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SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION

**THE TESTIMONY
OF
FAITHFUL WITNESSES**

SENIOR SCHOLAR SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY

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SENIOR SCHOLAR SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY

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THE ORDER OF SERVICE

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

THE LESSON

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

THE CLOSING

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

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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.

CHURCH SCHOOL CREED

I believe my AME 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.

AME Discipline

OVERVIEW

Theme: The Testimony of Faithful Witnesses

Unit 1

FAITHFUL WITNESSES TESTIFY TO GOD'S PROMISES

LESSONS 1-4

LESSON 1: JUNE 7, 2026

Title: Deborah, a Leader in a National Emergency

LESSON 2: JUNE 14, 2026

Title: Hannah, a Godly Mother

LESSON 3: JUNE 21, 2026

Title: Jonathan and David, a Noble Friendship

LESSON 4: JUNE 28, 2026

Title: Amos, a Herdsman Called of God to Be a Prophet

Unit 2

FAITHFUL WITNESSES SAY "YES" to JESUS CHRIST

LESSONS 5 - 8

LESSON 5: JULY 5, 2026

Title: The Believing Centurion, a Gentile Whose Faith Jesus Commended

LESSON 6: JULY 12, 2026

Title: Simon Peter, From Weakness to Strength

LESSON 7: JULY 19, 2026

Title: Zacchaeus, the Publican

LESSON 8: JULY 26, 2026

Title: Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Unit 3

FAITHFUL WITNESSES SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

LESSONS 9 - 13

LESSON 9: AUGUST 2, 2026

Title: Thomas, the Honest Doubter

LESSON 10: AUGUST 9, 2026

Title: Stephen, an Early Interpreter of Christianity

LESSON 11: AUGUST 16, 2026

Title: Saul of Tarsus: How a Pharisee Became a Christian

LESSON 12: AUGUST 23, 2026

Title: Timothy, the Influence of Home Training

LESSON 13: AUGUST 30, 2026

Title: Lydia, Judged to Be Faithful

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LESSON 1

JUNE 7, 2026

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

Deborah, a Leader in a National Emergency

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Judges 4:1-24

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: Judges 4:4-10, 14, 21-22

KEY VERSES: At that time Deborah, a prophet, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came up to her for judgment. Judges 4:4-5

WORDS TO KNOW

PROPHETESS – A woman chosen by God to speak God’s message to the people.

JUDGE (BIBLICAL) – A leader raised by God to guide, deliver, and restore Israel in times of trouble.

OPPRESSION – Cruel or unfair treatment by those in power.

COURAGE – The ability to act boldly even when facing fear or danger.

INDOMITABLE – Strong, determined, and impossible to defeat.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: JUDGES 4:4-10, 14, 21-22

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

- 4 At that time Deborah, a prophet, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel.
- 5 She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came up to her for judgment.
- 6 She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, ‘Position yourself at Mount Tabor, taking ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun.
- 7 I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin’s army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops, and I will give him into your hand.’ ”
- 8 Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go.”
- 9 And she said, “I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.” Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh.
- 10 Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh, and ten thousand warriors went up behind him, and Deborah went up with him.
-
- 14 Then Deborah said to Barak, “Up! For this is the day on which the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?” So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand warriors following him.
-
- 21 But Jael wife of Heber took a tent peg and took a hammer in her hand and went softly to him and drove the peg into his temple, until it went down into the ground—he was lying fast asleep from weariness—and he died.
- 22 Then, as Barak came in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and said to him, “Come, and I will show you the man whom you are seeking.” So he went into her tent, and there was Sisera lying dead, with the tent peg in his temple.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever made a bad choice and felt stuck afterward? Sometimes our decisions can land us in situations that feel too big to fix on our own. Israel found themselves in that kind of situation. Because of repeated disobedience, they were oppressed for twenty years by a powerful enemy. When their troubles became too heavy to carry, they cried out to God. And God responded. Instead of sending who the people might have expected, God raised up a woman named Deborah. She was wise, faithful, courageous, and confident in God. In a national emergency, God chose Deborah to lead. This lesson reminds us that when we feel trapped by problems, poor choices, or overwhelming circumstances, rescue begins when we call on God. God can empower anyone to lead, serve, and make a difference.

BIBLE STORY

Knowing God Through Scripture

Deborah was both a prophetess and a judge. She listened carefully to God and had the courage to speak exactly what he said. She held court under a palm tree, and people came to her for wisdom and direction because she was trusted and faithful to God's Word.

Israel was suffering under King Jabin and Sisera, who had 900 iron chariots — advanced military power for that time. In the natural, it looked impossible. But Deborah told Barak to go into battle because the Lord had already given the victory. She did not move in fear; she moved in faith, standing on what God had spoken. When Barak hesitated and asked her to go with him, she agreed, yet she made it clear that the victory belonged to God. Deborah teaches us that when we know God through scripture, we can trust that he speaks in difficult times, that leadership requires courage, and that faith means stepping forward before we see the results.

Loving God's Word

Loving the qualities of a faithful witness means recognizing the kind of strength that truly honors God. Deborah showed us what

that looks like. She listened to God carefully and moved when he spoke. She told the truth boldly without fear. She encouraged others and lifted them up. She stepped into leadership during a time of crisis and did not shrink back, even though she was a woman in a male-dominated culture. Being indomitable does not mean being loud or aggressive; it means being steady, confident, and unshaken because your strength comes from God. When we admire Deborah, we are really learning to love faithfulness, courage, and obedience.

Serving God Through Scripture

Serving God and others in difficult times means more than talking about faith — it means living it. Deborah did not just speak God’s Word; she acted on it. Because she answered God’s call, Israel was delivered, the people experienced peace, and hope was restored. Sometimes serving God means leading when others are afraid. Sometimes it means speaking up when everyone else is silent. Sometimes it means encouraging someone else to step into their calling. Deborah reminds us that God empowers us not just to survive hardship, but to help others overcome it as well.

Questions:

- ❖ What qualities made Deborah a strong leader?
- ❖ How does listening to God give someone confidence?
- ❖ What does it mean to be indomitable in today’s world?

SANKOFA

The word *Sankofa* comes from the Akan people of Ghana and means “go back and get it.” It teaches us that we must learn from the past in order to move forward with wisdom. Deborah’s story calls us to go back and reclaim the examples of strong, faithful women and leaders whose stories have too often been overlooked. For our young people, *Sankofa* is a reminder that your history matters and your voice matters. You do not have to wait until you are older to be used by God. The same God who called Deborah is still calling young leaders to stand, to speak, and to serve.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church has always lifted up

leadership rooted in courage and justice, and women have served powerfully in ministry, missions, education, and advocacy across the Episcopal districts of the AME Church and beyond. *Sankofa* reminds us that God uses women and men, young and old, ordinary people in extraordinary times. When we honor leaders like Deborah, we strengthen our global church, inspire our youth to walk boldly in their calling, and renew our shared responsibility to serve with faith, courage, and purpose.

Questions:

- ❖ Who are strong women of faith in your family, church, or community?
- ❖ How can you publicly or privately honor their influence?
- ❖ What gifts has God placed in you that could help someone else?

REAL TALK, FAITH WALK

Sometimes life hits you from every direction, and it feels like you are standing in the middle of a battle. You may not be leading a nation like Deborah, but as young people in the AME Church, you are facing real battles every single day. Peer pressure is loud. Online bullying is real. Academic stress can feel overwhelming. Family situations can weigh heavy on your heart. And standing up for what is right when everyone else is quiet can make you want to shrink back.

But being indomitable is not always loud or dramatic. Sometimes it is quiet strength. It is choosing not to join gossip. It is speaking up when someone is being bullied. It is standing firm in your faith even if others laugh. It is encouraging a friend who wants to give up. That is real strength. That is leadership.

Just like Barak hesitated, people around you may know what is right but feel afraid to stand alone. That is where you come in. You can stand beside them. You can say, “You’re not by yourself.” In the AME Church, we teach our youth to lead with courage and character. You can be the steady voice, the brave friend, the example others need.

When you listen to God through prayer, scripture, and wise guidance from your church family, something changes inside of you. Confidence grows. Fear begins to shrink. You start walking differently because you know God is with you. Emergencies are not just on battlefields — they can happen in your school, your friend group, even your community. God is still calling leaders in moments like that. The question is: Will you answer?

Questions:

- ❖ What real battles do you face today?
- ❖ How can you show courage in everyday situations?
- ❖ How does listening to God help you make brave choices?

SUMMARY

Israel made some poor choices, and those choices led them into a difficult season of oppression. They felt stuck, overwhelmed, and outmatched. But when they cried out to God, He did not turn away from them. He answered by raising up Deborah — a faithful and courageous leader who trusted him fully.

Deborah shows our young people that knowing God gives you direction when life feels confusing. Loving God builds courage and strong character on the inside. Serving God means faith is not just something you talk about — it is something you live out. She stepped up during a national crisis because she believed what God said more than what she saw.

Your battles today may not involve iron chariots, but they can still feel heavy and impossible — pressure at school, peer influence, family challenges, or self-doubt. When you pray, listen for God's voice, and move in faith, you can become a faithful witness right where you are. God is still raising up leaders. God is still delivering his people. And he is still calling young people to stand up, step forward, and serve with boldness.

Questions:

- ❖ How did Deborah show trust in God?
- ❖ What is one hard situation where you need God's direction?
- ❖ How can you step up and serve this week?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Take some time this week to really think about how you can show leadership in real life — not just talk about it. Leadership does not always mean being in front of a crowd. Sometimes it simply means being the one who chooses to do what is right.

You can encourage someone who seems discouraged. You can pause and pray before making a tough decision instead of reacting out of emotion. You can stand up for what is right, even if you are the only one doing it. You can volunteer at church, help in your community, or step up where you see a need. That is leadership.

Let your faith show. Post something that reflects courage and confidence in God — a scripture, a short testimony, or even a quote that reminds others to stay strong. Use hashtags like:

#IndomitableFaith

#DeborahLeadership

#FaithfulWitness

#CalledToLead

#AMEYouth



Before the prayer, scan the QR code and listen to “I Need You to Survive” by Hezekiah Walker. It reminds youth that we are all there for one another and understanding we are stronger together.

***Prayer:** Dear Lord, when we find ourselves in trouble because of fear, poor choices, or overwhelming situations, remind us to call on you. Give us courage like Deborah. Help us to listen carefully, act boldly, and serve faithfully. Empower us to be leaders in our homes, schools, churches, and communities. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.*

Hannah, a Godly Mother

LESSON SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 1:1-28; 2:1-11, 18-19; 3:1-18

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 1:9-20, 25 to (starting at “and they brought the child to Eli”)

KEY VERSE: In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, “I have asked him of the Lord.” 1 Samuel 1:20

WORDS TO KNOW

DECREES – Official orders or truths from God that are dependable and trustworthy.

PRECEPTS – Rules or guidelines that help us know what is right and just in everyday life.

FEAR (OF THE LORD) – A deep respect, awe, and reverence for God, not fear like being scared.

ORDINANCES – God’s rulings or judgments; they are fair, true, and completely right.

TRANSGRESSIONS – Serious wrongdoings or rebellion against God’s ways.

INSOLENT (OR PROUD THOUGHTS) – Arrogant or proud thoughts or behaviors.

SACRED WRITINGS – God’s inspired Word passed down through generations.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: 1 SAMUEL 1:9-20, 25B

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

- 9 After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the Lord. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorway of the temple of the Lord.
- 10 She was deeply distressed and prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly.
- 11 She made this vow: “O Lord of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head.”
- 12 As she continued praying before the Lord, Eli observed her mouth.
- 13 Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk.
- 14 So Eli said to her, “How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine.”
- 15 But Hannah answered, “No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord.
- 16 Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time.”
- 17 Then Eli answered, “Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him.”
- 18 And she said, “Let your servant find favor in your sight.” Then the woman went her way and ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer.
- 19 They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the Lord; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her.
- 20 In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, “I have asked him of the Lord.”

25^B...and (they) brought the child to Eli.

INTRODUCTION

Waiting is not easy. Waiting for answers. Waiting for change. Waiting on something you have prayed about again and again. After a while, waiting can make you feel forgotten, overlooked, or even invisible. And for our young people, sometimes the hardest part of waiting is the quiet fear that your dreams and hopes may never happen.

Hannah understood that kind of waiting. She longed for a child, and year after year she remained without one. She was misunderstood. She was talked about. She was heartbroken. But she did not let her pain push her away from God. She took her hurt, her hope, and her tears straight to him.

Today's lesson will show us that hopeful waiting is not weakness — it is faith in action. It will remind us that even when the answer has not arrived yet, God is still working, still listening, and still faithful to his promises.

BIBLE STORY

Knowing God Through Scripture

Hannah went to the temple and poured out her heart before the Lord. She did not pretend to be strong. She did not hide her tears. She prayed honestly and intensely.

Her prayer was not just about getting what she wanted. She made a promise that if God blessed her with a son, she would dedicate him back to the Lord. That is faith.

Hannah trusted God's decrees — his trustworthy truths. She respected his ordinances — his righteous ways. She approached God with reverence, with true fear of the Lord.

Even before she saw the answer, her countenance changed. She believed God had heard her.

Hopeful waiting becomes a faithful witness when we trust God before we see the outcome.

Loving God's Word

Sometimes we think that wanting something deeply means we don't have enough faith, but Hannah shows us that's not true. Your dreams, hopes, and prayers matter to God, and bringing them to him is an act of trust. Loving God includes loving the desires he puts in your heart and trusting him with the timing. Hannah didn't let anger, bitterness, or frustration take over her heart. She stayed humble. She stayed prayerful. She stayed hopeful. Loving God means believing his Word and trusting his timing, even when it feels slow.

The amazing thing is that God always honors faith that is patient and persistent. Hannah's story reminds us that even when we feel overlooked, forgotten, or like nothing is happening, God is still at work behind the scenes. He can take our prayers, our hopes, and our trust, and turn them into something greater than we imagined. For young people in the AME Church, this means your faith, your patience, and your dedication to God are never wasted — he sees you, he hears you, and he is preparing the way for your dreams to come alive.

Serving God Through Scripture

Committing to intentional prayer means we do not just pray when we are in trouble — we build a lifestyle of prayer. When God answered Hannah's prayer, she honored her promise. She brought Samuel to Eli and dedicated him back to the Lord. She understood that the blessing was not just for her enjoyment, but for God's purpose.

Serving God means we keep our commitments. It means prayer becomes a daily discipline, not just an emergency response. Prayer is part of our growth. It is how we stay connected, aligned, and strengthened.

Hannah did not stop serving once she received her blessing. She worshiped. She praised. She continued to trust God. That is the heart of a faithful witness — we pray consistently, we keep our word, and we give back to God what he has entrusted to us.

Questions:

- ❖ How did Hannah show faith while she was waiting?
- ❖ What is something you are currently praying and waiting for?
- ❖ How can prayer become a daily habit in your life?

SANKOFA

Sankofa is a powerful word from the Akan people of Ghana that means “go back and get it.” It reminds us that sometimes the key to moving forward is remembering what we already know. For young people in the AME Church, *Sankofa* is about going back and reclaiming the faith you were taught. It’s remembering the prayers your parents, grandparents, and church family prayed over you. It’s going back to the sacred writings when you feel discouraged, impatient, or unsure of your next step.

Hannah’s story shows us that waiting does not mean losing. When your prayers feel like they are taking too long to be answered, *Sankofa* tells us to go back and get our trust, go back and get our hope, go back and get that deep respect for God — the fear of the Lord that reminds us he is still in control.

As youth, it’s easy to feel pressure to rush, compare yourself to others, or give up. But *Sankofa* teaches you to pause and remember: God’s promises are dependable, his Word is trustworthy, and his timing is perfect. When you go back and get your foundation in God — the foundation built in the AME Church through teaching, mentorship, and example — you move forward stronger, wiser, and ready to live out the faith you carry inside.

Questions:

- ❖ What does “going back and getting it” mean to you in your faith life?
- ❖ How can remembering Hannah’s story help you stay patient and hopeful?
- ❖ Who are people in your life whose faithful waiting you can learn from?

REAL TALK, FAITH WALK

Waiting can be really tough, especially when it feels like everyone else is getting what you've been praying for. You might feel frustrated, impatient, or even invisible. But Hannah shows us that honest prayer and faithful waiting actually matter. You don't have to pretend you're okay when you're hurting. God already knows your heart, your dreams, and your struggles. Taking your feelings to him in prayer isn't a weakness, it's strength in action.

Faithful waiting also means keeping your promises to God. Hannah promised that if he answered her prayer, she would dedicate Samuel back to him. That takes courage, trust, and commitment. When we follow through on God's calling, we honor him and grow in faith. Even when it feels like nothing is happening, your prayers are being heard. Your patience is being shaped. Your hope is strengthened. You may not see the answer yet, but God is at work behind the scenes just like he was with Hannah.

You can practice this today by praying honestly about your deepest desires, journaling or sharing your hopes with someone you trust, and serving someone else while you wait — encouragement is powerful. Remember, waiting isn't sitting and doing nothing. Waiting is trusting, hoping, praying, and growing. And as young people in the AME Church, the lessons you learn while you wait today will prepare you to lead, serve, and shine tomorrow.

Questions:

- ❖ How can you pray honestly about your hopes and struggles like Hannah did?
- ❖ Why is it important to keep promises you make to God?
- ❖ What is one way you can serve or encourage someone while you wait for your own answer?

SUMMARY

Hannah teaches us that waiting doesn't mean God is absent — it means he's working in ways we can't yet see. Knowing God is trusting his promises, even when answers are delayed. Loving

God is placing our deepest desires in his hands. Serving God is committing to prayer and keeping the promises we make to him. In due time, God answered Hannah, and he will move in our lives too. Hopeful waiting isn't passive — it's powerful. It's faith in motion.

Questions:

- ❖ What does Hannah's story teach about trusting God while you wait?
- ❖ How can you show love for God through your hopes and prayers?
- ❖ What is one way you can actively serve God while you wait for an answer?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Take a moment to briefly discuss what you can post on social media that reminds you of waiting on God. Post a song, a Bible verse, or your own words. Use the hashtags

#FaithInAction	#HannahsFaith	#PrayerWorks
#WaitingOnGod	#YouthInFaith	#StandFirmInFaith
#AMEYouth	#GospelInspiration	
#TrustHisTiming	#HopefulWaiting	

Tag at least two friends who encourage you in your walk with God.



Before the closing prayer, scan the QR code and listen to “Wait on You” by Elevation Worship @ Maverick City, a song that reminds us to trust God's timing and keep faith while we wait.

Prayer: *Dear God, thank you for teaching us that waiting shows faith. Help us trust your timing, pray honestly, and keep our promises to you. Give us courage to stay hopeful, serve others, and shine your light every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Jonathan and David, a Noble Friendship

LESSON SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-42; 2 Samuel 1:17-27; 21:7

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:16-17, 32-34, 42; 2 Samuel 1:26-27; 21:7

KEY VERSE: Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, since both of us have sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘The Lord shall be between me and you and between my descendants and your descendants, forever.’” 1 Samuel 20:42

WORDS TO KNOW

HESED – A Hebrew word describing God’s covenant love, loyalty, mercy, and generosity toward God’s people *(see Exodus 34:6–7)*.

COVENANT – A sacred promise or binding agreement made before God.

LOYALTY – Faithfulness and commitment, even when it is difficult.

DESCENDANTS – Future generations or family members who come after us.

ANOINTED – The one chosen and set apart by God for a special purpose.

LAMENTATION – A song or poem expressing deep sorrow or grief.

*FOCUS SCRIPTURE: 1 SAMUEL 18:1-4; 20:16-17, 32-34, 42;
2 SAMUEL 1:26-27; 21:7*

- 1 When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.
- 2 Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house.
- 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul.
- 4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing and gave it to David and his armor and even his sword and his bow and his belt.
-
- 16 Thus Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the Lord seek out the enemies of David."
- 17 Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own life.
-
- 32 Then Jonathan answered his father Saul, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?"
- 33 But Saul threw his spear at him to strike him, so Jonathan knew that it was the decision of his father to put David to death.
- 34 Jonathan sprang up from the table in fierce anger and ate no food on the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David and because his father had disgraced him.
-
- 42 Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, since both of us have sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord shall be between me and you and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'" He got up and left, and Jonathan went into the city.
-
- 26 "Jonathan lies slain upon your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.
- 27 How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"
-
- 7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Saul's son Jonathan, because of the oath of the Lord that was between them, between David and Jonathan son of Saul.

INTRODUCTION

Friendship can be a beautiful thing, but it can also be complicated. In today's world, you may have hundreds of followers online and still feel alone. Some friendships are based on convenience, popularity, or what someone can do for you. But real friendship—the kind that reflects God's love—goes deeper.

In this lesson, we explore the powerful bond between David and Jonathan. Their relationship teaches us about covenant love, loyalty, and sacrifice. Their friendship was not built on jealousy or competition, even though David would one day take the throne that could have belonged to Jonathan. Instead of allowing insecurity to take over, Jonathan chose love. That kind of love reflects the *hesed* of God.

God calls us to friendships that reflect divine loyalty and care. When we know God, we begin to understand how to love others with integrity and faithfulness.

BIBLE STORY

Knowing God Through Covenant Friendship

In 1 Samuel 18:1–4, Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul. That's deep. Jonathan was King Saul's son—the next in line for the throne. From a teenager's point of view, it would have been easy for him to feel jealous or threatened by David's popularity. But Jonathan knew God. He recognized that God had a special purpose for David. Instead of competing, he chose to support him.

When you truly know God, you understand that what God has for someone else doesn't take away from what he has for you. Jonathan giving David his robe and armor—symbols of royalty—wasn't weakness. It was trust. He trusted God's plan more than his own position. Knowing God helps you celebrate your friends instead of competing behind the scenes.

Loving God Through Loyal Actions

In 1 Samuel 20, Jonathan proves his love isn't just talk. He protects David from Saul's anger and risks his own safety to warn him. That's real loyalty. Loving God means loving people the way he does—faithfully and courageously. When Jonathan tells David, "Go in peace," he reminds him that the Lord stands between them forever. Their friendship wasn't built on feelings, vibes, or convenience. It was built on God.

As teenagers, it's easy to form friendships around popularity, sports, classes, or social media. But friendships rooted in God are different. They're built on prayer, honesty, and trust. Loving God shows up in how you treat your friends when things get hard.

Serving God Through Covenant Faithfulness

Later, when Jonathan dies (2 Samuel 1:26–27), David grieves deeply and publicly honors his friend. But he doesn't stop there. In 2 Samuel 21:7, he protects Jonathan's son because of the covenant they made. That's serving God through loyalty. Serving God isn't just singing in the choir or volunteering at church. It's keeping your word, showing up, and protecting or uplifting others even when it costs you something. Covenant love doesn't expire when circumstances change.

This story teaches us that true friendship reflects God's covenant love. When we know God, we trust his plan. When we love God, we love others with loyalty. When we serve God, we keep our promises and protect the people he places in our lives. That is real friendship—faithful, sacrificial, and rooted in righteousness.

Questions:

- ❖ How does knowing God help you avoid jealousy or competition in your friendships? Explain.
- ❖ What are some practical ways you can show loyal love to a friend when things get difficult?
- ❖ How can keeping your promises and protecting others be a way of serving God in your everyday life as a teenager?

SANKOFA

The Akan word *Sankofa* means “go back and get it.” When we look back at David and Jonathan, we retrieve an example of loyal love that our culture desperately needs. In a time when friendships can be canceled with a click, we are reminded to return to covenant values.

The witness of the African Methodist Episcopal Church calls us into connection not just locally but globally. Loyalty within our congregations, districts, and Episcopal communities reflects *hesed*. We are reminded that covenant love bridges divisions—across culture, race, language, and geography.

Just as David protected Jonathan’s family, we are called to protect and uplift one another in the body of Christ. *Sankofa* reminds us to retrieve the sacred values of loyalty, gratitude, and faithfulness.

Questions:

- ❖ How can the church model loyal love in today’s divided world?
- ❖ What does it look like to keep a promise even when it costs you something?
- ❖ How can we practice covenant love in our families and communities?

REAL TALK, FAITH WALK

Not every friendship is healthy. Some people cheer for you in public but compete with you in private. Others disappear when things get hard. David and Jonathan show us what real support looks like.

Real friends celebrate your calling, even if it looks different from theirs. Jonathan knew David would be king, and he supported him anyway. That takes maturity. That takes security in God.

There will be times when standing by a friend could cost you popularity. You might have to speak up when someone is being talked about or treated unfairly. Covenant friendship means doing what is right, not what is easy.

Take a look at your circle. Are you the kind of friend who practices *hesed*—loyalty, kindness, and faithfulness? Are you trustworthy? Walking with God means letting him shape you into the kind of friend anyone would be lucky to have. That includes growth, accountability, and grace.

Questions:

- ❖ How does knowing God help you avoid jealousy or competition in your friendships? Explain.
- ❖ What are some practical ways you can show loyal love to a friend when things get difficult?
- ❖ How can keeping your promises and protecting others be a way of serving God in your everyday life as a teenager?

SUMMARY

David and Jonathan teach us that friendship is sacred when it is rooted in God. Their covenant reflected *hesed*—a steadfast love that does not fall apart under pressure. Their bond was not based on popularity, status, or what they could gain from one another. It was grounded in trust, loyalty, and faith in God’s plan. In a world that often promotes self-interest, clout, and competition, this lesson reminds us that loyalty still matters. Covenant love requires courage, sacrifice, and faith. It celebrates others instead of competing with them. It keeps promises. It protects relationships. Most importantly, it reflects the faithful love God shows us every day. When we know God, we learn to trust his plan. When we love God, we love our friends with honesty and loyalty. When we serve God, we show up, stand up, and keep our word. That is the kind of friendship that lasts.

Questions:

- ❖ Do you believe the Bible can guide your choices or goals? Explain.
- ❖ How can reading the Bible strengthen you when friendships become challenging?
- ❖ Who is someone in your life who has taught you about loyalty by the way they serve God?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Take a moment to discuss what you can post on social media that reflects loyal love and God's Word. Post a song about friendship, a Bible verse about love, or your own encouraging words.

Use hashtags like:

#CoveredByTheWord

#FaithfulFriends

#ScriptureStrong

#LoyalLove

#BibleInMyBag

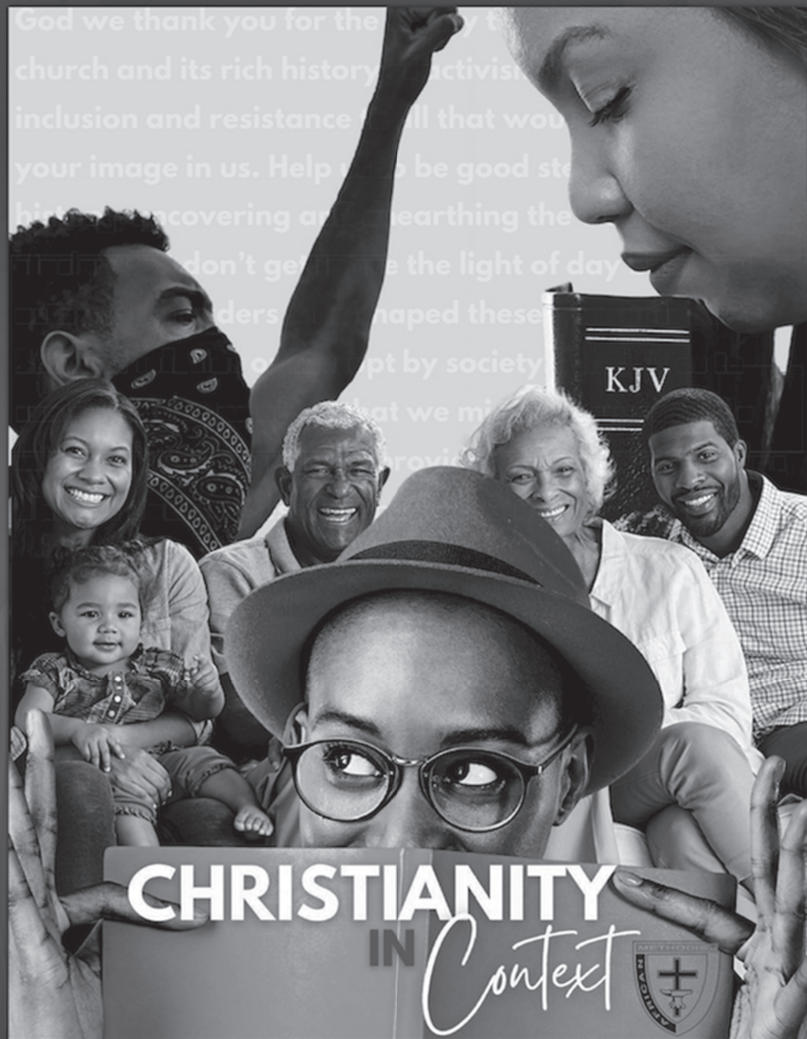
Tag at least two friends who demonstrate loyalty in your life.

Before the prayer, scan the QR code and listen to "Friend of God" by Israel Houghton.



***Prayer:** Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of loyal friendship. Teach us to love others the way you love us—with courage, faithfulness, and grace. Help us to be trustworthy friends who protect, uplift, and encourage one another. Guide us as we continue to know you, love you, and serve you in our relationships. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*

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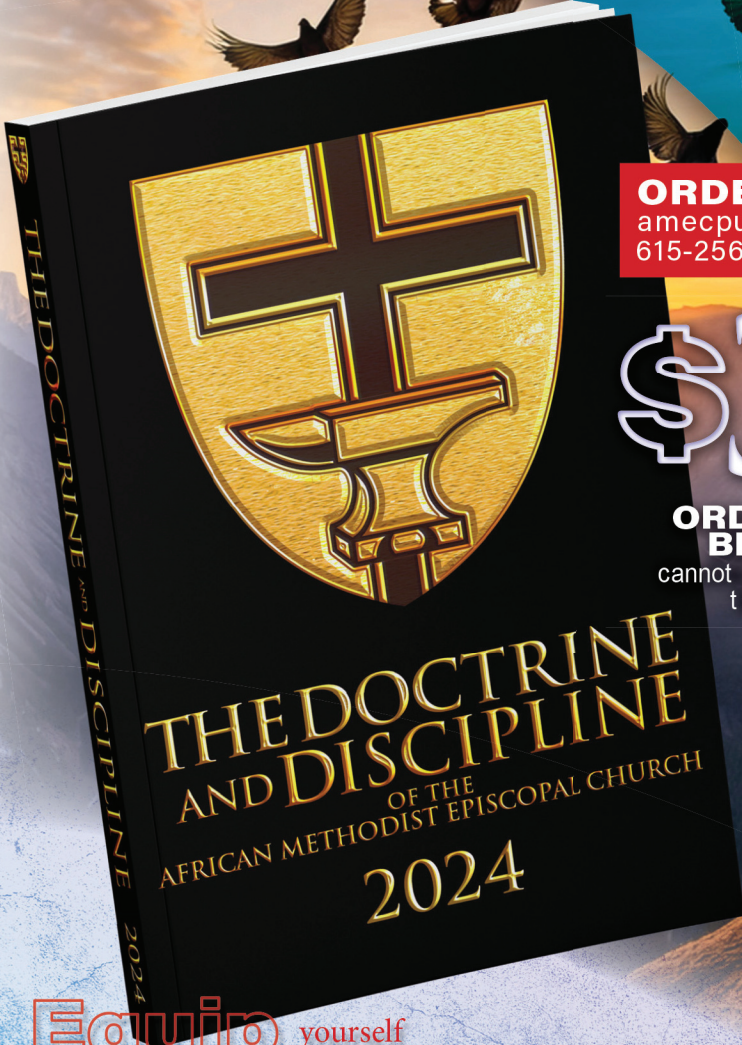
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