

February 1

Genesis 31:3, 17-18, 32:13-18, 33:1-11

Making things right

Jacob had worked for Laban for many years and eventually owned his own sheep and goats. His uncle Laban became jealous of him because God had blessed him with so many animals. Then God told Jacob to go back home to the place he had left as a young man. So Jacob took his two wives and his children, and everything he owned, and left Laban to go back to his father in the land of Canaan. The problem was that Jacob had to face his brother Esau whom he had tricked, and he remembered that Esau had wanted to kill him. When he got to the country of Edom, he sent servants ahead with many gifts for Esau. Meanwhile, Esau was coming toward him with four hundred of his men, and Jacob was afraid. But he knew he would have to face Esau; and when he finally did, he bowed down in front of him to show how sorry he was for what he had done. Then Jacob gave Esau large herds of camels and other animals, and the two brothers made peace with each other.

Is it enough to say sorry?

Maybe you have been trying to avoid someone because of something that has come between you and the other person. It is time to go make things right. Saying "I am sorry" are three short words, but they are sometimes the hardest words to say. However, even these three words won't always make things right again—especially if they are said in an uncaring way. To show that you are truly sorry, think about the words you use and how you say them. For example, you could say: "I am really sorry for what I said to you," or "I am sorry that I hurt you—please forgive me." Like Jacob, you may be able to think of a way to show kindness to the person you wronged, not as a bribe or to pay for what you did, but as a gift of love—a sign to show that you really mean what you say.

Today' Verse:

And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. Luke 19:8

February 2

Genesis 37:1-11

Talk about way-out!

Joseph was the second youngest of Jacob's twelve sons. The family had moved back to the land of Canaan where Joseph looked after sheep and goats. Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons and gave him a special, way-out coat. It was obvious who the favorite in the family was and that made his brothers very jealous. What made Joseph's brothers hate him even more is that Joseph told his father everything they got up to. One night, Joseph dreamed that while he and his brothers were tying up sheaves of wheat in the field, his sheaf stood up straight, while his brothers' sheaves made a circle around his and bowed down to it. Then Joseph had another dream in which he saw the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bow down to him. When Joseph told his brothers the dreams they were furious and asked, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? And they hated Joseph even more.

What's wrong with being the favorite?

How do you feel when someone is treated better than the rest, getting favors he or she doesn't deserve? Maybe you are someone's favorite and, if so, there is usually a good reason why people like you. There is nothing wrong with being liked! But problems come when someone does special favors for one child, or spends more time with one child, only because that child is liked more than the others. You cannot change someone's feelings towards you, but you can be humble and sensitive about the way that makes others feel. So, if you are favored, pass on the kindness and try to step back from getting too much attention.

Today's Verse:

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. James 4:6

February 3

Joseph Genesis 37:14, 17-24

The pit(s)

One day, Joseph's brothers were out in the fields looking after their father's flock. Jacob asked Joseph to go out and see how they were doing. When Joseph's brothers saw him coming, they said to each other, "Here comes the dreamer. Let's kill him and throw his body into one of the dry wells. We can say that a wild animal got hold of him and killed him." When Reuben, one of the brothers, heard them plotting to kill Joseph, he said, "No, let's not kill him. Just throw him into this well, but don't hurt him." So Joseph's brothers ripped off his coat and threw him into a deep pit.

Can bad people hurt God's children?

The Lord is our Shepherd and He watches over us all the time! (Psalm 23). Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:27-29). Isn't it comforting to know that God holds us in His mighty hand? God's enemy, the devil, will try everything he can to hurt and harm those who belong to Him. Although God has given the devil some power, he can never upset or spoil God's purpose for our lives. Even when the devil uses bad people to hurt us, he cannot change God's perfect plan for us. We may seem powerless for a while, but God cares about us. He knows what we are going through and He will rescue us. It may have seemed as though Joseph's brothers did something that not even God could stop. Yet, we will soon find out how God had placed a hedge of protection around Joseph, and God has also placed one around you!

Today's Verse:

The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. Psalm 121:7

February 4

Genesis 37:25-34

Sold as a slave

While Joseph's brothers were having lunch, they saw some travelers in the distance on their way to Egypt. Then Judah, one of Joseph's brothers had an idea. "Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh." All the others agreed, so they pulled Joseph out of the well and sold him to the traders for twenty pieces of silver. Joseph was taken to Egypt where he was sold as a slave to Potiphar, one of the king's officers.

What am I worth?

When you think of what a person is worth, twenty pieces of silver doesn't sound like much. What do you think you are worth? People often judge a person's worth by who they are, what they can do, or what they own. Those who are popular, talented, and rich often have bodyguards to protect them. They make front-page news and are fussed over by those who seek their favor. Do you know that you have been bought by someone for a lot more than twenty pieces of silver? The price that was paid for you is far more than all the silver and gold in the whole world! You have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus because you are worth that much to Him.

Today's Verse:

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: 1Peter 1:18-19

February 5

Genesis 39:1-6

Serving with excellence

The Lord was with Joseph and made him successful in Potiphar's house where he served as a slave. Potiphar noticed that the Lord was with Joseph. Joseph's new master was so pleased with him that he put him in charge of the whole house and everything he owned. Potiphar had never had it so easy: Joseph took care of everything and God blessed Potiphar's household and his fields.

Why should I do my best if I get nothing extra for it?

Have you ever wondered what motivates a person to work hard for someone else? Some people work hard because they want to make a lot of money. Some work hard to be known as an expert, and some do their best to get to the top in their career. But why would someone do their best when doing a job well doesn't bring in extra money or lead to some reward? In one of Paul's letters, he gives us the best reason to have a good attitude towards working and serving: Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does (Ephesians 6:6-8). God created us with a need to work. One of the first things He told Adam was that he should look after the garden and work in it. Hard work honors the Lord; and that means, whatever task you do, when you do it to the best of your ability, you are pleasing the Lord. And when the task is completed you will also feel good about a job well.

Today's Verse:

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;
Colossians 3:23

February 6

Genesis 39:6-12, 19-20

The set-up

While Joseph took care of things in Potiphar's household, everything went well. As he went about his daily chores, Potiphar's wife noticed how handsome Joseph was. She liked him and it wasn't long before she invited him to her bedroom. Joseph knew trouble when he saw it—and this was trouble! So Joseph refused to do what she wanted. Then one day, when Potiphar was away, His wife again said to Joseph, "Come to my bedroom with me." She grabbed him by his robe. Joseph pulled and squirmed until he was free and ran away, leaving her clutching the robe. Potiphar's wife kept the robe, and when her husband got back, she showed him Joseph's robe, saying, "This slave you brought into our house came into my room and said bad things to me, and when I screamed he ran away." Potiphar believed her and was so furious that he had Joseph arrested and put in the king's prison.

What should I do when I'm blamed for something I didn't do?

- Being treated unfairly or accused for something you didn't do can make you feel very angry. Talk to someone about those feelings and ask God to give you peace by helping you forgive the person who wronged you.
- If someone has got you into trouble and you need to explain what happened, stick to the facts (James 5:12).
- Let God deal with it! Don't threaten the person or try to get even with the one who accused you wrongly.

Remember, bad people lied about Jesus too (see Mark 14:53-56).

Today's Verse:

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Matthew 5:11.

February 7

Genesis 39:21-23

Making the best of it

Joseph found himself being punished in the king's prison for something he hadn't done. But instead of grumbling and complaining, Joseph carried on being cheerful and helpful. The jailer soon noticed Joseph because he was so different from everyone else. In fact, the jailer was so impressed with Joseph that he put him in charge of the other prisoners. He also made him responsible for everything that needed to be done in the prison. God blessed Joseph and helped him do everything well.

Does it help to complain?

Grumble, groan, mumble, moan. Does it really help? How else will people know that you are not happy with the way things are? Here are a few facts about being grumpy: • Complaining doesn't change things - people change things. • Grumbling upsets other people - it makes them feel unhappy! • When you deliberately put on a miserable look, you will actually start to feel even more miserable. Does that mean you should always look happy—even when you're not? Should you just accept whatever happens? No! For something to change you need to take action. So, if something isn't right: • Think about the situation for a while, then ask yourself: Who could help me do something about it? What can I do to change the situation? How would my idea affect others? • Go speak to the right person—someone who can help you. Tell the person what happened and how you feel about it. Suggest how the problem could be sorted out or ask for advice. • Like Joseph, be patient and keep doing what is right and good. Remember, God sees and knows everything, and He will help you.

Today's Verse:

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: Philippians 2:14.

February 8

Genesis 41:1-36

Seven fat cows

Joseph had been in prison for a long time when the king of Egypt had a dream. The king dreamed he was standing at the Nile River when he saw seven thin cows eat up seven fat cows; but the thin cows stayed thin. When the king woke up, he remembered the dream and called his wise men and magicians, hoping that they could explain the dream to him. But no one could! One of the king's servants, who had been in prison with Joseph, remembered that Joseph had told him the meaning of his dream. He told the king about Joseph. So the king sent for him. Joseph said to the king, "Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: And there shall arise after them seven years of famine;" And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, ... against the seven years of famine."

Will God give me the right words to say?

Do you think Joseph was nervous when he stood in front of the king? What if he couldn't figure out the king's dream either? Thoughts of staying in prison for life, or even being killed, wouldn't be helpful when everyone's eyes were on him. But Joseph remembered how—through a dream—God had showed him what would happen in his life. He told the king that God alone could give him the meaning of his dream, and God did! If you honor God as Joseph did, He will also give you the right words to say as you trust Him to guide your thoughts.

Today's Verse:

...take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say. Luke 12:11b-12.

February 9

Genesis 41:37-46

What a big task

When Joseph told the king what his dream meant and what he should do, the king said, "We will never find a better man than Joseph, who has God's spirit in him, to take charge of the great task of collecting and storing grain during the seven years of plenty." Then the king said, "Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. Then the king gave Joseph his very own ring and put a fine linen robe on him.

Why would God want to use me?

God sees those who are obedient to Him and who love Him. "For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him" (2 Chronicles 16:9). God is looking for those who will serve Him in a humble way, not boasting in their abilities, but willing to do any task—and do it well. Joseph had to learn to do little tasks well before he was given more responsibility. Whether he found himself in prison, or being the second in charge of Egypt, he listened to God and always did his best. God has given you special abilities, talents and spiritual gifts so that He can use you in a special way. In addition, you may have had experiences that make you unique. The things you are good at, and even those you are not so good at, help to make you all the more useful. Remember, God can use anyone who is available and has a pure heart.

Today's Verse:

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 1 Corinthians 1:27

February 10

Genesis 41:53-57, 42:1-4

Saving and spending

When the seven years of plenty had passed, the storehouses in Egypt were full. Then, just as God had said, seven years of famine followed. Joseph opened the storehouses and started selling grain to the Egyptian people. Things were getting so bad that even people from distant countries came to buy food. Joseph's father Jacob heard that there was food in Egypt and sent his sons to buy grain there. Only his youngest son Benjamin stayed behind because Jacob was afraid something bad might happen to him.

Should I spend my pocket money or save it?

Whether your parents give you pocket money, or whether you do chores to earn money, what you do with the money is up to you. It is probably best to keep a balance between spending money and saving it. By keeping money for a while (saving), you can make sure you have money when you need it. If you spend all of it straight away on buying things you don't really need, you may not have enough when you want to buy something special. By learning to save now, even if it is only a small amount, you will be starting a good habit. Jesus tells us not to store up treasures on earth (Matthew 6:19). This means that we should be careful not to heap up treasure—whether money or things—that could become more important to us than having eternal life. If you want to use money wisely, don't rush into buying things. Rather wait and ask the Lord to help you make a good decision. But remember, money and things won't last forever; what is far more important are the things we do to store up treasure in heaven.

Today's Verse:

The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; Proverbs 30:25

February 11

Genesis 42:5-11, 19-20, 24-25

Now it's my turn

Jacob's ten sons finally arrived at the storehouse in Egypt where Joseph was selling grain. Food was scarce everywhere because of the great famine. Joseph recognized his brothers who had sold him as a slave many years before, but his brothers didn't recognize him. Joseph asked them about their father and he also found out about Benjamin, his youngest brother who was not with them. He told them to go back and fetch Benjamin, and had Simeon put in prison until the others returned with him. Then he filled their bags with grain and sent them on their way. While on their way back, one of them discovered that the money they had brought to buy grain had been put back in the top of their sacks.

How should I treat someone who has hurt me?

Has someone hurt you recently and now you keep thinking of a way to get back at the person? Our sense of fairness makes us think that we need to even the score and show the other person what it feels like to be hurt. However, there is a far better way to handle the situation, and the Bible tells us how: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." (Romans 12:19). Things had changed for Joseph. He now had the power to get back at his brothers for what they did to him. He had a chance to get even, but instead he chose to show kindness. What would you have done if you were Joseph? Imagine if the person who hurt you was standing before you pleading for mercy. Now think of the many wrong things you have done in your life, all of which God has forgiven at great cost. In the same way you have been forgiven, God wants you to forgive the person who hurt you, and with His help even show kindness like Joseph did. Read Matthew 18:23-34.

Today's Verse:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
Matthew 5:44

February 12 Joseph

Genesis 43:8-12, 45:12-13

From bad to worse

When Jacob heard that Simeon was still in Egypt and that the governor in charge of selling food wanted to see Benjamin, his youngest son, he was very upset. He said to his other sons, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." As the famine continued, Jacob began to realize that the only way their family would survive would be to send his sons back to Egypt to buy food, this time with Benjamin. All this time, Jacob and his sons did not know that Joseph was alive and well, and that he was the one in charge of the food supply in Egypt.

How can I help people in countries where there is a famine?

How would you feel if you were in charge of all the food in Egypt? Would you feel powerful and important, or would you feel happy to be serving others? Maybe you have seen pictures of starving children. How do those pictures make you feel? You may feel upset that children your age are suffering and no one seems to care. You could do something to help needy people! Even though your part may seem small, God sees your heart and He can turn something small into something much bigger:

- Pray for God's mercy on their country, and if they need rain for their crops, that God would send them rain.
- Try to find out more about poor countries. Start a scrapbook with pictures and information about countries in need.
- Ask God to show you how you can help and, if you are wondering whether your part will really make a difference, read Mark 12:41-44.

Today's Verse:

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Matthew 25:40

February 13

Genesis 45:16-20, 46:5-6

Together again

When the king of Egypt heard about Joseph's brothers, and that his father was still in Canaan, he said, "This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; And take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. So Joseph sent his brothers back to Canaan with wagons to fetch their wives and children, and their father Jacob. From that time on, Jacob and all his sons, their wives and their children, stayed together in Egypt where they had more than enough food and land.

Do family break-ups always have a happy ending?

Jacob and all his sons were together again. How happy he must have been to have everyone safely together after what his family had been through over the years. Jacob had honored God, and God had kept His promise to bless him. Perhaps you know of a family that is not together anymore. Death, divorce, and living far from one another can scatter a family like pieces of a broken-up puzzle. God loves families and will always bless the family that honors Him. Whether family members are in one place or scattered all over the world, God can bless them wherever they are. Although God can bring families together that have been broken through divorce, He does not interfere with the decisions of a mother and father. He will not make people do something they don't want to, nor can He force people to love each other. There may not always be a happy ending for families here on earth, but a time is coming when all who believe will become one big family in Heaven—for ever and ever!

Today's Verse:

I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. John 14:18

February 14

Exodus 1:1-11

Blessings as God planned

As the years went by, Joseph and his brothers eventually died in Egypt. However, their children and grandchildren continued to live there and their descendants, the Israelites, became a strong nation. A new king had come to power in Egypt and he did not even know about Joseph. The king became worried and said, "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we:" So the Egyptians made them slaves. Yet, even though they tried to make the lives of the Israelites miserable, they only grew stronger and more in number.

Does God's blessing mean a life without difficulty?

God had made a promise to Abraham—to bless him and make his descendants a great nation. He had made the same promise to Abraham's son, Isaac, and to Isaac's son, Jacob. Now, Jacob's twelve sons had become such a great nation that the Egyptians became worried. And so the Egyptians forced them to be slaves so that they would never be able to rise up and conquer them. It doesn't seem fair, does it? Surely God's special favor includes His protection. Had God stopped blessing them? No, it was God's blessing that made the Egyptians worried in the first place. However, God's promise to them was not complete. He had promised them a certain country to live in, and they were not in that country yet. If things had continued to go well in Egypt, they would have had no reason to leave. Although you may only see a part of what God has promised, He may be using the struggles in your life to prepare the way for something even better later on.

Today's Verse:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Hebrews 11:13

February 15

Exodus 2:1-10

A baby on the river

When Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, realized that his plan to stop the Israelites from becoming powerful was failing, he ordered every Hebrew boy to be killed. A man and his wife who belonged to the tribe of Levi had a baby son. The mother was able to hide him for three months, but when she could not hide him any longer, she got a basket and coated it with tar. Then she put the baby in the basket and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the River Nile. When Pharaoh's daughter went down to the river to wash, she noticed the basket in the reeds and sent one of her slaves to get it. To her surprise she found the baby boy inside! His sister, who was standing nearby, quickly went up to the princess and asked if she should get one of the Hebrew women to look after him. Pharaoh's daughter replied, "Yes go." So she went to fetch her mother who nursed him. When the boy grew older she took him back to Pharaoh's daughter who named him Moses.

Did God know what I would be like before I was born?

You can find the answer in Psalm 139:14-16; "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. Isn't it wonderful that God could see you before you were even born? He could see you grow inside your mother and He formed you exactly the way He wanted you to be. God gave you your personality; He knew what your strong points would be as well as the things you would struggle with. God knew that Moses would be a great leader, and so He carefully worked in his life allowing some weaknesses that would make Moses depend on Him and be humble (Numbers 12:3). You may sometimes wish to be more perfect, yet God loves you just the way you are, because that is the way He formed you.

Today's Verse:

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.
Jeremiah 1:5

February 16

Exodus 2:11-15

A false start

When Moses had grown up, he went to see his own people, the Hebrews, who were working very hard. There he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave—one of his own people! Looking around, Moses saw no one watching so he killed the Egyptian and hid his body in the sand. The next day he went out to watch the Hebrews again. This time he saw two of his own people fighting. He said to the one, "Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?" The man replied, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian?" Moses was afraid because he realized that someone else knew what he had done. When Pharaoh heard what Moses had done, he tried to kill him, but Moses ran away and went to live in the land of Midian.

Should we defend someone who is being bullied?

God had planned for Moses to be the leader who would free His people from slavery. The Lord made sure that Moses got the best training and education in Egypt. One day, Moses decided that he was ready to start leading God's people, but he messed up because he went about it the wrong way. God had not finished preparing him. Moses still needed to learn to be completely obedient and to wait for God to lead him. It is always good to protect the weak from being teased and hurt. However, to do what Moses did is not the best way to stop a bully. It is always better to ask God for wisdom first. To help someone who is being bullied, start by staying close to him or her and be a loyal friend!

Today's Verse:

Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy. Proverbs 31:9

February 17

Exodus 2:16-25

Who is your master?

Moses had fled from Pharaoh and was sitting at a well when the seven daughters of Jethro came along to draw water for their flock. Other shepherds also arrived and drove the girls away, but Moses came to their rescue. When the girls' father heard about Moses, he invited him to stay and help look after the flock. Many years passed. During that time, the king of Egypt died. However, for the Israelites who were still slaves in Egypt, life didn't get any better. Yet, God heard their cries for help and remembered the promise He had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Can a slave ever be set free?

Moses, like his fellow Israelites, was a descendant of Jacob. Moses became a servant: his people worked as slaves. Moses could have been a slave too, or he could have been put to death as a baby, but God rescued him. Unlike a servant, a slave does not have a choice about who his master is, and he can never set himself free. His master owns him and forces him to work, giving him little or nothing in return. A slave has no rights and is usually treated very harshly. We are descendants of Adam, and because he sinned, we are born as slaves of the devil. He is a cruel master who only pays with pain, sadness and suffering because he has nothing else to offer. The good news is that Jesus can set us free from being slaves of the devil. When Jesus died for us He paid the price to buy us back. If you have asked Jesus to be your Lord and Master, you have been set free from the devil's control. You now belong to Jesus and, as a child in God's family, you are free to serve Him joyfully.

Today's Verse:

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house forever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. John 8:34-36.

February 18

Exodus 3:1-6

A burning bush

One day, Moses was looking after Jethro's sheep far out in the desert. While he was near a mountain called Sinai, he saw a bush burning. "This is strange," he thought. "The bush isn't burning up!" So he went closer to have a look. As Moses got closer, the Lord called to him, "Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I." Moses replied. "Do not come any closer," God said." Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Moses was afraid to look at God, so he covered his face.

What does holy mean?

When Moses heard the voice in the desert, he knew that it was God speaking to him. God does not often speak directly to people, and Moses was very afraid because his heart was sinful. Only God is holy. That is why it is difficult for us as sinful people to understand the full meaning of holiness. To be holy means to be without sin, completely pure and good. But holiness is much more than just being without sin. Holiness is also having a love so great that it cannot be measured (Romans 8:39), mercy that never ends (Luke 1:50), and faithfulness that never fails (Psalm 36:5). Yet, holiness is even more than that! Holiness is all that God is. God wants us to be like Him, and even though we will never be perfect here on earth, we can follow the example of Jesus by living like He did.

Today's Verse:

...Be ye holy; for I am holy. 1 Peter 1:16

February 19

Exodus 4:7-14

"I AM"

The Lord continued to speak to Moses from the burning bush in the desert. "I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt and have heard their cries," He said. "I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people out of Egypt." Moses replied. "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" "I will be with thee," God said to him. Moses realized that the Israelites might not be happy with him as their leader. So he said, "When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name?" And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

Can God be in the past, the present, and the future?

Do you look forward to the end of a long school day or to the end of the week? Do you sometimes think back to some fun things you've done with your friends, or wonder what you will be when you grow up? Everything in life has a beginning and an end, whether it is a day or a lifetime. We measure the time between the beginning and end of something in minutes or hours, in days or in years. It is hard for us to understand what it would be like not to have time. God uses the name 'I AM' to help us understand that He is in the past, the present and the future. God doesn't just see into the future, or travel back in time. He is in the past right now, He is everywhere at this very moment and He is in the future at this instant—all at the same time! He is always just there; that is why He calls Himself I AM.

Today's Verse: Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Hebrews 13:8

February 20

Exodus 4:10-16

Making excuses

After the Lord told Moses that He must free His people from slavery, Moses said, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." The Lord became angry with Moses. "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do."

How can I serve God with my weakness?

Moses was no longer as sure of himself as he had been when he lived in Pharaoh's palace. For the past forty years he had just been a shepherd looking after sheep and goats in the desert. By this time he probably felt rather unimportant and of little use. He told God that he wouldn't be able to speak to Pharaoh because he wasn't good at speaking. Are you afraid that God may ask you to do something big like He asked Moses to do? Maybe you have felt the Lord telling you to speak to someone who is older than you about His forgiveness and love. God doesn't expect you to do it in your own strength. In fact, He prefers using people who are unsure of their own ability because they rely on Him for everything: for strength, for wisdom, and for courage. The Lord shows His power best through those who are weak! Right now, you have all you need to be useful to God. You don't have to be perfect! All God wants is that you listen to His voice in your heart and obey.

Today's Verse: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Philippians 4:13

February 21

Exodus 4:18,27-31

Two can do it

Moses went back home to his father-in-law Jethro and told him that he was going to return to Egypt. Then he took his wife and his sons—and the special stick God had told him to take—and started on his journey. Meanwhile, the Lord had told Aaron to meet Moses in the desert. So Aaron met him at the holy mountain. There, Moses told his brother everything the Lord had said. Together, Moses and Aaron went to the leaders of the Israelites and told them that the Lord would free them from the Egyptians. After that, Moses did miracles as a sign of God's power, and the people believed them.

Should I trust God to help me do a task on my own, or should I ask others for help?

Sometimes God may tell you to do something He knows you can't do in your own strength. If He has promised to help you do a job on your own, He wants you to trust Him and not rely on others to make your task easier. However, at other times God wants us to work together with those whose strengths can help our weaknesses. Whenever we do something for God, we need to be humble; either by relying on God to use us in spite of our weaknesses, or by letting others help us and allowing them to share in the joy of serving God. Remember though, if we make excuses and expect God to use someone else to do the work, we cannot grow in our faith. God wants us to learn to depend on Him and also be willing to humbly work side by side with others.

Today's Verse: Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. 1 Corinthians 3:8.

February 22

Exodus 5:1-2, 11:1

The king says no!

Moses and his brother Aaron went to tell Pharaoh that God said he must let the Israelites go free. But Pharaoh simply said, no! He refused to let God's children go and made them work even harder. Then God sent many plagues to make the king realize who was in charge. He let the river turn to blood; He sent frogs, lice, flies, sickness, hail, locusts and other terrible things. Every time the curses only harmed the Egyptians and not the Israelites. After each plague, God gave Pharaoh a chance to let the Israelites go, but he was stubborn and refused. Finally, God said, "Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether."

Can a mighty king put a stop to God's plan?

Think of the most powerful king who ever ruled, or the greatest president who ever lived. With a single word or signature, powerful leaders can start or end a war. Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, could decide who should live and who should die. With the wave of his hand he could have a man killed, or let him live. Even if God did get rid of the king of Egypt, his army would still be far more powerful than the defenseless Israelites who had been slaves for over four hundred years. But Pharaoh forgot who was in control of his life; who controls the seasons, and who holds the whole universe in His hands. Foolishly he tried to challenge the One who makes the sun rise and set. It is God who decides when things will begin and when they will end, and it is He who decides who will rule.

Today's Verse:

And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: Daniel 2:21a

February 23

Exodus 12:1-7, 12-13

Blood on the doorpost

God told Moses; "In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it." "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you , when I smite the land of Egypt."

What is the Passover?

The word Passover describes how the Lord passed over the houses where the blood of the lamb had been sprinkled on the doorframes. Everyone inside a house where the blood had been sprinkled would be free from the curse of death. From that night on, God's people remembered the Passover night by having a Passover feast every year to honor the Lord. God told His people how they should prepare the feast and what they should eat. The lamb would remind them of how the blood protected them as the Lord passed over the houses. The bitter herbs would remind them of the bitterness and hardship they had faced as slaves. The bread made without yeast would remind them that there wasn't enough time to wait for the bread to rise as they made their escape from Egypt that night.

Today's Verse: And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever. Exodus 12:14

February 24

Exodus 12:29-36, 13:17-18

The great escape

On the night that God had told them about, the Israelite families put the blood of a goat or lamb on the doorposts and above the door. At midnight, the oldest son in every family and the first-born of every animal died, except in the houses where the angel of death saw the blood of the animal on the doorframe. There was loud crying all over Egypt when the Egyptians found that the oldest son in every family had died. Even the king's son was dead! Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, let the Israelites go and the Egyptian people gave the Israelites jewelry and gold because they were afraid that God would punish them even more.

How can the blood of a lamb save someone's life?

You may have heard how one person's blood can help save the life of another person by taking blood from one and letting it run through a thin pipe into the body of the other. But the blood of an animal is not the same as that of a person and the Israelites sprinkled the blood on the outside of the door! How could that keep someone inside the house from dying? The Israelites believed God and they were obedient. They did not understand or question why they had to put blood around their doors. By faith they simply obeyed and were saved! Looking back, we can see that this is a perfect picture of Jesus, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). He came to earth to die in our place and let His blood flow for us. When, by faith, you ask Jesus to cleanse your heart from every sin, you will be saved! (1John 1:9).

Today's Verse: Through faith he (Moses) kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. Hebrews 11:28

February 25

Exodus 14:8-14

The Egyptians are coming

The Israelites were well on their way when they got to a place where the Red Sea stretched out in front of them. The problem was how they would get across to the other side. Suddenly someone noticed a cloud of dust in the distance. Pharaoh had changed his mind about letting the Israelites go and was sending his army after them. The Israelites started to panic. "What now, Moses?" they cried. "For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness." With the sea on the one side, mountains on the other and an army behind them, there seemed to be no way of escape! Then Moses said, "The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

What must I do when I am cornered?

In a disaster such as a fire, a flood or an earthquake, people are sometimes trapped under rubble, unable to escape the approaching flames or the rising water. Being trapped is very scary! Can you imagine being cornered by a vicious, snarling dog! Maybe you have had a bad experience—a time when you were really scared. Maybe someone hurt you and you couldn't get away because the person was stronger than you. If you are ever trapped and you can't get away from danger, call out to the Lord and He will rescue you and help you. Maybe you have had a bad experience that still makes you afraid and gives you bad dreams. Tell your mom or dad about your fears; then pray that God will take those thoughts away and give you His peace.

Today's Verse: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Psalm 50:15.

February 26

Exodus 14:15-22

A wall of water

The Lord told Moses to stretch out his special stick towards the sea. Immediately, a strong wind started blowing from the east, and the sea divided, making a path right across from the one side to the other. Meanwhile, the angel of the Lord went behind the Israelites and caused a pillar of cloud and fire to make it dark on the side where the Egyptians were, but to give light to the Israelites. While the Egyptians were struggling to see where they were going, the Israelites were safely walking across the Red Sea on dry ground.

Will God make a path through water if I ask Him to?

A trickle of water from a dripping tap slowly twists and turns down a pathway like a little river. An ant stops just as the water passes in front of it. The ant cannot walk or swim across the flowing water. How easy would it be for you to help the ant get to the other side? Of course it would be easy for you to help the ant. You could lift the ant across, turn off the tap, or block the flow of water with your hand. God can easily make a path through the sea. He can do whatever He chooses to do, but He will not just do anything and everything people ask Him to do. Even Jesus—who did amazing miracles like healing a blind man—did everything for a good reason. He knew that things like jumping off a tower and expecting angels to catch you are foolish (Luke 4:9-12). However, if you are in trouble and you pray for God's help, He will hear and answer you, but He may not answer in the way you expected Him to. Sometimes God answers our prayers in very ordinary ways.

Today's Verse: And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Luke 4:12

February 27

Exodus 15:1-5, 20-21

Giving thanks

When all the Israelites had passed through the sea on dry ground, the Egyptians chased after them with their horses and chariots. But the Lord made the wheels of their chariots get stuck, and the Egyptians panicked. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. Moses obeyed the Lord, and the great walls of water on either side came crashing down on the Egyptians and drowned every single one. When God's people saw how He had saved them in such a wonderful way, they sang songs of praises and gave thanks.

What is the difference between thanking God and praising God?

When your mom or dad gives you something you have wanted for a long time, or when they have done something very special for you, you are thankful and you may give them a big hug. When you tell your mom that she is the best cook in the whole world, you are praising her. Or you may tell a friend how you admire your dad for his strength because he can lift you off the ground with one arm. You can thank God for a prayer He has answered, or for the things He does for you every day. You can praise the Lord by telling Him how great He is, or by telling others of His awesome power and unfailing love. You can thank and praise God with words, or with songs, or even by dancing like Miriam did.

Today's Verse: Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. Psalm 100:4

February 28

Exodus 15:22-25

Bitter water

After the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea, Moses led them into the desert of Shur. They had been walking for three days but had not found a drop of water. They came to place called Marah, but the water there was so bitter that they could not drink it. Everyone started complaining. "What shall we drink?" they asked. So Moses prayed to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw the wood into the bitter water and the water became fresh and sparkling.

How can a piece of wood change the taste of water?

Do you think that the piece of wood Moses threw into the water was special in some way; that it flavored the water or sucked up the bitter taste like a sponge? That piece of wood was probably like any other you would find lying in the desert. So, what made the piece of wood so special? The wood was not special at all—God made the bitter water fresh! Problems like the Israelites faced, and the problems we face, remind us how much we need to rely on God. The Lord wants us to ask Him for help and trust Him to do the impossible. Being obedient, even when we need to do something that doesn't make sense, shows that we are willing to trust God without wanting to know the reason for doing it. God is still making bitter things sweet; He can take away our angry thoughts and bitter feelings and put the sweetness of His peace in our hearts. He does this through the Holy Spirit who is the spring of living water that flows with love from each one who is born again (John 4:10-14).

Today's Verse: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Hebrews 12:15

February 29

Exodus 16:1-6, 13-15

Bread from Heaven

The Israelites had only been in the desert for a few weeks, when they started complaining to Moses. "Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily."

What is manna?

What do you think manna is? Not sure? Well, neither were the Israelites. That's where the name comes from: manna actually means, 'what is it?' The first morning that God sent manna from heaven, people woke up to find white 'stuff' lying on the ground. It was food sent from God to feed all the people. All they needed to do was to gather it. Many years later, when Jesus came to earth, He said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger;..." (John 6:35). What Jesus was saying is that we can only have eternal life by letting Him live in us and become a part of us like the bread we eat. When Jesus comes to live in us, He fills the emptiness inside us. And when we are filled with His goodness, we lose our appetite for what the devil tries to offer us.

Today's Verse: Jesus said... As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever." John 6:57-58

