

Intermediate Level, Block 5, Week 1 **Being Formed into an Army**

Point to Emphasize: We want to be those who accept where God has placed us.

Reference Reading: Numbers 1—7

Memory Verse: For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named. (Ephesians 3:14-15)

Story Sample

We have been talking a lot about the children of Israel as they traveled through the wilderness to the land that God had promised them. It has been nearly forty years and now they are getting ready to enter in. Eventually, they will have to fight for this land, because there are many enemies living there. To do this, God needed to first form them into an army. Fighting against a great number of enemies is not a one person job. Sure, if I wanted to fight with my sister, it would only take one person—me! But if there were a war in another country, I could never fight it alone. It takes a lot of coordination to fight against many people.

In Numbers 2:2 God told Moses and Aaron that the children of Israel needed to encamp by their fathers' households, facing the tabernacle. It was not a matter of them choosing where they would be; it was God's choice. Whichever tribe they were born of, that was the tribe they had to encamp with. Later on, Jehovah spoke to Moses and asked him to number the children of Israel. Moses needed to number all by their families, by companies of their fathers' households. The children of Israel could not just pack their things and go their own way. God needed them to stay with the people of God to be part of His army and go to battle. Once the children of Israel had all been numbered in this way, they were set in a particular order. Every family was grouped together with its leader and all the mature soldiers. And they camped facing the Tent of Meeting, the place where God was dwelling. They all faced God! What a wonderful arrangement!

When I was your age, whenever I got mad at my sisters or I thought mom and dad were too strict, I would wish I was in a different family. I would think to myself, "Why can't I be in Nancy's family? She is rich and can have any toy she wants; she's an only child and doesn't have to compete with three sisters; she gets to go to places I'm not allowed to go; and she doesn't have to go to meetings on the Lord's Day. I wish I was in her family!" But as I grew older, I realized I was placed by God in my family and it was the best one for me. God planned the very best family for me to grow up loving Him and this is where I could be a part of God's army. *[Storyteller, insert your own personal story.]*

Each of you, along with your family, is a part of this army. You can be glad that you are a part of a family that loves God. You can choose to obey your parents when they give you instructions. And one day you will mature and be able to be one who serves God. But it all needs to be done here in God's household, where we are part of a huge army—God's army!

Intermediate Level, Block 5, Week 2 **Journeying by Following the Cloud**

Point to Emphasize: We can be those who follow our parents, serving ones, and older ones regarding where to go and what to do.

Reference Reading: Numbers 9:15-23

Memory Verse: But it is Jehovah who is going before you. He will be with you; He will not fail you nor forsake you. Do not fear, neither be dismayed. (Deuteronomy 31:8)

Story Sample

The children of Israel journeyed in the wilderness for many, many years. Do you remember where they were going? God had promised them the good land, a land called Canaan. We saw last week that the children of Israel had now been numbered and formed into an army. Why? Because they were getting close to the land that God had promised to them, and there, they would have to fight the enemies to take over the land.

As they travelled, God was with them and guided their way. Back then, there was no map or GPS. Even if they had it, they didn't need it. Do you remember when they crossed the Red Sea, God guided them through a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire? Well, now they had the tabernacle where God was dwelling among them, and a cloud was covering the tabernacle.

So, God was there as a cloud to guide them. When the cloud moved, the children of Israel knew it was time to move, and when the cloud stopped, they stopped. When the cloud was lifted off from the tent, they would set out. Wherever the cloud settled, that's where they would encamp. The cloud was their guide. Because the children of Israel followed it, they didn't need to be worried about when and where to move. They did not set out whenever they felt like it or when the weather was good. It was God's word to them that they should follow the cloud. Because they did this, even though there were so many of them, they were in good order. They stayed together in their families, households, and tribes, and moved together according to the word given by God to Moses.

God is still guiding us today. He may no longer do it through a cloud like He did with the children of Israel, but He has given us certain older ones like our parents and serving ones, who have the wisdom to help us and guide us. We don't need to figure out ourselves where to go and what to do. God will always show us where to go, when to move, and when not to move.

When I was twelve years old, my dad got a job in another state. The whole family began to pack up and prepare to move. But about two weeks before we were to leave, my mom came to me and told me to pack a bag and go with my dad. He needed to start his job right away. I couldn't understand why I should go when no one else was going except my dad—not my mom or any of my sisters. I was so confused, but I trusted my mom. I have to admit, staying alone in a hotel all day while my dad was at work wasn't what I wanted to do. But I followed my mom's leading, knowing that she knew best. It wasn't until years later that I found out that the reason she had me go was so that dad wouldn't be alone and that I was the one she could trust to go. *[Storyteller, insert your own story about a time when someone led or guided you where to go or what to do.]*

Now, the children of Israel were ready to journey forward and to begin the battle in order to possess the land that God had promised to them. The cloud was bringing them forward. This week, let us also practice to follow our "cloud," that is, our parents, our serving ones, and the older ones who follow God and whom God has given to guide us.

Intermediate Level, Block 5, Week 3 Rahab and the Two Spies

Point to Emphasize: We believe that God plans to reach the right people, even an entire household, for His plan.

Reference Reading: Joshua 2

Memory Verse: ...For Jehovah your God, He is God in heaven above and upon earth beneath.
(Joshua 2:11b)

Story Sample

As the children of Israel were journeying, they had to fight many battles in order to take possession of the land that God had given them. Each of these battles was for different purposes. There was one battle in particular that was very important. This was the battle to take the city of Jericho. In that city there was one woman whom God had plans for. One day she would be an ancestor of Jesus!

Before entering the land that God had given them, Joshua sent two men as spies to go out and view the whole land, especially the city of Jericho. When these two men went, they entered the house of a woman named Rahab. Rahab had done many things that were not very good. ***[Storyteller, please do not use the word "harlot"!]*** But, even though she was not a good person, she realized and believed that the God of the children of Israel was the only One God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath!

Now, while the two spies were in Rahab's house, the king of Jericho heard that there were two men from the children of Israel searching out the land. So, the king sent a word to Rahab to bring out these men. Instead of bringing the men out, Rahab took the spies to the roof of her house and hid them among the stalks of a plant called flax, that she had laid out on the roof. When she was asked about the spies, she said she didn't know where they were. Then Rahab and the two spies made an oath. Rahab was going to preserve their lives by not turning them in and providing a way for them to flee. In exchange, the two men were going to preserve her and her entire family later, when Jericho would be destroyed by the children of Israel.

How did these two spies flee? Well, Rahab's house was right on the wall of the city, so she used a rope to let them down through her window! Before they left, the two men gave her a scarlet thread which she needed to tie to that window. This was going to be the sign for the children of Israel not to destroy her house. Her whole family needed to gather inside her house when they were coming to destroy the city in order to be safe. So, she sent the spies away, they went down the rope from her window, and she tied the scarlet line to the window. Can you picture that? I tell you, the stories in the Bible are like no other!

It seems that these two spies were sent by God especially to find Rahab and her family! Why would they go in to find Rahab even when she was not a good person? God had a plan for Rahab! Rahab and her entire household needed to be saved from the destruction that was about to happen in her city. This was because one day Rahab would marry Salmon, a leader of the tribe of Judah, and she would become a part of Israel. Rahab turned to the children of Israel and to their God and she put her trust in God and His people. Because of her faith, she was the right person for God's plan, and she later became one of the main ancestors of Jesus! *[Storyteller, insert your personal story about how you and your family have been preserved by God, without getting too spiritual.]*

This whole story was part of God's desire to gain the right people for His plan! I am so glad that one day God came to preserve me and my family! Aren't you?

Intermediate Level, Block 5, Week 4

Crossing the River Jordan

Point to Emphasize: We need to be those who know that our God is real, true, living and active.

Reference Reading: Joshua 3—4

Memory Verse: He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you, which your eyes have seen. (Deuteronomy 10:21)

Story Sample

After the spies returned from Jericho, the children of Israel needed to cross the River Jordan to enter the land. How do you think two million people could cross a river without some of them drowning? There were no bridges they could use. When a river is flowing high it is even riskier. Sometimes there are rocks and logs that you could use as a natural bridge. But, after a heavy rain those rocks and logs are covered with algae, making them slippery. Think about it. We are talking about two million people, plus the things they were carrying, crossing a river! It was almost impossible for all of them to be crossing a flowing river. That would take a miracle! Let us see what they did.

First, Joshua instructed the priests to carry the ark of Jehovah into the river. The ark represented God, so when they entered the water that meant that God went with His people. When the feet of the priests who carried the ark stepped into the waters of the Jordan, the waters that flowed down from upstream stood and rose up in a heap a great distance away. The priests stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, until all the nation had completely crossed over the Jordan and onto dry ground. It must have taken a very long time for two million people, including children, older ones, and weaker ones, to cross over the river with all the things that they were carrying. I believe that the priests must have been so happy about the miracle God had performed, even though they had to hold the ark there until the very last one had crossed.

Then Joshua chose from among the people twelve men, one man from each tribe, and asked them to take twelve stones from the place where the priests' feet stood firm in the middle of the Jordan. Those stones were to be brought over and laid down in the place where Israel was going to camp that night. Joshua also placed twelve different stones in the middle of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark had stood. After this, the priests who carried the ark came out of the Jordan, and when their feet touched the new land, the waters of the river Jordan returned to how it had been before they entered in.

After this, Joshua erected in Gilgal the twelve stones taken from the Jordan by the twelve representatives of the twelve tribes, as a memorial testifying of Israel's crossing over the river by God's miraculous deed. What a wonderful miracle this was! It was also the first miracle performed by God for Israel as they entered the good land. Such a miracle surely was a sign to the children of Israel that their God was real, true, living, and active.

Many times in your lifetime you will witness things that will happen that are just impossible to explain. You might see great things happening, such as people saved from a natural disaster. You might witness people surviving from a car accident. These events are somewhat big. But you might also see smaller things happening as well, that they are just as hard to explain. For example, years ago we were painting the parking lot where the church meets for a children's camp. The forecast said it was going to rain. We saw the dark clouds approaching. However, the clouds parted and there was rain to our left and to our right, but there was no rain falling on us.

We were able to finish painting the parking lot on time! *[Storyteller, insert your own example of a big or small miracle you have seen.]* When we see things like this happening, there is nothing to say except: "Wow! God is real. He is working on our behalf!"

According to the dictionary, a miracle is a surprising event that can't be explained by science, so is therefore considered the work of the divine (God). It looks like even the dictionary agrees that a miracle is something God does. Sometimes we will see things that we can't explain, but we need to believe that God is real, true, living and active. God can do whatever He says He will do, no matter how impossible it seems.

Intermediate Level, Block 5, Week 5

The Destruction of Jericho

Point to Emphasize: Even if we don't always understand, we can always trust that God's word is true and that our parent's instructions are the best for us.

Reference Reading: Joshua 6

Memory Verse: Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, / And do not rely on your own understanding; / In all your ways acknowledge Him, / And He will make your paths straight.
(Proverbs 3:5-6)

Story Sample

The children of Israel have now crossed the River Jordan! Two million people had completely crossed over the Jordan on dry ground! What a miracle, right? So we learned last week that even though no one could explain what happened, that's what a miracle is, we believe that God is real. The same goes for His word.

Now the children of Israel were ready to fight to get into the good land. The first city they came to was called Jericho. Remember, this was the city the spies went to before they crossed the Jordan. Jericho was a strongly fortified city—that means that the walls were strong and high. The city also had gates for protection, built to shut out people who wanted to get inside. The king of Jericho had heard what God had done for the children of Israel and he was afraid of them. So he locked up the gates and trusted that his walls could keep the children of Israel out. He knew that the children of Israel did not have weapons to take down his walls. Even though the Israelites had crossed the Jordan, he did not think that they would be able to conquer the wall.

God's word to Joshua was that He had given Jericho, its king, and the mighty men of war into Joshua's hand. God gave Joshua instructions on what to do. Now, these were VERY unusual instructions. What were they?

Joshua was told by God to have the men of valor (courage) carry the ark with the priests and they were to circle the city one time a day. They had to do this for six days. *[Storyteller, draw a square on the board, and put a "J" for Jericho in the center. As you tell the story, draw circles around the square, one for each day. On the seventh day, draw seven circles.]* Seven other priests were charged to carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of Jehovah and they couldn't just blow them anytime they liked. They had to blow them when they were instructed.

For the first six days, the army of Israel just walked around the city with the ark. If you were someone who lived in the city of Jericho watching, wouldn't you wonder what they were doing? Those people didn't have weapons; they just walked around the city carrying an ark, and no one said a word, they just walked silently.

Then on the seventh day, they were instructed to do something different. Instead of just walking around Jericho one time, they walked around the city seven times. At the seventh time the priests blew their trumpets. The captain of the army commanded: "Shout!" *[Storyteller, draw lines going out and away from your drawing, to represent all the noise.]* As the priests trumpeted, the people shouted, and...can you guess what happened? The wall fell down! The city was utterly destroyed. Wow! God, the one true and living God, was with Israel. Who else could have taken down a city like that? And His word is always true! Well, there was only one household that was not destroyed.

Whose house was it? Yes, Rahab and her household were not destroyed as promised by the two spies. But the rest of the city was completely destroyed.

This whole plan sounds kind of crazy, doesn't it? Think about it—no talking, no weapons, shouting only when told. Even hearing the instructions you'd say it doesn't make sense. Now that I think about it, that has happened to me before. Mom would tell me things that didn't make sense to me. One time she told me keep a pair of shoes by my bed at night. I thought that was crazy. Why would I need shoes when I was going to bed? Who needs shoes during the night? But a short time later, there was an earthquake and we had to get out of the house quickly. I was so glad my shoes were right there. Then I knew that mom knew what was best for me. *[Storyteller, use a personal example of a verse or special instruction that seemed to make no sense to you.]*

In the same way, Israel followed the instructions given by God through Joshua. Like the children of Israel, we can be those who trust older ones' instructions and also trust what God says in the Bible. We can always believe that God's word is true. Even though sometimes some things may not make sense to us, God's word is always true. We just need to learn to trust in Him and to follow His command.

Intermediate Level, Block 5, Week 6

The Need for Judges

Point to Emphasize: We should follow God's commandments and the rules and regulations set before us.

Reference Reading: Judges 1:1, footnotes 1 and 2; 17:6

Memory Verse: Hallelujah! / Blessed is the man who fears Jehovah, / Who delights greatly in His commandments. (Psalms 112:1)

Story Sample

After the destruction of Jericho, the children of Israel enjoyed many years of peace. They enjoyed having God as their King and the one they loved. But the situation changed again. The children of Israel turned their back and abandoned God. Instead of checking in with God before they did things, they went after other things. Instead of loving God, they loved idols; even though idols were the things made of wood and stone. What would God do? Well, this led to a period of history called the time of the judges. God had to establish judges.

Now what are the judges? A judge is like an arbitrator, who works to solve a problem by getting everyone involved to agree on a fair solution. Today, when people break a law or have a problem with someone they usually stand before a judge. So, are judges for our good or are they bad for us? Yes, they are for our good. Judges are needed to correct and punish our behaviors that are bad and harmful. Judges are needed to keep us following the law. What does it mean to say that this period of time is the time of the judges? It means that God's people broke God's law all the time; so they needed to have judges to keep things in order. The Bible says that in those times "everyone did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). Isn't God the only One who is right? But the people did what was right in their own eyes, and hence, they became rotten and corrupted. They needed the judges to judge them.

Now, let's see how this relates to us. If we were ALL following God's commandments and the rules that the school has for us and the rules that our parents have for us, we would have no need for judges. Now, I don't think any of you have done anything that would cause you to go to court and stand before a judge. But what about going to the principal at the school? He is kind of like a judge. Let's say that someone does not follow the teacher's directions. Instead of doing the math problems in class, he breaks the rule of the class and is sent down to the principal's office. Now, are principals for our good? Yes, they are for our good. They are meant to correct and discipline us so that we will behave the way we should. When we are in school, we should sit in the classroom to learn things and not to misbehave to be sent to the principal's office. *[Storyteller, give an example that when you were a child, instead of obeying the rule (your parent's rule or the rule at school), you did what was right to you, and how it resulted in trouble for your family or your classmates. This example should show us how much we need to follow the rules and regulations.]*

We need to see that even when we are children, God has established many "judges" around us for our benefit. Children and even grownups around you might be doing like the children of Israel were. They might be doing what they think is right without following God's commandments. But God's way of caring for us is establishing "judges" for us. Sometimes, your mom will have to be a "judge" to resolve a discussion between two siblings. Sometimes, a serving one in children's meeting will be a "judge" to resolve a matter between some children. We need to be those that accept God's arrangement. We need to be those that receive the help and advice from the

"judges" God has set for us so we can follow God's commandments and the rules and regulations around us.

I hope that you go home today thanking God for His arrangement in your life. Every time you are in a middle of a situation and you are brought up to a "judge", you remember that they were placed by God to guide you follow God's commandments and rules set for you. Let's be those who follow the rules and regulations set for us!

Intermediate Level, Block 5, Week 7
Deborah and Barak—Defeating Jabin King of Canaan

Point to Emphasize: We can be those who are willing to follow the proper leaders set before us.

Reference Reading: Judges 4

Memory Verse: The way of the fool is right in his own eyes, / But a wise man listens to counsel.
(Proverbs 12:15)

Story Sample

Last week we learned that God established judges to help the children of Israel to keep the law and follow the rules and regulations. Did any of you this past week had a moment in which you realized there was a “judge” helping you in the same way? Were you thankful that this person was in your life? I hope so!

Well, the period in history called judges went on for many years, and during this time something extraordinary happened. When all the men of Israel failed Jehovah, He raised up a WOMAN to sit as a judge over His people. This is remarkable! The children of Israel had never had a female leader before. Does anyone know what this woman’s name was? (Deborah!) Deborah was very capable. Yet she did not act like a man or try to be in charge of the men. At that time, all the men were doing what was right in their own eyes, but Deborah did what was right in God’s eyes. She, as a leader, acknowledged God and obeyed Him, taking Him as her King.

Now, an interesting part of this story is that during this period, the Israelites were being mistreated by King Jabin. Why did they not fight or try to get out from under him? Well, **none of the Israelites were willing to take the lead to fight against him. No one was willing to take the lead, and no one was willing to follow a leader. Everyone just did what was right in their own eyes.** Because of that, they remained under Jabin’s rule. It was a miserable situation! God needed someone to take the lead to fight for Him. He also needed some to follow such a leader. Yet, there was no one to do it until Deborah rose up!

What was happening with the Israelites is similar to what happened to me one day. My teacher put us into groups to work on a small project. That day in our group, no one wanted to be the leader and no one was willing to follow a leader. We all wanted to do our own thing. Since it was a group project we couldn’t do it alone. We made no progress until the teacher came to our group and gave us instructions and that’s how we were able to complete the project. *[Give a personal story of following a leader, perhaps a teacher as a leader versus acting according to your own idea without any one leading you.]*

God commanded Deborah to send out 10,000 men from the children of Israel. But Deborah was not a man who could lead the army into battle. What could she do? Wow, Deborah was so extraordinary! She knew that she could not directly carry out this word as a woman. Deborah called Barak, a capable military man. He was the right one to lead the army of Israel. But Barak knew that none of the men were willing to follow. He told Deborah that if she would go with him, he would go. Deborah rose up and went with Barak along with the 10,000 men. WOW! What a change! All those men were now in an excellent order, no longer were they doing what was right in their own eyes.

When these 10,000 men went, the enemy did not sit still. Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, called all his 900 iron chariots, and took all the people who were with him to the river Kishon.

The children of Israel did not have any chariots. But Jehovah fought for Israel. Jehovah threw Sisera and all his chariots and all his army into confusion with the edge of the sword before Barak. All the army of Sisera was destroyed; not even one was left. Isn't that amazing?

On that day, God subdued Jabin the king of Canaan before the children of Israel and they were able to destroy Jabin. Deborah and Barak led the people to sing praises to Jehovah for His mighty victory. The land had rest for 40 years. This all happened because Deborah was willing to follow God and be a leader of the children of Israel. She also sought a proper man to go to war with. It was then, with the proper leaders in place, that the children of Israel stopped doing whatever they thought was best and followed God as their King again.

In the same way, even when you are young you can be willing to follow the proper leaders set before you. To do things the way you think is best is not the right way; this might lead you to mistakes and often times to a miserable situation.

Intermediate Level, Block 5, Week 8

Gideon—The Defeat of Midian

Point to Emphasize: God takes care of us, and we should give Him the credit.

Reference Reading: Judges 7:9-20; 8:22-23

Memory Verse: ...I will not rule over you...Jehovah will rule over you. (Judges 8:23b)

Story Sample

Today we will hear a story about another judge. His name is Gideon. After the time of Deborah and Barak, a long time passed and the children of Israel went back to their old ways of doing evil things and not listening to God. So God put them in the hands of their enemy, the Midianites, for seven years. The Midianites treated them so horribly that the Israelites finally remembered to call out to God. Because God is a faithful God, He answered their call once again. He chose Gideon to lead 300 men to go into the enemy's camp and fight against them.

Our story begins with Gideon and the 300 men encamped above the camp of Midianites and Amalekites. The Bible tells us that the enemy's camp had so many people that it looked like a swarm of locusts. Gideon had only 300 men and the enemy's army was that massive! It might have seemed discouraging, so Jehovah told Gideon to do something that would strengthen him. Jehovah told Gideon to go to the edge of the camp of Midian and to listen to what the men there were saying.

So Gideon obeyed God, and he and his helper Purah crept down to the edge of the camp of Midian, and they heard a man there telling his companion of a dream he had. It was quite a dream! He told his companion that a round loaf of barley bread tumbling through the camp of Midian, hit the tent, and caused the tent to collapse. Incredible! But what did the dream mean? When the man's companion heard the dream, he realized that the barley loaf referred to the sword of Gideon and that God had delivered them into Gideon's hand.

When Gideon heard this conversation, he worshipped God. He knew the dream was from God. The dream made him bold. He knew that God would do what He said He would do. So Gideon and Purah returned to the 300 men and told them that it was time to strike the enemy's camp, because Jehovah had delivered the enemy into their hand.

Gideon divided the 300 men into groups of 100. Each man carried a trumpet in one hand and a torch inside a pitcher in the other hand. The pitchers hid the light from the torches, so that the enemy didn't see all the lights and didn't know they were coming. That was pretty smart! Then Gideon told his men to watch him and do what he did. He did not give many instructions ahead of time. Everyone had to pay careful attention to Gideon and do as he did.

When they got to the edge of the camp, Gideon and his group blew the trumpets and broke the pitchers so the light from the torches shined out. The other groups watched carefully and did what Gideon did: And they cried out, "A sword for Jehovah and for Gideon!"

What a noise! What a sight! Out of nowhere, the camp was surrounded by sounds and lights! The men in the camp were filled with fear! What was happening? The enemy's camp was in chaos. They ran and drew their swords. And as the 300 men blew the trumpets, Jehovah caused the enemy to swing their swords at one another. They were running around in confusion, with their swords drawn, and they ended up slaying one another. Wow, Jehovah knows how to fight

and win a battle! He can work all things out the way He needs them to be! Even though Gideon had only 300 men, Jehovah won the battle. This is because God does not need a large number; He needs those who obey and take His way.

After that battle, the people were so happy that they wanted Gideon to rule over them. Do you think Gideon accepted this honor? No, he did not. When we accomplish something, it is easy to take the credit, but Gideon knew that he had not won the victory—God had.

Gideon gave the credit to Jehovah, and he worshipped Him. Gideon had not fought the battle so that he could be a ruler. He had done it because he was obeying the instructions of Jehovah. Because Gideon obeyed God, there was rest in the land for 40 years.

One summer, my family and I went to visit my parents. We decided to take a road trip to the Rocky Mountains where we could see God's magnificent creation. But it was going to be a 9-hour car ride. So we had to prepare for the trip, including making sure that we had a car that would fit all of us and that could take us there and back. My parents had an old van that they knew needed some maintenance, but it seemed like it should be fine for our trip. So we prayed and off we went on our trip. We drove and saw the lakes and the mountains, stayed there for 4 days, and had a lot of fun. After that, we drove back home, another 9-hour trip. When we got back, my parents had an appointment for the van's maintenance. The mechanic was surprised when they told him that we took the van on a road trip for 4 days. He said there was very little engine oil left and there were a few other problems with the van—including the brakes!—and he couldn't believe nothing happened on the road. When we realized how bad it could have been, right away we knew that God took care of us to keep us safe. We were so thankful to God. *[Storyteller, insert your own story about doing something and giving God the credit, or realizing God took care of you in some situation.]*

Just as in the story of Gideon, let us also be those who obey God, trust in God, and are thankful for all He has done and is doing for us.

Intermediate Level, Block 5, Week 9 Samson—His Might

Point to Emphasize: We are those who are being strengthened, empowered, by God.

Reference Reading: Judges 13:24-25; 14:5-15:20

Memory Verse: Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength.
(Ephesians 6:10)

Note to storytellers: We do not want to tell the children all the details of Samson's story. We have chosen to present only the aspects that show Samson's might. We ask the storytellers to exercise care in their storytelling. Please do not bring in the parts of the stories that expose Samson's immorality, lust of the flesh, failures, or any other portions that we have purposely omitted.

Story Sample

Today we will hear a story about another judge. His name is Samson. Samson was born in a special way. He was set apart as a Nazarite. Do you know what a Nazarite is? The Nazarites were a group of people who vowed to follow the Lord absolutely. They vowed not to eat certain things, not to drink certain things, not to do certain things, and not to cut their hair, in order to show their absoluteness for the Lord. Before Samson was born, the Angel of Jehovah appeared to his mother and told her that she would bear a son and that he would begin to save Israel from the Philistines. But the Angel of Jehovah also told her not to eat certain things, not to drink certain things, not to do certain things, and not to cut the boy's hair. This was God's way of setting Samson apart as a Nazarite. So from the time he was born, Samson was following the Nazarite way. And as he grew up, he kept this way, and he had faith in God. Eventually, he was a judge of Israel for twenty years.

Today we want to talk about something God does for us—He strengthens us. Samson was one who had extraordinary strength from God. Throughout Samson's life, God would empower him to do amazing things. Who knows what *empower* means? That's right! It means "to make strong" or "to give strength to." So throughout Samson's life, God strengthened him and gave him amazing strength.

One time, a young lion roared against Samson! Can you imagine? But Samson wasn't hurt—no, God strengthened Samson, and he tore the lion apart with his bare hands! Wow! One man against a lion! There were also other instances of Samson being empowered. One time, God empowered Samson so much that he defeated thirty men all by himself! Wow! Thirty men against one! That is A LOT of strength Jehovah gave to Samson.

Yet another time, Samson was captured and taken to the Philistines. He was tied up in ropes and must have looked pretty helpless. But God empowered him, and the Bible says the ropes melted away. Samson found the jawbone of an animal and he used that to conquer ONE THOUSAND Philistines! That is really extraordinary strength, isn't it? One thousand people, all defeated by Samson with a jawbone!

Today God is still strengthening us—though not in exactly the same way. I don't think we will be fighting a thousand people with a jawbone! But sometimes we might find ourselves in a situation that seems just as hard!

Have you ever had to speak up or do the right thing, and you felt like it was just too hard? I have! One time when I was younger, some friends started making fun of our serving one. I remember how uncomfortable I felt. That serving one had always taken care of us, and I didn't think we should be talking about him that way. I wanted to say something to stop the teasing, but I was also afraid. Would the other children make fun of me if I said something? Would they get mad? I needed some extra strength, some extra might, to speak up. And you know what? I was able to say something. I thought it would be too hard, but God gave me the strength I needed. And when I spoke up, the other children agreed. It turned out, we all knew we shouldn't have been making fun of that sweet serving one. *[Storyteller, insert your own story of the Lord empowering you to do something you thought was hard. Try to use an example that will resonate with the children—speaking for God at a young age, going to the meeting instead of doing something else, doing the right thing in a hard circumstance.]*

Samson was one who was empowered by God with extraordinary strength. Today, God is strengthening us, too!

Intermediate Level, Block 5, Week 10

The Story of the Book of Ruth

Point to Emphasize: We can be wise in the choices we make.

Reference Reading: Ruth 1—4

Memory Verse: Who then is the man who fears Jehovah? / Him will He instruct concerning the way that he should choose. (Psalm 25:12)

Story Sample

The book of Ruth is a very short book in the Bible—only four chapters! But it tells a very important story. It tells of the ancestry of Christ Jesus. The story of Ruth is a wonderful story about making choices! We make choices every day, don't we? We choose what to wear to school, who our friends will be, whether to do our homework or not, whether to obey our parents and teachers, and so on. One day we will choose who to marry and where to live. Almost everything we do requires making a choice. There are big choices, small choices, good choices and poor choices. Let's go through the story of Ruth and see some of the choices that people made. *[Storyteller, as you tell the story, write on the board the names that are on bold letters as you talk about the choice they made, whether good or poor.]*

The story of the book of Ruth begins with a man named **Elimelech**. Elimelech made a poor choice in not talking to God about how to provide for his family. He had a wife, Naomi, and two sons. They lived in Bethlehem in Judah, where there was a famine. What would he do to feed his family? He had to make a choice about the best place for his family to be. He chose to go to the land of Moab. The only thing was, the Moabites were not children of God, and they had nothing to do with God, so it was not the best place to go. They remained in Moab until Elimelech died, leaving his wife Naomi and his sons in a foreign land without any other family.

Eventually, Naomi's sons **Mahlon and Chilion** married women from Moab. Again, a poor choice, because they were not children of God. One married a woman named Orpah and the other married a woman named Ruth. They lived there for ten years, and after that, Naomi's sons both died.

Poor **Naomi!** What would she do now? Now she had a choice to make. Should she stay in Moab or return to her homeland? She chose to return to the people of God, which was a very good choice.

Orpah and Ruth also had to make a choice. Would they remain in Moab where they had lived their whole lives, or follow Naomi to Bethlehem? And they each made a different choice, though they both loved Naomi. Orpah chose to return to her parents' house in the land of Moab. But **Ruth** made the better choice—to follow Naomi. She told Naomi, "Wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you dwell, I will dwell; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God." (Ruth 1:16-17). Ruth was willing to leave her family, her friends, and the country she had grown up in just to be with Naomi.

When they returned to Bethlehem, it was the beginning of the barley harvest. Ruth made a choice to go glean in the fields. Does anyone know what it is to glean? This was an Old Testament regulation that provided for the poor, the sojourners, the orphans and the widows. The reapers were not allowed to go back in their steps so that there would always be some grain left behind for the poor (Dt. 24:19-21). The poor were then allowed to enter the field after the hired reapers,

so that they could gather and keep the gleanings. This was God's way of caring for these people, and it was their right to work in this way. Ruth made this choice in order to care for herself and her mother-in-law, Naomi.

Now, Naomi had a relative, a relative of her husband Elimelech. His name was Boaz, and he was a man of great wealth, and a man who chose to be a man of God. Well, **Boaz** also had a choice to make. What would he do about Ruth, who was gleaning in his fields? Boaz appreciated that Ruth was such a hard worker. He appreciated the report he had heard about her, how she had taken such good care of Naomi, and how she had been willing to leave her family and home and come to a strange country. So he chose to make sure she was taken care of as she worked.

Naomi knew that God meant for Ruth and Boaz to be together so she came up with a plan. She told Ruth exactly what to do. And Ruth did exactly what she was told. She went to Boaz and reminded him that he was a kinsman and it would be his duty as a kinsman to care for her. This was the custom of the time.

Boaz had another choice to make. Should he marry Ruth? Boaz was a very honorable person. He told Ruth that he would be willing to take her, but the custom at that time was that the closest relative would marry a widow. So he wanted to be sure that he had the right to marry her before he did anything. There was another kinsman who was a closer relative to Elimelech than Boaz, so this other kinsman should have the first choice. In the morning, Boaz went to the city to seek out the kinsman and gathered ten of the elders of the city to be with him. He chose to act in an honorable way, obeying the custom of the time. The other kinsman chose not to buy the parcel of land and marry Ruth. This was more responsibility than this man wanted.

So in the end we see that Boaz and Ruth were married, had a child named Obed, and the ancestor of Jesus was born! All because of a series of choices. Naomi, Ruth and Boaz all chose to take the way of God. And the others chose to go according to what they thought best in their own mind.

As you go through life, you will have many choices to make. When we are young, our parents teach us how to make good choices, so that when we grow up we will continue to make the best choices. I hope you will think about every choice you make so that they will all be good choices!

[Storyteller, end with asking the children about some good choices and some poor choices that they have made—start with your own examples of each.]