

OLD TESTAMENT PEOPLE

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These are teaching lessons you can use for children or adults. For each of these sessions I have included an article teaching about the time in the person's life. Read this so you know the material and can teach it to others. Following is a page of questions to ask those you are teaching. This helps those who are learning to understand and apply what you have taught. It also keeps their interest and helps them remember the information in the future. You can read the questions or make a copy to give to each person. There is also a copy of the questions with the answers giving to help you as you teach. You can add to these answers or change them in any way you want.

I have pictures you can print to use or show on an electric device. This helps people to picture what is happening and remember it. It makes the story come alive. You can show the picture to those you are teaching and give them paper and pencil to draw it while you teach. Or you can make a black and white copy of the picture for them to color. To get these pictures email me at jerry@schmoyer.net and tell me which set you would like and I will email them to you as an attachment.

If you have any questions or comments please contact me at jerry@schmoyer.net

1. “ONE LITTLE BITE WON’T HURT ANYTHING”

Genesis 3:1-24

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

By Seth

What was the worst day in your life? What do you think was the worst day in the world? Hitler gaining power? Pearl Harbor? The Inquisition's start? The crucifixion? The worst day ever was the day Eve ate the forbidden fruit and Adam followed. THAT was the worst day ever! It changed my life and it changed yours, too.

You see, my name is Seth. I was born about 4526 BC when my father, Adam, was 130 years old. He lived to be 930 years old. Yes, Adam was my father and Eve my mother. I had lots of younger brothers and sisters, but it's the older two you know about: Cain and Able (Gen 4:25 - 5:5). My name, Seth, means 'substitute.' I was Abel's substitute. I never met him on earth. When I was born he was dead and Cain was far gone. It was a tragedy my parents never forgot.

Cain was very good at agriculture. He had that first-born determination and independence that drove him to want to be the best in all he did. He was religious, but didn't have a personal relationship with God. With him, it was all external show, going through the motions. He would be very quick to get angry when he didn't get his own way. I heard he was jealous of his younger brother, always wanting to prove he was better than Able.

Able was a shepherd, aware of the awful price of innocent blood being shed to cover sin. He knew it was just a picture of what God Himself would do for man one day in the future. He loved God and tried to follow Him in all he did.

One day, I was told, Cain's jealous anger got the best of him and he took it out on Abel. Still, God was merciful to him and didn't take his life in return. He did send him away to start his own civilization, not wanting him to continue to negatively influence those who were following God.

My parents were very hurt by this. They felt like a failure. They lost their first two sons at once. What a start for mankind! Perhaps if you knew a little about them it would help you understand all this better.

My father Adam, was a fine, outstanding man and a good father and husband. He was created by God as a full-grown, mature adult man. God then breathed His own image into him. But in order to understand Adam's world we need to go back even further, back to the very beginning.

In eternity past only God existed (John 1:1). It was then He planned creation and salvation. He then created the world in its original form (Gen 1:1; Job 38; Ezekiel 28:13). Before man or life was created, or the world formed into its current shape, Satan rebelled and was cast out of heaven for his pride (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezek 28:11-17; Luke 10:18). As a result he was cast out of heaven, lost his holiness, and corrupted God's original creation. One third of the angels followed him (now called demons).

It was then that God formed things into the world as we see it today. He did it in 6 24-hour days (Ex 20:8-11). He didn't use evolution to do it. Nor did the creation days line up with the geological ages. He did a pure, independent work of creation. The main appeal in evolution is that it gives man an excuse to reject God and escape responsibility to Him. If there is a God then man is responsible to know and obey Him and man doesn't want that. People are as proud as rebellious as Satan.

Anyway, back to my story. My mother, Eve, was created to 'fill up the empty spaces' in my father. She was a fine wife and mother, but had to forgive herself for leading her husband to sin. He

NEED FOR LIFE	“FORMLESS”	“EMPTY”
LIGHT:	1. Light made	4. Lights appear
WATER, AIR:	2. Water, air	5. Fish, birds
LAND:	3. Land, plants	6. Animals, man

never blamed her but took full responsibility for it himself. Too often my mother is only remembered for her role in bringing in sin, but she was a loving woman who taught us about God. She told me often about that day, the worst day that ever happened. She wanted me to learn from it so I wouldn't repeat it. Maybe there are some things you can learn, too.

Mother taught me that sin is always present. Satan hit them right away. They had no chance to 'be fruitful and multiply.' He'll hit you as soon and as often as he can, too. God allowed the testing by telling them to not eat from the one tree. It was a way of growing in their faith and trust. Satan, however, used it to tempt them to disobey and sin (James 1:12-16). His method was to get her to doubt God's word. He questioned if God really told her to not eat from ANY tree. I guess he attacked her alone with this because he thought she could be better misled. He implied God was withholding something good from them. He always knows how to make sin seem attractive, like bait in a trap.

Mother was wrong to listen to Satan's lies, but she then did something worse, she tried to argue with him. She should have quickly fled (I Corinthians 10:13). Satan misquoted God when he said God said they couldn't even "touch" the fruit. He always makes God out to be someone trying to take away man's 'fun.' That's what he meant when he said that God knew that when they ate they would be like Him, knowing good and evil (Gen 3:4-5). Using trickery and appealing to their pride, Satan got my mother to eat first, then my father. Eve was fooled, tricked into thinking right was wrong and wrong was right. Adam knew that wasn't so. He willfully sinned, knowing what he was doing (I Tim 2:12-14). The results they suffered were devastating.

Satan was right, they then knew good and evil. They immediately discovered, though, that

	PHYSICAL	MENTAL	SPIRITUAL
	Flesh Body Sensual man	Eyes Soul Worldly man	Pride Spirit Spiritual man
EVE	Good for food	Pleasing to eye	Gain wisdom
CHRIST	Stones to bread	All you see	Cast self down
US I Jn 2:16	Lust of flesh	Lust of eyes	Pride of life
	Lazy Drink-Drugs Sex Food Greed	Immodesty Greet, covet Steal, cheat Materialism Violence	Impress others Show off \$, clothes, etc Self-sufficiency Gossip
	Achan - Greed Jacob cheat Esau	David - adultery Solomon- women	Balak to Balaam\$ David - census Peter - fear

that knowledge wasn't anything good to have! Their fellowship with God was broken. Adam blamed Eve, and she blamed the snake. All three were punished (Genesis 3). What a day it was!

From that day on Satan never stopped trying to get men to sin. Sarah lied, so did Isaac. Abraham acted in fear. Jacob deceived. Balaam and Achan gave in to greed. David lusted and sinned. So it went through the centuries. Watch yourself carefully. Satan's good at what he does!

1. ONE LITTLE BITE WON'T HURT ANYTHING (SETH)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

How would you define sin?

Why did God allow sin to enter, why not have things so there was no sin?

Why do you think Satan tempted Eve instead of Adam?

Are there certain people you have a hard time saying no to, ones who can tempt you to sin? If so, what can you do about it?

Why does Satan lie to us to get us to sin?

What are some lies that Satan uses today that work?

What is so bad about sin, anyway? Why doesn't God want us to sin?

How was Jesus able to live a holy life without sin?

What must we do when we sin?

What can we do to have victory over sin?

1. ONE LITTLE BITE WON'T HURT ANYTHING (SETH)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

How would you define sin?

Sin is anything contrary to the will of God. It's not just what we do, it can be what we think, what we don't do, and good things we do for the wrong motive. Anything not done out of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). Anything Jesus wouldn't think or do is sin.

Why did God allow sin to enter, why not have things so there was no sin?

God wants us to love and follow Him because we want to, not because we have to. Having a live dog love you is better than a wooden one on a rope which you can pull around with you. But to do that God had to give us a free will. That means there was not only a choice to love and follow God but also to reject and disobey Him.

Why do you think Satan tempted Eve instead of Adam?

He knew he would have a better chance of getting her to sin and then she could get Adam to sin. Satan uses friends and people we know to tempt us to sin.

Are there certain people you have a hard time saying no to, ones who can tempt you to sin? If so, what can you do about it?

Not be with those who can mislead us. Pray for them. Ask God to provide godly friends.

Why does Satan lie to us to get us to sin?

Because if he told us the truth we would never sin.

What are some lies that Satan uses today that work?

Answers will vary but will include telling us the sin isn't so bad, others do it, we can confess it, God will understand, we're doing it for a good reason and we'll do it just this one time.

What is so bad about sin, anyway? Why doesn't God want us to sin?

Sin has terrible consequences for us, but that's not the main reason. The reason is because God is pure holiness and any sin is mocking His holiness and rejecting His purity. It is rebellion against God. Jesus had to die for sin on the cross. Our sins are terrible because they made Jesus suffer.

How was Jesus able to live a holy life without sin?

He was a man like us but didn't have a sin nature. He faced and resisted the same sins we face by turning to God and the Bible for help (Hebrews 4:15).

What must we do when we sin?

Confess (admit we have sinned) and ask God to forgive us (1 John 1:9) Then accept His forgiveness (Romans 8:1). When God forgives He totally forgets so He never remembers our sin.

What can we do to have victory over sin?

Learn the Bible and memorize verses that can help us. Remember that no temptation we face is too great for us (1 Corinthians 10:13). Pray and ask God to keep us from temptation (Matthew 6:13). Stay close to Jesus by praying and reading your Bible each day. Start the day with prayer.

2. SINGING IN THE RAIN?

Genesis 6:9-22; 7:1-5; 8:1-5,15-22

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

By Noah

"Ah, what a day! These old, stiff bones can't work like they used to! It's much easier to sit here and write on this old scroll. Let's see, Methuselah, Lamech and Noah (that's me). There's nothing to write about, nothing but our lineage and ages. What boring reading. No one is going to want to read this scroll. Everything here is always so dull!

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I think God is speaking to me. Yes! He wants me to write something. "When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.' The Nephilim were on the earth in those days-- and also afterward-- when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. (Genesis 6:1-8)"

"Wheww. I was starting to wonder there! 'God,' I said, 'Are you really going to destroy everyone else?' ... 'You have a point there, 1500 years and nothing but sin! But what about me and my family? How will we be spared? You want us to build an ark, what's that?' ... 'A boat, here, on this mountain -- people will laugh! Where will all the water come from?' ... 'Rain, what's that?' ... From clouds -- what are clouds?"

"OK, OK, so we make a little boat, I can handle that. We've made boats before. What's that? It's not a 'little' boat? Well, just what size are we talking about? 520' long, 45' wide, 75' high? But that'll take 100 years to build!" ... 'What's that, you say it'll take 120 years? I'll be 600 years old. People will really, really laugh!"

"And they did laugh, and laugh, and laugh. It was really hard building a boat that big by hand. I thought I had patience going into that project, but God really taught it to me then. People would watch and mock. I preached and pleaded every chance I got, but after 120 years I didn't have a single convert!"

"My wife trusted me, but it was hard for her to see me put so much time into the ark. That meant that much less time to provide for our family needs. That ark cost lots of money, too. Shem, as firstborn, totally supported me and his wife was the kind that would follow her husband anywhere. She grieved over her lost family, though. Ham was the family rebel, going the opposite direction of his older brother. He had a bad attitude about God and even me. He passed that attitude on to his son Canaan. I hated to see it but couldn't do anything about it. His wife was critical, gossipy and worldly. She believed in God but didn't exercise much faith. Japheth, the youngest boy, wasn't as faithful as Shem, but neither was he as rebellious as Ham. He did have faith, but was busy with his own life. His was unsure but trusted her husband. He friends, too, rejected and mocked her. We all learned to persevere, patiently work each day.

"When the ark was done God brought in the animals: two of each kind of unclean, 7 of each kind of clean. Then God shut the door and locked it. His presence was inside with us. That was our only source of warmth and light. It rained for 40 days and nights -- and we had never seen anything like rain before! There was tremendous erosion, earthquakes and volcanoes from the underground upheaval and continents shifted apart and layer of sediment were laid down. The canopy was gone, and for the first time we had 'climate.' I couldn't even imagine the changes going on in nature

outside. The water was a mile deep, and was putting pressure on the earth under it for over a year. What a time it was!

“Meanwhile in the ark, however, we were very busy with daily activities: feeding and cleaning up after animals. That took much patience and perseverance for all of us. When you feel like quitting, remember us building that big boat then taking care of all those animals for a year!

“Finally the water receded and, with the water canopy gone, we could see a rainbow for the first time. And clouds -- we never saw anything like that before, either. God promised that He would never again destroy the world by water. But what changes everywhere. I’m sad to admit I lost my self control when I drank fermented grapes and got drunk. Unfortunately I had to learn things the hard way, too.

“I lived another 350 years after the flood and died at age 950. My sons spread out to populate the world. Shem went to what is now the Middle East: Jews and Arabs came from him. Japheth started the European nations. Ham went south and the Canaanites and Africans were his descendants.

“About 100 years after I died a descendant of Shem named Nimrod was born. He was an ungodly rebel, a murderer. He was worshipped as a baby/god in his mother’s arms (the start of Madonna worship). He claimed to die and come back to life. He was truly a picture of the Antichrist to come!

“He built a special chapel on top of one of the large towers they were building everywhere. It wasn’t any higher than the others, but was based on worship of the stars and planets in the sky. God had written his plan of salvation clearly in the stars, but Nimrod perverted that to take the glory away from God. He wanted to unite everyone instead of scattering them as God commanded. He wanted the power and glory for himself, much the same as Satan when he rebelled before the world was created. God’s way of ending this rebellion was to have people speak various languages so they couldn’t communicate. Therefore there was no way they could work and live together. What a unique way to judge man’s rebellion. They didn’t want to patiently obey and serve God, but wanted pleasure and immediate gratification instead.

“ ‘We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.’ (Heb 6:11-12)

“ ‘Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. ... As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.’ (James 1:4; 5:11)

“Well, I guess this scroll isn’t going to be so boring after all! My life certainly wasn’t. I wonder how the rest of the story will turn out. I guess it depends if men persevere and patiently trust God as they live for Him each day or if they try to take matters into their own hands and run their own lives. It’s up to you -- which will it be?”

2. SINGING IN THE RAIN (NOAH)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did God send a flood to drown everyone?

Why didn't God destroy Noah as well?

Why was building the ark a test of faith for Noah?

Can you remember a time when you did something (or didn't do something) because you were a Christian and someone made fun of you?

Why didn't God help him finish it quickly instead of making it take over 100 years to build?

Are you able to stick with something when you start it or do you have a hard time persevering?

What can you do to persevere and not quit so quickly?

What do you think it was like being in a boat for a whole year with water everywhere? What would you have had to trust God for?

Why did mankind again disobey and build the Tower of Babel? Didn't they learn from the flood?

Have you put your faith in Jesus and decided to follow Him because you choose or, or are you just following Jesus because your parents do? What difference does it make?

What lessons can you learn from Noah's life?

2. SINGING IN THE RAIN (NOAH)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did God send a flood to drown everyone?

Mankind was sinning in terrible ways, even worse than today. God is a holy and just God who hates sin. By destroying everyone God wanted to start over again.

Why didn't God destroy Noah as well?

Noah deserved death, everyone does. But God had mercy on him because he put his faith in God. God used Noah and his family to repopulate the earth.

Why was building the ark a test of faith for Noah?

It had never rained before. There were no oceans, and he spends over 100 years building this very large boat on the top of a mountain. Everyone must have laughed at him!

Can you remember a time when you did something (or didn't do something) because you were a Christian and someone made fun of you? **Answers will vary.**

Why didn't God help him finish it quickly instead of making it take over 100 years to build?

God wants to teach us perseverance and patience (James 1:2-8). Starting something for God is easy, but staying with it for a long time is much harder. God is very patient and persevering with us and wants us to be that way as well. Then we are more like Him.

Are you able to stick with something when you start it or do you have a hard time persevering?

Answers will vary

What can you do to persevere and not quit so quickly?

You can write down your goals and commitments/ Review them each day. Remember WHY you are doing something. Memorize Scripture that talks about perseverance (James 1:2-8, etc.). Pray for the fruits of the Spirit of patience and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Have a friend encourage you and hold you accountable to finish what you commit to. Make sure that you only start things God wants you to do and not start too many things at once.

What do you think it was like being in a boat for a whole year with water everywhere? What would you have had to trust God for?

Everything! Food, health, that the boat wouldn't leak, etc. Especially you would have to trust Him that the water would go down and you could get off the boat before you ran out of food.

Why did mankind again disobey and build the Tower of Babel? Didn't they learn from the flood?

It was about 500 years later and they forgot. Each generation needs to learn to trust God for itself.

Have you put your faith in Jesus and decided to follow Him because you choose or, or are you just following Jesus because your parents do? What difference does it make?

Answers will vary, but each one must decide for themselves to follow Jesus and not just do it because that's how they were raised and their family does.

What lessons can you learn from Noah's life?

Answers will vary, but perseverance, faithfulness, patience and obedience stand out.

3. TESTING! TESTING!

Genesis 12:1-7; 22:1-18

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

By Abraham

Do you like tests? I don't think anyone really does. They are necessary, though. They sharpen our skills and hold us accountable. They strengthen us and cause us to grow in whatever area we are being tested in. One could say life is but a series of tests. I know mine obviously was. Let me tell you about them and I'll bet you can see some close parallels in your own life. God wants to increase our faith muscles, and it takes pressure to make a muscle grow. God only wants to stretch us (like a rubber band), it's Satan who comes along and turns God's opportunity to grow into an opportunity to sin (James 1:12-15).

My name is Abraham, first Abram then changed by God to Abraham. I was born about 4500 years after Adam and about 2200 years before Jesus. My story starts in Genesis 12. The first 11 chapters of Genesis are God's wide-angle lens of history, covering those 4500 years in brief outline form. When the account gets to me it slows down to a crawl and God switches to His close-up lens. It's not that I'm so important, but that God used me to start His chosen nation, the Jews. He could have used Job or Melchizedek, outstanding believers who were also alive at my time. He chose me, the weakest, so He would get all the honor and glory for what He did. I certainly couldn't claim any of it! He wanted a nation to live for Him by faith. He wanted a people to use to reveal Himself to the world, to give the world the Bible and the Savior. He sought to teach me faith to pass on to my descendants. That is what all my tests were about. Some I passed, others I failed. You can keep count if you wish.

1. LEAVE UR (Genesis 11:24 - 12:9) God told me to leave Ur, the most advanced city of its day where the moon was worshipped. I had been there 60 years and it was hard to leave. I passed in that I went, heading to Haran 600 miles away. I failed in that I took my father and nephew, which was against God's orders and which caused me much trouble. I had to wait in Haran 15 years before I could continue until my sick father died. Then I went 400 miles to Palestine. By this time I was 75 years old.

2. FAMINE (Genesis 12:10-20) There was a famine in the land shortly after I arrived, and, instead of staying and trusting God I headed to Egypt (a picture of the world) to find food. I always had a problem with fear. I even said Sarah was my sister to protect my own life. If God wouldn't have saved us from Pharaoh that would have been the end of this new nation God was forming. He was faithful even when I wasn't.

3. WEALTH (Genesis 13:1-4) God had made me very wealthy in Egypt, a temptation to trust in the wealth instead of Him but I was faithful (Psalm 118:8-9; Proverbs 28:25).

4. CONFLICT WITH LOT (Genesis 13:5-18) Soon there wasn't enough land for Lot and myself so I let him have first choice, even though it was all mine. He chose the best for himself - Sodom.

5. LOT CAPTURED (Genesis 14:1-16) Lot got into all kinds of sin in Sodom. When enemies defeated Sodom, I had to decide if I would risk my life to rescue Lot. I went.

6. POWER & WEALTH (Genesis 14:17-24) Then the king of Sodom tried to give me riches for saving them all, but I knew God wanted me to depend only on Him so I turned them down, with the encouragement and support of Melchizedek (Psalm 40:4).

- 7. SON PROMISED** (Genesis 15:1-21) Even though physically Sarah was way too old, God said I would have an heir (son). It was hard to believe, especially when time passed and nothing happened. I had to learn to trust God totally (Psalm 27:14; 37:5).
- 8. HAGAR** (Genesis 16:1-4) While waiting Sarah came up with a plan that was culturally acceptable. It was for me to have a son by her servant and consider it hers. It seemed like a good way to solve the problem, and Sarah could be quite persuasive! I gave it.
- 9. ISHMAEL** (Genesis 16:5-16) Having a son by Hagar just didn't work out. There was constant jealousy and turmoil in the family. Sarah told me to kick them out -- and unfortunately I did.
- 10. OBEY (CIRCUMCISION)** (Genesis 17:1-27) By now I was 99, and still no son. I was too old to father a child, and Sarah way too old to conceive. Still, God told me to have all of our males circumcised as a sign of faith in His promise of a coming son. He even changed our names. I responded in faith and obeyed Him.
- 11. SON NEXT YEAR** (Genesis 18:1-15) Now God's promises got even more specific. He said we'd have a son within the next year. Sarah was skeptical, but I believed God and not her.
- 12. INTERCESSION** (Genesis 18:16-33) God showed me that Sodom and Gomorrah were going to be judged for their sins. Lot deserved to die, too, but I interceded for him, believing God could spare him in His mercy if He chose. God promised He would.
- 13. LIE ABOUT SARAH** (Genesis 20:1-17) This retest was the same as test # 2, protecting myself by saying Sarah was my sister (so when she was taken to Pharaoh's harem I wouldn't be killed) or trust God by staying out of Egypt in the first place! Again I failed.
- 14. ISHMAEL SENT OUT** (Genesis 21:1-21) I didn't fail all my retests, though. When Sarah again wanted Hagar and Ishmael kicked out I went to God, willing to do whatever HE said. He said it was time for them to go and He'd take care of them, which He did. Finally I was able to put God above Sarah's pressure and my own fear and do what was right.
- 15. ISAAC SACRIFICED** (Genesis 22:1-19) My faith in God was really tested when God told me to take Isaac and sacrifice him to God, but I did obey! Praise God for the strength to obey Him!
- 16. SARAH DIES** (Genesis 23:1-20) My wife, Sarah, died when she was 127 years old. Life was empty without my mate. For all God had promised me, I didn't even have land to bury her on! I had to trust that God knew best when He took my life's mate. I also had to trust Him to help me be both mother and father to Isaac. God provided, even providing me with another wife, Keturah.
- 17. ISAAC'S WIFE** (Genesis 24:1-9) Trusting God for a wife for Isaac was hard, but I followed His leading and sent Eleazar back to my home area to find a wife who was a believer in God. God provided Rebekah for Isaac.
- 18. DEATH** (Genesis 25:1-11) I lived to be 175. My last test was to trust God when I was facing death, to trust Him with my soul at death and for all eternity. I had faith in Him and died in peace (Isaiah 26:4; Ps 9:9-10).
- 19. WHOLE LIFE** I guess you could say my whole life was a test. I passed some and failed others. I did pass more than I failed and God was good and merciful to me. He included me as an example of faith in His "Hall of Faith and Fame," Hebrews 11:8-19. The Jews still know me as the "Father of the Faithful."
- What about you? If God was keeping score in your life, how is your pass-fail ratio? How is it lately, any improvement? Remember, with HIS help you can do all things (Acts 1:8; Rom 15:13; Eph 3:16).

3. TESTING! TESTING! (ABRAHAM)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did God choose Abraham?

Why did God put Abraham through so many tests?

Name some other Bible people that God tested. What was the test? Did they pass?

How many of Abraham's tests can you name?

Which do you think was the hardest test for him? Why was it the hardest?

What are some of the hardest tests you or someone you know has faced?

Did you (or the person you talked about) pass or fail the tests you just talked about? If they failed, why did they fail? If they passed, why do you think they passed?

What are some of the every-day tests all Christians face?

Why do you think God wanted Abraham to sacrifice his only son?

What is the person or thing that means most to you, the thing that would be hardest to give up? Would you be willing to give it up to God, trusting Him to know what is best for you?

Try to think of the things that come into your life as tests – opportunities to trust God. What tests can you expect today and tomorrow? How should you respond in order to pass them?

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By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did God choose Abraham?

Abraham believed in God, not the other gods around them. He wanted to start a new nation from Abraham to spread His message to the world.

Why did God put Abraham through so many tests?

Tests are opportunities to stretch our faith muscles and grow in faith. They give us a chance to trust God and live in obedience to Him. There would be no opportunity to obey and follow if there wasn't also an opportunity to disobey and do what we want instead.

Name some other Bible people that God tested. What was the test? Did they pass?

Job was tested to trust God when suffering. (He passed). Samson, to live in obedience to God (he failed). Daniel and 3 friends at lions den & fiery furnace to obey God instead of give in (they passed). Lot to separate from sin and follow God (he failed). Peter to stay faithful when asked if he followed Jesus (he failed). Everyone in the Bible was tested, even Jesus (He passed!).

How many of Abraham's tests can you name?

See lesson paper.

Which do you think was the hardest test for him? Why was it the hardest?

Answers will vary and no one knows, but leaving his home and sacrificing Isaac must have been two of the hardest.

What are some of the hardest tests you or someone you know has faced?

Answers will vary.

Did you (or the person you talked about) pass or fail the tests you just talked about? If they failed, why did they fail? If they passed, why do you think they passed?

Answers will vary.

What are some of the every-day tests all Christians face?

Answers will vary. We all face tests of faithfulness, honesty, integrity, courage, patience, compassion, sharing, forgiving, yielding and trusting God for what we don't understand.

Why do you think God wanted Abraham to sacrifice his only son?

Abraham depended on people instead of God. He brought his father and nephew with him when God said to leave them in Ur. Now God wants to make sure Abraham puts God before his most prized possession, his son. God needs to be first in all of our lives?

What is the person or thing that means most to you, the thing that would be hardest to give up?

Would you be willing to give it up to God, trusting Him to know what is best for you?

This is very hard, but we all must be willing to give up everything to follow Jesus.

Try to think of the things that come into your life as tests – opportunities to trust God. What tests can you expect today and tomorrow? How should you respond in order to pass them?

Answers will vary.

4. WHEN COUNTING TO 10 DOESN'T WORK

Exodus 2:1-15; 3:1-10; 14:10-31; Numbers 20:1-12

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

By Moses

"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" (Eph 4:26)
"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice" (Eph 4:31). "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Eph 4:1-2). "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col 3:12-13). These verses were all written by Paul, a man who lived 1500 years after me. They are in the New Testament. I didn't have them to read in my time, yet I knew the truths they taught. Unfortunately I didn't always follow them, and the results were disastrous.

This is the story of my life. I'm the man you know as MOSES

THE FIRST FORTY YEARS My father, Amran (Ex 6:20; Num. 26:59) and my mother, Jocabed (Ex 6:20; Num. 26:59), were both very godly followers of Jehovah. I had a sister, Miriam, who was 12 when I was born (Ex 2:4) and a brother, Aaron, 3 years older than me (Ex 7:17). I was born in about 1525 (Ex 2:2), in slavery in Egypt.

As you probably already know, my parents hid me for 3 months (Ex 2:2; Acts 7:20; Heb 11:23) but then had to trust my care to God almighty. God provided wonderfully, having me grow up in the Thebes raised by Pharaoh's daughter Hatshepsut (Acts 7:20-22). My mother was with me for the first several years of my life. As an Egyptian prince and heir to the throne, I had the best education possible. I became very skillful in leadership and scholarly skills. I had everything one could ask for - everything but self-control! Some might say I was indulged and spoiled. I saw my mother use her anger to get her what she wanted. During my childhood, when I should have been learning self-control (Lam 3:26-27), I was just learning to do what I wanted instead.

Then came the time when I had to decide: stay with Egypt and become the next Pharaoh or leave it all to go with the Jews, my people of origin (Heb 11:24-26). It was very hard to say "no" to my strong-willed Egyptian mother, who had spent her life grooming me for the priesthood. I also had to turn my back on the woman I loved, and that was extra hard. Unfortunately I did it in my own strength, as I was used to doing everything in life. My anger flared when I saw an Egyptian beating a Jew and I reached with violence (Acts 7:23-29). While God created anger to be a positive motivator to action (Eph 4:26). It is a secondary emotion, a wrong response to a more basic emotion like pain, hurt, frustration or fear. I was frustrated by not getting my own way, so I used anger to try to control the situation. That was sin. As a result I ended up committing murder and fleeing (Acts 7:25-29; Ex 2:15). I was 40 years old and found myself with nothing, away from home, having lost everything -- all because of my anger.

THE SECOND FORTY YEARS When I got to Midian I found some young woman being taken advantage of and abused (Ex 2:15-21). This time my response was righteous indignation, not self-centered anger, and I drove them off and protected the women. This led to God placing me in that family with the oldest daughter, Zipporah, as my wife (Ex 2:21-22). We had two sons (Ex 18:3-4). I spent much time alone in the wilderness, watching sheep. God was using this time to teach me self-discipline, to humble me and have me learn patience and contentment. During the times along with God I learned much about Him, and was lead to write down things that had been passed down from

generation to generation. I then wrote what you call the books of Genesis and Job. God was lovingly and patiently working on me.

Eventually the Pharaoh who wanted me dead died and another took his place (Ex 2:23-25). The Jews were groaning in bondage, pleading with God to send them a deliverer. One day called me to be the one to come bring them out of Egypt, but I didn't want to do it. It was too threatening, too risky, and besides I was still angry at the Jews (and, to be honest, a little angry with God, too) (Ex 3:1 - 4:17). I came up with 5 good excuses, objections to God's plan, but finally I gave in when God Himself got angry at me!

God got even angrier when I started back, for I hadn't obeyed Him totally in the matter of circumcising my second son (Ex 4:20-26). I gave in to my wife's anger, and to keep her from being upset with me I hadn't totally obeyed God. I was on the receiving end of anger in this. I had to decide between having God or my wife angry at me, I chose to please God. She had to go along, or I would have died, but then she left with my sons and we were never reconciled. Still, I knew I had to obey God first. At 80 years of age I was headed back to Egypt!

THE THIRD FORTY YEARS God Himself was with me, and he sent my brother Aaron to help me, but Pharaoh certainly didn't cooperate. Soon the Jews were angry with me, too. I was caught right in the middle! God sent a series of 10 plagues, ending with the death of the firstborn of all those who didn't submit to following God, and we were allowed to leave Egypt. God used a trap at the Red Sea to destroy the Egyptians and we were free! You'd think those people would be grateful and glad, but they weren't! You never heard such constant complaining and whining! Nothing was good enough for them!

When we arrived at Mt. Sinai I went up the mountain to get God's law, but when I came down the Jews had built a golden calf to worship Baal with terrible, immoral worship. God was angry at them, and so was I. I prayed for God to have mercy and spare them, and He did. I took my anger out on them, though -- first I broke the tablets God had carved (He gave them to me again, but this time I had to carve them myself). I ground up the idol and poured the powder in water which they had to drink.

Eventually we moved on from there, to Kadesh Barnea, where they were afraid to trust God and enter the land, so we had to wander for the rest of these 40 years. God still was with us and provided, but fellowship was broken by the nation's sin of unbelief. When Korah rebelled God quickly opened the earth to swallow up him and his whole family. Good things were going on during this time, too. I wrote the books of Exodus and Numbers during this time. Still, it was wasted time because Israel was carnal, out of fellowship with God.

Then it happened. Again. The Jews complained about not having enough water. I mean those people always complained about everything! I had had enough and again lost my temper at them (Numbers 20). As a result I wasn't allowed to enter the Promised Land. God did let me see it, though. I died at 120 years of age, not able to enter God's perfect will for us because of my anger. Watch your anger -- it will keep you from God's perfect will, too.

4. WHEN COUNTING TO 10 DOESN'T WORK (MOSES)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Name some times when Moses got angry?

Was it wrong to get angry at these things?

What things make you angry? When do you have the hardest time not getting angry?

What can you do to keep from sinning when you get angry?

Why did Moses decide to not be the next Pharaoh but instead try to help the Jews who were slaves?

When you are tempted to compromise your faith to get something you want or be more popular, what should you do?

When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush Moses made excuses (Exodus 3:1-4:23). What were some of the excuses he made?

Have you ever made excuses instead of obeying God when He wanted you to do (or not do) something? What happened as a result? What can you learn from it?

Why was God angry with Moses and about to take his life when Moses was obeying by going back to Egypt to lead the people out (Exodus 4:24-26)?

Is there anyone who has a lot of influence on you and what you do, especially in wrong things? What can you do to keep from being wrongly influenced by them?

4. WHEN COUNTING TO 10 DOESN'T WORK (MOSES)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Name some times when Moses got angry?

When the Egyptian was hurting a Jew, when he threw down the 10 Commandments and when he struck the rock twice instead of speaking to it.

Was it wrong to get angry at these things?

Feeling righteous indignation was right, for God gets angry at sin. But the things he did were signs of lack of control and therefore very wrong. His motives were self-centered.

What things make you angry? When do you have the hardest time not getting angry?

Answers will vary.

What can you do to keep from sinning when you get angry?

Pray before acting. Ask yourself what Jesus would do were He in your situation. If you feel hurt, rejection, criticism or aren't getting your own way and you get angry you know for sure that is wrong. Let God get revenge, remember we aren't to try to get revenge for ourselves.

Why did Moses decide to not be the next Pharaoh but instead try to help the Jews who were slaves?

He knew that following God and being with His people was more important than all the power and riches that Egypt had to offer.

When you are tempted to compromise your faith to get something you want or be more popular, what should you do?

Remember those things are temporary and don't satisfy as much as following Jesus does. Ask yourself what you will wish you would have done in 100 years when you are in heaven and look back on it. It will be too late to change but now we have the opportunity to do the right thing.

When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush Moses made excuses (Exodus 3:1-4:23). What were some of the excuses he made?

Moses' excuses were all about the Jews not believing him and him not knowing what to say. They were self-centered and from Moses' pride and fear. He wasn't trusting God to help him do it.

Have you ever made excuses instead of obeying God when He wanted you to do (or not do) something? What happened as a result? What can you learn from it?

Answers will vary. Spend time discovering what you can learn from these examples.

Why was God angry with Moses and about to take his life when Moses was obeying by going back to Egypt to lead the people out (Exodus 4:24-26)?

Moses hadn't obeyed God years ago when it was time to circumcise his second son. It seems his wife didn't want him to do it so he gave in to keep the peace at home. Now he has to decide between obeying God and obeying his wife. He can't lead God's people if he gives in to pressure.

Is there anyone who has a lot of influence on you and what you do, especially in wrong things? What can you do to keep from being wrongly influenced by them?

Pray about it. Write down ahead of time what you should do. If Jesus were there with you what would you do?

5. THE GREAT COVERUP

2 Samuel 11:6-17

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

By David

Hello! My name is David. Maybe you've heard of me? I'm mentioned over 1,000 times in the Bible, more than anyone else, even Jesus. In fact He's called the "Son of David" 12 times. Pretty special, huh?

I'm remembered for my greatest achievement - Goliath's death when I was full of the Spirit, as well as my greatest failure - Bathsheba's seduction, when I was full of the flesh. I guess one reason so many people like me is because they can identify with me in each case. Listen to my story and learn from it.

BACKGROUND I was the youngest boy in my family, the 8th son. I was a shepherd who killed a bear and lion protecting my sheep. I loved to play the harp and sing songs I wrote. My brothers mocked and rejected me, and my own father forgot about me for awhile when Samuel came to anoint Saul's replacement king over Israel.

GOLIATH I burst on the national scene when I killed Goliath, the 9+ foot giant champion of the Philistines. As a result our army defeated theirs and we regained our freedom. I became very popular, but this made King Saul very jealous of me. My life was in danger because of this.

COVER-UP # 1 From the ages of 17-29 I was running, hiding from Saul's wrath. I should have trusted God as I did with Goliath, but didn't. I took matters into my own hands. I fled during the night in fear, went to Samuel for advice and was promised God's protection. However I was full of fear and panic and I dumped that on Jonathan. I came up with a scheme to protect myself: ask Jonathan to lie to his father about my whereabouts. I told him to tell his father I had gone away to worship, and to let me know his father's response by shooting an arrow. I had fled in panic, then tried to cover up my sin of fear. As the baby of my family, I was pretty good at getting out of the consequences of my sin. I didn't want to admit and confess my sin. It was easier to blame others (as Eve and Adam did). You know, often the cover-up is worse than the sin itself (I John 1:6-10). Joseph's brothers tried to cover up their wrong treatment of him by selling him and lying to their father, they were racked by guilt the rest of their lives and many innocent people were badly hurt.

Anyway, I went to Abimelech, the priest, as I fled Saul. I lied again, pretending to be on a secret mission for Saul. He helped me, and when Saul found out he helped me Saul killed him and 85 other priests! All that happened because of my cover-up of sin.

I fled to the Philistines, our enemies, for protection. I pretended to be insane so I could stay. Instead of trusting God I had sunk low in my attempts to cover up and not have to confess my sin so I could turn to God for His protection and help. When I finally did that God did help. Twice I was able to resist getting revenge on Saul. I didn't do quite so well against Nabal, but Abigail intervened and kept a disaster from coming. God was with me.

COVER-UP # 2 Soon, however, I again fled to the land of the Philistines. God forbid His people to live there, but I was out of His perfect will for my life. All went smoothly at first, it seemed 'doors opened' for me. It wasn't God's blessings, though, but Satan's trap developing. Through a series of deceptions, trickery and half-truths my followers and I got our own city, Ziklag. I was again meeting my own needs in the flesh instead of trusting God to meet them.

Soon thousands of disgruntled Jews had joined me in hiding from Saul, and I didn't have enough food to feed them all. What did I do? I provided for myself instead of trusting God with my needs again. I attacked neighboring tribes, killed them and stole their food. By killing everyone there

was no one to tell who did it. I told the Philistines I was killing Jews and stealing their food, and they thought Jews were attacking their people. Again I was trying to cover up my sin, and again the cover-up was worse than the sin. Again the cover-up resulted in murder.

I almost had to help the Philistines fight the Jews (lying catches up with you) but God bailed us out and the Philistine army sent us home instead. When we got home we found our city Ziklag plundered and burnt. What goes around comes around, but they didn't kill our families. They took them captive. We repented of our sins and God enabled us to win back our loved ones. Meanwhile the Philistines had attacked the Jews, and Saul and his family were killed. The door was open for me to become king.

COVER-UP # 3 God did many wonderful things through me, and I tried to love and serve Him with all my heart, but once again I gave in to my old sin pattern. When not stopped early they become much harder to break later in life.

I was 50 years old, half way through my 40 year reign. I was popular, loved by everyone. I had made Jerusalem my capital and gathered materials to build a beautiful temple to God. I wrote many Psalms and led in worship. I was rich and prosperous. The lands of Israel had increased 10-fold. Israel was at its high peak as a nation. I was successful, a sitting duck for attack. And it came!

One spring I stayed in Jerusalem, enjoying my success, instead of fulfilling my God-given responsibility of leading God's army against our enemies (II Samuel 11). Because of this I was in a position to see a woman bathing. Instead of looking away and moving on, I lusted and took action to have her brought to me. Again I was trying to fill my needs myself, instead of trusting and waiting for God's provision. Again it ended in a cover-up: do whatever is necessary to make it seem like her husband, who was away in my army, made her pregnant and not I. Again it ended in murder for I had him killed. My life and the nation went downhill from here.

As I later looked back on it, I could see that Satan had been setting up this trap for many years. First there was the pattern started in childhood of meeting my own needs my way and then covering up so I wouldn't get in trouble. Also, there was a pattern of lust that started early in my life. I was always lusty, sensual, enjoying things of the flesh -- forbidden as well as legitimate. In my 20's I disobeyed by taking several wives, indulging my sexual lusts. I had dozens of wives and concubines, I didn't need Bathsheba. This continued in my 30's and 40's and culminated with my sin with Bathsheba in my 50's. Satan had been setting up this trap for 30 years, and it worked!

Watch those 'little' lusts and sins. Watch the small cracks that develop in your personality. Watch that lie that says you can meet your own legitimate needs in your way and your timing. Watch that pride that motivates you to cover up your sin instead of admitting and confessing it.

As a result of this sin I lost my testimony to Bathsheba, my friends, my servants, my family, the nation, and even to my enemies (II Sam 12:14). My relationship with God was broken until I humbled myself and confessed it. Consequences from this sin continued throughout my life, and even down to today. My family, and the nation, started a slow decline from this time. Never has Israel achieved the greatness it had right before this sin.

Ask God to search your heart now. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24). Confess whatever He shows you. Don't ever cover up sin. It'll always catch up with you and cause you deep regrets. Learn from me. Don't cover up your sin.

5. THE GREAT COVER-UP (DAVID)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Name some of the times David covered up his sin and mistakes instead of facing them?

Why did David try to cover up his sins? Why do we cover up our sins?

What excuses or ways of covering up do Christians today use instead of admitting their sins?

Some things David said weren't total lies, they were cleverly stated facts but the result was that the listener was deceived. Why is this as bad as lying?

How can we tell if we are being deceptive?

David lied for a good reason – to protect his life. Is it OK to lie if we have a good reason?

In looking back on David's life we can see how Satan was leading David into a little sin and then a little larger one until adultery and murder which greatly harmed his life, family and nation. How can our giving into 'little' sins set the way for us to later commit larger sins?

What are some little sins to watch out for today?

How can we keep from getting caught in the trap of giving in to certain sins?

What should we do when we give in and sin?

5. THE GREAT COVER-UP (DAVID)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Name some of the times David covered up his sin and mistakes instead of facing them?

Running from Saul and lied to Abimelech, went to the Philistines and pretended to be crazy, sinned with Bathsheba then had her husband killed.

Why did David try to cover up his sins? Why do we cover up our sins?

Our pride makes it hard to admit we have sinned. We are afraid of the consequences. It's easier to blame someone else than admit it ourselves. All these come back to pride, though.

What excuses or ways of covering up do Christians today use instead of admitting their sins?

We say it was a mistake, won't happen again, was someone else's fault, we didn't really mean it, pretend we didn't do it, lie to cover up, etc.

Some things David said weren't total lies, they were cleverly stated facts but the result was that the listener was deceived. Why is this as bad as lying?

Any kind of deception is wrong. One of the names of Satan is 'deceiver' and his purpose is to deceive the world (Revelation 12:9). Even the truth can be used to deceive. Satan is a liar and the father of all lies (John 8:44).

How can we tell if we are being deceptive?

Our conscience will tell us if we are close to God. We can ask ourselves if Jesus would have said or did what we said or did. Even when it is harder to say the truth we must still do so and not deceive.

David lied for a good reason – to protect his life. Is it OK to lie if we have a good reason?

No, Jesus never lied. Some times He refused to speak but He never lied. We have a right to privacy and so we don't have to tell things that aren't appropriate but we must never lie.

In looking back on David's life we can see how Satan was leading David into a little sin and then a little larger one until adultery and murder which greatly harmed his life, family and nation. How can our giving into 'little' sins set the way for us to later commit larger sins?

When we sin and seem to get away with it then it is easier to sin again. When we taste sin, we want more. We become trapped.

What are some little sins to watch out for today?

Drinking alcohol or anything harmful to our body, looking at things we shouldn't, taking something that isn't ours, telling a little lie, pretending to be something we aren't, cheating, being dishonest with money, taking advantage of someone, letting anger or fear grow, being greedy, etc.

How can we keep from getting caught in the trap of giving in to certain sins?

Realize what areas we are most easily tempted and come up with a plan of what to do when tempted. Have a friend pray for us and ask us how we are doing in those areas. Ask God to help us resist. Remember that Jesus is always with us and God knows everything we do and think.

What should we do when we give in and sin?

Confess (admit it is sin) the sin and ask God to forgive you (1 John 1:9). Ask Him to help you not do it again.

6. WHEN YOU WANT TO GIVE UP

1 Kings 18:27-39; 19:1-18

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

By Elijah

I don't know if you have ever noticed or not, but when an animal falls into water how long it swims before drowning depends on how it accesses its chances of getting out. If the situation is hopeless with no way out an animal will give up right away and drown. If there is a glimmer of a chance of getting out the animal will swim until that chance is attained or gone. If the chance is good, even if it takes a long, long time, the animal will keep on swimming until it is safe. How long an animal stays afloat depends on how much HOPE it has for future relief.

That is true of human beings, too. Everyone needs hope. If things seem hopeless depression results. Eventually only death seems to be a solution and suicide is contemplated. This is Satan's plan to defeat and destroy people. Often it works. I know, it almost worked with me. My name is Elijah.

During the times I lived people were self-seeking, greedy and self-centered. People were outwardly religious, but inside had no true relationship with God. As a result many were discouraged, depressed, guilt-ridden, lonely, fearful and feeling hopeless. The times were ripe for Satan to use one of his favorite tools: discouragement/depression. He used them well on me. I wasn't the first one or the only one he's had success with, though.

"Why are you downcast (depressed), O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? ... My soul is downcast (depressed) within me" (Psalm 42:5-6). Depression is universal. It is as old as mankind itself. It hits everyone. No one is immune. Job, the oldest book in the Bible, speaks of Job in depression (Job 7:3-11). Moses got depressed (Num. 11:11-15), so did Jonah (4:3) and Jeremiah (15:10-18). Depression affects all areas of life and being. At its root, depression is self pity. We feel sorry for ourselves, thinking things are too hard and God isn't fair to us. It is a self-imposed pity party! My experience is a perfect example:

I am known as a tremendous man of faith and power. More miracles are associated with my ministry than anyone else in the Old Testament. God ended a long, terrible drought when the people turned back to Him after He used me to defeat the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18). I responded by running away and asking God to take my life. Why? What caused this? 1 Kings 19 is an interesting account of depression: its time, trigger, tortures and treatment.

The **TIME** of my depression is quite surprising (v. 2-4). I wasn't depressed when fed by a raven or widow, nor when facing Ahab or the prophets of Baal. It wasn't until after it was over, when I experienced an emotional let-down, that I got depressed. Always watch, after every high point in life the only direction is down. If we go by our emotions we'll let our feelings control, as I did. Always make sure your mind explains reality to your emotions and not the other way around.

What **TRIGGERED** my depression was a single threat of a defeated woman. Queen Jezebel said she'd kill me for what happened. She was powerless, everyone had turned back to God. There was no reason for me to get depressed. The immediate cause of depression seldom is valid. It's just the timing of it more than anything else.

I felt hopeless. Hope, as the Bible uses it, refers to confident assurance (Heb 11:1; Rom 8:24-25). It isn't a wish or want. It is something guaranteed, as good as done, 100% sure. It's like your 'hope' of spring when snow is two feet deep and everything is icy. You know it WILL come sometime. Our confident assurance is in the promises of God. He says He will meet all our needs

(Ps 84:11; 23:1-3; Mt 6:33; Phil 4:19; Heb 13:5). He guarantees He will help us through trials (Ps 126:5; 91:4,14-16; Isaiah 66:13; Rom 8:28; James 1:3; I Corinthians 10:13). God assures us we have nothing to fear (Ps 118:6; 23:4; Gen 26:24; 15:1; Ex 14:13; Josh 1:9; Isaiah 41:10; Deuteronomy 31:6; Mt 14:27; II Chronicles 32:7-8). We can count on His guidance (Ps 48:14; Ps 23:1-3; 32:8; Proverbs 3:5-6; Isaiah 42:16). We will never be alone (Heb 13:5; Gen 28:15; Rom 8:38-39; Ex 33:14). He promises strength for whatever comes (Phil 4:13; II Corinthians 12:9; Deuteronomy 33:25; Isaiah 40:29). When my life was threatened I went by my emotions instead of claiming these truths in my mind. I looked at my resources and abilities and saw they were totally insufficient, so I became fearful. I should have looked to God for His resources, but I didn't. Instead I ran and hid.

My **TORTURES** were the same as yours are today (v. 4). I ran away from my friends and responsibilities, I was disgusted with life and prayed for death, I felt all alone, as if no one cared.

The most important part, though, is God's **TREATMENT** for me. Physically I had to eat and sleep (v. 5-7). Our physical being must be healthy in order to overcome depression. Take care of your health! Psychologically God let me talk, get it off my chest (v. 9-10), and God just quietly listened. Spiritual God revealed Himself to me in a still, small voice (v. 11-15), not in a powerful, supernatural way as I wanted. Then God gave me work to do (when depressed stay faithful to your responsibilities) and explained that I wasn't alone. Knowing I wasn't alone is very important.

Still, there was always a **TRACE** left, for victory over depression is never permanent. It can always come back. Final **TRIUMPH** comes only by faith in God and His Word (Rom. 8:28; James 1:2-3; I Corinthians. 10:13; I Thessalonians. 5:18). Read and memorize this to help. Remember me and learn from me about how to avoid and defeat depression.

I learned my hope is in God, and in Him alone (Isaiah 39:7; Jeremiah 17:7; Rom 15:13). He never let me down, although I often let Him down. Our hope is in the Lord. John Newton, a one-time slave trader, was converted and became a great preacher. He wrote "Amazing Grace." For 2 years before his death he was so weak that he could hardly stand in his pulpit; someone had to support him as he preached. Shortly before he died he told a friend, "I am like a person going on a journey in a stagecoach, who expects its arrival every hour and is frequently looking out of the window for it -- I am packed and sealed, and ready for the post."

That is our hope, too. God is in total control of everything and everyone. We know (not just wish) that God is in control of everything in this life, and all He does is for our good (Romans 8). We know (not just wish) that when we die we will immediately be with Him in heaven for all eternity (Luke 23:43). Best of all, we know (not just wish) that at any moment the Lord may appear in the clouds to take us to heaven to be with Him. This is our greatest, most blessed hope (assurance). "While we wait for the blessed hope-- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him" (I Thessalonians 4:13-14). Is that your hope? If your hope is in anything else you will be depressed!

6. WHEN YOU WANT TO GIVE UP (ELIJAH)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

What is depression?

Do you know anyone who gets depressed, or do you ever get depressed?

Why did Elijah get depressed?

What should Elijah have done instead?

Since depression is self-pity, what can we do to prevent it?

What can you do to help someone you know who is depressed?

It's been said that depression is one of Satan's greatest weapons. Why is that so?

Why is depression sin?

Often when a person feels depressed they also feel hopeless. But a Christian should never feel hopeless. Why?

What have you found works to keep you from getting depressed or helps you get over it when you are depressed?

If God could use imperfect, very human people like Moses and Elijah, can He use you?

6. WHEN YOU WANT TO GIVE UP (ELIJAH)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

What is depression?

Depression is a sad feeling of gloom and inadequacy. It is feeling pessimistic and despondent, that nothing will work out right.

Do you know anyone who gets depressed, or do you ever get depressed?

Answers will vary, but everyone struggles with depression at some times in some ways.

Why did Elijah get depressed?

Jezebel threatened to kill him, he was tired and drained, and instead of focusing on God he just looked at what could go wrong around him.

What should Elijah have done instead?

He should have trusted God would take care of him just as he did when fire came down and the altar was destroyed.

Since depression is self-pity, what can we do to prevent it?

Not think so much about ourselves, what we think is right or fair, and how everything seems so bad for us. That is really pride – thinking about ourselves more than God or others.

What can you do to help someone you know who is depressed?

Listen to them in love. Don't try to talk them out of their depression, they will only think of more things that aren't right in life and think you don't care. Pray for them. Help them get their eyes off themselves by helping others, serving God and doing something useful. Tell them the truth in love.

It's been said that depression is one of Satan's greatest weapons. Why is that so?

Satan can't take our salvation, but he can take our joy and keep us from being a good example for God. When a person lets themselves get into depression and stay there for a long time then the only hope they think they have for getting out of the darkness is death. In this way Satan tries to get them to take their own life.

Why is depression sin?

Because it is saying God isn't faithful to me, God doesn't care, God loves others better, and He won't help me. It's self-centered and proud.

Often when a person feels depressed they also feel hopeless. But a Christian should never feel hopeless. Why?

God is in control of everything and even if we can't control things we know He does. When we put our hope in Him instead of our surroundings we find peace (Isaiah 39:7; Jeremiah 17:7; Romans 15:13).

What have you found works to keep you from getting depressed or helps you get over it when you are depressed?

Answers will vary. But reading the Bible, praising God and keeping our eyes on Him always help.

If God could use imperfect, very human people like Moses and Elijah, can He use you?

He certainly can!

7. WOULD A GOD OF LOVE JUDGE SIN?

Isaiah 6:1-13; 52:14-53:12

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

By Isaiah

Tomorrow I die. It's been decreed, and unless God miraculously intervenes, it will surely happen. I don't mind dying. In fact, I look forward to going to heaven to be with my God. I have so many questions to ask Him, even about things I myself taught and wrote. There are numberless blessings to thank Him for personally. Death has no fear for me.

I'm not looking forward to the means of it, though. I'm to be forced inside a hollow tree and sawn in half (Heb 11:37). To make this worse, it is my own countrymen who are doing this to me. God's people, His chosen people, from Jerusalem, the city of peace, the ones God sent me to teach and warn, they will be doing this thing. A couple of months ago they arrested me. I've been their prisoner every since.

You might be wondering why my fellow Jews, those I have spent my life trying to help, would do this. It's all because God personally revealed Himself to me.

I sort of feel like taking one more trip down memory lane, thinking through my life one more time before it is over. It's a long story, too long for the remaining hours I have left. I can tell you a short version of it, though. I've had some really nice and some very strange things happen in my life. Sometimes I played a harp and sang my messages. Did you know I walked around barefoot and naked for 3 years (Isaiah 20:2-3)? Let me go back to the beginning.

Have you ever seen God? I have, and it's quite something (Isaiah 6:1-8)! He came and spoke to me personally, visibly! I tell you I'll never forget it! I still don't know why God chose me. I was the 7th child of my father Amoz. My name, Isaiah, means "Jehovah is salvation." He passed his strong faith in God on to me. We were wealthy and important people, and I was given a godly woman to be my wife. From the moment I saw God, though, my whole life was changed. From then on I couldn't forget His greatness and His holiness. That reformed my image of Him. I understood why Moses took off his shoes in His presence, as did Joshua (Ex 3:5; Josh 5:15).

This is what happened: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:1-8)

I knew sinful man couldn't stand in His presence (1 Sam 6:20). It's an awful thing, in a good way, to come before the almighty and holy God of the universe. It keeps everything else in proper perspective. If we don't recognize how awesome and holy He is we won't see our sinfulness as it really is. If we don't see how great He is we won't see how small and insignificant we are. We won't realize how much we need His presence, strength, wisdom, support, love and mercy.

Everywhere around me things were falling apart. Our once great nation had split in two. Our once godly nation was now turning from God and to evil pagan practices. The north, Israel, was in its final days. The south, Judah, wasn't much better off. Sexual immorality was rampant. Other gods were put before Jehovah. Rich were oppressing poor. The economy was shaky, taxes were too high. Man had relegated God to a little box, Someone to pay empty tribute to on a few national holidays. They had forgotten that a holy God cannot overlook sin (Proverbs 1:31; Gal 6:7-8).

A long series of ungodly kings took things from bad to worse. God sent prophets to warn them to repent and turn back to Him, men like Joel, Hosea and Micah, but nothing changed. God gave me a vision of His greatness and glory to pass on to the people (Isaiah 5:16; 63; 29:23; 57:15).

Because He is holy, He wants His children to be holy, too (Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:26; Mt 5:48; 1 Pt 1:15-16). Because He is holy He judges sin (Rev 6:10). Sin brings judgment (Ps 9:15-16; 94:23). I gave these warnings to the people over and over, year after year, but they wouldn't heed them. They missed God's holiness and assumed judgment would never come on them. God was merciful and withhold His judgments for several more generations. This just made it worse, like flood waters held back by a dam until they finally break forth. God is very patient and merciful, but won't withhold His judgment forever. Because He is holy He just cannot.

My message was to proclaim the holiness of God. Without seeing that, how can you really worship god? (Ps 30:4; 48:1; 98:1; 99:5; Rev 15:4). God's holiness will continue forever (Heb 1:8). When we get to heaven we will clearly see it. I will see it in a few hours.

Tomorrow I die. Then I get to see and talk with god again. I'll spend eternity with His holiness. One day you will, too. Then you'll see what I'm talking about when I refer to God as holy. Until you see it for yourself, take it from the testimony of those who have seen Him.

Moses saw God as I did and said "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you-- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" (Exodus 15:11). The psalmist says "He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever-- holy and awesome is his name. " (Psalm 111:9). When you see God's holiness your response will be the same as mine, the only possible response anyone who sees God's holiness can have: "Here am I, Lord -- send me!" (Isaiah 6:8). Is that your response to God's holiness? As Him to reveal Himself to you. Then you, too, will never be the same.

7. WOULD A GOD OF LOVE JUDGE SIN? (ISAIAH)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was Isaiah?

What does God look like according to Isaiah 6:1-8?

Why do you think God showed Himself to Isaiah in this way when He called him to be a prophet?

Has God ever revealed Himself or something about Himself to you in a special way? If so, tell about it? Also tell how you picture God in heaven?

If the Jews were God's chosen people, why did He discipline them and have them go into captivity?

Today many Christians have 'idols' they put before God. What are some of these?

What does it mean to be 'holy'?

Why does God want us to know He is holy, why is that so important?

What can we do to be more like God, more holy?

7. WOULD A GOD OF LOVE JUDGE SIN? (ISAIAH)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was Isaiah?

Isaiah was a prophet, son of Amoz. The Hebrew name signifies Salvation of Jahu (a shortened form of Jehovah). He prophesied concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, Isaiah 1:1, covering probably 758 to 698 B.C. He was married and had two sons. Rabbinical tradition says that Isaiah, when 90 years old, was sawn asunder in the trunk of a carob tree by order of Manasseh, to which it is supposed that reference is made in Heb 11:37.

What does God look like according to Isaiah 6:1-8?

He is sitting on a throne, high and exalted. His glory fills the whole temple. Angels are all around proclaiming His holiness.

Why do you think God showed Himself to Isaiah in this way when He called him to be a prophet?

God knew the awful things Isaiah would have to go through for God and He wanted Isaiah to remember that the One he served was great and wonderful. Remembering how majestic and awesome God is can help us face troubles and difficulties, too.

Has God ever revealed Himself or something about Himself to you in a special way? If so, tell about it? Also tell how you picture God in heaven?

Answers will vary.

If the Jews were God's chosen people, why did He discipline them and have them go into captivity?

They continually disobeyed Him, turned from Him and worshipped idols instead. In name they were His people but they put other things before Him. They were extra accountable because they had His word and know more about Him than the other nations.

Today many Christians have 'idols' they put before God. What are some of these?

Money, popularity, possessions, job, relationships, pleasures, etc.

What does it mean to be 'holy'?

Holy in Greek and Hebrew (what the New and Old Testaments were written in) means "separation," or "setting apart." Holiness is a general term used to indicate sanctity or separation from all that is sinful, impure, or morally imperfect. The term is used with reference to persons, places, and things. It especially refers to God as pure, perfect, righteous and sinless/

Why does God want us to know He is holy, why is that so important?

Because it leads us to worship Him. It shows we are in need of Him for we are so unholy. When we see how holy God is we realize how much we deserve judgment for our sin. Then we can better appreciate God's great love for us in paying for our sin Himself so we can spend eternity with Him. Then, too, we'll see that anything we put before Him is wrong.

What can we do to be more like God, more holy?

Memorize and learn His Word, worship and praise Him, get to know Him, pray, be close to Him each day and ask yourself 'What would Jesus do?'

8. DARE TO BE A DANIEL

Daniel 1:1-21; 6:1-24

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

By Daniel

Suppose tonight your country was attacked and defeated, and the victorious enemies took you from your family to their capital to serve them. What would you think? How would you feel? What would you do?

Hypothetical, you say? I certainly hope so! I thought so, too, until it happened to me. I was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon when I was 14 when Judah was defeated (Dan 1:1-2).

INTO CAPTIVITY (14 years old) My name, Daniel, means "God is my judge." My godly parents brought me up in the faith of the Lord. The northern kingdom, Israel, had long ago fallen to Assyria. Many in south (Judah) thought that would never happen to us. My parents thought differently and prepared me for it. Still, how does one prepare for losing their family, friends, and home land -- everything they have? I knew God was sovereign and still in control of all, that's what I rested my hope on.

KING'S TRAINING PROGRAM (15 years old) I was chosen to be put into a special training program to serve the King of Babylon. It was a great opportunity to live a good life instead of dying young from overwork as a slave. Anyone would have jumped at the chance, and I thanked God for it, but there was a catch. I would have to disobey God's law and eat non-kosher food. Even though I knew I could be sent out to toil as a slave, I refused to eat. The end does not justify the means. I would be faithful, God would take care of the consequences if He desired.

Praise be to God, He chose to prosper me and honor my stand. Glory to His name!

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM (18 years old) Soon another problem presented itself. Nebuchadnezzar, the king, had an awful dream. He wouldn't tell his advisors what it was for he knew they'd come up with some kind of meaning. He could only know they had supernaturally received an interpretation if they also received the dream itself. Of course, none of them could know the dream, so he decided to kill us all! By His grace He revealed the dream and its meaning to me and I passed it on to the king, making sure God got all the glory for it! The dream was of a large statue whose gold head stood for Babylon, silver check for Medo-Persia, bronze thighs for Greece and iron legs for Rome. It was an outline of world history.

IDOL WORSHIP (20 years old) Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed by the dream he decided to make it all apply to him. In his pride he built a golden statue and had everyone worship it. I was gone on assignment, so my friends Hannaniah, Azariah and Mishael had to decide what to do. To refuse to worship meant death. They refused to worship and were to be thrown into a fiery furnace. They knew God was able to deliver them, but they didn't know if that was His will for them or not. As it turns out it was, and they were protected from the flames. All that happened was that the ropes that bound them were burnt away. Praise God for His sovereign control!

VISION # 1 (53 years old) Many years later God gave me more details about the coming world empires from my day to the end. Instead of a statue God used animals to describe characteristics of the coming kingdoms: lion for Babylon, bear for Media-Persia, leopard for Greece and beast for Rome (Dan 7). God's sovereign control over history future was clearly revealed (I Chronicles 29:11). "Our God is in heaven, He does whatever pleases Him" (Psalm 115:3). We can't understand all about Him and what He does (Isaiah 55:8), it is all by His sovereign choice (Rev 4:11). He controls the angels, nature, history past, present and future and all mankind.

VISION # 2 (54 years old) Shortly after God gave me many more details about the middle two empires, the ones soon coming (Dan 8). Those were the ones I was most interested in. A ram (Medo-Persia) and goat (Greece) were used in this vision. The focus was more on our enemies, preparing us for what would come. Alexander the Great and Antiochus Epiphanies were prophesied and many details given. God is in control of nations, even each individual in each nation. I was greatly humbled by this, as anyone who thought about God must be humbled.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR HUMBLLED (76 years old) Not everyone was humbled by God's sovereign control, though. Nebuchadnezzar was very prideful and arrogant, taking credit for great Babylon as if he had done it without God's help! God warned him (Dan 4:29-34) but he refused to humble himself, so God allowed him to live and act like an animal for 7 years until he turned to God for help and deliverance. God healed and restored him and then he gave all the credit and glory to God!

HANDWRITING ON THE WALL (86 years old) Before too long, though, Belshazzar replaced his father Nebuchadnezzar as king. He, too, was very proud and mocked God. He blasphemed God by using utensils from God's temple in Jerusalem for a pagan orgy. God wrote on the wall that judgment was coming (Dan 5). No one could read it, so I was sent for to interpret it for them. The prophecy was fulfilled that very night when Darius and his Medo-Persian army entered the complacent city and took over Babylon's kingdom.

LION'S DEN (93 years old) Darius was just as proud and self-sufficient as the rulers before him had been, so it was easy to trick him into signing a law that only he could be worshipped. When I refused to worship him and was therefore condemned to death, he realized his pride had tricked him but it was too late. He couldn't save me, but God could. Even among many starving lions I was safe for I was under God's sovereign control as if I'd have been safely sleeping in my own bed. Darius recognized God's total control over everything through this and worshipped him. He wanted everyone in his kingdom to worship my God, too.

VISION # 3 (94 years old) I had been praying to God about the future things He had revealed to me, asking for more details and information. I knew we could leave Babylon after 70 years of captivity (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10). What then? God told me our future would consist of 70 7-year periods. The first 483 years will be from when we can return to Jerusalem until when the Messiah is rejected (Dan 9). Then after a gap of undetermined time will be one final 7-year period before the Messiah returns to set Himself up on David's throne forever. What a God! "Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord is the Rock eternal" (Isaiah 26:4).

VISION # 4 (95 years old) After 3 weeks of praying and fasting about these things the Lord had been showing me, God gave me one more vision. It turns out the answering angel/messenger was held up by Satan's forces (Dan 10). He gave me more information about the future, especially about the coming Antichrist and the battle of Armageddon.

God is totally in control of everything. "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:37-38).

My message to you is that no matter what happens, trust God. Eli said, "He is the Lord; let Him do what is good in His eyes" (1 Sam 3:18). Job stated, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised" (Job 1:21). Jesus Himself said, "Not my will but Thy will be done." He taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done." Make that your prayer, too. Rest in God's sovereign control over everything and everyone. No matter what trust in Him. "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights" (Habakkuk 3:17-19).

8. DARE TO BE A DANIEL (DANIEL)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who is your favorite Bible person and why?

Suppose when you were 14 China invaded your country, killed your parents and took you back to China to serve them. You prayed but it didn't seem like God heard. Would you still love and obey Him?

Has anything unfair happened to you, even though you prayed about it? Did it cause you to doubt God?

What excuses could Daniel have used to justify eating the king's food?

What are some of the excuses Christians today use for sinning?

Why did God reveal so much of His plan for the future to Daniel?

Hannaniah, Azariah and Mishaël didn't have Daniel to help them when they had to decide about bowing down to the image of Nebuchadnezzar. They had to decide for themselves. Is there anyone (a friend, parents, etc.) that you depend on to help you stay faithful to Jesus? What happens when you aren't with them?

Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius all were proud and put themselves before God. All suffered as a result of that. Why does God hate pride so much?

What areas of pride do we have to watch out for in our lives today?

What do you like most about Daniel and his life?

8. DARE TO BE A DANIEL (DANIEL)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who is your favorite Bible person and why?

Answers will vary.

Suppose when you were 14 China invaded your country, killed your parents and took you back to China to serve them. You prayed but it didn't seem like God heard. Would you still love and obey Him?

Answers are personal and we don't know what we'd do until it happened, but we should trust God.

Has anything unfair happened to you, even though you prayed about it? Did it cause you to doubt God?

Even though we don't know why God does what He does, we must trust Him anyway. He is always ABLE to deliver us, but sometimes He isn't WILLING. Read Daniel 3:17.

What excuses could Daniel have used to justify eating the king's food?

"Everyone else is doing it." "It's just a small, unimportant law." "Why should I obey Him when He doesn't help me when I really need Him?" "I won't eat much, God will understand." "If I don't go along I'll get in trouble." "If I stay alive I can do more to help God than if I am dead." "I'll just do it then confess it. God will forgive me." "I have to do it to stay alive!"

What are some of the excuses Christians today use for sinning?

Answers will vary, but they are the same as given above.

Why did God reveal so much of His plan for the future to Daniel?

He wanted Daniel, and us, too, to know what was planned so we'd always remember that, no matter how bad things seem, God is still in control. He wants us, His friends, to know what to expect. He loves us and doesn't want us to worry or be afraid but to trust Him.

Hannaniah, Azariah and Mishael didn't have Daniel to help them when they had to decide about bowing down to the image of Nebuchadnezzar. They had to decide for themselves. Is there anyone (a friend, parents, etc.) that you depend on to help you stay faithful to Jesus? What happens when you aren't with them?

We should be as faithful as when they are there. God is always with us and His Spirit is always within us.

Nebuchadnezzar, Belchazzar and Darius all were proud and put themselves before God. All suffered as a result of that. Why does God hate pride so much?

Because it takes glory from Him and puts it on a person He created. Satan sinned because of pride, wanting to be like God.

What areas of pride do we have to watch out for in our lives today?

Taking credit in our lives for things God has done. Thinking we are better than others because of things we have, do, or because we are a Christian. Thinking we can do things without God's help.

What do you like most about Daniel and his life?

Answers will vary.

9. HAND ME ANOTHER BRICK

Nehemiah 1:1-2:6;

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

By Nehemiah

My name is Nehemiah. I was a leader of the Jews. Some people think being a leader is hard. It's really quite easy. All you need is inexhaustible patience, unfailing insight, unshakable stability, unbreakable will, decisive judgment, indefatigable physique, irrepressible spirit and unfeigned affection for all people. I didn't have that. But God helped me with it.

If you are a leader, perhaps there's something you can learn from me. If you have a job, a family or a friend, then you are a leader. A leader is someone who knows where he is going and how to get others to follow him. Being a leader is something you ARE, not something you DO. It's a function, not a title conferred by others. That's the way it was for me.

I lived in Babylon after Jerusalem fell to Babylon. My story starts in Babylon, 100 years before I was born. **ZERUBBABLE**, grandson of the 2nd last king of Judah (Jehoiachin), led the first group of Jews back to Jerusalem. Not many wanted to return, though - about 1 of every hundred. Most didn't want to leave the prosperity and good living in Babylon to return to a depressed and ruined country. Of course some, like Daniel (who was in his 60's) were too old to go back.

When Zerubbable led his group of 15,000 back, God provided Haggai and Zechariah to preach while he led work on rebuilding the temple. They didn't get too far, though, before they stopped for 20 years. Then they finished their work.

It was during this time that Hadassah, better known to you as **ESTHER**, was used by God to preserve the Jews from annihilation not only in Persia but also in Palestine.

Eight five years after Zerubbable, **EZRA** led another group of people back to Jerusalem. He was a great-grandson of the man who was the high priest when Jerusalem fell. He was the equivalent of the Secretary of State for Jewish affairs. Ezra was a godly scholar who knew the Old Testament by heart. He wrote the books of Ezra, Chronicles and Psalm 119 as well as finishing books such as Deuteronomy and Joshua. Ezra edited the whole Old Testament, changing it over to the square Hebrew script which is still used today. He also started the synagogue system which your church and school systems are built upon. The synagogue system kept the Jews together when they were away from their temple. Ezra also developed the Sanhedrin, 70 top men to govern Jews in and out of the land.

Only 1,500 followed him back. He taught the Bible and persevered in trying to encourage them to follow God. He didn't get much good response, though.

Fifteen years later the spotlight switched to me. **NEHEMIAH**. My story starts in 445 BC. I was born in Babylon. My grandparents had been taken into captivity at the fall. I was a top advisor to the king, Artixerxes. God used me in some very unexpected ways.

A leader is a person who prays. When I heard about the terrible conditions in Jerusalem I prayed for God to send someone to help them -- and wouldn't you know it, He sent me! (Nehemiah 1:1-4) God used me because I spent so much time in prayer with Him.

A leader is a person who prepares. When I finally got to Jerusalem we found everyone there was discouraged and very pessimistic (Nehemiah 2:11-12). It seemed hopeless. I patiently gathered as much firsthand information as I could, prayed about it, talked with some trusted advisors and made some long-range plans. To carry them out I had to detail short-range goals and all that would be necessary to accomplish the needed work (Nehemiah 2:4-8). When the time was right I shared my plans with others, motivating and encouraging them to follow (Nehemiah 2:17-18). I had delegated work so everyone had a specific assignment to carry out. When the enemy was about to attack to stop us we kept working and didn't give in to fear (Nehemiah 4:3-9). I prayed trusting God to protect us, but I also posed a guard. It takes prayer and work to be a good leader: pray as if all depends on God and work as if all depends on me.

A leader is a person who perseveres. Food shortages forced poor people to have to sell their children to the rich so they could have money to feed their other children. Money was lent at a high rate, with 50% inflation. A leader must contend with internal problems, which are often more difficult to handle than attacks from without. I had to take action about these difficulties, so I did. I did what was necessary, even though it wasn't popular. I stood for the right (Nehemiah 5:9-11)

Even when the enemy attacks intensified I didn't let them intimidate me or distract the work. Not even threats of assassination stopped me (Nehemiah 6:1-4). A leader can't be influenced by fear!

A leader is a person who purges. We needed to remove sin and evil from among us. Ezra was still preaching, and God used his words to start a revival. Lives were changed and people started obeying the Bible.

I went back to Babylon for a very short visit and when I returned I found more purging had to be done, for the people had quickly returned to their sinning. Praying, preparing, persevering and purging are ongoing duties of a godly leader. They aren't always enjoyable, but they are certainly necessary! Which of these do you need to work harder at? Set some goals and start today. You don't have any option about being a leader -- you are one. But it is up to you what kind of a leader you are!

9. HAND ME ANOTHER BRICK (NEHEMIAH)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who are some of the best Christian leaders you know?

What makes them good leaders? What are some of the traits of Godly leaders?

The first thing Nehemiah did when he got the news about the problems in Jerusalem was to pray. Why is it important to always pray about things before we take action?

Not only did Nehemiah pray, he also made plans. If we pray does that mean we don't have to plan and do our best?

What plans are you making for the future, so you will be able to best serve God in all you do?

Even though he prayed and persevered, things still didn't go easily for Nehemiah. Why does God sometimes allow things to be hard even though we pray and do our best?

Discouragement is a great enemy of those seeking to follow God. What can you do to keep from giving in to discouragement?

Part of what Nehemiah had to do was to tell others that they were committing sin and had to change. When are we to warn Christians that there is sin in their life?

How should you respond when someone says they see sin in your life?

If you could be someone in the Old Testament, who would that be and why?

If you could pick one person in the Old Testament to be a good friend of yours, who would it be and why?

9. HAND ME ANOTHER BRICK (NEHEMIAH)

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who are some of the best Christian leaders you know?

Answers will vary.

What makes them good leaders? What are some of the traits of Godly leaders?

Answers will vary but will include setting a good example, caring about people, being close to God, is fair, uses common sense, makes good decisions and stands for what is right.

The first thing Nehemiah did when he got the news about the problems in Jerusalem was to pray. Why is it important to always pray about things before we take action?

Prayer opens us to get God's advice and direction, it helps us think through and not react in our emotions, it gives us God's power to do what is right and it helps us remember that God is in control of everything.

Not only did Nehemiah pray, he also made plans. If we pray does that mean we don't have to plan and do our best?

No, we must pray as if everything depended on our prayers and work as if everything depended on our work. We must do both. Praying without planning can show we are lazy and want the easy way.

What plans are you making for the future, so you will be able to best serve God in all you do?

Answers will vary but can include information about careers, character formation, health, etc.

Even though he prayed and persevered, things still didn't go easily for Nehemiah. Why does God sometimes allow things to be hard even though we pray and do our best?

He wants to stretch and grow our faith. These are opportunities to trust him and persevere.

Discouragement is a great enemy of those seeking to follow God. What can you do to keep from giving in to discouragement?

Keep your eyes on Jesus, talk to a friend, pray and have others pray for you, remember all God has done in the past, read the Bible, memorize Scripture, listen to Christian music and praise and worship God.

Part of what Nehemiah had to do was to tell others that they were committing sin and had to change. When are we to warn Christians that there is sin in their life?

We are always to do this, but to do it in love and make sure we do it as Jesus would do it. We must make sure we don't get trapped into sin ourselves.

How should you respond when someone says they see sin in your life?

Listen with an open heart for what you can learn, thank them for their concern and ask them to pray for you. Then go to God in prayer and ask Him to show you what you need to learn and change.

If you could be someone in the Old Testament, who would that be and why? Answers will vary.

If you could pick one person in the Old Testament to be a good friend of yours, who would it be and why? Answers will vary.