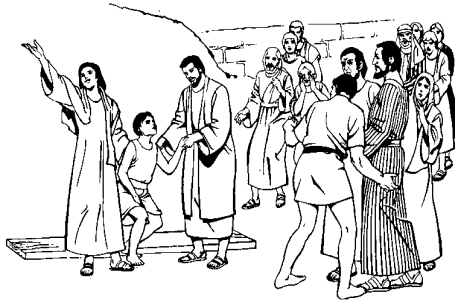


Bible Stories for Witness to Those  
Concerned about Their Fate after  
Death & Their Ancestors

Scripture is not the book of death, but of life, of everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord. It tells us, in oft-repeated and unmistakable terms, of the dreaded reality of death, but it proclaims to us still more loudly the wonderful power of the life which is in Christ Jesus.



“Then Jesus went up and touched the body of the dead person and those carrying it stood still. He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, get up!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk...”

*Adapted from Luke 7:14-15 NIV*

Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

*John 11:6 NIV*

## **The Death Stories from the Bible**

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These stories and accompanying study activities may be copied, adapted or translated as needed to instruct those who live in fear of death with the uncertainty of one's fate beyond the grave. This storying module is shared in the cooperative spirit of reaching the lost with the truth of God's Word about life eternal in Christ.

All stories are adapted from and Scriptures quoted from the New International Version Bible except as noted.

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## The Death from the Bible

Following are stories about dying and death which may be helpful when sharing with those listeners who have beliefs and fears about death that are either barriers or bridges to the presentation of the Gospel. The stories are listed chronologically as they appear in the Bible story and are given as a resource rather than a lesson set which must be strictly followed in any particular order.

The stories may be worked into a larger and more typical set of evangelism stories beginning with the core Old Testament stories and leading into the New Testament stories. The core evangelism stories deal with the several biblical truths generally covered when leading listeners to an understanding of their broken relationship with God due to sin and their need for faith in God's provision for a substitute sacrifice for sin and Savior in Christ Jesus. (the death substitute)

Some suggested discussion lead-ins are given for introducing each story and for a post-story discussion. There will be particular worldview issues among listeners which will influence the pre and post-story discussion times. So the discussion lead-ins given are resources suggestive of what might be used. As you prepare the story for your people reflect upon their beliefs and fears and adapt the discussion to fit their need, interest and understanding.

The need for this set of stories has existed for quite some time. Some of the stories have been used in typical evangelism story sets but not usually centered around this theme. The most recent encouragement for collecting and sharing these stories came from a request during one of the Chronological Bible Storying classes at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Others working in various Asian countries have asked about death stories where there is concern about the fate of ancestors and of listeners' own fate beyond the grave.

In one particular Southeast Asian country where this storyer previously had the privilege to work, there had been an almost futile effort to determine the real worldview issue(s) which could provide an opening for sharing from the Bible story about the condition and fate of man as a sinner. The ethnic majority of this country is Buddhist in their belief and religious practice and have been significantly resistant to the Gospel. An opening was discovered almost accidentally when one of the persons being interviewed admitted there was a great fear of death because of the uncertainty of one's fate beyond the grave. In that belief system there is believed to be reincarnation, either to a higher and more blessed next existence or to a lower punitive existence according to one's *karma* or actions in the previous life. Salvation is impossible for the common believer until an exhaustive number of reincarnations have occurred and there have been successive improvements in each existence.

In other countries and among other peoples the question often arose at some point in a typical evangelism storying strategy regarding the fate of departed ancestors who had not heard the message of salvation. I have answered those questions with a reference to Paul's message to the Romans regarding our accountability for the revelation of God in nature (Romans 1:20). And I have assured them that our God is a just God who will do what is right.

Many times I (and others) have encountered listeners who resisted the Gospel saying that they want to go where their ancestors (usually mother or father) went when they died. This was pointed out in an *Objections to Christianity* study done among elderly in Singapore. If their parents went to hell, then they wanted to go to hell. In other cases listeners have said they made promises to their mother or father not to abandon their family religion after the parents died.

In the Muslim world there is the common and very mistaken belief that a heroic death is desirable as a passage to Paradise where one's physical pleasures are endlessly sated. And for those who die in an act of *jihad* (holy war) there is a special blessing awaiting them in Paradise. So for many, death in some heroic act of self destruction and destruction of others considered to be their enemy is desirable.

Among certain African peoples there is concern at the point of death as to whether a person died peacefully or in some disturbed state. The attitude at death determined whether the spirit of the departed would be a beneficent spirit or a malevolent spirit who might seek to harm the family.

In several Asian countries there is an increased suicide rate as young people seek death as a way to escape the disgrace of failure in studies or romance.

Among many elderly and sick, where families have abandoned them or pain is a daily demon to struggle with, death is seen as an escape.

In countries where there is a strong Mormon presence one might encounter teaching about baptism for the dead to provide the salvation by the righteous works of the living.

Among Catholic background peoples there is a belief in an intermediate (purgatory) state after death in which one works out or suffers for one's sinful actions in this life. Then having been duly purged, punished, or become repentant, the soul moves on to its eternal destination. Many immediate pre and post-death rituals and customs arise that are to help the departed to eventually achieve eternal rest. Some Muslims share the belief that no one will remain in hell after a time of cleansing.

Among those who practice necromancy there is the practice of seeking counsel and guidance from dead ancestors.

As Bible storyers you will want to have knowledge about the worldview issues related to death among your listeners as it may strongly affect listeners' openness to a new teaching that challenges their prevailing belief system and teaches a view of death and one's fate beyond the grave which may cause great concern for their ancestors.

In the Old Testament God is spoken of as God of the living (see Exodus 3:6 and Mark 12:26). There is belief in an existence after death that is referred to as "being gathered to one's people." (Genesis 49:33; 2 Samuel 11:23) Death is referred to as "the grave" or "the pit" one goes down to. (Psalm 30:3) It was a place of hazy, shadowy existence (Psalm 88:12) without feeling or sound (Psalm 94:17), a place where one is were cut off from life (Isaiah 38:18; Ezekiel 26:20), no longer remembered by God (Psalm 88:5; 143:7). The grave (pit) is a place of no return where one joins the people of long ago. (Ezekiel 26:20) Those in the land of death possessed some degree of conscious awareness and some power of movement and speech. (Isaiah 14:9-20) In some instances they were thought of as possessing knowledge of future events and were called upon to give information to the living (1 Samuel 28:13-20; Deuteronomy 18:11; Isaiah 8:19). The most graphic picture of pre-resurrection (of Christ) death is found in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. (Luke 16:19-51)

Most all peoples have the conviction that man by nature is immortal which needs no proof, but death itself is a mystery which must be explained. The whole of mankind fears death as a mysterious power. People find comfort in death only when they hope it will be an end to a still more miserable life. Misery and death are not always consequences and punishment for personal transgressions (see Job's story, the blind man in John

9), but are often connected with sin as many Bible stories attest.

In the Bible, death is portrayed as part of the natural process of life, especially in the patriarchal stories. But it is also depicted as a judgment and disaster when one is taken away in guilt, or innocently or in the bloom of youth (Abijah, 1 Kings 14) or Enoch in righteous life (Genesis 5:24), or in advanced years while still strong and virile (Moses Deuteronomy 34:7). Behind all these stories in which Scripture speaks of death lies a deep consciousness that death is unnatural and contrary to our innermost being.

The Bible is not the book of Death, but of Life that is everlasting through Jesus Christ our Lord. The Bible tells us in often repeated and unmistakable ways, of the dreaded reality of death, but proclaims even more forcefully the wonderful life which is in Christ Jesus.

Figuratively speaking, death is also the loss of spiritual life (Romans 8:6) and the final state of the unregenerate which is called the "second death". (Revelation 20:14)

So I have gathered and prepared these stories on death, not to focus on the subject of death itself, but to take advantage of the opportunity to speak to those listeners fearing death because of the uncertainty of their status and existence beyond the grave, for those who because of their culture have many beliefs, questions and desires related to ancestors, and for those who relate their fears of the spirit world to departed family members. While holding their attention with the death stories, we want to give listeners a hope in life eternal in Christ Jesus with its forgiveness of sin and blessing for those who are obedient.

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## Talking About Stories with Oral Communicators

As Bible teachers using these stories for whatever objective you have, whether evangelism, discipleship or some topical teaching for leaders, you will have three tasks ahead of you for each story:

1. You need to appropriately introduce the story so that when the listeners hear it, they will make sense of it. It is often helpful to link new stories with those already told as stories which build one upon the other. This linking also can help to alleviate negative restructuring of a story which is misinterpreting the story either deliberately or innocently according to pre-existing beliefs and experiences. As the stories lean one upon the other, the story is stabilized in that changing one means also having to change others.

However, there is the characteristic among many oral communicators that stories are "just stories" which may or may not be true nor related to any other story. So this pre-story preparation is most important as it not only prepares for the following story, but over time is instructive in the understanding that many stories can be part of a larger and related story and n

Also be aware that true stories may only be told at certain times, in certain places, and by certain people. Check this out so the Bible stories will not be considered just entertainment to pass the time.

2. You will need to tell the story, being aware of the need for crafting of the story for understandability (and reproducibility, if that is one of your objectives), and how your presentation may affect the perceived meaning of the story. This takes forethought about the story and how it might land upon the listeners. It requires some understanding of the listener's worldview or lens through which the

story will be interpreted. And it requires patience in working with a people to arrive at a mutually satisfying presentation of stories—to gain your objective and to gain listeners' attention and understanding.

3. After the story you may or may not need to have a structured talk time. In the following story lessons some stories may provoke discussion on their own. The listener-initiated discussion may or may not be productive according to your objective. Questions can help to guide the discussions along. One of the characteristics of oral communicators is that they do not like to disassemble a story or to analyze it. The story is a whole that is taken as a whole and not dissected for discussion of its parts. If that is true for your people there are several options:

- a. *Just ask the listeners* (or allow them as the case may be) *to respond to the story*. This may mean waiting after the end of the story for some volunteer response or comment to come. You might be able to goad the listeners a bit by asking what they meant by their responses. I have opened discussion by asking the listeners to explain the story to me. Or to ask if what happened in the story is like their culture. Also I have asked listeners what they would have said or done if they had been one of the characters in the story. This may be more easily acted out if you allow the listeners to dramatize the story after hearing it. Many oral peoples enjoy such drama.

- b. *Listeners may have questions rather than comments*. Many stories raise the question of why such and such happened. In cases of hostile listeners this may be the best approach in letting them ask questions. If you can, respond with a question. If they are cooperative, then ask if they would consider listening to another story, verses, or review a situation which may help to answer

their question. For some of the Bible stories several additional stories may be needed to clarify the story and to give perspective for understanding it.

- c. Last is to *use a structured Q&A or catechism*. Remember that oral communicators usually do not think with our literate linear logic. They have a logic but it is not our logic. An ideal set of discussion questions would be developed upon a knowledge of how a particular listener group would think and process a story which challenged their beliefs or suggested responses contrary to their culture. In our questions we want to be sure that facts are reviewed, attitudes and characteristics explored, and decision options and responses proposed. But long lists of questions may weary oral communicators. Three or four essential questions may accomplish far more than an exhaustive exploration. Also realize that when someone prepares a set of post-story questions, these are given as resources and not as a mandated program for teaching.

Use your head and your heart in preparing the pre and post-story discussion times so that the storying event is enjoyable as well as educational. Remember that you the storyer are a guest among the people. They are showing you hospitality by agreeing to hear your stories and hopefully allowing you to teach from them in an appropriate manner.

Keep notes or a diary of things that are difficult to explain or understand, or that are often confused by listeners. Also keep notes of the questions that listeners ask. Note the stories which arouse the greatest response and those which seem to fail to reach listeners. These notes can be most helpful for training others who will work with you or follow you in sharing God's Word among your people group.



## 1. The Day You Eat of It You Will Die

*Scripture Base:* Genesis 1:1-3:21

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Do you always follow the instructions someone gives you?
2. What consequences might happen if you disobey?
3. What if the consequences were death for disobedience? Would that help you to obey?
4. Have you given instructions to another person and told them of the consequences for disobedience?
5. Here is a story that tells of just such instruction (or command) that was given to the very first man and woman. Find out what happened to them and how their actions affect us today.

*Tell the Story:*

### The Beginning of Death

In the beginning there was only life. God created all the plants and trees and gave them the ability to reproduce after their kind. God created the birds of the air and the fish and all the creatures that swim in the sea. God also blessed them. Then God created all the living creatures on the land—the livestock and wild animals and all creatures that move about on the land. God gave them life and saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness." So God created the first man from the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life (Job 33:4). And man became a living soul. Then God made woman from man's flesh and bone. And God saw that all his work was very good.

In that day was harmony and peace for man lived with all of God's creation and there was no death.



God prepared a garden with trees for the man He made and put him there to tend it. In the middle of the garden there were the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God said to the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For when you eat of it you will surely die."

Sometime later the serpent tempted the woman by saying, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" The woman replied, "God did say, 'You must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

The serpent said, "You will not surely die. God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So the woman continued to gaze upon the fruit and saw its beauty, and that it was tasty, and that it was desirable for gaining wisdom, so she took some and ate it and gave some to her husband who was there with her, and he ate also.

God came to judge their disobedience. He began with the serpent. A time will come when the serpent's head would be crushed by a descendant of the woman. The serpent's life or work would be finished by this descendant of woman. The woman would endure pain in childbirth and would desire her husband who would rule over her. For the man the ground would now be cursed requiring painful toil to grow his food. And one day his life would end and he would return to the dust from which he was made.

Because the man and woman were ashamed of their nakedness after their eyes were opened, God made garments of animal skins, and so clothed the man and woman. Blood of the innocent animals was shed to cover





the sin and shame of the man and woman. Death had come to the animals. Soon death would come to man.

Because of their disobedience the man and woman were put out of the garden God had prepared for them and cut off from the tree of life by which they could eat and live forever.

The man Adam lived a long time and had many sons and daughters. When Adam was 930 years old he died just as God said would happen. But in another way man had died long before that when his first living relationship with his Creator died. Adam the man disobeyed his God who had given life to everything. Death had come into the world by the first man. And today we have inherited the consequences of that disobedience. By disobedience of the first man death had come into the world.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Have you ever heard this story before? What did you learn from it?
2. In the beginning was there death?
3. What command did God give the man? What was the consequence for disobedience?
4. What did the serpent say would NOT happen if the woman ate the fruit?
5. Did the woman know what God had said would happen if she ate the fruit?
6. Did the man and woman die right then?
7. What did God say would one day happen to the man? (he would return to the dust—die)
8. Did it happen as God said?
9. If you had been that first man or woman, would you have obeyed God?
10. If you knew about other commands that God has given, would you obey them?
- 11.



## 2. Death Comes to the First Family

*Scripture Base:* Genesis 4:1-26; I John 3:12

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Do you remember the command that God gave the first man and woman in the last story? What happened when they disobeyed God?
2. What effect do you think this might have on their family?
3. Could it be that the disobedience of the first man and woman could set a pattern for all their descendants?
4. In the following story look for the disobedience and the tragic consequences for two people.

*Tell the Story:*

### Death in the First Family

The first man Adam lay with his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth to a son and named him Cain. Again Eve conceived and gave birth to a second son and named him Abel.

Abel kept the flocks and Cain tilled the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of his field as an offering to the LORD God. Likewise Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock as an offering to God. God looked with favor on Abel's offering, but on Cain and his offering God did not look with favor. When this happened Cain became very angry and his face was downcast.

Then God said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right you will be accepted. But if you do not do what is right, sin is at your door; it desires to have you, but you must overcome it."



Later Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out into the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Again God spoke to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know," Cain replied, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

God said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse for what you have done. You will be driven from the ground which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood, shed by your hand. When you till the ground it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."

So Cain went out from God's presence and lived in another land. Later a writer said, "Do not be like Cain who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother...Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and no murderer has eternal life..." (1 John 3:12, 15)

After several generations had passed Cain's great-great grandson Lamech one day bragged to his wives, "Listen to me, hear my words. I have killed a man for wounding me, and a young man for injuring me."

After Abel's death Adam again lay with his wife Eve and she conceived and gave birth to a son and named him Seth. Eve said, "God has granted me another child in the place of Abel, since Cain killed him." Seth also had a son and at that time men began to worship and call upon the name of the LORD God.



*Talk About the Story:*

1. What work did each of the sons of Adam and Eve do?
2. What kind of offering did they bring to God?
3. Which offering did God accept? Which did he refuse to accept?
4. What was Cain feeling in his heart after his offering was refused?
5. What did God tell Cain that he should do, what should he not do?
6. Did Cain obey the words of God? What did he do instead?
7. Did God know what Cain had done?
8. What did God say would happen to Cain because of what he had done to his brother Abel?
9. What did the writer have to say about Cain and his actions?
10. Another writer has this to say about Abel and his sacrifice:  
"By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain did." (Hebrews 11:4)
11. What did one of Cain's descendants brag about doing? Do you think this was pleasing to God? Could we say that Lamech had inherited the sinful nature of his ancestor Cain?
12. Could it be that we have inherited the sinful nature of our ancestor Adam? Death is a part of the world we live in today. God's Word says:  
"It is appointed unto man once to die, after that to face God's judgment." (Hebrews 9:27)
13. Will you die one day? What will happen after you die? In future stories we will learn what happens to people after they die, and how it depends upon what they believe in this life.



### 3. The Righteous Man Who Was Taken Away

*Scripture Base:* Genesis 5:6-24; 6:5; Isaiah 57:1-2; Hebrews 11:5-6

*Introduce the Story:*

Do you know anyone who had not died? This is a story about a man who lived long ago. He lived a good life that was pleasing to God. He lived in a day when great evil and wickedness were increasing upon the earth. Then God did an unusual thing. Here is the story of a man who was taken away.

*Tell the Story:*

#### The Man Who Was Taken Away

In the generations that followed the first man Adam there was his righteous son Abel (Hebrews 11:4) who was killed by his brother. Then God gave Adam another son Seth and it was during Seth and his son's day that men began to call upon the name of the LORD God.

Still more generations passed until a man was born whose name was Enoch. When Enoch had lived 65 years he became the father of Methuselah who was the grandfather of Noah who lived in the days of the great flood. After Methuselah was born Enoch lived another 300 years and continued to walk with God. In those days there was increasing wickedness and violence upon the earth. The LORD God saw the wickedness and violence and that every inclination of the thoughts of men's hearts was only evil all the time. So when Enoch had lived 365 years and walked with God, then he was no more, for God took him away. A prophet later wrote these words:

"The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no



one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death" (Isaiah 57:1-2).

And another writer said:

"By faith Enoch was taken away from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. Before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Hebrews 11:5-6)

*Talk About the Story:*

1. What kind of man was Enoch? What did he do?
2. Who was he descended from, Cain the evil one, or Seth the righteous son who replaced Abel?
3. What was happening on the earth in those days? What was increasing among the people?
4. Who took Enoch away? Did he die? Could his body be found?
5. What did the prophet have to say about those righteous persons who are taken away?
6. How did Enoch please God?
7. Would you like to walk with God—to live a life that is pleasing to God?
8. God's Word says:  
"The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good." (Proverbs 15:3)
9. God made man in the image of God and gave man the breath of life. Our life is a gift from God. We must use our lives wisely for a time will come when we die and then we must give account for all we have said and done. Wouldn't it be wonderful if there were someone who could take the punishment for



our disobedience upon himself—to suffer and die so that we might live? Later we will come to a story of just such a person.

10. What do you think that God will do about the increasing evil and wickedness that was happening in Enoch's day?



#### **4. God's Judgment: Death to a Wicked World**

*Scripture Base:* Genesis 6:5-9:28; Luke 17:26-27

*Introduce the Story:*

This is the traditional story of the Flood but with some additional implied emphasis upon the family members of Noah who may have been living and were not among those on the ark, as well as the families of the wives of Noah's sons.

1. Does God see and know what men and women do?
2. Is God pleased with those who live a wicked, evil life?
3. Would you obey all that God told you to do in order to live and escape death?
4. In today's story you will hear about a man who did obey God and so saved his family and animals from death.

*Tell the Story:*

God's Judgment: Death to a Wicked World

Among the descendants of Adam and Eve there was a great increase in wickedness and violence. The disobedience of Adam and Eve had spread to their son Cain who disobeyed the God. Then one of Cain's descendants killed a young man who had wounded him. Righteous Enoch who walked with God was taken away. Enoch's son was Methuselah who lived longer than any other person. His son was named Lamech and it was Lamech who was the father of Noah his firstborn. Afterward Lamech had other sons and daughters. When Noah was already very old he had three sons who were each married.

God saw how the earth had become filled with violence and was corrupt. So God said, "My Spirit will



not struggle with man forever, for he is mortal, his days will be a hundred and twenty years." Because of the great wickedness on earth and that men's hearts will be filled with only evil all the time, God was grieved that he had made man. So God said, "I will destroy man from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and the birds." But Noah found favor in God's eyes, for Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his day, and he walked with God.

So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people. I am going to destroy them and the earth. So make yourself an ark (boat) of cypress wood and coat it with pitch inside and out. I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you. You will enter the ark along with your wife and your sons and their wives and the animals I will bring to you."

Noah did all that God commanded him to do. When the ark was finished God commanded Noah and his family to enter the ark along with all the animals that God had gathered. Then God closed the door. When seven days had passed it began to rain and rained for forty days and nights. The waters poured down from the heavens and the great springs of the deep sent forth water until at last the entire earth was flooded. The people of the land had been eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage right up to the day Noah and his family entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. Noah's father and grandfather had died before the flood. Since Noah was the firstborn of his family and had brothers and sisters, they too, if they were still living, were swept away. Noah's wife's family and the families of the wives of Noah's sons were all swept away and perished.



After the flood had remained upon the earth a long time God remembered Noah and those in the ark with him and sent a wind to dry up the earth. One day Noah sent out a raven which did not return. Then Noah sent out a dove which returned as it could not find a place to nest. Again Noah sent out the dove and it returned with a freshly plucked leaf. God commanded Noah and those with him in the ark to come out.

Noah was thankful and offered a sacrifice that was pleasing to God. Then God promised never to curse the ground as He had done in Adam's time, nor to destroy all living creatures. God blessed Noah and his sons and commanded them to have many children and descendants to replenish the earth because their families and all other people had perished in the flood. God warned that He would demand an accounting from every animal and from each man for the shedding of the blood of fellow man.

After the flood Noah lived a long time and then he died. Noah's sons had many descendants and began the nations of the earth.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Did God see and know about the wickedness of the people?
2. Do you think that God is pleased with those who live a wicked life?
3. Do you remember in the story of Enoch that wickedness was already increasing in his day?
4. What did God tell Noah that He (God) was going to do?
5. What kind of man was Noah? Was he wicked or righteous? What do you think it means that Noah walked with God?
6. Did Noah obey God?



7. Did Noah and his family and the animals die in the flood?
8. What happened to those who were not with Noah in the ark? Do you think that any were able to escape God's judgment?
9. If the people heard about what God was going to do, did they believe God? Read Luke 17:26-27.
10. Another writer in God's Word tells that God waited patiently while Noah was building the ark. Could it be that God was waiting for the people to repent of their wicked and evil ways? (1 Peter 3:20)
11. Would you consider yourself like Noah or the people who died in the flood?



## 5. Death in a Righteous Man's Family

*Scripture Base:* Job 1:1-2:13; 19:25; 32:1-5; 36:7, 11; Job 38-39 & 42

### *Introduce the Story:*

Today we have the story of a righteous man that God allowed to be tested. Job had not done anything wrong. But he was wrongly accused by Satan whose name means "accuser". Satan was one of the powerful angels that God had created before the world was created. God's Word tells us that when he was created this angel was perfect and sinless. But a time came when he rebelled against his Creator and desired to take the place of God and rule over heaven. God's Word says: "You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until wickedness was found in you." (Ezekiel 28:15; also see Isaiah 14:12-14)) God has prepared a place of eternal punishment for this angel and others who joined him. Until that day arrives God allows him to test the faithfulness of man and to punish those who sin against God. (see 1 Samuel 16:13 and 1 Corinthians 5:5) God's Word also calls Satan a murderer and a liar. (John 8:44)

### *Tell the Story:*

#### Death Comes to Job's Family

There was a man named Job who lived during the days of the patriarchs. Job was upright and blameless, he feared God and shunned evil. He had seven sons and three daughters. Job owned many thousands of sheep and camels, many hundred oxen and donkeys and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the east.

Job's sons took turns holding feasts in their homes. They would invite their three sisters to eat and drink





with them. After the period of feasting, Job would send to have his sons and daughters purified. He would offer as sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom.

One day when all the angels came to present themselves before the LORD God, Satan was there with them. God said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is none like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

"Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan asked. "You have protected Job and blessed him in every way. Take all that away and surely Job will curse you."

"Very well," God said to Satan, "Job is in your hands, but do not lay a finger on him."

One day when Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job to say that enemies had attacked and carried off Job's oxen and donkeys and killed his servants. Then another messenger arrived and told how fire had fallen from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants. Then a third messenger arrived to say that still more enemies had carried off Job's camels and killed more servants. And finally a last messenger arrived with the news that while Job's sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine in the eldest brother's house, a mighty wind swept down from the desert and struck the house so that it collapsed on the sons and daughters and killed them.

When Job heard this he got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground to worship the LORD God, but he still did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.



Again when the angels and Satan were present God said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him in all the earth; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

"Skin for skin!" Satan said, "A man will give all he has for his own life, but stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face,"

"Very well," God said, "Job is in your hands; but you must spare his life."

So Satan afflicted Job with painful sores from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. Job sat in ashes and scraped himself with broken pottery. Job's wife said to him, "Curse God and die!" In all this Job did not sin in what he said.

Later some of Job's friends came to console him but also to accuse him of self-righteous pride and sin. Job defended himself and said that he trusted God to redeem his soul. Finally the three friends stopped answering Job because he was righteous in his own eyes.

Another friend came to visit Job and was angry with Job for justifying himself and with the three friends because they had condemned Job. For he told Job: "God does not take his eyes off the righteous...If they obey and serve God, they will spend their years in prosperity and contentment."

Then God spoke to Job and reminded him that God alone is the Creator and sovereign. It is the LORD God alone who had made everything and cares for all creation. Job admitted that he was unworthy to answer God and had spoken about things he did not



understand. Job confessed that God could do all things. Now he repented in dust and ashes.

God was angry with Job's friends for their unwise counsel and asked Job to pray for his friends. Then God blessed Job and made him prosperous again, giving him twice as much as he had before. All Job's brothers and sisters and everyone who had known Job before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted Job for all his troubles and gave him gifts of gold and silver. So the LORD God blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first and again gave Job seven sons and three daughters. After this Job lived a long time and saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. And then Job died, old and full of years.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Was Job a righteous man? What did God have to say about Job?
2. When Satan accused Job what did he say would make Job curse God?
3. What did God permit Satan to do to Job?
4. When Job did not curse God, then what did Satan say about Job?
5. God permitted Satan to do what to Job, but not to take Job's what?
6. Did Job suffer because of what Satan did to him?
7. What accusation did Job's friends bring against him?
8. Who did Job trust to redeem him? (Job 19:25-26)
9. Did Job believe that he was guilty of any wrongdoing?
10. When God finally spoke again, what did He have to say about himself?
11. What did Job admit about himself to God?
12. After God had spoken what did he do for Job?



## 6. Death of Lot's Wife

*Scripture Base:* Genesis 13:13; 19:1-26; Luke 17:32

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Does anyone remember what happened when Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command?
2. What happened in the days of Noah when the people were filled with evil and wickedness?
3. When God gives a command, does He intend for us to obey it? If we don't, what might happen?
4. In today's story we will hear of a people who wanted to do an evil thing, and also of a woman who disobeyed God's command and what happened to her.

*Tell the Story:*

Don't Look Back!

When God called Abraham to leave the land of his fathers and go to a new land that God would show him, he took along his dead brother's son named Lot. God promised to bless Abraham in the new land. Abraham obeyed God and came to live in the land among a people who did not worship God and who did sinful things.

After many years had passed the flocks and herds of both Abraham and Lot had increased, for Abraham was very wealthy. Lot had always moved with Abraham, but now the land could not support both of them in one place. Quarreling had broken out between the herdsmen of Abraham and the herdsmen of Lot. So Abraham said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are brothers. Let's part company. If you go to the left I will go to the right, and if you go to the right I will go to the left." From the hills Lot looked out upon the





plain along the river and saw that it was green and well-watered. Lot chose to leave Abraham and go pitch his tents near the city of Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were very wicked and were sinning greatly against God.

After some time had passed, angels came to visit Abraham to tell that he would soon have a son born to the wife of his old age. After this good news, two of the angels started toward Sodom. Abraham believed the angels had been sent to destroy the wicked city of Sodom so he asked, "Will the righteous be killed along with the wicked?" The angel of God assured him that if ten righteous people could be found in the city it would be spared.

When the two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, Lot greeted them in the city gate and strongly insisted they spend the night with him. After Lot's guests had eaten and before they had gone to bed, men from every part of town gathered outside Lot's house. They called out to Lot, "Bring out the men who came to you tonight so we can have sex with them."

Lot went outside to meet the men and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. Look I have two daughters. Let me bring them out to you instead."

"Get out of our way!" the men shouted and moved to break down the door. Just then the angels reached out and pulled Lot to safety inside the house. The angels struck the men of Sodom blind, young and old, so they could not find the door. Then the angels said to Lot, "Do you have any family in this place? Get them out of here because we are going to destroy the city."

Even when Lot went to warn his sons-in-law who were pledged to his daughters they thought he was joking and did not believe him. With the coming of dawn the angels urged Lot to hurry and take his wife and



daughters and flee so they would not be swept away when the city was punished. When Lot hesitated the angels grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and led them safely out of the city. Then the angels said, "Hurry, flee for your lives. Don't look back, and don't stop until you arrive at the mountains, or you will be swept away!"

As soon as Lot reached a small town and the sun had risen, God began to rain down fire and burning brimstone on Sodom and the sister city Gomorrah. When this happened the people living in the cities perished and even the plants were burned up.

Then Lot's wife disobeyed the angels and looked back and was changed into a pillar of salt. So only Lot and his two daughters survived the destruction that God brought on those wicked cities.

Later the Righteous One warned about the coming judgment of God and the danger of disobedience when he said, "Remember Lot's wife!"

*Talk About the Story:*

1. What did God call Abraham to do? Did Abraham obey God?
2. Did God bless Abraham as he promised?
3. What happened when the herds and flocks of Abraham and Lot became too great for the land?
4. Where did Lot choose to live?
5. What were the men of Sodom doing? Was God pleased?
6. What did God send angels to do to Sodom? What else were they to do for Lot and his family?
7. What terrible thing did the men of Sodom demand of Lot?
8. What did the angels tell Lot he must do? (flee from the city)



9. What did the angels tell Lot that he must not do? (don't look back)
10. What happened when Lot hesitated?
11. What happened to the people living in Sodom and the sister city Gomorrah?
12. What happened when Lot's wife looked back?
13. What happened to the people who were wicked? (they died)
14. What happened when Lot's wife disobeyed the angels that God had sent to warn them? (she died)
15. Did God save the righteous and obedient? (yes)
16. Read 2 Peter 2: 7-8 to see what the Bible says about Lot and the people he had chosen to live among. Did Lot make a wise choice?



## 7. Death of Sarah

*Scripture Base:* Genesis 23: 1-20

*Introduce the Story:*

When death comes we need a place to bury the body of our loved ones. Customs vary in many countries and among the peoples of the world. In the day of Abraham a tomb, which was usually a cave, was sought to place the body until it was reduced to bones and dust. Here is the story of how Abraham found a suitable place to bury his beloved Sarah. Talk about burial customs among the listeners following the death of a loved one.

*Tell the Story:*

### A Burial Place for Sarah

When Abraham followed God's command to go to a new land that God would show him, he took along his wife Sarah who was childless. Already Abraham and Sarah were old and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. God promised to bless Abraham and to give him a son and many descendants. One time when Abraham and Sarah had gone down into Egypt to live during a famine, Abraham was afraid that the Egyptian king would want Sarah to be one of his wives because Sarah was very beautiful even though she was old.

Over the years God had changed Abraham and Sarah's names. In the beginning her name was *Sarai* which means "troublemaker". And Sarah did make trouble for Abraham because she was impatient to have a child but did not though many years had passed. So Sarah gave Abraham her servant girl to be his wife so she could present Abraham a Son. But this was not the son God had promised to Abraham. Sarah's new name meant "princess" for God was gracious to Sarah and was going to do for Sarah what God promised to Abraham.



One day three angels came to visit Abraham and Sarah. One who was the angel of God said that Sarah was going to have a son and that it would happen the following year. Sarah was listening in her tent. When Sarah heard the angel's words she laughed and thought to herself, "I am now very old and worn out. Will I now have the pleasure of a son?" The angel knew Sarah's thoughts and asked, "Why did you laugh? Is anything too hard for God to do?"

Sarah did have a son the following year just as God had promised. Abraham named the boy Isaac which means "laughter." Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter. I have given Abraham a son in his old age."

Sarah's son was born when she was ninety years old. Sarah lived to the age of one hundred twenty-seven and then she died. Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her. Then Abraham rose from his dead wife and spoke to the people who lived in that place. He said, "I am a foreigner living among you. Sell me some property for a burial place so I can bury my dead wife."

The people said, "Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead."

Then Abraham bowed down before the people and said to them, "If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then intercede for me before the man who owns the field with a cave in it. Ask him to sell the field to me for the full price as a burial site among you."

Now the owner of the field was there sitting among his people. He replied to Abraham in the hearing of all his people who had gathered to listen, "No, my friend, I give you the field and I give you the cave that is in it. I



give it to you in the presence of all my people. Go, bury your dead."

Again Abraham bowed low before the man and said, "I will pay the full price of the field. Accept the payment from me so I can bury my dead."

The man said, "No, listen to me. The land is worth four hundred pieces of silver. But what is that between me and you? Go bury your dead."

So Abraham agreed to the man's price and gave him the payment in the hearing of all the people. The man's field and the cave that is within it and all the trees within the borders of the field were deeded to Abraham as his property. All the people were witnesses.

Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave that was in the field he had bought from the man. The field and cave in the field were sold to Abraham as a burial site for his dead.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. What did God promise to Abraham and Sarah? (a son)
2. Was Sarah too old to have children?
3. How did Sarah try to get a son for Abraham?
4. Was this the son that God had promised?
5. What did Sarah say when she heard the words of the angel saying that she was going to have a son?
6. What did the angel say about what God could do?
7. Did God fulfill his promise to Sarah and Abraham?
8. What did Abraham do when his wife Sarah died?
9. Talk about why Abraham did not accept the offer of the people to use one of their tombs. Why do they think that Abraham wanted one of his own? (perhaps for family use by succeeding generations)



10. In what place did Abraham want to bury his dead wife?
11. The owner of the field with the cave offered to give the land to Abraham? Talk about why Abraham wanted to pay for the place to bury his wife.
12. Who were witnesses to the bargain that Abraham made with the owner of the field and cave?
13. Who do you think might be buried in the cave next?
14. If you had been Abraham, would you have taken your wife's body back to their homeland for burial? What does the burial site say about the future of Abraham's descendants in that land? (this would be their new home)



## 8. Death of Abraham

*Scripture Base:* Genesis 25: 1-11

*Introduce the Story:*

Remember in the last story about the death of Sarah that God had called Abraham to leave his homeland and to go to a land God would show Abraham. Now Abraham and Sarah have lived in that land a long time. Sarah has died. Abraham continued to live for many years. At last time came for Abraham to die. Who would bury Abraham? Where would they bury Abraham?

Here is the story of the rest of Abraham's life and his death.

*Tell the Story:*

### Two Sons Bury Their Father

After Sarah died Abraham sent his servant to Abraham's relatives to find a wife for Isaac his son by Sarah. Abraham had other sons. During the years before Isaac was born while Sarah was still barren she had given her servant girl to Abraham as a wife so that Sarah might have a son through the servant girl. The girl did have a son and named him Ishmael. Abraham loved his son Ishmael and asked God to bless him. But God said that the son He promised Abraham would be Sarah's son.

After Sarah's own son Isaac was born she said to her husband Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share the inheritance with my son Isaac." So Abraham sent Ishmael and his mother away. Later Ishmael's mother obtained a wife for him from Egypt and God did bless Ishmael by giving him twelve sons of his own.



After Sarah died Abraham took another wife and she bore him six sons. But while he was still living, Abraham gave everything he owned to Isaac. He gave gifts to the other sons but sent them away from Isaac to the land of the east. Altogether Abraham lived one hundred seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age and was gathered to his people. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham in the cave in the field where Abraham had buried his wife Sarah. After Abraham's death God blessed his son Isaac and gave him two sons.

Ishmael lived one hundred thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and was gathered to his people. His descendants lived in hostility toward all their brothers.

#### *Talk About the Story:*

1. What did Abraham do for his son Isaac after Sarah died? Read Genesis 24: 1-4 and 66-67.
2. What else did Abraham do after Sarah died? (took another wife)
3. Did Abraham have more sons by the new wife?
4. Before Abraham died what did he do for Isaac and for Abraham's other sons? What did this say about Abraham's relationship to Isaac? (his special son born to Abraham and Sarah as God had promised)
5. What do you think "being gathered to your people" means?
6. What do your people say about death—do they have an expression like that used for Abraham?
7. Who buried Abraham?
8. Where did they bury Abraham?
9. Did God continue to bless Abraham's son Isaac?
10. How did God bless Ishmael?
11. Do you know where you will be buried when you die? Who will bury you?
12. Later we will talk about something very important that you should do while you are still living, before you die.



## **9. Death of Beloved Rachel**

*Scripture Base:* Genesis 35: 16-29

#### *Introduce the Story:*

Before you tell the story of Rachel's death, it may be helpful to give some review and introduction to the story. After Abraham's wife Sarah died, Abraham sent his servant to Abraham's relatives to get a wife for his son Isaac. When Isaac saw the girl he loved and took her to be his wife, and was comforted after his mother Sarah's death. Isaac was now forty years old. Isaac's wife Rebekah remained barren for a long time.

Then Isaac prayed for his wife and God answered the prayer. His wife Rebekah was finally able to conceive. But the babies struggled within their mother who asked, "Why is this happening to me?" So Rebekah inquired of God who said to her: "There are two nations of people in your womb, two peoples who will one day be separated. One people will be stronger than the other; the older will serve the younger." When the time came for Rebekah to give birth, there were two sons born. The second son born was holding the heel of the firstborn. Something was going to happen as we will see in the story. (Genesis 25: 19-23)

#### *Tell the Story:*

Death of a Beloved Wife and Father

Isaac, the son God promised to Abraham, had two sons born as twins. Before the birth of the twins a prophecy said that the older son would serve the younger. A time came when the younger son coveted the birthright which belonged to his older brother who foolishly sold it for a meal. Later the younger son Jacob deceived his father Isaac who was now old. So his father gave to the younger son Jacob the blessing Isaac



intended to give the older son. The older brother became very angry and thought to kill Jacob after his father died. So Jacob left home and went to live with his uncle where he fell in love with the younger daughter of his uncle. After working seven years for the daughter he was given instead, according to the custom in that land, the older daughter who was still unmarried. Jacob had to work another seven years to get the wife he wanted. Jacob loved Rachel the younger wife.

But Rachel remained barren while her older sister gave birth to four sons. So Rachel gave her servant girl to Jacob so that she might have sons by her servant girl. Two sons were born to Rachel's servant girl. The older sister did the same and two sons were born to her servant girl. Then the older sister conceived again and gave birth to two more sons and a daughter. Rachel had cried to her husband, "Give me children, or I will die!" But Jacob became angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?"

Then God remembered Rachel, He listened to her cries and opened her womb. Rachel conceived and gave birth to a boy and named him Joseph, and said, "God has taken away my disgrace." Then she said, "May God add to me yet another son."

During the years God had greatly blessed Jacob even though his uncle had cheated Jacob many times. Then God said, "Go back to the land of your fathers and I will be with you. One day while Jacob's uncle was away shearing his sheep, Jacob took his wives and children and departed. As they were leaving, Rachel stole her father's household idols. When the uncle learned what happened, he came after Jacob and said to him, "What have you done? You've deceived me and carried off my daughters like captives in war. God told me not to say anything to you either good or bad. But why did you steal my idols?"



Jacob replied, "I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force. If you find anyone who has your idols they shall not live." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the idols. While her uncle searched for the stolen idols, Rachel hid them in her camel saddle and then sat on the saddle. When her father entered her tent to search Rachel said to her father, "Don't be angry that I cannot get up for it is that time of month for me." After Jacob and his uncle made a covenant not to harm one another, they set up a boundary between them. The next day Rachel's father kissed the grandchildren and his daughters and gave them his blessing.

Jacob was later reunited with his older brother who forgave him and was no longer angry about what Jacob had done to him.

Jacob stopped along the way to build an altar and worship God who had first appeared to Jacob when he was fleeing from his brother. There Jacob said to his household, "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you and purify yourselves." So Jacob's family gave him all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears and Jacob buried them under a large tree. God again appeared to Jacob and blessed him and reminded Jacob of the promises God had given to his grandfather Abraham and father Isaac.

The family then moved on and, while they were still some distance from a certain town, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. The midwife said to her, "Don't be afraid. For you have another son." As Rachel breathed her last—for she was dying—she named her baby "son of my trouble." But Jacob renamed the baby "son of my right hand." So Rachel died and was buried on the way to the town that one day would be called Bethlehem. Over her tomb Jacob set up a stone pillar and then moved on.





At last Jacob came to the home of his father Isaac who lived near where Abraham had lived. Isaac had lived one hundred and eighty years. Then he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. Jacob and his older brother buried their father in the same cave in the same field that Abraham had buried Sarah, where Abraham's sons had buried him, and where Isaac had buried his wife. (see Genesis 49:32)

*Talk About the Story:*

1. How did Jacob come to have two wives?
2. Which wife did Jacob love?
3. Which wife first began to have sons?
4. What did Rachel do to have some sons belonging to her?
5. What complaint did Rachel make to Jacob? (Give me sons or I will die)
6. What did God finally do for Rachel?
7. What request did Rachel make of God? (May God grant me yet another son)
8. After many years had passed and God had blessed Jacob even while Jacob's uncle was cheating him, what did God tell Jacob to do? (Return to the land of his fathers)
9. When Jacob's family was departing what did Rachel do?
10. When the uncle learned what happened and came searching what did he ask about? (his idols)
11. How had Rachel hidden them?
12. What did Jacob say about the person who had taken the idols? Do your people believe in curses? If so, what if the curse falls upon someone you love?
13. Did God give Rachel another son? What happened when he was born?
14. Was Rachel buried in the family burial cave of Abraham?
15. When Jacob returned home his father Isaac was now very old and soon died. Who helped to bury Jacob's



- father? Where do you think they buried Jacob's father Isaac? (See Genesis 49:31)
16. What do you think it means "he (Isaac) was gathered to his people"?



## 10. Death of Jacob

*Scripture Base:* Genesis 49:29-33

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Read or tell the summarized story of Abraham's vision (Genesis 15:4-18) which had the prophecy about his descendants going to live in another land where they would be strangers.
2. The fulfillment of the prophecy began to happen during the days of Jacob the grandson of Abraham, and involved Jacob's sons.
3. Jacob would die in a foreign land. Where would Jacob be buried? Do the listeners have any beliefs about dying in a foreign land? Does it make a difference where they are buried?

*Tell the Story:*

### The Death of Jacob in Egypt

Jacob was the grandson of Abraham, born to Isaac and his mother Rebekah. Jacob was younger to his twin brother. After Jacob had left home and gone to live with his uncle he married two sisters and soon had twelve sons, though only two of the sons were born to Rachel, the wife that Jacob loved. First of these sons was Joseph and later his brother Benjamin who was born as his mother Rachel was dying. Jacob, Joseph's father, lived in the land that God had given to Abraham and his descendants.

After Joseph, a young man of seventeen, went to see his brothers who were out tending the flocks, he later brought a bad report about his brothers to his father. The father Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because Joseph had been born in Jacob's old age. Jacob had made a richly ornamented robe for Joseph. When the brothers saw that their father loved



Joseph more than any of them, they hated Joseph. To make matters worse Joseph had a dream in which he and his brothers were cutting grain in the field. In the dream the grain of the brothers bowed down to Joseph's grain. When the brothers heard of the dream they said to Joseph, "Will you really rule over us?" So they hated Joseph even more.

At a time when the brothers had gone away to graze their flocks, Jacob said to Joseph, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and bring word back to me." When the brothers saw Joseph coming, they plotted to kill him. When Joseph arrived the brothers stripped him of his beautiful robe and threw him into a dry well. When merchants came along, the brothers sold Joseph into slavery for twenty pieces of silver. The brothers tore Joseph's robe and sprinkled animal blood on it so that Jacob believed Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

In Egypt God blessed Joseph while he worked for a wealthy Egyptian official. In time the official's wife was filled with desire for Joseph who refused her demands. One day when the wife grabbed Joseph, he fled leaving behind his cloak. The wife falsely accused Joseph to her husband so that Joseph was put into prison. After some time had passed Joseph explained the meaning of dreams among the prisoners. Then the king of Egypt had two troubling dreams and no one could interpret them. When the king learned of Joseph, he sent for him and told Joseph his dreams. Joseph explained that the dreams meant a coming time of plentiful food and a time of famine. The king put Joseph in charge of collecting grain during the plentiful years and to distribute the grain during the famine years.

When the famine came there was also no food where Joseph's brothers and father lived. So Jacob sent the older brothers to Egypt to buy food. Joseph recognized them but the brothers did not recognize Joseph who





looked like an Egyptian official. Joseph gave the brothers the grain, but accused the brothers of being spies and kept one as a hostage and said to them not to return unless they brought their youngest brother. When Jacob heard what happened, he grieved that he had lost yet another son.

When the grain was gone and it was time to buy more grain the sons reminded Jacob that they could not return to Egypt without their younger brother. Jacob their father said, "If harm comes to the younger son on the journey you will bring my gray hair down to the grave in sorrow."

In Egypt the brothers were taken to the home of Joseph to eat a meal. They feared it was a plan for Joseph to make them slaves. Joseph was deeply moved at sight of his brothers. Afterward the brothers received their grain but Joseph had his servant put his silver cup in the younger brother's sack of grain. The brothers were accused of theft and brought back to Egypt where they feared for their lives and confessed what they had done to their brother Joseph. It was then that Joseph made himself known to his brothers. He sent them back to get their father Jacob and their families and to come live in Egypt.

When the brothers reported what happened to Jacob he could not believe them. So the brothers told Jacob everything Joseph had said. At last Jacob said, "I am convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

When they returned to Egypt, Joseph presented his father before the king who asked him, "How old are you?"

Jacob replied, "The years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty. My years have been few and



difficult, and do not equal the years of my fathers." So Joseph settled his father and brothers in the best part of the land and provided his father and brothers and their families with food. Some time later Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." Joseph brought his two sons to be blessed. Jacob's eyes were failing because of his old age. He said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children." When Joseph placed his sons on his father's knees to receive a blessing, Jacob gave the greater blessing to the younger son whose descendants would one day become a greater people.

After Jacob had blessed the sons of Joseph he said, "I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers." Then Jacob spoke a prophecy about each of his sons. One of the sons would be the ancestor of kings who would come to rule over the people and finally a special king who would inherit the kingdom. Then Jacob gave his sons these instructions: "I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field Abraham bought as a burial place. There Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried. There my father Isaac and his wife were buried. And there I buried my older wife." When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

Joseph threw himself upon his father and wept over him and kissed him. Then Joseph had his father's body prepared for burial while even the Egyptians mourned for him. When the days of mourning were over, Joseph and his brothers brought Jacob's body back to the land of his fathers. They buried him in the cave that Abraham had bought for a burial place for his wife Sarah.



*Talk About the Story:*

1. Who was Jacob's favorite son?
2. What did Jacob think had happened to Joseph?
3. What plan did God have for Joseph in Egypt?
4. When the brothers came to buy grain did they recognize Joseph? Did Joseph recognize them?
5. What requirement did Joseph give the brothers for their next trip to Egypt?
6. Why do you think that Joseph was testing his brothers? (Perhaps to see if they repented of what they did to him)
7. When Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers were they glad to see him? (No, they were afraid he would take revenge)
8. Did Jacob believe that Joseph was alive? (not at first, but the brothers convinced him)
9. What did Joseph tell his brothers to return home and do? (Bring their father and their families to live in Egypt)
10. Remember Abraham's vision and God's prophecy? How was it coming true?
11. When the king of Egypt asked Jacob his age what did he have to say?
12. What did Jacob say about the descendants of one of his sons? (they would be kings and one of them a special king who would inherit the kingdom)
13. What instructions did Jacob give his sons before he died?
14. When Jacob died what did he do? Was it a peaceful death?
15. What did Joseph do when his father died?
16. Did Joseph and his brothers fulfill their father's request about burial? Where did they bury Jacob?
17. Who else was buried in that place?



## 11. Death of Joseph

*Scripture Base:* Genesis 50:15-26

*Introduce the Story:*

This next story reviews the story about Joseph and then ends by telling about Joseph's death at the end of his life.

1. In the previous story about Jacob's death did Joseph forget his family after he was sent to Egypt?
2. Do the listeners think that Joseph loved his brothers even after what they did to him?
3. Read Genesis 37:2 and 50:22. How old was Joseph when he was sold into slavery? (17—37:2) How old when he died? (147—37:28) In those days a man was not considered mature to marry or hold an important job until he was about thirty years of age. During this time Joseph worked for awhile and then was in prison a long time. Here is Joseph's story.

*Tell the Story:*

### The Death and Burial of Joseph

Joseph was the eleventh son of his father Jacob. He was born as the first son of his mother Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife. Later Joseph had a younger brother born as his mother was dying after a difficult birth. Joseph was the favorite son of his father Jacob who made for him a richly ornamented robe. Because he was the favorite of his father the other older brothers were jealous. Jacob also looked with favor upon Joseph's younger brother.

When the older brothers (those of different mothers) had an opportunity, they sold Joseph into slavery and he was carried away into Egypt to live. The brothers conspired to show to their father Joseph's torn and blood-stained robe so that Jacob would believe Joseph to



be dead. In Egypt God blessed Joseph even though he was falsely accused by his Egyptian master's wife and thrown into prison for a long time (probably ten or more years).

When Joseph was able to correctly interpret the king of Egypt's dreams he was rewarded with a high position to gather and store food for a coming time of famine. (now 30 yrs old—41: 46)

When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food he recognized them but they did not recognize Joseph. The brothers were tested by Joseph who wanted to see his younger brother. When the older brothers finally brought Joseph's younger brother to Egypt, it was then that Joseph let his brothers know who he was. He sent them back to tell their father that Joseph was alive after all. Joseph wanted his father and brothers and their families to come to Egypt to live. At last Joseph was reunited with his father as he was with his younger brother.

After the families of Jacob had settled in Egypt and lived there for a time Jacob grew ill and knew that his time to live was short. He called for Joseph to bring his two sons so that he could bless them. Jacob also called his own twelve sons to his bedside and gave a prophecy about each one. Then he instructed his sons to bury him in the cave where Abraham and Sarah were buried. Then Jacob died.

Joseph wept for his dead father and kissed him. Then after Jacob's body was prepared for burial and the time of mourning was over, Joseph and his brothers carried their father Jacob back to the land of their ancestors for burial.

Now that their father was dead, the brothers were fearful that Joseph would take revenge in payment for



what they did to him. The brothers confessed, "We are your slaves."

But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is happening—the saving of lives." So Joseph reassured his brothers and spoke kindly to them.

Joseph stayed in Egypt and lived one hundred and ten years. He saw the sons born to his own two sons. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die." Joseph made his brothers and descendants swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place."

So Joseph died and his body was embalmed according to the custom of the Egyptians and it was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died. But God blessed their families and the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob became exceedingly great so that the land of Egypt was filled with them. (Read God's promise in Genesis 22: 17)

*Talk About the Story:*

1. What do the listeners think about how Joseph's brothers treated him? Did they act justly or unjustly?
2. Did Joseph act justly toward his brothers?
3. What did Joseph say to his brothers when they feared revenge?
4. Was Joseph thinking about himself or his family?
5. In what ways did God bless Joseph, even during his hardships?
6. What did Joseph want his father Jacob to do for Joseph's own sons? (bless them—if there is interest read or tell the incident in Gen 48: 1-20)



7. How did Joseph show his love for his dead father? (kissed him and buried Jacob in the family cave)
8. What request did Joseph make to his brothers and their descendants? (that his bones be carried up from this place—literally, carried back to the family burial cave)
9. Talk about how listeners prepare bodies of their people for burial. If interested tell briefly about how the Egyptians preserved bodies of important people for burial.
10. Has God's promise to Abraham for many descendants come true? Can we say that God knows our future? And can we say that God is faithful to keep his promises?
11. God's promises are very important because later we will see how God's promises also are for us—what God has promised to do for us while we live and even after we die if we believe what He tells us to do.



## 12. Deaths of the Egyptian Firstborn

*Scripture Base:* Exodus 1:12-12

*Introduce the Story:*

Our story continues with a story of both life and death. There was life because God was blessing the descendants of Abraham. There was soon to be death because the king of Egypt did not obey what God said for him to do. The story is about the death of the firstborn in the Egyptian families. This was not just firstborn boys but also among firstborn men of any age. Also included were the firstborn among the cattle as well.

Are you the firstborn in your family? Think what might have happened in your family if you had lived in Egypt at that time. It is a sad story that reminds us of the consequences of failing to honor God's commands.

*Tell the Story:*

### Deaths of the Firstborn in Egypt

Joseph the son of Jacob and grandson of Isaac lived a long time in the land of Egypt. After he died a new king came to power in Egypt who did not know about Joseph. Because God had blessed the descendants of Abraham they were now a great number of people. The new king said, "These people have become much too numerous for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them or they will increase even more." So slave masters were set over the people to oppress them. But the people continued to increase in number for God was blessing them. The Egyptians had a dread of the descendants of Abraham and worked the people ruthlessly, making their lives bitter with hard labor. Then the king gave an order that the midwives were to kill all boy babies when they were born. When this did not stop the increase, the king



then decreed that all boy babies were to be thrown into the river to die.

One mother saved her baby by placing him in a sealed basket in the river. The baby boy was found by the king's daughter and

taken to be raised as her own son. Later when he was grown, Moses saw an Egyptian beating one of Moses' own people. Moses killed the Egyptian and had to flee from Egypt to live as a shepherd in the desert. After forty years had passed God spoke to Moses saying, "I am sending you back to deliver the descendants of Abraham from their misery and slavery."

Moses was to bring God's message to the king to release the people from their slavery and let them leave Egypt. When the king refused, then God worked through Moses to bring curses and destruction upon the land. Nine times God's message to release the people was brought and nine times refused.

At last God said to Moses, "I will bring one last plague on the king and upon all Egypt. Then the king will set you free and indeed drive you out."

"So Moses went before the king and said, "This is what God says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the king who sits on the throne, even to the firstborn of a slave girl and of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout the land worse than ever before.'"

God said to Moses, "The king will refuse to listen to you—so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt." So the king's heart was again hardened and he would not listen.



Moses instructed his people about what they must do to prepare: "You must take a one year old sheep or goat that is without any defect. Take some of the blood of the animal and put it on the sides and over the top of the doorway of your house. Roast the meat whole without breaking any of its bones. Bake some bread without yeast, and prepare some bitter herbs. You must eat all of the meat and burn whatever is remaining. Do not go out of your house." Moses also told the people, "God said, 'I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of the land.'"

The descendants of Abraham who were now called Israelites bowed down and worshiped and did just what God commanded. At midnight God struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of the king who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. The king and all his officials got up during the night, and there was loud wailing throughout the land, for there was not a house without someone dead. But God spared the homes of the Israelites for they had obeyed his command.

At last the king called for Moses and said, "Go, worship your God. Take your flocks and herds and go. Also bless me."

The Egyptians were urging the Israelites to hurry and leave the country saying, "Otherwise we will all die!"

But after the Israelites had departed a short distance again the king and his officials changed their minds and said, "What have we done? We have lost our slaves." So the king gathered the army and went to bring the people back.



Because the Israelites were stopped by the sea they were terrified of the approaching army. God put a pillar of fire before the approaching army to stop them. Then God directed Moses to lift his staff over the waters which then began to divide during the night. When morning came the Israelites passed through the sea on dry land. When the Egyptian army saw what happened and, after God had removed the pillar of fire, the army rushed into the sea to capture the Israelites. Then Moses again lifted his staff over the sea. The chariot wheels of the army became mired in the mud and the waters closed over the Egyptian army so that every last one died.

When the Israelites saw the great power of God and what He did to the Egyptians, they put their trust in God and in Moses his servant. God had told the people that the firstborn male of every womb was holy unto him. Every firstborn son was to be redeemed. This became a practice among the people.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Was God fulfilling his promise to bless the descendants of Abraham?
2. God had chosen Moses to deliver the people from their slavery. How had God helped Moses to deliver the people?
3. Did the king listen to Moses and obey God's command?
4. When the king again and again disobeyed God, what did God say was going to happen?
5. What were the descendants of Abraham—the Israelites—supposed to do to be safe from God's judgment?
6. Notice that for the Israelites to have life, that is, to live, an animal must give up its life. The blood of the animal on the doorway was a sign of life.
7. On the appointed night for the angel to pass through the land of Egypt, what happened among the Egyptian families and even the family of the king?



8. Was anyone harmed among the Israelite families?
9. Did the king agree to let the Israelites go? What did he do?
10. How did God protect the Israelites from the Egyptian army?
11. What did God tell Moses to do to allow the Israelites to escape? Do you think this was by Moses' magic or a miracle provided by God? Did Moses obey what God told him to do?
12. The Israelites were saved from death by obeying God's command to put blood on their doorways. The people were delivered (saved) when Moses obeyed God's command to raise his staff over the sea. Can we say that it is important to do what God tells us to do in order to be saved from harm?
13. We saw that God judged the disobedience of the king. To disobey God is sin. To disobey brings death. Remember the story of Adam and Eve. In the story of the Flood, who died in the flood, the obedient family of Noah or the wicked people who did not believe?
14. Soon in a story we will hear about someone that God sent to deliver us. He obeyed what God told him to do so that we might have life instead of death.





### 13. Deaths of Disrespectful Worshipers

*Scripture Base:* Exodus 20:1-7; 32:1-35; 28:1-4; 29: Leviticus 10:1-10

*Introduce the Story:*

1. How do the listeners show respect toward others in their culture? How do they show respect in their worship?
2. What might be the consequences of failing to show respect to others?
3. In the last story we saw that the king of Egypt failed to respect God by obeying him. Was God pleased with this?
4. What might be the consequences for us if we fail to respect God in worship?

*Tell the Story:*

#### Deaths of Disrespectful Worshipers

Moses led the descendants of Abraham—the Israelites—out of Egypt with God’s help to escape through the sea and to punish the king’s army. Moses led the people to a mountain where God first spoke to Moses and called him to deliver the people from Egypt. At the mountain God commanded Moses to prepare the people to be ready when God would speak to them. The people must not touch the mountain or they would die for God is a holy God.

Through Moses God gave to the people his Holy Law. God commanded that the people must worship Him alone, for he was the only true God who brought the people out of Egypt and slavery. Worshipers must not make any images of God. Also God said that worshipers must respect his holy Name.



God called Moses to go up into the mountain where God spoke to him and gave God’s commandments which were written on tablets of stone. Moses was gone for forty days on the mountain. When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Moses’ brother Aaron and said, “Come, make us a god who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses we don’t know what has happened to him.”

So Aaron answered the people, “Bring the gold earrings that your wives, sons and daughters are wearing.” So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took the earrings and made a gold idol cast in the shape of a calf and fashioned the idol with a tool.

Then the people said, “This is our god, who brought us up out of Egypt.”

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar to God in front of the calf and announced, “Tomorrow there will be a festival to God.” So early the next day the people arose and sacrificed burnt offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and then got up to indulge in revelry.

God said to Moses, “Go down, because the people have become corrupt and quick to turn away from what I commanded them. They have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf and have bowed down to it and said, ‘This is our god who brought us up out of Egypt.’” So Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of God’s Holy Law written by the hand of God.

When Moses approached the camp he saw the calf idol and the people dancing. Moses’ anger burned so he threw the tablets down breaking them. Then Moses took



the gold calf idol the people had made and burned it in fire, ground the idol into powder, and scattered the powder on the water and made the people drink it. Moses saw that the people were running wild for Aaron had let them get out of control. So Moses called out, "Who is on the Lord's side?" The descendants of Jacob's third son Levi came forward. Moses told them to each take a sword and go throughout the camp and put to death those who sinned against God. About three thousand were killed that day.

The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin, now I will ask God to make atonement for your sin."

God said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. When the time comes for me to punish, I will punish the people for their sin." Then God struck the people with a plague because of what they and Aaron had done.

Now God said to Moses, "Bring Aaron and his four sons so they may serve me as priests. Make sacred clothes for Aaron and his sons to wear during worship. You are to consecrate Aaron and his sons so they may serve as priests." So Aaron and his sons were anointed by pouring oil on their heads. Animals were sacrificed for their sins. The sacred clothes were put on Aaron and his sons. Their preparation for priests lasted for seven days. God gave instruction of how they were to worship Him at the Tent of Meeting so the people would know that He was their God who led them out of Egypt and who lives among them.

One day the two oldest sons of Aaron named Nadab and Abihu, took their incense containers and put fire in them and added incense. They offered unauthorized fire before God contrary to God's command. So fire came



out from the presence of God and consumed the two sons so they died before God. Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what God said: 'Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of the people I will be honored.'"

Aaron remained silent. Then Moses summoned two of Aaron's relatives and said to them, "Come, carry your cousins outside the camp, away from the place of worship." So they came and carried the two bodies still wrapped in their robes outside the camp as Moses ordered. Then Moses said to Aaron and his two younger sons, "Do not mourn by disturbing your hair or tearing your clothes or you will die. Your other relatives and the people may mourn for those God has destroyed by fire. You must learn to distinguish between what is holy and what is not holy."

*Talk About the Story:*

1. In God's Holy Law what three things did God say the people must remember? (He alone is God, no images of him, respect his holy Name)
2. What happened while Moses was on the mountain receiving God's Holy Law? What had the people done? What were the people saying about their new god?
3. What did Moses do with the golden calf idol the people had made to be their god?
4. What happened to the people who were worshipping the golden idol and celebrating?
5. Was God pleased with what the people had done? How did God show his displeasure?
6. Aaron and his four sons were to be priests before God when the people worshiped. God gave instructions about how the priests were to lead the worship. What did the two older sons of Aaron do that was wrong?
7. Did this show respect or disrespect for God?
8. How did God punish their disrespect?





9. What instruction did Moses give to Aaron and his sons? (do not mourn by disturbing your hair or tearing your clothes)
10. Is God a holy God? (yes)
11. Must we always show respect for God when worshiping? (yes)
12. How might we show disrespect for God when we worship?
13. Do you believe there is only one true God? Do your people worship any images they say are their gods? Is this showing disrespect for the one true God who created the world and made the first man and woman?
14. In that day God had a special relationship with Abraham's descendants. He promised to bless them. But in return the people must obey God and worship him alone. Soon we will hear a story about the special relationship God wants to have with all people and a special blessing God has for all people who believe him and do what He tells them to do.



## 14. Deaths of Korah and His Followers

*Scripture Base:* Numbers 16:1-50

*Introduce the Story:*

(This is yet another story about disobedience, rebellion and disrespect for God's commands. The story may be skipped if it is not needed. It does show the effect of a man's sin upon himself and his family.)

1. Has anyone ever been guilty of envying the work or position of another person? Envy leads to rebellion and often to disaster for those involved.
2. Listen to this story and see what happened to the men who rebelled and to their families.

*Tell the Story:*

Deaths of Korah and His Followers

There were certain men among the Israelites who became rebellious and rose up against Moses. Joining in the rebellion were two hundred and fifty well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and God is with them. Why do you set yourselves above the people to rule over them?"

When Moses heard these words he bowed to the ground. Then Moses said to the leader Korah and all his followers: "In the morning God will show who belongs to him and who is holy. The one God chooses He will cause to come near. You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers (incense burners) and tomorrow put fire and incense in them before God. The man God chooses is the one who is holy. You people are the ones who have gone too far!"



Then Moses summoned two of the men named Dathan and Abiram. But they said, "We will not come! Isn't it enough that you have brought the people out of a land with plenty of food, only to kill us in the desert? And now you want to rule over us as well. You haven't brought us to a land with plentiful food or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you continue to deceive us? No, we will not come!"

Moses was very angry with the words of the men and asked God not to accept their worship. Then Moses reminded Korah and all of the two hundred and fifty men that they were to put incense in their censers and be prepared to present them before God. So each man took fire and incense and prepared his censer and stood before Moses at the Tent of Meeting (the place of worship where God's presence came).

God spoke to Moses and Aaron, "Separate yourselves from the whole assembly so I can put an end to them."

But Moses and Aaron fell on their faces and cried out, "O God, God of the spirits of all mankind, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man had sinned?" Then Moses warned the assembly, "Move back from the tents of these wicked men! Do not touch anything belonging to them, or you will be swept away because of all their sins." So the people moved away from the tents of the leader Korah and Dathan and Abiram. The men were standing with their wives, children and little ones at the entrances to their tents.

Then Moses said, "This is how you will know God has sent me to do all these things. If these wicked men die a natural death you will know that God has not sent me. But if God brings something totally new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them and all that belongs to them, they will go down alive into the grave. Then



you will know that these men have treated God with contempt."

As soon as Moses finished speaking the ground under Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their families opened its mouth and swallowed their households and all their possessions. So they were taken alive down into the grave. Then fire came from God and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who had joined the rebellion and were offering incense.

All this happened to remind the Israelites that no one except a descendant of Aaron that God had appointed should come to burn incense before God, or they would become like Korah and his followers.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. What complaint did the rebellious leaders bring against Moses?
2. How were the rebellious leaders to know who God had chosen?
3. What did Moses tell the rebellious leaders to do?
4. What did Dathan and Abiram say when Moses summoned them? (We won't come, who are you to rule over us?)
5. When God threatened to destroy all the assembly (possibly because they were in sympathy with Korah) what did Moses ask of God? (Will you be angry with the whole assembly when only one man had sinned?)
6. What was to be the sign if Moses really were the one that God had sent to lead the people?
7. Did it happen as Moses said it would happen? (yes, the earth opened its mouth to swallow the leaders and their families and possessions)
8. What happened to the two hundred and fifty community leaders who joined the rebellion?



9. Do you think what happened taught the people a lesson? Later another writer in God's Word said: "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did...All these things happened to them and were written down as warnings for us..." (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11)
10. What can we learn from this story about Korah and his followers? (we must be careful about criticizing the people God has chosen to lead)
11. Was God pleased with Korah and those who joined his rebellion?
12. Do you think God is pleased with you? Have you done anything that might displease God?



## 15. Deaths of Miriam, Aaron and Moses

*Scripture Base:* Numbers 12:1-15; 20:1-13, 24-29; Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 34:1-12

### *Introduce the Story:*

In the beginning death came into the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. We have continued to see that death often came from the disobedience or rebellion of wicked people. In this next story we are going to see that death came also to the God's leaders when they dishonored God by disobeying. It is a reminder that we cannot save ourselves from God's wrath or judgment. Unless God provides a way to live no one can escape death.

### *Tell the Story:*

#### Deaths of Miriam, Aaron and Moses

Miriam was the older sister of Moses. She had helped to save Moses' life when he was a baby. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and God opened the sea for them, Miriam took a tambourine and all the women followed her dancing and praising God for saving the people (Exodus 15:20-21). Later Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses, criticizing him for his wife. They were saying, "Has God spoken only through Moses? Hasn't God also spoken through us?"

God heard what Miriam and Aaron were saying. So God called for Moses, Aaron and Miriam to come before his presence. God asked Miriam and Aaron to step forward and said to them, "With my servant Moses I speak face-to-face and not through visions. Why were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" So the anger of God burned against Miriam and Aaron. When God's presence departed Miriam stood covered with leprosy.



When Aaron saw what happened he cried to Moses, "Please do not hold against us the sin we have foolishly committed." So Moses cried out, "O God, please heal Miriam!"

Then God said, "If Miriam's father had spit in her face she would have been in disgrace for seven days. Confine Miriam outside the camp for seven days and then she can be brought back." Later when the Israelites arrived in a desert place Miriam died and was buried there.

At that same desert place there was no water for the people. So the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to die in this desert where there is no water or food?" Moses and Aaron left the people and went to the Tent of Meeting where they fell face down before God.

"Take your staff and your brother Aaron," God said, "and gather the people together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the people and their livestock to drink."

So Moses took his staff and with Aaron gathered the people in front of the rock and said to the people, "Listen, you rebels! Must we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out so that all the people and their livestock could drink.

But God said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me enough to honor me in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring the people into the land I promised to give them" Later God said to Moses, "Aaron will be gathered to his people. He will not enter the land I am giving the Israelites, because both of you rebelled against my command. So remove Aaron's priestly



garments and put them upon his son. Aaron will be gathered to his people. He will die." Moses did as God commanded. Aaron died there on top of the mountain. When Moses and Aaron's son came down the mountain the people learned that Aaron had died. They mourned for him thirty days.

Moses had led the Israelites out of Egypt and across the desert to the border of the land God was giving them. There Moses reminded the people of all that God had commanded and warned the people that God would only bless if they obeyed His commandments. Moses said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day...they are not just idle words for you—they are your life."

On that same day God told Moses to go up on the mountain to view the land God promised to give the Israelites as their possession. God said, "There on the mountain you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died and was gathered to his people. This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites and did not uphold my holiness among the people."

Then Moses climbed the mountain and viewed the land. So Moses the servant of God died there on the mountain just as God said. God buried Moses in a nearby valley but no one knows where his grave is. Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. The people wept and mourned for Moses thirty days.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Do you remember the story of Miriam? What did she do that honored God? What did Miriam do that dishonored God? How did God have mercy on Miriam?



2. When the people needed water what did God tell Moses and Aaron to do to get water?
3. What did Moses and Aaron do that dishonored God?
4. What would be Moses and Aaron's punishment because of their disobedience?
5. Who died first? What was taken from him and given to his son? (Aaron's priestly garments were given to his son)
6. What did God allow Moses to do before he died?
7. Who buried Moses? Did anyone know where his grave was?
8. Do you think God was just in his punishment of Moses?
9. What if God were to punish you because of your disobedience to God's commands?
10. Did you know that God's Word says that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory and the wages of sin is death? (Romans 3:23; 6:23) Also God's Word says, "The soul that sins, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). Soon we will have a story about how to live even though we are sinners.



## 16. Disaster for Achan's Family

*Scripture Base:* Joshua 6:18-19; 7:1-26

*Introduce the Story:*

1. What might be the consequences of our personal wrongdoing? Consequences for us, for our family, for our community?
2. Can we hide our wrongdoing so that no one knows about it? What if someone did know about it?
3. In that day when God said that certain things were devoted to destruction or for his treasury, the people were to obey.
4. In today's story there was wrongdoing, someone did know about it, there were consequences for the person, his family and others among his people.

*Tell the Story:*

### Disaster for Achan's Family

After the death of Moses a new leader named Joshua was chosen to lead the Israelites into the land that God had promised to give them. There was a problem for the land was already occupied by a people who were living in great sin against God. So God was taking the land from this sinful people and giving it those He favored.

The first strong city the Israelites came to was Jericho which was tightly shut up. God provided a plan to overthrow the city. The leader Joshua brought a warning from God saying, "Keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. If you disobey you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring disaster upon it. All the silver and gold and bronze and iron are sacred to God and must go into his treasury."



The battle was successful and the city was overthrown and its inhabitants destroyed with the sword—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys. But one of the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things. He took some of them and God's anger burned against him. Soon the Israelites came to the next city and thought to conquer it just as easily as they had conquered Jericho. Instead the soldiers of Israel were defeated, some killed and the rest chased away. Then Joshua tore his clothes in anguish and cried out to God, "Why did this happen? Now people will hear about our defeat."

God said to Joshua, "Stand up! The people have sinned. They have violated my covenant which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things, they have stolen, they have lied, they have put the devoted things with their own possessions. I will not help you any more unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction."

So Joshua told the people to purify themselves and be prepared to stand before God tribe-by-tribe. He that is caught with the devoted things shall be destroyed by fire, along with all that belongs to him for he has violated God's covenant and done a disgraceful thing."

Early the next morning the people stood tribe-by-tribe. The tribe of Judah was chosen, then a certain clan, and then the family of Achan was taken. Joshua said to Achan, "Tell me, my son what you have done. Do not hide it from me."

Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the God of Israel. This is what I have done: When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe, pieces of silver and some gold, I took them and hid them in the ground under my tent."



Joshua sent messengers who ran to Achan's tent and found the devoted things and brought them to Joshua who spread them before God. Then Joshua together with all the people of Israel took Achan and the devoted things, his sons and daughters, his animals and tent and all that he had to the valley. Joshua said to Achan, "Why have you brought this disaster on us? God will bring disaster on you."

The people stoned Achan and his family, burned them and covered them with a large heap of stones. Then God turned from his fierce anger and helped the Israelites to defeat the people that Israel had been unable to defeat due to Achan's sin.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Did the Israelites need God's help to defeat the people living in the strong cities?
2. What warning did God give to the people about devoted things?
3. Did God give success to the Israelites in their first battle?
4. What happened in their second battle? Why did this happen?
5. Did God see what Achan had taken after the first battle? Did God punish Achan then?
6. How did Achan's sin affect others among Achan's own people? (some died in the battle)
7. How was Achan found out? What did Joshua ask the people to do?
8. When Achan was chosen what did Joshua ask him to do? Did Achan confess his wrongdoing?
9. What did the people do with Achan and his family, animals and possessions?
10. Who suffered as a result of Achan's wrongdoing? Only Achan? Or his family? Or his animals? What about the soldiers who were killed in battle?





11. Can we say that when we sin, that God sees it and knows about it? What effect might our sin have upon us, our family and upon our people?
12. What if someone else took our punishment for wrongdoing so that we did not have to suffer? God had a plan for this to happen one day. Soon we will hear about that story of how we can have life by obeying what God tells us to do.



## 17. Death of Joshua

*Scripture Base:* Joshua 1:1-18; 13:1; 23:1-16; 24:1-32

*Introduce the Story:*

Do you know any of the great leaders among your people? What advice did they give before they died? Was their life a good example for all to follow? What about your life, will it be a good example? What advice will you give your children or family before your death? Here is the story of Joshua.

*Tell the Story:*

### Death of Faithful Joshua

After the death of Moses, God said to Joshua who was Moses' assistant, "Moses my servant is dead. Now then you and all these people get ready to cross the river into the land I am about to give to the descendants of Abraham. I will give you every place where you set your foot. As I was with Moses so I will be with you; I will never leave you or forsake you." Then God instructed Joshua to be strong and courageous and very careful to obey all the law that God gave to Moses, not to turn aside to the right or to the left.

After Joshua instructed the people with the words of God the people replied, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go."

God was faithful to go before the people and cause a great fear to spread throughout the land among the inhabitants. God gave Joshua victory over the people so that he could possess the land. The conquest took many years and was still not finished. When Joshua was old and well advanced in years, God said to him, "You are very old and there are still large areas of land to be taken over." So Joshua divided up the land among the



tribes and families of the Israelites so they could possess the land.

A long time had now passed and God had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them. Joshua called all the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel and said to them: "I am old and well advanced in years. You have seen everything your God has done to all the nations for your sake. Now be very strong; be careful to obey all that is in the law that God gave Moses. Do not call upon the gods of the nations that remain among you. You must not serve them or bow down to them. Be very careful to serve only the LORD your God. Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart that not one of the good promises that God gave you has failed. If you break God's covenant and serve the gods of the nations, God's anger will burn against you and you will quickly perish from the good land God has given you."

Then Joshua assembled all the people of the tribes and said, "Now fear God and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped in their homeland and in Egypt, and serve God only. As for me and my household we will serve God."

The people replied, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him."

On that day Joshua drew up a covenant and then took a large stone and set it up under an oak tree. "See!" Joshua said to all the people, "This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words God has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God."

Then Joshua sent the people away, each to his own inheritance. After these things, Joshua, the servant of



God, died at the age of one hundred and ten years. He was buried in the land of his inheritance in the hill country. Also Joseph's bones which had been brought up from Egypt were buried in the land which Jacob his father had purchased for one hundred pieces of silver. This became an inheritance for Joseph's descendants.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Why do you think God chose Joshua to take the place of Moses? (he was faithful to obey God and was courageous)
2. What command did God give to Joshua? (be careful to obey all the law)
3. Did God give Joshua and the Israelites victory to possess the land? (yes)
4. After many years and Joshua was old what did he do about the unfinished work of possessing the land? (he gave portions of the land to each family so they could continue to possess it)
5. When Joshua called all the elders, leaders, judges and officials what did he say they must do and what must they not do? (must be careful to obey all God's law, must not bow down or serve the gods of the nations around them)
6. What were the people told to throw away? (the gods their forefathers had served)
7. What were Joshua and his family going to do? (serve God only)
8. What did Joshua say about God's good promises?
9. What did the people say they would do?
10. When Joshua had completed all that God had for him to do, he died and was buried. He was faithful throughout his life and careful to obey God's law. Joshua's name means God is salvation. Soon someone with a name that means the same thing will bring God's salvation to all people who will listen and accept it. His death will bring us life.





## 18. Death of Samson

*Scripture Base:* Judges 13: 1-5, 24-25; 14: 1-6, 12-20; 16: 1-31

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Following the death of Joshua God raised up judges to lead the Israelites who were descendants of Abraham. When the people sinned and God judged their sin and sent enemies to punish the Israelites, they would repent and cry out to God to deliver them. The judges were the deliverers God sent.
2. In this story you will hear about a kind of vow or special covenant between God and persons who are dedicated to him. There are certain rules to follow and consequences if they are not followed. Here is the story of Samson.

*Tell the Story:*

### Death of Samson

Again the Israelites had done evil in the eyes of God so that they were given over to an enemy nation for forty years. There was a certain man who had a wife who was barren and had remained childless. One day an angel appeared to her and said, "You are barren, but you will conceive and have a son. Now see to it that he drinks no wine or other fermented drink, or eats anything that is unclean, or that no razor shall touch his hair because he is set apart to God from his birth. He will deliver Israel from the hands of their enemy."

The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and God blessed him and the Spirit of God began to stir him. One day Samson went down to a village belonging to the enemy and there saw a young woman. Samson said to his mother and father, "I have seen a young woman. Now get her for me as my wife."



Samson's parents objected to his marrying such a woman. His parents did not know that it was God directing Samson to confront Israel's enemy. Along the way suddenly a young lion came roaring toward Samson. The Spirit of God came upon Samson in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands. Later Samson passed by that place again and saw bees in the carcass of the dead lion which was unclean for Samson to touch. He stopped and ate some honey. Samson did marry the woman and at the wedding feast gave a riddle for the enemy guests. When they could not answer it, the guests went to the wife and threatened to burn her and her father's household. The wife cried for seven days of the feast until Samson finally told her the answer which she quickly gave to the guests. This angered Samson. After paying those who answered the riddle, Samson went home leaving his wife who was given to another man.

On another day Samson went again to a city of the enemy where he saw a prostitute and stayed the night with her. When the enemy learned that Samson was there, they surrounded the city and planned to kill him. At midnight Samson got up and removed the two gates to the city and carried them away.

Some time later Samson again fell in love with an enemy woman named Delilah. The enemy leaders went to her and said, "See if you can lure Samson into revealing the secret of his great strength so we can overpower him. We will richly reward you."

So Delilah said to Samson, "Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued."

Samson answered her, "If anyone ties me with seven fresh leather thongs that have not dried, I'll become weak as any other man."



Then Delilah made Samson sleep and tied him with seven new thongs. The enemy leaders were hidden in the room ready to capture Samson. Then Delilah called out, "Samson, the enemy is here!" Samson awoke and snapped the thongs as easily as pieces of string.

Two more times Delilah asked Samson for the secret of his strength and Samson told her what to do. But each time when Delilah said the enemy was there, Samson awoke and broke free. Day after day Delilah nagged and prodded Samson until he was tired to death. At last Samson told Delilah everything about his vow and that if his head were shaved, his strength would leave him. Once again Delilah caused Samson to sleep and while he was sleeping Delilah called a man to shave Samson's head.

Then she called out that the enemy was present. Samson awoke and thought, "I'll go out as before and shake myself free." But he did not know that God's presence had left him. The enemy seized Samson and put out his eyes, bound him in bronze chains, and set him to work grinding grain in the prison. But the hair on Samson's head had begun to grow again after it had been shaved.

The enemy leaders assembled to offer a great sacrifice to their god and to celebrate saying, "Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands." While the enemy was celebrating they shouted, "Bring out Samson to entertain us." So Samson was brought from the prison and he performed for them.

When Samson was stood among the great pillars holding up the roof he asked a servant to put him where he could touch the pillars so he could lean against them. The temple was filled with men and women and all the rulers were present. Even gathered on the roof were three thousand who came to watch Samson. Then



Samson prayed to God, "O Sovereign Lord, remember me. O God, please strengthen me just once more and let me get revenge on these people for my eyes." Then Samson reached out his hands to the pillars and cried out, "Let me die with the enemy!" He pushed with all his might so that the temple fell upon the rulers killing all the people in the temple.

Samson's brothers and his father's whole family went down to get him and brought him back and buried Samson in the tomb of his father. Samson had ruled Israel for twenty years.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Do you remember in the story of Moses how God protected and delivered the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham?
2. Also do you remember how Moses and Joshua warned the Israelites not to turn away from God but to obey him fully?
3. The Israelites had disobeyed God again and now their punishment was to be ruled over by an enemy people.
4. Had God forgotten the people? How did God begin a plan to deliver the Israelites from their enemy?
5. What conditions or commands did God give Samson's parents?
6. Who caused Samson to desire to have an enemy wife? (see Judges 13:25 and 14:4)
7. Was this a successful marriage?
8. What evidence did we see of Samson's great strength?
9. Again Samson fell in love with another enemy woman. What did the leaders ask her to do?
10. When Delilah asked Samson the secret of his great strength, did he tell her the truth?
11. What finally caused Samson to reveal the secret of his great strength?
12. What happened when Samson's head was shaved?



13. How was Samson humiliated? (his eyes put out and chained to work as an animal grinding grain in prison)
14. Why did the enemy leaders and people gather at their temple?
15. Why did they ask for Samson to be brought out?
16. What did Samson ask the servant to help him do?
17. What did Samson ask God to do for him? Did God hear Samson's cry?
18. What happened to the people in the temple?
19. Was Samson's death an honorable death?
20. In spite of Samson's disobedience to both God and his parents, was God able to use him to punish the enemy people who ruled over the Israelites? Was it Samson's great strength or God's great power that punished the enemy nation?
21. What if God provided us with a deliverer who had God's great power to deliver us from our enemy who tempts us to sin? Would you believe in that deliverer or Savior?



## 19. Deaths of Naomi's Sons

*Scripture Base:* Ruth 1-4

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Has anyone in the group experienced the death of a husband or wife?
2. Is anyone among the listeners barren, not able to have children? Who is the one not able to produce a child—the husband or the wife? Is it always the wife's fault?
3. How do the choices we make in life affect us, our loved ones, or even our future generations?
4. What is the most important choice we must make in this life? Here is the story of a young woman who lost her husband, who had no children and who made the most important choice of her life that led to great blessing.

*Tell the Story:*

### Dead Sons and Husbands

During the days when judges ruled over the land of Israel, there was a famine in the land. There was a man from the town of Bethlehem, together with his wife and two sons, who went to live for a while in the neighboring land of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech. His wife's name was Naomi and his sons names were Mahlon and Kilion.

After they had lived in the land of Moab for a while, Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died and Naomi was left with her two sons. The sons married had Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died. So Naomi was left a widow without her husband and without her two sons to care for her.



When Naomi heard that God had provided food for the people back in Bethlehem, she and her two daughters-in-law left the place where they had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Naomi's own people.

Along the way Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May God show kindness to you as you have shown to your dead husbands and to me. May God grant that you find rest in the home of another husband." Then Naomi kissed each one as they wept aloud and they said to Naomi, "We will go back with you to your people."

But Naomi replied, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons who could become your husbands? Return home, daughters, I am too old to have another husband. Even if I had a husband tonight and gave birth to sons—would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters, it is more bitter for me than for you. The three women wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth clung to Naomi who said, "Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her to return home.

Ruth did accompany Naomi back to Naomi's own people and found work at harvest time in the field of a good man named Boaz who was kind to Ruth. Later Ruth told Naomi about Boaz in whose field she had worked.



At threshing time Naomi told Ruth to go to where Boaz was sleeping and lie down at his feet and Boaz would do what was right. Boaz was pleased that Ruth had chosen him over the other men. So Boaz agreed to purchase the land belonging to Naomi his relative and along with the land came Ruth the widow of Naomi's son. God enabled Ruth to conceive and she gave birth to a son. The local women said to Naomi, "Praise be to God, for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better than seven sons, has given birth." Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap and cared for him. The women living there said, "Naomi has a son!" That son became an ancestor of Israel's king. After many years there would be another descendant—the king God sent from heaven.

*Talk About the Story:*

A Chinese woman, after hearing the story of Ruth, said, "God blessed Ruth and gave her a son because she did the right thing—she did not abandon her dead husband's spirit but accompanied it back to his own people. But Orpah did not do right for she abandoned her dead husband's spirit and returned to her own people."

Are there beliefs among the listeners about what someone like Ruth should do when their husband died?

1. What important choice did Ruth make that changed her life?
2. What did Ruth's choice say about her love for Naomi?
3. What about Orpah's choice? In the land of Moab it was customary to sacrifice one's child in the fire to the false god of Moab. This was detestable to the Lord God of Israel.
4. Do you think that Ruth was lucky finding the field of a good man in which to work? Or was God helping Ruth?
5. What advice did Naomi give Ruth at threshing time?



6. Was Boaz pleased when Ruth chose him?
7. What did Boaz do to get Ruth as his wife?  
(purchased the property belonging to the dead sons of Naomi)
8. How else did God bless Ruth? (gave her a son)
9. In that day when all the men in a family died then it was the responsibility of a kinsman to redeem the land—that is, to buy the land to keep it in the family. That person was called a kinsman redeemer.
10. Soon in another story we will hear of another kinsman redeemer who is kin to us and who came to redeem us and give us an inheritance.
11. To be redeemed and to receive this inheritance you must make an important choice just like Ruth. Will you be ready?



## 20. Deaths of King Saul and Son Jonathan

*Scripture Base:* 1 Samuel 8:1-21; 10:1-7; 13:1-14; 15:1-22; 16:14; 28:1-19; 31:1-13

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Among your people, how are leaders chosen? What qualifications must they have?
2. What happens if a leader commits wrongdoing? Who is he accountable to?
3. God gave to Moses commandments about sacrifices. Only a priest approved by God could offer a sacrifice.
4. In today's story the people wanted a king because the appointed judges were dishonest. But soon their king began to have trouble because of his disobedience. Finally it led to his downfall in a tragic way.

*Tell the Story:*

Deaths of King Saul and Son Jonathan

The last of the judges over Israel was Samuel. His mother was barren and prayed to God for a son. God answered her prayer. She dedicated her son to God and let Samuel grow up in the place of worship. One night God had called Samuel and he answered, "Here I am." God was with Samuel as he grew up and let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. God revealed his word to Samuel and Samuel's word came to all Israel.

As Samuel grew old he appointed his own sons as judges over Israel. But Samuel's sons did not walk in his ways. The sons turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice. So the elders of Israel gathered together and said to Samuel, "You are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king to lead us like the other nations have." Samuel was angry to hear these words because the people were rejecting God as their king.



But God said to Samuel, "Listen to the people and warn them solemnly what a king over them will do." The people refused to listen and demanded a king. So God told Samuel to give the people a king.

Samuel was led to meet a young man named Saul who was an impressive man without equal among the Israelites, and he was a head taller than any of the others. Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him saying, "God has appointed you leader over his inheritance. The Spirit of God will come upon you in power, and you will be changed into a different person. Do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you." The people confirmed Saul as king in the presence of God. Then the Israelites held a great celebration.

In the beginning Saul was a good king and victorious over the enemies of Israel. Saul had a son named Jonathan who attacked an enemy outpost causing the enemy to assemble to fight Israel. But soon the men of Israel saw their situation was critical as they were outnumbered making their army hard-pressed. So the men began to hide in caves and among the trees, and some even ran away. Saul waited seven the days, the time set by prophet Samuel for offering a sacrifice to God for victory. But Samuel did not come. So Saul said, "Bring me the burnt offering." Then Saul offered up the sacrifice.

Just then prophet Samuel arrived and King Saul went out to greet him. Samuel asked, "What have you done?"

Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were afraid and scattering and that you did not come at the set time, I thought that I must seek God's favor. So I felt compelled to offer the sacrifice."



"You acted foolishly," Samuel said, "You have not kept God's command. Now your kingdom will not endure. God has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of the people, because you have not kept God's command."

At another time God sent word that a certain wicked people must be totally destroyed. Instead Saul and his army kept the enemy king alive and some of the best animals. When Samuel arrived Saul said, "I have carried out God's instructions."

Samuel said, "What then is the bleating of sheep in my ears? Do I hear cattle? Why did you not obey God? Now He has rejected you as king." Saul did confess his disobedience but said that he was afraid of his people so he did what they wanted. To this Samuel said, "To obey is better than sacrifice."

The Spirit of God had now departed from Saul and God sent an evil spirit to torment him. God had anointed a young man named David as the new king. Several times Saul tried to kill David but did not succeed. David and Saul's son Jonathan became good friends and Jonathan helped David to escape when his father Saul tried to harm David.

Samuel had died and King Saul had expelled all the witches and mediums from the land. When a large enemy army came against Saul he tried to inquire of God about the outcome of the battle. But God did not answer him. So Saul said to his assistants, "Find me a medium with a familiar spirit, so I may go and inquire of her." Saul disguised himself and went to the medium and asked that she conjure up the spirit of Samuel. When Saul saw the spirit he bowed to the ground and said, "I am in great distress for God has turned away from me."





Then Samuel said, "Because you did not obey God and carry out his commands, He will hand you over to the enemy tomorrow. You and your sons will join me here in the grave."

Later the same enemy nation fought against Israel and the Israelite soldiers fled before them. Jonathan was killed and also his brothers. The fighting grew fierce around King Saul and the archers overtook him and wounded Saul critically. Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and kill me, or the enemy will come and abuse me." But the armor-bearer would not do it. So Saul fell on his own sword and died that day along with his three sons. The enemy came and stripped the bodies. When they found Saul and his sons, the enemy cut off their heads and hung their bodies on the temple wall of their idols. When the Israelites heard what happened, they went and took down the bodies of Saul and his sons and burned them and buried their bones under a tree and then fasted for seven days in mourning.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Was Samuel a leader chosen by God?
2. What about Samuel's sons? What kind of leaders were they?
3. What two reasons did the people have for wanting a king? (Samuel's sons were dishonest and to be like other nations)
4. Was Saul a good choice in the beginning? What did God give Saul to help him? (God's Spirit)
5. In what way did Saul disobey God the first time? Did he believe that he had done the right thing? Was it more important to obey or to offer sacrifice?
6. What kind of man was God looking for to replace Saul as king? (a man after God's own heart)
7. When Saul disobeyed God a second time what did he fail to do? Was God pleased?



8. What did God take away from Saul when he continued to disobey God? (God's Spirit) What did God give to Saul to torment him because of his disobedience? (an evil spirit)
9. Later when Saul again faced a large number of the enemy in battle and he asked God for help—Did God answer Saul? Who did Saul turn to for a word about the outcome of the battle? (a medium or witch)
10. Whose spirit did Saul want? (Samuel's)
11. What did Samuel say would happen to Saul and his sons? (they would soon join Samuel in that place of the dead)
12. Did the prophecy against Saul and his sons come true?
13. When he was wounded what did Saul fear would happen? (the enemy would abuse him)
14. How did Saul die? Was it an honorable death?
15. What happened to Saul and his son's bodies after they died? Was this honorable or shameful?
16. What effect did Saul's disobedience have upon his family?
17. If you are disobedient to what God wants you to do, what effect will it have on your family?
18. Do you want to obey God? Soon you will hear what God wants you to do.





## 21. Death of Bathsheba's Husband

*Scripture Base:* 2 Samuel 23:13-17; 11:1-12:23

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Have you ever been betrayed by a good friend?
2. Have you ever betrayed another person who was your friend?
3. What consequences might our sins have for us, our families, and for others among our friends?

*Tell the Story:*

Death of Bathsheba's Husband

David was the new king that Samuel anointed to take Saul's place. But David was very young while Saul was still king. Several times Saul had tried to kill David but each time God helped David to escape. After Saul's death a nearby enemy nation was very powerful and had again invaded the land of Israel. During those days David hid from the presence of the enemy and was accompanied by his bodyguards.

One day David longed for a drink of water from the well at his hometown. Three of the bodyguards risked their lives to get the water for David. But he would not drink the water but poured it out before God. David said, "Far be it from me to drink this water. It represents the blood of my men who got it at risk of their lives." Two of the men among David's bodyguards were a soldier named Eliam (also called Ammiel) who had a daughter named Bathsheba, and a soldier named Uriah who was Bathsheba's husband.

David's army had gone to fight against another enemy but David remained at home in Jerusalem. One night when he could not sleep, David walked on the roof of his palace. On a nearby roof David saw a beautiful



woman bathing. David sent a servant to find out who she was. The servant returned and said, "She is Bathsheba the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah. Then David sent for Bathsheba and he slept with her and sent her back home. Later Bathsheba sent word that she was with child.

So David sent word to his army commander and asked that Uriah be sent back home. When Uriah arrived, David asked how the battle was going. Then David said, "Go down to your house and spend some time with your wife." David even sent a gift for Uriah to give his wife. But Uriah did not go home, instead he slept on the palace steps with the servants. When David was told that Uriah did not go home he asked Uriah, "Haven't you just come from a long distance? Why didn't you go to your home?"

Uriah replied, "The army is staying in tents camped in open fields, how could I go to my house to eat and drink and sleep with my wife?"

Then David told Uriah, "Remain here one more day, and tomorrow I will send you back. David invited Uriah to eat and drink with him and even made Uriah drunk. But again in the evening Uriah did not go home, instead he slept on a mat with the servants. In the morning David called for Uriah and gave him a message for the army commander. In the message David instructed that the commander was to place Uriah in the front of the fighting, and when it was fiercest, the army was to draw back leaving Uriah to be struck down and die. The army commander did as David instructed and Uriah was killed.

A messenger was sent to David to tell him what happened. When David heard that Uriah was dead, he replied to the messenger, "Tell the commander, 'Don't be upset. The sword devours one as well as another'." In this way David dismissed the death of Uriah.

When Bathsheba learned that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. After the period of mourning, David sent for Bathsheba and she became one of David's wives. But the thing that David had done displeased God.

God sent a certain prophet named Nathan to David who told David a story about a poor man who had one little sheep. Nearby lived a rich man who had many sheep. One day a guest came to visit the rich man who took the poor man's sheep and prepared it to feed the guest. When David heard this story he became very angry and said, "As surely as God lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! God would have given you anything you wanted. Why did you despise God's word by doing what is evil in God's eyes? You had Uriah struck down by an enemy sword. Now the sword will never depart from your house. Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you."

Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against God." David composed songs telling of his sin and repentance and asking for God to restore the joy of his salvation.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. In the beginning what did God have to say about the man who would replace King Saul? (a man after God's own heart)
2. Why didn't David drink the water that he had asked for?
3. Who were among David's body guards? (Eliam, the father of Bathsheba and Uriah her husband)

4. When David saw Bathsheba, what did he desire of her? Did David know who Bathsheba was? (Read Exodus 20: 17 or Leviticus 20: 10)
5. When David found that Bathsheba was pregnant, how did he plan to cover his sin? Did David's plan work? Who was more honorable—David or Uriah?
6. Was David upset when he learned that Uriah was dead?
7. Did David understand Nathan's story? (Read Exodus 22: 1)
8. What would be the consequences for David's family because of his sin?
9. Did David confess his sin?
10. Even when we repent and confess our sin there may still be serious consequences for us, our families and for others.
11. Some of these consequences are in the next story about David's sons.
12. In one of David's psalms he said:  
38: 4 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.  
38: 18 I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.
13. In another psalm David said:  
51: 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.  
51: 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.  
51: 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.  
51: 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...  
51: 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
51: 11 Do not cast me from your presence, or take your Holy Spirit from me.  
51: 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.



51:16 You do not take delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it...

51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart...



## 22. Deaths of David's Four Sons

*Scripture Base:* 2 Samuel 12:15-24; 13:1-39; 15:1-12; 18:1-17, 31-33; 1 Kings 1:1-52; 2:13-25

Introduce the Story:

1. This story of the Deaths of David's Four Sons completes the story of Death of Bathsheba's Husband. It shows the consequences of the prophetic condemnation David laid on himself after hearing the prophet Nathan's story.
2. One theme of these four stories is the consequences of sin upon one's self and family. Ask the listeners: Among your people what effect does your wrongdoing have on others? What effect does it have on the individual?
3. Ask the listeners: If you do wrong and no one sees you, will you go unpunished? Who sees you? (Read Proverbs 15:3)

*Tell the Story:*

### Deaths of David's Four Sons

After David coveted Bathsheba and committed adultery with her and then had her husband Uriah murdered, the prophet Nathan told David a story about two men and a sheep. The rich man took the poor man's sheep and served it to his guest. When David heard the story he burned with anger and said, "That man must pay for the lamb four times over!" Then the prophet said to David, "You are the man!"

David took Bathsheba to be his wife. She was pregnant with David's child. After Bathsheba gave birth to her son, God caused the baby to become sick. David pleaded with God for the baby's life. David fasted and spent nights lying on the ground. The elders of the household stood beside David to get him up and to get



David to eat, but he refused. On the seventh day the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell him that the child was dead for fear that David would do something desperate. When David noticed his servants whispering among themselves he asked, "Is the child dead?"

"Yes," the servants replied, "he is dead." Then David got up, washed himself and changed his clothes and went to worship God. David comforted his wife Bathsheba who conceived and gave birth to another son and named him Solomon.

In the course of time Amnon, the oldest son of David, fell in love with the sister of Absalom, another son of David. Tamar was a virgin and it seemed impossible for Amnon to do anything to her. Amnon's cousin who was very shrewd said to him, "Go to bed and pretend to be ill. When your father comes to see you ask that your sister Tamar might come and prepare food in your sight and let you eat it from her hand."

So Amnon lay down and pretended to be ill. When Tamar came, Amnon sent everyone else out of the room. As Tamar brought the food to Amnon's bed he seized her and said, "Come to bed with me, my sister." But Tamar replied, "Don't do such a wicked thing! How can I get rid of my disgrace?" Amnon refused to listen to Tamar and so he raped her. Then Amnon hated her and sent Tamar away. When Absalom heard what happened he hated Amnon but said nothing to him.

Two years later at sheepshearing time Absalom invited his brothers including Amnon to come. Then Absalom said to his men, "Listen! When Amnon is in high spirits from drinking wine strike him down and kill him!" So Absalom's men killed Amnon. The other brothers escaped to David and told what happened. Absalom fled to another country. David mourned for



Absalom every day after he was consoled concerning Amnon's death.

After some time Absalom was brought back, but David refused to see him. Absalom began a conspiracy to take David's place as king. Absalom sent secret messengers throughout the land announcing that he would be crowned king. When the people of Israel joined Absalom, David fled Jerusalem. To spite his father Absalom slept with his father's concubines on the roof of the palace so that everyone could see he was now king. Absalom and his men followed David to attack him. David organized his troops and wanted to go with them. But they would not let David. Then David said, "Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake." In battle David's army was prevailing and defeating Absalom's troops. Then Absalom happened to meet David's men. Absalom was riding a mule and his long hair was flying as he rode under a tree; his long hair was caught in the tree branches. Absalom was left hanging in the air while the mule kept on going. When the commander of David's army heard about Absalom he took three spears and plunged them into Absalom's heart. Then others came and struck Absalom so that he died. They threw Absalom in a big pit in the forest and covered him with rocks. When David heard what happened he cried, "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you."

When David was very old and could not keep warm, a very beautiful girl was brought to care for David and sleep alongside him. Another of David's sons named Adonijah said, "I will be king." So he got horses and chariots ready with fifty men to run ahead of him. When Nathan the prophet heard what was happening he went to David and asked who was to be king. David sent for Bathsheba and said, "Solomon your son will be king after me." So Solomon was anointed as king. When Adonijah and the guests at his celebration heard what

happened they became alarmed. Adonijah fled to the altar and held to it. He begged Solomon for his life and he was spared. But Solomon said, "If evil is found in him, he will die."

After David died his next oldest son Adonijah came to ask Bathsheba for David's concubine of his old age. "Very well," Bathsheba replied, "I will ask the king for you."

Solomon was not pleased at the request. He said, "Why does Adonijah make this request? You might as well request the kingdom for him as he is my older brother. May God deal with me ever so severely if Adonijah does not pay for this with his life." So Solomon gave orders that Adonijah be struck down and so he died.

"That man must pay four times over," David had said when Nathan told his story. Four sons had died. But the prophet also had said that the sword would never depart from David's house.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. What did David say the man must do who took the poor man's sheep?
2. What do the listeners do about retribution and restoration among their people? Do they have a similar law about restoring what is taken?
3. The love child of David and Bathsheba—Had it done anything wrong? Why do they think God allowed the child to die?
4. Amnon was David's oldest son by a different mother than Absalom and his sister Tamar. Was what Amnon did to Tamar considered wrong in the listener's society? Talk about the matter of defending one's honor versus taking revenge. Many societies

5. place honor very high and that it must defended even at the cost of death of a family member.
6. Did David love Absalom in spite of what he did to Amnon?
7. How did Absalom dishonor his father David? (rebelled against him and slept with his father's concubines)
8. Did David want Absalom killed? Why do you think the commander of the army wanted Absalom killed? (the commander was David's man, if Absalom were the new king he would appoint a new commander)
9. Adonijah was the next inline for David's throne. Who had David chosen to be the next king? David was still king though old and feeble when Adonijah declared himself king.
10. What was the significance of Adonijah's asking for David's concubine? (Solomon saw it as a threat to the kingdom and to his own rule as king.)
11. Did the prophecy about paying back four times over come true? What consequence did David's sin have on his family?
12. What consequence might your sin have on you and on your family and people? How can this sin be forgiven? Who can forgive sin? Who can make you clean again?



### 23. Death of Jereboam's Son

*Scripture Base:* 1 Kings 14:1-18

*Introduce the Story:*

The following story is tragic for it involves the death of a boy who was not guilty of any wrongdoing. It is ironic because of the way it happened and the comment made in the boy's behalf. Could it be that the righteous are removed from a wicked situation? Remember the story of Enoch and Isaiah 57:1-2?

*Tell the Story:*

The Death of Young Abijah

Following the death of King Solomon the kingdom of Israel was divided into two parts because of his sins. The larger part was taken by Jereboam, a former official in King Solomon's court. Jereboam instituted worship of two golden calf idols as the people's gods so his people would not go to the temple in Jerusalem to worship the true God of Israel. Even after the prophet of God had warned Jereboam he did not change his evil ways. Jereboam's sin led to the downfall of his family.

The son of Jereboam became ill, so Jereboam said to his wife, "Go, disguise yourself so you won't be recognized as the wife of Jereboam. Then go to the place where Ahijah the prophet lives. He is the one who told me I would be king over this people. Take ten loaves of bread with you, some cakes and a jar of honey and go to the prophet. He will tell you what will happen to the boy."

So Jereboam's wife did what he said and went to the prophet Ahijah's house. Now Ahijah could not see; his sight was gone because of his age. But God had told Ahijah, "Jereboam's wife is coming to ask you about her



son who is ill, and you are to give her such and such an answer. When she arrives, she will pretend to be someone else. "So when Ahijah heard the sound of her footsteps at the door, he said, "Come in, wife of Jereboam. Why this pretense? I have been sent to you with bad news. Go, tell Jereboam this is what the LORD God of Israel says: 'I raised you up from among the people and made you a leader over my people Israel. I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you. But you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes. You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal; you have provoked me to anger and thrust me behind your back. Because of this I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jereboam. As for you, go back home. When you set foot in your city the boy will die. All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. He is the only one belonging to Jereboam who will be buried, because he is the only one in the house of Jereboam in whom the LORD, the God of Israel, found anything good. The LORD will raise up for himself a king over Israel who will cut off the family of Jereboam.'"

Then Jereboam's wife got up and left and returned home. As soon as she stepped over the threshold of the house, the boy died. The people buried him and all Israel mourned for him, just as the LORD had said through his servant the prophet Ahijah.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. What sin did Jereboam commit against God?
2. After he was warned, did Jereboam change his evil ways?
3. What happened to Jereboam's son? Why do you think God allowed that to happen?





4. Why do you think Jereboam asked his wife to disguise herself? Could it be that he was ashamed to ask the prophet about his son?
5. What did the old prophet have to say to Jereboam's wife?
6. Did it happen just as the old prophet said?
7. What did God have to say about Jereboam's son?
8. What else did God have to say about who would be buried? (the son would be the only one)



## 24. Tragic Death of Naboth

*Scripture Base:* 1 Kings 21:1-24

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Do you know of an incident when an evil thing happened to a good man?
2. What caused the person who did the evil thing to act that way?
3. What punishment or justice was handed out to the evildoer?
4. Do you think God is pleased when He sees people doing what is evil? Read Job 34:21 and Proverbs 15:3

*Tell the Story:*

### Death of an Innocent Man

King Ahab of Israel had married the daughter of a neighboring king. His wife's name was Jezebel. She brought with her the worship of a false god and also a kind of sexual worship that was evil in God's sight. She had tried to kill the true prophet of God who had put to death the prophets of the false god who ate at Jezebel's table.

One day there was an incident involving the vineyard that was close to the palace of King Ahab. The king said to Naboth the owner, "Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever your vineyard is worth."

But Naboth replied to the king, "God forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." So he refused to give or sell his vineyard to King Ahab.





Ahab returned home angry and brooding because Naboth had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." The king lay on his bed brooding and refusing to eat.

The king's wife Jezebel came in and asked him, "Why are you so downcast? Why won't you eat?"

King Ahab answered her, "Because I said to Naboth, 'Sell me your vineyard or, if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

Jezebel his wife said, "Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up! I will get you the vineyard of Naboth."

So Jezebel wrote letters in King Ahab's name and placed his seal upon the letters. She sent the letters to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city. In those letters she wrote these words:

"Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have the scoundrels testify that Naboth has cursed both God and the king. Then take Naboth out and stone him to death."

So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel ordered in the letters she had written to them. They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth saying, "Naboth has cursed both God and the king." So the people took Naboth outside the city and stoned him to death. Then they sent word to Jezebel, "Naboth has been stoned and is now dead."



As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to King Ahab, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth that he refused to sell to you. He is no longer alive, but dead." When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.

God spoke to the prophet Elijah saying, "Go down to meet King Ahab. He is now in Naboth's vineyard where he has gone to take possession of it. Say to him, 'This is what the LORD God says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property? In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!'"

King Ahab said to Elijah, "So you have found me, my enemy."

"I have found you," Elijah said, because you have sold yourself to do evil in God's eyes. I will bring disaster on you. I will consume your descendants and cut off every last male in the family. And God says: 'Dogs will devour your wife Jezebel by the wall of the city.'" Later King Ahab was struck by an arrow in battle and died. Dogs came to lick the blood where his chariot was washed. Then servants threw Jezebel from the window of the king's palace and she fell to her death. Wild dogs came and ate her body leaving only her skull, her hands and feet. Finally the seventy royal princes, sons of Ahab, were put to death leaving no descendant except an evil daughter who was later put to death herself.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. One of the commandments that God gave to Moses says that we must not covet or desire what belongs to another. (Exodus 20: 17) What did Naboth covet?



2. Another commandment says we must not steal. (Exodus 20: 15) What was stolen from Naboth and his family?
3. Another commandment says that we must not give false testimony against another. (Exodus 20: 16)
4. What false testimony did Jezebel want to be given against Naboth.
5. Another commandment says that we must not commit murder. (Exodus 20: 13) Was Jezebel guilty of murder?
6. Also among the laws that God gave was one that said a man could only be put to death on the testimony of two witnesses whose testimony was in agreement. (Numbers 35: 30; Deuteronomy 17: 6) And another was that anyone who cursed God or the king must be stoned to death. (Exodus 22: 28)
7. Did God see what Jezebel did? Was God pleased with the desire of Ahab and the actions of Jezebel?
8. Was Naboth guilty of the accusation against him?
9. Where did the prophet find King Ahab? (in Naboth's vineyard)
10. What was the prophecy against King Ahab and his royal family?
11. Did the prophecy come true?
12. Does God know of our wrongdoing? Can we escape from God's justice? If we live a righteous life—that is, carefully obeying the laws of God it shows that we honor God. If we fail to keep God's commands then we dishonor God.
13. In God's law it says that we must make restitution for that which is taken from another. (Leviticus 6: 4)
14. Perhaps you have not done anything as wicked as King Ahab and Jezebel. Are you still guilty? God's Word says that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory and the wages or payment for our sin is death. (Romans 3: 23 & 6: 23)
15. How can we escape our just punishment? God in his mercy has provided a way. In the day of Moses and his brother Aaron who was the high priest before



16. God it was provided for an innocent animal to be killed and its blood sprinkled before God on the altar. In this way the innocent animal died in place of the guilty sinner as a substitute sacrifice. One day soon God would provide another substitute sacrifice whose blood would cover our sins and satisfy God's righteous demands. Otherwise we will be required to pay for our sins—and it's a debt we can never fully pay and it leads to great suffering in the life to come. God has given us these stories as a warning so we can escape his terrible judgment. God has provided our Redeemer.



## 25. Life for the Zarephath Widow's Dead Son

*Scripture Base:* 1Ki 17:1-24

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Who is able to give life when it is taken away? In the beginning when God made the first man and woman, He gave them life. Life comes from God. A man named Job once said, "The Spirit of God has made me, the breath of the Almighty gives me life." (Job 33: 4)
2. In this story the prophet of the Israelites was sent to help a foreign woman who lived in a neighboring country. It reminds us that God loved not only Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, but also even those who were foreigners, poor and helpless.
3. The prophet was sent to give the woman food, but also to give her hope. Here is the story of the widow and her son.

*Tell the Story:*

### Life for the Widow's Dead Son

During his reign King Ahab did more to provoke God's anger than all the kings before him. He set up a temple to worship a false god and even erected a kind of worship symbol for a sexual religion. Because of these sins the true God sent the prophet Elijah to say, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years, except at my word." So a serious drought came upon the land. For a time, the prophet stayed in a certain ravine and drank water from a brook. But in time that dried up.

So God said to the prophet, "Go to Zarephath in a neighboring country and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food." Elijah



obeyed and when he arrived at the town gate there was a widow gathering sticks.

Elijah called to the widow and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so that I might drink?" And as the widow was going to get the water Elijah called again, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread."

The widow replied, "As surely as the LORD your God lives I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die."

Elijah said to the widow, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, then make some bread for your son and yourself. This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day God gives rain on the land.'"

So the widow went away and did as Elijah told her. There was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. The jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with God's promise spoken by Elijah.

Some time later the widow's son became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. The woman said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

"Give me your son," Elijah replied. Elijah took the dead boy from the woman's arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying and laid the boy on his bed. Then Elijah cried out, "O LORD, my God, have



you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with by causing her son to die?" Elijah stretched himself out upon the boy three times and cried, "O LORD, my God, let this boy's life return to him!"

God heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. Elijah picked up the boy and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave the boy to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!"

Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and the word of God from your mouth is the truth."

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Why had God brought a drought upon the land of Israel?
2. Who did God command to feed the prophet Elijah during the drought?
3. Did the widow have enough food for Elijah?
4. What did Elijah tell the widow to do? Did she obey? What happened when the widow obeyed Elijah's words?
5. When the widow's son grew ill and died, who did the widow blame for the boy's death? Was he really to blame?
6. What did Elijah do with the dead boy?
7. Who did Elijah ask to restore life to the dead boy?
8. Did God hear Elijah's cry? What happened to the boy?
9. What did the widow have to say when Elijah returned her living son to her?
10. God's Word says that we are dead in our sins and trespasses against God. (Ephesians 2:1) We need to be made alive again.
11. Another place in God's Word it says: "Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fullblown, gives birth to death" (James 1:15).



12. God's Word also tells us: "The gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23). For "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).
13. Sin in life is an illness which grows worse and worse until we are dead in our sins. We need the man of God to give us life again. Soon we will have the story of that man of God who is able to give us life again in him.



## 26. Death of the Shunammite Woman's Son

*Scripture Base:* 2Ki 4:8-37

*Introduce the Story:*

1. After the prophet Elijah there was another prophet with a similar name. His name was Elisha. Prophet Elijah's name means "my God is Jehovah" which was the name God used for himself. Elisha's name means "my God is salvation".
2. This story happened after Elijah was taken away to heaven and Elisha took his place. It is a story that begins as a happy story, then becomes sad, but finally a good thing happens.

*Tell the Story:*

### Death of the Shunammite Woman's Son

At the end of Elijah's life he passed by a field where Elisha was plowing and threw his cloak around him. Elisha left his plowing and followed Elijah as his helper. One day a chariot of fire appeared in a whirlwind and came for Elijah and he was carried up into heaven. Now Elisha became God's prophet.

Elisha went to a certain town where a wealthy woman lived who urged the prophet to stay for a meal. So whenever the prophet Elisha happened to pass that way he stopped to eat. The woman said to her husband, "Let's make a small room on the roof and put in a bed and a chair and lamp for the prophet. Then he can stay there whenever he comes."

One time when Elisha came he went up to his room and lay down. He said to his servant, "Call the woman." So the servant called her and she came and stood before him. Elisha said, "Tell her, you have gone to all this trouble for us. Now what can be done for you?"



When the servant reported to Elisha, "The woman has no son and her husband is old."

So Elisha said to his servant, "Call her." The woman came to stand in the doorway. Elisha said to her, "About this time next year you will hold a son in your arms."

"No, no," the woman objected, "Don't mislead your servant, O man of God." But the woman conceived and at about that same time the following year she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her.

The child grew, and one day he went out to his father who was working in the fields. The child cried out, "My head! My head!"

The father told a servant, "Carry the boy to his mother." The boy sat on his mother's lap until noon, and then he died. The woman went up and laid her dead son on the bed of the man of God, went out and closed the door.

The woman called her husband and said, "Please send me one of the servants and a donkey so I can go to the man of God quickly and return." After she saddled the donkey she said to the servant, "Lead on; don't slow down for me unless I tell you." So she set out and came to the man of God.

When Elisha saw the woman coming he said to his servant, "Run to meet her and ask her, 'Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your child all right?'" But the woman said to Elisha's servant, "Everything is all right."

When she reached Elisha, the woman took hold of his feet and said, "Did I ask you for a son? Didn't I tell you, 'Don't raise my hopes?'"



Elisha sent his servant ahead with his staff and instruction to lay the staff on the dead boy's face. But the child's mother said, "I will not leave you." So Elisha got up and went with the woman.

Elisha's servant did as he was told and laid the staff on the boy's face, but the boy did not respond. When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his bed. So Elisha went into the room and closed the door. He prayed to God and then got on the bed and lay upon the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. As Elisha stretched himself out upon the boy, the boy's body grew warm. Elisha got up and walked back and forth in the room and then got on the bed and stretched himself out on the boy once more. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes.

Elisha called for his servant to come and said to him, "Call the woman." When she came, Elisha said to her, "Take your son." The woman came in, fell at Elisha's feet, and bowed to the ground. Then she took her son and went out.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. What kindness did the woman want to show the prophet Elisha?
2. What did the woman ask her husband to do for the prophet?
3. What kindness did the prophet Elisha want to show the woman? (what could he do for her)
4. What suggestion did Elisha's servant make for the woman?
5. What did Elisha promise the woman would happen about the same time next year?
6. Did the promise come true?
7. What happened to the boy one day?
8. Who did the woman turn to for help?
9. When Elisha sent his servant with his staff, was the servant able to bring the boy to life again?



10. What did Elisha do first before lying down on the boy? (he prayed to God)
11. Did God answer Elisha's prayer?
12. Who gained glory from what happened? Elisha or God?
13. The story reminds us again that God is the source of life. The story also reminds us that God is compassionate as He gave the childless woman a son. When the son happened to die, God gave her son back to the woman.
14. Soon we will see that we are dead in our sins. God wants to give us life again. Instead of sending a prophet, God sent a very special person who could give life to those dead in their sins.



## 27. The Soul That Sins Will Die

*Scripture Base:* Ezekiel 18:1-32

*Introduce the Story:*

1. This is not really a story as such. It is more of a narrative comparison. It is a summary that ties the matter of sin with death. Perhaps the narrative will generate some discussion about justice and wrongdoing.

*Tell the Story:*

The Soul That Sins Will Die

"The word of God came to the prophet Ezekiel asking: What do you people mean by quoting the proverb:

'The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'?

As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign God, you will no longer quote this proverb. For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. *The soul that sins is the one who will die.*

Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right. He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor's wife or lie with a woman during her period. He does not oppress anyone, but returns what he took in pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. He does not lend at usury or take excessive interest. He withholds his hand from doing wrong and judges fairly between man and man. He follows my decrees



and faithfully keeps my laws. That man is righteous; he will surely live, declares the Sovereign God.

Suppose he has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these other things (though the father has done none of them): He eats at the mountain shrines. He defiles his neighbor's wife. He oppresses the poor and needy. He commits robbery. He does not return what he took in pledge. He looks to the idols. He does detestable things. He lends at usury and takes excessive interest.

Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he will surely be put to death and his blood will be on his own head.

But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things:

He does not eat at mountain shrines or look to the idols of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor's wife. He does not oppress anyone or require a pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. He withholds his hand from sin and takes no usury or excessive interest. He keeps my laws and follows my decrees.

He will not die for his father's sin; he will surely live. But his father will die for his own sin, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother and did what was wrong among people.

Yet you ask, 'Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?' Since the son has done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my decrees, he will surely live. *The soul who sins is the*





*one who will die...*The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.

But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die...Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares Sovereign God? Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?

But if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live? He is guilty because of the sins he has committed and he will die."

*Talk About the Story:*

1. These words were first spoken to the people of Israel, the descendants of Abraham who lived long ago. After all that God had done for them, the people had turned to evil ways. So the comparison is a warning to the wicked that his sin leads to death, and to the righteous that he must persevere—that is, not lapse in wickedness, in order to live.
2. The words also remind us of the penalty for sin—for sin offends God who is just and holy and who hates sin and punishes the sinner.
3. The individual is held responsible for his own sin and is not punished for the sin of his father. Also the wicked son cannot count on escaping because he had a righteous father. Each will be held accountable for their sin—the soul that sins will die.
4. But we have a problem—We have inherited the sinful nature of Adam the first man that we are all descended from. (Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1) And



- God's Word says that all have sinned (Romans 3:23) and that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).
5. Soon we will have the story of someone sent from God to take the punishment for our sin and to provide a way to live even though we are sinners.



## 28. Suffering and Death of the Righteous One

*Scripture Base:* Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7; 42:1; 53:1-12

*Introduce the Story:*

1. This prophecy is a narrative preview of the rejection of the Messiah.
2. Do you know anyone who has been rejected by their own people? Why were they rejected? Did they do something wrong? Or were they a threat because of who they were?
3. Do you know of anyone who has offered themselves to be the scapegoat for others, to take the punishment of the guilty upon themselves even though innocent?
4. Do you know of anyone who has died and risen from the dead?

*Tell the Story:*

Suffering and Death of the Righteous One

A prophet named Isaiah saw a vision of God in his glory seated upon his throne. God had a message for his people. It was the story of one to be born, to be rejected and suffer, to die and finally to rise to life again.

Among the descendants of David's family a virgin would conceive and give birth to a son who would be called Immanuel—*God with us*. The son would be called *Mighty God* and *Prince of Peace*. He would inherit the throne of his father David and be the one to rule with justice and righteousness. And the Spirit of God would rest upon him.

In God's eyes he was like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry ground. But in our eyes there was no attractiveness at all, nothing to make us want him.



We despised him and rejected him—a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we didn't care.

Yet it was our grief he carried, our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, for his own sins!

He was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12) by a friend who shared his bread (Psalm 41:9). False witnesses rose up against him breathing out violence (Psalm 27:12). A band like dogs surrounded him, evil men, who would pierce his hands and feet (Psalm 22:16). He would pray for his enemies (Psalm 109:4).

But he was wounded and bruised for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace; he was lashed—and we were healed!

We—every one of us—have strayed away like sheep! We, who left God's paths to follow our own. Yet God laid on him the guilt and sins of every one of us!

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he never said a word. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he stood silent before the ones condemning him.

From oppression and trial they led him away to his death. Those who watched mocked him, telling him to save himself, or to ask God to save him. Others cast lots for his clothing (Psalm 22:16). But who among the people of that day realized it was their sins that he was dying for—that he was suffering their punishment?



He was put to death like a criminal yet buried in a rich man's grave; but he had done no wrong and had never spoken an evil word.

But it was God's good plan to bruise him and fill him with grief. However, when his soul has been made an offering for sin, then he shall have a multitude of children, many heirs. He shall live again, and God's work shall prosper in his hands.

And when he sees all that is accomplished by the anguish of his soul, he shall be satisfied. Because of what he has experienced, my righteous Servant shall make many to be counted righteous before God, for he shall bear all their sins.

Therefore, I will give him the honors of one who is mighty and great because he has poured out his soul unto death. He was counted as a sinner, and he bore the sins of many, and he pled with God for sinners. (adapted from TLB)

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Who did the prophet say would be this person's mother? How can that be? How will God cause this to happen?
2. Who would be his ancestor?
3. Whose Spirit would rest upon him?
4. What attitude would people have toward this person? Would they like him or despise him? Would the people accept him or reject him?
5. What would he do for the people? (carry their grief and sorrows)
6. Why was he wounded and beaten? For whose sins? Upon whom did God lay the sins of the people?
7. When he was oppressed and afflicted, what did he have to say? (nothing—he was silent before his accusers)



8. What did the people who mocked him say? (save yourself)
9. He was put to death like a criminal but buried in whose tomb?
10. Had he done anything wrong or spoken an evil word?
11. Would he live again?
12. His soul will be an offering for sin and he will have many heirs. He will make many to be counted righteous before God.
13. This is a person you will want to know. His suffering and death was for your sins, even if you do not know who he is.
14. Now you have heard the story the prophets told. Soon you will hear the story of the Promised One sent from God to suffer for our sins and to die so that we might live. You will know him as your Savior from death because of your sins.



## 29. Death of John the Baptist

*Scripture Base:* Luke 1:1-17; Matthew 11:1-11; 14:1-12; John 1:29

### *Introduce the Story:*

1. The prophets were God's spokesmen through the ages. God used the prophets to warn people about sin, to tell of coming judgment unless sinners repented, to bring messages of hope for those suffering under God's judgment.
2. The prophet's life was never an easy one for those who ruled the land often despised and rejected the message of the prophets and then put the prophets to death, thinking that would prevent their message from coming true.
3. The last great prophet before Jesus was a man named John the Baptist. His fate was similar to those prophets before him.

### *Tell the Story:*

#### Death of a Great Prophet

Samuel was the last of God's judges and also one of God's great prophets. He served God throughout his lifetime and then he died. All the people of Israel mourned for him and buried him at his home. Nathan was the prophet who at some threat to his own life brought accusation against King David about David's adultery and murder of his bodyguard Uriah.

During the days of Elijah the prophet he had proved that the God of Israel was the true God and not the false god brought to Israel by Queen Jezebel. At a sacrifice the false prophets of Baal failed to bring down fire from heaven to burn their sacrifice. After Elijah prayed to God and fire fell from heaven and burned the sacrifice, the people shouted, "The LORD, He is God!" Elijah gave an order to kill all the false prophets. When Jezebel heard



what happened, she said, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make Elijah's life like that one my prophets!" So Elijah had to flee for his life.

Jeremiah was a prophet in the last days as God's judgment was falling upon the remaining kingdom in Israel. God said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." God directed Jeremiah to go wherever God would send him and to say whatever God told him to say. God said, "Now I have put my words in your mouth." When Jeremiah proclaimed God's message to the king and the people, he was called a traitor and mistreated. In time Jeremiah was beaten and put in stocks, then confined in a dungeon. Then he was released, only to be thrown into the miry clay of a cistern. Friends rescued Jeremiah from the cistern. His life was spared but his message was rejected.

One prophecy about the coming Messiah is that someone would come before him as the voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God." At God's appointed time an angel gave good news to an elderly priest and his childless wife. The wife was to give birth to a son in her old age. He was to be named John. He would be filled with God's Holy Spirit even from birth. He would be like the mighty prophet Elijah to prepare the people for the coming of the LORD.

After John's birth he grew and became strong in the spirit. He lived in the desert until he began his public ministry, eating wild honey and locusts and wearing rough clothing made of camel hair. The word of God came to John so that he went into all the countryside near the river preaching a gospel of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. He was the voice of one calling in the



desert to prepare the way for the LORD...that all mankind should see God's salvation. John said to the crowds coming to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath of God? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance."

The people were wondering if John might be the Promised One of God, the Messiah. But he said, "I baptize you with water. But one is coming more powerful than I, for I am not worthy to untie his shoes. He will baptize you with fire and with God's Holy Spirit." So John rebuked the people for their sins and preached the good news of God's forgiveness. One day when John was baptizing, the Promised One—Jesus—came to be baptized. As Jesus came up out of the water John saw the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus and a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Later as Jesus was passing by that way again, John cried in a loud voice, "Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Then John rebuked the king who had married his brother's wife, and also for all the other evil things he had done. So the king locked John in prison. When the Promised One came and began to perform miracles and preach the good news about the kingdom of God, John sent his followers to ask if Jesus were the One God had promised to send. Jesus honored John saying, "I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not been anyone greater than John the Baptist."

The king had wanted to kill John but was afraid of the people because they considered John a prophet. On the king's birthday the daughter of the king's wife danced for the guests and pleased the king so much that he promised on oath to give her whatever she desired. Her mother told her to say, "Give me on a platter the head of John the Baptist." The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered



that the request be granted. So John was beheaded in prison and his head brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Afterward they told Jesus what happened.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Who called the prophets to be his spokesman?
2. Was the life of the prophets easy or difficult?
3. What were the prophets to tell the people? (only what God said to them)
4. Was John a special prophet? Why? (it was his honor to prepare the way for Jesus)
5. What was his message? (repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins)
6. How did John die? Who honored him? (Jesus)
7. All of the stories up to this point were chosen to prepare you for the stories that will follow about Jesus. The stories have talked about death, how it came into the world, how sin leads to death, and about life and how life comes from God. Even to those who died God through his prophets could restore life.
8. Soon you will have an opportunity to decide about life or death and why it is important to decide while in this life.



### **30. The Woman Good as Dead & Jairus' Daughter**

*Scripture Base:* Leviticus 15: 19-30; Matthew 9: 18-26;  
Mark 5: 21-43. Luke 8: 40-56

*Introduce the Story:*

These stories of the woman who was good as dead and the daughter of Jairus are two different stories though they happened at the same time. The woman had been a living "dead" person for twelve long years and now she was made "alive" and clean again. The girl had lived for twelve years and was now dead to be made alive again. The "dead" woman was considered ritually unclean and helpless to change her circumstance. Jairus had hope that Jesus could help heal his daughter but then thought that all hope was gone.

*Tell the Story:*

The Woman Who Was Good as Dead  
& Jairus' Daughter

Jesus had crossed by boat to the other side of the lake and a large crowd gathered around him. One of the worship leaders named Jairus came there. When Jairus saw Jesus, he fell at Jesus' feet and pleaded earnestly with Jesus, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so she will be healed and live." So Jesus went with Jairus.

The large crowd followed and pressed around Jesus. A woman was there in the crowd who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all her money. Yet instead of getting better she grew worse. In that day a woman with this condition was unclean and must be careful not to pollute others. (see Leviticus 15: 19-30) She was a living "dead" woman with no hope. Yet when the woman heard about Jesus, she



came up behind Jesus in the crowd and touched his cloak. She thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

Jesus' disciples answered, "You see the people crowding around you, how can you ask who touched you?"

But Jesus kept looking around to see who it was that touched him. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at the feet of Jesus, and trembling with fear, told Jesus the whole truth, why she had touched Jesus, and how she had been instantly healed. Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus saying, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher any more?"

Jesus ignored what the men said and told Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe and your daughter will be healed."

At the house of Jairus mourners had already gathered crying and wailing loudly. Jesus said to them "What is all this noise and wailing? The child is not dead, but asleep." The mourners laughed at Jesus because they knew the girl was dead.

After Jesus put all the mourners out, he took the girl's mother and father and three of the disciples and went in where the dead girl lay. Then Jesus took the





dead girl by the hand and said to her, "Little girl, I say to you: Get up!" Immediately the girl who was twelve years old stood up and walked around. The parents were completely astonished. Jesus gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about this, and told the parents to give the girl something to eat. But news of what happened spread throughout that region.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Why do you think the people followed Jesus?
2. Why did Jairus come to Jesus? What did he ask Jesus to do?
3. Along the way who touched the clothes of Jesus?
4. What happened to her when she touched Jesus?
5. What did Jesus say to the woman? (Go in peace, your faith has healed you.)
6. What bad news came to Jairus?
7. What did Jesus say to Jairus?
8. Did the mourners know the girl was dead? Did Jesus know the girl was dead?
9. What did Jesus say to the little girl? What did she do?
10. What do these stories tell us about Jesus? (he has power to heal and power over death itself)
11. Sometimes we can think of sin as a disease like the woman had. Sin drains our life away and we cannot heal ourselves. We need to touch Jesus for healing. Like Jairus we need to come to Jesus and then to trust Jesus to give life where sin has brought death into our lives.



### 31. The Widow of Nain's Son Died

*Scripture Base:* Luke 7:11-17

*Introduce the Story:*

In the time when Jesus was on earth a woman depended upon her husband to care for her, or if he had died, she depended upon her oldest son. A widow who had neither husband nor son was in dire need—often hopeless and cast upon society who may or may not help her. Ask the listeners to talk about the situation of a widow among their people. Would she be helpless if her husband and only son were dead? Who would care for her?

*Tell the Story:*

#### The Widow of Nain's Son Died

As Jesus journeyed along he went to a town called Nain. A large crowd of people and his disciples went along with him. As Jesus approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother—and she was a widow. A large crowd from the town was with her. Jesus felt compassion in his heart for the woman and said to her, "Don't cry."

Then Jesus went up and touched the funeral stretcher. The men carrying it stood still. Jesus said, "Young man, I say to you: Get up!" The dead man sat up and began to talk. Jesus gave him back to his mother.

The crowd were all filled with wonder and began to praise God saying, "A great prophet has appeared among us. God has come to help his people." The news about Jesus spread throughout that whole place.





*Talk About the Story:*

1. Who were following Jesus as he traveled along?
2. What did Jesus see happening at the town gate?
3. The widow had no husband to care for her and now her only son had died. She had no caregiver or protector. The family property would be in jeopardy.
4. What did Jesus feel in his heart for the woman?
5. What did Jesus say when he touched the coffin?
6. What did the young man do?
7. What did the people begin to do and say?
8. You may also want to praise God when you hear the next stories about how Jesus taught about death and overcame death by his authority and power.
9. We could see in the last story and again in this story that Jesus had compassion for people who needed his help. You and I also need Jesus' help. He has compassion for us. He wants to heal our sin and give us life.



## **32. Death of a Foolish Man**

*Scripture Base:* Luke 12:1, 13-21

*Introduce the Story:*

Who do you thank when you have an abundant crop or a good catch of fish or whatever you do to earn a living is successful? During the days of Moses, God reminded the people that blessings come from him. He is the God of Creation and the God who provides for his Creation. Read Psalm 104:27-28 and 107:9. What might happen to a person if he failed to honor or praise God for his goodness? Or what if that person thought only of himself and his wealth?

*Tell the Story:*

The Parable of the Rich Fool

Many times those who were self-righteous or wealthy came to Jesus to test him with foolish questions. So Jesus told stories about those with wealth. On this day a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so many in fact, they were trampling on one another. Jesus began as usual to speak first to his disciples.

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."

Jesus replied, "Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you and your brother?" Jesus said to the crowd: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in an abundance of his possessions."

Then Jesus spoke this parable to the crowd: "The ground of a certain man produced a good crop. So the man thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'

Then he said, 'This is what I'll do, I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all



my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'

But God said to the man, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

Then Jesus said, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself, but is not rich toward God."

*Talk About the Story:*

In the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy (26:2) God reminded the people that He alone is the source for their blessing. And the people should honor God by giving of the firstfruits to Him. In Exodus (23:19) God instructed the people: "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God."

1. Who came to test Jesus with foolish questions?
2. What did the man in the crowd ask Jesus to do?  
What was Jesus' reply?
3. What warning did Jesus give the people?
4. In the story Jesus told what was the attitude of the man who had great success with his crops? (selfish, hoarding for himself)
5. What judgment did God bring upon the man?
6. What second warning did Jesus give the people about their attitude toward God?
7. Who provides for our daily needs? What should be our attitude toward Him? (be thankful for his goodness)



### 33. Death of Lazarus the Brother

*Scripture Base:* Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-46

*Introduce the Story:*

In the village of Bethany near Jerusalem lived two sisters Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus. One time as Jesus and his disciples were on their way, they came to Bethany where Martha opened her home to Jesus. The younger sister Mary came and sat at the feet of Jesus listening to what he was saying.

Martha was quite distracted by all the preparations for hospitality that needed to be made. Soon she came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

Jesus soothingly replied, "Martha! Martha! You are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is really needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38-42)

So Jesus knew the family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

*Tell the Story:*

#### The Death of Lazarus

Some of the religious leaders had threatened to kill Jesus, for they said he was speaking blasphemy for which the punishment was stoning to death. For this reason Jesus had crossed the river to a place where John the Baptist had baptized many people. There many people came to Jesus and believed in him.

One day word came from Mary and Martha with news that their brother Lazarus lay sick. The sisters



sent this message to Jesus: "Lord, the one you love is sick."

When Jesus heard these words, he said to his disciples, "Lazarus' sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory, so God's Son may be glorified through what happens."

Jesus loved the family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus and yet, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, Jesus tarried in that place two more days. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Bethany in Judea."

The disciples protested saying, "But Teacher, a short while ago the people wanted to kill you, and yet you want to go back?"

Jesus answered their question, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble for he sees by this world's light. No, it is when a man walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light." Then Jesus added, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him."

Now the disciples did not understand Jesus' words for they said, "Lord, if Lazarus sleeps, he will surely get well." But Jesus had been speaking of Lazarus' death and not natural sleep.

So Jesus told his disciples plainly, "Lazarus is dead. And for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. Now let us go to him."

When Jesus arrived near the village of Bethany he learned that Lazarus had already been in the burial tomb for four days. Because Bethany is only a short distance from Jerusalem many friends of Martha and Mary had come to comfort them in the death of their brother.



When Martha heard that Jesus was coming she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

"Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that God will give you whatever you ask."

Jesus comforted Martha saying, "Your brother will live again."

Martha answered, "I know he will rise to life again in the resurrection at the last day."

Then Jesus stated plainly, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Martha, do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," Martha told Jesus, "I do believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

Then Martha called to her sister Mary who also came out to meet Jesus. Her friends followed thinking Mary was going to the tomb to weep. Mary said to Jesus, "If only you had been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus was touched by Mary's weeping and that of her friends. So Jesus wept for their sadness as he asked, "Where have you laid your brother's body?"

Some of Mary's friends saw Jesus' tears and said, "See how much he loved Lazarus, too!" But others criticized Jesus saying, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept Lazarus from dying?" Again, Jesus was deeply moved by these words.

At the tomb which was a cave with a large stone covering the entrance, Jesus said, "Take away the stone."



Martha immediately objected saying, "Lord, by this time there will be a bad odor, for Lazarus has been dead four days."

"Did I not tell you that you would see the glory of God if you believed?" Jesus asked. So the stone was taken away and the tomb opened. Then Jesus looked up toward heaven and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe you sent me." After saying this words Jesus commanded in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man did come out with his hands and feet still wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face. Then Jesus said, "Remove the grave clothes and let him go."

Many of those who had come to visit Mary and mourn and saw what Jesus did put their faith in Jesus. But some of them instead went to the religious leaders and told them what Jesus had done. After discussing the matter the leaders began to plot how they might kill Jesus.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. How did Mary and Martha know Jesus?
2. Why had Jesus and his disciples gone away? (the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus)
3. What word did Jesus receive from Mary and Martha?
4. What did Jesus do when he received this message?
5. Did Jesus know that Lazarus was dead?
6. In that day people believed that a dead person's spirit could return to the body up to three days after death. But when the body began to smell bad by the fourth day they knew the person was really dead.
7. When Jesus arrived in Bethany what did Martha say to him?



8. What did Jesus tell Martha? (Whoever believes in me will live even though he dies) What do you think Jesus meant by that?
9. Did Martha believe Jesus? What did she confess to Jesus?
10. At the tomb what did Jesus ask the people to do? (open the tomb)
11. When Martha objected what did Jesus say to her? (you will see the glory of God if you believe)
12. What did Jesus do before bringing Lazarus to life again? Why did Jesus do this—who was it for? (prayed—for the benefit of the people listening)
13. What command did Jesus give? (Lazarus, come out!)
14. What happened to Lazarus? What does this teach us about Jesus? (Jesus is the Lord of life with power over death.)
15. What was the attitude of Mary and Martha's friends? What was the attitude of others who saw the miracle?
16. What plans did the religious leaders begin to make?



### **34. Death of the Rich Man & Beggar Lazarus**

*Scripture Base:* Luke 16:14, 19-31

*Introduce the Story:*

Lazarus or Eleazar which means “helped by God” is the only story that Jesus told in which one of the characters is given a name. So many believe this not to be a parable but actually a true story about real people. For a hungry and penniless beggar who was covered with sores and who had to be brought to his place of begging each day, life was a living death as he wasted away day by day. In life he was unrecognized by the rich man who lived a truly comfortable life with all his needs met. In death there was an irony with a reversal of roles. This Lazarus is not the brother of Mary and Martha, but another of the same name. No doubt the story is given us as a warning of the choices we need to make while still in this life, for after death it is too late. At another time Jesus taught that angels are the harvesters of the souls of men. (Matthew 13:39) Here is the story:

*Tell the Story:*

Two Deaths; Two Destinies

Jesus was teaching his disciples about the danger of trying to love both money and God. The Pharisees, who loved money, heard Jesus’ words and were sneering at Jesus. So Jesus said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.” Then Jesus told this story:

There was a rich man who was dressed in the finest clothing of his day—in purple and fine linen clothing. And the man lived in luxury every day.



At the rich man’s gate every day a beggar named Lazarus was laid whose body was covered with sores. He longed to eat even the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs came and licked his sores.

The time came when the beggar died and angels came and carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. He found himself in the place of torment and looked and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. So the rich man called out, “Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and place it on my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.”

But Abraham replied, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things. But now he is comforted here and you are the one in agony. And besides all this, between us is fixed a great chasm so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.”

Again the rich man entreated, “Then I beg you, father Abraham, send Lazarus to my father’s house, for I have five brothers. Let Lazarus warn them so they will not also come to this place of torment.”

Abraham replied, “Your brothers have Moses and the Prophets (the Scriptures); let your brothers listen to what they have to say.”

“No, father Abraham,” the rich man begged, “but if someone from the dead goes to warn them, they will listen and repent.”

But Abraham replied, “If your brothers do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Read Romans 1:18-21 to see what testimony those like the rich man might have in addition to God's Word.
2. Read Hebrews 9:27 to see the finality of this life and the need to decide before it is too late.
3. Look at Proverbs 22:22 and compare the attitude discussed there with the compassion of Jesus.
4. What other reasons could have affected the rich man's fate after death?
5. What does this story tell us about those who believe in rebirth after this life?
6. Read the warning in Revelation 3:17ff to those who lived in Laodicea.
7. Do people continue to live after death of the body?  
(yes)
8. What two places were prepared for the dead?
9. Why do you think the rich man went to a place of torment? (unbelief—he did not listen to the warning of the prophets)
10. Is this a punishment for all rich men? (No. Abraham was quite wealthy in his life as God blessed him)
11. What determines where we go after we die?  
(whether we have believed the words of the prophets of God)
12. In this story, which of the two men would you be like?
13. Would you like to know more about the warnings given by the prophets of God?
14. Why do you think Jesus told this story to the people?

*Note:* In vs. 14 Jesus was talking to men who were lovers of wealth. They thought a man's material status was an indication of his spiritual status. A man destitute of material goods was regarded as one upon whom God frowned; one who had great wealth was regarded as one who had God's favor. However, Jesus did not agree. He told this story to illustrate the fact that some men who

have nothing in this world are right with God while others who have everything in this world find their eternal state in hell. The teachings of the passage on life after death and its nature are incidental. They are, nevertheless, real and important. (Ray Summers, The Life Beyond, Broadman 1959, p.8)





### 35. Suffering and Death of Jesus

*Scripture Base:* Mark 8:31; 9:31-32; 10:32-34; Luke 22:63-24:8, 36-44; John 20:10-18, 24-29; Acts 1:9-11

*Introduce the Story:*

1. In the days of Moses, God gave the requirement for a sin sacrifice—it must be a perfect animal—one that had no blemish. But those sacrifices had to be repeated again and again for each sin the people committed. What was needed was a more perfect sacrifice that was acceptable to God for all sin of all people. God would need to supply the only perfect sacrifice that would be acceptable to him.
2. The prophet told of a coming Anointed One or Messiah who would be rejected by his own people, he would suffer beating and finally be put to death. But the prophet said that this person who was the sacrifice would live again. By his punishment he would carry our sins and by his death the sin price would be paid.
3. Here is the story of how it came to be.

*Tell the Story:*

Suffering and Death of Jesus

Many times Jesus told his disciples that a time would soon come when he would be betrayed to the religious leaders. They would condemn Jesus to death and hand him over to the foreign soldiers who will mock Jesus, spit on him, flog him and then kill him. But three days later he would rise from the grave.

Satan had entered into one of Jesus' disciples who went to the religious leaders and told how they might capture Jesus when no people were present. The religious leaders offered to pay thirty pieces of silver for this information.



It was the time of year for the great Passover Feast when the people celebrated their release from Egypt as slaves. Jesus had gone to Jerusalem to eat the Passover meal with his disciples.

After eating the meal Jesus took a piece of bread, blessed it and broke it into pieces and said to his disciples, "This is my body given for you." Then Jesus took the cup of drink, blessed it, and said to his disciples, "This cup is the new covenant with God in my blood, which is poured out for you and the sins of many." Jesus announced that one of the disciples would betray him. Then Jesus took a piece of bread and handed it to the disciple named Judas and said, "Go quickly and do what you are about to do." Judas went out to betray Jesus to the religious leaders.

Jesus taught his disciples about where he was going to prepare a place for them. Jesus prayed for them and told the disciples always to remain in Jesus as branches must remain in the true vine. Then Jesus led the disciples out to a quiet garden to pray. There Judas found Jesus and led the soldiers to arrest him. The disciples fled away in fear.

Before the religious leaders Jesus was accused by many false witnesses. But there was no agreement in their testimony. Finally the chief priest asked Jesus, "Tell us plainly, are you the Son of God?" When Jesus said yes, the charge of blasphemy was brought against him. All agreed that Jesus was worthy of death. Then Jesus was led before the foreign governor and there Jesus was charged with inciting an insurrection, saying that he was a king. Jesus remained silent during his questioning. When no reason was found for putting Jesus to death, the governor offered that he should be beaten as a troublemaker and released. But the religious leaders began to shout, "Crucify him! Crucify him! Let his blood be upon us and our children." So the governor gave





Jesus to the soldiers who flogged him, mocked him and spit upon him. Then Jesus was led out to be put to death.

That day Jesus was nailed to a cross between two criminals. Jesus prayed for those leaders who stood nearby mocking him saying, "He said he was the Son of God. Let God save him." The soldiers gambled for Jesus' clothing. One of the criminals began to mock Jesus saying, "If you are the Son of God, save yourself and save us." The other criminal rebuked the first one for he said they were being justly punished for their sins. But Jesus was innocent. Then the second criminal said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Soon the day grew dark and Jesus cried in a loud voice, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" After suffering for some time longer Jesus said, "It is finished! Father, into your hand I give my spirit." And saying this Jesus bowed his head and died. Later one of the soldiers pierced the side of Jesus to see if he were really dead. Blood and water flowed out of the wound.

Secret disciples of Jesus came and claimed his body and prepared it for burial in a nearby new tomb. All the followers of Jesus went away sad that he had died.

Early on the morning of the third day there was a powerful earthquake and an angel of God came to the tomb. When it was daybreak some women came to the tomb to put spices on the body of Jesus. But the tomb was empty. The angel said, "He is not here, but risen as he said." Later Jesus appeared to one of the women and then to his disciples. The disciples were afraid that Jesus might be a ghost. Then Jesus asked for a piece of broiled fish to eat. When one of the disciples put his finger in the wounds of Jesus he cried, "My Lord and my



God!" Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen me you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus was seen by others including a group of five hundred at one time. At last it was the time for Jesus to return to heaven. He led his disciples outside the city and said to them, "You are my witnesses here and in nearby places and even to the ends of the earth." Then Jesus was taken up into heaven and given a place at the right hand of God the Father to make intercession for all sinners.

That day an angel said to the disciples, "This same Jesus who has been taken into heaven will come back in the same way.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Did Jesus know he was going to suffer and die?
2. What did Jesus say would happen on the third day?
3. What were the foreign soldiers going to do to Jesus? (flog him, mock him, spit on him and put him to death)
4. What made the chief priest and religious leaders angry? (Jesus replied that he was the Son of God)
5. Did the foreign governor find any reason to put Jesus to death? What did he say he was going to do? (have Jesus flogged as a troublemaker and released)
6. What did the religious leaders demand? (crucify Jesus)
7. How did Jesus show that he loved and forgave even those responsible for his suffering and death?
8. One criminal reviled Jesus. What did the other one do?
9. Why do you think Jesus cried out, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" (see Psalm 22:1) In the day



of Moses the priest was to place his hands upon the head of the sacrifice animal and confess the sins of the people. This symbolized transferring the sins to the sacrifice victim who then became the guilty.

Read Habakkuk 1:13 What does this say about what had happened to Jesus? Was Jesus a sinner or was he innocent of any wrongdoing? Read John 5:19-20 and 8:28.

10. Jesus was nailed to the wooden cross with nails through his hands and feet. The soldier pierced Jesus' side with his spear. The prophet said that God's Holy One would be pierced. (see Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10)
11. After Jesus was buried what happened on the third day?
12. Was Jesus a ghost?
13. What did Jesus say about those who believed in him and yet had never seen him?
14. Where did Jesus go when he returned to heaven?
15. What did the angel say Jesus would do one day?
16. Do you believe this is a true story? What if you had been present when this story happened, would you have believed in Jesus?
17. If it is true that Jesus' blood was being poured out for sin, do you believe that his blood was being poured out for you?



## 36. Death of Righteous Stephen

*Scripture Base:* Acts 6:1-7:60

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Remember in the story of Jesus' suffering and death that the religious leaders rejected Jesus as God's Son. After Jesus returned to heaven those who followed Jesus were persecuted because they followed Jesus. Yet the number of people who believed in Jesus was growing in spite of the persecution.
2. Our belief and faith may be costly for us. We may be called on to defend our belief, especially if we decide to follow Jesus and others do not. In this story we will see the faith of one man and his testimony before he died.

*Tell the Story:*

### Death of Righteous Stephen

After Jesus returned to heaven, God sent his Holy Spirit to be with the people. The believers were joyful in their fellowship with one another and in their worship. The believers devoted themselves to the teaching of Jesus' disciples, to worship and to prayer. When some of the disciples were told not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus they said, "Judge for yourself whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20). At another time they said, "We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him" (Acts 5:32).

In those days while the number of disciples was increasing there was a need among certain widows in the daily distribution of food. The disciples of Jesus gathered all the other disciples together and talked



about what to do. They decided to choose seven men from among them who are known to be filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. One of the men they chose was named Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. The disciples of Jesus laid their hands on the seven men and prayed for them.

Stephen was truly a man full of God's grace and power. He performed great wonders and miracles among the people. But soon opposition arose among certain men who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against his wisdom for the Holy Spirit helped Stephen when he spoke. So these men secretly persuaded some others to say, "We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God." So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the ruling council. There the men produced false witnesses who testified that Stephen spoke against their temple and holy law. They also added that Stephen spoke about Jesus and how he would change the customs that Moses had handed down. All in the council sat looking at Stephen and saw that his face was like that of an angel. Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are these charges true?"

Stephen replied saying, "Brothers and fathers, listen to me!" Then Stephen began to tell the stories of old, beginning with that of Abraham and God's covenant with him, of Jacob, Joseph and Moses and all that happened in those days. Stephen reminded the listeners of the rebellion of the Israelites in Moses' time and how the people had turned aside to worship false gods. Then Stephen said, "You are a stiff-necked people, just like your fathers! You always resist God's Holy Spirit. Your fathers persecuted God's prophets and killed those who predicted the coming of God's Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—this Jesus."



When the council heard this accusation they were furious and gnashed their teeth at Stephen. But Stephen, who was full of God's Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look!" Stephen said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." When he said these words the council members covered their ears; they began to shout at the top of their voices; and they all rushed at Stephen and dragged him out and began to stone him.

While the people were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then Stephen fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this against them." And when he had said these words, Stephen fell asleep and died.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. After Jesus returned to heaven what did his followers continue to do?
2. What did the followers say when they were commanded to keep silent about Jesus?
3. When the problem arose among the widows what kind of people were chosen?
4. What is said about Stephen? (he was filled with God's grace and power)
5. What was Stephen able to do because of God's power in him?
6. What accusation was brought against Stephen? (recall the story of Naboth in 1 Kings 21, remember Exodus 22:28)
7. What did Stephen do or say in his defense? What accusation did Stephen bring against his accusers?
8. How did the council members respond to Stephen's accusation?
9. What vision did Stephen see as he looked up toward heaven?
10. What did the people do to Stephen?



11. What did Stephen ask Jesus to do for him? (receive my spirit) What did Stephen ask Jesus not to do for those stoning him? (don't hold his death against them)
12. Do you think Jesus was pleased with Stephen? Do you think Jesus was pleased with what the people did?
13. Who helped Stephen during his trial and stoning? (God's Holy Spirit)
14. Was Stephen faithful? If you were in Stephen's place, would you be found faithful?
15. Did Stephen's life and death honor God?



### 37. Deaths of Ananias & Sapphira

*Scripture Base:* Acts 4:32-35; 5:1-11

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Does God know what is truly in our hearts and why we have done things? Can we hide our thoughts and motives from God and others?
2. Fruit becomes rotten from the inside out. It may appear to still be good fruit on the outside, but on the inside already be rotten.
3. Do you know anyone who outwardly attempts to be like other people, but inwardly is selfish? We have a story that happened to some believers who tried to impress others of their generosity but hidden in their heart was selfishness. What happens to rotten fruit?

*Tell the Story:*

Deaths of Ananias & Sapphira

All those who were believers and followers of Jesus were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions were their own, but they shared everything they had. The disciples of Jesus continued to testify to the resurrection of their Lord Jesus and his grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. From time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the feet of the disciples of Jesus.

There was a man among the believers named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, who also sold a piece of property. With his wife's knowledge Ananias kept back part of the money for himself and brought the rest of the money and put it at the disciples' feet.

Then Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for your land? Didn't it belong to



you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money yours to use? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men, but to God."

When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. Great fear seized all who heard what happened. Then some young men came forward and wrapped up the body of Ananias, and carried him out and buried him.

About three hours later Ananias' wife Sapphira came in. She did not know what had happened to her husband. Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price that you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she replied, "that is the price."

Peter said to Sapphira, "How could you agree to test the Holy Spirit of the Lord? The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door. And they will carry you out also." At that moment Sapphira fell down at Peter's feet and died. Then the young men came in and found her dead. They carried Sapphira out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized all the believers and all who heard about these events.

*Talk About the Story:*

1. After Jesus returned to heaven what were the believers doing to help one another?
2. Where did the believers get money to help those in need?
3. What did they do with the money from sale of their house or property?
4. What did Ananias and Sapphira do with their property? What did they do with the money from the sale? (kept back part of it)
5. Did Peter know what they had done? What did Peter say to Ananias?
6. What happened to Ananias?
7. As soon as his wife Sapphira came what happened?



8. What was their sin? (lying to the Holy Spirit by saying that what they brought was all the money from the sale of the property)
9. Can we fool God's Holy Spirit? Believers must be truthful.



### 38. To Live Is Christ, To Die Is Gain

*Scripture Base:* 2 Corinthians 11:23-27; 12:1-9;  
Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21-24; 3:10-11; 2Ti 4:6-8

*Introduce the Story:*

This is the story of a changed man—a man who died to an old way of life and who lived a new life in Christ. He suffered greatly for his faith in Christ as you will see in this story. Paul longed to be with Jesus in heaven, but for the sake of his friends and new believers he was content to remain in this life to teach them. Paul's motto might be: To live is Christ and to die is gain.

*Tell the Story:*

To Live Is Christ, To Die Is Gain

In the beginning Paul was not a believer in Jesus. In fact, Paul was like those who hated Jesus and believed that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy, and that Jesus' followers should be arrested and punished for following a false prophet. One day when Paul was going to persecute and arrest some believers Jesus spoke to him from heaven in a vision. Paul's life was changed. Now he wanted to teach about Jesus and to tell people what Jesus taught him. But there were many people who were like the old Paul—they believed that Paul was not teaching according to Moses. So Paul was often arrested and beaten and even imprisoned.

Paul said in a letter to some believers: "I have been in prison frequently, been flogged severely, exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked...I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, even in danger from my own countrymen. I have labored long and hard, often gone



without sleep, I have gone without food knowing hunger and thirst. And I have been cold and naked" (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

And Paul added: "I had a wonderful vision of heaven. To keep me from becoming proud because of what I saw, I was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with God to remove it but God said, 'My grace is sufficient for you'" (2 Corinthians 12:1-9).

To other friends Paul wrote: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

To other believers Paul wrote: "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I go on living in this body that will mean fruitful labor for me...I desire to depart and be with Christ, but it is necessary for your sake that I remain in the body" (Philippians 1:21-24).

To the young man Timothy Paul said, "I am already being poured out like a drink offering. The time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, our righteous judge, will award me on that day..." (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Paul was not afraid to die for he knew what was beyond the grave. "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like Christ in his death, and so, to attain resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11).

*Talk About the Story:*

1. In the beginning did Paul love Jesus and the followers of Jesus? What did he do to the followers of Jesus



2. What happened to change Paul?
3. After the change in Paul's life what did he want to do?
4. Did Paul suffer in his work for Jesus?
5. Do you think that Paul was afraid of dying?
6. Who did Paul say was living in him? What do you think Paul meant when he said, "I no longer live, Christ lives in me."
7. What did Paul know was waiting for him beyond his death?
8. Are you afraid to die? Do you know what awaits you?



### 39. Raised to Life Again

*Scripture Base:* Job 19:25-26; John 11:21-26; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5, 21-22, 35-36, 42-44, 49; 2 Corinthians 4:14; 5:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 16-17; Daniel 12:2

*Introduce the Story:*

Our story today will not really be a story until it happens. God's Word tells us what is going to happen. In the days of Moses, God commanded the people to go into their fields and harvest the first ripening heads of grain and to present these to God as an offering of their firstfruits. In the words that follow you will hear Jesus mentioned as the firstfruit of the resurrection. The harvest always followed the gathering of the firstfruits. Again the picture is that of a seed that is sown in the earth that dies, but is born again as a plant to bear fruit. Listen to these things that Jesus and later Paul said about the coming resurrection of the dead. Then we will talk about these things.

*Tell the Story:*

#### Raised to Life Again

Job—that righteous man who was tested by Satan—confessed that he trusted God to one day redeem his soul. Job said:

"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God. I will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another" (Job 19:25-26).

Do you remember the story of Lazarus the brother of Mary and Martha? Martha told Jesus that if he had been there sooner her brother would not have died. Jesus said that Martha's brother would rise again. Martha





answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

To this Jesus replied, "I am the resurrection and the life. He

who believes in me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:21-26).

Paul wrote to believers: "We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence" (2 Corinthians 4:14).

Paul also wrote: "Brothers, I want to remind you of the good news I preached to you...By this good news you are saved...For what I received I passed on to you: That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-5).

Then Paul added: "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed...So it will be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body...And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the



likeness of the man from heaven (1 Corinthians 15:35-36, 42-44, 49).

Again Paul wrote: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him...For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and living on earth will be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14, 16-17).

So when the Lord Jesus returns one day in great power and glory those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan 12:2).

In the last days when the Lord Jesus returns, the last enemy to be defeated is death itself. So the saying that is written will come true: Death has been swallowed up in victory. The sting of death is sin, but thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### *Talk About the Story:*

1. According to the beliefs of your people, do people live again after they die? Does their body come back to life again? Do they possess some other kind of body?
2. In the story of Job there was a hope that Job would again one day stand upon the earth and see his redeemer with his own eyes.
3. Martha believed that her dead brother will rise again in the resurrection of the dead. What did Jesus have to say about who was the resurrection? What do you



4. think Jesus meant when he said that whoever believes in him would never die?
5. Jesus revealed many things to Paul. Then Paul shared these things with believers. Did Paul believe that the dead would live again?
6. If Jesus is the firstfruit of the resurrection then who will follow in the resurrection?
7. Notice that Paul talked about those who have fallen asleep in Jesus—that is, who believe in Jesus when they die. They will be caught up to be with Jesus.
8. There was a warning in another writing that said some of those sleeping in the dust of the earth would be raised to everlasting life, and some to shame and contempt. We will talk about this in the next story.
9. Since the days of the first man Adam we have all borne his likeness as men and women. In the resurrection we will bear the likeness of the second man—the Lord Jesus Christ.
10. Are you ready for the resurrection? How will you rise?



## 40. The Coming Judgment of Sinners

*Scripture Base:* Matthew 25:31-34; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27; 2 Peter 2:9; Jude 14; Revelation 20:11-15

### *Introduce the Story:*

Most cultures have some belief or practice of revenge, retribution or restoration after wrongdoing. The question to ask listeners is: What happens to a person who commits wrong? Are they punished in this life or the life to come? For those who believe in the law of *karma* the next rebirth and life cycle depends upon how one lived out their place in the previous life cycle.

Others who follow certain Christian traditions allow for a time and place of temporary punishment to cleanse one after death before going on to their final reward. In another major religion the deceased is judged according to the mercy of Allah and then if found worthy is helped across a bridge thinner than a razor's edge into Paradise. But even those condemned to hell, it is only temporary, for they believe none will remain there.

The pre-story discussion then is about what happens to a person after they die—do they face a judgment, and if so, by whom and where.

### *Tell the Story:*

Then Comes the Judgment

Jesus' disciples asked him about his return to earth and the last days. Jesus said, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him. He will separate out the people from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep



from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left."

Paul wrote to his friends: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

Another writer said: "Man is destined to die once and after that the judgment."

The disciple Peter said, "The Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment."

Jude, one of the earthly brothers of Jesus said, "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words the ungodly have spoken against the Lord."

John the disciple of Jesus was given a vision of the last days. John said, "Then I saw a great white throne and the one who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them to hide. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that was in it, death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."



God said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book" (Exo 32:23).

To those who believe in Jesus and stand firm in their faith Jesus said, "I will never erase his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels" (Revelation 3:5). And again Jesus said, "Nothing impure will ever enter it (the holy city), nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27).

To his disciples Jesus said, "The harvest is at the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Mat 13:39-43).

*Talk About the Story:*

1. What do listeners believe will happen to a person after they die? Where will they go? Will there be any judgment or retribution for the acts they have committed in their life?
2. What did Jesus say would happen when he returned at the end of the age?
3. Who are the sheep and who are the goats? (Read John 10:14)
4. What happens after we die (Hebrews 9:27)?
5. What happens to the unrighteous while they are awaiting the day of judgment? (2 Peter 2:9, refer to the story of The Rich Man & Lazarus—Luke 16:23-24).
6. In John's vision who will stand before the great white throne? (all the dead)



7. Where must a person's name be found? (in the book of life)
8. How does one's name get written in the book of life? (Here we need to be careful that it not considered just what we do, but that faith and repentance are also involved. Refer to John 3: 16-18; 6: 40; 11: 25-26 and other verses of your choice that speak of belief in Jesus resulting in forgiveness of sin, salvation and eternal life, and a life pleasing to God.)
9. What will happen to those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life?
10. What is called "the second death"? (the lake of fire)
11. Can one escape God's judgment if their name is not found in the book of life?
12. Does God want to punish sinners? (see 2Pe 3:9)
13. What would keep you from believing in Jesus as God's Son who suffered and died for your sins and was raised from the grave as the firstfruit of the resurrection of the dead?



## 41. No More Death!

*Scripture Base:* 1Co 15, 1Th, Rev 22

*Introduce the Story:*

1. Talk about the deaths of loved ones—family members, friends, leaders.
2. Talk about what it might be like in a world where there was no death—no one, no animal, nothing died. What might it be like?
3. In the beginning when God made the world and all that is in it, there was no death, only life which came from God.
4. Long ago during the days of the man named Job his friend said to him: "The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life." (Job 33:4) Life comes from God. Let's think about a time when there will be no more death.

*Tell the Story:*

### No More Death!

Do you remember the story of Adam and Eve? God had warned Adam about the consequences of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil—the day he ate from that tree he would die. When Eve and her husband Adam did eat of that tree God said to Adam: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken, for dust you are and to dust you will return." Adam lived a long time but finally he died just as God said would happen.

The follower of Jesus named Paul wrote these words to some friends: "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). And again he wrote: "For the wages of sin is death, but the



gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). To other friends Paul wrote: "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive...The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:22, 27).

At the end of this age in which we live when Jesus returns and judges the living and the dead, a time will follow in which there is no more death. It can truly be said: "Death has been swallowed up in victory...Where, O death, is your sting" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55). An ancient promise of God says: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O death, is your destruction" (Hosea 13:14)?

The disciple of Jesus named John had a vision in which he was told about the coming judgment and the end of death. Here is what John had to say:

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth...I heard a loud voice saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them, and they will be his people...God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

He who is seated upon the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true...I am the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic, idol-worshippers and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake. This is the second death.



Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city...There will be no more night, nor need for the light of a lamp or of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And those who serve the Lamb will reign for ever and ever."

*Talk About the Story:*

1. Do you remember the command and warning that God gave to the first man Adam? What would happen if Adam disobeyed God? Did Adam die as God said would happen?
2. What did the follower of Jesus named Paul say about how sin entered the world? When sin came, what followed sin?
3. Why do you think that God sent Jesus to live, suffer and die and be raised from the grave? (to defeat death by dying in our place)
4. Is God able to do away with death? What has God given to believers instead of death? (recall the words of Jesus in John 11:25-26 and 3:16)
5. Will there be any more death, mourning or crying when God makes all things new?
6. Will there be any unbelievers or evil persons in the new creation?
7. In the story of Adam and Eve there were two trees mentioned—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. After Adam and Eve disobeyed God they could no longer eat from the tree of life. In the new creation the tree of life is present bearing its fruit each month.
8. God's Word says: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law" (Galatians 3:10). Now there is no more curse.



9. Again God's Word says that Christ redeemed us by becoming a curse for us" (3:13).
10. One of the penalties for those who were disobedient is that they would be thrown into darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12). Who will be the light for those in the new creation?
11. Jesus told a parable about a banquet that was prepared but some refused to come. Read Luke 14:16-24. God is preparing a new creation and you are invited to be there. Through these stories God has sent you an invitation to come. Will you be there or will your place be given to another? Next: It's your choice.



## 42. It's Your Choice

*Scripture Base:* Luke 14:16-24 (this parable was used in the last lesson. It may be good to read it again for the listeners)

*Introduce the Story:*

The following story is obviously not a Bible story. It is, however, a story which reviews many of the truths covered in the Bible stories and at the same time attempts to apply them in a thought-provoking manner to your listeners.

This approach may or may not be the best way to draw the net. You may have other options or preferences for drawing the net. The bottom line is to confront the listeners with the decision they must make—life or death. It's their choice.

At the same time we want to leave the door open for those who are slow to respond, needing more time to think about their decision and the consequences of not making it.

Is there a personal story from your family or acquaintances which could be equally effective in presenting the choice.

Following the story is the important time of response and decision. Do what is culturally appropriate in calling for this response. For some it may be individual responses, others may want to discuss it as a village or family before making the choice. Let them ask questions, take time to review more stories and scripture verses which speak to their questions. Decide how best to get the group (or individuals) to indicate their decision. Then be prepared to publicly affirm their decision if they choose life, or to appropriately show patient disappointment if they fail to choose life. Commit





yourself to continuing to pray that in time all will respond and choose life.

*Tell the Story:*

#### It's Your Choice

For a moment let's tell your story. As I tell this story, think of your own story and how one day you will die as all people eventually do.

The day came when you were born of your mother. You were a strong baby and lived. Over the years you grew in size. During those young days you never worried about the end of your life, for every day was a new day to enjoy and live out. In time you married and had a family. During those years you worked hard to provide food for your family and to care for their needs. Perhaps during this time you also cared for your parents who were now old and in poor health. Hopefully you were spared the pain of losing a child to early death, but you finally did see your parents come to death's door, one by one. Now they are gone. Your children are grown and have their families. As time passes you, too, have grown older and older. Now you may be in poor health or declining in strength. You begin to realize that one day you will be at death's door yourself. At night when you can't sleep you wonder what death will be like. What will happen beyond the grave? What do your beliefs and traditions tell you will happen to you when that time comes? What fears do you have about your fate at death?

But you have heard these stories from God's Word about people who lived and died. Some suffered and died an early death because of their sins against God. You have heard the story about how death came into the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Death spread to their sons and on to the population of the whole earth. Yet God spoke words of hope to



Abraham saying: "Through your offspring (descendant) all peoples will be blessed" (Genesis 22: 18). Could it be that meant both blessing in life and blessing in death? The prophets told of God's Anointed One coming to suffer for our sins (Isaiah 53:5-6) and to die as a substitute sacrifice for our sin (Hebrews 10:10, 18). We saw in the stories of Jesus that he was the Lord of both life and death—giving healing and wholeness to those who suffered and life to those who had died.

Then the time came when Jesus said that he must lay down his own life to suffer and die (Mark 8: 31; 10: 33-34). But Jesus said he would live again. And so Jesus was resurrected from the grave as the firstfruit of the resurrection. The angels said that Jesus would return again one day (Acts 1: 11). Paul told of Jesus' coming with a loud command and the dead arising to meet him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4: 16-17). Daniel said that those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life and others to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12: 2).

In the story that Jesus told of the Rich Man and Lazarus it was too late for the rich man to change his fate after death. Another writer in the Bible said "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Hebrews 9: 27).

Now suppose it is your time to die, what is your choice? Jesus told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die". Then Jesus asked Martha: "Do you believe this" (John 11: 25-26)?

The disciple named Peter wrote to some believers these words, "The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3: 9).





It's your choice—life or death. Jesus said to the criminal on the cross: "Today you will be with me in paradise." You have heard the stories, when your time to die comes, you can be with Jesus in paradise or face an eternity of terrible suffering for your sins. Choose life!

*Talk About the Story:*

Rather than have a series of fixed questions this should be a time of talking and responding. There is no way to anticipate all the possible questions or responses which might come. Besides choosing life, some may still fall back on their religious beliefs and superstitions. Some may fear the consequences of family or peers. Some may say they are not free to make such a decision on their own. We often hear young people saying that when their parents are dead and the expected religious rites have been performed, then they will make their decision. In many oral cultures one does not freely make independent decisions.

You will no doubt have bathed this moment in deep prayer. Hopefully it will be a harvest of souls. Be patient yet fervent in seeking the decisions. Decide how it is best done in that culture for one to indicate a decision. In the event of rejection or hostility consider how those who do respond might do so safely until a time comes when they can openly share their decision.

If decisions are not unanimous, decide how you will extend an opportunity for those slow to respond or still needing assurance this is the right decision. If those listeners can be provoked into asking questions you may be guided back to previous stories you need to review or to new stories you need to tell. After you have used this story set a time or two you will have a better idea of what response to expect and what you need to do to draw the net and to deal with those slow to respond.



## **Affirming New Believers**

One of the most dangerous times for a new believer is that time of quiet after they have struggled with a life-changing decision and are needing assurance they have made the right decision. It is this time that Satan can certainly come and pose questions accusing the person of abandoning their dead ancestors or living family members who do not yet believe as they do.

Review of Scripture is one good way to affirm new believers. Quote the verses and have the listeners repeat the verses. If they can read give a Gospel or New Testament to read. Since many non-Westerners do not believe in marking their Bibles, copy short portions of affirming verses to read. Teach songs for worship. Pray for the protection of the new believers. Encourage them to begin praying as well. Fellowship with other believers also affirms their decision.

Worship is also a wonderful way of helping to stabilize new believers. Not only are they in the presence of other believers but through their worship they are also in the presence of God.

A wonderful means of helping to affirm new believers is to get started sharing their testimony of faith in Jesus with their family and friends. Talking about their faith helps to affirm their faith.

Warn new believers of the consequences of slipping back into the old way of life. Teach about the indwelling Holy Spirit who strengthens the believer, pointing out sin in their lives which needs to be confessed, helps them when they pray, and helps them to live a life pleasing to God as a testimony of their salvation.



## DEATH NOTES

The Bible speaks of death in a threefold way: physical, spiritual, and eternal. The first physical death of a human being recorded in the Bible is that of Abel who was murdered by Cain his brother (Genesis 4:8). However, death itself, in both the physical and spiritual sense, is first mentioned by God himself (Genesis 2:17). In the Genesis account of the Fall both physical and spiritual death come as a result of sin (Romans 5:12-21).

Various attitudes toward death are expressed in the Bible, from dread to anticipation. The ancient Hebrews regarded death as an entrance into Sheol, where they were cut off from everything dear in life, including God and loved ones. But God revealed to the psalmist that the Redeemer God is both in heaven and in Sheol (Psalm 139:7-8). And He is able to bring a person out of Sheol ("the grave") (1 Samuel 2:6).

Because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), all are spiritually dead—separated from God who is the Source of spiritual life. Sin makes a person hate the light and despise the truth; it causes one to break God's laws and to become insensitive to holy things. Everyone who has not been redeemed by Christ is spiritually dead. (Luke 15:32; Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 2:13)

The Bible also speaks of "the second death" (Revelation 2:11), which is eternal death, the everlasting separation of the lost from God in Hell. The "second death" is equated with "the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:14), "the lake which burns with fire and brimstone...is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

The apostle Paul speaks of death as an enemy: "The last enemy that will be destroyed is death"



(1 Corinthians 15:26). In his resurrection, Jesus conquered death—physical, spiritual, and eternal. Through fear of death, men are subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:15); but "our Savior Jesus Christ...has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

Do not grieve as those who have no hope: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him". (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14)

And while alive in Jesus "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5)



## Two Deaths

Following is a graphic description of two deaths—the death of a believer and the death of an unbeliever. These two scenes are from a Preaching Poster titled *The Heart of Man* which describes the heart of an unbeliever and compares it with the heart of a believer. As part of the poster the two deaths are compared in picture and text. The original poster is over 250 years old. The faces in the poster are Chinese, but the people represented could be any nationality. I no longer have a copy of the actual poster which I had obtained some years ago while in Hong Kong. But perhaps the descriptions will paint the picture just as vividly in words as the poster does in picture.

### The Death of a Believer

In the first picture we see something of the peace and joy there is for a Christian at the time of death. Now 'death' is that which all people normally fear, for to them it is like going out into the unknown. God has planted in the heart of every race the realization that the death of the body is not the end of the individual. The Bible tells us that it is appointed to men to die once and after death comes the judgment. (Hebrews 9:27) Death may come suddenly, as when a person has an accident or meets a calamity unexpectedly. It comes without warning and there is no time to prepare. Or it may come gradually, as with old age or when there is a long illness. But who can tell whether the day of his death will be when he is a child, a young person or an old man? How important it is to be ready, and to be ready NOW.

Yet it is obvious that the dying man before us is quite unafraid. In fact, he is filled with peace and joy, and there is the look of eager anticipation on his face. How can this possibly be accounted for? Why is it? His



heart has been cleansed, Jesus Christ is his Savior, sin has been forgiven. Christ has taken away death's sting which comes from the poison of sin because He Himself conquered death and rose victorious from the dead after bearing away his sin. (1 Corinthians 15:56-57) Fear has completely left this man's mind, he knows that ahead of him is a life full of joy in God's eternal home. The gate of heaven is open for him, and by faith he already sees His Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:11) There will be no sorrow in heaven, for God has promised His people that He Himself "will dwell with them, and they shall be His people; He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be any mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4)

On the wall is a larger picture that shows how, as well as being a Christian, he had witnessed and worked for his Savior, and he longs to enter into the Presence of the One he has loved and served, to hear Him say, "Well done." Another smaller picture is a peaceful scene that fits so well with the whole atmosphere of the room. Do you wonder the face of the dying man is alight with joyful anticipation?

### The Death of an Unbeliever

This is a very different scene from that of the first picture of the believer who was dying. There is no hope for this man whose trust is not in Jesus Christ, no comfort for his heart, or peace or joy for his soul. Hopelessness, fearfulness and confusion are all in evidence as his life comes to an end. He has lived without God and is dying without God. The passing pleasures of this world, its revelry, gambling, and selfish indulgence bring no comfort to his soul now. He thought he was "enjoying the pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25) but now they mock him in his last moments, just as the discarded cigarettes or drink can bring no satisfaction in his hour



of greatest need. Whatever he may have accumulated in wealth or fame has no longer any value to him, for he must leave it all behind. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out." (1 Timothy 6: 7)

The dying man's heart has never been cleansed by the precious blood of God's dear Son Jesus. It is filled with sin, and Satan remains in control, to torment and frighten him still. Has he sinned against God by worshipping idols, or his own ancestors? Has he sought only for education, forgetting that all his wisdom is but foolishness in God's sight? (1 Corinthians 3: 19) Has he thought of fame in this world and neglected the need of having his name written in heaven? (Luke 10: 20). Has he professed to be an atheist, saying as those foolish people do say, that there is no God? (Psalm 53: 1) Has he been like so many others, decent and clean living, doing good to his neighbors and hoping he might be counted good enough for God to accept?. Or is it that he has been deceived by Satan into thinking that, by doing penance, praying to saints or people he considers holy, or performing good deeds, he can gain sufficient merit to escape the coming judgment and find heaven's door open to him? (Titus 3: 5) Does the dying man not know that we are saved by the grace of God, not by what we do, but by faith in what the Lord Jesus has done for us? (Ephesians 2: 8-9)

See how the demons gather round to claim him! They come to torment and to torture. They show him verses from the Bible to let him see his hopelessness. They might even mock him and lie to him saying that God would not accept him even if he should seek God's mercy.

How solemn is the time when a unbeliever faces death. There is danger, tragic danger in delaying any decision to put one's trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.



Remember always that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6: 23) and that after death comes judgment. (Hebrews 9: 27) Will you not listen to the word of warning, "Flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3: 7) How will you escape if you neglect such a great salvation as is offered you by Jesus Christ? (Hebrews 2: 3)