



LIBERATING
FAITH STUDIES

**FAITH THAT
PLEASES GOD**

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Roderick D. Belin, President/Publisher

Garland F. Pierce, Executive Director, Department of Christian Education

Tiffany Gregory, Chief of Operations

Orlando Dotson, Layout and Design

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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

Publisher • Rev. Dr. Roderick D. Belin

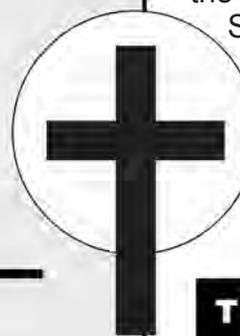
Editor • Rev. Dr. Garland F. Pierce

— Lessons —

Rev. Lionel Merritt

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!

The Home Daily Bible Readings will continue to appear at the end of each Sunday's lesson but they will be the readings for the following week. We made this change in response to your requests. The readings for the first week are on the following page.

For over a year we have used 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.

This virtual AME Connectional Church School was birthed due to the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The blessings from the teachings have been immeasurable. We will continue this 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

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

November 27–December 3

Monday	Proverbs 17:17-22 (Faith-based Friendship)
Tuesday	Matthew 26:31-35 (Peter's Test of Faith)
Wednesday	Hebrews 3:7-19 (Hear God's Voice)
Thursday	Leviticus 19:30-37 (Faith in Action)
Friday	Acts 10:34-48 (God Honors Genuine Faith)
Saturday	Ruth 4:13-22 (Naomi Becomes a Grandmother)
Sunday	Ruth 1:6-18, 22 (Ruth's Compassionate Faith)

The Faith of Ruth

Lesson Scripture: Ruth 1; 4:13-22

Focus Scripture: Ruth 1:6-18, 22

Key Verse: Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God." Ruth 1:16

RUTH 1:6-18, 22 (NRSV)

6 Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had considered his people and given them food.

7 So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah.

8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

9 The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud.

10 They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?"

12 Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons,

13 would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me."

14 Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

RUTH 1:6-18, 22 (KJV)

6 Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread.

7 Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.

8 And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

9 The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

10 And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

11 And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?"

12 Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons;

13 Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me.

14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

15 So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law."

16 But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you, to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God."

17 Where you die, I will die – there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!"

18 When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

22

22 So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

18 When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

22

22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

KEY TERMS

- **Symbiotic** – A relationship between two or more parties (persons) which exists for the mutual benefit of all the parties involved.
- **Paradox** – A statement of situation that on the face looks absurd or self-contradictory, but on explanation proves to be true.
- **Persona non grata** – A person considered unwelcome or unacceptable in a place or situation.
- **Imminent** – Something which is about to happen or likely to happen soon.
- **Loyalty/Allegiance** – A commitment to and support for a particular person, group, entity, nation.

INTRODUCTION

On the Series

When taken as a whole, the three groups of lessons in this quarter address themes of faith, hope, and love/law as the human responses to God's divine grace and forgiveness. The studies in the quarter show how people in the scriptures developed and fed their walks with God in their own time and culture. We highlighted these studies not to suggest that we copy the details into our day and culture. Instead, we should see how we can use the principles of faith they employed to reflect our belief and confidence in our God. Note, too, the people in these studies were not super humans. They, like us, experienced the twists and turns, valleys and peaks, gains and losses that are features of the normal journey of faith. Like them we should not

be surprised when we encounter highs and lows in our walk of faith.

The First Unit

Unit I, “Profiles in Faith,” is five lessons highlighting faith in both the Old and New Testaments (Ruth, 1 Samuel, and Matthew). Note that in each case, faithful people expressed faith by the actions they took. Sorry to say, for a high percentage of Christians today, faith does not extend beyond the discussion/declaration phase. The persons in the studies operated on the belief that the God they knew (or heard about in Ruth’s case) had the super ability to bring about the right resolution to their situation.

On Lesson 1

The story of Ruth is the type of exciting love drama most adults can identify with. It has warm features of commitment which make Christians happy. We encourage you to note two. First, Ruth as a Moabite had no knowledge of or relationship with the God of Israel. According to the Mosaic customs, Ruth was therefore not entitled to any favors from the God of Israel. The story shows how God brings into his favor people who according to our theology are unworthy. Second, Ruth’s introduction to God was through Naomi’s representation of her

God. The principle being how we relate to our God can draw onlookers into the grace of God. We must therefore be conscious of how our witness can impact others.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Ruth’s statement in the **Key Verse** (Ruth 1:16) is obviously a strong declaration of loyalty. But it is also much more than that. “Your people shall be my people, and your God my God” signaled

a profound change in national attachment and identity. Ruth was shifting her allegiance from the nation of Moab and its gods to Israel and its God, Jehovah. The lifestyle witness which Ruth saw in Naomi was that powerful. Ruth wanted to bring her life under the provision and protection of the God of Israel, Naomi’s God.

The story shows how God brings into his favor people who according to our theology are unworthy.

The passage also highlights the reality of life for a widow at that time. The death of both husband and sons would have left Naomi without income, without the means to look after herself. Please note that there were no well-defined social security schemes then. Widows were at the mercy of family and friends who cared to help them. Later (e.g., in Acts) the Christian church took part of the responsibility for the care of

widows and the fatherless.

The narrative also provides a striking contrast in outlooks. Naomi who knew God saw hopelessness. Ruth on the other hand who did not know the God of Israel saw hope through Naomi. Is there a lesson here? Can the persons we look to for hope and help in times of crisis be themselves lacking hope and answers for dealing with the crisis? Sometimes to be effective, faith requires a mutual symbiotic relationship:

you lean on me as I lean on you to find the way forward through the crisis.

But the story also brings us face to face with a big paradox. We love to view life as a progressive walk from bad to better to best. Yet, as fate would have it, often life has confusing circular paths that put us right back in the same place where we began. Naomi, through her husband, ran from famine conditions in Israel to greener pastures in Moab. After a series of adverse events in Moab, it was back to Israel for God's saving provisions. This perhaps is the reason our ancestors warned us not to burn the bridges we have crossed. We may need them on the way back.

Next, we come to the point we hinted at earlier. Ruth's identity as a Moabite

woman made her a *persona non grata* in Israel. By Moses' law, the Moabites were cursed for their roots and their cruelty to God's people. So, the Jews felt no Moabite could have a part in God's people or belong to God in any way (Deuteronomy 7:3-4, 28:32). Yet, and surprisingly so, God grafted Ruth and her descendants into a special slot in the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:5). This gives flesh to Jesus' teaching at John 6:37: "the person who comes to me (irrespective of religion, nationality, gender, or past lifestyle) I will accept."

Last, we come to the issue of God's involvement in human affairs. Did God put Ruth in Jesus' background because of the faith she exercised? Or alternatively, were Ruth and Naomi only responding in a drama God had decreed from the beginning of the world? Your answer, if it

is like ours, shines forth your faith in God.

SANKOFA

Often in teaching Bible study, I caution participants to focus on the main principles, not on all the details. When we read a story like the narrative in Ruth, we look for our own story, or stories of people around us, to play out in the same manner. Such an expectation can set us up for great disappointments.

Sometimes to be effective, faith requires a mutual symbiotic relationship: you lean on me as I lean on you to find the way forward through the crisis.

Ruth seemed ready to accept the God of Naomi and happily converted to following him. But it does not always work in that dramatic way.

On September 20, 2019, on the *Christianity Today* website, Lisa Brockman published a story of how a young woman who was a sixth generation Mormon converted from that religion to Christianity because of her contact with a born-again Christian. The story is engaging. Space does not allow us to reproduce it here. You can read it at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/october/lisa-brockman-ou-tzion-sixth-generation-mormon.html> ("A Sixth-Generation Mormon Meets a Born-Again Christian | *Christianity Today*). The key points we want to highlight are these.

1. Just as Ruth changed her religious outlook because of her relationship with Naomi, this young woman did likewise from her interactions with a born-again Christian.
2. The Bible does not give a period for Ruth's conversion. But for sure it was not instant. Similarly in the CT story,

the conversion took time. It did not happen overnight.

Let this and related stories inspire you to stay the course with people who may look to you for answers concerning faith. Do not give in to the popular instant-coffee microwave mindset which teaches that conversions take place instantly and dramatically. Consider that for persons

Consider that for persons to convert to a new or different religious belief, they must first break the spell which the old (false) thinking has on them. Leading people to Christ is as much a matter of faith as any other faith act you can consider. But it often takes time.

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CASE STUDY

In Ruth 1:13, we find these words, "... the hand of the Lord is gone out against me!" Here was Naomi voicing her frustration with the Lord, blaming God for the disastrous outcomes she had experienced. Then in December last year I read a Facebook posting on my page by a lady named Jarri. She gave details of her life before she became a Christian and the events which led to her conversion. What caught my eye was this statement, "The marriage was bad, and I was angry

at God for letting me get pregnant so late in life.” That statement prompted me to research how often people get angry at God. The results were fascinating.

We can sum up the finding with what came in an ABCnews.com site by opinion writer Lee Dye, December 21, 2010. The headline reads, “Are You Angry at God? Survey says up to two thirds of Americans blame God for troubles.” The article went on to examine a survey which found that most people polled blamed God for allowing horrific events. This was eye-opening for me. How could we imperfect people prone to sinful and flawed decisions blame a perfect God when terrible things happen in our lives?

Then I figured it all out – blaming God is easy. All that people need is a desire to avoid taking responsibility for their decisions, excuses for disobedience, and trust in themselves. We are fiercely confident in our ability to steer our lives to desired goals. And for good measure we heavily discount things like God’s will and purpose for our lives, and the role God may want us to play in our communities. God is always a great whipping boy when things do not turn out right for us. But have you ever thought that blaming God is one of the surest signs of lack of faith? Just a

thought to consider.

LIFE APPLICATION

One of the things that always fascinates me about scripture text is how ordinary people going about their ordinary business of life do God’s will. Today, we find spiritual leaders setting rituals and tasks we must perform “to be blessed” by God. The Bible narratives do not support a quarter of this. In the Bible, people just drew, as if by instinct, on their God-given

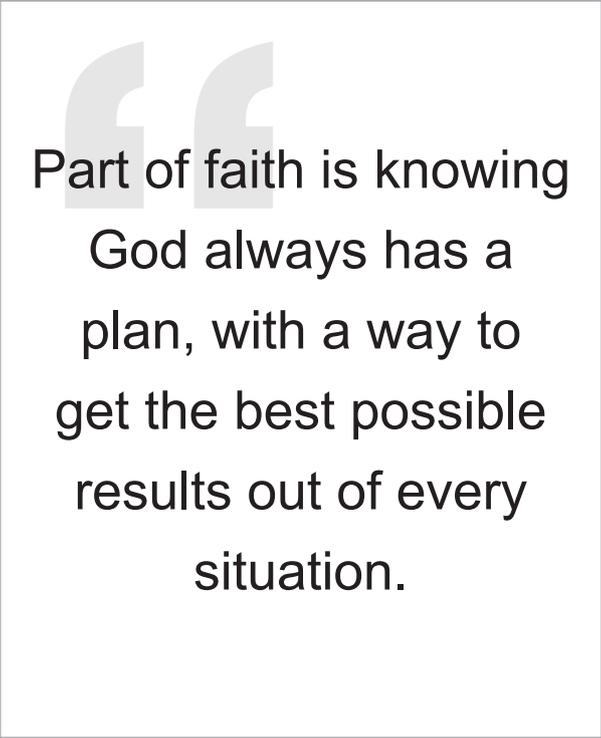
abilities to overcome great obstacles. In this regard, take time to consider the abilities God has blessed you with to battle through demanding situations. And be sure to thank God for these. My experience is that God does not wait for a crisis to equip us. The talents we need to withstand and conquer tough events we develop years before we must use

them.

Like Naomi and Ruth, we often hit roadblocks in life that make no sense. At these crossroads we have two simple choices. We can “curse God and die” as Job’s wife advised. On the other hand, we can look to God and trust him for the insight and strength to be “more than conquerors.” The unexpected death of a loved one, the dismissal from a job or

business in our winter years, an unwanted divorce, or the disastrous results in national elections, are all events that cause us to pause and focus on God. In all such situations we must exercise faith in God. Part of faith is knowing God always has a plan, with a way to get the best possible results out of every situation. God's plan will not always be painless. It will not always give the results we want. But it will always show God as supreme and worthy of our trust.

Last, we need faith to face the future. When we look at our world, we see chaos on a grand scale. We see multiple pandemics, wars, and conflicts in various corners of the world. The threat of nuclear war that seemed remote years ago, now appears so imminent. The ravages of illegal drugs, political chaos and violence, rising rates of crime, and the breakdown in family life all point to a chaotic world going forward. How are we to survive in such a world? Caring parents and grandparents confess their fears for the world in which their children and grandchildren will live. Yes, it looks scary. However, by faith we know that God remains in control. And that same God who provided for Naomi, Ruth, and Israel in their times of hardship is still alive and well and will provide for



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us when we look to him in faith. But just as Naomi and Ruth had to take action to enjoy God's provision, we, too, will have to act. Faith does not say *sit tight and God will drop provisions in your lap*. Faith says *move as God leads you to the provisions he has already set up*. Let faith train your eyes and heart to see the future with confidence.

QUESTIONS

1. How do you explain the different responses of Orpah and Ruth to Naomi's urging them to leave her and get on with their lives?
2. Ruth was prepared to give up her national identity and religious affiliation to follow Naomi and Israel's God. What would make you take such a drastic step?
3. Do you ever look at God with a cross-eye when problems pop up in your life? Is it ever ok to blame God for tragedies we face?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," *AMEC Hymnal* #84

Closing Prayer: Dear Father, at times I am confused and hurt by fearsome events I experience. Try as I may, I cannot

make sense of all the terrible events I experience or hear about. In those times, help me to keep my focus and faith on you. I know you never promised that I

would understand everything. So, help me, dear God, to take comfort in knowing you are with me, and you are always in control. In Jesus' name, amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 4-December 10

Monday	Joshua 1:1-9 (Faith Expressed Through Courage)
Tuesday	Matthew 20:25-34 (David's Son Came to Serve)
Wednesday	Matthew 21:18-22 (Ask in Prayer With Faith)
Thursday	Psalm 27 (Prophets Speak God's Word)
Friday	2 Timothy 1:3-14 (Rekindle God's Gift and Stand Firm)
Saturday	1 Samuel 17:1, 3-4, 8, 20-30 (Israel's Wavering Faith)
Sunday	1 Samuel 17:31-37, 45, 48-50 (Faith That God Will Act)

The Faith of David

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:1-58

Focus Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:31-37, 45, 48-50

Key Verse: David said, "The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." 1 Samuel 17:37a

1 SAMUEL 17:31-37, 45, 48-50 (NRSV)

1 Samuel 17:31-37

31 When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul; and he sent for him.

32 David said to Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

33 Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock,

35 I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it.

36 Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God."

37 David said, "The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and may the Lord be with you!"

45

45 But David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword and spear and 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."

1 SAMUEL 17:31-37, 45, 48-50

1 Samuel 17:31-37

31 And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul: and he sent for him.

32 And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

33 And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

34 And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock:

35 And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him.

36 Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God.

37 David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee.

45

45 Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.

48-50

48 When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.

49 David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand.

48-50

48 And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came, and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

49 And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

50 So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

KEY TERMS

- **Risk Averse** – Not open to taking risks; afraid of risks.
- **Menial** – Tasks which are considered low-class or unskilled.
- **Kicker** – Slang for an unexpected admission or remark.
- **Esoteric** – Having a secret or hidden meaning; not obvious.
- **Dogmatic** – Stating an opinion as if it were an obvious or widely accepted fact.
- **Infallibility** – Something having perfection; without faults.



This is one of those lessons with a *Bad Boys* type hero, David.

follow our heroes and sing their praises. And the more daring their actions, the more we praise them. If you are like my crew, you have seen every *Top Gun* and *Bad Boys* movie more than once. In those movies the heroes put themselves in tough situations and came out with excellence every time. This is one of those lessons with a *Bad Boys* type hero, David.

In this lesson, watch how David got involved in the fight with Goliath. He was minding his own business. Then try to follow what enraged him and pushed him into action. Note also where his skills came from. Of course, you have heard the David

and Goliath story so many times before. But there is a detail you missed. Consider this: David did not kill Goliath; God did. We know you heard differently so let us

INTRODUCTION

We all love heroes. In the movies, we

explain. Moses did not part the Red Sea. He did not take his hands and push back its water. He stretched out his rod in faith and God, in honoring that faith, parted the Red Sea.

The same here with David. Did David put the stone in the sling? Yes, he did. Did David twirl the sling to give it power? Yes, he did. But in honor of David's faith to face Goliath in the name of the living God, the Lord gave David's stone the direction and power it needed to kill Goliath. Where the stone struck Goliath was the only vulnerable point on Goliath's body which was open to David. That stone without doubt God directed to Goliath's head. After you have worked through the lesson, tell us if you agree.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

We open with an observation we noted in the first lesson, which we want you to keep in mind when dealing with Bible passages on faith. David did not set out to prove any theological points, show off his patriotism, or even defend his family honor. As he came into the story, David was doing what any teenager would do in Israel at that time. At his father's request, he was just running an errand and checking on his brothers. We cannot over-emphasize

this. The acts of faith we focus on in these lessons occurred in the normal activities of living, not to prove theological points or superiority of religion.

Notice also, faith must be based on something real and personal to the person showing the faith. This is the reason for verses 34-37. To miss this is to miss the whole lesson. Strong faith sits on deep personal convictions rooted in personal experiences. It is much more than mere expectation and stubbornness.

But also note the Philistines' insults to Israel and its God personally offended David (verse 36). At that time, to be uncircumcised was a sure sign that you were not in a relationship with the true God. That fact alone would have stirred fire in the bosom of any Hebrew male. Still, David's motivation ran higher than that.

Read David's words

to Goliath in verses 45-47. God's honor was on the line. Jehovah was either God, capable of defending Israel, or he was not God at all. David had no doubts, no if's, no but's, no maybes. For him God was God, so he could not lose. David did not have to look for a choir or praise team to pump him up. His own convictions about God set him ablaze.

In the bottom of verse 37 we see an

Moses did not part the Red Sea. He did not take his hands and push back its water. He stretched out his rod in faith and God, in honoring that faith, parted the Red Sea.

interesting play of events: Saul displayed a fake (or weak) faith in God. We all know this scene. Saul is sending off David to fight the giant with a blessing, “and the Lord be with you.” That sounded so good and pious. However, if Saul knew that the Lord was available to them, why was he and his army afraid to go forward and fight the Philistines? From verse 17 we see that the Philistines had been insulting Saul’s army for forty days. Saul was displaying what we call “sideline faith.” Our friends can show this wonderful “faith” when they are on the sidelines away from the real action. Like Saul they speak exciting words of faith from the safety of the sidelines or their living rooms.

From this text (verse 33) and related passages David was a youth. This may be significant. One of the features of youths is their willingness to take risks and their idealistic outlooks on life. Older persons with histories of failures, disappointments, and discouragements tend to be more risk averse. Our personal experience in the evangelism fields supports this. Youths are more ready to engage strangers even in districts we considered unsafe or violent. This in no way discounts the value of experience.

The last point in this section again refers to an issue raised before. God did not prepare David for his battle with

Goliath on the day when he got to Israel’s camp. The lion and bear experiences were all part of David’s training. What is the lesson here? Simple! Do not despise the small menial tasks leaders may assign to you. Expert studies have shown that over a third of the best administrators in both church and business affairs are people who came through the ranks from basement level. Faith is not an instant emotional bolt of courage. Often, we build courage experience by experience over a lengthy period.

Faith is not an instant emotional bolt of courage. Often, we build courage experience by experience over a lengthy period.

SANKOFA

In our text, Goliath was a tall, big human with an intimidating giant body. His opponent, David, was a youth enraged by the giant’s insults and propelled by a firm trust in his God. Yet, in our world the giant may not be a single person, but a system of injustice. And the David character we often see played by persons so enraged by injustice that they risk all

(even life) to get a deadly stone into the system of injustice.

In the Caribbean country of Barbados stands a national statue dedicated to such a liberator named Bussa. From historical records, Bussa came from Africa to Barbados as a slave. To quote the website *totallybarbados.com*, “What is also known is that Bussa had the strength of character and a passion for enforcing

change. It is this courage and sheer determination that observers captured in the history books (of Barbados). The man Barbadians fondly remember as 'Bussa' played an integral role in changing the social and political climate of the island forever."

Just as David's victory over Goliath changed the course of history for Israel, the Bussa-led rebellions changed the course of history for Barbados and the other slave colonies in the Caribbean in the 19th century. Like David, faith fueled by rage drove Bussa. They both knew evil was wrong and they had to stop the evil. Faith is not an eloquent recital of Hebrews 11:1. It is a rage that burns in our gut and shouts, "This is wrong, and I must do something to stop it, even if it costs me all my money, my freedom, or my life."

CASE STUDY

Faith is one of those topics we can talk about for a week without understanding what it really is and how it works. Certainly, we are not saying an academic study of faith is necessary. But a basic knowledge of faith and how it works equips us to better recognize and to act in faith.

In a *Psychology Today* website post (September 28, 2012) Arthur Dobrin, D.S.W. (professor emeritus at Hofstra

University) addressed this issue under the title "Why Faith Is Important." Here is the key plank of the professor's article. "Faith is an expression of hope for something better. More than a wish, it is closer to a belief, but not quite. A belief is rooted in the mind. Faith is based in the heart." For me, here is the kicker: "We act in faith when there is no guarantee, no certainty. No one knows what kind of life an infant will have, yet people continue

to have children. No one can know how life with our mates will turn out, yet we continue to have faith our relationships will last a lifetime." And check this: "Faith speaks the language of the heart. It is an expression of hope that goes beyond the conscious mind."

All this clearly shows we cannot just turn on faith as we do electricity with a power switch. Faith develops over time after we have

formed a deep personal conviction about the person or thing which is at the center of our faith. We have faith our car will start when we turn the key or press the ignition, because in the past that process started the car. Our friends' cars also start that way. So, what about faith in God? How could David have known God would have delivered Goliath into his hands? God had rescued David before. Further, the historical records, the scriptures, the

"Faith is an expression of hope for something better. More than a wish, it is closer to a belief, but not quite. A belief is rooted in the mind. Faith is based in the heart."

folklore, the authorities he respected, all declared God's faithfulness to Israel.

This brings us to a very real and present danger Christian's face today. Unwittingly and unwisely Christians without proper preparation enter esoteric discussions on the Bible, its infallibility, its accuracy, and its relevancy. Sharing in such debates can make a Christian appear so wise, so rational, and non-dogmatic. But there is a grave danger!

Consider that the opponents of Christianity are not seeking to win the arguments. Oh no! What they seek is to raise doubts in our minds about our faith. Do you remember the serpent and Eve's conversation in Genesis: "Did God really say...?" The whole aim of this intellectual sparring is to weaken the foundation of our faith, the Bible. A good example of such an issue is the debate which questions why we celebrate Christmas since the Bible gives no mandate for such a celebration.

As with any building, the structure falls when the foundation falls. Therefore, we must learn to feed our faith, and be careful, very careful, about joining in any activity which seeks to shake the foundational planks of our faith. So be cautious when debating the Bible with

fools (Psalm 14:1).

LIFE APPLICATION

At the base of faith is a solid trust in the almighty God. Against this truth, take time to reflect on your personal understanding of God and his capabilities. Try, difficult as it might be, to step past the popular cliches, and quiz yourself on the events in your experiences that confirm God is who you said he is. Note in the lead up to

the fight with Goliath, David drew not on rhetoric, but on his past experiences where God had showed up for him. What past experiences can you draw on when dire threats come?

Consider professor Arthur Dobrin's position in the **Case Study**: in situations requiring faith, outcomes are without guarantees. Is this consistent with your understanding of Bible passages on

faith? Look at three cases. With Samson, he died giving Israel one of its greatest deliverance events. With the three Hebrew boys (Daniel 3), in faith they faced the possibility that God might not save them (Daniel 3:16-18). In Acts 6 and 7 we see Stephen full of faith standing for God and being stoned to death. In the light of these incidents, what is your position on the statement, "When we stand for justice and or righteousness, we



At the base of faith
is a solid trust in the
almighty God.

stand despite the risks of personal injury, loss of property, loss of freedom, and/or loss of life”? Is it worthwhile to take a faith stance for God when the outcomes are not guaranteed?

In the lesson we mentioned “sideline faith”: speaking words of faith when we are not directly involved in the actual fight. What role, if any, can this play in the lives of believers? Can we spur others on to acts of faith by our support and encouragement to them? Can you give examples of where “sideline faith” helped in an act of faith? Please do not give any scenes from the movie *Rocky*. We overuse those scenes.

QUESTIONS

1. When acting in faith, outcomes are without guarantees. Do you accept that statement?

2. Is there any difference between faith and a positive mental attitude to life? Do optimists have more faith than pessimists?
3. Does internal rage play a role in a Christian’s expression of faith. (In the **Sankofa**, Bussa was not known to be a Christian in our clinical sense of the word.)

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: Psalm 34 (“I Sought the Lord”) by The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir.

Closing Prayer: Dear Father, as I walk through this life, I see giants in various forms and situations. Help me to remain focused on you and firm in my faith that you, who delivered David and delivered Israel repeatedly in the past, will also deliver me in this time. This is my prayer request, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 11-December 17

Monday	Genesis 38:6-11, 13-18, 24-26 (Tamar’s Risk-taking Faith)
Tuesday	Joshua 2:1-6, 8-16 (Rahab’s Faith)
Wednesday	James 5:1-11 (Patient Faith)
Thursday	1 Timothy 1:12-17 (God’s Grave Overflowed)
Friday	2 Samuel 11:1-5, 26–12:1, 4-7a, 15-16, 24 (Bathsheba’s Challenged Faith)
Saturday	Psalm 9:1-4 (God, the Stronghold for the Oppressed)
Sunday	Matthew 1:1-17 (A Family Tree Characterized by Faith)

The Family of Faith

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17; Genesis 38; Joshua 2, 6:22-25; 2 Samuel 12:24; Ruth 4:13-22

Focus Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17

Key Verse: An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Matthew 1:1 (NRSV)

MATTHEW 1:1-17 (NRSV)

1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram,

4 and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,

5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,

6 and Jesse the father of King David. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,

7 and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph,

8 and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah,

9 and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

10 and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah,

11 and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

12 And after the deportation to Babylon:

MATTHEW 1:1-17 (KJV)

1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;

7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;

8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;

9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;

10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;

11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:

12 And after they were brought to Babylon,

Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel,

13 and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor,

14 and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud,

15 and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob,

16 and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;

13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;

14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;

15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;

16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

KEY TERMS

- **Genealogy** – Family line; list of relatives by generations.
- **Aberration** – Irregular, a departure from what was normal.
- **Tainted** – Spoiled or contaminated; a person’s bad character or reputation.

INTRODUCTION

The stories of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba raise complex social issues including rape, adultery, poverty, womanizing, and the like. It is difficult to tell the stories of all four

women in a single lesson. Therefore, the focus of this lesson is not the details of their stories. Rather, it is to examine in broad terms the reason Matthew included them in Jesus’ genealogy. Further, we seek to explore how our own biases inform our assessments of people and their acts of faith.

Rather, it is to examine in broad terms the reason Matthew included them in Jesus’ genealogy. Further, we seek to explore how our own biases inform our assessments of people and their acts of faith.

The texts in this lesson push us to examine our concepts of who God chooses and uses in matters of faith. Every generation has its own ideas of who are righteous and therefore deserves God’s favor, blessings, and special mention in sacred literature. We

all have inherent biases. Naturally, and especially in public groups, we suggest or openly declare that such biases (in others) are wrong. This we readily do, while cherishing our deep-set opinions on certain persons or groups.

What does this have to do with our talks on faith? Our biases and deep-seated opinions affect when and how we see acts of faith. For people we like and can identify with, heroic acts we readily hail as acts of faith. Such acts deserve recognition by us and even by God. On the other hand, when people we despise do the same or similar feats, we scorn those acts of bravery. So here is your connection. Naturally, we expect God to share our views. Why would God favor and honor persons we despise, and despise people we honor? Depending on your views of certain behaviors, in this lesson you will see a live application of Isaiah 55:8-9 (our ways are not God's ways).

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

In the texts we see in living color gender bias which was very evident in Hebrew society in Bible times. Matthew listed the women which for one reason or another made up the genealogy of Christ. In vital aspects this was an aberration. In the first century, the listing of women within

a genealogy was rare. For Jewish writers to so mention women, the women had to earn exceptional admiration, respect, or be noted for extra special work or character traits.

So how do we explain in Jesus' genealogy the listing of women of questionable repute: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba? Without doubt, respected theologians and Bible commentators have offered varying explanations for this.

And as class members, you may have ideas of your own. But we lean to a simple view hinted at by Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:26-29. God wanted everyone to identify with Jesus: Jews, gentiles, slaves and free people, males and females, "saints" and prostitutes. Still, look further. The inclusion of women of questionable backgrounds killed the sterilized family tree image purist theologians and

commentators may have preferred Jesus to have. It would seem natural and desirable to have the spotless sinless savior coming from a spotless family tree. But God saw the danger in that.

Under the clean, spotless, family tree scenario, female and male prostitutes, fornicators and adulterers, tricksters, scammers, thieves, swindlers, robbers, crooked politicians, fraudulent



Our biases and deep-seated opinions affect when and how we see acts of faith.

cryptocurrency executives, and misguided religious leaders would find it hard to relate to Jesus. By including these women God was making a profound statement. He was telling the world *my Son, though perfect and sinless, can identify with you and welcomes you*, “for you are all children of God by faith in Christ” (Galatians 3:26). The inclusion of the women in Jesus’ genealogy says God will accept into his kingdom all persons who identify with Jesus. This includes even those persons who we, because of personal biases, may not consider fit or worthy of God’s kingdom. Is that not how an all-embracing God operates?

Having said that, let us look at the individual women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Elizabeth. Watch for the similarities in their stories. But if they were alike, God would need only one to make his point. So also look for the differences which made each woman’s case peculiar.

In Tamar’s case, here is the key question. In your current mindset can you see God using a woman who used prostitution tactics and tricks to maintain her position in a family line? Aren’t these evils obvious signs a person is acting outside the will of God? Are these

practices not criticized in scripture? Consider that Tamar’s actions were calculating and deliberate. She set herself up as a prostitute in Judah’s path.

Please also think about verses 27-28 (Gen. 38). They challenge our pet saying that two wrongs don’t make a right. Both Judah and Tamar admittedly had been guilty of deception. Something to consider the next time you say, “But two wrongs don’t make a right.”

Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Elizabeth. Watch for the similarities in their stories. But if they were alike, God would need only one to make his point. So also look for the differences which made each woman’s case peculiar.

In Rahab’s case we have a splendid example of lying (Joshua 2:4-6). To feel the impact of this story, replace the word *spies* with the word *terrorists* (how the king and his army saw the spies). Now comes the key question for Rahab’s case. And before we ask the question, please avoid giving a generic answer like “the Lord can talk to anybody.” The question is: does God share his plans for a nation and give insights to practicing

foreign prostitutes? Remember, Rahab was a Canaanite: the nation God was displacing to make room for Israel. In verse 9 Rahab said, “I know,” not I think, or I guess; “I know.”

Like Tamar, Rahab asked for a performance bond, a pledge. And the terrorists gave it. Was this not selling out

to the enemy? So, in Rahab's story we see a foreign prostitute, deliberately lying and deal-making with terrorists. All these evils in the family background of Jesus. Wow!

We met Ruth already in Lesson One. Here we just emphasize that she was a foreign woman who had no prior allegiance to the God of Israel. She was an outsider who God in his mercy and grace brought into the family of God. This one is just that simple.

Now to Bathsheba! We heard a little joke about Bathsheba which you do not have to remember. The first part of Bathsheba's name is "Bath." She was having a bath when David saw her and trapped himself. Apart from that, her story is intriguing. Outside her natural beauty, and the fact she took her bath at the wrong time (while the king was on his lookout), Bathsheba did absolutely nothing to put herself in the picture. It was the king's unrighteous act which dragged her into the spotlight. Your key question is this: why would God spotlight a woman who was just a victim of someone else's sin? Then ponder this. Despite an act of lust, adultery, virtual rape (and later murder), God set in motion the birth of

God set in motion the birth of the builder of the sacred place which would represent the home and holiness of the pure God. Did someone say God has an enchanting sense of humor and inclusion? We agree!

the builder of the sacred place which would represent the home and holiness of the pure God. Did someone say God has an enchanting sense of humor and inclusion? We agree!

SANKOFA

When it comes to activities like prostitution, we find not only gender bias but societal bias: where all genders of a certain status look down on the activities of sex workers. In keeping with that negative attitude, sex workers we usually see as persons without decent marketable skills, who live on the fringe of society. Consider how well Jammie Kelley fits into that box.

Kelley was a prostitute for 19 years and had nine felony convictions on drug and theft charges. With help from a program called the Prostitution Diversion Initiative, she "came off the streets." Eventually, "She got married, went back

to school and got a master's degree in social work and became a licensed social worker."

Kelley is now (at the time of the article) director of Admissions at the Nexus Recovery Center in Dallas. The agency helps low-income women and their families break the cycle of addiction.

Kelley believed she was making a difference. “I was put on this earth to show women they too can survive,” said Kelley.

(Kelley’s story was from a September 19, 2016, CBCnews.com (CBS News DFW) posting)

CASE STUDY

Pastor Dana addressed her YPD group at the start of *YPD Week*. She ended her remarks with the caution that their bodies were the temple of God and to engage in pre-marital sex was to defile God’s temple. She repeated the statement for impact. Then the pastor invited comments.

Kathy raised her hand and Pastor Dana invited her to speak. “Everything you said, pastor, is true,” she began. “But when you leave here tonight you are going home and will sleep in a bed beside your husband. We have no husbands.” The room went dead silent.

One reason we hold harsh attitudes toward people or groups with different outlooks is ignorance of those persons. We do not know them: their challenges, the options they had, or the goals they were seeking. Consider this. The women in Jesus’ family line got there as they were trying to reach desirable goals with

limited options. Did Tamar desire to be a prostitute? We doubt it. But she was determined to have her place in her first husband’s family tree despite setbacks and betrayals.

So, one way to change attitudes toward certain people and reach positions where we can help them is to learn about them. There is a saying, “You have to know my pain to understand my shame.” We will continue this in the **Life Application** section. At this point we invite you to examine your default

So, one way to change attitudes toward certain people and reach positions where we can help them is to learn about them. There is a saying, “You have to know my pain to understand my shame.”

positions on subjects like prostitution, abortion, drug addiction, corporate profits, divorce, and religious leaders. On what do those opinions sit? Now read the lesson texts again. By your opinions, was it wrong for God to put Tamar in Christ’s family line?

LIFE APPLICATION

When we study the four women in this lesson, it should expand our understanding of the grace of God. Take each woman and find a modern equivalent. If the modern person is a public figure, also check the media opinion of the person. Consider if you share that popular or majority opinion. Be prepared to give a reasonable explanation on why you agree or disagree with the popular or majority opinion on

the person you selected.

Now really push yourself. This one should be extremely easy if you do it wrong. Consider your political views and favorite party. Next, select a hero of the same gender from each of the main political parties. Note on paper what qualifies each person for hero status. Review your paper. Do you notice any difference? How do you think God assesses the acts of each person?

“Adults grow in faith through participating and finding acceptance in a faith community.” Do you accept this assertion? If you do, examine how your faith has grown over time by membership and serving in your local faith community. Can you point to specific leaps of faith in your life?

Again Tamar’s (avoid saying we favor her) desire to get what was rightfully hers drove her actions. She yearned for a son and a mention in the family tree of her first husband. Consider to what extent you can stir in yourself motivation to take action to get what you think is rightfully yours. Today, if we are dealing with material property or property rights, people resort to the law courts. But what do you do when you are dealing with intangibles like family honor and

personal reputation which a court cannot enforce? You could spread equally nasty rumors about people who offend you. But is that an option for a Christian? If not, why not? Again, avoid saying two wrongs do not make a right.

We said at the start, this lesson will push you into perplexing corners. Since you took the warning, here we go. In your opinion, to what extent does fear (lack of faith) cripple Christians from doing evangelism activities? In thinking about this, review in your minds the last time your pastor or

evangelist proposed an evangelism outreach. What were the reasons given for non-participation or non-attendance? Which of those stated excuses were rooted in fears: fears of rejection and/or personal attacks?

QUESTIONS

1. How useful is the Bible text on hot-button issues like abortion and homosexuality?
2. Kelley (**Sankofa**) came off the streets because people in the Prostitution Diversion Initiative cared enough to start an outreach to prostitutes. What would it take for you to get involved in a similar outreach?
3. How was Jesus’ outreach to marginalized people consistent with God’s inclusion of people of questionable



Can you point to specific leaps of faith in your life?

character in his genealogy?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: "Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed," *AMEC Hymnal* #141

Closing Prayer: Dear God, as the hymn noted, in comparison to your standards, we are all but worms. Help me to remember this as I deal with others. Let

me show any superiority I claim by efforts to help persons I think are now in less fortunate positions. I recognize this is the example Jesus set when he associated with prostitutes, tax collectors, crooks, and needy people. Lord, this is not easy, so I really need your help. My prayer in Jesus' name! Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 18-December 24

Monday	Philippians 4:10-19 (Contentment in Every Situation)
Tuesday	Psalms 91:1-16 (God Is My Refuge)
Wednesday	Joel 2:18-27 (The Lord Has Done Great Things!)
Thursday	Luke 1:5-17 (The Annunciation to Zechariah)
Friday	Luke 1:18-25 (Zechariah Doubts but Elizabeth Rejoices)
Saturday	John 20:19, 24-29 (Believe!)
Sunday	Luke 1:36-45, 56 (Mary and Elizabeth Express Faith)

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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