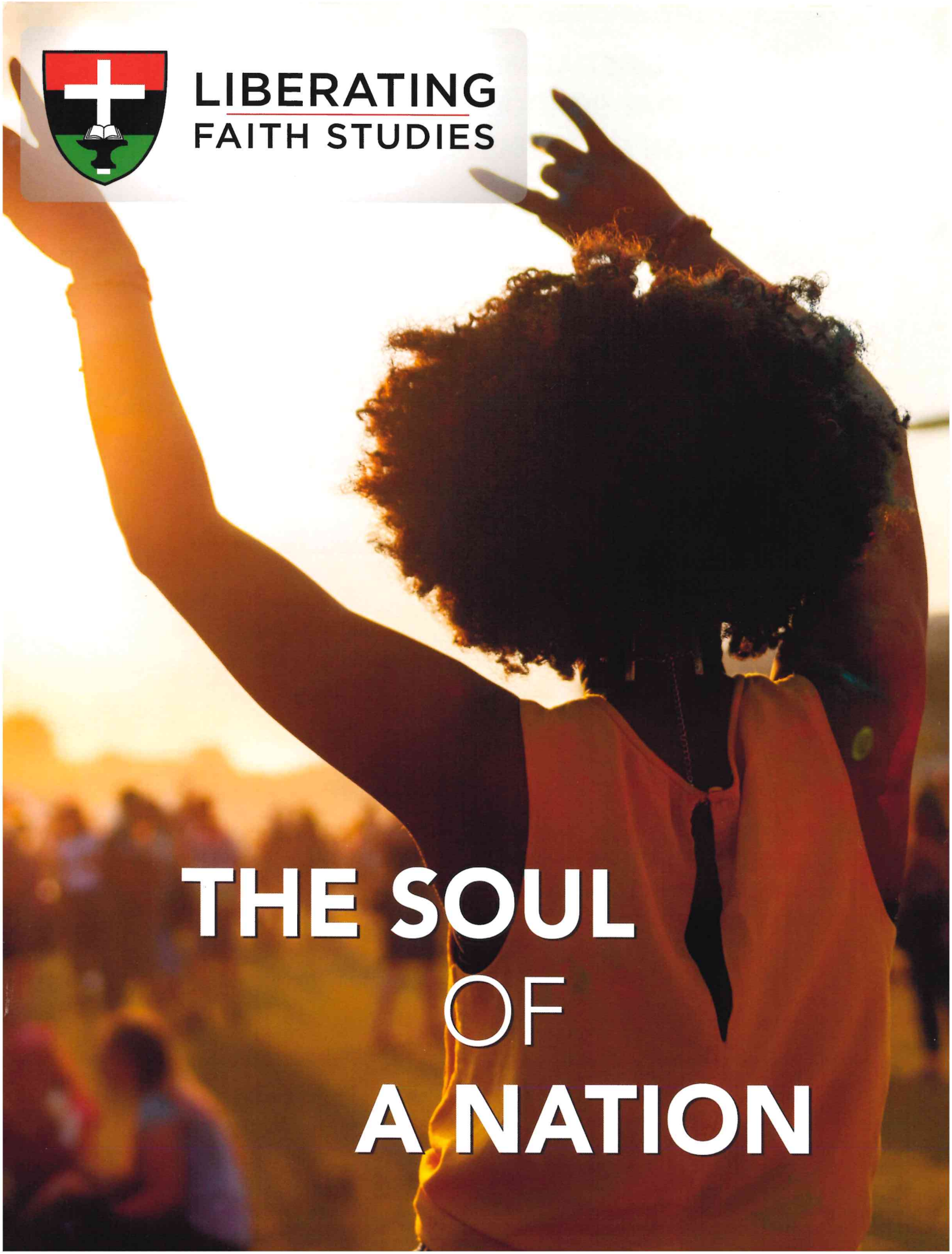
LIBERATING
FAITH STUDIES



THE SOUL OF A NATION

LIBERATING FAITH STUDIES
SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Ages 18-Up

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LIBERATING FAITH STUDIES SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY

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The Order of Service

I. Bell tap or organ voluntary as a signal for silence
II. Singing
III. The Apostles' Creed
IV. Prayer, closing with the Lord's Prayer in concert
V. Singing
VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
VII. Responsive reading of the lesson text by school
VIII. The Decalogue

The Lesson

I. Organ interlude while the classes are being arranged
II. Class study of the lesson
III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
IV. Closing bell — silence

The Closing

I. Singing
II. Review and application of the lesson
III. Secretary's report
IV. The Church School Creed
V. Singing
VI. Benediction

Editorial Staff

Rev. Roderick Belin, Publisher
Rev. Garland F. Pierce, Editor
Rev. Dr. Cynthia Parnell McDonald, Lessons

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

The Church School Creed

I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

A.M.E. Discipline

Hello, AME Church School Member!

Don't Forget to join us on Zoom and Facebook to facilitate our weekly Connectional Church School with teachers (lay and clergy) from around the AME Connection. They generously share their knowledge, talents, and expertise with a weekly average of 500 participants viewing via Zoom and 1500 on Facebook.

The blessings from the teachings of the virtual AME Connectional Church School have been immeasurable. We convene the Connectional Church School on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. EST. Join us! Zoom Meeting ID: 829 9325 1894. Visit our website- www.iamame.org- to find worship and study resources to empower you and enhance the life of the church.

Like our Facebook page so you will be informed about programming and important announcements from the Publishing House and *The Christian Recorder*: www.facebook.com/amecpublishing.

Join our Facebook group to continue conversations after Church School and share ideas, thoughts, and best practices with other AME Church School members and teachers: www.facebook.com/groups/amechurchschool.

Thank you for purchasing *Liberating Faith Studies*. We are working every day to fulfill our mission to provide high quality resources to empower us to spread Jesus Christ's liberating gospel, pursue justice, and enhance the social development of all people.

And, always remember, I am praying for you.

Roderick D. Belin
President/Publisher

AMEC
PUBLISHING HOUSE
SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

August 31–September 6

Monday	Romans 8:31-39 (More Than Victorious)
Tuesday	Genesis 13:14-18 (See What God Has Promised)
Wednesday	Deuteronomy 34:1-12 (The Promised Land Revealed)
Thursday	Hebrews 4:1-10 (God's Promised Rest)
Friday	Hebrews 10:14-18 (God's New Covenant)
Saturday	Psalm 27 (Whom Shall I Fear?)
Sunday	Joshua 1:1-11 (Be Strong and Courageous)

The Covenant Continues

Lesson Scripture: Joshua 1
Focus Scripture: Joshua 1:1-11

Key Verses: *(The Lord said,) "I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9*

JOSHUA 1:1-11 (NRSV UE)

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses's assistant, saying,

2 "My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses.

4 From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory.

5 No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall lead this people to possess the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them.

7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go.

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you

JOSHUA 1:1-11 (KJV)

1 Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.

7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest.

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou

shall be successful.

9 I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people,

11 "Pass through the camp and command the people, 'Prepare your provisions, for in three days you are to cross over this Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess.'"

shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it.

KEY TERMS

- **Nomad** – A person historically associated with a tribe, with no permanent home but who moves from place to place, often seasonally, to find food, pasture for livestock, or work.
- **Succession** – The order and conditions under which one person after another succeeds to a property, dignity, title, or throne.

INTRODUCTION

This quarter begins with Joshua's appointment into leadership as a replacement to the lawgiver, Moses, following his death. The book of Joshua centers on the major events in Israel's history. However, scholars do not believe Joshua himself wrote it. The book launches the reader into the next stage of Israel's narrative. This phase presents a people empowered to espouse themselves as a unique and formidable nation established on their monotheistic belief in one true God, Jehovah. The initial chapter of their history also transitions them from a nomadic people to a sovereign nation, under the new leadership of Joshua. It juxtaposes the nature of God with Joshua's response of effective leadership that willingly undergoes the process of the calling. It displays this through Joshua's demonstration of

This quarter begins with Joshua's appointment into leadership as a replacement to the lawgiver, Moses, following his death.

courage, obedience, and confidence in God's abiding presence. Joshua chapter 1 opens at a critical moment of passing the prophetic mantle as well as transitioning the power of leading the Israelite people to the Promised Land. The chapter does not begin with ceremonial displays that validate and establish the reassignment of power. Nor does this chapter open with the descriptions of military planning and strategies. Instead, it begins with the affirmation of God's presence, and a reminder of God's continued divine instructions are required for the accomplishment of a divine contract. It is through faithful obedience that Joshua steps into the divine path and direction of God's fulfillment of the Promised Land. Leadership evolves through the creator's succession plan, and not through human self-promotion. The result is the manifestation and realization of God's Word.

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TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

We see in the very first verses of Joshus chapter 1, that leadership of God's people must be determined by God. It is God who explicitly commissions Joshua: "Moses, my servant is dead. Now proceed..." (Josh. 1:2). Therefore, as it was with Moses, Joshua's authority flows from divine calling, not from personal ambition or popularity. Through prophetic gifting, Joshua hears God's voice, responds with obedience, and recognizes his responsibility to lead the people forward. This mandated charge requires courage and determination. Three times God tells Joshua to "be strong and courageous" (Josh. 1:6-9). Courage is not an optional choice, but it is an essential element of faith. Joshua's future effectiveness as a leader not only comes from the experiences and mentoring of Moses, but also the understanding of who called him and why. His calling from God gave clarity and legitimacy to the daunting task of leading the massive population of Israelite migrants. He could not stand on his own self-confidence, but Joshua had to trust in the immeasurable power of God.

In addition, Joshua is called to a life of obedience to God's law. God promises that their obedience can anchor Joshua and God's people in their future success. The path to that obedience is to meditate on the law "day and night" and to act according to it (Josh. 1:8). The commitment to a faithful walk in God's commands aligns them with the promise. God's instruction is meant to build strong leaders who are disciplined and consistently grounded in the godly values that sustain long-term success and prosperity.

Furthermore, Joshua is promised that God's presence remains with him. "I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you" (Josh. 1:5). This gives the assurance of the ongoing power and provision of God that leads to unquestionable success. The same God that was with Moses is with Joshua. Although Moses has passed away, God is eternal, everlasting, and always present. God will not forsake the people nor recant on his promise. Joshua grows in confidence knowing that he has not been abandoned with this immense responsibility.

God's instruction is meant to build strong leaders who are disciplined and consistently grounded in the godly values that sustain long-term success and prosperity.

SANKOFA

Just as Joshua stood at the edge of the Jordan facing an unknown future, leaders today often inherit complex situations they did not create. God's message to Joshua affirms that leadership is not about replacing greatness, but about faithfully continuing the mission. There are many stories that are told, passed down from generation to generation, to encourage the younger family members to continue the legacy passed down to them. Such stories may build traditions called folklore, the beliefs, customs, and stories of a community. Eventually they are written down, to memorialize the strength and endurance of the ancestors. Some survived over the decades, centuries, or even millennia after they were recorded. It is particularly important to keep these stories and critical historical events regarding people of African ancestry. It is not simply to honor the great leaders of the past, but to learn

from them and acknowledge the role God played in their lives. Harriet Tubman, for instance, is not simply the great conductor of the Underground Railroad. She is a pillar in which all African Americans can look towards as a model prophet and leader in the black community during the cruel, bitter, and oppressive times of slavery. Her intentional will to lead the people out of slavery is undeniably one of the greatest stories of black history. Yet being a black woman who had physical weaknesses did not stop her determination to free God's people. Her actions took courage and confidence, with relentless faith and determination. Even as a spy and warrior in the Civil War, she demonstrated that God's presence remains with those he calls, leading to great triumphs for those who believe in him.

Even as a spy and warrior in the Civil War, she demonstrated that God's presence remains with those he calls, leading to great triumphs for those who believe in him.

CASE STUDY

Succession planning is considered the strategic process of identifying and developing future leaders to ensure the smooth transition of organizational leadership. An example of this can be seen during the Civil Rights Movement, during the time Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the established leader. Dr. King had a good friend and confidant by the name of Reverend Ralph David Abernathy. Reverend Abernathy was a Baptist minister, with a B.S. degree from Alabama State University in mathematics. Later, he shifted his interest to sociology, and he earned an M.A. degree from Atlanta University. That same year he became pastor of the First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama and met Dr. King a few years later. His common interest in the Civil Rights Movement led to their collaboration. In 1961 Abernathy relocated his pastoral activities to Atlanta, and that same year he was named vice president at large of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and King's designated successor. Reverend Abernathy was considered Dr. King's "spiritual right-hand man" and lieutenant throughout the Civil Rights Movement. Following the assassination of Dr. King

on April 4, 1968, Reverend Abernathy assumed the presidency of SCLC as unanimously requested by the SCLC board of directors. Within a week of the assassination, Abernathy led the march that King had been planning to support striking sanitation workers in Memphis. In May 1968, he assumed leadership of the Poor People's Campaign in Washington, D.C., which included the construction of "Resurrection City." This project was a shantytown on the National Mall intended to highlight economic inequality. Abernathy led the SCLC for nine years (1968 to 1977). During this time, he expanded activism to include labor struggles, such as the 1969 Charleston hospital workers' strike, as well as international diplomacy, as demonstrated in his address to the United Nations in 1971.

> Leaders who trust the call, follow the instruction, and rely on God's promises can lead boldly into uncertain futures.

LIFE APPLICATION

Joshua's transition into leadership after Moses' death provides a timeless model for leaders facing change, uncertainty, and responsibility. It teaches that leadership success is not measured by control or charisma, but by courage, faithfulness, and confidence in God's presence. Leaders who trust the call, follow the instruction, and rely on God's promises can lead boldly into uncertain futures.

Questions

1. What leadership positions are you being called into? Consider personal, spiritual, and professional areas of leadership.
2. What fears, doubts, or barriers limit the progression or the advancement of others?
3. How does grounding your leadership in values of faith strengthen your decisions?
4. Encourage others in your group, family, or community to identify one leadership responsibility where they will intentionally practice courage and obedience this week.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: AMEC Hymnalal #390,

"I Am on the Battlefield for My Lord"

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, our lives are often a myriad of complex issues and concerns, muddied by the oppressive and overwhelming injustices that continue to plague our society. We find ourselves burdened by grief and often face insurmountable odds that suggest we cannot win. But Lord, we believe in your divine hand and presence that fulfils the promises to never leave us nor forsake us. Build up our leaders and those who follow to obey your Word and have courage in times of trouble. May our paths and steps be ordered by you and may our faith never waiver. This we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 7-13

Monday	2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 (Hold Fast to the Traditions)
Tuesday	Exodus 14:21-31 (Victory at the Sea)
Wednesday	Numbers 10:29-36 (The Lord Goes Before Us)
Thursday	John 6:15-21 ("Do not be afraid")
Friday	Psalm 77:11-20 (Remember God's Mighty Deeds)
Saturday	1 Corinthians 11:23-27 (Remember Jesus' Saving Work)
Sunday	Joshua 4:14-24 (Crossing Into the Promised Land)

Remember God's Actions

Lesson Scripture: Joshua 4
Focus Scripture: Joshua 4:14-24

Key Verses: *(Joshua said) "When your children ask their parents in time to come, 'What do these stones mean?' then you shall let your children know, 'Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.'" Joshua 4:21b-22*

JOSHUA 4:14-24 (NRSV UE)

14 On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him, as they had stood in awe of Moses all the days of his life.

15 The Lord said to Joshua,

16 "Command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant to come up out of the Jordan."

17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan."

18 When the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord came up from the middle of the Jordan and the soles of the priests' feet touched dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before.

19 The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.

20 Those twelve stones that they had taken out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal,

21 saying to the Israelites, "When your children ask their parents in time to come, 'What do these stones mean?'

22 then you shall let your children know, 'Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.'

23 For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you crossed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we crossed over,

24 so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty and so that you may fear the Lord your God forever."

JOSHUA 4:14-24 (KJV)

14 On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.

15 And the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying,

16 Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.

17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.

18 And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before.

19 And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

20 And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

21 And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones?

22 Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

23 For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over:

24 That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.

KEY TERMS

- **Ark of the Covenant** – The Ark of the Covenant, Ark of God, or "chest of the covenant," was a sacred, gold-plated wooden chest holding the tablets of the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. It also symbolized God's presence and represented the moral laws that bound God's relationship with Israel.
- **Gilgal** – Served as the Israelites' first campsite in the Promised Land and acted as their primary military and spiritual headquarters during the conquest of Canaan.

INTRODUCTION

In the Bible, the Levitical priests were the male descendants of Aaron from the tribe of Levi. They were specifically set apart by divine command to serve as mediators between God and the people of Israel. Their primary importance lay in maintaining the nation's holiness through the sacrificial system and teaching the Mosaic law. In the book of Joshua, we see the priests also serve to carry the Ark of the Covenant. In this passage, they become the bearers of the law, the sign of Israel's obedience to God, and the physical bearers of the key covenant responsibility of the Israelites. This moment establishes the priests as intercessors for the people as they transition into their new status of a sovereign nation. With Joshua as the new leader, the Israelites now see the continued presence and power of God manifest in miraculous events that defy the laws of nature. Joshua serves as the prophet leader who carries the mantle passed on by Moses but most importantly instituted by God. This event is memorialized as the turning point for the people. They are now entering into a new stage of freedom that is noted by nations across the region.

Joshua serves as the prophet leader who carries the mantle passed on by Moses but most importantly instituted by God.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

This migratory moment of the Israelites served as validation of Joshua's leadership (Josh. 4:14). The miracles performed through the Ark's priestly

procession through the Jordan River served to promote Joshua in the eyes of the people, confirming that God was with him as he had been with Moses. The Ark of the Covenant is primarily known as the physical manifestation of God's presence among the Israelites. It serves as the focal point for miraculous events that facilitated the conquest of the Promised Land. It replaced the pillars of cloud and fire that led the nation into the wilderness, becoming the primary guide for their movement and a symbol of divine leadership. When the priests carrying the Ark stepped into the Jordan during its flood stage, the waters upstream stopped flowing, piling up in a heap near the city of Adam. The priests stood in the middle of the riverbed with the Ark, allowing the entire nation to cross on dry ground (Josh. 3:14-17). This phenomenal event mirrors the conquest over the Pharaoh of Egypt as the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. As the priests carrying the ark caused the Jordan River to part, the people passed through safely. Upon Joshua's command, the priests came out of the river and as their feet touched dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place (Josh. 4:18). Stones were placed as a memorial for the children of future generations to see (Josh. 4:22). These markers would represent the divine sovereign will and power of God as well as God's care over the people. God's orchestration of this event was executed through Joshua's obedient leadership and further displayed through God's authority over nature. With God, nothing could stand in their way. In addition, the presence of the Ark represented God's covenant faithfulness. Since the ark housed the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments it also functioned as a reminder of the required obedience to the law, and their legal and spiritual bond with God.

God's orchestration of this event was executed through Joshua's obedient leadership and further displayed through God's authority over nature.

SANKOFA

Inanimate objects and relics often serve as reminders of important events and future commitments. This practice appears throughout the Bible and

continues today. One common example in the Old Testament is the use of stones. In Joshua, stones marked significant events, symbolized promises or vows (Josh. 24:7), and commemorated God's miraculous acts (Josh. 4:7). Families use similar memorials through photo albums, quilts, t-shirts, tokens, portraits, and heirlooms. Today, technology also allows memories to be preserved digitally, with photos restored or animated to tell a family's story across generations. In earlier times, parents might mark a wall to record a child's growth and milestones. Family trees and household keepsakes also help preserve the memory of people and events. These traditions create moments of remembrance that honor loved ones, recognize their faith, and affirm a commitment to carry their hopes into the future. A familiar example is the headstone, which marks the life of a loved one who has died. Even as church attendance declines and traditions are challenged, many still deeply value honoring their ancestors through gravesites and family burial grounds. Churches around the world also remain places where history is made and remembered. These stones tell stories, preserve history, and renew vision. May we remember the stones laid in our own lives, churches, and Zion.

Even as church attendance declines and traditions are challenged, many still deeply value honoring their ancestors through gravesites and family burial grounds.

CASE STUDY

Placing the names of trustees on the cornerstones of African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches is a long-standing tradition. It is rooted in the necessity of compliance to doctrine and discipline, establishment of legal authority, and recognition of community leadership. It also serves as a reminder of the historical struggle of African Americans to secure property rights. Trustees in the AME tradition are the legal custodians of church property, holding deeds and titles "in trust" for the denomination.

Legal ownership and proper stewardship in the 19th and early 20th centuries was crucial to clearly identify who held the legal title and rights to church

property. This was particularly important for black congregations operating in a racially charged and discriminatory environment that was known for dismantling and literally destroying the progress of Negroes. The physical cornerstone of church property served as a public, permanent record that the church trustees, who were usually free black men, held the deed and proof of ownership for the church. The laying and dedication of the cornerstone was an act to recognize the congregation and the community leaders. It is laid during a formal dedication ceremony, which memorializes the individuals responsible for the "temporal affairs" of the church, including building construction, securing funds, and land purchase. Listing their names honored their service and established the structure as a permanent place of worship, education, and community service. The cornerstone may also contain documents from the date of the building's construction, with some similarities to a time capsule. The cornerstone and other markers may also list the names of the pastor(s), builders, and architects, ensuring that the history is protected and shared for future generations.

The physical cornerstone of church property served as a public, permanent record that the church trustees, who were usually free black men, held the deed and proof of ownership for the church.

LIFE APPLICATION

Joshua's rise to leadership and his actions that followed presents an image of balancing vision, action, and deep spiritual dependence on God. His example offers a model for leadership in any context, whether in the ministry or secular environments. There are times when we face barriers and daunting obstacles that suggest the vision is unattainable. Yet, the Bible presents the faith found in Joshua, who is called by God to carry out the work begun by his predecessor and mentor, Moses. There comes a time when you may be called upon to carry on the legacy started by a tremendous and well-known trailblazer. The mission may seem overwhelming. But those who believe in the Lord must trust in God's

plan and walk by faith in Jesus Christ. This does not negate careful preparation but instead suggests that God is always preparing the next leader in line. You must have courage when given these special assignments. Just as the warriors were prepared for battle, you must also be. Joshua led the people to the promise of a sovereign nation. His life illustrated completely that nothing is impossible with God.

Questions

1. Reflect on the great achievements of family members, ministry leaders, political figures, or historical figures who had to follow a great leader. What positive aspects stand out in their leadership role?

2. What has God called you to do in the past, and is sending you out to do in the future that requires faith and obedience?

3. What spiritual battles do you expect to face in the future and how are you equipping yourself for them?

Joshua led the people to the promise of a sovereign nation. His life illustrated completely that nothing is impossible with God.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: AMEC Hymnalal #513, "Time Is Filled with Swift Transition"

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, we your people are often faced with overwhelming odds against us. Whether we face them in our homes, our jobs, our communities, and our countries, we need you to guide us through. These are times when we must rely on your presence and your power to take us through troubled waters and unknown destinations. But just as you have led those before us, we trust you, God, to lead us through to the promises you gave our ancestors and the destiny you promised to all of us. May our hearts align with your Word, your commandments, and be enhanced and revealed in truth through the Gospel of Jesus the Christ. All this we pray in Jesus' matchless and precious name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 14-20

Monday	Deuteronomy 7:1-11 (Live as God's Treasured Possession)
Tuesday	Deuteronomy 7:12-26 (God Will Love, Bless, and Multiply)
Wednesday	Philippians 4:10-19 (Strengthened in Every Circumstance)
Thursday	2 Corinthians 10:1-5, 15-18 (Armed for Spiritual Warfare)
Friday	John 16:23-33 (Christ Has Conquered the World)
Saturday	Joshua 10:40–11:5 (God Fights for God's People)
Sunday	Joshua 11:6-9, 16-23 (God Brings Victory)

God's Complicated Promise

Lesson Scripture: Joshua 6; 8:26; 10:28-43; 11:1-23; Deuteronomy 7:1-26
Focus Scripture: Joshua 11:6-9, 16-23

Key Verse: *It was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts so that they would come against Israel in battle, in order that they might be utterly destroyed and might receive no mercy but be exterminated, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. Joshua 11:20*

JOSHUA 11:6-9, 16-23 (NRSV UE)

Joshua 11:6-9

6 And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will hand over all of them, slain, to Israel; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire."

7 So Joshua came suddenly upon them with all his fighting force, by the waters of Merom, and fell upon them.

8 And the Lord handed them over to Israel, who attacked them and chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim and eastward as far as the valley of Mizpeh. They struck them down until they had left no one remaining.

9 And Joshua did to them as the Lord had commanded him; he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

16-23

16 So Joshua took all that land: the hill country and all the Negeb and all the land of Goshen and the lowland and the Arabah and the hill country of Israel and its lowland,

17 from Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir, as far as Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon. He took all their kings, struck them down, and put them to death.

18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

19 There was not a town that made peace with the Israelites except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon; all were taken in battle.

20 For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts so that they would come against Isra-

JOSHUA 11:6-9, 16-23 (KJV)

Joshua 11:6-9

6 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Be not afraid because of them: for to morrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel: thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.

7 So Joshua came, and all the people of war with him, against them by the waters of Merom suddenly; and they fell upon them.

8 And the Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephothmaim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh eastward; and they smote them, until they left them none remaining.

9 And Joshua did unto them as the Lord bade him: he houghed their horses, and burnt their chariots with fire.

16-23

16 So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same;

17 Even from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baalgad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them.

18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all other they took in battle.

20 For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts,

el in battle, in order that they might be utterly destroyed and might receive no mercy but be exterminated, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.

21 At that time Joshua came and wiped out the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel; Joshua utterly destroyed them with their towns.

22 None of the Anakim was left in the land of the Israelites; some remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.

23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses, and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.

that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses.

21 And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.

22 There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained.

23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

KEY TERMS

- **Jericho** – The first city the Israelites encountered and conquered after crossing the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Its miraculous fall served as a definitive demonstration of divine power over human strength.
- **Inheritance** – The passing of physical property/land within families and the spiritual blessings, promises, and covenantal rights bestowed by God upon his people.
- **Plunder (shalal, bizah)** – Goods, livestock, or people taken by force during war or conquest, representing both material spoils and divine judgment.
- **Allotment**–A division of the conquered land of Canaan among the tribes of Israel as an inheritance.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as a significant crux in the book, transitioning from the phase of military conquest to the phase of permanent tribal settlement. Israel is now a nation. What was once a community who wandered in the wilderness is no longer simply a populous collection of migrants. They have become a governed people possessing a mighty army comprised of the twelve tribes of Israel. Previously led by the prophet, Moses they have been

transformed into a massive, empowered social order. They are entrenched in a faith belief that the sole deity of the universe has selected them and granted them the privilege of a Promised Land, upon which they are steadily encroaching. Israel's historic conquests and Joshua's evolution and affirmation into leadership must not be ignored. His willingness for accountability is just as important as his rise to power and fame.

As the wars proceeded, Joshua and the Israelite armies were once again victorious. The process of allotting land to each tribe in an equitable manner provided assurance that each tribe received a portion corresponding to their size and needs.

Israel's historic conquests and Joshua's evolution and affirmation into leadership must not be ignored. His willingness for accountability is just as important as his rise to power and fame.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The Israelite people encamp east of the Jordan River in a region known as the plains of Moab. This position gives them the perspective of overlooking the northern end of the Dead Sea and the Southern Jordan Valley. They have accomplished the military victory over Jericho (chapter 6), which is interpreted as God's authorizing act. But the narrator also reveals the turmoil that followed. After a decisive win over Jericho, Joshua and the people realized a terrible defeat at the hands of the people of Ai. This defeat was due to the disobedience of one man, named Achan. In Joshua chapter 7, the "devoted things" (Hebrew: *herem*) refer to items from the city of Jericho that were set apart exclusively for the Lord, either for destruction or for his treasury. The Israelites were able to plunder the defeated nation which signified a transfer of wealth. But the disobedience of one individual resulted into a major setback for God's people. Achan confessed to secretly taking and hiding treasures comprised of a Babylonian robe, 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels. After Joshua realized the sin against God that was affecting all of the people, he bowed down in remorse, begging for forgiveness. God was merciful and instructed Joshua to have the people consecrate themselves and prepare for the battles ahead. God's wrath was also

found in the inflection of bitterness held by Israel's adversaries. The kings and rulers were said to have hardened hearts (Josh. 11:20). Scholars interpret God's hardening of the Canaanite kings' hearts as a judicial act of judgment following centuries of persistent wickedness and rebellion. Rather than an arbitrary act of divine force, this hardening is seen as God ratifying the kings' existing choices, strengthening their resolve to wage war so they could be justly destroyed. This story is not simply about God's power wielded over foreign lands. This illustrates the consequences that people face due to the poor choices of their leaders and those who follow evil. It recalls the need for repentance from sin and commitment to a new life with God. How difficult this was for the people and still is today. Yet, humanity has been given a Savior, through Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God that the poor choices and mistakes due to temptation and human frailty have been resolved through God's son, Jesus the Christ.

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SANKOFA

Continuous victories may lead to arrogance and conceit, sloppy behavior, and disregard for discipline. Most people see fighting wars and battling in competition as the natural order of survival. Encouraging a spirit of competition, winners and losers, is perceived as training and preparation for life. But most trainers and coaches will advise that the greatest challenge is maintaining a clear mind, focused on a broader vision. One must be committed to the survival of the community and be faithful to the purpose and plan that not only supports the individual but the community at large. Despite the harsh reality of wars during ancient times, it poses a reality check of the divide throughout humanity today. The desire to have peace among all people has become increasingly distant as humanity vies for the natural resources and rulers of all nations appear to hunger for more power. Countless actions by the United States of America

have been questioned and condemned as lacking evidence of upholding not only our democracy and civil rights, but lack of demonstrating integrity and upholding human rights. The commands of God that are being repositioned in schoolhouses and courthouses may appear to be no more than plaques of art and artifacts of the vision of the past. The hypocrisy is exasperated by the belief that tax dollars are better spent on deportations and wars rather than provisions for food, housing, and affordable health care. The past teaches us that our greatest resources are human resources, young and old, able bodied or other abled. What we learn from the book of Joshua is not simply that God is able to bring victory to God's people. We also learn that war brings death and destruction, and even the victor is held accountable for fairness and justice. Let us pray that our vision and desired legacy for the next generation is that war will not be the first option but instead be the last resort.

Let us pray that our vision and desired legacy for the next generation is that war will not be the first option but instead be the last resort.

CASE STUDY

Throughout history, the loss of human life due to mass conflicts is incalculable. Reflecting on the costs of war over the past century is daunting and immeasurable when recognizing the wholescale global impact on ethnicities, societies, economies, and the environment. In the 20th century the world witnessed over 260 wars or major conflicts across the globe. Most notable to people are the two massive world wars, the Russian Civil War, the Cold War, Korean War, Vietnam War, Arab-Israeli War, Iran-Iraq War, and the Gulf War. These do not include the wars and conflicts that have occurred since the beginning of the new millennium. The Vietnam War (1955–1975) represents one of the most significant demographic shocks of the 20th century. Total death toll estimates vary widely but most scholarly figures range between 1.3 million and 3.8 million total deaths. In addition to the toxic herbicides from Agent Orange and unexploded ordnances (UXO) left

behind, the Vietnam War resulted in a tremendous refugee crisis. The United Nations estimates that between 200,000 and 400,000 died at sea due to storms, piracy, and overcrowding. The war in Afghanistan (2001–2021) resulted in an estimated 176,000 to 212,000 deaths. When including related conflict in North-West Pakistan, the estimated death toll rises to approximately 241,000 people. These figures primarily represent direct deaths from violence (bombs, bullets, and fire). However, hundreds of thousands more Afghans died from indirect causes such as hunger, disease, and the destruction of infrastructure. As of early 2026, the Russia-Ukraine war has resulted in a devastating death toll, with total casualties across both sides estimated to exceed 1.8 million. As of October 3, 2025, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health, 67,075 people have been killed and 169,430 people have been injured. Recent analysis by public health experts suggests that the number of fatalities reported by the Gaza Ministry of Health may be significantly undercounted. Regarding the War of Iran, the most recent conflict involving the U.S., the numbers are still being compiled. As of late April 2026, reports stated that over 3,600 people had been killed in Iran, with estimates including 1,701 civilians. Wars are also expensive. In the few years since the Hamas attack on Israel, the costs of the U.S. government support to Israel have exceeded $31 billion. The U.S. spent an estimated $28 to $35 billion on the war against Iran, in the three-month span between February and April 2026. Although some would focus on the monetary cost of war, the human toll and impact to human welfare, social structures, generational advancement, and the environment is a far greater loss. Conflict resolution, peace negotiations, building alliances and promoting unity among diverse groups offer a less costly price. It is incumbent upon believers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to call for alternatives to war and work towards stronger leadership that will work towards options to resolve conflicts globally.

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LIFE APPLICATION

There is significant concern of the messaging from Christian leaders who reject or avoid opportunities to promote peace and welfare for all people. The ideology of having a "Christian" nation has no biblical foundation. Jesus often corrected the disciples to understand that the Messiah is not a military leader, but a God-inhabited Savior, spreading a message of love and understanding for all people. The parables that Jesus used to illustrate the definition of loving our neighbors, was effectively done through the Good Samaritan. It served as an illustration of the prejudice and bigotry that prevent love and compassion from reaching all people. The book of Joshua is often used as the justification of privileged and more powerful groups to condemn others. But God's promises and plans are more complex and cannot be defined by narrow minded prejudicial practices. The true battle is against sin. God's greatest promise is the redemption from sin we receive through Jesus Christ. The fight has already been won. We must share this with others, so that we all can be victorious through Jesus Christ.

The parables that Jesus used to illustrate the definition of loving our neighbors, was effectively done through the Good Samaritan. It served as an illustration of the prejudice and bigotry that prevent love and compassion from reaching all people.

Questions

1. What are the greatest concerns surrounding wars in the 21st century?
2. What messages (if any) should the church share in the 21st century regarding human rights and welfare?
3. How can the church become a stronger advocate for human rights, especially in times of war?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: AMEC Hymnalal #453, "I Trust in God"

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, we humbly come before you this day with grateful hearts, thanking you for our basic needs being met and for the protection you provided that has kept us from harm. But we know that everyone does not

experience the same blessings. We pray now for those who are in harm's way, facing war and conflict, sickness and disease. We pray for healing of the land, for righteous and honorable leadership, for peace and prosperity to replace disease, death, and despair. Heal our land, oh Lord. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 21-27

Monday	Joshua 2:1-7 (Welcoming Strangers)
Tuesday	James 2:18-26 (Faith Without Works Is Dead)
Wednesday	Psalm 67 (May the Nations Know God's Salvation)
Thursday	Hebrews 11:1-2, 29-31 (Faith to Live by)
Friday	Acts 10:34-48 (God Shows No Partiality)
Saturday	Joshua 2:8-14 (Rahab's Faith in Israel's God)
Sunday	Joshua 6:6-17 (Rahab Is Spared)

God's Compassion for Rahab

Lesson Scripture: Joshua 2; 6:16-25; Matthew 1:5; James 2:25; Hebrews 11:31
Focus Scripture: Joshua 2:8-13; 6:16-17

Key Verse: *"The city and all in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent."*
Joshua 6:17

JOSHUA 2:8-13; 6:16-17 (NRSV UE)

Joshua 2:8-13

8 Before they went to sleep, she came up to them on the roof

9 and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land and that dread of you has fallen on us and that all the inhabitants of the land melt in fear before you.

10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

11 As soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any of us because of you. The Lord your God is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below.

12 Now then, since I have dealt kindly with you, swear to me by the Lord that you in turn will deal kindly with my family. Give me a sign of good faith

13 that you will spare my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them and deliver our lives from death."

6:16-17

16 And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the Lord has given you the city.

17 The city and all that is in it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live because she hid the messengers we sent."

JOSHUA 2:8-13; 6:16-17 (KJV)

Joshua 2:8-13

8 And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof;

9 And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.

10 For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed.

11 And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.

12 Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token:

13 And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.

6:16-17

16 And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city.

17 And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent.

KEY TERMS

- **Inhabitants** – Those who occupied the land at that time; best interpreted as the "rulers" of the land.
- **Spy** – To gain advantage by discovering secrets about an enemy's plans or defenses. Other stories of spies are found in Numbers 13, Joshua 8:2-3, Judges 18:2-16.
- **Prostitute** – A person who engages in sexual activity for money, sexual desire, or survival, predominantly viewed negatively as immoral under Mosaic law.

INTRODUCTION

This portion of the narrative specifically highlights the significance of Rahab, a woman, a prostitute, and a Gentile, who otherwise would be considered expendable and of no importance. Yet God has designed this segment of Israel's history to use an incredibly brave and clever woman to not only protect and deliver her family from harm, but to be the ancestor of the Messiah. As a "hero of faith" in Hebrews 11 and James 2, she represents the inclusion of outsiders. She is evidence that God's work of redemption is not limited to human bloodlines but is ignited by the actions flowing from belief in God. This is the opening presentation for the invasion that could only be orchestrated by God. The strategy incorporates the use of a liturgical procession depicting a ceremonial act, with a combined atmosphere of solemnity and worship. The imagery depicts the realization that a battle will soon ensue with an unseen commander of arms, namely the Holy Spirit. There is no fortress, no barrier that can stand against the God of the heavens.

"There is no fortress, no barrier that can stand against the God of the heavens.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The kingdoms of Sihon and Og in central and northern Transjordan had already been conquered under Moses' leadership (Numbers 21; Deut.1–2). Spies, espionage, and a reinforced Jericho wall present the imagery of the strategies for any impending battle or

attempted takeover. But this chapter of Joshua presents an unlikely champion for the people of God. A woman and prostitute named Rahab rises as the negotiator and ally to the Israelite spies. This is a dramatic shift from traditional roles of women. The biblical account of women from the time of Joshua to Nehemiah portrays a patriarchal, male-dominated culture in which women were seen as peripheral to society. However, in Joshua 2:8-13, Rahab aids the spies in their mission and their escape. Rahab offers them a secure hiding place as well as directs them westward to the high country, the safest direction to hide from the king of Jericho (Josh. 2:15-16). She provides them intel of the current morale of the people and Jericho's army by disclosing that the reputation of Israel is widespread. She informs them that the people of Jericho are intimidated by the Israelite warriors' fighting skills, chariots, and their numbers (Josh. 2:11). She offers her silence and support in return for her family's safety. In Joshua 2:14 the spies respond, "Our life for yours!" Rahab agrees and provides them with the best route and strategy for escape. In Joshua 6:22-23, the commitment made by the men was upheld. Their promise was considered a sworn oath, and Joshua commands the two spies to personally escort Rahab and her family from harm's way. Joshua displays his commitment to the spies' agreement, and to the secure passage of Rahab and her family. Generations continue to hear the story of the mighty battle and victory over Jericho. And the name of Rahab continues to be respected and honored to this day.

She offers her silence and support in return for her family's safety. In Joshua 2:14 the spies respond, "Our life for yours!" Rahab agrees and provides them with the best route and strategy for escape. In Joshua 6:22-23, the commitment made by the men was upheld.

SANKOFA

Women of color have redefined the identity of women through the lens of Womanist Theology. Womanist Theology is a theological framework rooted in the experiences, voices, and agency of black women, analyzing how race, gender, and class create a "triple oppression."

Developed in the 1980s, it focuses on God's liberation, survival, and quality of life for black women. This concept was coined by Alice Walker and developed by theologians like Delores Williams, Katie Cannon, and Jacquelyn Grant. It emerges from the lived experience of black women, particularly in the U.S. Womanist Theology interprets Rahab as a survivor who used her marginalized position to secure the survival of her community. By analyzing her through the "tripartite" lens of race, class, and gender, Womanists challenge the "harlot" label. Through this lens, Rahab's sex work is considered likely stemming from poverty and debt slavery rather than moral failure. When describing her home as living "on the wall," it suggests a physical location on the outer areas of the city, symbolically and physically on the margins. Rahab used her knowledge of local politics to negotiate a covenant of safety for her family, mirroring the "strong rescue" *(ezer)* found in Genesis 14. Joshua reminds us that God's promises to Israel also anticipate the coming Messiah. In Matthew 1:5, Rahab is the non-Jewish heroine of the family lineage. Instead of portraying her as an unclean outsider, Rahab emerges as a model of faithfulness and a recipient of God's grace. Although Rahab is a sex worker, she is also a leader and a negotiator. Ultimately, she becomes the ancestral matriarch of the line of David and the promised Messiah. People will seek wisdom, guidance, and sound leadership but often overlook the character traits of an individual due to her gender, class, or background. Throughout history, women were overlooked and dismissed, portrayed only through a maternal role. Yet women, particularly black women, have offered much more, often being the foundational pillars and strategists within the church and society. This text is a reminder that women have enabled the survival of God's people and the fulfillment of God's plan.

People will seek wisdom, guidance, and sound leadership but often overlook the character traits of an individual due to her gender, class, or background.

CASE STUDY

The list of the black heroines that are dimly highlighted throughout history are sadly too numerous. However, they must be acknowledged. Examples, of course, include the heroine and Underground Railroad engineer Harriet Tubman. But, many are unaware of other skillful and brave women who placed their lives in jeopardy for the good of their country and their people. For instance, iconic singer and dancer Josephine Baker is best-known for her entertainment career that spanned five decades. She was also an agent for French intelligence during World War II. Historical accounts state that Nazi guards were so star-struck by Baker, known in various circles as the "Black Pearl," that they let her slip across the border without trouble. Soldiers were unaware that Baker carried secret messages written in invisible ink on her sheet music. After the war, Baker was awarded the French Legion of Honor for her service. The National Order of the Legion of Honour, formerly the Imperial Order of the Legion of Honour, is the highest and most prestigious French national order of merit, both military and civil. Baker aided the French Resistance during World War II, and also worked with the British Secret Intelligence Service and the United States Office of Strategic Services. The extent of her work as a spy was not publicized until 2020, when French documents were declassified. After the war, she was awarded the Resistance Medal by the French Committee of National Liberation, the Croix de Guerre by the French military, and was named a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour by General Charles de Gaulle. When performing in the United States she refused to perform for segregated audiences. She is noted for her contributions to the Civil Rights Movement and was even offered a leadership role in the movement. Some would have considered her vocation as a singer and dancer as scandalous during the early 20th century. But she performed for a higher calling for justice that crossed

When performing in the United States she refused to perform for segregated audiences. She is noted for her contributions to the Civil Rights Movement and was even offered a leadership role in the movement.

national and international borders.

LIFE APPLICATION

When reading about Canaanites (Matthew 15:22), there is speculation whether the ancient Israelites committed genocide by killing all of the inhabitants of Canaan. As African Methodists, there is a responsibility to carefully analyze scripture through a social justice lens. We must not respond to Joshua's conquest narrative as a sign of God's disregard of select people nor support the modern-day acts of aggression and war that threaten to eradicate civilizations. We must be sensitive to current geopolitical realities, such as the pressures facing many countries today in wars over land and oil. Jesus reminds us in John chapter 10 that he is the good shepherd who has come for all sheep, all ethnicities, Jews and Gentiles. People of God are called not to raise up earthly kings, but the King of Kings, which is Jesus Christ.

> We must be sensitive to current geopolitical realities, such as the pressures facing many countries today in wars over land and oil.

Questions

1. What would you consider the best method(s) to assess whether a person is suited for leadership in the church? Do the requirements differ if a person seeks leadership in a secular role?
2. Are people too dependent on images of heroic leadership rather than considering the strengths and contributions of everyday individuals in their midst?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: AMEC Hymnal # 378, "Lead Me, Guide Me"

Closing Prayer: Dear God, Heavenly Father, creator and sustainer of heaven and earth, we praise and glorify your holy name and thank you for your continued grace and mercy. Thank you, Lord, that you see the potential in us when others may not. Thank you, that you gave your Son for all of us and that you have no respect of persons. You see each of us as what we become through your grace and mercy and aligned with your purpose. Reveal your plan for us and strengthen us for

the work you have assigned to each of us, man, woman, or child. May your Holy Spirit strengthen us to break down walls and build new bridges towards your kingdom. May your mercy abound and your promises be revealed through our obedience and faith in Jesus Christ. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 28–October 4

Monday	Joshua 23:1-11 (Hold Fast to the Lord)
Tuesday	Joshua 24:1-13 (Reaffirming the Covenant)
Wednesday	1 John 1:8–2:5 (Obey Christ's Commandments)
Thursday	Luke 9:57-62 (No Turning Back)
Friday	Matthew 22:34-40 (The Greatest Commandments)
Saturday	Psalm 25:12-22 (God, Redeem Your People)
Sunday	Joshua 24:14-27 (We Will Serve the Lord)

Radical Commitment to God's Way

Lesson Scripture: Joshua 23–24
Focus Scripture: Joshua 24:18-27

Key Verse: *(Joshua said,) "Put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt and serve the Lord." Joshua 24:14b*

JOSHUA 24:18-27 (NRSV UE)

18 "...and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God."

19 But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins.

20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good."

21 And the people said to Joshua, "No, we will serve the Lord!"

22 Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses."

23 He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel."

24 The people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and him we will obey."

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem.

26 Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the Lord.

27 Joshua said to all the people, "See, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us; therefore it shall be a witness against you if you deal falsely with your God."

JOSHUA 24:18-27 (KJV)

18 And the Lord drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God.

19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

20 If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

21 And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord.

22 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.

23 Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel.

24 And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.

27 And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

KEY TERMS

- **Rebellion** – Revolt, insurgence, or mutiny. In biblical context, it is considered the willful defiance, stubbornness, and rejection of God's authority and commands.
- **Shechem** – Derived from the Hebrew noun "shekem" meaning "shoulder/ shoulder blade" or the upper part of the back. It is believed to be a city named for its location in a narrow valley between the shoulders of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. Considered a monumental theological crossroad.

INTRODUCTION

As the closing chapter, Joshua 24 operates as the intense as well as prophetic conclusion to the book describing Moses' successor. The early verses feature Joshua's farewell address at Shechem where he challenges Israel to make a binding pledge to serve God solely. Joshua provides a final lesson on God's historical faithfulness, accompanied by warnings against the people entering idolatry practices. This final discourse renews the covenant and sets up a stone as a witness to their pledge. However, the words of the people continue to be probed. There is no question that the people of Israel have long continued a pattern of defiance against almighty God, despite the evidence of God's power and love for the people. The words of Joshua serve as both confirmation of favor as well as warnings of demise. Joshua makes it clear of his stance and establishes a platform on which the people can determine their own fate.

"The words of Joshua serve as both confirmation of favor as well as warnings of demise.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Joshua, the prophet, the warrior, the leader of the people into the Promised Land, has grown old. His final days are focusing on continuing the legacy that Moses had begun while recalling the lessons and laws of the past. It is reminiscent of the transition of leadership that is presented in multiple biblical passages (Num. 27:12-23;

Deut. 31:1-8; Josh. 1:1-9). The wisdom that is exhibited is equally grounded in concern for these people who historically lacked compliance and adherence to these precious words. The reference to God's mercy and favor of the past will be integrated with the understanding that God's wrath is still to be considered. The almighty creator has boundaries and rules that carry considerable consequences when violated, as demonstrated in the past. Preceding this section, the reader finds Joshua establishing a plan for the people beyond his tenure as the leader of this nation. He illustrates his obedience to Moses by conducting a review of God's laws and commands for the people. Joshua ensures that the people are well informed and clearly understand God's promises were made to them coupled with their own responsibility and future accountability. Joshua leads the proclamation by establishing his position in the previous verses (vs. 15). He declares his personal allegiance to God, which included his household. There is no question about Joshua's faithfulness, and his inquiry of every listener is to determine their commitment as well. It appears that Joshua has assumed the people may attempt to be obedient but will ultimately fall away in rebellion. The people adamantly responded, "No!" Their bold declaration of faithful allegiance to God becomes their binding agreement to the covenant, becoming the evidence similar to a legal document in a court of law. As Joshua acknowledges their response, he acquires a stone to symbolize their commitment and dedication to God moving forward. A stone continues to mark the location and space of continuing the covenant with God. This chapter concludes with the hope that the future will bring continued favor and prosperity to this young nation.

Joshua ensures that the people are well informed and clearly understand God's promises were made to them coupled with their own responsibility and future accountability.

SANKOFA

Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established. (Proverbs 16:3)

There are several common sayings

about keeping a commitment or keeping your word. "My word is my bond" is an established historical version, serving as the motto of the London Stock Exchange. Since its founding, this phrase is meant to emphasize that verbal agreements are as binding as written contracts. Another familiar saying is, "A man is only as good as his word." This is a traditional proverb suggesting that a person's entire character and reputation are based on the fulfillment of the promise that was made. "Your word is your honor" has become a modern adage emphasizing that personal integrity is defined by the ability to keep one's promises. In other words, if you say you're going to do something then you need to do it. Yet the challenges of life still exist, and a person's word is no longer trusted. In essence, people are growing more skeptical of the promises made at marriage ceremonies, political campaigns, and even in a court of law. The most important thing to commit to is the commitment to God. Proverbs chapter 16 verse 3 does not indicate a person is infallible and unable to lie or embellish the truth. Instead, this proverb suggests that whatever work is done or word said should be committed unto God. When that happens, God's strength replaces our weaknesses. We are no longer solely responsible but instead rely on the Lord's presence to be our help. Through the Lord's guidance, believers are able to rightfully direct all things we pursue to God. It does not enable or justify wrongdoing or broken promises. Instead, it provides those who willingly commit themselves to God, to allow God to order their steps and guide them on a straight and narrow path. Jesus taught the importance of following him through the straight and narrow gate. Though difficult, it ensures that the those who believe in him will reach the destination God intended. Do not simply make a commitment to God. Ensure that you commit all things to him.

Through the Lord's guidance, believers are able to rightfully direct all things we pursue to God.

CASE STUDY

Current data from 2026 indicates a

distinct rise in rebellious behavior across the United States, manifesting through large-scale political resistance, shifting social attitudes, and disruptive youth trends. Society is increasingly viewing rebellion as a positive "skill" rather than a negative trait. Over 57% of Americans now consider being rebellious a skill, viewing it as a means of personal empowerment and a tool to reshape traditional career paths and workplace norms. These beliefs have crept into youth behaviors. Police in major cities like Chicago, Detroit, and Atlanta are struggling with "teen takeovers." These large, boisterous, and sometimes violent gatherings are quickly organized via social media. Experts note that much of this behavior is linked to a sustained mental health crisis. As of 2026, 16.1% of students experience anxiety disorders and 6.3% have behavioral/ conduct problems. Approximately 74% of Gen Z (aged 21-26) embrace their rebellious spirit, compared to 63% of Gen X and 39% of baby boomers. Rebellions are not new. The American Revolution was a rebellion. The French Revolution was a rebellion. The Civil Rights Movement was a basic resistance to the laws and rules of government. However, these historical efforts towards social justice do not align or compare with the destructive trends of youth takeovers or disregard for traffic rules, snatch-and-grab-looters in a neighborhood store or mall. The rebellious nature of the individuals mirrors the disregard and disrespect of authority seen in the book of Judges. This behavior can ultimately lead to weakening social order and dismantling the infrastructure of communities. The question that is posed is how society institutes a recommitment to social order and the basic law and order that is built foundationally on God's laws. If the Bible provides the blueprint, it also warns of the potential outcomes if God's laws are not followed. Grace and

The Civil Rights Movement was a basic resistance to the laws and rules of government. However, these historical efforts towards social justice do not align or compare with the destructive trends of youth takeovers or disregard for traffic rules, snatch-and-grab-looters in a neighborhood store or mall.

mercy abound but consequences for disobedience may still lie ahead.

LIFE APPLICATION

With the multitude of demands that intrude in one's life it may become difficult to keep commitments. Even more challenging are the streams of temptations that bombard every individual in life. Videos, posts, and images constantly pop up on computers, tablets, and phones. Not to mention the inappropriate and disrespectful behavior seen in public. This is immersed in a society led by questionable leadership and disappointing trends towards past injustice. However, the walk of a Christian is to stay grounded and rooted in God's Word. This is a season to make wise choices that do not encourage bad behavior nor draw a believer away from Christ. Instead, plan time to unplug from devices and media. Immerse yourself in words of faith and encouragement. Increase prayer and devotion time. Focus on the past victories and present evidence of God's presence and faithfulness. Encourage other family members, friends, and members of your church to join in a season and quest of spiritual renewal. Make a commitment to God that can't be broken by the world. Then watch the Lord establish your ways.

> …the walk of a Christian is to stay grounded and rooted in God's Word.

Questions

1. What can you and your church community do to promote spiritual growth and commitment to the Lord?

2. What spiritual battles are you and your community currently facing that require a recommitment to the Lord?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: African American Heritage Hymnal #461, "Give Me a Clean Heart"

Closing Prayer: Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn. Through the storm, through the night, lead me unto the light. Take my hand, precious Lord, and lead me home. May your Spirit strengthen

me to commit fully to you, to follow you wherever you lead with joyful anticipation of your plan in my life. Thank you, Lord, for forgiveness and the redemptive power of Jesus Christ. Hallelujah, thank you, Jesus. Amen!

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

October 5-11

Monday	Romans 5:1-10 (Christ Died for All)
Tuesday	Romans 5:11-21 (Grace Abounds Despite Our Sin)
Wednesday	Deuteronomy 12:1-14 (Worship God in the Chosen Sanctuary)
Thursday	Deuteronomy 12:20-32 (Reject Unworthy Forms of Worship)
Friday	Colossians 3:1-11 (Reject Earthly Desires)
Saturday	Colossians 3:12-17 (Clothe Yourself With Godliness)
Sunday	Judges 2:1-15 (God Is Faithful Anyway)

God Works Despite Evil

Lesson Scripture: Judges 2
Focus Scripture: Judges 2:6-15

Key Verse: *The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. Judges 2:11*

JUDGES 2:6-15 (NRSV UE)

6 When Joshua dismissed the people, the Israelites all went to their own inheritances to take possession of the land.

7 The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel.

8 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of one hundred ten years.

9 So they buried him within the bounds of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

10 Moreover, that whole generation was gathered to their ancestors, and another generation grew up after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel.

11 Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals,

12 and they abandoned the Lord, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; they followed other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were all around them and bowed down to them, and they provoked the Lord to anger.

13 They abandoned the Lord and served Baal and the Astartes.

14 So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers who plundered them, and he sold them into the power of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies.

15 Whenever they marched out, the hand of

JUDGES 2:6-15 (KJV)

6 And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land.

7 And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel.

8 And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

9 And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash.

10 And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.

11 And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim:

12 And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger.

13 And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

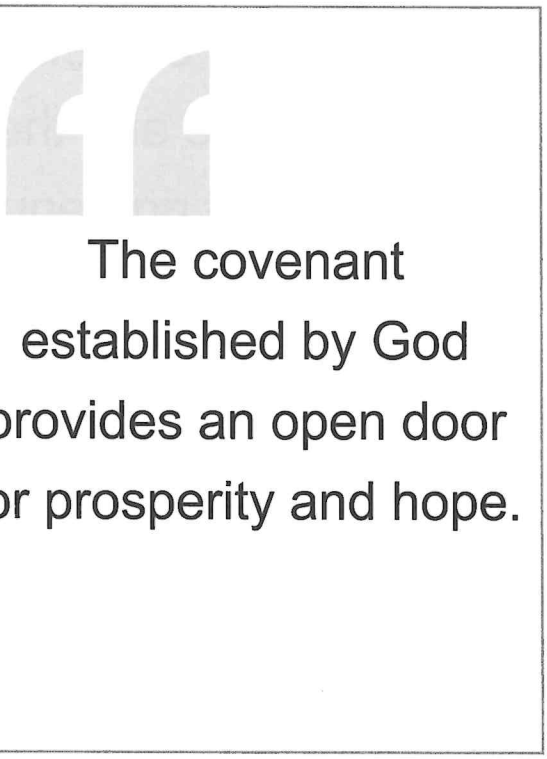
14 And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.

the Lord was against them to bring misfortune, as the Lord had warned them and sworn to them, and they were in great distress.

15 Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

KEY TERMS

- **Judge (verb)** – To discern, decide, or govern, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, right and wrong; **(noun)** a person acting as a representative of divine justice.
- **Ashtoreth** – Godess of fertility and sexual love; pagan goddess and physical idol of the Canaanites. Ashtoreth was frequently paired with the male god Baal. The term is used as deliberate corruption of the name *Astarte* by interspersing vowels with the word, *bosheth*, which means *shame*.
- **Bosheth** – Hebrew word meaning *shame*, *confusion*, *disgrace*, or *disillusionment*; frequently used as a replacement for the name of the Canaanite god Baal.



INTRODUCTION

Judges chapter 2 serves as the theological introduction to the book. It details Israel's failure to drive out the Canaanites, leading to a recurring cycle of idolatry, divine punishment, and mercy through the establishment of divinely appointed judges. The chapter highlights a new generation unfamiliar with the almighty God of their ancestors and the covenant of obedience sworn by them. This introductory section of Judges sets the stage for an ongoing fateful pattern of turmoil and deliverance for the Israelite people. The covenant established by God provides an open door for prosperity and hope. The next stage is the rebellious trend of the people, abandoning the Lord's commands, resulting in God's punishment and loss of God's favor. In response, the people cry out to God for forgiveness and deliverance from their

distress. This leads to God raising a deliverer, a judge to rule over and bring the people back to God.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

In the opening verses of Judges 2, the angel of the Lord brings a harsh rebuke to the people of God at the place named *Bochim,* which means *weeping.* The people who receive this message are warned of the future demise of the people. The writer illustrates that Joshua's death was a pentacle point of the Israelite narrative, marking the decline of moral accountability and obedience to Yahweh. As foretold by the angel, Judges 2:10 describes a generation that lacked knowledge of the God of their ancestors, resulting in the fulfillment of the oracle. Thus, the people fell into spiritual decay, and worshiped the false Canaanite gods, Baal and Ashtoreth. As seen in the past, their rejection of Yahweh left them vulnerable, without the power and might that brought them through seas and gave them victories over great armies. Their aggression in battle was futile for they fought under their own power, not the covering of almighty God. This section illustrates the contrast of Israel's failed attempts of success and prosperity under their own hands and under the influences of theological falsehoods. This passage presents the harsh realities of the consequences forewarned by God through Moses and Joshua. As a result of their disobedience and the lack of sound righteous leadership, the Israelites found themselves in grave distress.

As a result of their disobedience and the lack of sound righteous leadership, the Israelites found themselves in grave distress.

SANKOFA

During a church school class entitled "The Christian Home in a Modern World," the class was invited to explore current beliefs and practices that shape the future. The comment was made by a member that "Children today have no home training!" Despite the robust discussion, there is evidence that this may be the trend. Parents and other guardians have a responsibility to intentionally

teach children positive healthy life skills. However, there are varied views of what that means. The modern definition of "home training" focuses primarily on physical training and exercise. Apparently, training at home includes physical workouts like push-ups, and the use of home equipment. Behavioral training or what old school folks call "upbringing" is secondary in the lists of definitions. Yet social skills is critical to healthy living. The process of raising children and influencing young minds involves teaching manners, gratitude, humility, emotional control, and respect for others. Yet this appears to be secondary to the attention towards the physical attributes and condition of an individual which primarily entails appearance. This suggests that modern society is more focused on the acceptance or approval of a person's outer appearance, body shape, athletic abilities, and what may be considered physically attractive rather than one's social behavior. This argument certainly applies to parenting children in this modern-day culture. Although parents' greatest desire is the welfare of their children, the strong influence of social media, marketing, and peer pressure *promote* alternative views and directions that often do not align with strong moral principles and Christian beliefs. Integrated with these challenges is the acceptance of relaxing responsibilities and even removing consequences for bad behavior, thereby shielding children from experiences that not only promote healthy moral character but build confidence and resilience to challenging situations. Thus, there is a concern for the absence of attention to the sacred text of Proverbs 22:6 which says: "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." This proverb does not refer to the way humanity goes, but in the way God leads us. It emphasizes guiding children toward moral, ethical, and spiritual values, laying a foundation for their adulthood. The lesson today is a friendly reminder for all parents. Don't let

Although parents' greatest desire is the welfare of their children, the strong influence of social media, marketing, and peer pressure *promote* alternative views and directions that often do not align with strong moral principles and Christian beliefs.

this generation grow up ignorant of the Lord's instruction and the foundational laws of God.

CASE STUDY

Extensive longitudinal and cross-sectional studies demonstrate that church involvement and youth training programs provide significant psychological, social, and physical benefits for adolescents. Reports indicate that regular religious participation acts as a "protective buffer," reducing the likelihood of depression by 12%, illicit drug use by 33%, and risky sexual behavior by 30-40%. Affiliation and attendance in church communities have also increased a young person's understanding of his or her self-identity and self-worth: studies by the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) show that religious 12th graders have significantly higher self-esteem and more positive life attitudes than secular peers. The involvement in church activities also plays a positive role in leadership and life skills. Church programs may provide opportunities in leading prayers, organizing outings, and public speaking, which boosts confidence and prepares youth for future leadership. Another finding that is found to have tremendous value is the church's impact on youth academic success. Data indicates that students in faith-based educational settings can score at academic levels nearly 12 months ahead of their counterparts. This is attributed to emphasis on discipline and achievement. These studies illustrate the importance of the church in supporting parents and reinforcing families' attempts to raise morally and ethically responsible adults. Studies have shown that involvement in a faith community that provides some form of mentorship and in some way emphasizes character development can promote behavior tendencies towards honesty, kindness,

The involvement in church activities also plays a positive role in leadership and life skills. Church programs may provide opportunities in leading prayers, organizing outings, and public speaking, which boosts confidence and prepares youth for future leadership.

and forgiveness. The church influences young minds and builds moral character that transcends to later civic engagement as adults. These findings and life experiences of children and families provide a strong argument to encourage adult parents and guardians to bring their children back to the church.

LIFE APPLICATION

Parenting in modern society is difficult. This can be considerably more concerning with increased exposure to unhealthy and inappropriate media and imagery. However, the church has the opportunity to supplement the needs of families and provide a model for a healthy and successful future for young people. Churches have traditionally been the teaching ground for children and youth. The church provided a platform to learn not only moral, social, and leadership skills, but also strengthen and highlight young talent in music, arts, and oratorical abilities. With churches reporting a growing deficit in young people's attendance and participation, every church must be intentional in establishing forums for young people to learn, grow, and thrive. Children must be taught the ways of their ancestors. The AME Church has the gifts, tools, and most importantly the Spirit of God to build the future generations of God's people.

Churches have traditionally been the teaching ground for children and youth. The church provided a platform to learn not only moral, social, and leadership skills, but also strengthen and highlight young talent in music, arts, and oratorical abilities.

Questions

1. What goals has your church set regarding building ministries surrounding children, youth, and young adults?
2. How can your church support parents and other adults in teaching young people life skills?
3. Explore new ways to engage the community and build an intergenerational church that honors all ages and develops creative ways to grow the kingdom of God.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: *African American Heritage Hymnal* #577, "I Really Love the Lord"

Closing Prayer: "Thou my everlasting portion, more than friend or life to me. All along my pilgrim journey, Savior let me walk with thee." Lord, we pray for the extension of your hand to lead and guide us throughout this journey called life. Give us wisdom and understanding that we must be close to you and that everything we say and do should be committed to you. Lord, give us the strength to resist all distractions and temptations while overcoming the barriers and attacks that may come our way. We pray for a disciplined spirit that is not lured by our weaknesses of the flesh, but instead we are strengthened and empowered through your Holy Spirit. All these things we pray in the precious name of our Lord Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Verse from "Close to Thee" – AMEC Hymnal #396

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
October 12-18

Monday	Philippians 1:21-30 (Courage to Live or Die)
Tuesday	Matthew 5:11-16 (Let Your Light Shine)
Wednesday	Psalm 84 (A Humble Servant of God)
Thursday	Hebrews 4:11-16 (Let Us Strive for God's Rest)
Friday	Hebrews 6:1-12 (God Will Not Overlook Your Work)
Saturday	Judges 3:1-7, 12-14 (God Tests God's People)
Sunday	Judges 3:15-23, 30 (Restoring Rest to the Land)

God Works Through Ehud

Lesson Scripture: Judges 3
Focus Scripture: Judges 3:15-23, 30

Key Verse: *When the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud son of Gera, a Benjaminite, a left-handed man. Judges 3:15a*

JUDGES 3:15-23, 30 (NRSV UE)

Judges 3:15-23

15 But when the Israelites cried out to the Lord, the Lord raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud son of Gera, a Benjaminite, a left-handed man. The Israelites sent tribute by him to King Eglon of Moab.

16 Ehud made for himself a sword with two edges, a cubit in length, and he fastened it on his right thigh under his clothes.

17 Then he presented the tribute to King Eglon of Moab. Now Eglon was a very fat man.

18 When Ehud had finished presenting the tribute, he sent the people who carried the tribute on their way.

19 But he himself turned back at the sculptured stones near Gilgal and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king." So the king said, "Silence!" and all his attendants went out from his presence.

20 Ehud came to him, while he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber, and said, "I have a message from God for you." So he rose from his seat.

21 Then Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into Eglon's belly;

22 the hilt also went in after the blade, and the fat closed over the blade, for he did not draw the sword out of his belly, and the dirt came out.

23 Then Ehud went out into the vestibule and closed the doors of the roof chamber on him and locked them.

JUDGES 3:15-23, 30 (KJV)

Judges 3:15-23

15 But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera, a Benjamite, a man lefthanded: and by him the children of Israel sent a present unto Eglon the king of Moab.

16 But Ehud made him a dagger which had two edges, of a cubit length; and he did gird it under his raiment upon his right thigh.

17 And he brought the present unto Eglon king of Moab: and Eglon was a very fat man.

18 And when he had made an end to offer the present, he sent away the people that bare the present.

19 But he himself turned again from the quarries that were by Gilgal, and said, I have a secret errand unto thee, O king: who said, Keep silence. And all that stood by him went out from him.

20 And Ehud came unto him; and he was sitting in a summer parlour, which he had for himself alone. And Ehud said, I have a message from God unto thee. And he arose out of his seat.

21 And Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the dagger from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly:

22 And the haft also went in after the blade; and the fat closed upon the blade, so that he could not draw the dagger out of his belly; and the dirt came out.

23 Then Ehud went forth through the porch, and shut the doors of the parlour upon him, and locked them.

30

30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest eighty years.

30

30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.

KEY TERMS

- **City of Palms** – Also known as Jericho; highlighting its lush, fertile oasis and abundant date-palm groves; see Deuteronomy 34:3.
- **Cubit** – About 18 inches or about 45 centimeters; this length is the standard specification for a medium-sized machete and is the defining length for several historical short swords.
- **Ehud** – The name of a heroic judge in the Bible, meaning *unity*. His name is believed to be derived from the Hebrew root y-*ḥ*-*d*, signifying togetherness or oneness.
- **Tribute** – A compulsory tax, payment, or service imposed by a ruling power (such as a king or foreign empire) as a sign of submission and allegiance. A political or religious tax.

INTRODUCTION

Israel finds itself once again in a state of defeat and bondage. They are oppressed under the pagan nation of Moab, who defeated and ruled over Israel for eighteen years. Once again, the people cry out to God for deliverance. This time, an unlikely hero arises, whose militaristic tactics bear a resemblance of both a spy and a warrior. Acting as an envoy to deliver a tribute to Eglon, king of Moab, Ehud requested a private audience with the king. He claims to have "a message from God" only to use this deception to perform a strategically planned assassination. Ehud is portrayed as a man of great wisdom as well as physical skill and prowess. He leads the Israelites to victory and into an era of peace lasting eighty years, the longest period of rest recorded in the book

Acting as an envoy to deliver a tribute to Eglon, king of Moab, Ehud requested a private audience with the king. He claims to have "a message from God" only to use this deception to perform a strategically planned assassination.

of Judges. This story presents God's continued mercy coupled with a divinely ordained leader. Ehud brings God's people out of jeopardy but also back into alignment with God's law and will.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The story of the judge named Ehud is one which illustrates how God selects those often rejected or considered less capable by man. Ehud is identified as left-handed, which is often considered the weaker side of human strength due to its less common occurrence. Yet Ehud's preference or tendency to his left side did not leave him weaker. Instead, it was beneficial for Ehud in combat, as most would be focused on being attacked by their opponent's right hand. Ehud is triggered by the images he saw as he returned from paying tribute to their oppressive ruler. Ehud is said to have perceived these stone images at Gilgal, a place once occupied by the Israelites. These stone images called *pesilim*, are commonly interpreted by scholars as idols, graven images, or carved statues. These images likely represented Moabite gods (such as Chemosh) and were set up as a sign of conquest by King Eglon of Moab to signify their dominance over the region of Gilgal. The sight of these statues may have enraged Ehud. But it is also considered a time of revelation from God, as Ehud returns to Eglon with a "secret message from God." The text indicates that the moment Ehud was passing the idols that stood for the eighteen-year Moabite reign, was the moment of enlightenment for Ehud. These images ignited a spirit of resolve to God's command forbidding the worship of idols. The statues were an insult to God and a reminder of the demise of God's people. Thus, the left-handed messenger returned with more than a tribute, but with a determined spirit to restore the land to the God of Israel and the people of God. The actions by Ehud were resolute as he used his hand-crafted blade to kill the king, then craftily locked the quarters and made

This story presents God's continued mercy coupled with a divinely ordained leader.

his escape from the king's chambers. Ehud was a true military strategist. He understood that the Moabite's earlier alliance with the Ammonites and Amalekites strengthened King Eglon to make his earlier defeat over Israel. Ehud's plan resulted in the Moabites delayed reactions. The Israelites attacked quickly and defeated the Moabite army. However, it is also noted that the Lord was with Ehud, giving him and the Israelite's victory. The story unfolds as God's warrior leads the people into victory and an era of peace for eighty years.

The story unfolds as God's warrior leads the people into victory and an era of peace for eighty years.

SANKOFA

In the earlier days of older homes filled with paneled walls, plastic slip covers, and the smell of fried chicken, there was a tradition of placing a special object on the coffee table. No matter the social status of the house, the people of color who called themselves Christians would place a marker in the home, an important marker or symbol that stated this house was covered by almighty God. What is this marker, you ask? Of course, it was the family Bible. Those who remember those days recall that this book held not only the sacred texts in the King James version, but it also held the family history, the lineage of parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, even birth certificates and obituaries. This marker, not a stone, but a book, would somehow also speak to the occupants of the room. As each person would carry out their daily routines, there somehow appeared to be a presence that suggested that since the Holy Bible was in the room, so was God. Or at least God was watching. Jesus was covering. And the Holy Spirit was empowering, strengthening, even delivering the people from the oppressor outside those doors. Now everybody may wonder not have these memories. Some may whether their home had a book, a marker somewhere else in the home. Maybe it was in Mama's bedroom, or in the area where Big Mama slept. Maybe your home didn't have a big Bible, but someone carried a little one around with them. The problem is that we have so many other markers,

distractions, even idolatrous images that steer people away. But the marker that has stood for ages, the stone that the builder's rejected, still speaks. It still holds a message from God. It's probably closer than you think. It's no longer limited to scrolls and paper. It's on your phone, your tablet, even your watch may be the marker. But it still speaks. Yes, the Bible still speaks. The question that is posed to every person is, "Are you listening?" God has a message for you.

Yes, the Bible still speaks. The question that is posed to every person is, "Are you listening?"

CASE STUDY

Most people would believe that in this modern day 21st century, that one would not witness the practice or law of "tributes" as is mentioned in the Old Testament stories. However, the reality is that modern day taxes and tariffs are quite similar in their enforcement as well as their impact on the poor. For instance, the Budget Lab at Yale University published a recent article in 2025 on the Trump administration's effect on households on the United States. This group estimates that the Trump administration's new 2025 tariffs will increase the number of Americans living in poverty by between 650,000 and 875,000 (between 0.2 and 0.3 percent of the U.S. population), depending on the poverty measure used. According to this report, tariffs are like all indirect taxes. They reduce the purchasing power of household incomes by increasing prices in the economic environment where they are applied. Tariffs can ultimately result in a loss of purchasing power for individuals and families. In addition, The Manhattan Project reports that taxes negatively impact the poor. This primarily occurs through regressive structures, such as sales, excise, and property taxes. These taxes consume a higher percentage of the poor populations' limited income compared to wealthier households. These taxes reduce purchasing power and, in some cases, exceed the value of welfare benefits received, particularly for childless, low-income workers, such as the elderly and disabled. Therefore, the modern-day citizen in the United States

faces a ritual each year on or around April 15th, in which all are expected to pay tributes to the reigning government of the land. Although it is couched under a democratic governance, there are rulers today who seek the opportunity to have citizens pay homage, pay money, and even postulate in a sense of worship. As the citizens fight back, not with knives but with voices, there is a clarion call for no more kings, and may the tributes be used for those most in need.

LIFE APPLICATION

Today's lesson is a reminder that society has established specific legal requirements in which every person must comply. These requirements range from state and federal laws that determine rights and citizenship to obligatory payments to ruling jurisdictions, officials, and authorities. Even the church must comply with the governmental controls and laws of the land. However, some faith communities have become paralyzed and restricted their activities and their voice for fear of repercussions and retaliation from ruling parties. However, the church must first report to God. The AME Church was built on this when Richard Allen was confronted at the altar at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. His prayers were interrupted by an unjust system of government, yet Richard Allen worshiped the God of eternal justice. Therefore, every disciple and member of the AME Church has a responsibility to continue the walkout from injustice and stand for the equal rights of all humanity. As you review this lesson, remember that voting is one of the most powerful tools to correct the injustice within the land. Use this season to right the wrongs and send a message to the rulers of the land.

As the citizens fight back, not with knives but with voices, there is a clarion call for no more kings, and may the tributes be used for those most in need.

Questions

1. How can your church be a more active voice in the community to address injustice?
2. What is your church doing to promote voter participation in upcoming elections?
3. What do you believe are valid reasons to fight in a war?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: AMEC Hymnal #307, "Sweet Hour of Prayer"

Closing Prayer: Father God, "I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, where shall I go?" Heavenly Father, in these uncertain times, where corruption and injustice abound, where our youth are vulnerable to the evil one who deceives the people of this world, we reach towards the heavens from where our help comes from. Move by your Spirit to direct us all to a place of peace. May your Spirit reconcile the disparities in our land and beyond our borders, and provide for the hungry, the sick, and the grieving. May your love be felt in the most difficult of circumstances and may we recognize your grace and mercy as the redemptive power to transform and restore our homes and our land. All these things we pray in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
October 19-25

Monday	Exodus 20:1-7 (No Other Gods but the Lord)
Tuesday	1 Corinthians 8:1-6 (One God and One Lord)
Wednesday	Matthew 4:1-11 (Worship God Alone)
Thursday	Isaiah 44:9-20 (There's Nothing There!)
Friday	Isaiah 44:21-28 (Return to the Lord)
Saturday	Luke 16:13-17 (No One Can Serve Two Masters)
Sunday	Judges 17:1-6 (The People Cast Off Restraint)

God's Works Are Not Forgotten

Lesson Scripture: Judges 17–18
Focus Scripture: Judges 17:1-6; 18:18-19, 27

Key Verse: *In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes. Judges 17:6*

JUDGES 17:1-6; 18:18-19, 27 (NRSV UE)

Judges 17:1-6

1 There was a man in the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah.

2 He said to his mother, "The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse and even spoke it in my hearing—that silver is in my possession; I took it, but now I will return it to you." And his mother said, "May my son be blessed by the Lord!"

3 Then he returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother, and his mother said, "I consecrate the silver to the Lord from my hand for my son, to make an idol of cast metal."

4 So when he returned the money to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into an idol of cast metal, and it was in the house of Micah.

5 This man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and teraphim and installed one of his sons, who became his priest.

6 In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.

18:18-19

18 When the men went into Micah's house and took the idol of cast metal, the ephod, and the teraphim, the priest said to them, "What are you doing?"

19 They said to him, "Keep quiet! Put your hand over your mouth, and come with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you

JUDGES 17:1-6; 18:18-19, 27

Judges 17:1-6

1 And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah.

2 And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the Lord, my son.

3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the Lord from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.

4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.

5 And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.

6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

18:18-19

18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye?

19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that

to be priest to the house of one person or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?"

27

27 The Danites, having taken what Micah had made and the priest who belonged to him, came to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, put them to the sword, and burned down the city.

thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?

27

27 And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire.

KEY TERMS

- **Shekel** – An ancient Hebrew unit of weight, roughly 9-17 grams, used to measure precious metals (silver or gold) for commerce and temple contributions.1100 shekels equates to about 28 pounds or about 13 kilograms.
- **Ephod** – A sacred, ceremonial, apron-like garment worn by the Levitical high priest, made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen. In this passage it is also considered a type of image or item carried, not worn, and placed with an idol.
- **Teraphim** – Comes from the Hebrew word *hatterapim* and usually refers to household or family gods, idols, or cultic images representing pagan or ancestral worship practices; usually accompanied by an ephod in the home.



INTRODUCTION

The remainder of Judges illustrates the growing disregard of God's laws among the Israelite people. During this time, Israel's government was decentralized, enabling each tribe to manage affairs by its own chiefs. Local communities were empowered to conduct their own affairs, as stated in verse 6. "The people did what was right in their own eyes." Chapters 17 through 18 present the multifaceted disregard of God's laws and the integration of paganistic worship among the Israelite tribes. Even priests were easily persuaded and bought into idolatrous practices. There is no evidence of any leadership that honored

the historical foundation of the nation nor the belief in the one true God. Instead, they are easily led by their own desires. The people simply accepted whatever actions or practices that fed their flesh, including engaging in forbidden worship at any whim. The story of Micah and his surrogate priestly father is the foretaste of the further disgrace and abominable actions that close the book of Judges. The people were lost to their own desires.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORIES

This story begins with an individual named Micah, which means, "Who is like Yahweh?" The term and name, *Micah*, poses a rhetorical question that can only be answered in the negative. There is none like the Lord. The text proceeds to illustrate that this character returns from a place of great significance for the Israelite people. Micah comes from the hill country of Ephraim, also called Mount Ephraim, which was a meaningful location for ancient Israel. It is noted as the spiritual and political heartland before the rise of Jerusalem. This region is known for the burial place of major figures, including Joshua (Joshua 24:30 and Judges 2:9). There is a sense of irony in this text. Here we see someone whose name suggests that he would proclaim the excellence of the almighty God of Israel. One would assume that Micah is returning from the sacred burial grounds of their former leader who leads the people into their promised land. Despite the gesture as a faithful and dutiful son who redeems his mother's monetary loss of silver, the story illustrates the extreme betrayal of God's people to the laws. These first few verses illustrate the commitment to disobedience and disregard of the God of their ancestors. As stated in verse 6, the people engaged in whatever they pleased, leading them to corrupt and deviant actions. The spiritual decay of the people is portrayed by Micah who integrates the sacred rituals into the idol worship of the household deities and other gods of their culture. Micah establishes his son as a priest

The story of Micah and his surrogate priestly father is the foretaste of the further disgrace and abominable actions that close the book of Judges. The people were lost to their own desires.

ıd later invites a Levite priest to join s household and his practices of idol orship. Without objection, the man who ghtfully holds Aaron's lineage of this acred priestly office casually agrees. He illingly enters into an agreement to lead he worship, thereby making sacrifices to alse gods. The text is clearly designed o illustrate not only the fall of one person and household, but the rapid decline of the people to accept their earthly treasures and desires over the traditional allegiance to Yahweh. There is no loyalty to the God who brought their people out of bondage and blessed them with a land flowing with milk and honey. Without a righteous leader committed to the ways of God, the people perished.

The text is clearly designed to illustrate not only the fall of one person and household, but the rapid decline of the people to accept their earthly treasures and desires over the traditional allegiance to Yahweh.

SANKOFA

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. (Proverbs 1:8 NRSV)

The book of Proverbs has been referenced for millenniums as a guidebook for wisdom. As generation after generation are born upon the earth, there are elders, mentors, and wise sages who often attempt to inform the young of potential pitfalls in life and ways to live healthy and prosperous lives. The spiritual gift of wisdom offers an opportunity to not only avoid mistakes but to choose a path that promotes prosperity for oneself and their community. Proverbs warns that rejecting wisdom leads to destruction, folly, and divine judgment, as fools despise instruction and ignore counsel. The primary theme within the book of Proverbs is the fatal consequences of ignoring reproof (Proverbs 1:24-32) and the folly of self-trust (Proverbs 12:15, 28:26). Proverbs warns of the path of devastation that comes from relying solely on one's own insight and experience, lacking humility to accept the prepared plan and instructions of God. As presented in this book, turning away from wisdom brings premature ruin. However, the Proverbs were written after the book of Judges. The ancient

people of the newly formed nation of Israel lacked a Godly leader and sound counsel to guide them. Thus, they were left to their own decisions and were easily misled. The book of Judges illustrates the need for educating every generation of the importance in seeking those who demonstrate wisdom and insight. Those who have high moral character and trust in God provide rich expertise that can prevent younger, less experienced minds from falling into ruin. Life is too short to experiment and make costly mistakes. Sound options are limited and decisions may be subjective, lacking objectivity when relying on one's own personal experience. Seek wisdom and trust in God.

Further, nearly 40% of U.S. children are estimated to lack strong emotional bonds with their parents, leading to higher risks of aggression and hyperactivity.

CASE STUDY

A literature review conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2012) revealed that a "lack of guidance" is often measured through neglect and living arrangements. For example, approximately 4% of U.S. children (nearly 3 million) live in home with no parent present, with over ha residing with a grandparent. About 18.: million children (1 in 4) live without a biological, step, or adoptive father in the home. In addition, over 6% of children experienced supervisory neglect in the year preceding this study, while around 15% experienced it at some point in their lives. Further, nearly 40% of U.S. children are estimated to lack strong emotional bonds with their parents, leading to higher risks of aggression and hyperactivity. This data found in a 2012 study of various research projects reveal an extensive number of children in the U.S. who lack access to strong parental guidance and support. As such, these same children are at higher risks for making unwise decisions, following peer influence, and failing to thrive in already complex social environments. An additional concern is the growing number of children who are highly influenced by factors outside of the home, school, and other positive outside activities such as church, sports, and special interests.

These powerful and sometimes negative influencers occur through the broad gamut of media sources that expose children and teens to a wide range of topics that influence life decisions. Most children acquire their first cell phone between the ages ten and thirteen, with a trend of kids getting smartphones at much younger ages than many experts recommend. Yet in surveys of older teens and young adults, the average recommended age for a first phone is at least twelve years or older. With smartphones being a primary influencer of young minds, the content and validity of the information should always be critically examined and carefully screened. Overall, all would agree that there is no replacement for sound instruction and guidance from older adults with strong moral character, godly wisdom, and insight.

Overall, all would agree that there is no replacement for sound instruction and guidance from older adults with strong moral character, godly wisdom, and insight.

LIFE APPLICATION

Children today live in a complex world with a myriad of information at their fingertips. Yet, the Bible has become less utilized as an influencer of human behavior. The church must be intentional in sharing the wise counsel and instruction that comes from the Word of God. Even more, the church provides the platform for understanding this instruction firsthand through an experiential learning process called worship, prayer, and Bible study. The Word of God is powerful and relevant in today's broken and chaotic society. There is no wiser counsel. It provides the foundation for human ethics and moral accountability. Let the church say "Amen!"

Questions

1. How can the church bridge the gap between young people and adults, incorporating an intergenerational ministry that builds on the strengths and talent of all ages?

2. What role can you play as a believer in Jesus Christ in mentoring and instructing young people in your church, family, and/or community?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Song: "Great is Your Mercy" by Donnie McClurkin

Closing Prayer: Gracious and merciful heavenly Father, in whom all creation was made, all thoughts and deeds are known, we pray in unity for a clean heart and to renew a right spirit within us and others. Purge us, Lord, that we follow you and resist the temptations in this world. Give us strength to have love in our hearts and to remove the idolatry in our lives of greed and coveting of our neighbors. May your Holy Spirit fall fresh upon us and renew our strength to fight every spiritual battle and come out victorious. In the mighty name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

October 26–November 1

Monday	Amos 3:1-7 (God Speaks Through the Prophets)
Tuesday	Hosea 12:7-14 (The Prophets Warn and Guide)
Wednesday	1 Corinthians 12:1-11 (Gifts for the Common Good)
Thursday	1 Corinthians 14:1-5, 26-31 (Weigh the Words of the Prophets)
Friday	Isaiah 6 ("Here am I; send me!")
Saturday	Ephesians 4:1-13 (Live Worthy of Your Calling)
Sunday	1 Samuel 3:8-20 (Speak, for Your Servant Is Listening)

The Lord Calls Samuel

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1–4:1
Focus Scripture: 1 Samuel 3:8-20

Key Verse: *Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" 1 Samuel 3:9a*

1 SAMUEL 3:8-20 (NRSV UE)

8 The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy.

9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

11 Then the Lord said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.

12 On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.

13 For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them.

14 Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

15 Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.

16 But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am."

17 Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you."

1 SAMUEL 3:8-20 (KJV)

8 And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child.

9 Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 And the Lord came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth.

11 And the Lord said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle.

12 In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end.

13 For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

14 And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

15 And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision.

16 Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I.

17 And he said, What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all the things that he said unto thee.

18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him."

19 As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

18 And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.

19 And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.

KEY TERMS

- **Samuel** – The name *Samuel* most commonly means *God has heard* or *Name of God* in the Bible. It is derived from the Hebrew name *Shemu'el*, which is a theophoric name combining a reference to the divine.
- **Blasphemy** – The act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God or to something sacred.
- **Shiloh** – Shiloh is a Hebrew name primarily interpreted as place of *peace*, *tranquility*, or *he to whom it belongs*.

"Hannah's treasured and memorable prayer is an example of God's response to the distress of his children.

INTRODUCTION

The books of Samuel transition Israel's narrative to the return of God's spiritual presence among the people. Samuel's life integrated the numerous gifts and callings of prophet, priest, judge, and the original maker of kings to the people of Israel. While Samuel is best known as a prophet, these initial chapters also underscore his early multifaceted roles. In 1 Samuel 1:20, his mother Hannah explains the naming of her son was "because I have asked him of the Lord." Hannah's treasured and memorable prayer is an example of God's response to the distress of his children. Chapters three and four of 1 Samuel provide context for Samuel's multifaceted leadership. Samuel would become the nation's last judge and is considered a true and historically significant prophet. As a prophet, he

conveys God's will and reaffirms God's expectation of the people. He serves at the earliest times of his youth to support the priestly duties, preparing him for the office of priesthood. As a priest, he intercedes for the people in performing sacrifices and cleansing them from their sins. As a judge, he administers justice, leads the nation to restorative status, and promotes a return to obedience to God's will. And, ultimately, Samuel becomes the anointer and establisher of the nation's first kings. Samuel's emergence signals a new era, preparing Israel for the transition to monarchy while emphasizing the necessity of obedience and integrity in those who lead God's people.

"And, ultimately, Samuel becomes the anointer and establisher of the nation's first kings.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The texts comprised of 1 Samuel chapters 3 and 4 mark a significant transition in Israel's spiritual history, highlighting the emergence of Samuel as a pivotal leader. Raised in the tabernacle under the priest, Eli, Samuel performs priestly duties, bridging the gap between God and the people. In chapter 3, the narrative centers on Samuel's calling, where God speaks to him directly. This was an unusual event in a time when "the Word of the Lord was rare" (1 Sam. 3:1). This divine encounter affirms Samuel as God's chosen prophet. The description of Samuel's first prophecy is not a literal meaning of "itchy ears" but declares that the words would be shocking and astonish the hearer. Eli would be the first to validate Samuel's gift and calling as Eli receives a prophecy of God's judgment over his family. The message relayed to Eli (vs. 11-14) not only establishes a return of God's Spirit among the people but establishes Samuel's true authority as not only prophet but ultimately as a judge. Samuel's willingness to listen and respond sets him apart from the corrupt priesthood under Eli, emphasizing the need for faithful leadership.

His role as judge becomes evident as he guides Israel through a period of spiritual crisis, particularly after the disastrous loss of the Ark to the Philistines which is later found in chapter 4. The

failure of Eli's sons and the subsequent judgment upon Eli's house contrast sharply with Samuel's rising influence, reinforcing his divine appointment to restore order and faithfulness in Israel. Samuel's wisdom and obedience to God presents a stark contrast to the earlier narratives found in the book of Judges. His life was dedicated to God by his parents who were committed to serve the Lord (1 Samuel 1:21-27).

SANKOFA

Better a poor man who lives with integrity than a rich man who distorts right and wrong. (Proverbs 28:6)

One of the most important lessons to teach children and to model in leadership is to demonstrate integrity.

One of the most important lessons to teach children and to model in leadership is to demonstrate integrity. In a world that values wealth and fame above the care and compassion of others, it is often rare to see someone sacrifice these privileges to do what is right. The stories of fallen leaders come across the media screen far too often. And at times it appears that those who hold positions of authority but engage in reckless and unscrupulous activities are adamantly entrenched in their position, refusing to admit guilt or wrongdoing. The official or person of authority may attempt to hide behind the positions he or she holds. But, ultimately, God sees everything. It is even more egregious when parental authority is not used to rebuke the bad behavior of their children. Parents are the first models of leadership that a child has. Therefore, it is crucial for a parent or guardian to not simply speak about right and wrong, but also do it. The consequences not only fall on the children but can often become the burden of the parent. No one is perfect. But the goal of every Christian is to seek perfection through Jesus Christ. Admonishing the behavior of children as well as adults is critical in establishing a just and fair community that is safe and reflects the values and principles of a loving God. To live in integrity must be a daily practice and goal.

CASE STUDY

A prominent true story of parental conviction and courage can be found in the case of Nichole Schubert. Schubert is a Washington-state mother who made national headlines in 2022 after sharing a potentially tragic event that involved her son. In 2019, she turned her 17-year-old son into the police after discovering he was planning a mass shooting at his high school. She was led to act after discovering a detailed journal outlining his plans to commit a school shooting. The discovery occurred while Mrs. Shubert was cleaning her home and found his journal, which outlined detailed plans to kill her first, then commit a school shooting at his Washington state high school. Despite the heartbreak and potential for family estrangement, she reported her son to law enforcement to save lives, stating it was a necessary action to protect her community. Her son was arrested, pleaded guilty, and completed a rehabilitation program. Schubert maintained she loved her son unconditionally but felt compelled to act on her moral responsibility as a parent.

Schubert maintained she loved her son unconditionally but felt compelled to act on her moral responsibility as a parent.

In a similar case in Spencer, Oklahoma, Alania Vasquez reported her 14-year-old son to police. She told the police officer who came to her apartment that she believed her son would hurt people, possibly at a school. Her son had a growing obsession with guns and violence, and she had discovered him watching videos of school shootings. She was unable to process the thought of her son committing such an act. However, he had been in trouble for making threats at school. A teacher had overheard him telling his classmates how to construct pipe bombs. Vasquez knew something had to be done. These are two cases where each parent was willing to do what was necessary to protect others and to get help for their children. One can only imagine the difficulty these mothers faced. But it is the responsibility of every parent to do their best to raise a child.

LIFE APPLICATION

There is no perfect parent or child. Nor is there an evidence-based parenting model where one size fits all. Raising children is challenging, expensive, and can be exhausting. However, this does not validate turning a blind eye to a young person headed in the wrong direction. In this text with the father Eli, he appears to have failed his sons. Although his sons were capable of making choices, Eli still had a responsibility to admonish them for their disobedience and to hold them responsible. As Christians, we are all called to a level of accountability for our children and the young people of our community. Children need this guidance and correction, despite their resistance to it. This is a time to reassess methods that may be enabling children rather than correcting them. Otherwise, a child may follow a destructive path.

As Christians, we are all called to a level of accountability for our children and the young people of our community.

Questions

1. Discuss with others the importance of loving parenting techniques that not only nurtures a child but also incorporate discipline and accountability.
2. Under what circumstances would you report the illegal actions (past, present, or expected future) of your child or other close relatives. Discuss how church officials should handle this type of situation.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: AMEC Hymnal #364, "My Hope Is Built"

Closing Prayer: Here we are, Lord, standing in the need of prayer. We pray, Lord, for our children, their children, and the children of generations to come. Guide us, Lord, in the way we should go in providing sound and effective support to our young people. May they feel the love that is needed for security and confidence. May they understand and embrace the teachings that lead to strong virtues of compassion, love, integrity, and self-control. May the fruits of the Spirit rain upon them and each guardian, teacher, mentor, and

community member so that the oversight of children is done in love. May your hand be upon them to provide for them and protect them. And may your Spirit breathe the gift of wisdom, insight, and courage to steer the children along the right path. We commit them to you and pray your blessings, in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

November 2-8

Monday	Revelation 21:1-4, 19-27 (Bask in God's Eternal Glory)
Tuesday	Ezekiel 10:1-7 (The Glory of the Lord)
Wednesday	Ezekiel 10:15-19; 11:22-25 (God's Glory Leaves the Temple)
Thursday	Galatians 6:1-10 (We Reap What We Sow)
Friday	1 Samuel 6:13-18 (Rejoice in God's Glory)
Saturday	2 Corinthians 5:1-10 (God's Judgment Is Sure)
Sunday	1 Samuel 4:12-22 (When All Is Lost)

The Glory Departs

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 4:2–7:2
Focus Scripture: 1 Samuel 4:12-22

Key Verse: *She (the wife of Phinehas) said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured." 1 Samuel 4:22*

1 SAMUEL 4:12-22 (NRSV UE)

12 A man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes torn and with earth upon his head.

13 When he arrived, Eli was sitting upon his seat by the road watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God. When the man came into the city and told the news, all the city cried out.

14 When Eli heard the sound of the outcry, he said, "What is this uproar?" Then the man came quickly and told Eli.

15 Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were set, so that he could not see.

16 The man said to Eli, "I have just come from the battle; I fled from the battle today." He said, "How did it go, my son?"

17 The messenger replied, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has also been a great slaughter among the troops; your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured."

18 When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell over backward from his seat by the side of the gate, and his neck was broken, and he died, for he was an old man and heavy. He had judged Israel forty years.

19 Now his daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant, about to give birth. When she heard the news that the ark of God was captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed and gave birth, for her labor pains overwhelmed her.

20 As she was about to die, the women at-

1 SAMUEL 4:12-22 (KJV)

12 And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.

13 And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city, and told it, all the city cried out.

14 And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli.

15 Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.

16 And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to day out of the army. And he said, What is there done, my son?

17 And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken.

18 And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

19 And his daughter in law, Phinehas' wife, was with child, near to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father in law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her.

20 And about the time of her death the women that stood by her said unto her, Fear not; for

tending her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have borne a son." But she did not answer or give heed.

21 She named the child Ichabod, meaning, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.

22 She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured."

thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it.

21 And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father in law and her husband.

22 And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

KEY TERMS

- **Ichabod** – Means *no glory*.
- **Hophni** – *Pugnacious; strong; hard-fisted; a fighter.* Son of Eli (1 Sam. 1:3). He and Phinehas his brother were priests of Israel. Possibly also has an Egyptian origin.
- **Phinehas** – An ancient name commonly interpreted to mean *the Nubian* or the *d*ark-skinned one. Hebrew interpretation is mouth of brass or mouth of copper; derived from peh (mouth) and nehoshet (brass/bronze). Possibly also has an Egyptian origin.

INTRODUCTION

In 1 Samuel 4:12-22, the narrative reaches a tragic climax for Israel and the house of Eli. The Israelites, having suffered defeat at the hands of the Philistines, experience the devastating consequences of their misplaced trust and spiritual decline. A messenger arrives from the battlefield at Shiloh, his clothes torn and dust on his head indicating a sign of mourning and distress. He brings news that Israel has fled, suffered a great slaughter, and most significantly, that the Ark of God has been captured by the Philistines.

A messenger arrives from the battlefield at Shiloh, his clothes torn and dust on his head indicating a sign of mourning and distress.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

This event fulfills the prophecy previously spoken by Samuel, warning that God's judgment would fall on Eli's household due to the corruption and

irreverence of his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. The loss of the Ark symbolizes not just military defeat, but spiritual catastrophe. The presence of God has departed from Israel. The deaths of Eli's sons in battle confirm Samuel's words and underscore the severity of divine judgment. Eli's legacy suffers a final blow when he hears that the Ark is lost and his sons are dead. Overcome with grief, he falls backward from his seat and dies, marking the end of his leadership and the fulfillment of God's warning. The chapter closes with Phinehas's wife naming her newborn son Ichabod, declaring, "The glory has departed from Israel." This phrase encapsulates the profound loss experienced by the nation, not only in terms of military defeat but also in the loss of spiritual guidance and favor. The passage poignantly illustrates how the Israelites' reliance on ritual rather than true faith led to disaster, and how Samuel's prophecy was realized through the downfall of Eli's house and the departure of God's glory from Israel.

The loss of the Ark symbolizes not just military defeat, but spiritual catastrophe. The presence of God has departed from Israel.

SANKOFA

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).

This proverb is a warning of overconfidence and arrogance, which can in turn lead to a person's downfall. The wisdom text is given to promote a spirit of humility, suggesting that even people in high places may face the difficult and demeaning experience of demotion. Many people aspire to reach higher status in their careers, to have great success and be highly favored by the public. However, these advantages also present increased scrutiny and exposure. Thus, the reason for public officials and high-ranking officers to disclose business and financial records. Celebrities and athletes are frequently followed by the paparazzi or other media, with cameras in hand. Legal proceedings and case records are available for public inspection. Therefore, it is imperative for those who climb the ladder of

success to strive to hold the highest standards of behavior and to discipline themselves accordingly. Otherwise, they may experience a shattered reputation. Oftentimes their family members also become victims and collateral damage. Although the privacy and protection of minor children is usually enforced, these same children grow to become adults and are susceptible to feel the pain and embarrassment of the adult members' mistakes. In addition, a child who has indulged in deviant activity may be protected as a youth, but there are no guarantees that these historical records will remain protected and sealed. Both positive and negative historical accomplishments can be recorded and passed down to future generations. The best way to manage the negative events of the past is to learn from them. Encourage the young to be wiser, and to avoid encountering the same mistakes. Allow transparency as appropriate since secrets can be equally if not more damaging. And be willing to forgive the past, not hold onto it. The losses need not be so great that they consume future generations.

For people or organizations of high status it can result in immediate reputational damage, the loss of lucrative professional opportunities, and intense public scrutiny.

CASE STUDY

There are many aspects of life that can cause tremendous loss and hardship. They include sickness, financial fallout, and family and relationship disputes. This is compounded with the overarching inequities of social economic disparities in a polarized and racially charged society. But one occurrence can do more damage than a serious illness or unfair job loss. The greatest concern is often the fear of a scandal, damage to one's reputation. A scandal often triggers a severe, multi-faceted crisis. For people or organizations of high status it can result in immediate reputational damage, the loss of lucrative professional opportunities, and intense public scrutiny. Famous individuals such as Tiger Woods, Bill Cosby, Michael Jackson, Bill Clinton, and Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, formerly known as Prince Andrew (the Duke of York) are just a few of the ranking celebrities and political figures who fell from grace in the public eye. Despite efforts to

dispute the allegations against these and other notable figures, the consequences can still result in permanent damages and setbacks, a drastic loss in public trust, legal and professional fallout, and financial losses. But when a story of corruption or impropriety is alleged against the church, the impact can be even more devastating. Lawsuits abound in both Catholic and Protestant institutions surrounding anything from child sexual abuse to mismanagement of funds. Those who are personally identified with ethical or criminal improprieties are not only causing devastating harm to their own personal reputation and livelihood but also to their families and the faith communities and institutions they represent. The temptations that have plagued humans since the beginning do not stop at the church doors. Therefore, every clergy and lay person must be on guard to model a life that glorifies God and lifts the Gospel. As the course of sanctification occurs through each believer, may those who are in positions of leadership be diligent in conducting ministry with a spirit of excellence, a position of integrity, and a heart of love.

The temptations that have plagued humans since the beginning do not stop at the church doors.

LIFE APPLICATION

The story of Eli, the priest, and his sons is a reminder of the responsibility the church holds to model the image of Christ in all aspects of ministry and in the personal lives of each leader. The church should be a place of healing and restoration, a space of worship to a loving and redemptive savior. It is paramount that the church ensures that adequate safeguards are in place to safeguard the welfare of others. The church must demonstrate processes and procedures that maximize adherence to legal and ethical practices. When this occurs, it inspires others to conduct themselves in the same manner. Finally, when an individual representing the institution of the church is responsible for wrongdoing that causes harm to others, the church must strive to make the affected parties whole. That is

how we love our neighbor as ourselves.

Questions

1. What additional steps can your church take to promote a safe and healthy environment for its members and guests?
2. How familiar are you with steps outlined in *The Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church* which addresses local church structure, operational procedures, and handling church concerns?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: *African American Heritage Hymnal* #505, "Somebody Prayed for Me"

Closing Prayer: Gracious and loving God, who answers us in times of trouble, hear our prayers and pleas for forgiveness, our call for consecration, and our desire to serve and please you. David wrote in Psalm 20, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God." So, we call on you, Lord, to guide us and keep us and your sacred church on the right path that fulfills the mission of spreading good news. May your Holy Spirit give us victory over evil in this world, and may the love of Christ abound through our living, and give you glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
November 9-15

Monday	2 Peter 3:9-13 (Though We Sin, God Is Patient)
Tuesday	Colossians 2:8-15 (Avoid Worldly Entanglements)
Wednesday	Deuteronomy 20:1-9 (The Lord Gives You Victory)
Thursday	James 1:1-12 (Remain Steadfast Under Trial)
Friday	Psalm 34:15-22 (God Hears and Rescues)
Saturday	2 Chronicles 7:12-16 (God Will Hear and Forgive)
Sunday	1 Samuel 7:3-11, 15-17 (Cry to God for Deliverance)

Samuel, God's Prophet and Judge

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 7:3-17
Focus Scripture: 1 Samuel 7:3-11, 15-17

Key Verses: *Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 1 Samuel 7:15*

1 SAMUEL 7:3-11, 15-17 (NRSV UE)

3 Then Samuel said to all the house of Israel, "If you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Astartes from among you. Direct your heart to the Lord and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

4 So Israel put away the Baals and the Astartes, and they served the Lord only.

5 Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you."

6 So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the Lord. They fasted that day and said, "We have sinned against the Lord." And Samuel judged the Israelites at Mizpah.

7 When the Philistines heard that the Israelites had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

8 The Israelites said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, and pray that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines."

9 So Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord; Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him.

10 As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel, but the Lord thundered with a mighty voice that day against the Philistines and threw them into

1 SAMUEL 7:3-11, 15-17 (KJV)

3 And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.

4 Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only.

5 And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord.

6 And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

7 And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines.

8 And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines.

9 And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him.

10 And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines,

confusion, and they were routed before Israel.

11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them down as far as beyond Beth-car.

15-17

15 Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

16 He went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places.

17 Then he would come back to Ramah, for his home was there; he administered justice there to Israel and built there an altar to the Lord.

and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.

11 And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Bethcar.

15-17

15 And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.

16 And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places.

17 And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel; and there he built an altar unto the Lord.

KEY TERMS

- **Mizpah** – A Hebrew word meaning *watchtower* or *lookout*; original biblical context was one of mutual suspicion.
- **Beth-car** – Mentioned once in the Bible in 1 Samuel 7:11. It is described as the geographical limit of a decisive military pursuit. Hebrew: *Bêyth Kar* literally translates to *House of the Lamb*.
- **Ebenezer** – A stone placed by Samuel meaning *Stone of Help*; considered a proclamation that God is our help.
- **Ramah** – *High place, lofty;* also used to mean *a high level*, as in *excellence*. Ramah in the area of Benjamin was the birthplace and burial site of Samuel.
- **Reconciliation** – A restorative process of rebuilding trust, acknowledging harm, and fostering repentance.

INTRODUCTION

In the initial verses of 1 Samuel chapter 7, the children of Israel are without the Ark, experiencing the grief of losing God's presence for over 20 years (1 Sam. 7:1-2). But through the leadership of Samuel, the people are convicted of their sins against God and their nation is revived. This passage teaches that restoration begins with repentance and a renewed focus on God. Israel's victory in physical battles of war relied on God's presence, which was symbolized through the Ark of God. For the people to feel God was present, they also needed to commit their ways to the Lord, pursue God wholeheartedly, knowing that his power and presence bring transformation and triumph over adversity. The recovery of the Ark of God represented more than just reclaiming a

sacred object. It also symbolized Israel's desire to restore their relationship with the almighty. After years of spiritual decline and the loss of the Ark, Samuel urges the people to turn away from idols and seek the Lord. This victory ended a 40-year period of Philistine oppression and led to a season of peace. Immediately after this event, Samuel erected the famous memorial stone, to commemorate God's intervention in their lives.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

In verses 3 and 4, Samuel confronts the people about their idolatry. He commands them to put away the Baals and Ashtaroth and serve the Lord alone. He then instructs them to gather at Mizpah and seek the Lord's forgiveness. In verse 5, they draw water, pour it out, and fast as signs of repentance, humility, and complete surrender to God. As they confess their sins, Samuel judges the people (v. 6). When the Philistines hear about the gathering, they prepare to attack, and the Israelites become afraid. Samuel responds by offering a nursing lamb as a burnt offering and crying out to the Lord. God answers with a mighty thunder that throws the Philistines into confusion (v. 10), and Israel defeats them. Samuel then sets up a stone between Mizpah and Shen and names it *Ebenezer*, meaning *the Lord has helped us*. This battle marks the restoration of Israel's territory and demonstrates the fruit of national repentance. Israel's victory comes only after the people turn from their idols and return to God. Their prayers are answered with divine intervention and supernatural victory. The stone at Ebenezer serves as a lasting reminder of God's faithfulness and of how far he had helped Israel. Theologically, it points to God's enduring power and steadfast covenant with his people despite their disobedience. As a memorial, it marks not only a military victory but also a spiritual one brought about by God's intervention. Samuel's roles as priest and prophet overlap here, and verses 15 through 17 further show his work as a judge traveling throughout the region.

Theologically, it points to God's enduring power and steadfast covenant with his people despite their disobedience.

SANKOFA

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

One observation to the story found in 1 Samuel chapter 7 is Samuel's return to his home in Ramah. Although Samuel appears to have served God well, he was compelled to return to his roots and build an altar to bring sacrifices to God. Animal sacrifices are no longer required nor are they sufficient to cover the sins of this world. God seeks true humiliation and repentance. The image that comes to mind when considering a repenting soul led to God are the characters found in the powerful book and film *The Color Purple*. Most viewers recall the moment that the beautiful woman and songbird named Shug entered the scene. She was the daughter of a preacher, but she spent most of her young adulthood living a fast-paced worldly lifestyle in juke joints singing and drinking prohibition liquor. Her rejection of her father and the church was considered an abomination and disgrace by her earthly father. But the heavenly Father of all creations is still loving and forgiving, even when his children are at their worst. It appears repeatedly in the Old Testament, as the children of Israel embrace false gods and worship idols like Baal and Ashtoreth, even perform sacrifices to them. Yet they repented and God repeatedly forgave them and gave them victory over their attackers. For the fictional character known as Shug, she can be described as the lost wanderer. Yet she, too, was gripped with a spirit of repentance and turned back to God. The beauty of the Gospel is that God provides a path to reconciliation through Jesus. This reconciliation is a ministry that everyone can participate in and share with a fallen world. No one can claim to have lived a perfect life without sin. But thanks be to God that the entire world has a path of reconciliation to God through his Son, Jesus Christ.

But the heavenly Father of all creations is still loving and forgiving, even when his children are at their worst.

CASE STUDY

The human condition found in many nations and societies is often filled with conflict and discord, particularly when resources are scarce. Poverty can abound when limits are applied to a specific race, ethnicity, gender, or class and particularly, when these same groups are exploited. The pain and suffering of those who have been abused, marginalized, and disenfranchised are frequently overlooked, with justice only considered a fleeting dream. Thus, there is sorrow and pain when considering the historical backdrops of indigenous people throughout the world, whose colonized lands were taken and stripped from their ancestors. The cries can still be heard in the historical tragedy of the African slave trade that stole millions of able-bodied Africans from the continent and forced them and the children they bore to brutally perform free labor called slavery. How does one reconcile the atrocities of these historical events? And why has there not been more progress in forming a true and intentional plan for the equitable and just restorative process? Barring the real issue of racism in America, a moral plight in this country, the primary obstacle is lack of repentance to restore justice. To repent means to accept one's faults and turn away from the past behavior. One model to consider is to adopt Restorative Justice (RJ), a social justice model. RJ is a system that views wrongdoing as a violation of people and relationships rather than just a breach of the law, particularly when laws are unjust. Unlike traditional punitive justice, which focuses on determining blame and imposing punishment, restorative justice prioritizes repairing harm through dialogue involving the victim, the offender, and the affected community. The person responsible for harm must acknowledge their actions and take active steps to make amends. In a country called the United States where the historical evidence of wrongdoing to persons of color is being erased from textbooks and schools, the opportunity

Barring the real issue of racism in America, a moral plight in this country, the primary obstacle is lack of repentance to restore justice.

for restorative justice and ultimate reconciliation is becoming increasingly short-lived. It is obvious why the discussion of reparations is dismissed or the true story of Christopher Columbus, native Americans, and the Trail of Tears is silenced. Acceptance of wrong must occur and be accompanied by repentance and a desire to repair the breaches that have ensued. The model is there and one can only pray that this country will one day use it.

Acceptance of wrong must occur and be accompanied by repentance and a desire to repair the breaches that have ensued.

LIFE APPLICATION

The themes of 1 Samuel 7 resonate with modern believers facing challenges and uncertainties. Just as Israel needed to recenter their lives around God's presence, we are reminded to seek him in times of trouble and spiritual dryness. The victory over the Philistines encourages us to reinforce our prayer life and build up our faith, trusting that God can overcome any problem we face. God's presence is most obvious when obstacles seem insurmountable, but we are still victorious in the end. Whether personal, relational, or societal, the need for God's presence is as vital now as it was in ancient times. Let us pray for God's presence to guide the church and our community.

Questions

1. What can the church do to encourage a spirit of reconciliation within families and a community?
2. Share your thoughts on reparations and specific cases where it could be applied.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: *AMEC Hymnal* #82, "O for a Closer Walk with God"

Closing Prayer: "O Thou, in whose presence my soul takes delight. On whom in affliction I call. My comfort by day and my song in the night. My hope, my salvation, my all!" As we consider the sins of humanity and rebellious actions against you, Lord, we confess our wrongs and pray for forgiveness. In our wounds we respond with pain and need the healing balm of forgiveness and reconciliation to restore us and make us whole. Let us recommit ourselves to you,

oh Lord, with joy and gladness, trusting in your holy plan and drawing near to you in faith through Jesus Christ. This we pray in his name. Amen.

AMEC Hymnalal #93 – "O Thou, in Whose Presence"

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
November 16-22

Monday	Proverbs 29:1-14 (Blessings of a Righteous Ruler)
Tuesday	Daniel 2:16-22 (God Deposes and Sets Up Kings)
Wednesday	Luke 4:14-21 (Anointed for God's Service)
Thursday	1 Samuel 15:10-23 (God Rejects Saul)
Friday	Matthew 12:14-21 (God's Righteous Servant)
Saturday	John 7:14-24 (Do Not Judge by Appearances)
Sunday	1 Samuel 16:4-13 (God Looks on the Heart)

Samuel, a King Maker

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 15:10–16:13
Focus Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:4-13

Key Verse: *(Jesse) sent and brought (David) in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him, for this is the one." 1 Samuel 16:12*

1 SAMUEL 16:4-13 (NRSV UE)

4 Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?"

5 He said, "Peaceably. I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely his anointed is now before the Lord."

7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one."

9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one."

10 Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these."

11 Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him, for we will not sit down until he comes here."

12 He sent and brought him in. Now he was

1 SAMUEL 16:4-13 (KJV)

4 And Samuel did that which the Lord spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?

5 And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the Lord: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

6 And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.

7 But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

9 Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this.

10 Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these.

11 And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.

12 And he sent, and brought him in. Now he

ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him, for this is the one."

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

KEY TERMS

- **Anoint** – To rub or pour sacred oil on a person; a ceremonial act to distinguish an individual for a divine assignment, calling, and purpose.
- **Abinidab** – From (1) the noun, *father* in a social context rather than biological, and (2) the verb which means *to give* indicating nobility and volunteerism. Another holding this name is found in 1 Samuel 7:1.
- **Shimea** – Third-born son of Jesse and brother of David; the name *Shimea* primarily translates to *fame*, *renown*, or *he (God) has heard*.

INTRODUCTION

The 16th chapter of 1 Samuel records a pivotal moment in biblical history, with several critical facets. The saga unfolds with the rejection of Saul's dynasty, following Saul's disobedient act of preserving a portion of the Amalekite spoils (1 Sam.15:20). Saul falls from God's grace and is tormented by insecurity and fear, knowing his reign is coming to an end. This sets the stage for a new leader, who will be faithful to God. God demonstrates sovereign selection over the discriminatory human expectations of leadership comprised of birth order, appearance, or perceived livelihoods. God selects David who has already held a close and personal relationship with God. God tells Samuel, "I have provided for myself a king among his (Jesse's) sons" (1 Sam. 16:1). This statement is an indication that the new leader will serve

God demonstrates sovereign selection over the discriminatory human expectations of leadership comprised of birth order, appearance, or perceived livelihoods.

God's purposes rather than the popular demand of the people. Saul was a king after the people's heart. David is chosen as a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). Saul was a king chosen by human standards. God selects a leader based on divine criteria, centering on heart character.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

When Samuel arrives in Bethlehem, he enters a small, ancient town that would later become famous as the birthplace of Jesus the Messiah. At this moment in Israel's history, Bethlehem is a quiet agricultural community. The elders are fearful when Samuel arrives, likely because his presence could signal judgment or trouble. This was understandable in reflecting the uncertainty and anxiety of the times (1 Sam. 16:4). Jesse presents his sons to Samuel, beginning with the eldest, Eliab. His stature and appearance are impressive. As Jesse's sons continue to pass by Samuel, none are found to be acceptable by God. God instructs Samuel not to judge by outward appearances. The youngest son, David, is outside busy tending to the sheep. David is not initially considered by his father. God's choice of David highlights his preference for humility and character that is focused and grounded in faith in God (vs. 7). Samuel's anointing of David signifies a radical shift in the societal norms and expectations of a king. God chooses the discounted, unseen, and underrated to fulfill his purposes. This demonstrates that leadership and greatness are defined by faithfulness and a heart aligned with him. This contrasts with Saul's rise to power as the first king, where Saul was selected by the people. But David was selected by God. When Samuel anoints David with oil, he receives the Spirit of the Lord mightily from that day forward. This signifies God's favor, visibly equipping David with divine guidance, strength, and wisdom. The Spirit's presence empowers David for the challenges ahead and distinguishes him as a vessel of the Lord. God's selection

"Saul was a king after the people's heart. David is chosen as a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14).

of the next king reaffirms that Israel is a theocracy, ruled ultimately by God, not by a human monarch.

SANKOFA

"…From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required…" (Luke 12:48 (NRSV))

Most individuals would agree that the average person desires to have talents and abilities that enable him or her to achieve great success. But what is often overlooked is the cost and accountability associated with the talents one may possess. The parable taught by Jesus in Luke chapter 12 was a reminder that everyone has a responsibility to utilize whatever gifts and talents they possess. Parables such as this practical tale surrounded the day-to-day activities that people experienced at that time. Jesus illustrates that God does not apportion the same level of resources and abilities to everyone. However, it is everyone's responsibility to make the best use of what they are allotted. This parable also aligns with the story of David. It may appear that David was physically destined to have a less successful future and more modest destiny than his brothers. Yet, his heart was aligned with the creator. It allowed him to see the beauty around him and perform excellent stewardship in his care of the sheep. The result was God's favor upon him and his rise to the throne of Israel. Each story reminds the listener to use the talents and gifts that are given with gratitude and anticipation of God's plan for it. When David received the Spirit of the Lord, he was empowered to do far more than he had ever accomplished before. He was no longer a shepherd caring for his father's sheep. His destiny was marked for greatness and required David to stand in the face of great adversity without wavering his faith in God. Much was required of David from that point forward. The Spirit of the Lord also manifests in each believer of Jesus Christ. Therefore, much is required of each saint, to walk in the favor of God, and use their gifts to God's glory and the

Each story reminds the listener to use the talents and gifts that are given with gratitude and anticipation of God's plan for it.

building of God's kingdom.

CASE STUDY

There are several theories in psychology that suggest that the birth order of children determines the family dynamics and interactions which in turn will also impact the personality traits, life perspectives, and other factors in a child's life. This hypothesis is called "Birth Order Theory" and was introduced by Alfred Adler in the early 20th century. This theory posits that a child's rank creates a unique "family constellation." Parents assign roles (intentionally or not) that shape a child's psychological makeup. Interestingly, birth order ranking and assignment is a classic tradition and practice in many cultures. The hierarchy is based on age and is considered a means of determining responsibilities as well as potential future abilities. The older sibling that usually has received the most instruction from the parents is thereby assumed to be more knowledgeable and is therefore assigned more responsibilities for leading younger brothers and sisters. Ultimately, this may lead to stronger resilience and enhanced wisdom due to life experiences. In larger families, it was common for the older child to make sacrifices to support the needs of the younger children and the family overall. Older siblings were often responsible for caring for the younger ones while parents worked or attended to other responsibilities, especially in single family homes. In addition, Adler's theory also suggests that a middle child was often characterized as feeling "overshadowed or squeezed out" of parental attention, leading to a personality with strong negotiation skills, adaptability, and a competitive drive. However, research has failed to support this theory. Studies consistently fail to find unique personality traits among middle children and a 2019 study contradicting Adler's theory found no consistent personality differences based on birth position. Regardless

> Older siblings were often responsible for caring for the younger ones while parents worked or attended to other responsibilities, especially in single family homes.

of theories or studies, family traditions in raising multiple children remain, particularly in regard to assigning roles and responsibilities based on age. Age should bring teachable life experiences and a broader education of life skills. Therefore, age should increase knowledge and add wisdom, for children as well as adults. Despite the different viewpoints between generations, the insight and input from older family members is still invaluable. With a growing digital divide and disparate perspective between older adults and young people, valuable wisdom is being untapped, particularly when it relates to building wealth, physical and mental health, and healthy relationships. The wisdom of the elders combined with the strength and ingenuity of youth is necessary to not only survive but to thrive in every time period.

Age should bring teachable life experiences and a broader education of life skills.

LIFE APPLICATION

The story of David can be an inspiration to anyone who has faith in God. David was not perceived as a potential ruler of Israel by his family or the community. Yet his love for the Lord and dedication to his humble responsibility as a shepherd elevated him to the noble and critical role as king. This is a reminder that destiny is determined by God. The one who believes and who places their faith in the Lord can trust that God sees them and will respond. A relationship with Jesus Christ can bring the most isolated soul out of the wilderness and into places of honor. This applies to the community as well. The town of Bethlehem which was once known as the quiet agricultural community of modest inhabitants is forever known as the birthplace of David and the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Discuss ways to recognize and honor people in your church who often go unnoticed and forgotten.

2. How can the AME Church provide platforms to highlight and celebrate the ministries of smaller or less noticeable churches in the connection?

3. How can the church celebrate the gifts of younger people and recognize their potential to build the kingdom of God? Discuss opportunities through your church's Young People's Department (YPD) and your church's Youth Ministry.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: *African American Heritage Hymnal* #318, "Anointing"

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are truly grateful for your abounding grace and your fresh new mercy that met us in the dawning of this day. We extol you, dear Lord, for being God and displaying your sovereign wisdom that establishes the pathway of your divine plan. We pray that we are not led simply by human thoughts and desires, earthly judgment and assessments, but rather through contemplative, reflective, and diligent prayer, seeking to rest in your heart of forgiveness and Spirit of love. May your Holy Spirit speak to our hearts that we may be receptive to your call in our lives and excited for the positions you assign to others. May the church be an example of unity for the world to see in us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
November 23-29

Monday	Psalm 2 (God Defends the Chosen King)
Tuesday	Acts 13:21-24, 32-39 (Heir of God's Promises to David)
Wednesday	Romans 11:23-29 (A Deliverer Out of Zion)
Thursday	Isaiah 33:15-22 (God's City Stands Forever)
Friday	Psalm 132:8-18 (The Lord Has Chosen Zion)
Saturday	Luke 24:44-49 (From Jerusalem to the Nations)
Sunday	2 Samuel 5:1-12 (God Establishes David's Kingdom)

David's Coronation and Capture of Jerusalem

Lesson Scripture: 2 Samuel 5:1–6:23; 24:18-25; Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21; 1 Kings 15:5
Focus Scripture: 2 Samuel 5:1-12

Key Verses: *David then perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel and that he had exalted his kingdom for the sake of his people Israel. 2 Samuel 5:12*

2 SAMUEL 5:1-12 (NRSV UE)

1 Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your bone and flesh.

2 For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you, 'It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel.'"

3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.

4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.

5 At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

6 The king and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, "You will not come in here; even the blind and the lame will turn you back," thinking, "David cannot come in here."

7 Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, which is now the city of David.

8 David had said on that day, "Whoever would strike down the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind, those whom David hates." Therefore it is said, "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house."

9 David occupied the stronghold and named it the city of David. David built the city all around

2 SAMUEL 5:1-12 (KJV)

1 Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh.

2 Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the Lord said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel.

3 So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord: and they anointed David king over Israel.

4 David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years.

5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

6 And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither.

7 Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David.

8 And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain. Wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.

9 So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the

m the Millo inward.
10 And David became greater and greater, for
e Lord of hosts was with him.
11 King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to
avid, along with cedar trees and carpenters
nd masons who built David a house.
12 David then perceived that the Lord had es-
ablished him king over Israel and that he had
xalted his kingdom for the sake of his people
srael.

city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward.
10 And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him.
11 And Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and cedar trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house.
12 And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake.

KEY TERMS

- **Hiram** – Translates to *exalted brother* or *my brother is exalted*. It is derived from the Hebrew word for *brother* (*ah*) and a root meaning to be high or lofty (*rum*).
- **Millo** – Interpreted as the *landfill*, *rampart*, *storage facility*, or *filling*. It represents a filled-in embankment or fortification.
- **Hebron** – Means *association*, *alliance*, or *friendship*, *to join*; derived from the Hebrew root *ḥbr*; one of the oldest and most significant cities in the Old Testament, functioning as a major spiritual and political hub in Judea, famously serving as Abraham's burial place and King David's first capital.
- **Zion** – Holds many meanings, first as a geographical location and synonym for Jerusalem as well as for the land of Israel; evolved to symbolize God's presence and Israel's spiritual heart; the New Testament interpretation as *the new Jerusalem* where God's ethnically diverse people live in his presence.

> The fifth chapter of 2 Samuel marks a pivotal moment in the history of Israel, which continued to shape the soul of this nation.

INTRODUCTION

The fifth chapter of 2 Samuel marks a pivotal moment in the history of Israel, which continued to shape the soul of this nation. It is a foundational text that highlights David's achievements. This final lesson chronicles David's ascent to rule over a unified nation and his

establishment of Jerusalem as the political and spiritual center. These events shape the course of Israel's history, laying the groundwork for both religious and political developments. Historically, it not only highlights David's leadership, but it also sets the stage for the enduring legacy of his dynasty. The critical themes in the first twelve verses include military victory, divine favor, and David's stellar leadership. David's conquests reflect his tactical prowess and reliance on God. His ability to garner support from both his people and foreign allies underscores his diplomatic skill. The narrative also explores the challenges of leadership when David faces opposition. This leads to the military and political act of fortifying his new capital. This text is a critical component of the heart of Israel's beliefs and establishment as a religious nation to this day.

David's conquests reflect his tactical prowess and reliance on God.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

David's military achievements are central to this passage. He captured Jerusalem by overcoming the Jebusite defenses that had resisted earlier attacks. The account describes his strategic use of the water shaft, highlighting both ingenuity and determination. These victories strengthened David's reputation as a formidable leader and secured his rule over all Israel. Another important feature of the text is David's favor with neighboring nations, especially King Hiram of Tyre. Hiram sent cedar logs, carpenters, and masons to build David's palace, showing recognition and respect from a powerful ally. This support enhanced David's prestige and reflected Israel's growing influence during his reign. The Jebusites, however, mocked David, claiming their city was so secure that even "the blind and the lame" could repel his army. Their taunt suggested that even their weakest inhabitants were superior to David's soldiers. David's response was not merely personal; it reflected opposition to the arrogance and idolatry of those who defied the God of Israel. The phrase "hated of David's soul"

(2 Sam. 5:8) points to his rejection of that defiance. This incident has also been linked to the proverb that "the blind and the lame" should not enter the house. Rather than expressing contempt for persons with disabilities, the phrase is better understood as a rebuke of the arrogant enemies of God and God's people. After securing Jerusalem, David established his residence in a newly built palace. This symbolized the stability and permanence of his reign. The palace served not only as a royal home but also as a sign of Israel's unity and prosperity. It stood as a visible expression of God's blessing and the fulfillment of his promises to David. By conquering Jerusalem, David also demonstrated God's active role in his rise to power. As the text states, "The Lord, the God of hosts, was with him" (2 Sam. 5:10).

"The palace served not only as a royal home but also as a sign of Israel's unity and prosperity.

SANKOFA

The conclusion of this quarter presents a story of the once enslaved people from a state of wandering in wilderness settings, through the instability of uncertain leadership and volatile existence in foreign hands, to a place of prestige and power. Despite the tumultuous events of conflict, the Israelites become stable in their land of promise as a sovereign nation, under the rule of God's chosen king. The themes that can be found in this lesson is to first wait on God's timing, God's plan, and God's spiritual manifestation to provide the ultimate victory. The lesson also concludes with a resounding affirmation of worship. King David was established by God for his heart towards God, grounded and focused on God's existence being the underlying foundation of all life. Therefore, worship must be the critical linchpin to reinforce the commands of God and the relationship between God and his people. This lesson has significant resemblance to the journey of the marginalized and disenfranchised African diaspora who have seen days of wandering, sought leaders of divine ordination, and have felt the glory of victory along with the agonies

of defeat. Yet throughout the trials, the people have survived and even thrived due to the presence of almighty God and the redemptive love of Jesus Christ. The space of worship became the place of celebration and rejuvenation. The heart of the people of African ancestry have found hope and strength through God's promise, not only of abundance in earthly treasures, but the ultimate reward of a heavenly home. The treatise of the black family in America is often titled "Trust in the Lord." With ethical God-led leadership and a determination to seek only the *King of Kings*, the people of God have survived and continue to overcome adversity despite the attacks upon the people. The mantra for those who trust God is that the people know the fight is fixed. "This battle is not ours, it's the Lord's." If we follow King Jesus, the battle is already won.

"The basic needs of human beings are food, water, clothing, and shelter. These are the basic requirements for nourishment and sustainability of life.

CASE STUDY

The basic needs of human beings are food, water, clothing, and shelter. These are the basic requirements for nourishment and sustainability of life. Yet, the expansion and extravagance of these basic needs become a symbol of a person's wealth and power. Examples are massive feasts, elaborate clothing, and expansive buildings and estates which are used to display a person's status. Therefore, the existence of a palace becomes a manifestation of a person's or family's ego, an example of their supreme wealth and even a symbol that their religious beliefs are the validation of divine authority. The need for extensive resources and labor gives evidence of the ruler's power and control. It projects invincibility to rivals, awes subjects, and immortalizes the monarch's legacy. For thousands of years, castles and palaces have stood as symbols of power, wealth, and prestige. These magnificent structures, built by kings, queens, emperors, and noble families, not only served as residences but also as statements of their owners' dominance and status while also

capturing the imagination and awe of the onlooker. Examples of great architectural accomplishments include and offer insight into the social and economic hierarchies of their times. The Palace of Versailles or Château de Versailles is considered a monument to absolute monarchy and artistic brilliance. The palace was expanded and enhanced under the reign of Louis XIV and stands as one of the most stunning and historically significant landmarks in France and the world. The most famous room in the palace is the Hall of Mirrors (Galerie des Glaces). Stretching over 73 meters, this grand gallery is lined with 357 mirrors. However, the extravagance of Versailles became a symbol of royal excess, pride, and arrogance especially as France faced economic hardship during the French Revolution. Considering the extensive reach of the monarchy's exploitation of not only the French people, but through colonization of foreign lands, the French exploited and plundered many civilizations in Africa to support the greed and indulgence of the rich. Palaces may offer a tremendous contribution to artistic beauty and architectural accomplishments, but they also symbolize the inequitable distribution of power throughout the world.

Palaces may offer a tremendous contribution to artistic beauty and architectural accomplishments, but they also symbolize the inequitable distribution of power throughout the world.

Hawa Mahal Palace in Jaipur, India was constructed in 1799 for Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh. Also known as the Palace of the Winds, it was designed as an extension of the Royal City Palace. Consider the number of resources used for these palaces against the average lifestyle of the citizens. For instance, when the British came to India it was one of the richest countries in the world. But over 200 years of exploitation, loot, and destruction reduced India to a poster child for third world poverty. These exploitations have used Christianity and the Bible as a tool to colonize countries around the world. Palaces are considered a tremendous building accomplishment. But it stands as evidence of the sins of humanity when contrasted to the hardships of a growing

homeless population. Let the hearts of the people be focused on the needs of all people, not the greed of some.

LIFE APPLICATION

David's victories and his growing reputation with other nations led to the tradition of building a royal home with the grandeur of a palace. However, palaces throughout the world are used for more than a basic dwelling place. These structures and estates display the splendor and power of royalty. Sadly, many people throughout the world lack accessibility to a room and running water, hoping for a basic safe structure in which to live. The church has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to assist in providing the basic requirements of life to those in need. If the people of God are blessed to worship in a sanctuary that provides heat, running water, and shelter, then let the church be a blessing to those who need a home.

"The church has been commissioned by Jesus Christ to assist in providing the basic requirements of life to those in need.

Questions

1. How has the church successfully aided those in need? With rising prices and lack of affordable housing, do you think the church has done enough?
2. Discuss untapped opportunities your local church can pursue to provide shelter to displaced people in your community.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn of Praise or Praise Song: "How Great Is Our God"

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, our God, how excellent is thy name above all the earth. The earth, cosmos, and all of creation within it serve to display the opulence and magnificence of your glory. May the children of God be diligent in honoring the beauty of your creation while also expressing heartfelt appreciation for the blessings of our homes, food, and clothing. We pray for godly wisdom and revelation in ways that we can help our brothers and sisters in

the world who require assistance in any of these needs. May our hearts be filled with compassion and our minds be strategic in building paths to provide the means for those in distress to receive God's love and blessings through the transformative ministries of the AME Church. This we pray in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

November 30–December 6

Monday	Philippians 4:1-9 (A Healthy Mindset)
Tuesday	Isaiah 61:10–62:5 (Nations Will See God's Vindication)
Wednesday	Romans 14:11-17 (Righteousness, Peace, and Joy)
Thursday	Romans 15:7-13 (Abounding in Hope)
Friday	Nehemiah 8:6, 9-12 (The Joy of the Lord)
Saturday	Psalm 91:7-16 (God's Salvation Revealed)
Sunday	1 Peter 1:1-12 (The Promised Salvation)

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DECALOGUE

Superintendent—And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord hath made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

My soul be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise:
And hosts of sins are pressing hard
To draw thee from the skies.

Superintendent—Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not kill.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not commit adultery.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not steal.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and write these laws upon our hearts.

Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee!
Nearer to thee!

Superintendent—Hear what Christ, our Savior, saith: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

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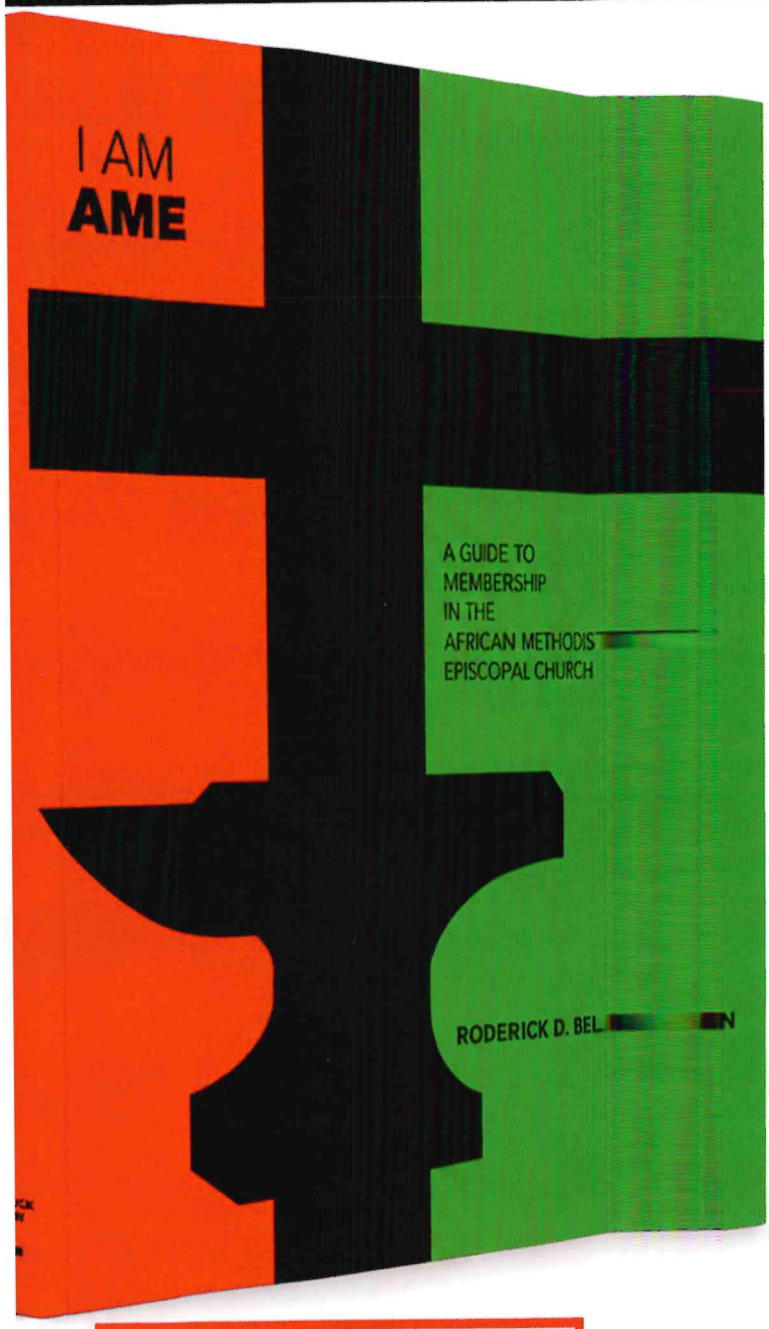

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