HONORABLE MEN

OF THE BIBLE

HIGH SCHOOL

The Missionary Baptist
Vacation Bible School Literature Committee presents

HONORABLE MEN OF THE BIBLE

Vacation Bible School Lessons for HIGH SCHOOL
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Table of Contents

HUMILITY AND PATIENCE 4
HONESTY AND INTEGRITY 12
FAITH AND WISDOM 16
ZEALOUSNESS AND LEADERSHIP . . . 21
COURAGE AND OBEDIENCE 27

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LESSON ONE

HUMILITY AND PATIENCE

LESSON TEXT
Isaiah 2:11; Numbers 12:3

WRITTEN BY
ELDER JOSHUA GREGORY

Introduction

Why Study Scripture? Perhaps one of the best answers to that question is found in the Apostle Paul's Roman Letter: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

A primary reason for studying scripture is to learn the mind of Christ and his attributes. Not only is Jesus Christ the end (fulfillment) of the law to all those (of whatever blood or background) who trust Him by His grace, but also, holy men of old often pointed to the coming of Christ through their very lives. They exemplified certain traits that Christ would later exhibit while he was on this earth. And, some of them in their service appeared as a prefiguring of the Savior to come.

Abel brought an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord from the firstlings of his flock, thus demonstrating obedience to the pattern set when God provided Adam and Eve with animal skins to cover their nakedness. Scripture confirms that, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. Abraham demonstrated faith in following God to a new land of new people and promise. Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Joseph, as a type of Christ, was persecuted for the vision God had placed in his heart. And, through many years in Egypt, he remained faithful to God, and was used by God to preserve the lineage of the Savior to come. Moses was perhaps the clearest example of a type of Christ, serving as mediator between God and Israel, and interceding on behalf of the people, even praying, "Lord take my name out of the book." King David anticipated the King of Kings to come. As a boy, he killed Israel's greatest enemy and demonstrated the sort of boldness that would come through the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. After Jesus ascended to Heaven, the apostles remained and served God faithfully. And, many endured horrific deaths as a result of their service to him.

What does each of these men have in common? They all possess some attribute of Christ. We can read more about the faithful men and women of old in Hebrews 11:33-40, where we are told that these people: "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

A further examination of these heroes of faith reveals that they were ordinary men and women who humbly *yielded* themselves in service to an extraordinary God. The most common attribute shared by every person who is faithful to God is this: **Humility**

Part 1: The Man Whom God Will Accept

"The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day." –Isaiah 2:11

Let us recall the story of the first people who lived on this earth. God created the heavens and the Earth in 6 days. As a side note, remembering that simple yet amazing truth will put us in a humble state of mind as we reflect on the Omnipotence of the Creator. He created Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden. They had only one forbidden thing: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The serpent was the most cunning person/animal that Eve had ever encountered, and she eventually succumbed to his tempting words and partial truths. He appealed to her vanity and pride, tempting her to "be as a god." "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." (Gen 4:6-7).

Indeed, Adam and Eve became "as gods, knowing good and evil," but the result was far from what they expected. The father of lies, appearing as the serpent in the garden, did what he always does: he twists the truth just enough to make it believable or tempting. He pressures and pushes and deceives until we yield to sin. And, the end result of sin is death. The moment they ate of the fruit, they sinned and became separated from God. They

recognized their nakedness and therefore had knowledge of their sinfulness. As God had warned, they died in the day that they ate of the fruit. This event typifies the "age of accountability" that every person reaches before they can be saved. When a knowledge of separation from God comes, the only proper way to respond is through humble submission to God, and repentance for sins. Not only did Adam and Eve bring death upon themselves, but because of their actions, "all of creation groans to be delivered even until now." God, creating a symbol of the perfect Lamb who would take away the sins of the world some 4,000 years later, killed the first animal, in order to make a covering for sin.

After Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden, they had children. Abel humbly brought a lamb to the Lord for sacrifice. Cain, in contrast, thought too much of himself to debase himself in such a manner. He, instead, brought to the Lord samples of all of his good works—fruits of his labors in the soil. Scripture tells us that God had respect to Abel's sacrifice, but that he rejected Cain's. God told Cain, "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" It seems likely that Adam and Eve, after coming to knowledge of their own nakedness and separation from God, later found grace in God's sight and repented of their sins. Adam likely shared the story of the fall with his sons, telling them of the necessity of blood offerings to cover sins. And Abel came to God in the manner which He required—with a heart of humility and with the "sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit," as evidenced by his offering of a lamb.

Jesus taught that no person can enter in to heaven unless that person humbles himself as a little child. David experienced that "God is near to those who have a broken heart and a crushed spirit." The Psalmist wrote: "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God:* God *is* not in all his thoughts." Scripture teaches, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and faith never exists in conjunction with personal pride. It is only the humble who can have true faith in God. We see that the man whom God accepts is a humble man. And, we learn from these men—and more importantly from Christ—that one of the greatest marks of true manhood is humility.

Part 2: The Meekest Man in All the Earth

"Now the man Moses *was* very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth." —Numbers 12:3

As further background study, read the entire twelfth chapter of Numbers.

In verse three of the above text, the word translated as "meek" is the Hebrew word *`anav*, which Strong's defines as "1. poor, humble, afflicted, meek. 1A poor, needy. 1B poor and weak. 1C poor, weak and afflicted. 1D humble, lowly, meek."

One way meekness could be defined is "strength bridled." A meek or humble man is not necessarily a weak man. In fact, some of the greatest examples of humble men in scripture are men who are (or have been) strong. Moses is one of these men. When he was around 40 years old, Moses killed an Egyptian taskmaster who was abusing one of the Hebrew slaves. But, rather than using Moses in the strength of his youth, when he still had the status of an Egyptian prince, God chose to use Moses to deliver his people as an 80 year old man. Moses returned to Pharaoh, not with an army, not with pomp and circumstance, and not with physical strength; Moses returned to Egypt as an old man with a shepherd's staff and a simple message from God: "Let my people go."

At first glance this passage in Numbers Chapter 12 may be difficult for a modern reader to understand. A simple reading of the text seems to indicate that Moses married a woman of whom his family did not approve. Miriam and Aaron state that they disapprove of Moses marrying this woman, and God's anger is "kindled against them" to such a degree that He strikes Miriam with leprosy. It also seems that the Lord might have brought more severe punishment against these dissenters if Moses had not intervened. The first time I read this story and pondered it, I immediately thought, "Poor Miriam…why was it so bad for her to dislike Moses's choice of a wife?" But, there is much more going on in this scene than we might perceive at first glance.

In order to understand any verse of scripture, we must attempt to understand it in the context of the passage. To that end, let us consider some questions (you may have additional questions of your own that you would like to ask yourselves or each other before continuing):

1. What were the circumstances surrounding this passage?

2. Why was Moses considered more meek or humble than anyone else on the earth?

3. Why was God angry?
   a. Were Miriam and Aaron really upset about the wife of Moses, or was it something deeper?

4. Why did Moses react as he did?

In order to further understand the context of the passage and begin answering questions such as those above, we will consider Stephen's words as recorded in the 7th Chapter of Acts (Note: Stephen is a New Testament Example of an humble man of God who had great Power of the Holy Spirit):

"Then said the high priest, Are these things so? And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto

our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.(7:1-3) "But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.(7:17-22)

"And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.(7:23-29)

"And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.(7:30-34)

"This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with

our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.(7:35-43)

"Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things? Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. (7:44-53)

Brother Stephen outlines the history of Israel and the exodus in such a way that we see the reason for the humility of Moses. God performed many impossible acts and miracles through Moses. Moses was sent by God to deliver a great number of Israelites (some scholars suppose there were millions of people, rather than thousands). Given such a task, and knowing his own impotence, how could Moses react, except with humility?

To return briefly to the questions posed above, God was angry because Aaron and Miriam tried to take upon themselves a glory or privilege God had not assigned them. This is revealed in their statement: Has God only spoken to Moses? Has he not also spoken to us? We also see through this question that there was something much deeper than was stated explicitly: Miriam and Aaron questioned God's appointed mediator. God spoke through Moses to Aaron. He was to intercede and mediate for all

of the people at that time. And again, in foreshadowing of the Christ to come, Moses reacted to the sin of his brother and sister with nothing but love and forgiveness—even begging God to have mercy on them.

Now let us revisit Stephen for a moment. In response to Stephen's powerful and true words, the people covered their ears and rushed upon him, gnashing their teeth and screaming. They began stoning him, and God provided Stephen with such grace that he said, as Christ did, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." His dying thought was of forgiveness because of his vision of Christ in Heaven. He died as an humble man, but with the boldness and power of God upon him.

We consider Stephen's account of Moses and the history of Israel in detail, because the completeness of such a history is often lost on the readers. Why were these people angry enough to murder the person who was telling them the truth? The truth is that Moses and all other faithful servants of God, for all of history, have pointed to the Savior of mankind.

Part 3: A Lamb Who Fulfills the Anticipation of All of History

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" - Hebrews 1: 1-3

John the Baptist, the last and greatest of all of the prophets looked upon Jesus traveling toward him and exclaimed, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. John knew the purpose for which God had brought him into the world, and said of Jesus, He must increase but I must decrease. If any man spends much time in fellowship with God, he will realize that Jesus must—and will—increase. We are brought into this life to give Him glory.

The Greek philosophers recognized that it is in him we live and move and have our being, and Scripture teaches us that Jesus is the image of the Godhead in bodily form. In other words, if we want to know what God looks like, all we have to do is look at Jesus. The passage above from Hebrews 1 clearly states that God has spoken (a completed action in the past) to us through Jesus Christ. We no longer have to listen to dark sayings or obscure prophesies to try to know God (though these Old Testament writings are still full of meaning today)—we can read the very words of his son. The law came by Moses, but Grace and truth by Jesus Christ. This Hebrew Letter explains to us that all of the sacrifices that were offered for all of time were only a shadow of the One to come, and not the very image. This letter also teaches us that the blood of bulls and of goats made nothing clean (accepted) before God; rather, it was the bringing in of a greater hope which did—namely, the sinless Lamb of God. What a picture the Lord has given us here! The Jews expected a great and mighty King—a man of war—to return and deliver them from political and social oppression. But, God sent a lamb—the Lamb—who would take away our sins. And, though Jesus Christ alone has all authority in heaven and earth, he was willing to humble himself and to come into this world as a little baby, to live as a sinless man, and to die a gruesome death on the cross—that we might live.

As we have briefly examined some of the Old Testament Scriptures and servants of God, it is my hope that we have seen Christ in their stories. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, they brought a curse upon the whole earth so that even until now it is groaning to be delivered. And, just as nature groans for deliverance from the curse, so the hearts of mankind groan for deliverance from the burden of sin. Jesus—the better hope whom God brought into the world—is the only one who can provide relief from the burden of sin. As you study this lesson, it is my prayer that you know the forgiveness of God. If you have not experienced the saving grace of God, it is my prayer that you would repent of your sins and yield yourself—in humility—to him.

LESSON TWO

HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

LESSON TEXT
Psalm 41:12; I Peter 2:12

WRITTEN BY
ELDER JUSTIN FARRIS

Honestly honest…
Have you ever been in a situation where you knew you should be honest and chose not to be? Have you ever examined why you chose to not be honest?

Often times our conduct and answers reflect how close we are with the Lord. Webster's 1828 dictionary defines Honesty as upright conduct, fairness and truth. By this definition, we see that honesty includes more than just telling the truth, but indeed includes upright conduct and demeanor.

Many times we choose to be dishonest or deceitful when it would benefit us in some way. In the book of Joshua in the 6th chapter, the children of Israel were about to take the city of Jericho. The Lord gave specific instructions on how to go about doing it and told Joshua that all the silver, gold, brass and iron in that city were to be taken and placed in the treasury of the Lord. If any of those things be taken unto themselves then they would be cursed by God (Joshua 6:18-19). When they continued to the next city named Ai to conquer it, 36 Israelites were slain in trying to overtake that city and they had to retreat. Upon this failure, Joshua was angry and didn't understand why this had happened. Upon calling all the men of Judah up to confess what they had done to defy the Lord, Achan finally confessed saying, "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." (Joshua 7:21) We see Achan as an example of one who chose to be deceitful and hide that which he knew to be wrong, all in order to benefit himself.

The apostle Paul wrote much about leading an honest life before God and man. 2 Corinthians 8:21 states "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

In I Timothy 2:1-3, Paul tells Timothy what is needed for a good and right walk with God. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;"

Romans 12:16-18 says, "*Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."

Math time with Integrity
How can this be? Are we going to talk about math in a bible lesson? Absolutely! Did you know that the word integrity comes from the word integer? The word integer means the whole of anything. In math terms, an integer is a whole number. That being said, Webster's 1828 dictionary defines Integrity as wholeness, entireness; unbroken state or the entire, unimpaired state of anything, moral soundness, purity, incorruptness and uprightness.

One's integrity can be viewed as being upright and unmovable in standing for what is good and right, despite the situation we are faced with. In the Old Testament we read of a man named Job. Job was a man who had a big family, many animals and many servants. He was close to the Lord in all that he did. A just man, one who feared God and turned away evil (Job 1:1). He had 7 sons and 3 daughters, 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 yolk of oxen, and 500 donkeys (Job 1:2-3). One day, Satan himself questioned the Lord regarding Job's integrity. Satan accused the Lord of placing a "hedge" about him and said that is why Job is an upright and God fearing man (Job 1:9-10). The Lord allowed Satan then to destroy his livelihood. Job lost all of his livestock and even all of his 10 children were slain. All the things that Job cherished were taken from him. In Job 1:22, the scripture tells us that "Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

Once again, Satan came to the Lord and the Lord proclaimed that through all of these things that happened to Job, that "still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause" (Job 2:3). Satan was not done trying to prove that Job would be broken. The Lord then allowed Satan to smite Job with boils from the sole of his foot to his head (Job 2:7). Job's wife then speaks up saying, "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." (Job 2:9-10).

Job is then visited by some of his friends who spoke with him about his situation and in Job 27:3-5, Job says this: "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me."

We see in Job an excellent

example of how we are to face life's situations while holding tight to our integrity. Everything that Job held close was taken from him. Satan attacked Job as a farmer and as a father to his children. Both roles were taken from him and he held his integrity together. Then Job's health was taken from him with very painful boils and to add insult to all that he has been through, Job's role as a husband was attacked by his wife to just "curse God and die." Job knew that as long as he had the Spirit of God that he would remain true to God.

The psalmist David says in Psalm 25:21 "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee."

David's son Solomon states in Proverbs 19:1 "Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool."

Joseph was a man who was full of both of these virtues. Joseph was sold into slavery by his very own brothers. A man named Potiphar, who was the captain of the guard in Egypt, was his master and Joseph through his moral soundness and upright conduct gained his trust (Gen. 39:4). Potiphar gave Joseph charge over all of his household. Before long, his honesty and integrity were tested by Potiphar's wife who made many ungodly advances towards him. He had to flee even the appearance of evil, but she framed him still and he was then sent to prison, though being innocent. Years passed and the Lord blessed Joseph even through all of these things including being in prison. In the end, the Lord delivered Joseph out of all these troubles and he became the second in command over all of Egypt (Gen. 41:40-42). Just when things were going well for Joseph a great temptation came that could have derailed his honesty and integrity. His very own brothers that sold him into slavery came to Egypt to buy food. It would have been very easy to do evil to his brothers and get revenge. Joseph held tight his integrity and remained true to his honest life. He was able to bring his whole family to Egypt and save them from a great famine. They all prospered at the hand of the Lord all because Joseph relied on Him and did not forsake these key virtues.

Summary

Don't be a fraction or a number with decimal points. It's much easier to do arithmetic with whole numbers. It's easier to maintain one's integrity than it is to try to repair it. The Lord desires those who are true to Him to serve and worship Him. Living an honest life full of unwavering integrity is a life that is focused on the Lord in all aspects of life. When we read scripture that is thousands of years old, sometimes we get a feeling of being disconnected. We let ourselves make excuses such as, "I don't do nearly as bad things that I read of in the bible." We tend to think that these things don't apply to us. The truth is that every one of us goes through

many of the same principled issues of life of those who went before us. In our examples of the men that were spoken of above, we see that Achan took some treasures for himself. You might not have taken any treasures from anyone, but maybe you have stolen things that belonged to someone else? Have you ever coveted something so much that you obtained it for yourself? How about in the case of Job. Have you ever had everything going for you and suddenly have everything in life crash in on you? Have you even just had one of the things happen to you that Job went through? Maybe lose a loved one or become very ill? Have you ever been betrayed by your very own family such as the case with Joseph? How about being accused falsely for something that you didn't do? Living an honest life, while keeping your integrity, doesn't mean that you have to be perfect. Job was not perfect, but in the end he still repented to the Lord and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. The last chapter of Job verse 12 says that the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. The Lord blesses those who stick by Him through ALL situations in life. It is so very easy to give up on God and to cave in to our fleshly desires.

Psalm 41:12—And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face forever.

1 Peter 2:12—Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

LESSON THREE

FAITH AND WISDOM

Background Study
Hebrews 11; Proverbs 9

WRITTEN BY
ELDER BRADLEY HICKS

Both faith and wisdom are virtues which generally do not come naturally. The Bible is full of men and women who had great faith and wisdom and others who desperately lacked faith and wisdom. The purpose of this lesson is to identify the definitions of faith and wisdom, give examples of faithful (and faithless) and wise (and foolish) men and women, and finally attempt to identify ways of developing more of these two wonderful qualities.

Defining Faith and Wisdom

Faith

God made it easy on us when defining faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

That definition, however, is difficult to understand when standing alone. To better understand what faith means, let's do an activity.

(Your teacher will explain the "TRUST FALL" Activity)

This activity helps us to understand two aspects of faith which are often misunderstood in today's religious world.

1. **To the Lost:** Faith requires us to depend upon **evidence**, someone or something we cannot see. In our activity, you were required to place trust in the evidence (your teacher's word) to catch you despite not ***being able to see them*** directly behind you. If they were unreliable, you would pay a cost (perhaps a hurt back or more serious) for depending on someone who was not faithful to their word.

True biblical faith is very similar to this activity because it requires us to **depend** upon someone we cannot see. The Bible calls lost people to depend upon Jesus Christ's sacrifice as the only way to be saved. God does NOT ask us to believe this without evidence. He provides intellectual truths and ***spiritual experiences*** as evidence. A few examples include:

- **The Bible**- God divinely inspired men to write historical accounts and principled truths which are meant to ultimately prove to us that Jesus Christ is our Savior from death and hell (II Peter 1:16-21).

- **The Law on the heart-** God has written a moral law on our hearts which shows us that we are sinners and need a Savior (Romans 2:15).

- **Testimonies of Saved People-** When God saves a person, they have a testimony of salvation and a changed life which both witness to the Lord's truth (Paul's testimony- Acts 26:1-32).

- **The Holy Spirit-** The things above are of little help to us until they are *made real* or *deeply felt and understood*. This is done by God himself, through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit often uses a combination of evidence (the list above) to show us our need to depend upon Christ for salvation.

To the saved: The Bible calls those which are saved **to live their entire lives depending upon** the promises of God's Word and the leadership of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts (Hebrews 10:38-39). In short, ***faith, together with repentance***, is the means to obtain salvation, but is also the way we are to live our lives. God's word has many promises which are difficult for Christians to understand or accept. Those promises include ideas about our careers, spouses, parenting, religious observances and more. We are to trust that God's ways are higher than our ways and obey His word as it is revealed to us.

2. The second thing this activity demonstrates which the religious world misunderstands today is that f*aith has different degrees or levels.* When you were falling backwards while standing on the ground, it required less faith than when you were ***asked*** to stand on the chair. That took less faith than if you were to stand on the roof and trust that you would be caught by your teacher.

To the Lost: For a person to be saved, they must depend upon God *completely*! They must theoretically stand at the edge of a cliff and throw themselves upon the mercy of God. Thank God that He helps us turn from the things in this world that we normally trust in (repentance) and depend completely upon Jesus Christ for our salvation.

To the Saved: After having begun our walk by faith, God calls us to continue to live a life depending *entirely* upon Him and His word. Many Christians err when they only depend upon God and His word during difficult times or when it is convenient.

Wisdom

Wisdom has a variety of meanings which are difficult to express in a few words. The Bible talks about *worldly wisdom* and godly *wisdom*. It talks about knowledge, wisdom and understanding. The primary concern we have in this lesson is godly wisdom. Below is the broad definition we will use throughout this lesson:

Wisdom- wise management as shown in forming the best plans and selecting the best decision; includes sound judgment, good sense and practical wisdom.

Very often wisdom and knowledge are assumed to mean the same thing when they most certainly

do not. Someone who has a lot of knowledge may desperately lack wisdom, whereas someone with great wisdom may not have an extremely large amount of knowledge. The Bible tells us that wisdom begins with an attitude and view of the heart. This attitude is respecting God. The verse which communicates this is Proverbs 9:10 - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom…" The word fear simply means a reverence or respect for God. A man *begins* having wisdom when he respects God, and acknowledges that we ought to imitate His ways. God has a plan for this world and everyone in it, and one begins to function within the realm of wisdom when they begin to act according to God's will generally and specifically. Let's look at the book of Proverbs and identify wise sayings. Use your Bible and finish the statements of wisdom listed below:

1. The Mouth

- ***Proverbs 15:1*** - "A soft answer _____ but grievous words _____"
- ***Proverbs 13:3***- "He that keepeth _____ keepeth his life: but he that _____ shall have destruction."

2. Obtaining Wealth

- ***Proverbs 13:11***- "Wealth gotten _____shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by _____shall increase."
- ***Matthew 6:33***- "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and _____."

3. Receiving Correction

- ***Proverbs 15:5***- "A fool _____: but he that regardeth _____is prudent."
- ***Hebrews 12:11***- "Now no _____ seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

Examples of Faith and Wisdom

Faith - Hebrews 11:8-19

Abraham was a man who is referred to in the Bible as the *father of faith*. Not because he was the first man that had faith, but because he demonstrated extraordinary faith that God desires His children to imitate. In Hebrews 11, the author is recounting men and women of God who showed great faith in times of struggle and ends the chapter by encouraging us to follow their example.

Abraham was particularly noted in this scripture because of two occasions where he demonstrated exceptional faith. The first one was when God commanded him to leave his home, the city of Ur, and go to a place that God would allow his descendants to inhabit. This required great faith on Abraham's part for numerous reasons:

- His wife was barren: She was unable to have children and was beyond child bearing age.
- He had presumably lived in the area his entire life because that was the home of his family.
- Finally, he did not know where he was going.

It gives us insight to the **degree** of his faith when ***we learn*** that he died, never having received the promise, but believing it would come true after he died. Wow! Abraham believed that God would be faithful to His word even though he didn't see it come to pass during his lifetime. That is extraordinary faith worth following.

The second demonstration of faith ***in Abraham's life took place*** when he obeyed God in sacrificing his promised son, Isaac. God blessed Abraham's wife with Isaac long after a normal person can have children. God told Abraham that through Isaac, He would create a huge nation that would be extremely blessed. Just as Isaac was reaching his teenage years, God commanded Abraham to go sacrifice him on a mountain. Abraham obeyed because he trusted that God was so faithful that even if he sacrificed his son, God would be able to raise Isaac from the dead. Eventually, Abraham was stopped from sacrificing Isaac by an angel of the Lord and gracefully recounted this story for all of us to learn from.

Faithless - Matthew 14:22-33

A quick example of someone who at first had great faith, but after hardship diminished in faith, was the apostle Peter. Peter was the informal leader of the apostles and was most likely the oldest of them. In this account, Jesus is walking on the water and Peter, demonstrating great faith, walks towards Jesus at His bidding. Suddenly, the sea begins to turn violent. Peter takes his eyes off the Lord in fear and his faith begins to shrink. As a result, he begins to sink and calls out to the Lord. The Lord's response is, in essence, You who have little faith, why did you doubt me?

It is important to remember when hardships come upon us, that is when it is the most difficult to have faith. And yet those are the precise times that faith in God is most powerful. Those are the times when only God can get us through without harm. This account of Peter illustrates this important truth.

Wisdom and Foolishness - Matthew 7:24-27

Jesus preached a sermon found in Matthew chapters 5-7 known as the *Sermon on the Mount*. This sermon is filled to the brim with words of great wisdom. At the conclusion of this sermon Jesus adequately summarizes the two responses that we can have to his teachings (within the sermon and throughout the entire Bible).

The Wise: He gives an example of one man who builds a house upon a firm foundation – a rock. Common sense should tell anyone the most important attribute of any house is the part which is responsible for bearing the

majority of the weight. Regardless of where you live in the world, every house will be tested by its environment (rain, snow, heat, wind, etc.). Similarly, regardless of who we are, eventually we will ALL suffer hardship (death of a close loved one, heartache, wrongful accusations, temptation, etc.). A wise person handles those situations according to the teachings of God. By doing so, their lives will endure the heartache.

The Foolish: A person who is unwise is comparable to a house which is built on a shifting surface, ***such as sand***. This surface is unable to endure the elements and thus causes the entire house to collapse. When people do NOT *build their lives* upon the wisdom of Jesus's sermon and the entire Word of God, they are building their lives upon the sand.

The final phrase in these verses ought to be a chilling reminder of the danger of building on that surface – "…great was the fall of it." Many good, Christian people build their lives partially on God's Word (the rock) and partially on their own opinions (the sand). When hardship comes, which it will at some point, their entire lives often crumble. Men and women of God who display wisdom will certainly build upon God's Word.

Developing Faith and Wisdom

In conclusion, it is wonderful to understand these virtues and know of men and women who have displayed them. However, those virtues do us little good if we do not seek to obtain and develop them. Below is a list of ways that we may seek to obtain faith and wisdom AND develop the faith and wisdom we already have:

Faith	Wisdom
Ask God for more faith. What did the Roman centurion ask Jesus when he was afraid that his child would die? Ultimately, God can give us the faith we lack to live according to His will in this world.	**Ask God for more wisdom**. The book of James tells us that if we lack wisdom to ask God and He will give it generously. God knows what needs to be done in every situation and will freely help us if we ask for His guidance.
Read the promises of God when you are struggling with doubt. Go through your Bible and identify things God has promised. For example, when you feel alone, turn to the scriptures that talk about God never forsaking us. Be aware that just because God is silent, it does NOT mean he is absent.	**Study Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and James**. The whole Bible is filled with godly wisdom; however, these books are filled with situational helps and character qualities which serve as powerful words of wisdom.
Surround yourself with people who don't just talk about faith, but live by faith. Anybody can talk about trusting God and boast that they would believe in God through anything. There are some people, however, who place every area of their lives in God's hands. Find a role model and ask God for their degree of faith.	**Spend time with older men and women.** The Bible both commands and encourages older people to teach younger people. Why? Older men and women have experienced or witnessed many things that younger people have not. They have often learned the best ways to handle a variety of situations. DO NOT think that what you are experiencing could not be understood by your older brothers and sisters.

LESSON FOUR

LEADERSHIP AND ZEAL

LESSON TEXT
Proverbs 1:1-7

WRITTEN BY
ELDER BRAD WHEELER

Introduction

Leadership is a popular "buzz word" in our society and around the world. And for good reason! There is an increasing need for leadership. Our society appears to lack basic leadership attitudes at all levels. Governments, corporations, non-profits and religious organizations appear to demonstrate a lack of basic leadership principles. Examine any 24-hour news cycle or a popular reality TV show and you will quickly see many examples of individuals making poor choices.

While there are many examples where leadership in our society is generally lacking, the condition of families and churches indicate greater problems. The two most important institutions the Lord has ever created are the family and Lord's church. With society, these God given organizations are also experiencing a leadership vacuum and it may take a multi-generational effort for real positive changes to occur.

Zeal is almost a completely universal trait which all people possess. If the teacher were to ask you what you are passionate about, most people would be able to provide several examples of their passions. Zeal and passion are closely linked. Universally, almost everyone exhibits passion or zeal of some kind. The problem is not whether zeal exists in your life, but does your zeal and passion correctly lineup with God's plans for your life. The desire and prayer of the Apostle Paul's heart was to see Israel saved. He recognized that Israel had zeal towards God, but stated that it was misplaced because it was not according to knowledge (Romans 10).

Paul had a religious zeal before he was saved but it was not based on the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It was not until Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, that he knew Jesus. Many today have religious zeal, but religious zeal does not save. And God wants your zeal and devotion to be firmly based on a knowledge of Him through salvation.

In this lesson, we want to first define leadership and zeal and explore the causes for the need of leadership in our society. We want to examine the range of leadership programs offered by society that are being used to fill the leadership void. Second, we want to look at spiritual and biblical leadership. Finally, we wish to encourage our readers to use your time wisely and establish

sound leadership principles in your life.

Leadership and Zeal Defined:

Leadership has many definitions. In reality, there may be thousands of definitions as people consider what it means to be a leader. Hundreds of thousands of pages have been written on the subject. The most basic of definitions describe a leader as **one who leads.** Another definition states a leader is **one that knows, goes and shows the way.** Based on the fact that Jesus said, "I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life" and that we are called to be followers of Jesus, this second definition has biblical roots and is applicable to be considered in these terms. A person meets Jesus through a true salvation experience (knows the way). Then that person learns his ways and his paths of righteousness (further learns the way and goes the way), and testifies of his works and deeds by humble obedience (shows the way). True Christian leadership can only be found by following Christ in his simple call to "Come and follow me."

Zeal can be defined as "great energy or enthusiasm in the pursuit of a cause." It appears that everyone has a zeal of some kind. There appears to be large numbers of people with all kinds of zeal towards all kinds of causes. Causes include social, religious, environmental and countless others. Some describe young people as being unmotivated but every generation appears to have the same complaint of the generation before. As your responsibilities increase and more people depend on you, your motivations grow and change over time. However, if you have been saved, then God has placed a zeal for him in your heart. This zeal will make you want to work for Him.

Many years ago, I purchased my father a coffee mug that had a man standing in the yard with a push mower, in knee high grass. The caption said, "I came, I saw, and I went back in the house". While we may find the mug humorous, God did not save us so that we "go back in the house". He saved you and me so that we might have a zeal to serve him all the days of our life. He wants our lives to have true meaning and purpose. Finding meaning and purpose requires that we "get out of the house". Paul, encourages us to join the fight and take hold of our eternal life and testify (profess) to the world (1 Timothy 6). True leaders have zeal for God and understand that time is a precious gift from Him!

Understanding our Society and Modern Leadership and Trends:

According to a leading U.S. business magazine, in 2014, the United States will spend 70 Billion of the 130 Billion Dollars spent worldwide on leadership training. Self-improvement books, leadership articles, seminars and retreats repackage old or create the newest leadership fads

"training people". Companies and businesses would not be spending this money if there was not a perception that there was both need and return on that investment. This spending is an indication that businesses recognize a need for leadership.

Americans have a great legacy of being leaders. Each generation has tackled hazardous journeys to moon landings, from fighting the world's super powers to liberating Europe. Our history is an amazing history of a country aided by the help of God. The Christian moral system, our trust in God and our prayerfulness have been important attributes. It may be difficult to return our country to God but real spiritual leaders can tackle the hard issues and wrestle with the difficult problems. Leaders don't ignore problems – they prayerfully confront them.

The acceleration of a substantial decline in leadership can be attributed to three reasons. The first relates to changes within America's school systems. Public schools have been required by our courts to remove the moral code that schools operated under since America was founded (the Bible and the 10 commandments). Around this same time, both prayer and discipline (or means for orderly teaching) were no longer permitted or allowed. The second change is the increasing absence of parental leadership in America's homes. Third is increased availability of bad influences in our homes though means of entertainment by way of internet and television. While some may debate this point, businesses do not spend billions of dollars just to be charitable to advertisers. They spend these resources because they know that print, internet, TV and commercials will influence behavior. The Bible supports this, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners (1 Corinthians 15:33)." True leadership involves using the Bible and its moral code, providing family leadership and encouragement and guarding oneself from the influences of the world.

Increasingly, a secular or non-religious code is being sought out by our society. While businesses are spending more to develop leaders, our education systems are beginning to realize and understand the problems that have been created by changes in the education system over the last 30 years. Programs are being introduced to students from Kindergarten to College to teach "Leadership Principles". In a few years, these programs will likely be used nationwide. Some of the readers of this literature will be attending schools that have adopted these programs early. While some of what you will be taught may be practical or even biblical, some points may contradict the Word of God.

Leaders know "what to do" and apply that knowledge:

For many years a popular television show focused on "What Not to Wear". Participants were

selected based on their perceived "inability" to dress according to current socially acceptable standards and were taught how to improve their outward appearance. Paul in his writings to Timothy provides a long list of "what not to do". His list includes: people loving self above God and others, coveting, boasting, acting proudly, blaspheming, being disobedient to parents, and being unthankful and unholy (2 Timothy 3). The tendency towards these traits indicate a society, nation, or organization that is in trouble. A baby does not have to be taught how to be selfish. Without practical and spiritual intervention, selfish babies will become selfish adults. Self-centered adults are of little help to others and most importantly are considered offensive to God.

If Paul provided a list of destructive traits for the young leader Timothy, then reason would suggest that indirectly Timothy was also being instructed on traits that God found acceptable. For example, if being unthankful is not acceptable, then thankfulness is an acceptable attitude in God's eyes. In another list, Paul states that the fruit (harvest results) of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5). I would advise every person that desires to become a real leader to clothe their lives with these Godly traits. How could one <u>really</u> lead and not have these attributes in their lives?

"Beware Humanistic Training" or the Wolf in Leadership's clothing:

Leadership training provided in the world has been created with several underlying motives. Training ranges from biblically-based to humanism. Humanism is a philosophical system that emphasizes value of the human being and ignores or undervalues God. Biblically-based teaching involves a God-focused teaching. Sometimes, without careful examination, it is difficult to discern between the two. It even becomes more confusing when information provides biblical appearance but is in reality humanism. Training can also be biblically-based but disguised to hide its source.

A classic humanistic example is "The Greatest Salesman in the World" written by Og Mandino. This tiny book is popular worldwide and has sold millions of copies. The author loosely uses a few scriptures, makes many biblical references set during the time of Christ and provides 10 scrolls (truths) so that you can become the "Greatest Salesman in the World". Humanistic teaching is woven throughout the book. Humanism can be found in the title of the fourth scroll: Scroll IV: *I Am Nature's Greatest Miracle.* Remember humanism raises the human being up to an elevated position and devalues God. Is scroll IV truth? That nature made you? That you are <u>the</u> greatest miracle? Or is this some attempt to work up egos, puff people up, tell lies and sell books? The book ends with Paul the Apostle, being sent by Jesus to find the greatest salesman in the world to ask advice.

Leaders submit to the Righteousness of God:

The bible indicates that Solomon was one of wisest men that ever lived. This wise man cared for his children and wrote many instructions on the importance of wisdom. The Lord preserved Solomon's words of wisdom for us to use today. The few verses included in the introduction is a small sample of the instructions you need to consider as you become a leader for the Lord.

If you seek to be wise, listen and increase in learning, gather wise councils that will instruct you properly, and listen to the advice they provide. And most of all, reverence the Lord in fear, for that will be the start of your journey towards wisdom. Leaders seek out wisdom as if they were searching for a great treasure in a field.

Closing Thoughts:

Science claims that you were created by accident or some random chance, but we know that you were created by God. With your creation, you were not only physically made but you were given life (animation), and a soul (an eternal existence). You have also been given, on a continuing basis, something that is limited – time. Young men and women, if you are to ever really accomplish anything, then be a leader in the service for the Lord. Your future family will need strong guidance and leadership. Your church needs your efforts and talents, now and in the future. Colossians 3:17 "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

Group discussion:

1. Can you find all the attributes of a leader listed in this lesson?

2. Can you give examples of poor leadership that you see in others and how you would do things different?

3. Can you give examples of where you have demonstrated poor leadership and areas of weakness you have? What you have attempted to change? Have you talked with the Lord about it?

4. How can you better be a leader in church over the next year?

5. Leaders are willing to share experiences – Over the next week and year - how can you tell others about the Lord and your salvation?

6. Leaders are encouragers – Over the next week and year - how can you show and encourage others to good?

7. Leaders are servers – Over the next week and year - how can you serve others?

8. Leaders hold self and others accountable – Over the next week and year – how can you better hold yourself and others accountable?

The writer encourages teachers to have open and encouraging discussion. You can create an open positive dialogue with students. Please prayerfully consider these questions yourself in preparation for teaching this lesson.

LESSON FIVE

COURAGE AND OBEDIENCE

Key Verse: Joshua 1:7 **WRITTEN BY**
Background Study: Joshua 6:1-27 **BROTHER CHRIS CLINE**

When I was approached about writing this lesson, almost immediately Joshua came to mind. Having a personal history of military service, the events contained in the book of Joshua are relatable to me and definitely showcase courage and obedience. These two traits - courage and obedience - are paramount to a successful military career. They are equally important to a pleasing relationship with the Lord. These traits compliment each other, but it would not be sufficient to discuss them together; they must be discussed individually. The key verse that I have chosen is one of my favorites. God is speaking to Joshua at the beginning of his time of leadership, and He tells him he must be strong and very courageous. This phrase is repeated time and again in scripture with some variation, leaving one to believe that they must be important. The further I travel along life's journey, this phrase most certainly rings true. Why did Joshua need to be strong and very courageous, was it because of the difficulties of being a leader? Maybe, but more importantly it was so that he could be obedient to God's directions, both to him and the children of Israel. Lastly, the Lord promises prosperity in reward to his obedience. I wonder, if Adam and Eve had not fallen in the garden would it require such great effort on our part today to be obedient? I tend to think no, but nonetheless, it is our nature to be drawn to sin and go against God's will. However, God helps his children when they are sincere in their effort and desire to be obedient to God and seek His will.

In the chapters prior to chapter six, where Joshua and the army attack Jericho, God gives a great deal of specific instruction to him about how to prepare. This gave God the opportunity to evaluate not only Joshua's obedience, but the Israelites' obedience as well. God still gives us leadership through the Holy Spirit, although it may or may not be as specific as was given to Joshua. When God gives us a task to do, He already has counted the benefit/cost before He sends us the task. Trust Him. Everything He gives us the leadership to do has purpose. In the fourth chapter of Joshua, God gives Joshua some instruction regarding stones from the bed of the Jordan River. The end result was that the rocks were to be a memorial of what took place that day, a story to be told to future generations. They were to share the story as evidence of God's power and deliverance.

God rewards our obedience! You may be thinking to yourself, I'm never going to be leading a group of God's people to take ownership of another territory, and you may be right. However, it does not take long from the time the Lord saves someone's soul for them to begin facing trials. To non-believers or self-proclaimed Christians (lacking a true salvation experience) some of the tasks people do in the Lord's service may seem risky or a gamble. I assure you they are not - quite the opposite really. You may be very self-disciplined, but there will be some trials you will not be able to face alone. We should depend upon the Lord's leadership and guidance, ever seeking His will for every facet of our lives. The Lord may be working on your heart to stand against some action or behavior that your friends are taking part in that you know is not right. Perhaps you are afraid of losing friends or popularity, or maybe it is just difficult for you to go against the grain. If you follow the Lord's guidance, you will never, ever be wrong, and He will bless you for it. ***For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.*** Luke 9:26

One cannot experience courage in the absence of fear. Without fear, there is no adversity or difficulty to overcome. As a child, I was quite fearful of someone breaking into our home. I had no real reason or motivation for feeling this way, other than my own over-active imagination. From time to time, I would hear a noise or think I saw a light outside and go wake my parents. To say they were unappreciative of my "close attention" is an understatement. Later, in my military career, I became very well acquainted with fear and difficult circumstances. Essentially, when I would encounter a fear, I would "disconnect" emotionally and just power my way through. This was the coping mechanism that carried me through those moments - that, and the Lord's protecting hand. While it served the purpose I suppose, this is not the type of courage the Lord provides for us. The courage the Lord provides and wants us to have as His children is so much more. It is courage born of faith and trust in Him, and it is absolute! You can and must rely on God. There is no doubt in my mind that as Joshua and the army were approaching Jericho there was fear in their hearts. Jericho had decided that Israel would not be their leader, and had fortified the city. (Joshua 6:1) Because Israel had demonstrated faith and obedience in previous circumstances, they knew the Lord delivered and would, in fact, deliver them again. I want to highlight in verse ten of chapter six that as they got to Jericho God had instructed them to be silent, no war cries or yells, they had to circle the city in silence. This would be especially difficult if one was using the type of courage that I spoke of earlier. In the military, we had many "battle cries" and mottos meant to cultivate motivation, pride, and *espirit de corp.* Notice that He did not give them instruction to prepare the swordsman, archers, or really any military battle type of preparation. How is it that they were going to gain entry to a fortified city with no military action? The Lord said that He had delivered the city into their hands! The only thing they had to do was to be obedient and courageous. As I try to imagine what it must have been like to march around Jericho that seventh day and to finally hear the long blow of the horn and to get the order from Joshua and let out the mighty yell which ultimately led to the collapse of the walls, I get chills. What a blessing to have the Lord's leadership in that battle! The scripture records it as a complete victory, destroying everything and everyone, except for Rahab and her family and their belongings. (Joshua 6:21)

The scripture is full of accounts of God testing his children's obedience and the direct results based off of their choices. The Lord loves obedient servants, and if you have been saved then you have been given a taste of the blessings of obedience to Him. There have been a few occasions since I have been called to preach that the Lord influenced me to go preach at a certain church, or preach a sermon that may not be well received. While I loved receiving such leadership, my carnal mind would doubt and fret over the situation. I have yet to not get a tremendous blessing in these situations, and to Him may all the praise and glory be forever. While these situations may be difficult for a season, it is glorifying to God when I am obedient.

In closing, prepare yourselves for the battles in life that you will face, for I can promise, there will be battles. Perhaps not the kind with sword or firearm, but battles nonetheless. The only way that you can prepare is to be obedient to God's leadership on a regular basis, in deeds small or great. Prayer, open communication between you and God, will serve you well. Have faith, trust, and courage when the battle ensues and the Lord gives you leadership. It is my sincere prayer that this lesson, however scattered, might be a blessing to those it was intended.