

March 1

Exodus 17:1-7

Water from a rock?

The Israelites had grumbled against the Lord in a place called the Desert of Sin. They had also disobeyed the Lord by keeping some extra manna for the next day instead of trusting God to give them fresh food every day. Once again the people became thirsty because they had found no water. They said to Moses, "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" Then Moses prayed to the Lord and the Lord said to him, "Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel."

How can a rock give water?

If you had to squeeze a raw potato really hard, you may get a few drops of water from it; but water from a rock? That sounds impossible! But with God, nothing is impossible! God loves doing things in unusual and unexpected ways. We don't know how the water got into the big rock; whether God had been storing it up over a long time, like water that is stored under the ground, or if He created the water from nothing. God had done it before when He created the world, so why should it have been any harder for Him this time? Either way, Moses could have gone around striking rocks in the desert for years and not found a single drop of water. Yet God showed him exactly which rock to strike, and when he struck it, there was enough water for thousands of people and their animals. Jesus, the Rock, gives us the life-giving water of the Holy Spirit. Everyone is invited to drink freely from Him (John 4:13-14).

Today's Verse: And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:4

March 2

Exodus 18:13-23

Good advice from dad

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, heard about everything God had done for the people of Israel, so he came to see Moses. He watched Moses being kept busy from morning till night trying to settle all the quarrels and disagreements the people had. "Why are you doing this on your own?" he asked Moses. "You will wear yourself out! I have to help these people with their problems. They need to know God's rules and laws," Moses replied. Then Jethro said, "Take some leaders you can trust and teach them God's rules. Let them rule over different groups of people." So Moses did what Jethro told him. From then on, Moses only judged the very difficult matters. And Jethro returned to his own country.

How do great leaders get all their work done?

Have you ever wondered how a leader gets all his work done? Think of all the things that go on at your church. How can a Pastor do everything and be everywhere at the same time? He can't! You may have noticed that many people help in different ways, like welcoming people, teaching children, or singing in a group. Others do things that no one ever sees, like sending out letters or cleaning the church. Even Jesus had a group of disciples that helped Him in different ways. You can learn to be a good helper by doing things that will make life a little easier for your mom or dad.

Today's Verse:

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Luke 6:13

March 3

Exodus 19:1-8, 18-21

Mount Sinai

In the third month of their journey through the desert, the Israelites set up camp at the foot of Mount Sinai while Moses went up the mountain to meet with God. The Lord said to Moses, "Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:" On the day that the Lord said He would come, there was thunder and lightning on the mountain, and a loud trumpet was heard. The whole mountain was covered with smoke. God spoke to Moses and told him to come up and meet with Him. So Moses went up and disappeared in the thick smoke.

Can people really meet with God?

God is so big that the whole mountain was covered with His glory. The people were not allowed to come near the mountain. If they even put a foot across the line that Moses had marked off, they would die. Everyone had to get ready to meet God by doing certain things and by not doing certain other things. When we go to church to meet with God, it can also be an awesome experience for us if we prepare our hearts properly. If we are casual about meeting with God and there is sin in our hearts, we cannot get near to Him to see His greatness. But when our hearts are clean and we are ready to worship Him with gladness, we can sense His closeness and become aware of His glory. We can come right into God's presence because of what Jesus has done (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Today's Verse: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16

March 4

Exodus 20:1-17, 24:12, 32:15-16

God's rules

After Moses had gone back down the mountain to tell everyone what God had told him, God again called Moses to come up the mountain to meet with Him. God said, "I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them." So Moses went up Mount Sinai, which was still covered by a cloud, and stayed on the mountain for forty days.

What is a commandment?

A commandment is an instruction from God. He has given us ten very important rules for life—rules to guard our relationship with Him, and rules that guard our relationships with others. This is what God's ten rules mean:

1. You must only worship the true God.
2. Do not let anything take God's place in your heart.
3. Do not use the Lord's name thoughtlessly or as a swear word.
4. Keep the Lord's Day just for Him and let it be a day of rest.
5. Respect and obey your parents.
6. Do not take someone else's life.
7. Be loyal to the person you are married to.
8. Do not take something that does not belong to you.
9. Do not say anything untrue about someone else.
10. Do not long for the things others have.

These rules weren't given to us to make life difficult. God gave us the Ten Commandments to keep our lives peaceful, safe and happy. By keeping the commandments we honor God and respect others.

Today's Verse: With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Psalm 119:10

March 5

Exodus 25:1-9

The Tabernacle (Holy Tent)

Moses stayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights, and the Lord told him many important things. The Israelites camping at the bottom of Mount Sinai had seen a dazzling light come down on the mountain. Now it was covered with cloud. The Lord said to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,

Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" Then the Lord told Moses what the people could bring as an offering and explained to him exactly how the Tent should be built.

Can God fit into a tent?

God wanted to be close to His people as they wandered through the desert. He wanted to meet with His people just as He had met with Adam in the Garden of Eden before Adam sinned. The sin in Adam became like a wall between him and God. Because of sin, people would never be able to go in and out of the Tent to meet God face to face. A special curtain in the Tent separated the people from God. Yet, God allowed the High Priest to go into the very Holy Place behind the curtain once a year to ask for forgiveness for himself and for the nation. If God is bigger than the whole universe, how could He get down into a tent to be close to His people? (1 Kings 8:27). Just as an artist does not become part of his painting, so God does not have to get inside His own creation in a physical way. He can be everywhere and in one place at the same time! What is even more amazing is that God, through the Holy Spirit, comes to live inside every person who believes in Jesus!

Today's Verse: For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Isaiah 57:15

March 6

Exodus 25:10,11,16,30

The Covenant

Inside the Holy Tent, where God would meet with the people of Israel, there was to be a holy ark. The Lord told Moses exactly how big it should be and what it should look like. It was to be made of acacia wood and covered with gold on the inside and the outside. It was to have rings on the sides through which poles would go to carry it. Moses was told to put the stone tablets—on which the commandments were written—inside the Covenant Box.

How can I remember all God's rules?

Do you sometimes have trouble remembering things? God knows how easily we forget rules and instructions, especially a whole long list of them. That is why God wrote the commandments on stone tablets that would last a long, long time. And, to make sure that the tablets would not be lost or forgotten somewhere, He told Moses to put them safely inside the Covenant Box. However, now the people wouldn't be able to read the commandments to make sure they were following them. So Moses told the parents to teach the commands to their children. He also told them to write the commandments on their doorposts; to wear them on their foreheads, and to tie them around their arms, so they would never forget a single command (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). An even better way of remembering God's rules (and doing them), is to write the commandments in your heart. That means, if your heart wants to please the Lord, the Ten Commandments become just two: Love the Lord with all your heart and love others as you love yourself (Matthew 22:37-40). Now that is a lot easier to remember!

Today's Verse: Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Psalm 119:11

March 7

Exodus 27:1-8, 38:1

The altar

The Lord told Moses about all the other things that must be inside the Holy Tent and in the courtyard that surrounded it. God said, "And thou shalt make an altar of shittim wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits." Moses did what the Lord told him to do and had the altar made exactly as the Lord had said.

Do we still have altars today?

An altar was used for all the offerings that were made to the Lord (see Leviticus 1-5). It was made of wood or big stones, and a fire would be made on top of it. Although there were different kinds of offerings that could be made, it was the only place where people could offer an animal to God for their sin. The animal would be killed and laid on the altar as a sign that the sin had been paid for by death and blood. This sign was pointing to Jesus who would come to earth to lay down His life, once and for all, and die for every sin in the world. Because the blood of Jesus washes every sin from our hearts (1 John 1:7), we no longer need to sacrifice animals for the forgiveness of our sins, and so we don't need an altar (see Hebrews 10:1-7). Once we are forgiven, the good we do and the good words we say become our sacrifice—a sacrifice of praise that God will accept because Jesus has made us pure (Hebrews 13:15-16).

Today's Verse: Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 1Peter 2:5

March 8

Exodus 32:1-4, 15-19

The golden calf

Moses had been up on Mount Sinai for a long time and the people in the camp below were becoming impatient. They said to Aaron, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us;" So Aaron told the people to take off the golden earrings they had received from the Egyptians and he melted the gold. Then he formed it into the shape of a calf. As Moses was coming down from the mountain he saw the people worshipping the calf. He was so furious that he smashed the stone tablets the Lord had given him. When he got to the camp, he melted the golden calf, ground the gold into a fine powder and mixed it with the drinking water.

What is idolatry?

Isn't this one of the silliest things you've ever heard? These people made a statue of a calf and actually believed that it had led them out of Egypt! Although they had made the calf themselves, they respected it as though it had become greater than them. The calf became their idol! Idolatry means worshiping or believing in things instead of in God. Do you remember the second commandment? Look up Exodus 20:2-5 and read it again. Even though you probably don't have idols in your room and you don't bow down to things in nature, there is a danger of other things creeping into your heart; things that become so important that you think about them all the time. Be careful that the things you have, or long for, don't take God's place in your heart.

Today's Verse:

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Exodus 20:3

March 9

Exodus 34:1, 29-35

Shining for the Lord

Moses went up the mountain again; this time to get another set of commandments. In anger, he had smashed the first set when he saw the Israelites worshipping the golden calf. Moses chiseled out two stone tablets, like the first ones, and took them up the mountain for God to write on. When he got back, his face glowed brightly because he had been so close to the Lord. When the people saw his face, they were afraid to go near him. But Moses was not aware that his face was shining and he called them closer. First, Aaron and the leaders went to him, then the others gathered around, and Moses gave them the laws the Lord had given him on the mountain.

How can I shine for Jesus?

If you have a glow-in-the-dark sticker or a watch with glowing hands, you would probably have noticed that when you hold it right next to the light before you turn the light off, it shines a lot brighter. After a while, it loses its glow, and by morning it is rather dim. Moses had been with God for such a long time that his face began to shine. Every time he met with God, his face shone so brightly that he had to cover it with a cloth. We know that God is so pure and holy that we cannot look at Him and live (Exodus 33:20). So, whenever God would speak to someone, He would shield them so they would not see His face. The more time we spend reading the Bible and praying, the more we allow God's light to shine in our hearts (2 Corinthians 4:6). The more we are in God's presence, the more brightly we will shine for Him—not like an ordinary light, but with the beauty and purity of God.

Today's Verse: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

March 10

Exodus 35:10, 30-35

Craftsmen needed

Moses said to the people of Israel, "And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the LORD hath commanded; he tabernacle, his tent,..." Then God chose a man from the tribe of Judah and gave him the skill, ability and understanding to do every kind of work. The Lord also gave him a helper from the tribe of Dan to teach their crafts to others. So Bezalel, and his helper, Oholiab, got the list of instructions from Moses and started working.

How can I use my talents for God?

God has given each of us talents and abilities to do certain things well. Even if others have the same talent you have, your talent is special because you are unique—with different strengths and weaknesses; likes and dislikes. The way you were brought up, the help and encouragement you get from others, and even the hardships in your life, can help to develop abilities you may not even know you had. If you are wondering whether God could actually use your abilities, remember that He made you the way He wanted you to be. He put everything inside you that you will ever need to please Him. God is not waiting for you to be perfect, He wants to use you right now—just the way you are. And, in case you thought you don't have a talent; whatever you are good at is your God-given talent. Use your abilities for His glory. Humbly honor God when you are praised and look for ways to help and encourage others.

Today's Verse: For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

March 11

Exodus 36:2-7

More than enough

Now that Moses was back, and the Israelites had seen God's awesome power, they realized that it had been a bad idea to make the golden calf. God was giving them another chance to show their love for Him by letting them bring gifts that would be used to build the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle would be a special place where God would meet with them—right in their camp! The people were so excited that they brought piles and piles of stuff: there was a pile for gold, a pile for silver, a pile for fine linen. Eventually there was so much that Moses had to tell everyone to stop bringing things. (The full list of things people brought is in Exodus 25:1-7).

Can I also give something to God's work?

God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). God loves it when we give freely, without feeling that we have to give something to stay in His 'good books'. Remember how the wise men traveled a long way to take beautiful gifts to Jesus the King of kings (Matthew 2:11). They did not just send a few gifts with someone traveling that way. They wanted to take the gifts themselves. When we give to God, we should become part of the gift by giving of ourselves, our time, and perhaps even some of our hard earned pocket money. God can use whatever we give when we give with a heart of joy. By giving to God, we worship Him and show Him our love. Remember, Jesus sees even the smallest love-gift you give.

Today's Verse:

And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:. Mark 12:42-43

March 12

Exodus 40:16-17, 34-38

The Lord lives with His people

At the beginning of the second year after the Israelites left Egypt, the Tent of the Lord was ready. The stone tablets were put in the Covenant Box, the table and the lampstand were put in the Tent and the curtain that kept the people from the holy presence of God was hung across the front of the Tent. When everything was in place, a cloud covered the Tent and the dazzling light of God's presence filled it.

Why is there no cloud in church?

In a way, the Holy Tent was like a church building today. It was a special place where God would meet with ordinary people in a close way. It was a place where people could come to worship God, ask for forgiveness at the altar, and bring an offering of thanks to God. It reminded people that the Lord is always close to us and that He is very real! Through Jesus, God is in every place where even a few people are gathered together in His Name (Matthew 18:20). A church is a group of people who believe in God and have come together to worship Him. You may be wondering why we don't see the bright light of God's presence in church, or a cloud covering the church building. Before Jesus left the earth to go back to His Father in heaven, He told His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to help them, to comfort them and to guide them. Forty days later the Holy Spirit came down and filled every believer. When a person becomes a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit fills him or her. In other words, God now lives inside every believer and we are now His Tent (or Temple).

Today's Verse:

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?1

Corinthians 6:19

March 13

Numbers 9:15-23

The pillar of cloud and fire

The cloud that covered the Tent of the Lord was a sign to the Israelites that the Lord was with them. When it was dark, the cloud was like a fire above the Tent. The Israelites did not carry on walking when the cloud stopped over the Tent. But when the cloud lifted and started moving, the Israelites would follow it. And wherever the cloud stopped, the Israelites would set up their camp. Sometimes the cloud would stay over the Tent for only a day or two and sometimes it stayed for a whole year or even longer.

How does the Lord guide us?

The cloud of God's presence showed the Israelites when to walk, when to stop and where to go. The dark cloud guided them during the day and the fiery cloud guided them at night. The Israelites had a cloud to guide them, but how can you know the way God wants you to go when you need to make a difficult and important decision and you don't know what to do? When you ask Jesus to save you and you keep following Him, the Holy Spirit who lives inside you guides you in a very special way. He puts good thoughts in your mind. He lets your heart feel peaceful when you obey Him, or He lets your conscience feel uneasy when you are going the wrong way. But relying only on feelings can sometimes be confusing. That is why God has given us the Bible as a light to guide us when the way ahead seems dark and unclear.

Today's Verse:

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3:5-6

March 14

Numbers 13:1-2, 25-31

The spies

At this stage, the Israelites were very close to Canaan—the land the Lord had promised them. The Lord said to Moses, "Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them." So Moses did what the Lord said and chose twelve spies. He told them to find out what the country was like, how many people lived there, and how strong they were. Then he sent them to go spy out the land. After forty days, the spies came back carrying large bunches of grapes and other fruit. They told Moses that there were cities with high walls and very big people living there. Of the twelve spies, only Joshua and Caleb trusted God and said that they had nothing to fear because God was on their side.

If God can see everywhere, why does He need spies?

God did not need spies in order to get information about the people or the land He had created and cared for. God knew exactly how many grains of sand were in the Promised Land and how many hairs were on the head of each person living there. If God did not need to find out more about the people there, why did He tell Moses to send spies to go find out about them? Do you think that Moses and the others needed to know what they were up against? God wanted to see whether the Israelites believed that He was able to give them what He had promised. From what the spies said, the Israelites knew that the future would not be easy. Would they trust God enough to face the challenge of conquering the land? Joshua and Caleb passed the test of faith by trusting God; the other spies failed and caused the whole nation to doubt God.

Today's Verse:

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or not. Deuteronomy 8:2

March 15

Numbers 20:1-13

Moses gets it wrong again

Moses was as disappointed as Joshua and Caleb were that God was sending the Israelites back into the desert instead of letting them go into the Promised Land. The Israelites would have to spend forty years in the desert as punishment for their unbelief! What made things worse for Moses was that the people were always complaining. This time they were in the Desert of Zin. "Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink." they moaned. Then Moses and Aaron went to the Holy Tent to meet with God. God told Moses to speak to a certain rock, and water would come from it. So Moses took his stick and had everybody gather around the rock. "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Then Moses struck the rock with his stick and water gushed out. But the Lord was not pleased with Moses because he did not honor Him by speaking to the rock.

How can I control my temper?

We all have bad days; days when everything goes wrong, when we are disappointed, when others annoy us and when we are very tired. Our sinful nature takes advantage of our weakness. We feel like shouting at everyone and throwing things around. When you feel that way:

- Allow the Holy Spirit to control you instead of letting your feelings decide how you will react.
- Don't let angry feelings pile up inside. Find good ways to let angry feelings come out in a controlled way—for example, by telling someone why you feel angry or by using up your emotional energy by being physically active.
- Ask the Lord to give you peace and help you feel calm inside. Then pray that He will fill your heart with His love.

Today's Verse:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: James 1:19

March 16

Numbers 21:4-9

The bronze snake

The Israelites would have to live in the desert many years—until all those who had complained and grumbled against the Lord had died. Only their children would be allowed to go into the Promised Land (Numbers 14:31-32). Yet, even while they were on their way from Mount Hor to the area of Edom, the people started complaining again. So God put poisonous snakes among the people and many Israelites were bitten and died. The people realized that they had sinned against the Lord and asked Moses to pray for them. Then God said to Moses "Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze snake and lifted it up on a pole. And all those who obeyed God and looked up at the snake were healed.

Why did God make snakes?

Are you scared of snakes? Imagine creeping into a tent on a dark night and putting your hand on something soft and slithery. Snakes, like other dangerous animals, are all a part of God's creation. Before Adam and Eve sinned, there was no danger and no death. Eve wasn't even afraid of a snake! Sin changed that. The day Adam and Eve sinned, God cursed the snake and said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Genesis 3:14-15). For the Israelites, the snake had again become a sign of death—the punishment for disobedience and rebellion. Only Jesus could come and make things the way they were meant to be on earth—a place of safety and peace where children would play near snakes (Isaiah 11:8). Many years later Jesus did come, and He was lifted up on a cross to die and to bring healing to all those who look to Him.

Today's Verse: And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:14-15

March 17

Numbers 22:22-31

God uses a donkey

The Israelites eventually moved to the valley of Moab. When the king of Moab heard how God had helped the Israelites defeat the Amorite army, he was terrified. So he sent messengers to fetch Balaam to curse the Israelite nation. At first, God told Balaam not to go with them. Later, when the king sent more messengers, the Lord told Balaam to go with them but to only do what He told him to. The next day Balaam left with them, but God was angry with him. On the way, the angel of the Lord stood in front of the donkey that Balaam was riding on. When the donkey ran into the field, Balaam lost his temper and beat it. But the angel moved on ahead and stood in a place where the path narrowed. The donkey saw the angel and lay down, so Balaam beat it again. This time, the Lord made the donkey speak to Balaam. "What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?" the donkey said. Then the Lord let Balaam see the angel standing in the road with his sword. So Balaam fell with his face to the ground.

Can a donkey really speak?

Balaam did not listen to God; perhaps he would listen to his donkey! Balaam's selfish heart was leading him—not his desire to do what God wanted. We know this because God was very angry when Balaam left with the messengers. Although a donkey cannot speak, God used the donkey's voice to speak to Balaam. God wanted to warn Balaam before his stubborn heart got him into big trouble. Sometimes we may hear God speaking to us through the Bible or by the voice of the Holy Spirit inside us, but our hearts want to do something else, and so we pretend not to hear. Balaam was tempted to curse the Israelites because the king had offered him a big reward, but God stopped him in his tracks! Learn to listen patiently and carefully to what God is saying so that the voice of His Spirit in your heart is not drowned out by other voices telling you what to do.

Today's Verse:

And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out. Luke 19:40

March 18

Numbers 22:34-38, 23:1-8

Bless you!

The angel of the Lord stopped Balaam while he was on his way to the king of Moab. He said to Balaam, "Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak." So Balaam went with them to meet King Balak. When Balaam got there, he told the king that he would only speak the words God put in his mouth. The next morning, the king took Balaam to a place where he could see the people of Israel. Balaam went alone to the top of a hill where the Lord told him what to say. Then Balaam went back down to the king. Put a curse on the Israelites now! the king demanded. But instead, Balaam started to speak words of blessing on God's people!

Can the words we say really bless someone?

Sometimes people say, "Bless you!" and you may wonder if those words really mean anything, or if it is just a nice thing to say. One thing is sure; words are very powerful and can even change someone's life. When we say "bless you" (and mean it), we are actually asking God to bless that person, because only He can send real blessing into someone's life. God's blessing is His special favor and kindness. It is also His protection and a feeling of closeness to Him. God loves to bless people because He is good and kind (Psalm 145:9). Just as bad, unkind words can hurt and bring misery to people, so words of blessing can be an encouragement and can heal sad and lonely hearts. You can go around spreading as many blessings as you want because God's supply of blessings will never run out!

Today's Verse: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: Ephesians 1:3

March 19

Deuteronomy 31:1-3, 34:5-6

Moses hands over to Joshua

Moses was now one hundred and twenty years old. He called everyone together and said to them, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Moses also told the Israelites that he would no longer be their leader. Joshua would become the one to lead them into the Promised Land. Then Moses went to the top of a high mountain where God showed him the land He had chosen for His people. Yet, Moses himself was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land because he had disobeyed God by striking the rock instead of speaking to it. Moses died in the land of Moab and the Lord buried him there.

Does God know when I will die?

God knows exactly how many days each of us will live here on earth. Does it seem a bit scary to know that there is a certain day on which you will die and there is nothing that can change that? On the other hand, isn't it comforting to know that nothing and no one can take your life before that time—that you are completely safe in God's hands! It is also comforting that God Himself will be there to take us to be with Him, right into His presence where we will be safe and happy forever. For those who believe in Jesus and have been saved from sin, death is not the end! If you read Matthew 17:1-3, you will see that Moses was actually talking to Jesus hundreds of years later, when Jesus was on earth. Moses did not have his human body anymore. He had received a different kind of body; one that never gets old and will never die (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Today's Verse: 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. Psalm 139:16

March 20

Joshua 1:1-2, 12-18

Honoring the new leader

After Moses had died, the Lord spoke to Joshua. "Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel." Now while Moses was their leader, two tribes had asked if they could settle on the east side of the Jordan River rather than cross into the Promised Land (Numbers 32:15-25). Moses told them that if they helped the other tribes conquer the enemy in Canaan, they could return to their homes on the east side of the river. So Joshua said to the two tribes, "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land." Then they said to Joshua, "All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go."

For how long must I keep a promise?

If you want someone to be sure that you will do what you said you would, simply tell the person that you will do it. If you are known as a person who can be trusted, that is enough. Always be someone who can be trusted and counted on to keep your word. If you do make a promise, be sure that you are able to do what you promised. If your promise depends on good weather, someone else's help, or Mom's permission—don't promise! You should rather say, I will do my best, or, as soon as I can, or, if I am allowed to. Always keep a promise because a kept promise shows your honor; a broken promise becomes a lie. If it is worth making a promise, it is worth keeping it.

Today's Verse: But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. Matthew 5:37

March 21

Joshua 2:1-7

Two spies risk their lives

The first city that the Israelites would have to conquer in the land of Canaan was the city of Jericho. Joshua sent spies to secretly explore the land and the city of Jericho. The two spies managed to get right inside the city without being noticed. There, they found a woman who was willing to let them stay for the night. Somehow the king found out that the spies were staying with Rahab and sent his soldiers to arrest them. Meanwhile, Rahab had hidden the spies under a pile of flax stalks. When the soldiers knocked on Rahab's door asking about the men, she told them that some men had been there earlier, but that they had left the city before sunset. When the king's men heard that, they rushed out of the city to go track down the spies.

Can I be a spy for God one day?

Have you ever spied on someone? It can be a lot of fun to watch people going about their work not knowing that someone is watching them. God may not need you to be a spy for Him, but He does have an equally daring assignment for you: to go right into the enemy's territory and tell others about Him. The people out there are not the enemy though; God's enemy cannot be seen! The enemy is the devil, who goes around spreading all sorts of evil. He sows doubts in the minds of people and scatters despair in their hearts. Everywhere he goes he leaves misery and sadness. But you can bring hope to those who don't know Jesus by telling them about His love for them. Jesus will forgive their sins and give them new hope. He will be their very best friend, forever!

Today's Verse: And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 2 Corinthians 9:8

March 22

Joshua 2:8-21

The great escape

The king of Jericho had his men looking all over the countryside for the Israelite spies who were still hiding under the pile of drying flax on the roof of Rahab's house. Then Rahab went up and said to them, "or we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house..." The spies said to her, "Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by." This was to be the sign to not harm Rahab and her family. Then Rahab, whose house was built into the wall surrounding the city, helped the spies escape by letting them down the outside of the wall with a long rope.

Is believing in God all I must do to be saved?

It took a lot of courage for Rahab to hide the spies in her house. She was willing to risk her life because she had heard about the great things God had done for the Israelites. She believed that their God is the only true God. Rahab not only believed—she acted. She showed that her faith was real. By tying the red ribbon to her window, she showed that she believed her life would be spared (see Hebrews 11:31). Although Rahab believed in God, it was the red cord that saved her. Even though we believe in God, it is the blood of Jesus that saves us. Merely believing that God exists will not save us just as Rahab's belief alone would not have saved her. She had to do something: she had to tie the red cord where it could be seen. There is only one way we can be saved from the destruction of sin: by asking Jesus to forgive us, thereby placing the sign of His precious blood on our hearts.

Today's Verse: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Romans 10:10

March 23

Joshua 3:9-17, 4:1-7

Crossing the river

After hiding in the countryside for three days, the men that had spied on the city of Jericho returned to Joshua. Then the Lord said to Joshua, "And thou shalt command the priests that bear the Ark of the Covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan." The priests did what the Lord said, and when they stepped into the Jordan River, the water stopped flowing and everyone walked across on dry ground. When everybody was safely across on the other side, the Lord said, "Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night. That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones?" So the twelve men took the stones they had carried from the dry river bed and placed them on a pile on the other side.

How can I remember all the great things God has done for me?

Has God answered a prayer of yours in an unusual way? Has He shown you His faithfulness at a time when you really needed Him to help you? If we don't remember the times when God has done amazing things in our lives, we may become like the Israelites who forgot how God had made a way for them through the Red Sea when Pharaoh's army was right behind them. Once again, God opened a way for the Israelites; however this time, they made a big pile of stones that would remind them of His faithfulness. One way in which you can remember God's answers to your prayers, and the promises He has given you, is to write down what happened and the date on which it happened. You could also add verses from the Bible that became especially meaningful to you at the time. Write them in a journal or in the back of your Bible.

Today's Verse: Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Colossians 4:2

March 24

Joshua 6:8-21

The strong walls of Jericho

At last the Israelites were in the Promised Land! But their troubles were not over yet. They had to face the people living there and conquer them. The gates of Jericho were kept shut and guarded, and the wall around the city was very high. Then God said to Joshua, "See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor" The Lord told Joshua exactly what to do. So on the first day, the people walked around the city once. The priest carrying the Ark of the Covenant followed the priest blowing the trumpets. They marched around the city once every day for six days. On the seventh day, they marched around the city seven times. On the seventh time around, Joshua ordered the people to shout and the priests to blow their trumpets—and the wall collapsed! Then the Israelites went up into the city and took it.

Can God make my "big wall" come down?

Do you have a problem in your life that seems to be like a huge wall? Maybe it is there all the time—wherever you go; whatever you do, the same wall blocks your way. Life is not a smooth highway. There will always be ups and downs, bumps in the road and unexpected turns. Jesus did not promise us an easy, trouble-free life (Luke 9:23). Although problems usually help us to grow stronger in our faith, some may be so big that we cannot climb over them or get around them. They don't seem to go away, no matter what we do. Only God can break down the walls in your life that are keeping you from doing your best and growing in your relationship with Him. Ask Him to break down the wall that is holding you back; trust Him, and then do what He tells you to.

Today's Verse:

...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. John 16:33b

March 25

Joshua 7:1-7, 20-21

Sin in the camp

The city of Jericho lay in ruins! Joshua had told the people of Israel not to take anything from the city: they were not to keep a single thing for themselves. However, one man disobeyed the Lord's instruction. He secretly took a beautiful coat, some silver and a bar of gold, and buried them in his tent. Joshua did not know that Achan had taken the treasures and hidden them. He sent some soldiers to the nearby city of Ai to attack it. Yet even though it was only a small city, the Israelite army was defeated and chased back. The Israelites lost their courage and were afraid. When Joshua prayed and asked the Lord why He had let them be defeated, God told him that Israel had sinned.

Why were others punished when only one person disobeyed?

Has your whole class ever been punished for making a noise, and you weren't even talking? It seems so unfair that everyone has to suffer just because one or two break the rules and don't care about others. God had given the Israelites a strict order not to take anything from the city. To Achan, it seemed such a waste to leave the gold and silver behind, and besides, if he didn't take it, someone else was bound to take it. Yet his disobedience cost him his life and the lives of many Israelites who were killed in battle. It is unfair that the innocent suffer because of others; but remember, the devil who encourages disobedience never plays fair. Because God is absolutely holy, He cannot just overlook sin as though it doesn't matter. He also cannot bless His people in a powerful way when there is unforgiven sin in their lives; and where God's power cannot work, there is defeat!

Today's Verse:

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.. Psalm 139:23-24

March 26

Joshua 8:1, 11-20

Victory!

Achan, whose sin had caused the Israelite army to be defeated, was punished by death. Now that the sin of disobedience had been dealt with, God could bless the Israelites again. God said to Joshua, "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai: see, I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land:" The next day, Joshua sent his best fighting men behind the city where they could not be seen. The rest of the army went towards the gates as if they were going to attack. When the king's men came out to fight them, the Israelite army started running away as they had done the first time. All the men of Ai chased after them and left the city gates wide open. Then the Israelites, who had been hiding, ran into the city and set it on fire. Now, the men of Ai could not flee back to the safety of their city. So Joshua's men turned around to attack them from the front, while the other soldiers came and attacked from behind, and the men of Ai were defeated.

How can I have victory over temptations around me?

When you are on God's side, you are on the winning side! The devil can never ever win against God. Jesus conquered the devil, once and for all, when He died on the cross for all our sins in the past and all the wrong things we still do. But that doesn't mean that our daily struggle against sin is over. It is up to you to win over the temptations in your life. Here are a few things to help you be a winner: • Pray every morning for God's help and for His protection from evil (Matthew 6:13). • Don't go to places where you will be tempted more easily. • Don't make close friends with those who do bad things. • Fill your mind with good things (Philippians 4:8).

Today's Verse:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

March 27

Joshua 9:3-15

Joshua is tricked

The victories of Israel became known all over the land. When the people of Gibeon heard how Joshua had conquered Jericho and Ai, they decided to fool him. They sent men dressed in worn-out clothes and with moldy bread to meet with Joshua. The men said to Joshua, "We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us." Then Joshua's men said, "Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you? "They had made all of their belongings, even their food, look old and worn out, to appear as though they had traveled a great distance. So Joshua made a peace treaty with them—without asking the Lord. Three days later, Joshua found out that the men lived nearby, but the Israelites could do nothing to them.

How do I know whom to trust?

It is in the nature of a young child to trust others because that is the way God has made us. From birth, we learn to trust our parents. Later, we trust others in the family, and eventually we start trusting teachers and other adults. If you have been brought up around good people, it may come as a surprise that not everyone can be trusted. Even ordinary people with a friendly smile may have a heart that cannot be trusted. Joshua should have prayed and asked God what to do. Let your parents know about the people you talk to. And before you make any deals or plans with someone you don't know well, ask your parents what they think—and above all, ask God!

Today's Verse:

The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. Nahum 1:7

March 28

Joshua 10:7-15

The day the sun stood still

When the other kings in the land heard that the people of Gibeon had made peace with the Israelites, they joined forces to attack them. So the people of Gibeon sent a message to Joshua, "Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us:" So Joshua and his army made a surprise attack on the Amorite army, and while they were running away, the Lord made large hailstones fall on them. While all the fighting was going on, Joshua spoke to the Lord so that others could hear: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;" he said. Then the Lord made the sun stand still in the middle of the sky and it did not go down for a whole day. Never before, and never since, has there been a day like that, when God listened to the command of a person.

Does the sun go around the earth?

You have probably heard about our Solar System and the path the planets take around the sun. The planet closest to the sun is very hot, while the one farthest away is very, very cold! God has put the earth at just the right distance from the sun so that we can enjoy the outdoors without frying or freezing. If the planets are going around the sun, how could God have made the sun stand still? As far as Joshua was concerned, the sun stopped moving across the sky—and that is all that mattered on the day God gave him victory. Yet the thought of God stopping the earth from spinning for a day is just as awesome! Exactly how God did what He did doesn't matter. The fact that He actually stopped the sun from moving across the sky is so amazing that no one is able to explain how it happened. Isn't that great!

Today's Verse: A Psalm of Asaph. The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Psalm 50:1

March 29

Joshua 21:43-45, 22:1-4

The promised reward

At last, the Israelites conquered the land the Lord had promised them. The people settled in their new homes and villages and the Lord gave them peace. Not one of their enemies had been able to stand against them because the Lord had given them victory. Then Joshua called the tribes that wanted to settle on the far side of the Jordan River. They had helped the other Israelites fight their battles. He said to them, "Ye have kept all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you: Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God. And now the LORD your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as he promised them: therefore now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side Jordan. But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." So the men from the two tribes went home.

Will I ever get a reward from God?

Have you ever wished you would get a prize for doing well at school or perhaps earn a big trophy for a sports achievement? How disappointed we feel when we have worked and trained as hard as everyone else, but we go home with nothing to show. Always remember: rewards for achievements on earth do not last forever. But there is something far better. Jesus said that if we give even just a cup of cold water to someone, we will be rewarded (Mark 9:41). Probably you have already done a lot more good than that. Each time you do good for Jesus, your reward (which you can't see yet) is getting bigger and bigger in heaven—where it is being kept safe until you get there one day (Matthew 6:19-20).

Today's Verse: And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 1 Corinthians 9:25

March 30

Judges 2:1-8, 3:5-6

Mixing with the wrong people

Not long after the Israelites had settled in the Promised Land, they became friendly with the wicked people they were supposed to have driven from the land. The Israelites did not tear down the idols and altars of the heathen people as God had told them to. Joshua died at the age of one hundred and ten, and the next generation forgot what the Lord had done for Israel. They settled among the heathen tribes, married with them, and worshiped their gods.

Is it okay to have friends who don't believe in God?

One of the greatest gifts God has given us is the gift of friendship. It is wonderful to have close friends with whom you can have fun and share your dreams. It is also comforting to have someone who understands you and encourages you when life gets tough. Jesus had a group of close friends with whom He spent most of His time. The night before He faced death on a cross, He went to a garden to pray with them. The human part of Jesus longed for the support of those closest to Him. Yet, Jesus did not only have His twelve close friends. He also made friends with sinners— bad people who probably didn't even know how to pray. Jesus wanted them to know about God's love too, and they would only be able to see the love of the Father by seeing how much He loved them. God also wants us to reach out to those who don't know Him, but He doesn't want us to get caught up in the wrong things they do. Make sure that your closest friends are not the type who will try to get you to do wrong things.

Today's Verse: The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor: but the way of the wicked seduceth them. Proverbs 12:26

March 31

Judges 6:1, 11-22

God chooses a brave man

The Israelites had forgotten all that God had done for them: how He had brought them out of slavery in Egypt. Life had settled down, and the people now lived comfortably and peacefully in the land God had promised them. They no longer depended on God and they even started worshiping the gods of the heathen people living in the land! The Lord did not want them to become like the other nations. He wanted His chosen people to be separate and devoted to Him. So God allowed the people of Midian to rule over the Israelites. One day, the angel of the Lord came to Gideon while he was secretly threshing wheat (Gideon was afraid the Midianites would find him). The angel said to him, "The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valor."

Does God only choose special people to do important tasks?

Don't you hate it when teams are being chosen from a whole bunch of kids, and the leaders start choosing the strongest, fastest or cleverest kids? The last few stand around and wait, hoping that they will be the next to be chosen; and the longer they wait, the more embarrassing it becomes. Isn't it great to know that God doesn't choose us that way? God looks at our hearts! Even Gideon couldn't believe that the Lord actually wanted to use him, and he asked the Lord, "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house." Then the Lord replied, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." God is looking for those who will be brave for Him!

Today's Verse: ...for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7b