

*Church of God
International*

A person's legs and feet in black sneakers are visible at the top, walking on a dark, wet surface. A bright orange and yellow flame trail follows the path of the feet, extending down the center of the image.

IGNITE THE FLAME WITHIN

**NEVER LET THE FIRE IN YOUR HEART GO OUT. KEEP IT ALIVE.
SERVE THE LORD. - ROMANS 12:11 *NIRV***
Feast of Tabernacles Teen Lesson Booklet

Why We Keep These Days

Lesson 1

Memory Verse

¹⁶ And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷ And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. -

Zechariah 14:16-17



Are These Days Only for the Jews?

Sometimes people who don't know about God's Holy Days, become confused when you tell them that you are going to be gone for eight days. Teachers may make it difficult for their students to take off from school. Companies may try to threaten employees if they leave for the Feast. And others may ask you if you are Jewish because there is a misconception that God's Holy Days are only for the Jews. It can be rather troublesome when we decide to observe God's annual Holy Days, but there are so many benefits that outweigh the negatives.

The truth is, God did not create His Festivals for only the Jews. God already had His planned, appointed times during creation. The Bible states that on the fourth day of the week God created the sun, moon, and stars to mark the times and the seasons (Gen 1:14). The Hebrew word for seasons is "moed", which means "appointment, that is, a fixed time or season; specifically a festival...by implication, an assembly" (*Strong's H4150*). It is the same word for

“feasts” in Leviticus 23 when God gives Moses the thorough instructions regarding His Holy Days. This word is used over two hundred times in the Old Testament; whenever it states congregation, feasts, or assembly it is most likely this Hebrew word, “moed”. Therefore, just like the Sabbath was established at creation, God established His Holy Days during creation.



We also know from our Bible that God commanded all of Israel to keep His Holy Days. He also commanded anyone that wanted to be part of Israel, even a foreigner, to keep His Holy Days (Exodus 12:19). These set apart Days are called Feasts of the Lord” (Leviticus 23:2), not the Feasts of Israel and not Feasts of Judah. These are the Lord’s Feast days.

Why do you think they have now become known as only Jewish Festivals?

Why Keep Them Now?

Future Feasts

Now some people may say, that was then, but why do you keep them now? The Bible says that they are an everlasting covenant for all generations (Ex 12:14, Lev 23:21,31,41). Let’s review our memory scripture. The prophet Zechariah is speaking of future Feasts when Jesus is the King of the world. “And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zech 14:16). It also has a warning for those who do not come to keep God’s Feast - they will not receive rain (Zech 14:17). So, if the Feasts are going to be important in the millennium, don’t you think they are important today?

Jesus’ Words and Example

Some may also say that Jesus did away with the Holy Days. This is not true. Let us look at what Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-19 (NASB):



¹⁷ “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. ¹⁹ Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

What is a jot and tittle? A jot is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and we find a more complete answer at the following:

According to <https://www.gotquestions.org/jot-tittle.html> : “Jot is related to our modern English word *iota*, meaning “a very small amount.” They also state that a “tittle is even smaller than a jot. A tittle is a letter extension, a pen stroke that can differentiate one Hebrew letter from another.” A tittle is like the dot over our English letter “i” and “j.”

So Jesus is stating that not one little pen stroke is going to be removed from the law until heaven and earth disappear. We know that heaven and earth have yet to disappear, and therefore He did not come to do away with God’s Holy Days.

Jesus also kept the Feast. In John chapter 7, the Feast of Tabernacles has started. Now, at first Jesus just sends His disciples (vs 8), but after a while, he also went to the Feast in secret (vs 10). He ends up teaching in the middle of the Feast in the Temple (vs 14), and His teachings confound the Jews (vs 15). Then on the Last Great Day Jesus teaches about the Holy Spirit, John 7:37-39:

³⁷ On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” ³⁹But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

So we can see from these scriptures that Jesus was there for the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

The Apostles



The apostles themselves never taught that we did not have to keep the Holy Days anymore. In fact, they observed them also. A few can be found in Luke 2:42; John 5:1; Matt 26:17; John 7:2, 10, and 14. Even Paul after the resurrection of Christ kept God's appointed times, (some references are: Acts 18:21 **side note: some modern translations keeps out the part where Paul states "I must by all means keep this feast that comes in Jerusalem; 1 Cor 5:8; Col 2:16).**

- If these days are not valid, why can't we find one scripture where someone teaches that we do not have to observe them anymore?
- Don't you think that if God did not want us to keep His Holy days and remember these are the Feasts of the Lord, He would have made it clear somewhere in the Bible?

The Light Within God's Holy Days

The truth is, these days are not burdens. They are moments of light in world filled with sin and darkness. They all point to our Messiah. Passover reminds us of His great sacrifice for us, so that we can have eternal life. Unleavened Bread reminds us to remove sin out of our lives.



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Pentecost reminds us of the harvest time of God's first fruits and a memorial of the giving of the Holy Spirit to His people. Trumpets points us to Jesus' return. Day of Atonement is the day that Satan will be locked away, thus removing sin from the earth. Feast of Tabernacles is to remind us of the thousand years of Jesus reign on the earth when all things will be renewed, restored, and cleansed, and then the last Holy Day is the Eighth Day that is joined with the Feast of Tabernacles. This Eighth Day is a foreshadow of new beginnings, when Satan is removed forever and the world is perfect.

God's Holy Days tell His story of redemption to a New Heaven and New Earth. They edify us and give us hope throughout the year. They remind us why we keep on walking the path of faith. They give us strength to endure.

- Do you realize when you observe these days you are showing faith and obedience to God, and that you are honoring Him by doing so?
- Do you realize that your observance of these days can be a light to others that do not know about these days?

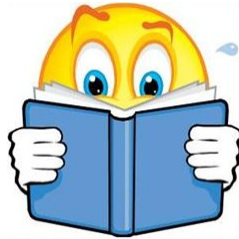
You may not realize it, but your willingness to keep these days is a testimony of your faith. Even though you all are teens, it does not mean that God can't use you to be lights. During the next few days we are going to learn how God used teens and young adults in the Bible.

These youths faced many obstacles like you face today and more. They have courage, faith, loyalty, and trust in God. They saved many people and stood up for what was right, even when faced with death, despite the fact that they were young. God does not judge people based on their age and looks. He judges us by our hearts, and He will use who He chooses even if the person is seventeen or thirty. Remember, you are never too young for the light within to be ignited.

Review

- ✧ What is your memory verse?
- ✧ Are these days only for the Jews?
- ✧ Are these days important to you?
- ✧ Where they kept in the New Testament?
- ✧ Are they burdens?

Read the Manual



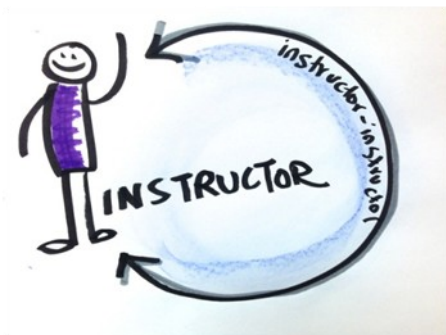
Lesson 2

Memory Verses

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.- John 1:1-5

The Incorrect Instructor

(Disclaimer: This short interactive play is for humor and teaching purposes. Please do not attempt to do anything this instructor teaches.)



Instructor: Hello, class. I hope you all are as excited about this driving course as I am. I know that many of you can't wait to get yourself on the road. I am your instructor (Mr. or Mrs.) Naïve.

So let us start off. What is the first thing you do when you get into your vehicle?

Student1: Put on our seatbelt?

Instructor: No, you shut the door. *Instructor laughs at his own joke.* Okay, enough silliness. Okay, so let us just jump forward. You are in the car driving down a road and you come to an intersection with a stop sign. What do you do if no one else is at the stop sign except you?

Student 2: You make a complete stop anyway and look both ways.

Instructor: No, you just slow down, look both ways and keep going. It makes no sense to lose time in our busy world by making meaningless stops when there's no need.

Student 3: Are you sure, instructor?

Instructor: Quite certainly. I have been driving for thirty years. I think I know what I am talking about.

Instructor: Now what do you do if a light is yellow?

Student 1: You slow down because the light is about to be red.

Instructor: No, you speed up, so you don't get caught at the red light.

Students now start getting a little nervous. They are unsure if the instructor is teaching them the right things.

Instructor: I have another question. Do you have to use your blinker even if no one is behind you?

Student 3: I assume that you are going to tell us no?

Instructor: Finally, a student answers correctly

All of a sudden a young woman enters the classroom. She is flushed and carrying a book. She goes up to the instructor.

Instructor: What a surprise - this is my office assistant, Ms. Insightful, class. What brings you here today?

Ms. Insightful: I was cleaning your desk, Mr. Naïve, and I found stuck away under a pile of paperwork this driver's manual. I glanced over it and realized all of your teachings are incorrect. You must read this first before you proceed teaching these students.

Ms. Insightful hands the instructor the book. He skims through it, and realizes to his shock that she is right. He humbly looks at his students and clears his throat.

Instructor: Class it seems that my assistant is correct. I apologize for teaching you the wrong instructions. I must proceed to read this entire book before I teach you all anything more.

King Josiah

This little “play” may seem silly. We all know that an instructor would not teach without first reading the manual. In fact, you all should know by now that it is foolish to take tests without reading the book, to build something without reading the instructions, etc... However, do you know what the most important book of instruction ever printed is? Do you read it often?

Years ago there was an entire nation that did not know nor had ever read God’s instructions. Now they did not have the Bible like we have it today, but they did have the book of the law that was written by Moses. This consists of our Genesis to Deuteronomy called the Tanakh. Now for a quick background, after King Solomon the Kingdom of Israel split into two kingdoms. One became known as the Kingdom of Israel consisting of ten tribes, and the other became known as the Kingdom of Judah consisting of mostly the tribes of Judah and Levi.

The Kingdom of Israel never had any righteous kings. They fell away from serving God very quickly. But the Kingdom of Judah had a few righteous kings, and today we are going to focus on one of them, King Josiah.

Josiah became king at eight years old (2 Kings 22:1). That is a really young king. His father Ammon only reigned two years, and he was really wicked (2 Kings 22:19, 20); Josiah’s grandfather, Manasseh, reigned fifty-five years (2 Kings 21:1). He was also very wicked (2 Kings 21:2). The sad thing is that Manasseh’s father was Hezekiah, who was mostly a righteous king. However, Manasseh didn’t care. His first order of business was to rebuild all the pagan altars that were destroyed and to ignore God’s law. Therefore for fifty-seven years the Kingdom of Judah had forgotten God’s law and His ways.

This is the kingdom that Josiah inherited at eight. Now he probably had advisors that “ruled” until he came of age, but by the time he was twenty-six, he was definitely the man in charge. Twenty-six is still quite young, but just because Josiah was young did not mean he wasn’t wise.



Josiah ordered Hilkiah the high priest to restore and rebuild the Temple (2 Kings 22: 4-6). In the process of fixing the Temple, Hilkiah found the Book of the Law (2 Kings 22:8). Making a long story short, Hilkiah gave the book to the scribe Shaphan who then made sure King Josiah got the book. King Josiah read the book, and realized that they have all been living in sin. He realized that his fathers did not obey God’s words. Josiah humbled himself before God and asked

the Lord for instructions. It was already too late for the tribe of Judah because they had acted very badly; but, God put off punishing Judah during Josiah's reign because of his humility. Josiah then make a covenant with God "to follow the Lord and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all *his* heart and all *his* soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book" (2 Kings 23:3). He also required all of Judah to partake in this covenant.

Josiah is known as one of the most righteous kings of Judah. The Bible states that "there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did *any* arise like him" (2 Kings 23: 25).

All of this transformation came because he read the correct "instruction manual," and then proceeded to live his life according to the manual's words.

Application

1. How important to you is it to read instructions?
2. Has there ever been a time that you skipped the instructions? What happened?

The Bible is God's word. In order for us to know how to live our lives we have to know His word. This book is our most important instruction manual. If we do not know what is in it, we will look as naïve as the driving instructor. We are very fortunate to live in a time where God's instructions are at our finger tips. Back in Josiah's time the Book of the Law was on long sheets of papyrus, and only the priests had easy access to it. The people did not have their own copies to read from. Even a few hundred years ago people did not have their own copies of the Bible. In fact, for the longest time, it was forbidden to translate a Bible from Latin to a common spoken tongue.

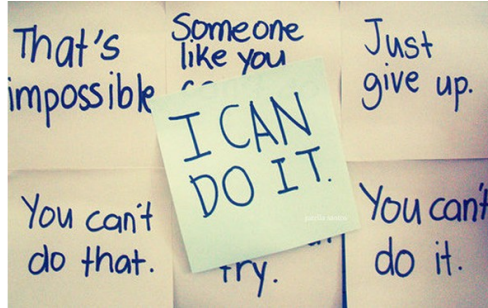


Today we are blessed to be able to read the Bible in our own languages. We can put them on our smart phones, allowing us to have access to God's word all the time. Do not take this for granted. You may think because you are still young that it isn't that important to know the Bible. That thought is not true. God can use anyone for His purpose regardless of age, and in order for Him to use us we must know His truths, His ways, His rules, and His words, which are found in the Bible. So do not neglect to read your instruction manual.

Review

- ✧ Reread the memory verses. Remember, Jesus is the word, and He is light. So, if you want to brighten your life, read His word.
- ✧ How important is it to read instructions?
- ✧ What can you learn about King Josiah?

Do Not Give Up



Lesson 3

Memory Verse

But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. - Genesis 50:20

God Gave Me a Dream

Let us discuss a hypothetical situation. Here is the backdrop; one night God gives you a dream. You are certain the dream is from God because it is different than any dream you have ever had. Plus, you wake with an intense peace inside you.

In the dream you stand before a great audience. Your family and friends are before you. They are applauding. You realize that a microphone is in front of you. You are certain you just gave some grand speech, but you have no recollection of what you said. You wake feeling peace and then excitement. You really believe that sometime in the future you are going to do something great. It may not be a speech because that may have been just a metaphor, but you know that something great is going to happen.

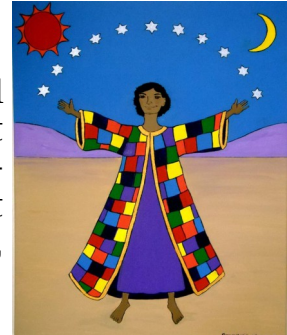
When you tell your family your parents laugh at you and your siblings get mad because they think you are being a braggart. Then years pass and nothing seems to come from the dream. In fact, the opposite happens. You graduate from high school okay, but can't get into any good colleges. To make matters worse your siblings mockingly ask you when you are going to be famous.

Would you lose heart? Would you decide to forget about the dream even though you really believe God gave you the dream? What if, unknown to you,

the dream will be fulfilled, but it takes years, perhaps ten or twenty, before there is a fulfillment of the dream? Do you think you could wait that long?

The True Story

Well, something even more dramatic than our hypothetical story did happen to a young teenager. You all have most likely heard the story of Joseph, but have you ever put yourself in his shoes and really considered what he went through? Let us reexamine his story and ask ourselves, “What would I have done if this happened to me?”



Joseph received dreams from God at age seventeen (Genesis 37:2). He didn't ask for this to happen. He wasn't ambitious as far as we know, but he received two grand dreams from God. They have the same theme and point. God usually works with more than one witness to verify that the message is from Him.

Before we get to the dreams, let us look at a short back story. Joseph had eleven other brothers. Ten were older than him and one was younger. The ten older brothers were extremely jealous of Joseph because their father, Jacob, loved Joseph more than them, and it was obvious.

So, here was Joseph at seventeen with ten brothers that really did not like him. And to make matters worse, he tattles on his brothers. We don't know what they did, but they did not appreciate getting told on (Genesis 37:2). After the tattling Joseph presented Jacob with an expensive coat of many colors (Genesis 37:3). This just added fuel to the brothers' jealousy, and they begin to hate him, could not even talk to him nicely (Genesis 37:4).



It was after all of this that God gave Joseph his first dream. The short version of the dream was that Joseph and his brothers were out in the fields gathering sheaves of grain. Joseph's sheaf was the largest, and all the other sheaves circled around his and bowed to it (Genesis 37:5-7). Joseph shared the dream with his family. Needless to say, it only increased his brothers' hatred towards him. Joseph had another dream in which the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed to him (Genesis 37:9). How do you think they reacted to this one? Even Jacob was a little displeased with this dream (Genesis 37:10).

Here we have Joseph having dreams that he is going to rule over his family. These aren't dreams that jealous brothers want to hear. In fact, they hated him so much that at first some plotted to kill him, but then they decided to

sell him into slavery instead. Obviously, going into slavery was not what Joseph would have predicted would happen to him after such God given dreams.

Do you think Joseph gave up on his dreams? What would you do?

What is awe inspiring is that there is no reference of Joseph getting angry with God. Indeed, he decided to not give up, but instead worked hard for his new master as a slave. He is a good example of the scripture that points out that whatever job that is put before us, we must work with all our hearts as working for the Lord (Colossians 3:23).

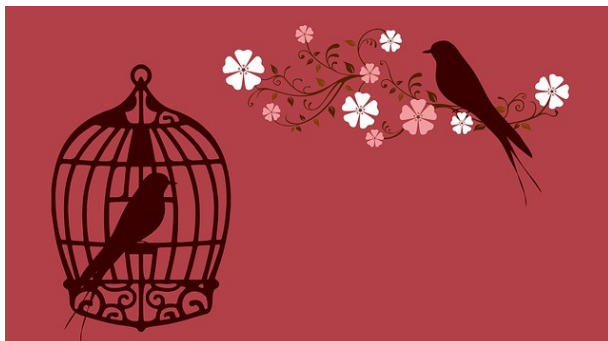
Facing Temptation

Here was Joseph, a teenager, far from home, given a dream, now in slavery, working so hard that his master put him in charge of his entire property, and then another trial hit. The master's wife was attracted to Joseph. He knew her advances were wrong. He tried hard to avoid her, but she found him alone one day. She tried to seduce him and he fled. It brings to mind the scripture in First Corinthians 10:13, where we were told that we will not be tempted beyond what we were able to handle, and with the temptation God will provide a way of escape. Joseph had to run to get away from the temptation.



Unfortunately the master's wife was able to grab his garment. She then proceeded to falsely accuse him of attacking her. Joseph's master listened to his wife and has Joseph put in prison. Joseph went from slavery to prison all at a young age. But what may seem like a life of despair can eventually turn into a life of joy and hope.

From Prison to Glory



How would you feel at this point? Would you be angry? Would you give up on your dream?

The Bible doesn't tell us how old Joseph was at this point, but for the sake of telling a story, let's just guess that he probably worked at least a couple of

years as a slave. It would have taken some time for Joseph to learn everything and to do so well that Potiphar put him in charge. Joseph became Potiphar's second hand man. We can make an educated guess that Joseph was probably twenty to twenty-one. That would mean three to four years as a slave.

Once again Joseph took on his new position in life with gusto, and ended up being in charge of the prison, second to the warden (Genesis 39:22). The Bible makes it very clear that through all of this the Lord was with Joseph and blessed his labor (Genesis 39:23).

We all probably know what happens next. Pharaoh's baker and butler were imprisoned, and they have two separate dreams. Joseph correctly interpreted their dreams because God was with him. The butler's dream was a good one, and Joseph let him know that he would be restored to his position in three days (Genesis 40:13). What may have been missed, however, was what Joseph asked the butler to do for him.

"But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon" (Genesis 40:14-15).

Unfortunately for Joseph, though, the butler forgot Joseph for two full years (Genesis 40:23, 41:1).

How would you feel if you were Joseph now?

It was now at this time that Pharaoh had his two famous dreams. Joseph was thirty years old when Pharaoh sent for him to interpret his dreams. Thirteen years had passed since Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. We all know that Pharaoh's dreams foretell seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. Joseph was then put second in command, just under Pharaoh (Genesis 41:40).

Dream Fulfillment

The seven years of plenty had passed now and Joseph had diligently prepared food for all to survive the seven years of famine. This famine not only affected Egypt but all the land around (Genesis 41:54). Joseph's own family is affected by the famine, and Jacob had to send his ten sons to Egypt for food.

Joseph put his brothers through a lot of tests to see if they had learned anything from what they did to him. They did not recognize him, but he recognized them. It came to pass that all of them bowed to him, dream fulfilling the dream.



Joseph was thirty-nine at this time because the Bible informs us that it was two years into the famine (Genesis 45:6). After some time, and once Joseph saw that the older brothers had changed, Joseph revealed himself to them. He then did something profound. He forgave them, and told them “do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life” (Genesis 45:5). Later he even went further to say to his brothers

“you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive” (Genesis 50:20). What looked to be a life that was not to lead to a fulfilled dream actually led to his dream being fulfilled.

What We Can learn from Joseph

We may not receive a vision or dream directly from God, but we all have goals, hopes and dreams. Give these to God, and remember to always “trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

And learn from Joseph:

1. Willingness to work hard not matter what position you are in at the time.
2. Trust God, especially when it is very dark and looks as though things won't work out.
3. Just because you are teenagers doesn't mean that your dreams aren't important, but patience is required to reach them. Some dreams may take years, but don't give up - good things can come to those who wait.
4. Flee from temptations and resist the devil (James 4:7). Even as a teenager, God can give you the strength to walk or run away (1Corinthians 10:13).

5. Forgive those that wrong you, because you never know what good God can make out of it.

Review

- ⌘ What insight can you get from the memory verse?
- ⌘ What lessons inspire you from Joseph's story?

Facing Fears

Lesson 4

Memory Scripture

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. - Matthew 16:25

Peer Pressure

1. Have you ever encountered peer pressure?
2. How have you resisted peer pressure?
3. What are some times that you did give into peer pressure? How did it make you feel?



Well there were some teenagers that faced fierce peer pressure in the Bible. It is the time of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and in his third year of reigning he overtook Jerusalem (Daniel 1:1). He then proceeded to bring some of the Israelite children back to Babylon to serve in his palace (Daniel 1:3-4). Four of them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Scholars believe these boys would have been in their teenage years somewhere between fifteen and eighteen. They were trained in Babylon for three years to become servants of the king himself (Daniel 1:4-5).

Hopefully, you recognize the name Daniel, but you may not recognize the names: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They are better known by their Chaldean (Babylonian) names Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. The first test in peer pressure was when they first arrived in Babylon.

As part of their training they were all supposed to partake of the king's food and wine (Daniel 1:5), but the food was not within God's clean guidelines. Therefore, Daniel "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank" (Daniel 1:8). The three other teens obviously agree with Daniel because Daniel pro-

ceeds to request that all of them be given only vegetables to eat and water to drink. The chief of the eunuchs was very afraid because he really believed that they would become unhealthy, and he did not want to be killed for not feeding them well. Yet Daniel convinces him to let them try it out for ten days. After the ten days the teen boys look better than anyone else. (Daniel 1:11-15). God blessed them for standing up for what was right. Thus, for the next three years they did not eat of the king's food and wine.

After the three years all of the young men who had originally been chosen were brought before the king and examined. The four who had observed God's food laws were the best out of all the young men. In fact, they were all "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all" the king's realm (Daniel 1:20). So the king had them serve before him.



This first test of standing up to peer pressure may have been what gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego strength to face the hardest trial yet. Shortly after the young men became servants to the king, Nebuchadnezzar built a giant image of gold. He then proceeded to issue a command that all people who heard the "sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music...shall fall down and worship the god image" that the king had set up (Daniel 3:4). Those that did not worship would be burned in a fiery furnace (Daniel 3:5).

(Now, the Bible doesn't say where Daniel is during this time, but he definitely stays to true God throughout his life. You can read about the rest of his life in the Book of Daniel.)

Imagine you are young, anywhere between eighteen and twenty-one. You believe in the true God - not some golden image, but your king has just told you that you have to bow down to an image or die. What would you do? What if in your mind you said, "Well, God knows my heart. What could be the problem of pretending to worship for the sake of not losing my life?" Would this be correct?

Jesus says that those who seek to save their lives will lose it, but those who lose their lives for His sake will find it (Matthew 16:25). Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego proved Jesus' statement completely. They refused to bow before this image. They were brought to King Nebuchadnezzar who was extremely furious, and he asked them why they are not worshiping his god. He also asked them which god could deliver them from his hands (Daniel 3:15).

The young men boldly answered:



“O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” (Daniel 3:16-18).

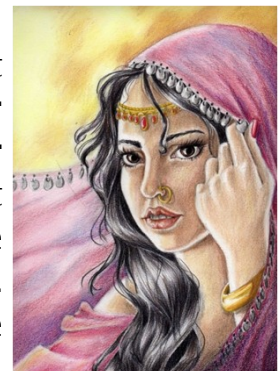
These young men knew God could deliver them if He wanted to - or He could choose not to. However, death was much better to them than forsaking their God. What strong faith they had!

You all probably know the end of the story. The young men were not only saved, but a fourth person appeared in the furnace. The three were able to walk out of the fire fully unscathed, and Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to bless their God, the only true God, and made a decree that no one could speak out against the young men's God (Daniel 3:26-29).

Have you ever had to face that kind of peer pressure? Probably not, but peer pressure is a common thing. Yet it can never be used to excuse ourselves from behaving correctly. It is our job to walk in righteousness, and when we do we can be an example for others. It is a way to let our light shine and help others to see. You never know which moment that you stand up against peer pressure might be the one for God uses to plant a seed in your peers.

Overcoming Fear

Another important person in the Bible, whom many may not realize was most likely quite young, is Esther. Back in her time girls were considered to be of marriageable age in their mid-teens. Different times and cultures have different norms. Though the Bible doesn't tell us her exact age, she was most likely under twenty years old, which is still young. The Bible never says how old she was. We do know that she had never been married.



Like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, Esther was an exile living in a foreign land. This was during the time of King Ahasuerus, also known as Xerxes I or Artaxerxes I, who was king of Persia. Her time is approximately a hundred or so years after Daniel. An interesting history fact is that Esther was raised by a relative named Mordecai. In the Bible we learn that Mordecai was the son of Jair. Jair was the son of Shimei. Shimei was the son of Kish, and

Kish was a Benjamite who was “carried away from Jerusalem with the captives who had been captured” by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon (Esther 1:5). Esther was brought up by someone whose great-grandfather was captured just like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego.

Esther, whose Jewish name was Hadassah, was raised by Mordecai, the nephew of her father, because she was an orphan. The Bible does not tell us what happened to her parents.

Esther lived in Persia, which was ruled by King Ahasuerus (or Xerxes, depending on the Bible version). Persia was a very large kingdom, spreading from India to Ethiopia (Esther 1:1). The king was already married, and he became really angry at his wife, Vashti, because she wouldn’t join him at a major 7 days long party he was hosting, so he banished her from the kingdom (Esther Chapter 1).

After a while the king regretted his rash decision and missed having a wife. He issued a decree for all eligible young ladies to come to his kingdom, so that he could pick a new queen.

Esther was taken to the king’s palace and placed in his harem, under the care of Hegai. After a year of beautification, Esther was presented to the king and found favor with him and all who saw her. She was chosen to become his queen. However, no one knew that she was a Jew because Mordecai had told her not to reveal where she came from (Esther 2: 10). Mordecai had a nemesis. His name was Haman, and Haman hated Mordecai because Mordecai wouldn’t bow to him (Esther 3:2-5). Haman then sought to kill Mordecai, and when he found out that Mordecai was a Jew, Haman decided to destroy all the Jews also (Esther 3:6).

So, here is Esther, an undisclosed Jew and the queen of Persia, finds herself and her people now being plotted against by one of her husband’s main servants. When Mordecai found out about Haman’s evil plan, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city to the “front of the king’s gate” (Esther 4:1-2). Esther heard of it, and at once sought out to find out what was going on. Mordecai then informed her of Haman’s plan and pressed her to do something. Esther explained to Mordecai why she could not do anything. She told him that no one could go to the inner court of the king

without being called. If they did they could be put to death, unless the king showed mercy by holding out his golden scepter (Esther 4:11). And Esther had not been called for thirty days to see the king. Esther was afraid. Could you blame her?

Mordecai then told her a hard truth, she must not believe that she could escape just because she was in the king's palace (Esther 4:13). He warned her that if she remained silent, the Jews would be delivered, but she would not. Who knows whether or not she was put in the kingdom "for such a time as this?" Mordecai asks her (Esther 4:14).

Esther was afraid, and it was understandable. She needed strength so she fasted for three days and three nights, and decreed that all the Jews in Susa to fast with her (Esther 4:15). She decided that after she fasted she would go to the king, and if she died, then so be it (Esther 4:16). Fasting and praying is a great way to seek God's wisdom and strength when facing a hard decision. We may not be able to fast for a full three days, but we can fast to seek His help.



The story ends with Esther receiving mercy from the king; the Jews were saved, and Haman was hanged on the very gallows that he had made for Mordecai. Esther faced her fears and with God's help she overcame them. She stood before a king without being summoned to help save her people and stop an evil.

Review

- ✧ What do you admire about Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego?
- ✧ What can you learn from them when facing peer pressure?
- ✧ What similarities do the four young men have with Esther?
- ✧ Have you ever been in a situation that you really believed God put you there to make a difference? What happened?
- ✧ What does the memory scripture mean to you?



Lesson 5

Memory Verse

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. - 1 Tim 4:12 (NIV)

You Are Not Too Young

You have learned about some young people that God used for His purpose. God does not look upon the age of a person. He looks upon the heart. He knows what someone can or cannot handle, and just because you are young does not mean God cannot use you for His purpose.

He wants teens that are strong in faith. He needs teens to be lights in the world. He desires teens to walk on the path of righteousness. How does one learn how to walk? David answers it pretty well:

"How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to Your word" (Psalm 119:9 NIV).

Get into God's word. God's instruction manual is the Bible. The only way you will know how God wants you to live is if you read His instructions. God's Word can guide you, inspire you, give you strength, heal you, etc... His word "is a lamp" for your feet "and a light" for your path (Psalm 119:105).

Read the memory scripture. Pay attention to the points that Paul is telling Timothy to live by. Now realize that this scripture is also speaking to you. Teenagers sometimes get a bad rap because of a few bad apples. Plus, adults can remember that it is usually during the teenage years that one becomes a wee bit rebellious. Since there is "nothing new under the sun," youth



were also looked down upon in the Bible times. And Paul is making a point of telling the youth what steps you have to take to make sure you do not give anyone cause to look down on you. Let's discuss and answer the following questions. (*Give them time to discuss*)

1. How can you set a Godly example with your words?
2. How can you set a Godly example by your actions?
3. How can you set a Godly example by how you love others?
4. How can you set a Godly example with your faith?
5. How can you set a Godly example in purity?

Power of Words

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." Proverbs 18:21

The tongue is a mighty weapon that can yield powerful words. God created the Heavens and Earth through his word. God spoke things into existence. He then created mankind in His image, thus, giving us the ability to "heal" or "destroy" by our words. We can't create things into existence like God, but our words still hold power.



Here are some contrasts (*emphasis mine*):

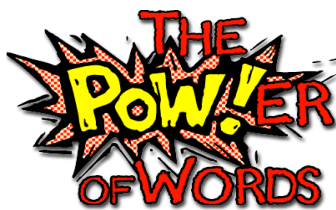
- ***Pleasant words*** are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones. Proverbs 16:24
- He who ***guards his mouth preserves his life***, but he who ***opens wide his lips shall have destruction***. Proverbs 13:3
- There is one whose ***rash words are like sword thrusts***, but ***the tongue of the wise brings healing***. Proverbs 12:18 ESV

- *A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1*

These are just a few of the many scriptures that teach how powerful words can be. Christ himself gives a bold warning, given He was speaking to the Scribes and Pharisees, but all scriptures are for our instruction (Romans 15:4).

“For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. ³⁶ But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. ³⁷ For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Matthew 12: 34b-37

All of us must take heed on what we say. Like James points out, our tongue maybe small, but even the smallest spark can set a whole forest on fire (James 3:5). So as Christian teenagers you must set an example by how you speak to others, about others, and even to yourself. Use words that edify others. It may just help ignite the spark within them or aid the spark to stay strong.



How important are words to you?

Our Actions

Have you ever heard the old statement “actions speak louder than words.” We just covered how powerful words can be, so this would mean our actions can say more than behind those words.

There is another teenager in the Bible who took bold tremendous actions. His name was David. David was the youngest of eight sons, and he was not old enough to be in Israel’s army. In fact, the Bible says that the three oldest sons were the only ones that followed Saul into battle (1 Samuel 17:13). According to Numbers 1:3, a man had to be at least twenty to be able to serve in the army, therefore, David must have been years younger than twenty, since only three of his brothers were in Israel’s army.



Imagine David around fifteen or sixteen facing the giant Goliath. He was the only one that had the courage to face this giant. None of the trained soldiers would stand before Goliath. David’s actions spoke loud and clear in Israel that day.

You may not have a physical giant to face, but temptations and trials will come your way. How you act when facing these things will give an example of your character. You can set a Godly example if you face

them like David, with faith, courage, and trust in God's power to help you overcome. Or you can set a worldly example if you throw a temper tantrum, get angry, attack others, give up, etc... Hopefully, your actions be the Godly way.

What are some small actions that you can do that help you to live out your faith?

Love

Love is the most important fruit and gift of the Spirit to have (1 Corinthians 13). You can speak edifying words all day, but if you do not have love, you have nothing. Your actions can be full of courage and appear always Godly, but if you do not have love, you have nothing.

Let's just cover some major characteristics of love:



- From 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: *Love is: patient, kind, not envious, not proud, not self-seeking, not easily angered, does not remember wrongs, does not delight in evil, loves the truth, protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres, and never fails.*
- *Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to receive anything back in return (Luke 6:35)*
- *Love does not harm its neighbor, therefore it fulfills the law (Romans 13:10)*
- *Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8)*
- *Love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God (1 John 4:7).*

Out of some of the traits for Love, which one is the hardest to do?

Be diligent to show love - especially to those who wrong you. It will ignite the hope that is within you, and will actually help heal you from the inside out.

Faith

Faith IS NOT KNOWING
WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS,
BUT KNOWING
who holds the future.

Living a life of faith requires one to let go of anxieties and fear. Truth be told, we cannot please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6). Faith trusts in the Lord, and trusts that He can do anything. Faith holds fast to the truth that nothing is impossible for God (Luke 1:37).

It is our faith in God the Father and Jesus Christ that can set us apart from the world. Through our faith, we know that this life is not all there is. That someday in the future the Kingdom of God will come. This faith helps to keep us strong when we face various trials.

Faith “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” and by it the people in the Bible gained a good testimony (Hebrews 11:1).

Have you ever had to stand out on faith? What happened?

The Bible is full of examples for you to read about and learn from. There is a chapter in the Bible that many title the “Faith Chapter.” It is Hebrews eleven. You should read it, and meditate on the people mentioned there. You then should go and read their stories in the Bible. This would be one good way to start a faith Bible study, and it can teach you how to live and walk in faith.

Have you ever had to walk in faith to go out not knowing the outcome but totally trusting God that things would work out? What happened?

Purity

The last characteristic that Paul told Timothy to make sure no one could fault him for not having purity. The definition of purity from dictionary.com is “the condition of or quality of being pure; freedom from anything that debases, contaminates, pollutes...freedom from guilt or evil; innocence.”



Following the above things, watching our words, having Godly actions, loving others, and having strong faith, will aid us in staying pure. The world is impure. It is very anti-God. From TV to movies, to music, to dress, etc... we can find endless examples of what is not pure. Therefore trying to keep one unstained by the world helps to keep you pure.

Remember that Jesus stated that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks”? He also states “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8 *ESV*). Keeping our hearts pure will not only keep our words pure, but will also allow us to see God one day.

God understands that we will make mistakes. Therefore, to purify yourselves, confess your sins to Him and repent. He can make you clean through His forgiveness.

Is it hard to be pure? What are some of your struggles that you have had to face?

Review

- ✧ You can serve God even as a teenager.
- ✧ Watch yourselves, so that you can set an example of God wherever you go.
- ✧ Read your Bible it can keep you pure.
- ✧ Reread the memory scripture