



# Lent Devotional Plan

Adapted from Deron Spoo's  
"The **Good** Book"

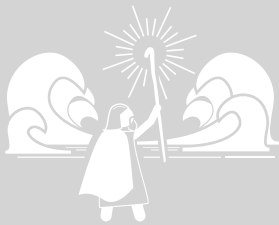
# For Families

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You will find a family specific devotional at the end of each booklet. Please choose whatever day and time to do them with your family (*over a meal, before they sleep, etc.*).



There is no specific day that each devotional corresponds with. **All devotionals have been tailored to be relevant for your children.**



# *week two*

Genesis 22

Exodus 3

Exodus 14

Exodus 20

Judges 16

1 Samuel 17



# Genesis 22

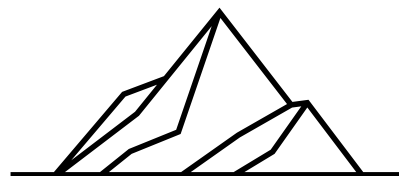
1 After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. 5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. 7 And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

15 And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven 16 and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." 19 So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba. And Abraham lived at Beersheba.

20 Now after these things it was told to Abraham, "Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: 21 Uz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, 22 Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel." 23 (Bethuel fathered Rebekah.) These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. 24 Moreover, his concubine, whose name was Reumah, bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

# 5 | When God Asks Too Much



Genesis 22 teaches us two valuable lessons about true faithfulness. Firstly, Abraham valued obeying God more than he valued understanding himself. Oftentimes, when we are faced with uncertainty and confusion, we tend to pray to God for understanding. For God to help us make sense of the events happening around us. Perhaps we ought to look at Abraham, and follow his example of obedience rather than comprehension.

Secondly, we must recognize the distinction between God and His gifts. While it's important to acknowledge and be grateful for the blessings that God brings into our lives, it's vital that we worship the Giver rather than the gifts themselves.

We must know the difference between God's test and Satan's temptations. Testing is God's method of bringing out our best, while tempting is Satan's method of reducing us to our worst. James 1:13 addresses this distinction saying "No one undergoing a trial should say, 'I am being tempted by God,' since God is not tempted by evil, and he himself doesn't tempt anyone."

God doesn't delight in depriving us of good things. God's gifts for us aren't something that we need to pry from his closed hand. Instead, God has already opened up his palms and has provided all we need in life, beginning with our relationship with him.

In Genesis 22:12, God described Abraham accurately when he said, "Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me." The event took place on Mount Moriah, predating the life of Jesus by two thousand years. It would be on another mountaintop two millennia later that another "only Son" would not be withheld. Ultimately, God's Son would be the sacrifice of the ages and for all eternity.

## Reflection

Sacrifice is an important concept in the Bible. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac as an act of obedience. Later in the Old Testament, an entire system of sacrifice was established to deal with the sins of the people. Ultimately, out of love God would sacrifice his Son, Jesus, for the salvation of humanity. In turn we're asked to sacrifice nothing less than our whole selves to God for his use. The apostle Paul brings the challenge to us in these words: "Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship" (Rom. 12:1).

What is God asking you to sacrifice on his behalf today? What is one practical way you can move away from selfishness toward surrender to him and his purposes?

# Exodus 3

1 Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, "I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned." 4 When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

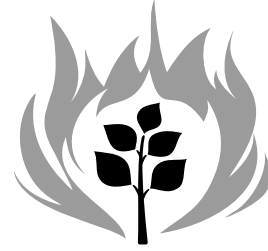
7 Then the Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?" 12 He said, "But I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. 16 Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, 'I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, 17 and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.'"

18 And they will listen to your voice, and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; and now, please let us go a three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.' 19 But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. 20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all the wonders that I will do in it; after that he will let you go. 21 And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, 22 but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and any woman who lives in her house, for silver and gold jewelry, and for clothing. You shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

# 6 | On a First-Name Basis with God



When Moses first encountered God in the burning bush, the Lord told him that he had "observed" and "heard" and "[known] about their sufferings" (v. 7). For all of us, this is a comforting thought. We are often tempted to believe that in the midst of our suffering that God has abandoned us. It is pain that skews our ability to perceive God's presence in those moments. But Moses learned that God is closer to his people and far more concerned about their difficulties than he once thought.

Moses discovered two things at that moment. First and foremost, he learned the name of our Lord. He asked the Lord, "If I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what should I tell them?" (v. 13).

And God said "I AM WHO I AM." The Hebrew term could also be translated as "I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE."

"I AM" at once reveals and conceals God's true identity. God's self-given name reinforces the reality that he is always working, acting, and moving. God's name sets his true identity apart from our human expectations. God is as he chooses to be, not as we might wish him to be. God is somehow deeper than our efforts to define him. His identity is eternal.

The second thing Moses discovered was his own destiny. Contact with big names enlarges our world with a sense of grander purpose. After the first forty years in Egypt and second forty years of exile, Moses would spend his final forty years leading an exodus—the deliverance of Hebrew slaves from Egyptian oppression. Moses discovered that God's name brings fresh perspective and the opening of new possibilities. Moses's lifelong adventure began with knowing God's name.

Our culture is obsessed with celebrities. Knowing big names is seen as proof of our importance. But as Christ followers we know all big names are nothing when compared with the name of God. We have the privilege of knowing our Creator, which brings a sense of determination and destiny to our lives. We can say with all confidence that we share an intimate friendship with the God of the universe.

## Reflection

The three eras of Moses's life help us understand our own lives. Moses spent forty years in Egypt (a period of ease), forty years in exile (a season of difficulty), and forty years leading the exodus (a time spent fulfilling his life's mission).

What season are you in right now? How might God be using the present to prepare you for your future? Whatever your season, realize that God is both present and at work in your life.

# Exodus 14

1 Then the Lord said to Moses, 2 "Tell the people of Israel to turn back and encamp in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, in front of Baal-zephon; you shall encamp facing it, by the sea. 3 For Pharaoh will say of the people of Israel, 'They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.' 4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord." And they did so.

5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" 6 So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, 7 and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. 8 And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. 9 The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

10 When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord. 11 They said to Moses, "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." 13 And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. 14 The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

15 The Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. 16 Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. 17 And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and

all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen."

19 Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, 20 coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. 22 And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. 23 The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. 24 And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, 25 clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians."

26 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen." 27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. 28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. 29 But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.



# 7 | When Life Seems Out to Get You



After a series of miracles, the Israelites finally escape Egypt. But then, Pharaoh regrets his decision and chases after them. Now they are trapped between the army of Egypt and the sea. With nowhere to go, Moses cries out to the Lord to deliver them again. Why does God go to such great lengths in freeing his people? Why put them in this situation in the first place?

In response, Deron Spoo says, "God's purpose in the events of Exodus 14 was to make himself look good. This wasn't the work of ego. God is good. He simply wants us to recognize this truth. God's intent is to drive deep into his people's collective consciousness the fact that he can be trusted even when life seems to get us." God intended to establish a deep and lasting relationship with His people based on the unwavering trust in His character. This was not about making himself look good; rather it was about us seeing Him as good no matter the circumstance.

Three things God commands Moses to tell the people that we could apply to our lives especially in circumstances that may seem impossible. Don't be afraid. Stand Firm. See the Lord's salvation. Psychology teaches us our flight or fight response is an automatic reaction to an event we see as fearful. When God tells us not to be afraid, it is not necessarily for us to have no fear at all. Rather, we are commanded to fix our eyes upon Him in those moments of fear. Spoo writes, "courage isn't the absence of fear; courage is the decision to persevere in the presence of fear." We can persevere and stand firm because we know God will deliver us. And lastly, watch and see how God delivers us. It was beyond their imagination that God would split the sea and the people would walk on dry land. Perhaps a more logical response would be to either destroy their enemies or provide a different route. God can deliver us in the most unexpected ways.

Lastly, Exodus 14 ends with "when Israel saw the great power that the Lord used...the people feared and believed in him..." Notice the difference between the fear of their circumstance vs. the fear of the Lord. The first causes the people to be paralyzed. The second leads to a greater trust in him. It is a fear based out of awe and reverence of God. More importantly, is the fear of the Lord that teaches us we never have to be afraid of anything else. No matter what life throws at us, He will surely deliver us.

## Reflection

Deron Spoo makes the following observation, "As the Israelites left Egypt, a pillar of cloud guided them during the day. At night they followed a pillar of fire. When the pillar stopped, they were meant to stop. When the pillar moved, they were to move. Even at night they were given enough light to travel." As God guided the Israelites step by step, how is God guiding you today? Perhaps in this season he is asking you to stop.

Don't be afraid. Stand firm. See the Lord's salvation. How can you live this out in your own life? How can we fear the Lord in all that we do?

# Exodus 20

1 And God spoke all these words, saying,

2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

7 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

13 "You shall not murder.

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

15 "You shall not steal.

16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

18 Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid and trembled, and they stood far off 19 and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." 20 Moses said to the people, "Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin." 21 The people stood far off, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.

22 And the Lord said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the people of Israel: 'You have seen for yourselves that I have talked with you from heaven. 23 You shall not make gods of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. 24 An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you. 25 If you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones, for if you wield your tool on it you profane it. 26 And you shall not go up by steps to my altar, that your nakedness be not exposed on it.'

# 8 | Ten Keys You Can't Live Without



Two of the most commonly held views of the Ten Commandments deprive the commandments of their full impact and correct application. First, is the view that the commandments are nothing more than restrictions. This makes God, in essence, an eternal killjoy. With these rules, God sucks all the fun and adventure out of our lives for no other reason than he can.

Instead, try to see these commands as expressions of God's wisdom and love. Consider the concept of parenthood. A mother isn't being cruel when she chides her child for trying to touch the attractive flames of the burner on the stove. The parent, with wisdom gained from experience and education, offers instruction as a sign of compassion.

Second, is the view that the commandments are an insurmountable moral high bar. Consider another view. The Ten Commandments aren't a pole-vault bar; instead, they're a limbo bar. God doesn't ask us to jump over these commands. Instead, he asks only that we avoid stooping below these minimal requirements. God doesn't ask for a moral leap; rather, he desires that we not sink below our true worth.

As a whole, these commandments tell us an important truth. Life is about relationships. The first four commands focus on loving God, while the final six detail what love for other people should look like. The Ten Commandments are commentary to the greatest commands to love God and love others, which Moses gave and Jesus endorsed. A life well lived keeps these two relationships in proper working order. When we live only for ourselves, we miss the point of life and mistreat the relationships for which God created us.

What is the most frequently repeated command in the Bible? Remember, it's this: "Do not fear. Do not be afraid. Fear not." God's intent for life is freedom, not fear. This truth is a key to appreciating all of God's commands, especially the Ten Commandments. God offers us liberty. We don't have to live as idolaters nor adulterers or as overcommitted or untruthful people. We can experience freedom from sin in our lives under the life-giving guidance of a loving father.

## Reflection

John 1: 17 says, "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." Jesus didn't discard the law contained in the Older Testament. In fact, Jesus fulfilled the law. We aren't asked to obey a set of impersonal rules. Instead, we see obedience as an opportunity to imitate and please Jesus Christ.

Read through the Ten Commandments again. Which command do you tend to ignore in your own life? Most of God's commands are simple and direct. What we typically lack is not the ability to understand but the willingness to obey. Regarding the command you're inclined to neglect, ask God for the needed strength to change.

# Judges 16

1 Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went in to her. 2 The Gazites were told, "Samson has come here." And they surrounded the place and set an ambush for him all night at the gate of the city. They kept quiet all night, saying, "Let us wait till the light of the morning; then we will kill him." 3 But Samson lay till midnight, and at midnight he arose and took hold of the doors of the gate of the city and the two posts, and pulled them up, bar and all, and put them on his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that is in front of Hebron.

4 After this he loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. 5 And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, "Seduce him, and see where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to humble him. And we will each give you 1,100 pieces of silver." 6 So Delilah said to Samson, "Please tell me where your great strength lies, and how you might be bound, that one could subdue you."

7 Samson said to her, "If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." 8 Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings that had not been dried, and she bound him with them. 9 Now she had men lying in ambush in an inner chamber. And she said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he snapped the bowstrings, as a thread of flax snaps when it touches the fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

10 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Behold, you have mocked me and told me lies. Please tell me how you might be bound." 11 And he said to her, "If they bind me with new ropes that have not been used, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." 12 So Delilah took new ropes and bound him with them and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And the men lying in ambush were in an inner chamber. But he snapped the ropes off his arms like a thread.

13 Then Delilah said to Samson, "Until now you have mocked me and told me lies. Tell me how you might be bound." And he said to her, "If you weave the seven locks of my head with the web and fasten it tight with the pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." 14 So while he slept, Delilah took the seven locks of his head and wove them into the web. And she made them tight with the pin and said to him, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" But he awoke from his sleep and pulled away the pin, the loom, and the web.

15 And she said to him, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and you have not told me where your great strength lies." 16 And when she pressed him hard with her words day after day, and urged him, his soul was vexed to death. 17 And he told her all his heart, and said to her, "A razor has never come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother's womb. If my head is shaved, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man."

18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, "Come up again, for he has told me all his heart." Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. 19 She made him sleep on her knees. And she called a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him. 20 And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." But he did not know that the Lord had left him. 21 And the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes and brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles. And he ground at the mill in the prison. 22 But the hair of his head began to grow again after it had been shaved.

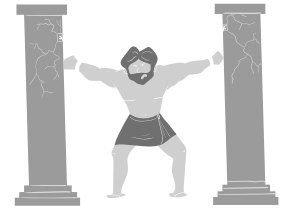
# Judges 16

23 Now the lords of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to rejoice, and they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy into our hand." 24 And when the people saw him, they praised their god. For they said, "Our god has given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country, who has killed many of us." 25 And when their hearts were merry, they said, "Call Samson, that he may entertain us." So they called Samson out of the prison, and he entertained them. They made him stand between the pillars. 26 And Samson said to the young man who held him by the hand, "Let me feel the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them." 27 Now the house was full of men and women. All the lords of the Philistines were there, and on the roof there were about 3,000 men and women, who looked on while Samson entertained.

28 Then Samson called to the Lord and said, "O Lord God, please remember me and please strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes." 29 And Samson grasped the two middle pillars on which the house rested, and he leaned his weight against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other. 30 And Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then he bowed with all his strength, and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life. 31 Then his brothers and all his family came down and took him and brought him up and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had judged Israel twenty years.



# 9 | God Can Use Even Your Failures



What does the life of Samson teach us? What spiritual insights might Samson offer us? Whereas many personalities in the Bible model ways we should aspire to live, Samson offers an example of what we should avoid.

First, avoid temptation. Samson was aware of Delilah's motives. He was willing to see how far he could go without experiencing failure. He thought he was clever and in control. Only too late did he realize he was neither. In the New Testament, we're clearly instructed how to respond to the reality of temptation in our lives: "Flee from youthful passions" (2 Tim. 2:22). Samson chose to flirt rather than flee.

Second, avoid the mistake of confusing physical power for spiritual strength. The truth may be summed up like this: thinking we're strong is a weakness, but acknowledging our weakness makes us stronger.

It's worth the time to consider three or four of your most glaring spiritual weaknesses. What is your greatest temptation? Owning our biggest temptations is the surest defense against them. When we understand the sins we're most prone to commit, we can take the necessary steps to avoid any situation that introduces temptation.

Samson does offer a redeeming quality worth admiring. As the story of his life drew to a close, Samson experienced for himself the God of second chances. Judges 16:22 almost twinkles on the page when it says that "[Samson's] hair began to grow back after it had been shaved." These words describe what was happening not only to his follicles but also with his faith. In a dark prison, growth was happening. Along with the length of his hair, the depth of Samson's commitment to God began to mature. He was a model for all of us who suffer from personal mistakes. God may choose to use our weaknesses and mistakes. God redeems our mistakes as we renew our desire to serve him.

We're meant to grow until we die. Through our seasons of compromise and commitment, God will mature our faith even when we fail. God wants our strength, but it's good to know that he will use even our weaknesses.

## Reflection

Outside the book of Judges, Samson is mentioned only one time in the Bible, among a list of the faithful in Hebrews 11. Even though he was a deeply flawed individual, subsequent generations have remembered him as a faithful person, in part because he finished his life well.

Looking at your life with the end in mind, how do you want to be remembered? What are the three or four words you want people to associate with you once your life is complete? Are you living by these qualities today?

adapted from Deron Spoo's "The Good Book"

# 1 Samuel 17

1 Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. **2** And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. **3** And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. **4** And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. **5** He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. **6** And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. **7** The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him. **8** He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. **9** If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." **10** And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together." **11** When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

**12** Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. **13** The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. **14** David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, **15** but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. **16** For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.

**17** And Jesse said to David his son, "Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers. **18** Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them."

**19** Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. **20** And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry. **21** And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. **22** And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. **23** As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.

**24** All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. **25** And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel." **26** And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" **27** And the people answered him in the same way, "So shall it be done to the man who kills him."

**28** Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." **29** And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?" **30** And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before.

# 1 Samuel 17

31 When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him. 32 And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." 33 And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." 34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, 35 I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. 36 Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." 37 And David said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you!"

38 Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, 39 and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." So David put them off. 40 Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd's pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine.

41 And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. 42 And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. 43 And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." 45 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

46 This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, 47 and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand."

48 When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. 51 Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. 52 And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. 53 And the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. 54 And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent.

55 As soon as Saul saw David go out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this youth?" And Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I do not know." 56 And the king said, "Inquire whose son the boy is." 57 And as soon as David returned from the striking down of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58 And Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

# 10 | Why Hard Times Help



David had confidence in God. David declared, "The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine" (v. 37). As a shepherd, he had dealt with his fair share of hungry lions and charging bears. He was no stranger to conflict. He had learned from stress-filled days and lonely nights the sufficiency of the Lord's strength. God had preserved David's life on more than one occasion, and David trusted he would do it again.

David acknowledged a simple truth: past experiences prepare us for present and future challenges. For a shepherd, guarding sheep was no easy occupation. Each encounter David had with a bear or a lion prepared him for this encounter with Goliath. God has a way of using our unique experiences to prepare us for our eventual destinies.

The balance of David's confidence in God and confidence in himself was exactly that—a balance. Confidence in God without confidence in ourselves translates into foolishness. We can't expect God to regularly rescue us from our lack of experience. A failure to learn and prepare can lead to our ultimate undoing. On the other hand, confidence in self with no confidence in God is arrogance. Our own strength has its limits. God's strength knows no boundaries.

Don't go looking for adversity; it will find you. Hard times may come in the form of difficult people, unpredictable circumstances, or fears that seem beyond your control. While none of these Goliaths feel glorious at the moment, their purpose is to form in us the character of Christ.

When David walked away from the battlefield, he carried with him Goliath's sword to fight on other battlefields. The sword that once threatened his life became the very tool used to protect his life. The simple truth is this: today's greatest threats can become tomorrow's most reliable resources.

We all face hard times; it's as simple as that. As important as knowing how to face those challenges is remembering who faces the challenges of life with us. God's presence in our greatest source of confidence and courage.

## Reflection

Consider a quote from an early twentieth-century pastor, Smith Wigglesworth: "Great faith is the product of great faiths. Great testimonies are the outcome of great tests. Great triumphs can only come out of great trials." Hard times help us by producing a stronger faith based on real-life experience with our reliable God.

What great fight do you face today? Ask God not only for a good outcome; ask him to also produce a more confident character in you through that experience.

# Genesis 1

25 God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

27 So God created human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.







## Made in the Image of God

Did you know that God, the creator of the universe, was the one that created you?

Even though God created the beautiful sky and the amazing animals that we see outside, nothing is as special as His best creation: you!

You're His greatest creation and you might be thinking to yourself, "how?"

Well, God didn't make you like everything else that He made.

He made you special by making you in His image and that makes you more like God than anything else He created.

If God is our creator and He knows us better than anyone else, we can put all of our trust in Him. We can trust Him with our lives, families, and even friendships.

### Reflection/Prayer

1. What do you love the most about yourself? How do you feel about being made in the image of God?

2. Do you believe that God has the best plans for you?

3. As a family, come up with one fun way to remind yourselves of this truth

(i.e. do a self portrait activity, come up with a phrase that everyone can remember)

Prayer: "Dear God, Thank you for creating us in your image. Thank you for making us special and knowing what's best for us. Jesus, help us remember that we can trust in you..."