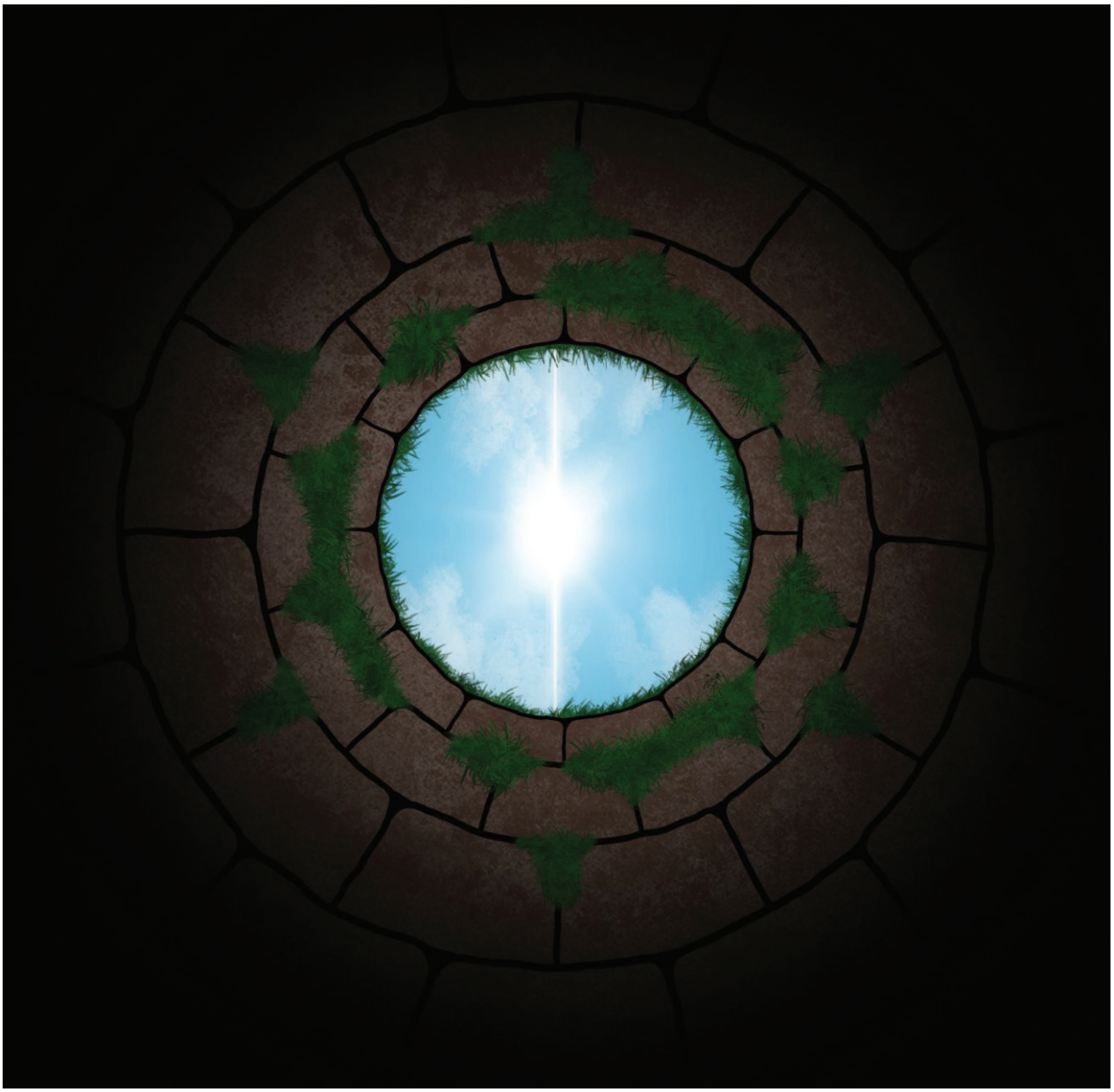
MISSIONARY BAPTIST VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
LITERATURE COMMITTEE PRESENTS

WILL YOU REMAIN



IN THE PIT?

LESSONS PREPARED FOR STUDENTS AGE 10 AND OLDER

THE MISSIONARY BAPTIST VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
LITERATURE COMMITTEE PRESENTS

WILL YOU REMAIN IN THE PIT?

ALL LESSON OUTLINES PREPARED FOR CLASSES FOR PERSONS AGED 10 AND OLDER

WILL YOU REMAIN IN THE PIT? 5

JOSEPH CAST INTO A PIT 9

DANIEL CAST INTO THE LION'S DEN 13

JEREMIAH CAST INTO THE DUNGEON 17

PAUL AND SILAS CAST INTO PRISON 22

Treasurer
Brother Randall Henson
10022 Woodburn-Allen Springs Rd.
Alvaton, KY 42122
270-842-4526

CHAIRMAN:
Brother Cory Glass

COMMITTEE MEMBERS/ PROOFREADERS:

Sister Michelle Corder
Brother Trent Forshee
Brother Randall Henson
Brother Jay Snoddy
Sister Casey Rouse
Sister Deborah Williams
Brother Rick Williams

Price Per Booklet: NO CHARGE

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:
Elder Roger Carter
Elder Todd Fugate
Elder Billy Moran
Elder Mike Reid
Elder Douglas Skinner
Elder David Swindle

Written and published under the authority of Mount Lebanon Missionary Baptist Church In Cooperation with Fairview (Woodburn), Fairview Memorial, Faith, Old Union, and Unity Missionary Baptist Churches in Warren County, KY

Booklet Design and Layout: Brother Cory Glass
Cover Art: "In The Pit" Hand Drawn Rendition by Brother Mitch Corder

ALL SCRIPTURE REFERENCES ARE TAKEN FROM KING JAMES VERSION

©2020 Missionary Baptist Bible School Literature/ Mount Lebanon Missionary Baptist Church

OVERVIEW OF THEME AND LESSONS

"Will You Remain in the Pit?"

Those that have travelled a good portion of life's pathway understand through personal experience that there are challenging periods, difficult times, and low points that must be navigated. Looking in our rear-view mirror, we may see past individual decisions and choices that brought us straight-forward to those obstacles. Other times, however, we awaken to a new day whose events suddenly and unexpectedly bring us down off of a mountain and place us solidly in the deepest valley.

It is a worthwhile endeavor to teach our children about life's ups and downs. More importantly though, because of the unreliability of life, is knowing the One True and Living God who spoke in Malachi 3:6 "*For I am the LORD, **I change not**, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."*

And so, this series of lessons begins with an evangelical message contrasting two pits. The psalmist in Psalms 40 uses the allusion of a pit to describe his condition of being lost and separated from God. Being in this pit was not a unique situation to him. Every person who has ever been saved by our Lord Jesus has found themselves in this pit. Likewise, every unsaved person is now abiding in the same pit. Thus, the theme in the form of a question: **"Will You Remain in the Pit?"**.

We who have been saved by God's grace no longer remain in this pit, and the unsaved do not have to linger on in this sinful condition either. But if they are never delivered from that pit and die as a sinner, they will find themselves in the Bottomless Pit spoken of in the book of Revelation. And from that pit, there is no escape.

The subsequent lessons introduce us to individuals who have been cast into either literal or symbolic pits. **Spoiler Alert: None of them remained in the pit.** What can we learn from their lives of service? What examples can we take from this study to help us when we too shall have no where else to look but up.

Lesson One: WILL YOU REMAIN IN THE PIT?

LESSON TEXT: PSALMS 40:1-3; REVELATION 9:1-2; REVELATION 20:10, 14-15

Psalms 40:1-3

1 *(To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.) I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.*
2 *He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.*
3 *And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.*

Revelation 9:1-2

1 *And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.*
2 *And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.*

Revelation 20:10, 14-15

10 *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

14 *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*
15 *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*

1. **The Pit of the Psalmist**
    a. John W. Peterson penned the words to the hymn "**It's Not An Easy Road**". He spoke of thorns on the way, trials and troubles, dangers, being weary and bowed down with care. Job sums up the life of a man thusly, "*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble*" **(Job 14:1)**. Figuratively speaking, there are innumerable pits in life that await our coming. Some we see and avoid. Other times we stumble in without warning. Unfortunately, there are other pits where we, despite all knowledge and ample warning, choose to dive in head first. Only when we land with a thud at the bottom, sore and broken, do we reflect on the error of our ways. If the Lord blesses us by lifting us from one, know

that another is very close by. A certain pit that may hold you, may not be a detriment to another. You walk right by some pits that swallow up another.

b. But there is one pit that we all find ourselves in at one time in our life, including the psalmist. It is the pit of being lost and spiritually separated from God. That pit will be our focus as we study the first three verses from Psalm 40.

2. **It is God's Will that <u>You</u> Be in this Pit**
   a. One may think that this statement is contradictory to the entire teaching of the bible. However, the true contradictory statement reads "*It is God's will that you <u>remain</u> in this pit*."
   b. In the garden, when Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, the bible tells us the eyes of both himself and Eve were opened and they knew they were naked **(Genesis 3:7).** Had the Lord dealt justly with Adam, his eyes would not have been opened in the garden but as the rich man's in hell **(Luke 16:23).** It was God's will that man have the opportunity to repent and be saved.
   c. By delaying justice for Adam and extending love, mercy, and long-suffering, we see the plan of salvation that God had for mankind.
   d. "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me*" **(Psalms 51:5)**. By inheriting Adam's nature, we all are sinners. Yet we are not immediately cast out with our sin. Instead, our sins committed and to be committed were borne by our Savior Jesus Christ. And we are given the opportunity to repent and believe upon Him for the saving of our soul. This opportunity is being in the pit.

3. **We Are Unable to Get Out of the Pit on Our Own**
   a. The psalmist cried and waited. But it was the Lord that inclined, heard, brought up, set, established, and put.
   b. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and **that not of yourselves**: it is the gift of God: **Not of works**, lest any man should boast*" **(Ephesians 2:8-9).**
   c. *"Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and **begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father**: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham"* **(Luke 3:8).** Your name, heritage, connections, status, nationality …. none of it is sufficient to get you out of the pit. "*Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that **God is no respecter of persons***:" **(Acts 10:34).**
   d. The pit is described as horrible and containing miry clay. We define "*horrible*" as "*awful, dreadful, extremely unpleasant"*. Those are certainly

fitting attributes for being lost and under conviction for our sins. Yet the Hebrew word used for "*horrible*" in this instance paints a more vivid picture of the trouble the psalmist was experiencing.

i. Sha'own – a noise, a roar, crash, or uproar
   1. As a roar of waters, crashing waves
   2. As an uproar of a great crowd of men

ii. The psalmist finds himself in a deep dark pit. He is struggling to find his footing, slipping and sinking further as he fights to stay on top of the mire. He is surrounded by a wall of noise, like that of mighty rushing waters coming somewhere from within the underground cavern. Waters coming to flood the pit, submerge and bury the psalmist. Read more of David's words in **Psalms 69:1-3**.

iii. There is a somewhat similar picture presented in the 14th chapter of Matthew – the account of Peter walking on water. The psalmist, like Peter, can only try to cry out above the great noise, "**Lord, save me!**".

4. **It Takes a Miracle to be Delivered from the Pit**
   a. After crying out for help, specifically for salvation, the psalmist says he waited patiently for the Lord to hear and answer him. Do not apply a measure of time to waiting for the Lord. Our eternal God can not be constrained by limitations set for man. (Remember for whom "time" is for). Instead the psalmist is conveying the thought of waiting with expectation and hope.
   b. Refer back to the Ephesian verses from earlier in the outline. See the word "faith". Faith is a grace necessary for salvation and is exercised when we are in our pit waiting patiently for the Lord, by seeking Him, submitting ourselves to Him, trusting that He alone is the One to deliver us.
   c. The experience of salvation is a miracle that can not be fully explained. It is spiritual and super natural. "*And the peace of God, **which passeth all understanding**, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*" **(Philippians 4:7).** The psalmist expresses being delivered from the pit after the Lord inclined unto him, leaned in close to hear his cry. Then the Lord brought him up from the miry clay and set him on the solid rock.
5. **The Purpose of the Psalmist Being Delivered**
   a. The scripture teaches that when saved, we are new creatures living a new life. "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" **(II Corinthians 5:17)**. It then follows that we do not walk along the former paths of life, but let God establish our goings.
   b. Another purpose is to praise God, even with the new song he puts in our mouth.

c. In addition, we become witnesses and examples for others of what the Lord has done for us and what He can do for others. Many shall see us.

6. **God Receives Glory by Delivering Us from the Pit**
   a. God receives praise from us.
   b. Perhaps we write a psalm or song telling of our experience.
   c. We become a living testimony. It is often said, "we may be the only bible people read".
      i. So when others see us, they in turn may fear the Lord and place their trust in Him as well.

7. **The Bottomless Pit**
   a. Have you ever attempted to send an email and received a return message of "*undelivered*" or "*unable to deliver*"? This status also applies to anyone who is cast into hell, the bottomless pit, a pit that is unbounded and immeasurable **(Isaiah 5:14 and Proverbs 27:20).**
      i. If you are not delivered from the pit the psalmist was rescued from, then when you die, this bottomless pit will be where you spend eternity. Forever. You will not die again to escape **(Mark 9:39-50).** You will not be delivered because you will not be known of the Lord **(Matthew 7:23).**
      ii. You will not be delivered because the opportunity will have passed **(Ecclesiastes 11:3).**
   b. It will not be God's fault that you are eternally cast out. He made a way for you to be saved by sending His Son Jesus to die for you. Thus the urgency of the message "seek Him while he may be found" **(Isaiah 55:6)**
   c. God receives honor and glory from saving a soul. Yet he receives no pleasure when a soul is cast forever into hell **(Ezekiel 33:11).**
   d. Nobody has to go to hell**.** But the truth is more will die unsaved than will be saved and go to heaven **(Matthew 7:13-14).**
   e. Consider the lesson title. It is a question. If you die in your sins, you will go to hell. Then the answer to the question is "YES". It is needful to repent and believe upon Jesus for the saving of your soul. Then the answer to the question is "NO". Two different pits. Two different answers. One way of salvation. Be delivered from one pit and entirely avoid the other.

Lesson Two: JOSEPH CAST INTO A PIT

LESSON TEXT: GENESIS 37:23-24; GENESIS 45:4-8

Genesis 37:23-24
23 *And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;*
24 *And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.*

Genesis 45:4-8
4 *And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.*
5 *Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.*
6 *For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.*
7 *And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.*
8 *So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.*

1. **An Introduction to Joseph**
    a. Joseph had ten older (half)-brothers and an older (half)- sister, yet he was the first-born son to Rachel, his father Jacob's true love.

And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. (**Genesis 29:18)**
And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. (**Genesis 29:30**)
And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach: And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son. (**Genesis 30:22-24)**

    b. Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons and outwardly showed this favoritism by making him a coat of many colors to wear.
        i. *Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.* **(Genesis 37:3)**
    c. Joseph was 17 years old when he was cast into a pit by his brothers.
        i. *These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the*

sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. **(Genesis 37:2)**

d. Joseph is often seen as a Type of Christ **(Genesis 45:7)**
   i. A Savior
   ii. A Preserver
   iii. A Deliverer

2. **It was God's will that Joseph be placed in a pit**
   a. There are some tangible and observable factors that filled Joseph's brothers with jealously and hatred that led to the plotting against their younger sibling.
      i. Jacob loved Joseph more than the other sons **(Genesis 37:3)**
      ii. Joseph's coat was a continual reminder of his favored status **(Genesis 37:4)**
      iii. Joseph had told Jacob of the brother's evil behavior **(Genesis 37:2)**
      iv. Joseph shared two dreams that placed his brothers in a subservient position unto him **(Genesis 37:5-11)**
   b. Stephen reveals to us that despite the intentions of the brothers, **God was with Joseph**.

And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, **(Acts 7:9)**

   c. The scripture reveals God remained with Joseph while he was imprisoned in Egypt.
      i. *But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.* **(Genesis 39:21)**
   d. Deeper and deeper, Joseph found himself within the pits that ensnared him. Yet through these pits, God brought Joseph closer and closer to Pharaoh to fulfill His ultimate plan.

3. **Without intervention, Joseph would have remained "stuck in the pit"**
   a. Evidence includes **Genesis 37:28** which provides the detail of Joseph having to be drawn and lifted from the pit by his brothers.
   b. Evidence includes **Genesis 42:21** recording the words of the brothers, who 22 years later, had approached Joseph in Egypt to buy corn. The brothers did not recognize Joseph, but recalled how he had begged and pleaded with them as they dealt harshly with him: stripping his coat, casting him into a pit, selling him as a slave into a foreign country. If Joseph was able to remove himself from the pit, no begging or pleading would have been needed.
   c. Strong's Concordance for the word "**pit**", as used in these scriptures, references the Hebrew word "***bore***". Among its definitions are a cistern or a well, most likely cut or dug from stone. **Genesis 37:24** shares the detail that the pit contained no water. It's possible that this pit was a dry

well. Climbing or digging out by one's self was not feasible.

d. Joseph was delivered from the pit in the wilderness, but seemingly placed right into another pit --- being sold as a slave and taken into a foreign land. He too would be unable to escape this situation by his own will. **Genesis 37:26-28**
e. From the pit of slavery, Joseph was cast into a pit of prison, brought about by false accusations against his character. **Genesis 39:20**

4. **It took a miracle(s) for Joseph to be delivered**
   a. Nine of ten brothers had the intention of killing Joseph. One brother, Rueben, convinced the others to not follow through with that plot, and instead place him in the pit. **(Genesis 37:20-22)**
   b. The nine brothers, unaware of Rueben's ulterior motive, were satisfied to let Joseph die from starvation in the pit. But a band of traders passed by and the brothers agreed to rid themselves of "the dreamer" and spared his life, by selling him into bondage. **(Genesis 37:25-28)**
   c. Of all the possibilities as to where a slave could have found himself in Egypt, Joseph was sold to an officer of Pharaoh, Potiphar. Though a slave, Joseph was put in charge of the affairs of Potiphar's household and was well favored. **(Genesis 39:1-6)**
   d. Upon being falsely accused of inappropriate contact with Potiphar's wife, Joseph was placed in the king's prison rather than being put to death (*he was only a slave after all*)
   e. In prison, Joseph found favor in the sight of the prison keeper due to the Lord continuing to be with Joseph. **(Genesis 39:20-23)**
   f. Joseph's God-given ability to interpret dreams was demonstrated while in prison. **(Genesis 40:8)**
   g. Though at first forgotten, Pharaoh's chief butler remembered one who could interpret dreams at the time when none other in all Egypt could. **(Genesis 41:9)**
   h. **The final delivery: Genesis 41:14**

5. **The purpose of Joseph's deliverance from the pit**
   All due to the providence and guiding hand of God
   a. Joseph was delivered from the wilderness pit so that he could be taken to Egypt.
   b. Joseph was sold to Potiphar, because Potiphar had access to Pharaoh's prison.
   c. Being in prison allowed Joseph to interpret dreams for two of Pharaoh's imprisoned servants, one of whom would be restored to his former position.
   d. The butler recalled Joseph's abilities of interpretation at a time when Pharaoh was searching for answers for his own dreams.

e. Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream and was elevated to a position of second to the throne of Egypt, managing the country's seven years of harvest to feed nations during seven years of famine. **(Genesis 41:57, Acts 7:11)**
f. Joseph was in the position where God wanted him so that he could sustain the family of Jacob during the wide-spread famine, moving them into Egypt. This action also began the fulfillment of the covenant between God and Abraham. **(Genesis 15:13)**
g. This family being preserved allowed for following generations to form the genealogy from Abraham to Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World. **(Matthew 1:1-16)**

6. **Through the pits in Joseph's life, God received honor and glory**
   a. It seemed to be an immature act from Joseph to reveal details of his dreams to his brothers. Yet all other scripture about his life indicates that he was wise beyond his years and content with each situation he found himself in.
      i. *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* **(Philippians 4:11)**
      ii. *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.* **(I Timothy 6:6-8)**
   b. Potiphar observed that the Lord was with Joseph. Joseph, though a slave who owned nothing, was the overseer of all that Potiphar had. Potiphar's house was blessed by the Lord. **(Genesis 39:2-6)**
   c. Joseph did not yield to the temptation brought by Potiphar's wife. **(Genesis 39:12)**
   d. Joseph, though a prisoner himself, was given charge over the other prisoners and found favor with the keeper of the prison. **(Genesis 39:21-23)**
   e. Joseph gives all credit to God concerning his ability to interpret dreams **(Genesis 41:16, 25)**
   f. Pharaoh recognized Joseph's God **(Genesis 41:38-39)**
   g. Joseph's two sons are named by what God had done for him **(Genesis 41:51-52)**
   h. Joseph reveals God's plan for him being in Egypt and holds his brothers blameless **(Genesis 45:4-8)**

Additional Questions and Discussion Points:

- Why did Rueben's plan to rescue Joseph not succeed?
- Why do we not find bitterness or the want of revenge in Joseph's story?
- When we find ourselves in a pit, what can we recall from the account of Joseph that may help us?

Lesson THREE: DANIEL CAST INTO THE LION'S DEN

LESSON TEXT: DANIEL 6:16-23

Daniel 6:16-23

16 *Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.*

17 *And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.*

18 *Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him.*

19 *Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.*

20 *And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?*

21 *Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.*

22 *My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.*

23 *Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.*

1. **A Brief Introduction to Daniel**
   a. There are several similarities between Daniel and the subject of a prior lesson, Joseph. Both were carried as captives away from their homeland. Both were given the gift of interpreting dreams. Both rose to a position of great influence and responsibility within the monarchy of the nation to which they were carried. Both remained faithful to God and He delivered them from harm.

2. **It was God's Will that Daniel be Cast into a Pit**
   a. God allowed the Babylonians to overthrow Judah as judgment for their idolatry and other sins against God.
      i. This was prophesied in Isaiah 39 where God told that even the descendants of Judah's King Hezekiah would be carried off to serve in the court of the Babylonian king.

ii. God's word is fulfilled in Daniel 1:3
1. Though King Nebuchadnezzar wanted these sons of nobility and/or royal youth to be set apart for a future work, God had greater plans for Daniel's future work.
2. Note in Daniel 1:4 the special qualities that Nebuchadnezzar requested that Daniel possessed.

b. From the onset of the story of Daniel (1:8), we see his faithfulness in pleasing God and following His laws. This trait certainly has bearing on our study of Daniel being in a pit.

c. God intervened in Daniel's life to allow him to find favor with the king and his officers, for him to be considered extraordinary and stand apart in their eyes.
i. Daniel 1:9
ii. Daniel 1:15
iii. Daniel 1:17
iv. Daniel 1:20

d. God brought Daniel closer to Nebuchadnezzar by having him interpret a dream.
i. The king's magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers, neither the Chaldeans could interpret the dream.
1. Nebuchadnezzar would not reveal what he had seen. He expected someone to both tell him the vision as well as its' meaning.
2. Daniel 2:10 – the Chaldeans spoke truth by saying, *"There is not a man that can shew the king's matter"*.
3. The angry king issued an unjust "one size fits all" decree that all of the wise men should be put to death. This included Daniel.
4. Daniel exhibited his practice of prayer by asking for God's intervention (2:18) and in thanksgiving for His revelation (2:20-23).
a. Daniel confirms before Nebuchadnezzar that it is God that is providing the answer to the secret dream, not of any wisdom possessed of himself (2:28-30).
5. Daniel is promoted from being a servant in the king's court to being a ruler over Babylon and chief of all the wise men.
a. This promotion also has the effect of putting him closer to jealous scrutiny and the edge of the pit.

3. **Without Intervention, Daniel was Stuck in the Pit**

a. A Plot, Deceit, and Ego
i. Daniel was brought into the land of Babylon most likely as a teen-

ager. Chapter 6 takes us to a much later time in his life. Daniel is now living under the reign of a third king, Darius. Bible scholars and historians teach us that Daniel is near eighty years old (or more).

ii. King Darius chose to set up his government by appointing three presidents to rule over 120 princes, who would, in turn, oversee the entire kingdom.
    1. Daniel was one of the presidents chosen and because he possessed an "excellent spirit", Darius considered elevating him above the other presidents.

iii. The other men did not like the idea of being subordinate to Daniel and began to scheme how to rid themselves of him.
    1. They observed how he ruled and how he made decisions regarding the kingdom. Surely there were instances where Daniel erred in judgement. They found none.
    2. They observed his character, his reputation, what, and more importantly, WHO he stood for. They found no fault.
    3. The men were left with turning Daniel's good deeds into a law-breaking offense. They knew Daniel prayed.

iv. King Darius was coaxed into signing a decree forbidding prayer to anyone other than Darius himself for a span of 30 days.
    1. Daniel knew of this decree and had a choice.
    2. Acts 5:29

v. It had been established by Medo-Persian custom that no signed decree by the king could be changed. It would show weakness or indecisiveness should this occur. When Daniel was apprehended, not even Darius could (would) intervene.

vi. Daniel was cast into the pit
    1. A den of lions
    2. A stone covered the mouth of the den
    3. The stone was sealed by Darius with his own signet

4. **It Took a Miracle for Daniel to be Delivered from the Pit**
    a. Daniel was discovered to be without harm the next morning.
    b. God had sent an angel to shut the lions' mouths
    c. Daniel was found to be innocent by the righteous judge in heaven and did not suffer from the penalty imposed by unrighteous men.
    d. At the king's command, Daniel was lifted out of the pit.
5. **The Purpose of Daniel Being Delivered from the Pit**
    a. From the very onset of his being taken captive, scripture continues to reveal to us Daniel's faithfulness, prayerfulness, and reliance upon the true and living God. Daniel's life was a true witness for the Lord.
    b. Consider the words of King Darius as Daniel is lowered into the lions'

den and again the next morning as the stone is removed. The king's words were a true witness concerning Daniel's devotion.

i. *"..... he will deliver thee"*
ii. *"is thy God ..... able to deliver thee ....."*
iii. Twice – *"whom thou servest continually"*

6. **God Received Glory by Delivering Daniel from the Pit**
   a. Daniel 6:25-27 reads as follows:

"Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

Lesson FOUR: JEREMIAH CAST INTO THE DUNGEON

LESSON TEXT: DANIEL 38:4-6; DANIEL 38:11-13

Daniel 38:4-6

4 *Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.*

5 *Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you.*

6 *Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.*

Daniel 38:11-13

11 *So Ebedmelech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.*

12 *And Ebedmelech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.*

13 *So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.*

1. **An Introduction to Jeremiah**
    a. Similar to Joseph and Daniel, we see the Lord working in Jeremiah's life at an early age, calling him to be a prophet unto Judah. Similar to John the Baptist, we see that God had chosen Jeremiah for a work before he was even born. (Jeremiah 1:5)
    b. Jeremiah was the son of a priest. (Jeremiah 1:1)
    c. Jeremiah prophesied for an estimated period of 40 years (the number 40 in the bible represents a period of testing, a time of probation and proving). The number 40 seems appropriate considering Jeremiah's warnings to the people concerning their sins against God, and the pending chastising hand of God coming upon them by way of the Babylonians, who would destroy Jerusalem and exile many of her inhabitants to a foreign land.
    d. Jeremiah is often referred to as the "weeping prophet" because of the tears shed and pain he felt for his countrymen who rejected

God's word. Additionally, Jeremiah struggled at a personal level with the rejection of his preaching and the persecution he faced (Jeremiah 9:1).

2. **It was God's Will that Jeremiah Be Placed in the Pit**
   a. From the time of his calling, Jeremiah was told that his ministry would be difficult. He would be relaying difficult words for the people to hear – words they would not like. His prophesying would not contain messages of peace and joy. Instead, it would serve to agitate and condemn the people of Judah.
      i. *"See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant"* **(Jeremiah 1:10)**. Thinking about the 3rd chapter of Ecclesiastes (seasons and times), more of Jeremiah's 40 years would be used to "tear down" (4 actions listed) versus "build up" (2 actions listed).
   b. Despite the hard road ahead, God assured Jeremiah with His promises and encouragement:
      i. Be not afraid of their faces (1:8)
      ii. I am able to deliver thee (1:8)
      iii. I have put my words in thy mouth (1:9)
      iv. Gird up thy loins, arise, and speak (1:17)
      v. Be not dismayed at their faces (1:17)
   c. Jeremiah was made as a: (Jeremiah 1:18)
      i. Defenced city
      ii. Iron Pillar
      iii. Brasen Walls
         1. Against the whole land
         2. Against the kings of Judah
         3. Against the princes of Judah
         4. Against the priests of Judah
         5. Against the people of Judah
      iv. All of these would fight against Jeremiah for his preaching (1:19)
         1. By trying to silence him
         2. By trying to kill him
         3. By throwing him in prison
         4. By throwing him into a dungeon (the pit)
      v. But they would not prevail (1:19)
         1. Because the Lord was with Jeremiah to deliver him
   d. Jeremiah chapter 37 tells how God allowed Jeremiah to be brought closer to the pit.

i. In verse 12, Jeremiah left Jerusalem during a break in the siege. Yet the men of Benjamin were not happy with the messages being proclaimed.
ii. He was cast into prison there for many days.
iii. King Zedekiah delivered Jeremiah from the prison because he desired to hear of any "updates" from the Lord.
iv. Jeremiah lobbied to not be placed back in that prison.
1. The king honored Jeremiah's request to an extent. He remained a prisoner but in the court of the prison.

3. **When Jeremiah was Lowered into the Pit, He was Stuck**
a. The Hebrew word for "dungeon" used in Jeremiah 38:6 is the same word used in Genesis to tell the story of Joseph (pit, cistern, well).
b. Jeremiah 38:2 shows the words of the Lord, explaining the fate of those in Jerusalem who attempt to stand against the Chaldeans. Famine is one of the outcomes.
i. When Jeremiah is lowered into the pit, the scripture is clear that it held no water. Yet because Jeremiah sank in the mire, it indicates water had recently been in reserve. Was prophecy coming to fruition?
c. Jeremiah was placed in the pit at the consent of King Zedekiah (Jeremiah 38:5)
i. Zedekiah was a weak man and king. His nephew, Jahoiachin, had been Judah's king but was carried off to Babylon under an earlier siege. Zedekiah was placed by Nebuchadnezzar to be "the king" while pledging his allegiance to Babylon.
1. Zedekiah's weakness comes through in his words in verse 5.
2. Zedekiah proved to be disloyal to Babylon and attempted to form alliances with Egypt and other regional nations – which was in opposition to God's will for His people.

4. **It Took a Miracle for Jeremiah to be Delivered from the Pit**
a. It was Jeremiah's own countrymen who sought Zedekiah's agreement to imprison him, in fact, they requested death.
i. The word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah was absolute in that Judah <u>would fall</u> to Babylon. So the choice was to willfully submit unto the enemy and live or hold out and die. (Jeremiah 38:2)
ii. The men of Judah considered these words to be traitorous --- to be bad for the people's morale.
1. Our own United States of America has seen protests against our military action in Vietnam and more recently

during the War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq. Do you find similarity or find no comparison between Americans exercising their freedom of speech and assembly when protesting war and Jeremiah's preaching?

2. One thing is for sure. Had Israel as a whole, or just Judah as the southern kingdom, remained faithful and in covenant with the Lord God, there would not have been a nation on earth who could have ever raised a challenge to them.

b. It was a man of another nationality who pleaded Jeremiah's case before Zedekiah (Jeremiah 38:7-9).
   i. (Notice more hints of famine in verse 9)
c. The waffling king made a good decision
d. Jeremiah was pulled out of the dungeon by torn rags and cloth.

5. **The Purpose of Jeremiah's Deliverance from the Pit**
   a. *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"* **(Isaiah 55:8-9)**
      i. At times, both in scripture and in our own lives, God does not provide an open and easy-to find answer to all of our questions. However ……
   b. We do observe the following exchange between Jeremiah and Zedekiah after Jeremiah's rescue.
      i. Jeremiah 38:14-23 shares Zedekiah's sneaking around to meet with Jeremiah in secret.
         1. Not to apologize for his consent to drop Jeremiah in the pit
         2. But instead to receive another message from the Lord through His prophet.
            a. Is this the reason Jeremiah was delivered? To be God's mouthpiece one more time unto Zedekiah? To give Zedekiah space to repent before Jerusalem's fall occurred?
   c. Chapter 38 ends with the sad words that Jeremiah, though brought up from the pit, and though revealing God's words to the king, still remained a prisoner in the court of the prison until the day the Babylonians fell Jerusalem.
      i. A little bit different outcome than what was experienced by Joseph and Daniel?
      ii. Still God remained with Jeremiah

6. **God Received Glory from Jeremiah's Pit Deliverance**
    a. When the end did come for Jerusalem, when Zedekiah, the princes, and the people were captured and carried away. When the city was burned and laid waste, do you believe their memory recalled Jeremiah speaking, "Thus saith the Lord"?
    b. Read Jeremiah 39:15-18
        i. Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, the advocate for Jeremiah's rescue, had trusted in God and was himself delivered when Jerusalem fell.
    c. Jeremiah 39:11-12, Jeremiah 40:2-6
        i. Jeremiah's fate after Jerusalem's destruction is shown in these separate passages of scripture.
        ii. God makes provision for him through the enemy.
            1. He received better treatment than from his own people.
            2. Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, professed more knowledge of the Lord and His judgment than any of the Judeans dared to acknowledge.

Lesson FIVE: PAUL AND SILAS CAST INTO PRISON

LESSON TEXT: ACTS 16:16-34

Acts 16:16-34

16 *And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:*
17 *The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.*
18 *And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.*
19 *And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers,*
20 *And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,*
21 *And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.*
22 *And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.*
23 *And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:*
24 *Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.*
25 *And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*
26 *And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.*
27 *And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.*
28 *But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*
29 *Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,*
30 *And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*
31 *And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*
32 *And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.*

33 *And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.*
34 *And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.*

1. **Summary of Paul and Silas' Journey to the City of Philippi**
    a. The events shared in the lesson text occur during Paul's second missionary journey.
    b. This journey lasted approximately 3 years and is covered in chapters 15-18 in the book of Acts.
    c. Philippi was a city in bible times Macedonia and is now within the borders of present-day Greece.
    d. Paul and Silas were joined during the journey by the young preacher Timothy and the physician Luke, who authored the book of Acts.
2. **It was God's will that Paul and Silas be placed in a pit**
    a. In the context of this lesson, the pit was a prison.
    b. Even before focusing on their being locked away in a prison cell, it is fruitful to consider the Holy Spirit's leadership well before Paul and company even arrived in Philippi.
        i. After visiting certain initial cities where churches had been established during the first journey, Paul was inclined to visit Asia. The Holy Spirit said "NO". **(Acts 16:6)**
        ii. Obeying and continuing the journey in a different direction, Paul then thought to visit Bithynia. The Holy Spirit said "NO" **(Acts 16:7)**
        iii. After closing two doors, the Lord provided a vision to Paul letting him know he was needed in Macedonia to preach the gospel. **(Acts 16:9)**
            1. Arriving in Neapolis and then to Philippi, the missionary party was now ready to *evangelize the continent of Europe for the first time.*
    c. The scripture records the interactions between Paul and two women in Philippi.
        i. One encounter was positive as Lydia was saved and baptized. **(Acts 6:13-15)**
        ii. The other encounter received more attention from the Philippian citizens, though for the wrong reasons.
            1. After being "hounded" for days by a demon-possessed damsel, Paul commanded the evil spirit to leave her body. **(Acts 16:16-18)**
            2. The masters of this young lady saw their source of "easy-

money" dry up and sought revenge through mob justice. **(Acts 16:19-22)**

iii. Notice that the charges brought forth essentially attempt to condemn Paul and Silas of being Jews.

1. There was no mention made of how this damsel had been used for immoral gain, nor her inability to continue her sooth-saying efforts because of the cast out demon.
2. The best charge the masters could come up with was that this town mostly populated with Roman citizens was being upended due to improper teachings by these Jewish men. **(Acts 16:20-21)**
3. The magistrates, similar to Pilate when faced by a large angry mob, didn't seek to determine the truth for themselves. They simply gave in to the uprising and ordered a beating upon Paul and Silas. **(Acts 16:22-23)**
    a. Paul could have stopped the beatings before they even began. But he didn't.
    b. Refer to **Acts 16:37** to see Paul, the following day, admit to being a Roman citizen. Had this been known beforehand, the stripes laid would not have occurred. **Why did Paul not speak up at the point of being stripped of his clothing?** Do you believe God had let him know he must go into the pit?

3. **Without intervention, Paul and Silas were "stuck in the pit".**
    a. No doubt bloodied and bruised from their beatings, Paul and Silas were cast into prison.
    b. The jailer was charged to keep these two men ***"safely"*** within. The meaning of the Greek word used in this verse **does not mean** the magistrates were concerned for the missionaries' welfare (why, they had just beaten them). The message conveyed was to make sure these men do not escape. **(Acts 16:23)** (Reference Mark 14:44 for a similar use of the word *"safely"*)
        i. The jailer complied by taking his prisoners into the inner-prison and fastening their feet in stocks. **(Acts 16:24)**
4. **It took a miracle for Paul and Silas to be delivered**
    a. Paul and Silas did not place their proverbial one phone call from jail. Instead they accessed a communication line that is free of charge, always open, and always heard. **Acts 16:25** tells us that the prisoners heard them praying and singing praises. *Who else would you say heard these men around the midnight hour?*
    b. Suddenly. Unexpectedly. An earthquake shook the prison but did not destroy it. Instead, every cell door was opened and everyone fastened

in chains, stocks, or otherwise tied down was loosed from their bands. *Do you see the earthquake as a natural occurrence for that area of the world, or do you see a miracle? Why?*

5. **The purpose of Paul and Silas' deliverance from the pit**
    a. Can it be assumed that without an earthquake the jailer would have continued to sleep? In fact, he was awakened and allowed to survey the condition of the prison, that being every door was opened. *For those who have been saved, what was your personal "earthquake moment" where you were awakened to the need for salvation?*
    b. An escaped prisoner, under Roman law, who was later captured was put to death. The same death sentence was applied to the keepers, watchmen, or in this case a jailer, whose prisoners escaped under his watch.
    c. The jailer was intent not to wait for the inevitable to befall him. He was prepared to take his own life by his own sword.
    d. Paul intervened with news that no prisoner had escaped. All were accounted for.
        i. We see in **Acts 16:29-30** that this news had a greater impact upon the jailer than did finding open prison doors.
            1. With the word of no escapees, perhaps the jailer should have felt ***relieved*** that death was no longer knocking at his door. Perhaps he should have felt ***a lifted burden*** because those under his watch were still in place. Perhaps he should have felt ***overjoyed*** that he would not be held accountable by his superiors. Perhaps he should have felt ***a peace about him*** after the earth had stopped her quake and no harm had occurred. Perhaps he should have …...but he didn't. Not yet. Even still, the jailer would experience all of those feelings before the night was over!
            2. First, he called for a light. A lost sinner is in spiritual darkness, blind even. Calling upon the Light of the World is the only way to receive spiritual sight. **(John 8:12)**
            3. Next, he ***"sprang in"*** to where Paul and Silas were. That is to say, he ran in, without hesitation, with a great urgency. **(II Corinthians 6:2)**
            4. Trembling – translated from the Greek word ***"entromos"*** (en-tro-mos) which carries the meaning of being made to tremble but also includes the feeling of being terrified. The same Greek word is used in **Hebrews 12:21** when Moses said *"I exceedingly fear and quake"*. Every testimony of salvation is unique and personal. Yet there may be some commonalities by which others can relate. One being when conviction from

the Holy Spirit moved upon them causing fear and trembling. Sadly, some share in that commonality but are never saved. See **Acts 24:24-25.**

5. Fell Down before Paul and Silas …. a position of humbleness. **(Luke 18:14)**

e. ***What must I do to be saved?*** Direct and to the point. Earnest and sincere. The most important question anyone could ever ask on their own behalf.

f. ***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*** Direct and to the point. Earnest and sincere. The best answer anyone could ever give.

i. Lest anyone be concerned that either the scripture or this commentary promotes an "easy believe-ism", **Acts 16:32** follows with Paul and Silas expounding upon the word of God. We conclude by the jailer falling before Paul and Silas that he was in a penitent condition.

6. **As a result of Paul and Silas being in the pit, God received honor and glory**

a. Within a vision, a Macedonian man asked for help.

b. As a result of Paul and team responding to the call and enduring much hardship, two households were saved and baptized. **Acts 16:15 and Acts 16:33-34.**

c. The book of Philippians is a letter written by Paul and Timothy unto the church that was later organized in this city to keep the gospel message alive.

NO CHARGE FOR BOOKLET