

Get Ready!

Choosing Sides

By: Daniel Smead



Text

Joshua 4:19-24; 5:1-15

Key Quest Verse

Joshua 5:13b-14a Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” “Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.”

Bible Background

The Hebrew people finally entered the Promised Land and the first thing they did was give God honor. They made a monument from a simple stack of 12 stones to commemorate God’s miracle at the Jordan for future generations. This was not an altar, but it followed the method mandated for building altars to God: “If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it.” (Ex. 20:25). The Old Testament includes a series of altars and monuments which commemorated particular events of God’s provision or leading, including 12 pillars set up at the base of Sinai to represent the tribes (Ex. 24:4). Some Old Testament altars even received names (as with Jacob in Gen. 33:20 and Moses in Ex. 17:15).

The monument may also have emphasized unity, with the stones brought by representatives of each tribe. The tribes lived in close quarters for 40 years, and were about to spread out. This was perhaps the last good opportunity for some years to emphasize unity. Already the family members of two and a half of the tribes had remained east of the river. At least all of the soldiers crossed together. Within a few years the tribes settled in separate areas, though they continued to assemble for festivals and sometimes for war. When the tribes gained a king this may have lent a greater consciousness of unity, though for the first time it also elevated one family line. But that unity was incomplete. Saul had conflict with David. David was king for years before he received all the tribes’ loyalty, and later more than one of his sons rebelled. Under Solomon the seeds were planted for the kingdom to break in two. It is hard to find a biblical generation which was close to the Lord and avoided conflict.

Get Ready!

The crossing of the Jordan strengthened Joshua's position with the Hebrews (Josh. 3:7). Joshua 4:14 says that in this event "the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they revered him all the days of his life, just as they had revered Moses." Even 40 years earlier Joshua was counted as a leader among his people, and for about 40 years he had aided Moses (Num. 13:1-3; Ex. 24:13). During all this time God visibly led the people, represented by a pillar of cloud in the day or a pillar of fire at night. It seems that once the Jordan was crossed these pillars were no longer on the scene, and the recognition of God's presence among the people concentrated on the Ark of the Covenant. Joshua was one of the two oldest people in the community, able to comment from memory on the whole course of the exodus (the new generation of soldiers topped out at 59, and we know that Caleb was 79; see Josh. 14:7). He was the nation's human military leader and to some extent served as its vocal conscience and prod. But as significant as Joshua's role was, he was not given Moses' exact role, and it seems that he did not normally have the kind of direct relationship with God that Moses had experienced. Joshua was granted some of Moses' authority (Num. 27:18-21), but was meant to seek Eleazar the priest's guidance on God's will rather than simply talk with God. However this lesson's Bible story is one of several places where Joshua's contact with God seems to mirror Moses'.

When the people entered the land some adjustments were necessary. It seems that the covenant of circumcision had not been carried forward during the wilderness wandering. It was now renewed. Likely the ritual lapsed during the years after Kadesh Barnea, reflecting the status of the adult (parenting) generation as under a sentence of death for rebellion. So the people could come back under the terms of God's covenant with Abraham a mass circumcision took place.

The mass circumcision helped prepare the nation to celebrate the Passover. It appears this also had gone unperformed for some time. It was first enacted in Egypt before the tenth plague, and then celebrated at the start of the second year in the wilderness (Num. 9:1-3), still prior to the Hebrews' arrival at Kadesh Barnea and the rejection of that generation. A long gap in its practice can be surmised because it would be unacceptable for uncircumcised men to participate in it, and it was required that Passover be commemorated by the entire nation (Ex. 12:47-49).

The timing for the people no longer eating manna was carefully noted, perhaps emphasizing how God had fulfilled a promise. Manna was first given to the Hebrews to sustain them while on the way to Sinai. God continued to provide it even after the people's rebellious acts. Now God had at last brought them all the way into the land with divine provision, only ending this help when they had already proven themselves capable of eating of the produce of the land.

The placing of twelve stones by twelve chosen members of the tribes as a monument to the crossing of the Jordan seems to mirror the sending of 12 spies from Kadesh Barnea. It is a formal way of involving each of the tribes in what is going on (except for Levi, which had its own duties) when the people are called on to enter the Promised Land. But rather than these 12 men being sent out collectively to find the way the tribes' representatives are called upon to provide a visual reminder that God prepared a way for them.

Get Ready!

We can get caught up in our own image as God’s servants doing good for people, forgetting whose power we serve in. Jesus had to die for us to have these opportunities. Jesus once concluded a parable by saying “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’” (Luke 17:10). After years of serving God well Joshua may have needed this reminder. Or maybe the angel’s comment emerged simply from the way Joshua phrased himself. Either way you view it Joshua was still a strong servant for God. After all, it seems like this angel was there to prepare the way for the Lord to deliver instructions to Joshua about the defeat of Jericho (Josh. 6:2-5).

In God’s strength, and through God’s plan, we can do great things for God. In fact we are in a better situation to do so than even Joshua, for we have a greater Joshua working for us. We have Jesus, whose Hebrew name is really the same as Joshua’s, as our mediator. Also we have been given the Holy Spirit with which to serve. Moses once expressed his wish that this could be true for all of God’s people (Num. 11:29), and in time God fulfilled that desire. This week make a point of committing your teaching to God for a divine blessing on the outcome, and serve the Lord with zealous love.

Get Set!

Option A



HOMECOMING

Materials: None

Procedure: Ask your class: **Suppose you were to go on a long trip, when you return, at what point do you consider the journey to be finished? When you arrive at the city limits? When you pull onto your street? When you get out of the car? When you go through your front door? Once all the luggage is out of the car? Once you have unpacked your suitcase? When the dirty clothes from your trip are by the washing machine? How about when you eat your first meal at home? What about when you first sleep in your own bed again? Maybe when you first go back to school after the trip?** (Accept answers now – or if you believe the class would be ready with many responses, perhaps don’t list all of the sequence of responses given here as suggestions, but rather rely on them to give differing answers.)

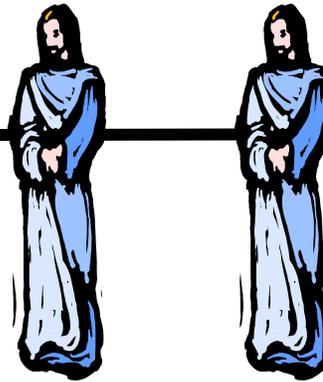
There are a lot of ways to judge that a trip is over, and a lot of transitions that need to occur along the way. Even if you find it easy to say “the trip ends right now” you will still be adjusting from having been on the trip for a while. But usually you wouldn’t take a trip that is more than a week or two. If your trip took a year what extra steps might be involved? (Get furniture out of storage; contact utilities companies to restore power and water and phone service; maybe even get a hotel room in your old home town while you prepared to rent a new apartment or buy a house.)

Can we even really grasp the idea of going on a trip that takes 40 years to complete? You could think that the Hebrews’ journey was over once Joshua started planning for an attack on Jericho, or when the people actually crossed the Jordan, or perhaps you would want to go further. In today’s text we will hear about some changes that advanced the transition of the Hebrew people from wanderers to conquerors.

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Get Set!

Option B



JESUS AND JESUS

Materials: None

Procedure:

Relay the following to your students (in your own words, if this is awkward for you, or if your students would not be familiar with the idea of two christs from Galatians that is alluded to here): **The Bible tells us to accept only one Christ, and to watch out for stand-ins. What if I were to tell you that the Bible talks about more than one Jesus?** (Some students may be surprised, or try to guess what the joke is, and some may already have learned that Joshua and Jesus share their Hebrew name.) **Joshua and Jesus actually share their Hebrew name, which would be pronounced Ye-shu-a. In fact there are more than two people by that name in the Bible. The book of Zechariah talks about the High Priest of that time, who was a man named Ye-shua.**

Our Joshua couldn't have been named after Jesus; it would have to have been the other way around if there is a connection. Do you think it is significant? (Maybe some will suggest that the name is giving us a clue that we should look at Joshua's life to understand Jesus' life.) **People sometimes discuss things in the Old Testament which seem to connect to the New Testament in special ways, some of which the New Testament never actually mentions. Here's an example. You know how in the Bible John the Baptist gets compared with Elijah?** (If your students aren't familiar with this, you can reference Malachi 4:5 and Matthew 17:10-13; cf. 2 Kings 1:8; Matthew 3:4.) **Well, that comparison leads some people to make a connection between Elisha and Jesus; they both raised the dead, fed hungry people with small amounts of food, cared for the poor, and so on. People call these kinds of examples "types" – like a prototype. Except that a prototype is what you base later models on, but in the Bible types are examples *before* the big example, sort of the opposite of copies. Similar things get discussed with Joshua and Jesus. Joshua took over from Moses and brought the people into the land. We think of Jesus as the prophet like Moses who was predicted as his successor and we expect Jesus to take the people into the land. (To establish the connection with Moses you can see Deut. 18:15-19.)**

But there are significant ways that Joshua and Jesus differ at the same time as their careers may seem to overlap. Today's lesson points to some of that difference.

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Get Set!

Bible Story

Teacher Tip: Provide markers for students to highlight portions of the story in their Bibles

Joshua 4:19-24; 5:1-15 (NIV)

You might briefly introduce today's text before it is read, by stating that it comes soon after the crossing of the Jordan (which your class probably studied last week). When your students have read the Bible text for today's lesson, perhaps to themselves, or perhaps going around the class for each new verse or paragraph, ask for their first reactions to this passage. If you used Option A to bring them into the lesson, ask them at what point they would now identify the Hebrews' journey as having ended. (Some might say when they crossed the Jordan, built their monument, were circumcised, celebrated the Passover, stopped receiving manna, began to attack Jericho, or at some other point.)

The Hebrews' journey was a trip to be remembered. They were coming to their new home when they came into the land, but it wasn't anything like just opening the door to a house and going in. Part of today's lesson is about how the people remembered their trip in a special way, by building a monument as a reminder of when they crossed the Jordan.

What are some ways you can think of that people use to remember important events?

(Make photo albums, videotape the event, engrave a plaque, put an ad in the newspaper, put out a press release – if your students don't give particularly personal responses, use the next question as well.) **I'm going to guess that none of us has ever done something like what the Hebrews did in today's story to remember their journey, but what are some things you personally do to remember things?** (Maybe they put pictures in their locker of favorite times, or keep a diary, or buy souvenir tee-shirts or caps, or have people sign their school yearbook.)

Today's lesson has a lot to do with remembering. Do you see reasons why the Hebrew people might use a pile of stones to remember their trip? (It was available; they could expect it to last a long time since it couldn't really break, just fall over and need repairs; it represented the trip by being stones taken from the Jordan; it represented those who took the trip by being 12 stones from twelve tribes; it was a symbol to God of the people's lasting memory of what God had done for them.)

Get Set!**Bible Story**

The people had not continued with the practice of circumcision while they were in the wilderness, but now years later they returned to it. Do you understand why circumcision was significant? (It comes from a covenant that God formed with Abraham. He and his male descendants were to undergo circumcision as a symbol of their commitment to God. Your students can read about this in Genesis 17:9-14.) **Circumcision had existed before God ever mentioned it to Abraham, but it wasn't a practice in the area where Abraham was living, and perhaps it had never been given a spiritual meaning before. We don't know why this particular ritual would be a symbol for God's relationship with Abraham and his descendants, but we know that God was calling for it to have more than a physical meaning. It was a symbol of removing sinful attitudes from a person's heart. Jeremiah 9:25, 26 refers to God's disapproval of people who were "circumcised only in the flesh" because that meant they were "really uncircumcised."**

Another thing that the people remembered in today's text was the Passover. What was that event in their history? (It was when the people were protected from the tenth plague in Egypt by having put the blood of a lamb on their doorways, so that the death angel would pass over their houses and not kill their firstborn children.) **Passover was meant to be an annual celebration, but it seems like they had not celebrated it for quite a few years. We can guess that because they could not have had Passover without having continued with circumcision.**

The people most needed to remember what their relationship with God really was. Somebody once said that there are two kinds of people in this world, the ones who divide the world into two kinds of people and the ones who don't. From today's lesson text it sounds like Joshua was the first kind, but he got a reminder from an angel that you couldn't really look at the world in terms of "us" and "them." Rather if you have to divide the world in two it needs to be seen as broken between God's desires and what people end up doing. **None of us fully manages to do what God wants us to. That is where Jesus comes in. (If your students used Option B to begin the lesson, you might draw in the idea of Joshua being seen as a "type" of our Lord Jesus.) Jesus managed to place himself completely on God's side. That is why he is able to save us.**

Go!



Manna Again?

FOOD

Materials: Some coriander seeds, or a picture of them; something to stand in for manna, perhaps vanilla wafers, perhaps bread with honey, or some other idea of your own;
 optional: access this site, <http://www.cnn.com/2000/FOOD/news/12/15/basic.challah/index.html>, on the internet for one version of the recipe for a very old kind of Jewish bread. To make this more like manna either use the suggested modification that substitutes a cup of honey for the 1/4 cup of sugar, or the method that uses sugar and adds 1/4 cup of honey to the dough; also, use olive oil for the oil in the recipe. If you follow this option you will need the ingredients as part of your materials, and the preparation time is estimated at two hours, with 20 minutes of baking. Optional: additional website, http://www.stratsplace.com/rogov/israel/manna_breakfast.html. This makes something more like a pancake

Quest Connection

In today’s story the Hebrews stopped eating manna, which God had provided for 40 years. This big change went with their beginning to eat the land’s long-promised produce.

Procedure: Optional: let your class be involved with making bread or pancakes (using a recipe from above). If bread, the dough should already have raised before your class meets, and the bread’s 30 minutes in the oven would allow time for discussion.

Ask your class: **What kinds of foods do you most like?** (perhaps put answers on a board and then rank them for popularity within the group.) **What is the least kinds of food that anyone here particularly likes? How do you think you would get by eating just one kind of food?** Have your class taste “manna” vanilla wafers, or honey-flavored bread. Discuss how they would feel about eating just that and water for a week. Up the time lengths, letting them think about each: a month; a year; ten years; forty years. Like the Hebrews, they are used to variety. Read Numbers 11:5, 6. Have students discuss foods they would most miss on an all-manna diet. Show or describe coriander seeds, perhaps passing them around (3 to 4 millimeters long, they are tan but manna was white, based on the Hebrew of Num. 11:7). Read Numbers 11:7-9, and Exodus 16:31.

Manna was ground up like grain and used for baked items like bread which tasted like wafers made with honey and olive oil. (Maybe it also was boiled, see Exod. 16:23).

It can be very hard to imagine eating the same thing for forty years. What must it have been like to stop? (As your students discuss this you can ask questions: “how well would they deal with spicy foods?” “In part, might God have been guiding them away from eating with idolatrous neighbors?”) Have your students look at Deuteronomy 8:1-3 and consider how much weight they normally put on food compared with the words of the Lord.

Go!**Close**

We may tend to get down on the Hebrews for complaining about their food. They were living in the wilderness, and God kept them alive with nourishing food and enough water, so we may call them ungrateful. But a lot of people in the West today tend to be very picky about their food, and to complain about it. Take some time now to consider if there are any ways that you need to change to show more gratitude to God for what you have been given in your life. (Allow some time.) One final thing – in a way the communion service represents Jesus as bread from God. We should be careful not to let ourselves get so used to that experience that we fail to treat it properly.

Go!

Angel Opinion



SELF EVALUATION/DISCUSSION

Materials: None; optional: a copy of Frank Peretti’s novel *This Present Darkness*.

Quest Connection

In today’s lesson an angel reminded Joshua that he wasn’t really the one in charge of the Hebrews. It was a good reminder, but it raises a question. What other things might we need reminders of, from an angel’s perspective?

For a long time people have thought about what angels might think about events in the world. (If you have a copy of *This Present Darkness*, by Frank Peretti, you might bring it to class and discuss how it guesses at angels’ activities and thoughts.) An old Jewish story says that when the Hebrews had successfully escaped the waters of the Red Sea and it closed in behind them God stopped the angels from singing. The idea is that angels in heaven were singing hymns of praise to God while the Egyptian army was drowning, and God stopped them because “His handiwork was drowning in the sea.” We humans try to describe God’s love for creation, even as God destroys parts of it, to understand our God. But is it legitimate to think that the angels would not have understood God’s will in that situation? (The story appears in the Talmud, from about five hundred years after Christ’s birth. It is harder to tell when the story itself dates from.)

An old Christian story supposes that when Jesus arrived in heaven he was welcomed by the angels, and one asked about the plan for the world, trying to understand it better. (This goes along well with 1 Peter 1:12.) The angel saw that Jesus had done wonderful things and opened the way for salvation. But now he was in heaven, so how was the news to spread in the world? Jesus explains about having trained his disciples and giving them the task. The angel basically asks “what if they fail?” Jesus replies “I have no other plan.” The idea is for the story to be encouraging to us humans. God has given great blessings and opportunities and responsibilities to us weak humans, when angels seem stronger and more reliable. They are powerful, by God’s will, but they aren’t the back up plan for us Christians. [Note: we might say that this story puts a lot of weight on Jesus, after all it was God’s plan that Jesus carried out.]

Go!

Ask your students to discuss what they think are some realistic perspectives that angels might hold about the state of the world. Have them look at 1 Peter 1:12.

Your students might want to bring up other biblical accounts of angels, or other stories they have heard about angels. Try to keep the subject matter centered on biblical understandings of angels. There is a limit to how much speculation is useful in this topic, but hopefully thinking about the relationship angels have with God can offer your students some inspiration and help them look at things in another light. You might ask your students to think about Jesus' relationship with angels – would angels approve of Jesus as being so much on God's side that they could declare themselves to be on Jesus' side?

Close

It is fun to do a little speculation sometimes, but there are many things we can't really be sure about. Among the things we can know for sure, however, is that God loves us and that Jesus provided us with a route for salvation. Let's take some time now to pray and thank them.

Go!**My Church's History****GUEST QUEST****Materials:**

The worksheet “My Church’s History”; writing instruments; any historical documents about your congregation (commemorative books, for example); optional: invite a guest in to class who knows a lot about the history of your congregation, its people, its changes, its building (s).

Quest Connection

The Hebrews needed to remember where they had come from so they could remember where they were going. God had brought them out of Egypt; they used the Passover to bring that to their minds year after year. God brought them through the Jordan; they built a monument to bring that into focus for later generations. God’s covenant with Abraham involved circumcision to help keep them aware of that agreement.

What about our church, this particular congregation we are involved with? What do you know about its history? Our worksheets will help us think about that history.

Procedure:

Distribute the worksheets and allow your students to consider the questions. As part of your class time you might go on a “monument hunt,” seeking out plaques and other items that name their donors or who they were in memory of. You could get some ideas in advance of where it would be best for your class to go. Some places may not be available during class time, so you might want to bring items into the classroom for them to look at.

You could have a guest come to discuss the history of your congregation, maybe someone who remembers its founding or who has some special understanding of its changes over the years. Such a guest can assist your students in working on their worksheets (which call for conducting an interview). Or you might suggest a trip to visit a shut-in who would have knowledge of the church’s history. Many people would really appreciate the visitors and the chance to reminisce.

Your students may take their worksheets with them, perhaps interviewing their own parents during the week to help them prepare their answers. If so, you might want to have them pool their information on a later Sunday.

Go!

Something you might try is creating a history chart on the board or some paper. Start big. Mark off a horizontal line representing the history of the church from its founding to the present day. Insert vertical lines, labeled to indicate the decades, and allow space for comments within each decade. Note significant events in the culture or the local area below the horizontal line, and big changes in the church's life above the line. For example you might note if the church moved and why. If some things never were a big deal don't emphasize them.

Did the congregation grow or shrink; was there a fire in the old building; did an increase in the local population spur some large effort in evangelism? Are there programs which were added, or which ran their course and faded out (like a VBS program, or a Sunday night service)? Did the death of some significant leader change things for the congregation, or the arrival of a new fire-brand stir things up? Has the church been involved in mission work, or planting other churches? Has it sent some of its members into ministry elsewhere? Hopefully the chart will give some sense of a flow to the life of the congregation.

Close

Pray: Dear God, you have brought us to today, through many yesterdays. You have used our pasts to demonstrate your love and guidance, helping us place our trust in you in the present. Please help us to rely on you in each moment that you allow us to serve you on into the future, knowing that you have great plans for our lives. Amen.

Go!



Circumcision / Baptism

BIBLE RESEARCH

Materials: Worksheet “Comparing the Covenants”; writing utensils; chalk board or marker board; Bibles; concordances.

Quest Connection

In today’s lesson the people renewed their commitment to circumcision as a way of acknowledging their covenant with God. It was a practice that was to be carried out for every male who entered the community, whether by birth or other means. It dated from the time of Abraham and is connected to what we call the Abrahamic Covenant (or agreement). As Christians we are part of a new covenant described in Jeremiah 31 and at the Last Supper. Some people in the church have tried to describe baptism (part of this new covenant) as comparable with circumcision. In this activity we will discuss whether that is a reasonable comparison.

Procedure: Distribute the worksheet “Comparing the Covenants” and ask your students to review its overall questions. Discuss the questions as a class. Look up scriptures, share ideas, even debate. Write ideas on the board to keep track of the points being raised. At some point allow time for students to mark their own answers on their papers. Hopefully your students will be able to see that there are some significant differences between circumcision and baptism, particularly involving the issue of personal choice (which pushes baptism to be a conscious decision made later in life than circumcision normally is). Among the issues they should recognize is that circumcision primarily indicated whether people were members of a family group. Foreigners only rarely came under the covenant, and when they did so they were becoming part of that physical community. When people circumcised their children they demonstrated the *parent’s* faith, acknowledging God’s claim on that child’s life.

The church exists as a company of the committed – we join Christ’s body by faith, each of us individually choosing to accept the Lord and thus becoming part of the group. Baptism indicates our mental state, our faith in Jesus. Even when people claim that baptism mirrors circumcision they advocate “confirming” people’s faith once they understand who Jesus is. This appears to acknowledge that conscious faith is required. Also, baptism is accessible to male and female, Jew and Greek, slave and free (Gal. 3:28, 29). There is no suggestion that it is primarily for the children of believers and only secondarily for everyone else.

Go!

This activity should allow any of your students who have not yet committed themselves to Jesus in baptism to consider that possibility. Be prepared to discuss this with students who may wish to talk more, perhaps after class time.

Close

We have been given the gift of a covenant that allows us to lead changed existences. Our commitment to God through Jesus opens us to receive the Holy Spirit and to live as servants of God. Let's take some time now to thank God for that opportunity, and to tell God that we will not treat it lightly. (Close with a silent time of prayer.)

Go!**From Egypt to Gilgal****OBJECT LESSON**

Materials: Copies of the worksheet “From Egypt to Gilgal,” perhaps photocopied on grey paper to simulate iron, or gold or silver paper to represent those metals; writing instruments; scissors; tape or glue; optional: matches or a lighter; a fire pit or a metal can for burning paper

Quest Connection

The Hebrews were slaves in Egypt before God sent Moses to free them and lead them away. The former slaves turned out to not really be ready to enter the Promised Land. Maybe they were too caught up in fears and doubts they gained during their enslavement, like their repeated worry that really God intended to wipe them out in the wilderness. The generation of Hebrews which *entered* the Promised Land grew up in the wilderness as free people serving a powerful God. They hadn’t brought chains with them in their minds.

Now, God didn’t want the Hebrews to simply forget about having been slaves. They were supposed to look back on that time and learn from it. The people’s obedience about the Sabbath, their proper treatment of their workers, their celebration of the Feast of Weeks, and particularly their treatment of the poor were all to be connected in their minds to their past as slaves in Egypt. Your class could look at Deuteronomy 5:15; 6:21; 15:15; 16:12; and 24:18, 22. The point was two-fold: they were to remember that this was in their past and that God saved them from it; they were also to realize that anyone can be enslaved, so they were never to look down on or mistreat the weak. Leviticus 26:13 says that God freed them so that they could hold their heads high; but the first generation remained fearful people. Later generations forgot that anyone could be a slave. They mistreated the poor, and proudly rejected God’s commands. Leviticus warned against the people’s future behavior, behavior which ultimately led to the nation being exiled (see Lev. 26:19, 32ff, 41).

Anyone who knows Jesus now was a slave to sin at one point. How far have we come in accepting our freedom from that enslavement and changing our attitudes?

Go!**Procedure**

Distribute the worksheets, and have your students cut off the strips from the bottom of the page to use in making a paper chain. Explain to them that this paper chain will serve as a reminder to of the enslavement that Jesus has offered us freedom from, as well as the risk we face of falling back under it. The verses on the paper chain should help them to remember what God has done for them.

Optional for when your students have completed this chain, or before they begin it: create a chain symbolizing slavery to sin, writing on each link enslaving things. Your students could put on specific things from their past, or from their present if they feel that they are enslaved to sin. These links can be set up to be smaller than the ones from the worksheet. Once the chain is completed, discuss with your class the horrible state of being a slave to sin. Then burn the chain, to symbolize how Christ frees us from sin.

Close

Second Peter 2:19 tells us that people are the slaves of whatever has mastered them. We need to make it a point to have Jesus as our master. Take your chains home and put them somewhere that they will be a reminder to you of what Jesus has done, and what his actions call us to do.

Go!**Holy Days****OBJECT LESSON**

Materials: Worksheet “Holy Days”; optional: a calendar, an internet connection

Quest Connection

The Hebrews had certain days on their calendar which held special meanings for them. Passover was one. It commemorated the events in which they were brought out of Egypt and freed from slavery. It was to involve an annual retelling of that story so that each new generation could think of itself as having experienced the first Passover meal. It was a holiday in the original sense, a holy day set aside for a special purpose.

In modern times we have many holidays, but fewer holy days in which we experience a special relationship with God. Hopefully in considering this activity we will identify some ways that we can make our special days more holy for God.

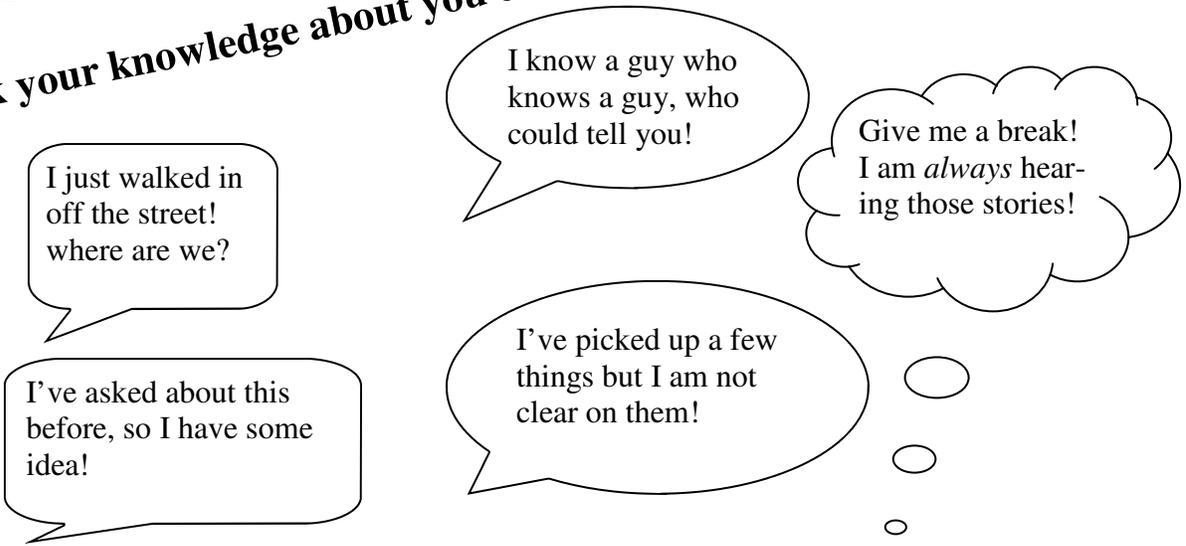
Procedure: Distribute the worksheet “Holy Days” and writing instruments. Ask your class to consider the questions. Allow them time to ponder for themselves what times and events have special meaning to them. Perhaps provide a calendar to help spark their minds, or even an internet connection so that they can look up information on holidays. When they have completed their worksheets you can ask for them to discuss any answers they are willing to, and compare people’s thoughts on these issues.

Close

Pray: Lord, we know that all of the moments you give us are gifts, and you desire every day to be viewed as special. And there is an age coming when people will no longer consider that some days are more worthy of honor than others. But we are still growing Lord, and still learning. Please help us, as we still are on this side of that great day, to be able to take into ourselves all the joy and love and glory that we can from each of the days which we can share with our brothers and sisters as special. Amen.

How would you...

rank your knowledge about you church's history and background?



Find out the answer to these questions and you might learn some interesting things!

When was this congregation founded, and how did it get started? (Was it started by another local church, or a traveling evangelist, or what?)

Has the congregation ever changed buildings? If so from where did it move, when, and why?

What pastors (or other significant leaders) has your congregation had? When were they here?

Look around the building you use. Are there any plaques of remembrance? How about other items that have people's names, like items that were donated by individuals, families or other groups (check out hymnals, pianos, and other fixtures of the building). Ask around and find out who these people were. Tell what you found here in class.

Is anyone still in the church who was there when it was founded? Interview them, to find out something about how your congregation came to exist, or how it has changed.

Has your church ever produced a book or tract which tells about its own history? If so, find a copy and look at it as a class. What are some cool things it tells you? Note them on the back of this worksheet.

Comparing the Covenants

How was each of these covenants established?
(For the covenant with Abraham, you might look at Genesis 12, 15, and 17 particularly.)

How does each of these covenants relate to the Law?

What standards apply for people to undergo the symbol of this covenant?
(Who is allowed, and why?)

What do you make of the long gap in circumcisions during the Hebrews' time in the wilderness?

Does this tell us anything about the comparison of baptism with circumcision?

Are you baptized? If so, describe how you decided the time was right. If not, try to decide what would be necessary for you to take that step.

From Egypt to Gilgal

John 8:36 “if the Son sets you free
you will be free indeed.”

Romans 6:8 “we died with Christ, we believe
that we will also live with him.”

Romans 6:9 “since Christ was raised from the dead, he
cannot die again; death
no longer has mastery over him.”

Romans 6:10 “The death he died, he died to sin once for
all; but the life he lives,
he lives to God.”

Romans 6:18 “You have been set free
from sin and have become
slaves to righteousness.”

Romans 8:15 “you did not receive a spirit that
makes you a slave again to fear”

2 Timothy 2:9 “God’s word is not chained”

2 Peter 2:19 “a man is a slave to whatever
has mastered him”

Holy Days

Work out a list of 15 holidays, and rank them in order of significance to you personally (its o.k. to have more than one where you say “none,” but try to list numbers for the rest).

Are there particular anniversaries which hold great significance to you and/or your family but which are not normally thought of as “holidays”?

Pick out whichever holiday or anniversary is your favorite, and explain why it is:

How do you celebrate / commemorate / remember that time?

How long does that day affect you each year? (Count the time spent planning and preparing for it, and how long it maintains its impact on you afterward.)

In what ways could that day have a greater positive effect for you?

Thinking about these things, are there changes you want to make in your approach to holidays? Are there particular events or anniversaries that you want to begin paying attention to in your life?



My Journal

All the time people want me to choose sides, in arguments at school, in situations at home, even commercials on T.V. ask me to declare my loyalty to products or programs or ideas. Is it even possible just to maintain myself as my own self, not tied to anyone else's agenda? At least with God my options are clear. There is one mediator between God and all of humanity, and I get to have a relationship with God through that one mediator, Jesus. He is the one person who ever really was able to learn God's intentions and just accept them. How do I feel about that?