTIONAL ASSIGNMENT**

Though Barnabas is an important Bible character, he often played a secondary role to men like the apostle Paul. Write a short paragraph below about the value of secondary roles. Isn't there a sense in which all of us have secondary roles?

## PERSONAL GROWTH

An essential element in the life of all Christians is a commitment to personal growth and preparation for service to God, as well as service to their brothers and sisters in Christ. Without exception, all of the faithful men and women that we have studied grew in their personal development in service to God. Not one of them had all the talent and personal character that would be required of them to achieve God's purpose. They had to develop and grow personally as they served God.

In both the Old Testament and New Testament, God often spoke directly to His servants or spoke through an intermediary such as an angel or a prophet to declare His will unto them. Typically, however, the majority of His servants learned God's will for their lives by means of written revelation, just as it is with us today. In any case, God declared His will for His servants. In every case, He wanted them to grow in their service to Him and to His people. In the New Testament, God has revealed to us through His Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit exactly what He wants us to change in our lives in order to serve Him and to be the faithful servant that He is looking for.

We must put on Christ (Galatians 3:27); "for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." This brings great responsibility to us. We are not just members of the church. Our responsibility goes far beyond and much deeper than mere membership. We are told in Galatians 3:29 "*And if ye be Christ's (the idea of ownership to Him) then ye are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* We become joint heirs with Christ. Hence, the concern that Christ had for our souls also applies to us regarding the souls of others.

Philippians 2:7 tells us that Jesus *made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant and (V 8) humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death.* We become God's servants not by being unwilling captives, but rather through our own willing submission, not looking to our own needs, but looking to and taking care of the needs of others as Christ does, and also as Ruth did towards Naomi.

Paul talked about the patience and faith of the Thessalonians in 2 Thessalonians 1:4. The patience referred to here was related to the suffering and tribulations that the Christians in Thessalonica endured. Also, 2 Peter 1:6 tells us we are to have patience. The qualities embodied in patience include calmness and constancy. Most of us have a measure of patience that we can demonstrate at times, but the patience that a faithful Christian must demonstrate is that of calmness, constancy and endurance. Jacob demonstrated these qualities in his dealing

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with Laban, as we saw his integrity and personal character develop for use in God's service. We must go beyond the normal measure of patience that we demonstrate in our daily lives, which may be very limited. We must develop the kind of constant patience that pleases God, a patience that is constant and becomes an integral part of our character.

Peter instructs us in 2 Peter 1:5-11 to give diligence to add certain qualities to our faith. One of the things in that list is "perseverance." Constancy is certainly the thought here. We must serve God with perseverance and carefulness, with steady, painstaking effort. Joseph, who had to endure so much in his service to God, did so with perseverance and longsuffering. He was careful in all that he did. He was steady in his service in Potiphar's house. He was painstaking when he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh and others. Although he suffered setbacks, he served God with a constant, steady effort. Never once did Joseph proclaim or seek his own glory. Believing in God and believing in Jesus Christ as our Saviour is absolutely essential to our salvation, but God requires us to add the things of 2 Peter 1:5-11 to our belief, and to give diligence in so doing. This embodies diligence in our study of God's word, and to constantly search the scriptures to know the perfect will of God and thereby gain the knowledge that God requires in His faithful servant.

We are to develop a moral excellence and that demonstrates right thinking and right character. This quality is called "virtue" and is among the list in 2 Peter 1:5-11. Read the text and you will see seven characteristics that the Lord wants us to add to our faith. Self-control is found in that list. We are to be temperate in nature. We are to have a sober and moderate character that demonstrates self-control, not allowing our judgment to become imbalanced through our emotions, conducting ourselves in a serious and solemn way concerning matters of the church and our personal dealings with each other. Abraham and David demonstrate a number of times these good characteristics.

In fact, all of the characters we have studied demonstrated their temperance in one way or another. The Lord goes on to tell us in 2 Peter 1:8-11 that if we demonstrate godliness, brotherly kindness and love, if these things are in us, we will not be barren or unfruitful in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Observations:**

- To become God's faithful servant, the faithful man or woman that God is looking for, we must go further beyond merely faithful church attendance, faithful worship and faithful giving. Our personal character must be under constant review, always being ready to make improvements, growing and becoming more like Jesus so that we can be useful servants to God in His kingdom.

- We must be diligent in our Bible study, in addition to doing our assigned study for Bible class. We must develop a thirst to know God's will for us.
- In our daily secular work, we are willing to accept that in order for us to be good employees we must keep abreast of all the changes that come about in our particular industry and occupations. Our diligence to God's cause must be many times higher than our diligence to being good employees.
- By putting on Christ, we must realize that there is no place for half measures. Christ wants the whole person to be devoted to Him every day, every night, and every week. Ephesians 6:11 talks about putting on the whole armour of God. We need the whole person to put it on.
- Our whole objective in being a pleasing servant of God is keyed to our willingness to submit to God without reservation and without holding back, but absolute and complete submission, James 4:6-7, 10.
- We must submit as Isaiah submitted in Isaiah 64:8, saying *we are the clay, and thou (God) our potter, and we are the work of thy hand.*

**Questions:**

- (1) Why is personal growth an essential element in a Christian's service to God?
- (2) Which one of God's servants that we have studied do we find had all of the personal characteristics and did not require any personal growth when God used them?
- (3) How does one "put on Christ"?
- (4) Having put on Christ, what do we become?

- (5) Does the patience mentioned in the Bible have the same connotation of the patience that we use in our daily lives, i.e. patience to wait in the checkout line in the grocery store? Explain your answer.
  
- (6) How did Jacob demonstrate patience?
  
- (7) Is it enough to simply have faith and believe in God to please Him? Why, or why not?
  
- (8) Describe what is meant in the Bible by the word *temperance*.
  
- (9) What will we not be (or become) if we demonstrate godliness, brotherly kindness and love?
  
- (10) What is it that we must have a thirst for?
  
- (11) How much of ourselves must we submit to God's use?
  
- (12) If God speaks to us through His word, how much must we study to become knowledgeable of God and His will for us?

## THE FAITHFUL MAN

God has clearly outlined in His word His description of a faithful man. We have merely studied a few characters from the Bible to learn what a faithful man is; however, there are many other descriptions of men and women whom God has revealed to us as being the faithful person that He seeks. Now that we have studied the characteristics of that faithful person, we must ask ourselves what God wants the faithful person to do in service to Him.

When Elijah the prophet mourned the fact that all the prophets had been slain and he was left alone, in 1 Kings 19:18, God told him, "*Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.*" God knows His people. God knows where they are and God uses His people to bring about His plan of salvation. These seven thousand of God's faithful men had not compromised with the people who they lived amongst in worshiping false gods. God was able to rely on His faithful servants. God relies on His faithful servants today to continue to carry out His plan.

Luke 19:10 tells us that the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost. Jesus also promises in Matthew 7: "*seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*" Again in Matthew 6:33, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" These promises were made by Jesus and are God's assurances that He has people in place who have not compromised His gospel and that people who seek salvation will find it.

The people whom God has in place today to bring seekers of His salvation to Him are those faithful men and women in this church. It was mentioned in a previous lesson that being a faithful servant of God and being dedicated to His purpose goes much deeper than mere membership and regular church attendance. We are the people whom God has in place to seek and save the lost. We are the people whom God has established to find the honest seekers of His will and give them refuge. Hebrews 6:18 says, "*That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us*": This is the work and purpose that God has for the faithful men and women. This is the purpose of our growth and self preparation by constant study—to be knowledgeable of what God's purpose is for us.

God's people are there at the door when the lost seek salvation; when they knock, we point them to Christ. Christ Himself is the door to salvation and its blessings, John 10:9. God's people point the way to the refuge that the seeker of His salvation is to find. We ourselves individually cannot save the lost, only Christ and His blood can do that. But the Lord's church is made up of faithful men and women

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who stand at the door and invite men and women to come in. The Lord tells them to knock and it will be opened; they can come in and find refuge. Proverbs 14:26 says, "*In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence and his children shall have a place of refuge.*" Psalm 9:9-10 says, "*The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.*"

What will the seeker find when they knock and the door is opened? Will they find you as the one who greets them? What will they find as they come into the assembly of God's people? Will they find you as their Bible class teacher? Who will they trust with their children? Will they find you as a teacher for their children? When the assembled are seated to start worship, will they find you making the announcements? Will they be sitting at your feet as you lead us all in singing praises to the Lord? Will they see you as a leader in the taking of the Lord's Supper, or as one of the men that bring them the bread or the fruit of the vine? Will they see you as you preside over taking up the offering? Will they hear your name as the one to lead us in prayer? Will they see you as the proclaimer of God's word to His people? Will you and your spouse be the ones who will lead them in Bible study at your home? Will you be the one they will call upon for help when one in their family is sick and in need? Will you be the one who brings them food when trouble comes to them if they lose a loved one? Will you be one of the deacons they go to for help from the church when they have a benevolent need? Will you be the elder that encourages them to do right and who watches for their souls?

Leaders are needed in the Lord's church. In our congregation, workers are needed who are willing to give of themselves wholly and completely to the Lord, willing to be used to fulfill the Lord's promise to the lost to come and seek His refuge. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth, 1 Timothy 3:15.

The seekers of God's will come to us in order to be partakers in the truth. Will you be prepared and ready to impart the truth to those who seek it? Leaders and workers in the church don't just happen; they are developed within the church by encouragement and help from other leaders and workers. God's plan of salvation is not a chance thing—meaning that some will be saved just by the chance of being in the right place at the right time. But rather, we are saved by the knowledge of God. God's plan is for *all men to*

*be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth, 1 Timothy 2:4.* Are you that faithful man or woman that God seeks to do His will?

### Observations:

- There is no other sacrifice to save the lost; the sufficiency of our Lord's death on the cross is declared in Hebrews 10:26. There is no other sacrifice for sins; Jesus is a perfect Savior. As we are God's faithful servants, our Lord was given us this work. We cannot wait for somebody else to do the work that He has entrusted to us.
- We have learned how God used common men, sometimes unlearned men, to achieve His objectives in saving souls. We must not say that we are unable to do the things in the church that He has ordained for us to do.
- We must continually add to our faith, as God commanded us. It is a never ending process of growth as we study God's word. Paul tells Timothy, *"follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ", 1 Timothy 6:11:14.*

### Questions:

- (1) What other method of growth does the Lord authorize us to use in our task of saving souls other than what we find in the Bible?
- (2) How much work is involved in carrying out the lord's commandments?
- (3) How many men are needed to fill the leadership positions authorized by God, i.e., deacons, elders and evangelists?
- (4) How many men and women are needed to fill all the positions for the Bible class program, i.e., teachers and resource personnel?

- (5) Where will the needed people come from who should fill these roles—teachers, song leaders, personal workers, helpers to the sick—where will they come from?
  
- (6) Does our study of faithful men indicate that these men refused to work because they were lacking in talent?
  
- (7) How long should we wait until we appoint qualified men as deacons and elders if the need is now?
  
- (8) If you find that you do cannot meet the qualifications for deacon or elder, what can you do to encourage others to prepare for those offices?
  
- (9) In what scriptures do we find the qualifications for elders and deacons?
  
- (10) At what age should a young man start to prepare himself for work in the kingdom? For help see 1 Samuel 3:9-10.



