



GROWING in GOD's Word

Ages 4–5

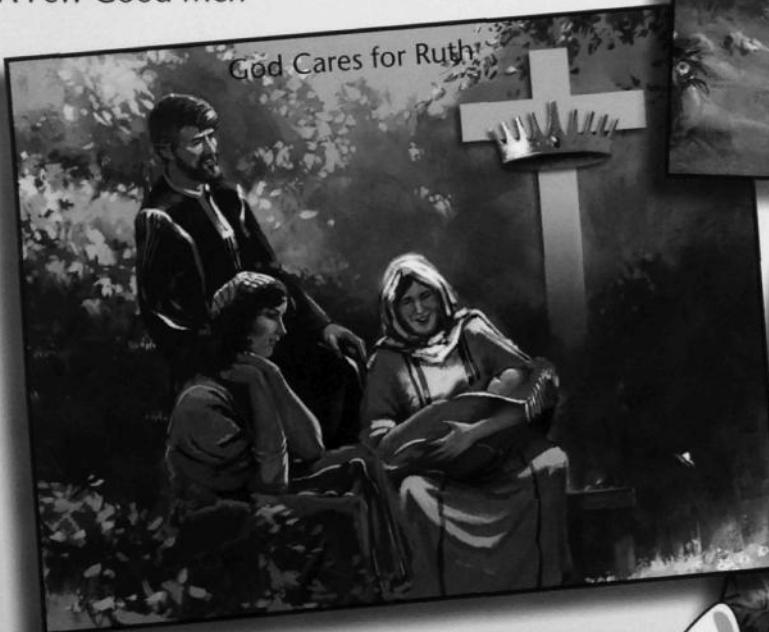
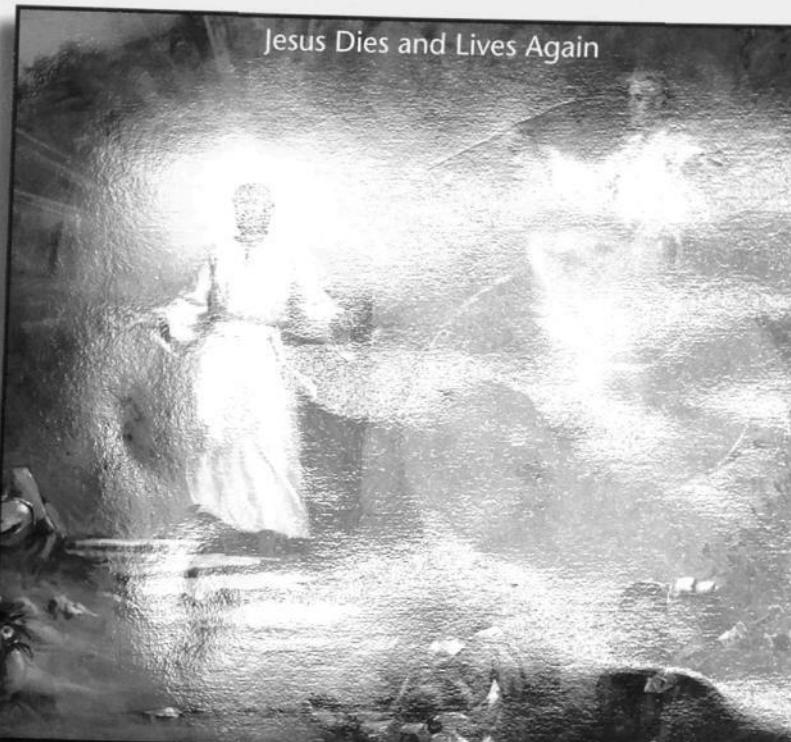


Bible Flash-a-Cards

13 Lessons • 40 Cards

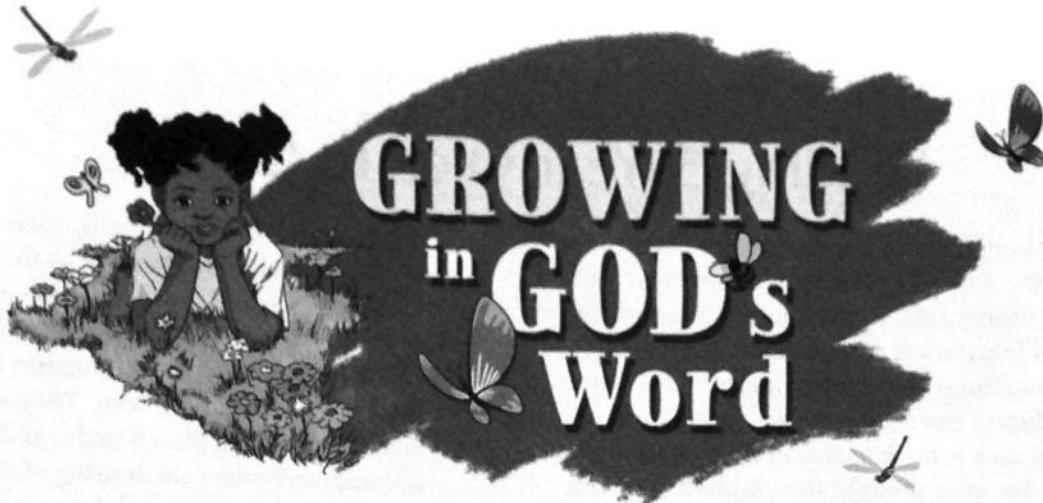
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- B Jesus Dies and Lives Again
- C Jesus Appears to His Friends
- D Eating Breakfast with Jesus
- E Jesus Returns to Heaven
- 1 Ruth Makes the Right Choice
- 2 God Cares for Ruth
- 3 Twins Are Different
- 4 A Rock for a Pillow
- 5 Brothers Forgive
- 6 Marching 'Round and 'Round
- 7 Joshua Keeps His Promise
- 8 A Few Good Men

Easter



Joyful Life®
Sunday School Program





GROWING in GOD's Word

Bible Flash-a-Cards

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Lessons

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Easter

JoyfullLife®

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Teacher Instruction

Before presenting a lesson to the children, read it over three or four times until you know it well enough to recall the main points from memory. Then practice aloud several times, holding each Flash-a-Card in sequence as you tell the story with feeling and animation appropriate to the age group.

Easter Lesson A People Worship Jesus

Matthew 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:29–38; John 12:12–15

Introduction

Oh, what a happy day! The boys and girls skipped and ran beside their parents. They were going to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. The Passover was a happy time when the people remembered how God had taken care of Moses and the Israelite people and brought them safely out of Egypt. The city of Jerusalem would be *full* of people who came for the Passover. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins all came to be in Jerusalem for the special celebration.

Card GGW 1

Jesus gives instructions

Early in the morning, Jesus and His disciples left the village where they had been staying. They were on their way to Jerusalem, too. As they walked along, more and more people joined them—the people had seen and heard about the miracles that Jesus had done. They had heard about the sick people who Jesus made well, and even about some people who Jesus had made come alive again! They wanted to see Him and be near Him.

When Jesus came to a little village close to Jerusalem, He said to two of His disciples, “Go into that village over there. As you enter the village, you will find a young donkey, or colt, that no one has ever ridden. Untie the donkey and bring him to Me. If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, ‘The Lord needs him.’”



The two disciples hurried to obey Jesus. When they entered the village, they saw the donkey right where Jesus said it would be.

As they were untying the young donkey, the owner called out, “What are you doing? Why are you untying my donkey?”

The disciples told him exactly what Jesus had said: “The Lord needs the donkey.” Just as Jesus had said, the owner let the disciples take the donkey. When they brought it to Jesus, the disciples folded their long robes across the donkey’s back for Jesus to sit on. Even though it had never been ridden before, the donkey did not try to buck or throw Jesus off! It acted as if it had been ridden many times.

Card GGW 2

Jesus rides into Jerusalem

Clip, clop; clip, clop. Jesus looked like a king riding down the road into Jerusalem. Someone took off his bright-colored robe and spread it on the road in front of Jesus. Then someone else spread out his robe in front of Jesus. People cut palm branches and threw them on the road in front of Jesus, too. Others waved palm branches in the air, shouting,

Easter Lesson A



"Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" Over and over the people shouted their words of praise to Jesus.

They lined the streets just to see Jesus as He passed by on the little donkey.

The people thought Jesus was coming to be their new king. They didn't know that Jesus was the Messiah—the Son of God—the One Who God had promised would die to take the punishment for our sins (all the bad things we do).

As Jesus entered the gates of Jerusalem, the streets were crowded with people who had come to celebrate the Passover. "Hosanna in the highest!" the people continued to praise Jesus. The children sang praises to Jesus as they followed Him to the Temple. Oh, how they loved Jesus!

Card GGW 3 Children praise Jesus



When Jesus got off the donkey and went into the Temple, the children followed Him. And then they began to sing: "Hosanna to the King! Hosanna to the King!" The religious leaders who hated Jesus became very angry. They wanted Jesus to make the children stop singing praises to Him. But Jesus liked to hear the children's praise because He knew the children truly loved Him.

It pleases the Lord when we praise Him, too. First, let's thank God for loving us and giving us the Bible to help us learn about Him. Let's thank Him for taking our punishment for the bad things we do. Then let's sing praises to Him.

Review Questions:

1. Where was Jesus going? *to Jerusalem for Passover*
2. What did Jesus ask the disciples to bring Him? *a donkey/colt*
3. What did the people do while they waved palm branches? *praised Jesus*

Easter Lesson B Jesus Dies and Lives Again

Matthew 26:47–56, 27:1–28:15; Mark 14:43–16:8; Luke 22:47–24:12; John 18–20:10

Introduction

It was a wonderful day when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Some people welcomed Jesus with Hosannas! Others waved palm branches, and the children sang praises to Jesus. But some bad people did not love Jesus. They wanted to get rid of Him. They paid money to Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, so he would show them where they could find Jesus. Judas knew

that Jesus had never done anything wrong, but Judas loved money more than he loved the Lord.

Card GGW 4 Jesus is betrayed

One night as Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas showed a group of soldiers where Jesus was. The soldiers then



grabbed Jesus and took Him to the religious leaders who gathered in Jerusalem.

The religious leaders hated Jesus.

They said Jesus lied, but Jesus had told only the truth—that He is God. As a crowd of curious people gathered, the angry leaders dragged Jesus to Pilate, the man in charge of all Jews.

"Crucify Jesus!" the wicked people shouted. "Crucify Him!" When Pilate gave the order for Jesus to be put to death on a cross, soldiers took Jesus outside the city of Jerusalem to a hill called Calvary. There they nailed Jesus' hands and feet to a wooden cross.

Card GGW 5 Jesus dies for sinners

Some of the people in the crowd made fun of Jesus. "You helped other people," they called out. "Why can't You help Yourself?" Could Jesus have gotten down off the cross? Yes, but Jesus knew it was God's plan for Him to die so He could take the punishment for our sins.

Two thieves also hung on crosses, one on the left side of Jesus, and one on the right side. One of the thieves made fun of Jesus. The other thief believed Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus told the one who believed, "Today, you will be with Me in Paradise."

While Jesus hung on the cross, the sky became very dark. Although it was the middle of the day, the sun did not shine! It stayed dark

for three hours. Then Jesus said in a loud voice, "It is finished," and He died. He took our punishment that day.

One of the soldiers watching Jesus cried out, "Truly, this was the Son of God!"

After Jesus died, some friends who loved Him very much took His body down from the cross. A rich friend named Joseph laid Jesus'



body inside his own tomb in a garden. Then men rolled a big, heavy stone in front of the doorway to the tomb. Because Jesus' enemies had heard Him say, "After three days, I will rise again," they asked Pilate to have soldiers guard the tomb.

Card GGW 6

Jesus rose again

On the third day after Jesus' body had been put in the tomb, something *wonderful* happened. Jesus rose from the dead! The ground



near the tomb suddenly started to shake; then a bright, shining light appeared as an angel came from heaven and rolled the stone away from the tomb.

The body of Jesus was not there! He was no longer dead! He had risen just as He said.

The soldiers guarding the tomb were so frightened they fell to the ground. As soon as they could get up, they ran to Jerusalem to tell the wicked religious leaders that the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was open.

Before sunrise that same morning, when all was quiet and still, some women went to Jesus' tomb to put sweet-smelling spices on His body. As they walked along, they wondered how they could roll the big, heavy stone away from the front of the tomb. But when they got to the garden, the stone was already rolled back!

Card GGW 7

Angel's message to the women

One woman, Mary Magdalene, immediately ran to tell the disciples that the tomb



had been opened; she didn't know an angel had rolled the stone away. When the other women went closer to the tomb, they saw that Jesus' body was gone.

Easter Lesson B

Suddenly they saw an angel in a bright, shiny robe, and they were frightened!

"Don't be afraid," said the angel. "I know you're looking for Jesus, but He isn't here. He has risen as He said. Go quickly and tell the disciples that Jesus is alive!"

The women hurried back toward Jerusalem. "The—tomb—is—empty!" they told the disciples. "Jesus' body is gone! An angel told us that Jesus is alive!"

Card GGW 8

Peter and John see the empty tomb

The disciples did not believe them—they forgot that Jesus had said He would rise from the dead. Peter and John had already heard from Mary Magdalene that the stone had

been rolled away, so they ran all the way to the tomb. They wanted to see the empty tomb for themselves. As soon as Peter got to the tomb,



he hurried inside, and John followed him. The empty grave clothes were lying there—but Jesus' body was gone!

"Jesus has risen from the dead," said John. "Jesus is truly alive!"

Boys and girls, God loved us so much that He sent His Son to die for us. But Jesus did not stay dead. He died to take the punishment for our sins—and then He came back to life.

Optional: You may want to give an invitation after this lesson. See lesson guide, p. 4, for details.

Review Questions:

1. Who showed the soldiers where Jesus was? *Judas*
2. What was rolled in front of the door to the tomb? *a big stone*
3. After Jesus had been in the tomb for three days, what wonderful thing happened? *He rose from the dead.*
4. Why did Jesus have to die? *to take the punishment for our sins (all the bad things we do)*

Easter Lesson C Jesus Appears to His Friends

Matthew 28:16–17; Mark 16:9–14; Luke 24:13–43; John 20:1–29

Card GGW 9

Mary sees Jesus

Jesus said He would rise again, and He did! But Mary Magdalene thought Jesus was dead. She hadn't stayed in the garden long enough to hear the angel say "He isn't here; He has risen as He said." Mary rushed to tell the disciples that the tomb was empty. Peter and John returned to see for themselves what had taken place. Later,

Mary returned to Jesus' tomb and stood there crying. When she looked inside, she saw two angels. One was sitting at the head and another at the feet of where Jesus' body had been.

"Why are you crying?" the angels asked.

"Because they've taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they've put Him."

As she turned, she saw Someone standing near her. Mary thought He was the man who took

care of the garden. "Sir," she said, "if you've taken Him away, tell me where you've put Him, and I'll go and find Him."



Again Jesus spoke to Mary, "Go quickly and tell the disciples that I'm alive and that I'm going to heaven—just as I said I would."

Mary Magdalene rushed to find the disciples. "I've seen the Lord!" she cried. "He's alive!"

Card GGW 10

A Stranger met on the road to Emmaus

Late that afternoon as two of Jesus' friends walked home to Emmaus, they talked about the things that had happened. Mary Magdalene had said she'd seen the Lord. And Peter and John and some of the others had seen an angel at the empty tomb. But could Jesus *really* be alive?



said one of the travelers. "Three days ago Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. Some women were at His tomb early this morning, and they said Jesus' body wasn't in the tomb. They saw angels who told them that He's alive."

As the Stranger walked along with the two travelers, He told them all that God's Word says about the One Who came to be the Savior of the world. He told them that Jesus—God the Son—had to die to take the punishment for our sins and that He was to rise from the dead the third day.

Suddenly a Man was walking beside them. "Why are you so sad?" He asked.

"Are you a stranger here that you don't know what's happened?"

Card GGW 11 Dinner with the Stranger

Since it was getting late when they reached the town of Emmaus, the two asked the Stranger to go home and eat with them. Before eating, the Man picked up the bread, thanked God for



it, and broke it into pieces. As He was passing the bread, they recognized—Jesus! Jesus immediately disappeared from their sight.

"Mary Magdalene was right!" they said. "Jesus *is* alive!"

Right away they got up from the table and ran seven miles back to Jerusalem. When they got there, they hurried up the stairs to where the disciples and some of the others had gathered. The disciples were afraid of the religious leaders who had taken Jesus to the Romans to be crucified, so they were hiding in an upper room with all the doors locked. They didn't want the religious leaders to find them and arrest them, too.

"We have—some—wonderful—news!" painted the two from Emmaus as soon as they entered the room. "We saw Jesus!" And they told the disciples everything that had happened.

Card GGW 12 Jesus appears in the upper room



While they were talking, suddenly—Jesus was standing right there with them!

"Don't be frightened," said Jesus.

"Look at My hands and feet." They could see where the nails had been. Then Jesus asked, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb and watched Him eat it. They knew then that Jesus was alive!

When Jesus appeared in the upper room that Sunday evening, Thomas wasn't there. But the other disciples told him, "We've seen Jesus! He's alive!"

Easter Lesson C

Thomas said, "I won't believe it until I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger into them."

Eight days later, the disciples were together again in the same room, but this time Thomas was there. Again the doors were locked. And again—Jesus was suddenly in the room with

them. When Jesus spoke, Thomas immediately believed and fell to his knees saying, "My Lord and my God!"

As the news spread around the country that Jesus had risen from the dead, some believed it was true; but others did not.

Review Questions:

1. Who was the first person to see Jesus and know that He was alive? *Mary Magdalene*
2. How did Mary know the Man was Jesus? *She knew His voice.*
3. Who suddenly appeared in the upper room where Jesus' followers had the doors locked? *Jesus*

Easter Lesson D Eating Breakfast with Jesus

John 21:1-14

Card GGW 13

Disciples go fishing

Some of Jesus' disciples were at the sea one day. Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John, and two others were talking together. They may

have been talking about all the things that had happened lately. Jesus had been crucified, had risen from the dead, and had appeared to the disciples. They

knew that Jesus would be going back to heaven soon. They may have wondered what they were going to do after He left them.

As they walked and talked, Peter began thinking about how he used to be a fisherman. He decided that it might be good to go fishing that night. *Before* Peter had started following Jesus, he had earned his living catching fish, so he said to the others, "I'm going fishing."



"We'll come too," the other six men said.

The seven disciples piled their nets into the bottom of the boat and pushed it out into the deep water where they hoped to catch some fish. Nighttime was a good time for fishing. The fish would rise close to the top of the water, and there they could easily be caught in the nets. But, though they fished *all night long*, the disciples did not catch even *one* fish! Over and over they dragged their nets into the boat and threw them out again, but the nets always came in empty. Over and over, they moved to other places in the water, but still they caught no fish. Every time they pulled the nets in, they were disappointed to see that they had nothing to show for their hard work.

When those big fishing nets got wet, they were very heavy and hard to handle. Fishing like this was difficult work. The disciples probably needed the money that a good load of fish would have brought them. Morning finally came, but they had not caught any fish. Tired, hungry,

and discouraged, Nathaniel spoke for the others, saying, "We might as well go in to shore. We've worked all night and caught nothing."

As they rowed in to the shore at dawn, they saw a Man standing on the shore. They couldn't tell Who He was; then, suddenly they heard the Man call from the shore. "Children, have you caught any fish?"

"No," they called back, and the Man could hear the disappointment and frustration in their voices.

"Throw out your net on the other side of the boat," the Stranger said.

Card GGW 14 Net is full of fish

Even though they thought it would do no good, and even though they did not know Who gave them this unusual command, the disciples obeyed. They threw the net on the other side of the boat. As soon as the net hit the water, it was full of fish! There were so many in the net that they couldn't pull it into the boat. What a miracle!

In an instant, John recognized that the Man standing on the beach was Jesus. He understood that Jesus had given them the wonderful catch of fish. John turned to Peter and joyfully told him, "It is the Lord!"

When Peter saw that the Man on the beach really was Jesus, he jumped into the water! He



wanted to get to Jesus as fast as he could, so he swam to Jesus! The rest of the disciples stayed in the boat and struggled with the heavy net full of fish. When they had pulled it in, they rowed the boat to the shore.

When they got to the sand, they all crowded around Jesus, telling Him how glad they were to see Him. Seeing Jesus was even more exciting than catching all those fish!

Card GGW 15 Breakfast with Jesus

Suddenly, *mmmm!* The disciples noticed a delicious smell. They looked around and saw a campfire on the beach. There on the fire was bread and fish. Jesus had cooked them breakfast! Jesus told them to bring some of the fish they had caught, and He cooked those, too.



Peter hurried to obey Jesus, and when he dragged the net farther up on the sand, the disciples counted their catch. They had one hundred and fifty-three big fish! Jesus had helped them even more because the net had not torn with their heavy catch!

Jesus invited His disciples, saying, "Come and dine." How kindly and lovingly He treated those who followed Him. The men enjoyed a happy time eating breakfast on the shore with Jesus that day! Jesus had truly risen from the dead. He was as alive as the disciples were, and He enjoyed bread and fish there on the beach.

Review Questions:

1. How long did the disciples fish? *all night*
2. What did Jesus tell the disciples to do with their net? *cast it on the other side*
3. Who jumped out of the boat to see Jesus? *Peter*

Easter Lesson E Jesus Returns to Heaven

Matthew 28:18–20; Mark 16:19–20; Luke 24:44–53; Acts 1:1–11

Friends see the risen Lord

Jesus had risen from the dead. He was alive! Mary had seen Him and talked to Him! And she had run to tell His disciples, just as Jesus had asked her to do.

That evening, some of them were gathered together in a locked room in Jerusalem—and suddenly, Jesus was right there in the room with them!

Eight days later, the disciples were together again in the same room, but this time Thomas was there, too. Again the doors were locked when Jesus was suddenly in the room with them. And when Jesus spoke, Thomas believed.

Jesus told Thomas, “You believe because you have seen Me. Blessed are those who haven’t seen Me and believe anyway.” Jesus was thinking of us. We have not seen Jesus. But we believe that Jesus died and rose again because the Bible—God’s Word—says so.

Later, Jesus stood on the seashore and called out to seven of His disciples who were in a boat. They had fished all night without catching anything. Jesus told them to throw their net into the water on the right side of the boat. When they pulled it back in, it was full of fish! Jesus then fixed breakfast for all of them.

Another time, more than five hundred people saw Jesus (*1 Cor. 15:6*). For forty wonderful days Jesus was with the disciples. He walked with them, talked with them, and ate with them.

Card GGW 16 Jesus speaks to His disciples



Then one day Jesus took the eleven disciples up on a mountain. It was time for Jesus to go away. He was going back to His Heavenly Father. Jesus

had finished the work He had come to earth to do. That work was to take the punishment for all the sins of the people of the world.

Jesus said, “I have an important job for you to do for Me.”

“What is it, Lord?” wondered the disciples. “What do You want us to do?” The disciples could see the scars in Jesus’ hands and feet as He was standing there—the scars that were made by the nails that held Him to the cross. They knew how much Jesus loved them. He died and rose again so they could have their sins forgiven. But there were millions of people who had not heard this wonderful news. They didn’t know Jesus died for them, too. Jesus said, “I want you to tell them the good news and everything I’ve taught you. Go to those in Jerusalem first. Then go farther away and tell the good news to those in Judea and then Samaria. Keep going farther and farther until the whole world has heard the good news.”

Jesus wanted everyone—people of all races, from every part of the world—to know He died and rose again to take the punishment for their sins.

Card GGW 17 Jesus ascends to Heaven

Next Jesus gave the disciples a wonderful promise: “Lo, I am with you alway.” And as soon as Jesus had finished talking, His body began to rise up into the sky. Up—up—up—until a big cloud covered

Him. Jesus was *gone!* He had returned to heaven!



As the disciples stood quietly, still looking up, they noticed two strangers in shining white robes standing by them. Who could they be? How did they get there?

“You men of Galilee,” said the strangers—who were really angels—“Why are you standing here

looking up into heaven? This same Jesus who has gone away from you into heaven, will come back again one day, just as you have seen Him go."

Then the disciples remembered: before Jesus died on the cross, He had been teaching them about heaven. He told them He was going to heaven to get a new home ready for them and for all people who would believe in Him. Then He was coming again! Immediately the disciples began to worship God and thank Him for

the wonderful promise that Jesus would return.

Jesus made that promise a long time ago, but He still hasn't come back. Did He forget His promise? No; Jesus is God, and what God says He will do—He always does. God planned for Jesus to be born, and Jesus *was!* He planned for Jesus to take the punishment for our sins, and Jesus *did!* He plans for Jesus to come again, and Jesus *will!* He's coming back to get us. Are you ready to go to heaven with Him?

Review Questions:

1. Where did Jesus go when He went back to His Father? *to heaven*
2. What wonderful promises did Jesus make before He went to heaven? *that He will come back again/that He is always with us*
3. Before Jesus went to heaven, what did He ask His disciples to do? *tell others about Jesus*

Lesson 1 Ruth Makes the Right Choice

Ruth 1

Card GGW 18

Elimelech takes his family to Moab

There once was a family who lived in the land of Israel in the city of Bethlehem. At that time there was a famine in the land. Do



you remember what happens during a famine? Yes, during a famine the people do not have much food to eat.

The father of the family, Elimelech, was afraid that his family would not have enough to eat in Bethlehem. One day Elimelech told his wife Naomi that he had heard there was plenty of food for them and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, in the country of

Moab. Now, the country of Moab was called a heathen country because the people there did not believe in God. Instead, they worshiped idols. God had told His people many times that they were not to live in heathen countries such as Moab, but Elimelech decided to move his family to Moab anyway.

In Moab Elimelech's family had plenty of food to eat. But, the sons grew up and soon married Moabite girls named Ruth and Orpah. Ruth and Orpah were nice but they did not know God or God's ways. Naomi probably felt bad that her sons married them because God had told His people not to marry anyone who did not believe in Him.

Lesson 1

Card GGW 19

Naomi's decision

One day Naomi's husband Elimelech died and then her sons died. Naomi was terribly sad and so were Ruth and Orpah. Now, Naomi and the girls were without any husbands to take care of them.



Naomi loved Ruth and Orpah

and the girls loved her, but Naomi missed Bethlehem and her family and friends. One day Naomi heard that the famine was over and decided she would go home. Because Ruth and Orpah loved Naomi and wanted to take care of her, they told her they would go with her. They remembered how she had always loved them, been kind to them, and taught them about the true God. Soon the three ladies were walking together to Bethlehem. As they walked, Naomi may have wondered how the girls would like living in Bethlehem. They would be poor and not have many things, but she could promise them that God would take care of them and give them everything they needed. She thought about how the girls had to give up many things—their homes, friends, and families, and of course their idols.

Turning to the girls she said, "Why don't you go back home instead of coming with me. I will ask the Lord to bless you for your kindness to my sons and to me. I will ask God to help you find good husbands and good homes." Then she kissed Orpah and Ruth and told them goodbye.

Card GGW 20

Ruth goes with Naomi

Orpah thought about what Naomi had said. It would be hard for her to leave her family, friends and idols. She hugged and kissed Naomi goodbye and went back home.



Ruth stood quietly. She was thinking about what to do. She had to make an important decision. Ruth looked toward the Promised Land and remembered all

that Naomi had told her about it and her God.

"Please don't make me leave you, Naomi," Ruth pleaded. "Where you go, I will go; and where you live, I will live. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God." Ruth had made up her mind. She would not only go with Naomi, but the true God would be her God.

Review Questions:

1. Why did Elimelech take his family to Moab? *There was a famine in Bethlehem.*
2. Who died in Moab? *Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion*
3. Which Moabite girl chose the true God? *Ruth*

Lesson 2

God Cares for Ruth

Ruth 2:4

Introduction

Have you ever gone on a long trip with your family to see your relatives? It's exciting, but you may be a little nervous to meet people that you have not seen in a long time. Naomi may have thought about some of these things as she went back home. It had been a long time since she had seen her family and friends in Bethlehem. Would they welcome her home? Would there be anyone there that would help take care of them?

Naomi and Ruth walked and walked many miles back to Bethlehem. As they neared the city, they saw it was time to pick the food the farmers had planted in the spring. Naomi's friends and family greeted her as she came into Bethlehem. They were surprised to see her and said, "Is that you, Naomi? Where are your husband and your sons?" Naomi told them how Elimelech, Mahlon, and Chilion had all died in Moab. Naomi's friends could see that she was very sad. Naomi knew that she and Elimelech should never have left Bethlehem. They could have trusted God to provide for them even though there was a famine. Naomi could see that God had taken care of her friends who had stayed while she was in Moab. Now Naomi was ready to trust God to provide for her and Ruth back home.

Card GGW 21

Ruth gleans in the fields

Ruth and Naomi were widows. That means that their husbands had died. God made a special law for widows who do not have husbands to take care of them anymore. At harvest time when the workers went into the fields to pick the grain, whatever was dropped on the ground was to be left for the widows to pick up and keep. That was called gleaning. It was how God used His people to help provide for those who needed food. When Ruth heard about gleaning, she decided to do it.

Ruth got up early every morning to find a field where the men were working. There she and the other women would pick up the leftovers to take home. One day Ruth gleaned in the field of a man named Boaz. Boaz saw that she was a hard worker and asked one of the men, "Who is this young lady?"

"Oh, she is the Moabite girl who came home with Naomi," the worker replied. "She works very hard all day so she can take care of Naomi."

Boaz wanted to help Ruth. So, Boaz told Ruth to stay in his field and walk right behind the men; and if she got thirsty she should get a drink from the jars of water that the workers had drawn from the well. Then, he told the men in his field to leave a lot of leftovers on the ground for Ruth. When Ruth told Naomi about Boaz and his kindness to her, Naomi told Ruth about another law God had given His people. The law said that if a girl was married and her husband died, someone else in his family could marry her. Can you guess who was in Naomi's family? Boaz! Yes, he was the man who had told Ruth to pick up the leftovers in his field.

Card GGW 22

God gives Ruth a husband

One night Naomi told Ruth to go down to the threshing floor. There she would see

the men throw the wheat and barley into the air. The grain would fall to the floor while the bad part flew away. Ruth was to wait



Lesson 3

until all the work was done and dinner was over and Boaz lay down to sleep. After he was asleep, she was to uncover his feet and lie down beside them. Ruth obeyed Naomi. During the night Boaz woke up. He wondered who was beside his feet. "It is Ruth, your servant," she told Boaz. Boaz was happy because he knew he was part of Naomi's family and could marry Ruth.

The next day Boaz went to the gate of the city and asked the leaders, or men in charge of the city, if he could marry Ruth and take care of her and Naomi. The people of the city asked God to bless Ruth and Boaz and to give them children who would serve God.

Card GGW 23 God rewards Ruth

Time passed and God gave a son to Ruth and Boaz. They called him Obed. Obed grew up and

became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of King David. And years later from King David's family, Jesus, the Son of God was born in that same little town of Bethlehem.



This means that—the Lord Jesus came to earth through the family line of Ruth and Boaz. God rewarded Ruth for the love and care she gave Naomi, and He took care of Ruth and Naomi just as He promised He would.

Review Questions:

1. How did God give food to Ruth in Bethlehem? *She gleaned in the field of Boaz.*
2. What did Boaz tell his workers to do? *drop extra handfuls of grain for Ruth*
3. Who came to earth through the family line of Ruth and Boaz? *Jesus, the Son of God*

Lesson 3

Twins Are Different

Genesis 25:19–34

Card GGW 24 Twins for Isaac and Rebekah

Isaac and Rebekah had been married for a long time. They had prayed and asked God to give them a child of their own. At last, Rebekah knew God was going to give her a baby. Not just one baby—but two! God was going to give them twins. Finally, the twins were born. Both of the babies were boys. Many times when twin babies are born, they look just alike. But the twins God gave to Isaac



and Rebekah did not look alike at all. The first twin, named Esau, was red all over and had lots of hair. The second twin, Jacob, did not.

As the boys grew, they became more and more different. Esau practiced

with his bow and arrow, and when he grew up he became a great hunter. Esau was not interested in learning about the God that his father, Isaac, loved so much. He would rather spend his time out in the woods and fields.

Jacob, on the other hand, enjoyed cooking and taking care of the family's sheep. Jacob listened closely to the things Isaac and Rebekah said about God and the great promises He had given to Isaac's family.

When Jacob and Esau were boys, parents gave their oldest son a very special gift, called the birthright. This son would receive twice as many things as any of the other children, and he would be the one in charge of the family. He would teach the family about the promises of God.

Jacob didn't understand all that the birthright meant, but he loved to hear his parents talk about God. He knew about the promises God had made to his father and mother and to his grandfather, Abraham. And he knew he wanted the birthright.

Before the twins were born, God had told Rebekah that Jacob, even though he was born second, would receive the birthright. But instead of waiting for God to take care of it, Jacob did a bad thing to get the birthright from his brother. This is what happened:

Card GGW 25

Birthright for a bowl of soup

One day Esau came in from hunting. He was hot, tired, and *terribly* hungry. As he

neared home, he smelled something good. Was that food cooking? Yes! Jacob was cooking dinner! Oh, it smelled good!

"Jacob, I'm starved!" said Esau, and he sat down on the ground. "I've just *got* to have a bowl of that soup *right now!* I'm so hungry I could die!"

Jacob thought for a minute; then he had an idea. "All right," he said, "I'll *trade* with you."

"Trade? Trade for what?" asked Esau.

"I'll trade you a bowl of soup for your birthright," said Jacob. "Promise me your birthright, and you can have something to eat."

"What good is an old birthright when I'm starving to death?" cried Esau. "Just give me the soup, and you can *have* the birthright."

Jacob tricked his brother into giving him what he wanted. It was wrong to take the birthright from his brother the way he did. He should have waited on God instead of doing things his own way. Because he did not wait on God, Jacob later had to leave his home and the family that he loved. It took Jacob many years to learn the lessons that God wanted to teach him. Jacob finally learned that if he waited on the Lord, and kept *His* way, then God would give to Jacob all the things that had been promised to him. When God gives a promise, He will *always* keep it.



Review Questions:

1. Which of Rebekah's sons did God promise would receive the birthright? *Jacob*
2. What did Jacob do to make sure he received the birthright? *tricked his brother with a bowl of soup*
3. What important lesson did Jacob finally learn after many years? *to wait on the Lord and keep His way*

Lesson 4

A Rock for a Pillow

Genesis 27-28

Introduction

What does a rock feel like? Is it rough? Sometimes. Is it smooth? It's always hard! How would you like to use a rock for a pillow? The Bible tells us about a man named Jacob who once did that very thing.

Isaac taught his family to love God and remember all the wonderful promises that God had made to their grandfather Abraham. God had promised Abraham that He would give him a wonderful land for his family to live in for many years. He promised to make Abraham's family a great nation. Isaac told Jacob and Esau about their great God because he wanted his sons to love God and serve Him all their lives.

Card GGW 26

Rebekah's plan

Isaac knew that God had chosen Jacob to receive a special blessing, but when Isaac was very old and almost blind, he called Esau to

him and said, "Go hunting in the fields and cook the meat that I like to eat. Bring it to me, and I will bless you."

Rebekah heard what Isaac had said to Esau. She wanted her husband to bless Jacob, not Esau.

Rebekah quickly went to find Jacob. "Bring me some meat to cook for your father," she told him. Jacob brought the meat to his mother and while she cooked it, Jacob dressed in Esau's clothes and put goat hair on his arms and neck. "Now," Rebekah said, "take your father the meat. He will think you are Esau, and he will bless you instead of your brother. Hurry! Esau may be back soon!"



Card GGW 27

Jacob tricks his father

Jacob took the meat his mother had prepared and went to his father. Since Isaac could not see well, he thought Esau had come back from hunting and made him the food he had asked for.

"Is that you, Esau?" Isaac asked.

"Yes, Father," Jacob said. "Touch my arm to see that it is me." Old Isaac touched Jacob's arms. He felt like Esau and the food tasted as if Esau had prepared it. So he gave Jacob the blessing he meant to give to Esau.

It was mean of Jacob to trick his brother and lie to his father. Jacob received the blessing from his father, Isaac, but made his brother so angry that Jacob was afraid of him! To keep Esau from hurting Jacob, Rebekah told Jacob to leave home for a while.

"Go stay with your Uncle Laban in Haran," she told Jacob. "I will send for you when it is safe to come back home." Jacob did wrong; he should have waited on God, but because of what he did, Jacob would have to leave the home he loved. Rebekah went to Isaac and told him that Jacob needed to go away to find a wife. "Send him to my brother Laban. There he can find a wife who believes in the true God," she said.

Isaac knew that Jacob should not marry anyone who did not believe in God. Isaac called Jacob to his tent and said, "Jacob, do not marry a girl from Canaan. Instead, go to Haran to your Uncle Laban. There you can choose a wife from your mother's people. God will bless you and give you the blessings promised to your grandfather Abraham."

Jacob would miss his mother and father but he had to go. So Jacob told his father and mother goodbye, and started out. He must



have felt very unhappy. Jacob walked and walked until he was very tired and decided to rest for the night. Jacob lay down on the ground and used a rock for his pillow. While Jacob lay there looking up at the starry sky, he had plenty of time to think about what he had done. He probably wished that he hadn't tricked his brother and his father for the blessing. Sometimes we do things and later wish we hadn't. But it is *never* too late to talk to God and ask forgiveness. God is *always* ready to listen, forgive us, and help us do what is right. God does not stop loving us because we sin. He loves us even though we sin, and He forgives us when we ask Him.

Card GGW 28

Jacob's dream

As Jacob slept, he had a wonderful dream. In his dream, he saw a ladder that reached all the



way up to heaven. There were angels going up and down the ladder! *God* was standing at the top of the ladder! In his dream, God spoke to Jacob and said, "I am the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of your father Isaac. I will give this land to you

and your children and your children's children. Through your family, I will bless all the people of the earth. I am with you and will take care of you wherever you go; and I will bring you back safely to your homeland. This is my promise to you."

The next morning when Jacob woke up from his dream, he sat up and looked around. He could not see the ladder—and there were no angels. But Jacob knew that God had been there. He said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it!"

God had shown Jacob through his dream that He still loved him and had forgiven him for what he had done.

That made Jacob's dream and the place of his dream very special! Jacob did not want to forget his dream. So he set up the rock that he had used for a pillow and poured oil on the top of it. Jacob called the place *Bethel*, which means "house of God." Then Jacob promised God, "If You will go with me and take care of me and bring me home again, You will be my God, and I will give back to You part of everything I have."

Jacob went on his way until he got to the land of his mother, and finally he was close to his Uncle Laban's house. It had been a long journey, but Jacob was not lonely. He knew God was with him just as He promised.

The rock Jacob used for a pillow was not very big, but what a wonderful dream he had while he slept on it! The Lord used that dream to teach Jacob about His promises. God did bless Jacob and gave him many children, servants, and cattle. Today, God doesn't talk to us in dreams—He teaches us what He wants us to know through His Word, the Bible. God teaches us that even though we do wrong, He will forgive us and bless us and use us to work for Him. He doesn't like the bad things we do, but He never stops loving us.

Review Questions:

1. What did Jacob use for a pillow? *a rock*
2. In Jacob's dream, what reached all the way into heaven? *a ladder*
3. What was going up and down the ladder? *angels*
4. While Jacob was dreaming, Who told him, "I am with you and will take care of you"? *God*

Lesson 5

Brothers Forgive

Genesis 32-33

Card GGW 29

Jacob travels home

Have you ever fought with your brothers or sisters? Maybe you called each other names, or even pushed each other. Then you wouldn't talk to each other because you were mad. In our story today we will hear about two brothers who were angry with each other. Let's find out what they did about it.

Jacob lived in Haran for twenty years; that is a *long* time! During that time, Jacob became a very rich man. He had lots of animals and servants. Even though he had many things, he was sad. He had not seen his mother and father in twenty years. He missed his home, his mother, and his father. He wondered what it was like at home and if his father and mother were still living. And he thought about his brother, Esau. Was Esau still angry with him for what he did? Did he still want to hurt him? Even though it would be hard, Jacob decided that it was time to go back home and face his brother Esau.

As Jacob and his family traveled back to his country, God sent a group of angels to encourage him. It reminded him of the angels he had seen long ago on a ladder going from earth to heaven. But the next day Jacob was afraid again.

He decided to send messengers to Esau to announce he was coming.

He wanted Esau to know that he was not a poor man. Jacob told his servants to say, "We have a message from your brother, Jacob. He is coming back home. He has many animals and servants. He wants you to forgive him for the mean things he did to you many years ago."

The messengers returned a few days later and told Jacob that Esau was coming to meet him, along with an army of four hundred men!



"Four hundred men!" he cried. "What can I do? He will destroy us all!" Jacob forgot the ladder to heaven, the group of angels, and the promises of God's blessings. "What can I do to protect my family? I must think of a plan!" he cried. Jacob tried to figure things out on his own instead of asking God for help.

Jacob decided to separate his family and belongings into two groups. If Esau attacked the first group, then the other group could try to run away. *After* Jacob had made his plans and decided what he would do, *then* he prayed. He should have prayed *first*. It would have saved him a lot of worry!

The next day, Jacob sent *hundreds* of his animals ahead as a present to Esau. He sent goats, lambs, and rams. He sent camels with their babies, cows, bulls, donkeys, and colts. He kept choosing more and more animals to send as a gift to Esau. There were so many animals that Jacob had to send many servants just to take care of them. Jacob told his servants to say to Esau, "These are presents for you from your brother, Jacob. He is coming right behind us." Jacob hoped that the gift of all those animals would make Esau friendly to him. Surely that would make him happy!

Card GGW 30

Jacob wrestles with the Angel of the Lord

That night, Jacob sent his family and all the things he owned across the river, but he stayed behind. He needed to be by himself to think. There had to be a way out of this problem! If only he could figure it out.



Suddenly, in the dark, a hand grabbed Jacob! The One who grabbed him was very strong. It

was the Lord God Himself! He appeared to Jacob as the Angel of the Lord. He wanted to be the boss of Jacob's life instead of Jacob trying to figure things out for himself. God wanted Jacob to trust *Him* for everything and give *God* his plans, but Jacob wanted to do things for himself.

Have you ever watched two boys wrestle out in the yard? They toss and turn, they grunt and groan, and their faces get all red from the struggle. They keep wrestling until someone gives up. Well, Jacob wrestled with God all through the night! He was very stubborn and wanted to have his own way. Finally, the Lord touched Jacob's hip and made it so that Jacob was helpless. Jacob cried, "I give up—have Your own way from now on!" Jacob had finally learned that God's way is the best way.

That night, the Lord told Jacob, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince you have power with God and with men." Israel means 'God Rules' or 'God Commands.' That means *God* is in charge!

Jacob limped for the rest of his life as a reminder of that night, and he always remembered that the Lord was in charge of his life. Jacob was not perfect, but he tried to please God and do what God wanted him to do.

Early the next morning, Jacob limped away from where he had wrestled. At last, God was

in control of his life. Jacob crossed over the river and joined his family.

Card GGW 31 Esau greets Jacob

Far in the distance he saw Esau coming



with his four hundred men. Jacob went out alone to meet Esau, and he bowed before him. Then Esau ran toward Jacob. He threw his arms around Jacob and kissed him! Both of them cried for joy! Esau was not angry anymore. God

had been working in Esau to change him, too. Jacob didn't need to send all those animals to Esau as a present. Esau had already forgiven Jacob.

After a short, happy visit with Esau, Jacob headed toward his father Isaac's home. His mother Rebekah had already died, but his father was still alive.

Jacob never forgot the wrestling match with God. He knew that he had let God take control of his life. God would help him. God can help us if we let Him. He doesn't want us to be stubborn. He wants us to listen to Him, because God's way is always the best way.

Review Questions:

1. Why was Esau angry with Jacob? *Jacob had tricked Esau and taken the birthright.*
2. What did Jacob try to give to Esau to make him friendly? *many animals*
3. Who wrestled with Jacob all night until Jacob let Him be in charge? *the Lord*

Lesson 6

Marching 'Round and 'Round

Joshua 5:13–6:27

Card GGW 32

The Lord's Captain speaks to Joshua

The people of Israel were very excited! For forty long years they had wandered around in the wilderness because they didn't believe God's promise. Now, they were close enough to see the green hills and fields of Canaan—the land of milk and honey. They had just crossed the Jordan River, and they would soon be in the land that God had promised to them.

When God chose Joshua to be Israel's leader, He said, "Joshua, every place you go in the land of Canaan will be yours." Because that land belonged to Israel, God wanted His people to drive out their enemies. God also told Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage. I will always be with you." That is a wonderful promise for us, too!

The people of Canaan were afraid. They knew the Israelites had a powerful God, one that could help the Israelites destroy their enemies.

The people of Israel put up their tents near a large city named Jericho. The high wall



around the city was so wide that houses were built on top of it. As Joshua left the Israelite camp to look over this great city, he probably wondered how he

could get his army inside the huge stone wall that surrounded it. He knew the gates would be locked and soldiers would be on top of the wall guarding the city. He knew that no one had gone in or out of the city. They were waiting to see what Israel would do.

While Joshua walked around the city he saw Someone with a sword in His hand.

"Are You on our side, or our enemy's side?" asked Joshua.

The Stranger said, "I am Captain of the host of the Lord's army. Take off your shoes,

because the ground where you are standing is holy ground."

Joshua did just what He said, for He was not just another man. He had come to help Joshua. The Lord's Captain told Joshua that the people of Israel would conquer Jericho if the Israelites did exactly what He commanded them to do. Joshua listened carefully for instructions.

Card GGW 33

Important instructions

Early the next morning, Joshua lined up his army exactly the way the Lord had said. Seven priests marched in front of the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant, the most important piece of furniture from God's house. The soldiers followed after them. They all marched to Jericho; then they marched all the way *around* Jericho. Seven priests blew their trumpets made



from rams' horns, but *no one* said a word.

The only sounds were the blowing of trumpets and the marching of feet. After the army of Israel marched around the

city one time, they marched back to their camp.

The watchmen on the walls of Jericho saw Joshua's army march toward their city. They thought the Israelites were coming to attack them. Instead, they watched Joshua and his men march around the walls of the city, then back to their camp.

The next day the Israelites marched around the city of Jericho and did the very same thing they had done before. Again the seven priests blew their trumpets, but no one said a word. Then they marched back to camp. The people of Jericho wondered when Israel would attack their city.

The Israelites marched around the city of Jericho—*one, two, three days, four days, five days, six days*. Each day they marched around only one time. And each day the priests blew their

trumpets, but no one said a word. Then the Israelites returned to their camp. By this time, the people of Jericho may have thought that Israel might not attack their city after all. But God had a different plan.

On the seventh day, the Israelites again marched around Jericho. But instead of going back to their camp, they kept marching. They marched around and around—*three times, four times, five times, six times*. And again the only sounds that were made were the blowing of trumpets and the marching of feet. *No one* said a word.

Card GGW 34

Walls fall down

The people inside the city wondered what was going on. The *seventh* time around the city, the priests blew a long, loud blast on their trumpets, and Joshua called to the people, “Shout, for

the Lord has given you the city! All that is in it belongs to the Lord!”

All the men SHOUTED! As the Israelites shouted, the power of God caused the huge



city walls to crumble and fall down flat. God had helped His people again! The battle was won. The Israelite army just climbed over the broken stones and

marched into the city. And the city of Jericho was defeated that day.

Just as God helped the children of Israel, God wants to help us. He wants us to remember to pray to Him each day and ask Him when we need help. Aren’t you glad that God loves you and wants to help you, too?

Review Questions:

1. Who told Joshua how to win the battle at Jericho? *the Captain of the Lord's army*
2. How many days did Joshua and his men march only one time around the city of Jericho? *six*
3. On the seventh day, what happened when God's people shouted? *The walls of Jericho fell down flat.*

Lesson 7

Joshua Keeps His Promise

Joshua 9:3–10:13

Card GGW 35

Gibeonites trick Joshua

One day after Joshua's victory at Jericho, a meeting took place in a nearby city—the city of Gibeon. The Gibeonites had heard how the walls came down in Jericho. They knew that the God of Israel was a great and powerful God

Who protected His people and helped them fight against their enemies. They didn't want their city to be destroyed, so they decided to come up with a plan.

“What shall we do?” they asked each other. “Gibeon is not far; the Israelites will be coming here next. Let's trick them.”

Lesson 7

It didn't take long to get everything ready. All they needed was just some old, torn up, dirty clothes and shoes; old, dusty packs; dry bread; and a few skinny donkeys. Then they chose some men from their city and told them what to do.

A few days later, the group of men came hobbling into the camp of Israel. They looked like they had been traveling for weeks and



weeks. Their clothes were ragged; their hair was dirty, and their shoes were worn out. Their poor donkeys were skinny and tired and the bread that was left in

their sacks was dried out. The water bags which lay across their donkeys' backs were cracked and old. "Take us to Joshua," they said to the men who met them.

Soon the strangers were standing before Joshua, the leader of God's people. "We have heard about your great God, and we have come from a far country to make peace with you."

Joshua knew God wanted him to drive all their enemies out of Canaan. But the strange men said they were from a far country, and they looked like they had traveled for a long time. Some of the leaders of Israel looked at the men and asked, "How do we know that you are not from a nearby country, and that you are not just trying to trick us?"

The Gibeonites quickly answered, "Oh, no, we are from a very far country. We have heard about your great God Who delivered His people from Egypt. We have heard about the battles you have won and the cities you have taken. Our leaders told us to come on this long trip to ask for peace with Israel. Do you see this bread? It was warm when we left our country. We have traveled for so many days that it is old and dry now. Just touch our clothing. It was new when we left our land, but now it is torn and dirty and our shoes are worn out. Please, believe us. We are from very far away. Don't send us away; we want to be your friends. Please tell us that you will not fight against our

country, so that we may go back home and tell our people and our leaders not to be afraid of the people of Israel."

Not one time did Joshua and the leaders of Israel ask God what to do. They felt sorry for the strangers, and they thought, "How could they hurt us? They live so far away." So Joshua promised to help these ragged strangers and their people. Israel would not hurt them or their city. Joshua and the people of Israel were kind to these men of Gibeon.

Card GGW 36 Gibeon serves Israel

But three days later, Joshua found out that he had been tricked by the Gibeonites. Why, they were his enemies. He felt foolish! He knew he should not have made peace with them without asking God about it first. But now it was too late. Joshua had promised the Gibeonites that Israel would be their friends. Soon the Israelites went to Gibeon. They were very angry that the people had lied to them and deceived them by dressing up in dirty, old clothes. God's people wanted to fight against the Gibeonites, but Joshua said no. "We have promised them by the Lord God of Israel that we would help them and not hurt them. We must do right and keep our promise. If we don't, the Lord will not bless us."

Some of the leaders in Israel told Joshua to make the people of Gibeon become the ser-



vants of Israel. He agreed that it would be a good way to punish them for lying. So for the rest of their lives, the Gibeonites had to chop wood and carry water for God's people. They worked hard for the people of Israel.

The devil, God's enemy, is like the Gibeonites. He tries to trick us into doing wrong things. He wants us to go right ahead and lie, argue, and pout. He wants us to be unkind and mean to our friends and disobey our fathers and

mothers. But we have Someone who can help us do right. God's Word tells us He is stronger than the devil. When we pray and ask God to help us, He will give us the power to do it.

When the king of Jerusalem heard that the people of Gibeon had made peace with the Israelites, he was afraid! He knew all about Israel defeating Jericho, and he was sure that his city would be attacked next. The king had an idea; he would send a message to four other kings who lived near him. He would ask them to come and help him fight the Gibeonites, because they had made peace with the Israelites.

Soon the five kings and their armies marched to Gibeon and camped around the great city. The leaders of Gibeon knew they could not win the battle against the five kings. They needed help from Israel and the God of Israel.

Quickly they sent a message to Joshua. "Come as fast as you can and help us," they said. "Five kings and their armies have gathered together to fight against us. Please come and save us."

Card GGW 37 Sun stands still

This time, Joshua didn't forget to ask God first! Joshua had learned a very hard lesson from the Gibeonites, and he never wanted to make the same mistake again!

The Lord told Joshua, "Don't be afraid to go to the Gibeonites and fight against the kings, because you will win the battle. Not one of them will be strong enough to stand against you."

Joshua knew he was obeying God by keeping his promise to the Gibeonites. Joshua called his army together. He told them they were going to fight against the five Amorite kings. Joshua wasn't afraid, for he trusted in the Lord. He *knew* that with the Lord's help, they would win the battle. The army of Israel marched all night so that they could surprise the five enemy armies the next morning. As the battle began, Joshua saw that his soldiers were tired from their long journey during the night,

so he began to pray that God would give his army strength and help them fight against their enemies. Joshua asked God to refresh his army so that they wouldn't be so tired.

God answered Joshua's prayer. God did wonderful things to show His people that He was with them. He caused great hailstones—pieces of frozen ice—to fall from the sky. The hailstones didn't hurt any of the Israelite army, but they hit the enemy. The hailstones cooled the air and gave Joshua's army more strength to fight. God even caused the sun and moon to stand still for almost a whole day so that Joshua and his men would be able to win the battle! God is so great! God's people won the battle that day, and praised God for His help and power.

God knows when we need help, too, and He will always hear and answer our prayers.



Review Questions:

1. Were the people of Gibeon friends or enemies of the Israelites? *enemies*
2. What were the Gibeonite men wearing when they came to trick Joshua and the leaders of Israel? *old, ragged clothes*
3. Who told Joshua not to be afraid of the five Amorite kings? *the Lord/God*

Lesson 8

A Few Good Men

Judges 6:11–16, 19–22, 33–35; 7:1–25

Card GGW 38

God chooses Gideon

Have you ever been afraid? Maybe of a new place, a loud noise, or even the dark? Today I'm going to tell you about a grownup who was afraid. Let's find out what happened when this man trusted God.

The Israelite people had turned away from God. They had forgotten about God and they began worshiping the false gods of the Canaanites. They built statues and bowed down to them. God was very sad when He saw what His chosen people were doing! He knew that He had to punish their disobedience, so He allowed the Midianites to take over their land. The Midianites began to steal food from the Israelites' fields and barns. The people of Israel were so afraid that they ran away from their homes and hid in caves in the mountains. There they were cold, hungry, and sad. They knew they had done wrong. Finally, after seven long years, the people of Israel asked God to forgive them for worshiping idols. God forgave His people. He always forgives us when we ask Him to. Then God chose a man named Gideon to lead the army of Israel against the Midianites.



One day Gideon was threshing wheat (separating seeds from the plants) in a secret place so the Midianites would not steal his wheat. Suddenly Gideon noticed that Someone was standing with him. It was the Angel of the Lord!

"Gideon," He said, "You are a strong and brave man. The Lord is with you."

"How can the Lord be with me?" Gideon asked. "Why doesn't God help us the way He helped Moses lead our people out of Egypt? The Midianites have ruined our land!"

But the Angel of the Lord said to Gideon, "Go and free the people of Israel from the Midianites!"

"Me?" Gideon replied. "My family is poor, and I am the least important son in all of my father's family. How can I save the people from their enemies?"

The Angel told him, "Go. God will be with you and make you strong." God was not looking for an important person. God was looking for a man who would obey.

Gideon ran home to get food for the Angel. When Gideon returned with the food, he asked the Angel to show him a sign from God. The Angel told Gideon to put the food he had brought on a rock. The Angel touched the food, and fire burned it up. Then the Angel disappeared! Gideon knew that he had talked to the Angel of the Lord. God gave Gideon even more signs that he was to lead His army against Midian.

Card GGW 39

Gideon calls an army

Now Gideon was ready to do exactly what God said. He was filled with courage from God. Gideon blew a trumpet, calling men to fight, and he sent messengers throughout the land to spread the word that he was getting an army ready to fight against the enemy.

Every day men came—10 thousand, 20 thousand, 30 thousand—until Gideon had an army of 32 thousand men.

Even though that seems like a lot of soldiers, there were *four* times as many enemy soldiers. That means that every soldier of Israel would have *four* Midianite soldiers to fight!

Then the Lord spoke to Gideon, "You have too many men."

"Too many!" thought Gideon as he looked at all the enemy soldiers down in the valley. Did God know how many enemy soldiers there were? Yes, He did, but God wanted Gideon to trust Him, not the number of soldiers he had.

The Lord said to Gideon, "Tell everyone who is afraid to go home. If you defeat the Midianites with a large army, the people will think they won by their own strength. I want them to know that *My* power helps them fight their enemies."

So Gideon did as the Lord commanded. Thousands of men walked away from Gideon's army! More than half the men went back home because they were afraid to fight against the Midianites.

After all the men who were afraid went home, there were only ten thousand men left. Now every soldier of Israel would have *thirteen* Midianites to fight! Gideon's army would *have* to trust God.

God came and spoke to Gideon again. "There are still too many men. Take them down



to the river and tell them to get a drink of water. I will show you which men to take into battle with you." Gideon took his men to the river and told them to drink. "Watch how the men drink," God said. "If the men cup

their hands and lap the water with their tongues, put them in one group. If they bow on their knees and drink from the river, put them in another group." Gideon watched the men drink. (The men who lapped water out of their hands could watch for the enemy, but the men who knelt to drink from the river would not see the enemy coming.)

The Lord said to Gideon, "Take the men who lapped water from their hands to fight against the Midianites; send all the others home." Again Gideon obeyed God, but his army was getting very small! Only 300 men! Now every soldier of Israel would have *450* Midianite soldiers to fight!

During the night the Lord spoke to Gideon. "Get up!" He said. "Take your men and attack the Midianites. I will win the battle for you." Then the Lord said, "If you are afraid, take your servant and go to the tents of the enemy and listen to what they are saying."

Card GGW 40

God wins the battle for Israel

Quietly, Gideon and his servant walked down the hillside to the enemy camp. When they reached the edge of the camp, they stepped close to one of the tents and listened. A soldier was telling about a dream he had just had. The soldier said, "Gideon and his army will come and fight against us, and win, for their God is with them!"

"Thank You, God," prayed Gideon as he hurried back to his little army on the hillside. He was no longer afraid. "Get up! Get up!" he called to his men. "It's time to fight the Midianites. The Lord is with us. He will give us the victory!"



First, Gideon divided his men into three groups—one hundred in each group. Then he gave each man a trumpet and a clay jar with a light inside. "When we come to the edge of the Midianite camp," Gideon told his army, "do just as I do. When I blow my trumpet, you blow your trumpets, too. Then shout, 'The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!'"

Gideon and his men stepped carefully down the dark hillside. The Midianites were asleep. Gideon's men waited silently for his signal.

Gideon blew his trumpet! Then all of Gideon's men blew their trumpets. Gideon broke his clay jar, and a light shone in the darkness. With a loud *crash*, all three hundred of Gideon's men broke their clay jars. Light was blazing all around the camp! Then the soldiers of Israel all shouted as loudly as they could: "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon!"

Immediately the Midianites were awake. And they were afraid! Trumpets were blaring, men were shouting, and light was blazing all around them. "We must be surrounded by a *huge* army," they cried. They were so frightened that they began to fight with each other instead of with the army of Gideon! They ran in every direction, not knowing where to go. Most of the enemy soldiers were destroyed while Gideon's army stood on the hillside and watched.

Lesson 8

Gideon and his small army won the battle—not because they were powerful, but because Gideon trusted in the power of God. For the rest of Gideon's life, God's people were at peace. Gideon learned that God was power-

ful enough to defeat a huge army with only 300 men. The number of soldiers was not important. The important thing was that Gideon trusted in God for the victory. God wants us to trust Him, too.

Review Questions:

1. What happened to the men who were afraid? *They went home.*
2. What happened to the men who knelt down to drink? *They went home.*
3. What did Gideon give to each man who stayed to fight? *a trumpet and a clay jar with a light inside*