

# **THEME 3**

## **From Conquest to Exile**

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The units in this theme follow the Israelites as they form a nation and make decisions that impact their covenant relationship with the Lord God. Throughout history, God has called people to faithfulness. The people of Israel began a cycle of covenant-making, honoring the covenant for a period of time, breaking the covenant, and being called back by God to renew the covenant through events or prophets. Israel requested a king, and the actions of kings led to Israel's eventual downfall and exile. Over time, the prophets warned Israel that they must follow the covenant or God would send other nations to overtake them. Students examine the message of the prophets, the actions of Judah's good kings, and an overview of the conquering empires that ended the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Throughout the theme, students are given opportunities to examine their own faith walk and seek ways to rely more strongly on God's providence and presence in their lives.

This theme includes the Christmas unit. As fifth graders take this walk through the Bible, they meet many faithful followers that sing songs of praise and thanksgiving, as well as other kinds of songs, to God. In looking at songs of the Bible, students will be directed toward the book of Luke and the songs that accompany the Christmas story. This, in turn, leads to the Christmas carols we sing today that help us focus on the birth of Christ.

## Grade 5—Unit 6

# The Promised Land

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This unit covers the period from Joshua’s appointment as leader of the Israelites to the time of the Judges. It focuses on the desire of the Israelites to serve God, and God’s desire for them to be faithful servants. Students are given many opportunities to examine their own faith walk and seek ways to rely more strongly on God’s providence and presence in their lives.

### LESSONS

1. Crossing the Jordan River
2. The Fall of the Wall of Jericho
3. Windows of God’s Work
4. Israel’s Conformity
5. Deborah the Prophetess
6. Ruth’s Love and Devotion

# Unit 6: The Promised Land

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## Unit Information

### SUMMARY

In this unit, students will process and internalize the story of the Israelites crossing the Jordan River on dry land by reenacting the story. They will recognize the importance of the Israelites remembering and retelling God's goodness, as well as renewing their covenant with God. They will conduct an interview with a person who can tell the story of someone who has lived an especially devout life. Reviewing the story of the fall of Jericho will allow students to discuss the violence that frequently took place in the Old Testament, and our current way of dealing with the stories as peaceful people. Students will review what has been studied so far in fifth grade and will participate in a time of worship.

Discussing the Israelites' tendency to conform to the cultural religions and ways of living will give students time to reflect on their own peer pressure and a desire to fit in with society. Studying the stories of Deborah and Ruth will give them a glimpse of women who participated in these important events. Reviewing Ruth's story will also personalize the picture of an Israelite woman.

### KEY BIBLE TEXTS

Deuteronomy 34

Joshua 1–4, 6, 8, 24

Judges 2:6-19

Judges 4, 5

The book of Ruth

### BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

#### The Gift of Land

After 40 years in the wilderness and the death of Moses, God led Israel into the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. The sin of the Canaanites had reached full measure (Genesis 15:16), and conquering the land was seen as God's judgment on the idolatry and wickedness of the Canaanites.

At the time of Israel's entrance into the land, Egypt's power was low, and its leaders no longer backed the power of the Canaanite kings. Yet the Canaanites remained a forbidding presence in the land. Their military strength far exceeded that of the Israelites. Great walled cities protected the people of Canaan.

The religion of the Canaanites employed an especially degrading form of idol worship. As in all of the Near East, they worshiped the forces of nature. Fertility cults were prominent, and the practices of temple prostitution and child sacrifice were particularly offensive to Yahweh.

The Israelites crossed the Jordan River on dry land, carrying the Ark of the Covenant ahead of them, by a special act of God. They felled the wall of Jericho in a similar fashion. Time and again, they won battles in spite of military inferiority. The writers of Joshua and Judges believed that God was doing the fighting for them. Once Yahweh had won the battle for them, it was Israel's responsibility to

completely destroy the wickedness that contaminated the land. God first promised this land to Abraham at Shechem (Genesis 12:7). Now God was keeping the promise, as it was definitely a gift of God, not gained by cleverness or military strength.

### **Israelites in the Land of Canaan**

The land as gift and promise held important implications for Israel's worship and ethics. Injustice—using the land to impoverish others, and unfaithfulness—turning to idol worship, threatened to endanger the gift. The land could be lost. Israel's tenancy in the land depended on their choice to live righteously. Most importantly, the land was never to be grasped. Instead, it was a gift to be enjoyed and shared.

Joshua knew that for Israel to remain faithful to Yahweh, the people would have to remember their story. He acted as both spiritual and military leader. The 12 stones at Gilgal (Joshua 4), the covenant renewal at Mount Ebal (Joshua 8), and the covenant renewal near the end of Joshua's life (Joshua 24) provide dramatic examples of Joshua's emphasis on remembrance and renewal.

The covenant at Mount Ebal incorporated new people (Joshua 8:35). Some scholars think that due to the inequalities in Canaan, a significant number of disenfranchised people in the land joined Israel under the banner of Yahweh, liberator of the oppressed. As Christians, we see this as an important model for evangelism. These aliens became part of the story by hearing it retold and making it their own story.

The covenant renewal of Joshua 24 takes place at Shechem, where God established the first covenant with Abraham. The confederation of tribes formed at Shechem lasted 200 years (*during the time of the judges*). This tribal confederation had no strong political structures. It was held together by a common confession of trust in a God who was acting on their behalf (*note the recital of salvation history*) and a common covenant with Yahweh. Without kin or political system, the tribes of Israel remained aware of whose they were and their relationship with each other. Yet their faithfulness to the covenant and ties to each other were often still in jeopardy.

### **The Violent Conquest**

What we read in Joshua poses problems for all Christians. The practice of wiping out an entire population would be judged completely inhumane in our time, even if the invading group claimed to be doing it on command of the deity they served. Nor would we be likely to accept the claim of an invading group based on a promise they said their God had made to an ancestor half a millennium ago.

It is important not to offer easy answers to students concerning this problem. It would be better to admit that we don't have an answer. Certainly there are aspects of the Joshua story that we can affirm as followers of Christ. Israel, at its best, trusted in God rather than its own resources. The story of the conquest shows that God cares deeply about people having a land where they can live securely and enjoy the fruits of their labor. We can also affirm that God was and is active in history.

### **The Deuteronomic View**

Joshua died, and the Israelites lived in the land as a nation of tribes held together by their covenant with God. Many of the Canaanites still lived in the land. The sea people, the Philistines, occupied the coast. Their five powerful cities engaged in commerce and controlled the making of iron during the time of the judges. After

Joshua's generation died, Judges 2:10-13 says, "another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. They did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths."

The time of the judges shows a cycle of disobedience, punishment, crying out to the LORD, forgiveness, and renewal. "Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived: for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them" (Judges 2:18-19). This view of history is called the "Deuteronomic view," because it was predicted in Deuteronomy 31:14-29.

Serving an invisible God who required ethical behavior proved difficult for the Israelite people. The path of least resistance led to idol worship. The temptation of syncretism was strong. It wasn't so much that they wanted to stop worshipping Yahweh, but worshipping *only* Yahweh was the difficult part.

The results of such syncretism were disastrous. Reading the book of Judges often gives one a sick feeling. Each new generation seemed to need to discover for itself that apostasy led to oppression for their enemies, fighting among themselves, and lawlessness in the land.

### **Deborah, Judge and Prophetess**

In the time of Deborah, a Canaanite coalition led by King Jabin had arisen. Israel stood in danger of losing the Promised Land. Fearful travelers abandoned the roads, and village life ceased (Judges 5:6-7). Deborah, who belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, became recognized throughout all Israel as a leader. As a judge and prophetess, she held court under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel. When Deborah told Barak to fight Sisera and Jabin's army, he went under the condition that she accompany him.

Though all the tribes were expected to help each other in times of crisis, only Zebulun and Naphtali came to the battle. Ten thousand men on foot seemed no match for an army with 900 chariots. But a sudden storm filled the age-old Kishon River bed, miring the heavy chariots in mud. Jael, a tent-dwelling woman, killed the fleeing captain of the Canaanite troops.

Deborah's judgeship was unique for two main reasons. She was the only woman judge in the book of Judges and was the only one said to have been a prophet(ess). As a prophetess, she received her wisdom and words from the LORD. Deborah serves as an example of a woman in the Old Testament who was an effective leader of God's people.

### **Ruth, Faithful and Loving Israelite Woman**

Ruth, who lived in the time of the judges, was loving and devout, a woman of deep conviction and strength. She is an appropriate model for us as followers of God, and personalizes the picture of an Israelite woman.

The author of the book of Ruth is unknown, although its literary style suggests that it was written during the monarchy. Thus, this look at the story of Ruth is one of looking back at a faithful servant of the Lord. This perspective is important.

Ruth showed courage, loyalty, and faithfulness in the face of loss and insecurity.

She, her mother-in-law Naomi, and her sister-in-law Orpah lost everything when their husbands died. Without personal rights, they were powerless to act on their own, and had to depend on male relatives for support and protection.

When Naomi decided to return to her homeland of Bethlehem, Ruth, a foreigner from Moab, chose to go with her. To do this, she left behind her home, her ethnic identity, her belief system, and friendship with her sister-in-law. She would live as a stranger in a foreign land. She would even worship a God she did not know.

But Ruth embraced her mother-in-law's God and customs, becoming a faithful Israelite woman. She and Naomi were poor, and Ruth spent her days gleaning wheat in the fields for food. At Naomi's urging, she found a way to meet Boaz, a relative, who promised to care for her and eventually married her. Their child, Obed, became the grandfather of King David, in the ancestral line of Jesus the Messiah (Matthew 1:1, 5).

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- God wanted Israel to have covenant-keeping leaders.
- Though the task of claiming the land of Canaan looked impossible, God promised to be with Joshua and the people and provide a way for them.
- The Israelites used stone memorials from the Jordan River as reminders of God's provision and goodness. Remembering and retelling God's goodness is a vital part of our faith heritage.
- The destruction of the city of Jericho by God's people is difficult to reconcile with our faith of God's desire for peace and justice. Dealing with this openly and creatively is important in the students' faith walk.
- The Promised Land, a gift from God, was to be enjoyed but never grasped. It would belong to Israel only as long as the Israelites remained faithful to God. Joshua was keenly aware of this.
- Israel tried to combine worshipping the Lord with idol worship, as they gravitated to the religious practices of their neighbors.
- The book of Judges shows a cycle of disobedience, oppression by enemies, repentance, crying to the Lord for deliverance, and the Lord raising up judges.
- Deborah's and Ruth's trust in God inspires us.

## WORSHIP

### Theme hymns:

HWB 545—Be thou my vision

SJ 105—Don't be afraid

SJ 42—Listen, God is calling

### Other hymn ideas:

SJ 96—I'm pressing on the upward way

HWB 314—The word of God is solid ground

HWB 352—Gentle Shepherd, come and lead us

### 1. **God on our minds** (*Focus: When God's word is foremost in our thoughts, we are able to live out God's word in the world.*)

Gather in a circle. Read/recite Joshua 1:8-9 (*memory passage*). Now go through the verses line by line:

- 1) "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night . . ." What does it mean for something to "not depart from

your mouth?” To meditate on something day and night? Have the students try to put these ideas into their own words. Does this mean they have to repeat the Ten Commandments over and over? Probably not, but it might not hurt sometimes. How can they consciously remind themselves of the word of God?

Help them to come up with suggestions, such as taping a Bible verse to the mirror and reading it over and over as they brush their teeth, or reading a portion of the Bible daily. Help students to think creatively. Once they have brainstormed this concept, repeat the first part of the passage.

2) “. . . so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.” Why do we try to have God’s word on our hearts and minds constantly? Again, have the students rephrase the first part of this section. If something is on our minds constantly, it is difficult not to act on it. Sometimes, when our mind is filled with bad thoughts, it is hard to not act on those things, causing pain to ourselves and others. But when we replace those thoughts with God’s word, we are more likely to live out God’s word. And what does it mean that we will be successful? Does this mean we will have a big house and lots of money? Help students think of success as God does—that we may be the people God made us to be, following the will of God. Recite this part of the verse again.

If you have time, using the brainstorming you have done, construct an interpretation of the verse in the words of the class. Repeat that with the word of God on our minds, it becomes our foundation, making it possible for us to do the will of God and bring about reconciliation in our world. You may want to put both the original verse from the Bible and your class’ interpretation on a banner for the classroom as a reminder as you continue the unit.

Close the time by singing HWB 545, “Be thou my vision.”

## **2. God is with us in our fears** (*Focus: When fear stands in the way of our doing what is right, God walks with us and gives us courage to overcome it.*)

Gather in a circle, with a pot in the center of the circle. Have each student bring with them a piece of paper and a pencil. Light a few candles to create a comforting atmosphere. Recite together Joshua 1:9. Ask students if they have ever been afraid of anything. If it is fitting, ask a few to share these experiences. Talk about how fear sometimes keeps us from danger, which is good. But fear also sometimes keeps us from doing what is right. Ask if the students have ever been afraid to do what they know is right. Did they do it anyway? Or did they allow their fear to stand in their way?

The Israelites were about to do something really scary—set out for a new land, where they would encounter enemies and possibly death. In order to do the next step in bringing about salvation, they had to be strong and courageous. But God gave them a gift. Instead of telling them to get over their fear, God told them that YHWH would be with them. They didn’t have to be frightened—not because the situation wasn’t really scary, or they were just being babies—but because God would be with them wherever they went.

And God promises the same thing to us. Now have the students write or draw on the piece of paper whatever scares them most. Ask, “What is it that sometimes keeps you from doing what God wants you to do?”

Explain that now they are going to bring these fears to the center of the circle

and put them into the pot. The fears are real, but in giving them to God and allowing God to walk with us, they will no longer be obstacles to bringing about God's salvation. Play or begin to sing SJ 105, "Don't be afraid." Allow students to come forward whenever they are ready to relinquish their fears. They may place their papers in the pot, then return to their spot in the circle.

Recite the verse together again. A necessary part of the journey is giving God our fears, and that is part of what God calls us to do. Pray together that God will keep God's promise and walk with the class in the journey.

As the students return to their seats and the candles are blown out, sing together or play SJ 42, "Listen, God is calling."

## **ASSESSING TEACHING / LEARNING**

Assessment is important throughout the unit, and teachers should use tools both to formally and informally assess student learning. Use the results of these assessments to modify lessons to further increase student understanding and mastery. Teachers should formally assess students using their own point system and grading scale on the various worksheets and activities in the lessons. In addition, the following tools are provided:

- Unit Review #1
- Unit Review #2
- Travel Log Evaluation

## **HOME EXTENSION IDEA**

*(To be shared with parents)*

Your child is learning to tell the story of his/her walk of faith. Share your journey with your child. Be open about the struggles, the ups and downs, the joy, where you are now. Encourage your child to share with you about his/her own faith.

## **MEMORY PASSAGES**

The main memory passage for this unit is Joshua 1:8-9. Another memory passage is Joshua 24:14b-16a. These passages are provided in large format on pages 211-212, to be used as posters or overheads or to send home with students for memorizing.





“Do not let this Book of the Law  
depart from your mouth;  
meditate on it day and night,  
so that you may be careful to do  
everything written on it.  
Then you will be prosperous  
and successful. Have I not  
commanded you?  
Be strong and courageous.  
Do not be terrified; do not be  
discouraged, for the  
LORD your God will be with  
you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:8-9



Now fear the LORD and  
serve him with all faithfulness.

Throw away the gods your  
forefathers worshiped beyond the River  
and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

But if serving the LORD seems  
undesirable to you, then choose for  
yourselves this day whom you will  
serve, whether the gods your  
forefathers served beyond the River, or  
the gods of the Amorites, in whose  
land you are living.

But as for me and my household,  
we will serve the LORD."

Joshua 24:14b-16a

# The Promised Land

## LESSON 1: CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

### Objective

Students will learn the story of Joshua leading the Israelites across the Jordan River, following the Ark of the Covenant. They will also become familiar with the politics, religion, and culture of Canaan.

### Key Concepts

- God appointed Joshua to lead the people following Moses' death.
- Though the task of claiming the land of Canaan looked impossible, God promised to be with Joshua and the people and provide a way for them.
- Crossing the Jordan on dry land with the Ark of the Covenant leading the way was a concrete sign that the people followed God as their leader, and that Yahweh would break the power of wickedness and give the land to God's people.
- God still calls on people today to do things that require courage and strength. Joshua 1:8-9 can be a reminder to us in those situations.
- Stone memorials were used as reminders of God's provision and goodness.
- Remembering and retelling God's goodness is a vital part of our faith heritage.

**Texts:** Deuteronomy 34; Joshua 1:1-9, 2, 3, and 4

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 40 minutes

### Materials

- Student Bibles
- Travel logs/timelines
- "Stone"—an item to share (*see Teacher Preparation*)

### Teacher Preparation

- Temple prostitutes and other prostitutes are mentioned frequently in the passages for these lessons. Their role in society is not necessarily crucial to the plot. You will want to read the Bible passages ahead of time and decide how to handle this subject.
- Bring a "stone"—an item from your home that, like the stones in Joshua 4:19-24, helps you remember and retell a story of God's provision. The item could also be a reminder of your own need for faith in God.
- Gather other materials needed.

### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

**Read Deuteronomy 34** aloud, which tells the story of Moses' death and Joshua's appointment as the new leader of the Israelites. This will connect the story from the lessons at the end of Theme 2, to what you will study in Theme 3.

Ask students to locate Joshua, Judges, and Ruth in their Bibles. Events you will study in Theme 3 come mainly from these books. Explain that today's text of Joshua is believed to have been written by either Joshua or Samuel, which means that you will be reading largely a first-hand or recent account of the story.

## LESSON STEPS

**1. Understanding the culture of Canaan.** It is important for students to understand the culture and political situation in Canaan, which the Israelites were about to enter. Explain that knowing the following information will help students understand the feelings the Israelites may have had about the overwhelming task of conquering the land. It also sheds light on the people's tremendous faith in God, and in Joshua as their leader.

—Canaanite feudalistic society had much inequality and idolatry. The nation's royalty lived in ease and wealth at the expense of serfs at the bottom of society. The Canaanite kings had been vassals of Egypt and imitated the lifestyle of Egyptian royalty.

—At the time the Israelites entered the land, Egypt's power was at a low ebb and no longer backed the power of the Canaanite kings. Yet the Canaanites remained a forbidding presence in the land. They had far greater military strength than the Israelites. Great walled cities protected the people of Canaan.

—The religion of the Canaanites was made up of an especially degrading form of idol worship. As in all of the Near East, Canaanites worshipped the forces of nature. Among the Canaanites, fertility (*this could be explained as the ability to have a baby*) cults were prominent and particularly offensive to the covenant that God established with the Israelites at Mount Sinai.

**2. The Israelites enter Canaan.** With the information about Canaan in mind, read the following passages to the students: Joshua 1:1-9, 2 (*read ahead of time to make sure you know how you want to read it*), 3, and 4.

When finished, look back again at Joshua 1:1-9. Discuss the following questions with students:

—What did God promise Joshua? *The Lord would be with Joshua, wherever he went.*

—What did God tell Joshua to do? *To lead the Israelites into the land.*

—What phrase is repeated twice? *“Be strong and courageous.”*

—Why were these words so important for Joshua to hear? *The task ahead would not be easy.*

Look back at Joshua 3 and discuss the following:

—What was significant in Ark going ahead of the people? (*See key concepts, p. 213.*) *It showed the people that God was leading them.*

**3. Introduce Joshua 1:8-9 as memory verses** for this unit. Ask several students to recite it separately, emphasizing different words or phrases each time.

**4. Work on time lines.** Students should mark “Crossing the Jordan River” on their timelines, and note God's work in that event.

**5. Write in travel logs.** Students should journal in the voice of an Israelite who crossed the Jordan River, using the following prompt: What did God's words from Joshua 1:9 mean to you as you crossed the river?

**6. Reread Joshua 4:19-24,** then share your story of God's provision and the item you brought from home as a reminder (*see Teacher Preparation, p. 213*).

Invite students to think of items in their own homes that allow their families to tell of God's provision or protection. *For example: family Bible, items passed down from previous generations, photo albums, recipes, tools, items they use for traditions*

or rituals—such as Christmas ornaments, special dishes, Easter baskets, etc. Give some time for students to share items that come to mind.

## **EXTEND THE LESSON**

*(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 40 minutes.)*

- **Journal in travel logs** on the following prompt: What is your “stone?” What does it mean? Ask students to write in their own voices, then invite them to bring their “stones” to share with the class tomorrow if they wish. Be sure to allow time during the day for students to share.
- **Brainstorm or research an example** of a person today God asked to do things that require courage and strength. Students could write an essay about it, create an illustration, prepare a short monologue in first-person, create and perform a short skit, or give a class presentation on that person. Encourage students to somehow include the words from Joshua 1:8-9 in their work, showing God’s faithful presence.
- **Create a diorama** of the Israelites crossing the Jordan River, following the Ark of the Covenant, on dry ground.

# The Promised Land

## LESSON 2: THE FALL OF JERICHO

### Objective

Students will review the story of Joshua, the wall of Jericho, and its destruction. They will note the significance and spiritual importance of the covenant renewals Joshua held with the people, and consider the importance of inviting others into relationship with God.

### Key Concepts

- Joshua was faithful to God’s instructions to circle the wall of Jericho, and was rewarded with its falling.
- The destruction of the city by God’s people is difficult to reconcile with our faith of God’s desire for peace and justice. Dealing with this openly and creatively is important for the students’ faith walk.
- The Promised Land, a gift from God, was to be enjoyed but never grasped. It would belong to Israel only as long as the Israelites remained faithful to God. Joshua was keenly aware of this.
- New people became part of the Israelites as they heard the story of God’s provision and acts.

**Texts:** Joshua 6:1-21; Joshua 7:10-12; Joshua 24:14b-16a; Joshua 8

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 40 minutes

### Materials

- “Order” and “Chaos” murals created in Theme 1
- Student timelines
- “Covenant Renewal” (p. 219)
- For Extend the Lesson, option three: “Interviews” (p. 221)
- For Extend the Lesson, option four: white construction or other heavy paper, crayons or colored pencils, black fine-tip markers, envelopes, scissors

### Teacher Preparation

- Think about the issues in the discussion for lesson step #2. You may want to talk to others about how to process this with students. Many battles are recorded in the Old Testament, and students will benefit from a solid, thorough conversation about how to process the stories.
- Make copies of the “Covenant Renewal” sheet, one per student.
- If using Extend the Lesson, option three, make copies of the “Interviews” sheet, one per student.
- Gather materials needed.

### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

**Invite students to close their eyes and visualize** events as you read or retell the story of the fall of Jericho from Joshua 6:1-21.

## LESSON STEPS

**1. Look again at the “Chaos” and “Order” murals** you created in Theme 1. Which one more completely represents what must have been happening at the end of this story? We know that God is present in chaos as well as in order, yet it is hard to understand why God would order such destruction. Give students time to express their thoughts and feelings about the event.

**2. Discuss Israel’s involvement in destruction.** We know that Israel won battles time and time again, in spite of military inferiority. The writers of Joshua and Judges (*likely Joshua and Samuel*) believed that God was doing the fighting for them. They believed that once Yahweh had won the battles for them, it was Israel’s responsibility to completely destroy the wickedness that contaminated the land. The people of Canaan were definitely living in wickedness, which God cannot tolerate. Yet it’s difficult to understand their destruction. We can find aspects of the Joshua story, though, that we affirm as followers of Jesus:

- The Israelites trusted in God rather than in their own resources.
- They were sometimes called to do seemingly impossible or ridiculous acts (*crossing the Jordan River, circling the wall*), yet did so out of faith in God.
- The story shows that God cares deeply about God’s chosen people, and wants them to have a land where they can live safely and enjoy the fruits of their labor. God brought them out of the wilderness for this reason.
- God was, and is, an active part of history.

**3. Work on timelines.** Have students put “The Fall of Jericho” on their timelines and note God’s work in the event.

**4. Distribute “Covenant Renewal” sheets.** The Israelites were prone to forgetting their covenant with God and all that God had done for them. Use Joshua 7:10-12 as a reference. Ask students to use their Bibles to help them complete the sheet. This may be done as an Extend the Lesson activity if you need more time.

**5. Look back at Joshua 24:14b-16a.** This is the second memory verse for this unit. Point out to students two important things:

- Note the commitment that the Israelites were choosing to renew, and the faith, courage, and commitment that came with their covenant renewal. When we decide to be followers of Christ and believers in God, we are making the same serious commitment that Joshua was asking for the Israelites to make.
- A number of people that participated in the Joshua 8 renewal were not initially part of the Israelite tribes, but rather joined the Israelites because of seeing what God had done for them. They saw Yahweh as a liberator of the oppressed. As Christians, we see this as an important model for evangelism. These aliens became part of the story by remembering God’s actions and making it their own story. This was possible because the Israelites shared their “stone” stories!

## EXTEND THE LESSON

*(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 40 minutes.)*

- **Encourage students to discuss the topic** with parents by creating a list of several questions they have for them about topics discussed today.
- **Brainstorm and discuss ways** students could share the story of Christ through word and action, and invite others to become followers.

- **Conduct interviews.** Remind students that God has provided for each of their families and the families in their church and school. In the spirit of renewing your covenant with God, each student will interview a family, church, or school member and ask the person(s) to tell about God’s work in the life of someone they know. Each student will then have the opportunity to share that story with the class, as Joshua shared the stories in Joshua 24.

- Distribute the “Interviews” sheets and set a deadline for completion. On deadline day, invite each student to share his or her essay.

- Set the scene in the classroom for a short time of worship together. Use whatever seating arrangement, lighting, and props are most familiar and comfortable to the students.

- Begin by singing “How firm a foundation.” If another song or praise song is relevant and more familiar, sing it instead.

- Lead in a “popcorn” prayer, beginning and ending with the teacher. Students may simply pray aloud if they would like, thanking God for presence and provision.

- Read or recite Joshua 24:14b-16a together.

- Close by singing “God be with you,” or substitute another song in its place.

- **Make verse puzzles** as a way to help students memorize Joshua 24:14b-16a.

- Give each student a sheet of heavy white paper and ask them to illustrate a way that his/her family honors God. *Examples: treating each other with kindness, working together peacefully on a project, reaching out to another family in need, worshipping God together, listening to each other’s stories, singing together, learning to know each other better by taking a vacation, etc.*

- When the drawings are finished, students may write the scripture passage over them with dark fine-tip markers.

- Give students scissors to cut the picture into puzzle pieces, and an envelope for storing the puzzle.

- Have students try to reassemble their puzzles, reciting the passage as they work. They can also exchange puzzles. Encourage them to take the puzzles home to share with their families.



# COVENANT RENEWAL

Joshua planned several covenant renewals to help the Israelite people remember all that God had done for them. As you skim through Joshua 8 and Joshua 24, you will learn about two of these events. Record your answers in the blocks below.



	<b>JOSHUA 8</b>	<b>JOSHUA 24</b>
When?		
Who was present?		
Where?		
How did they prepare for the event?		
What happened?		
How did the people respond?		

## COVENANT RENEWAL—Answer Key

	<b>Joshua 8</b>	<b>Joshua 24</b>
When?	<i>Soon after the Israelites entered the Promised Land</i>	<i>At the end of Joshua's life</i>
Who was present?	<i>All Israel—aliens, citizens, elders, officials, judges, women, and children.</i>	<i>The elders, leaders, judges, and officials of Israel</i>
Where?	<i>Half of them in front of Mt. Gezirim; half in front of Mt. Ebal—facing the Ark of the Covenant</i>	<i>At Shechem, at the oak tree</i>
How did they prepare for the event?	<i>Built an altar of uncut stones, burned offerings.</i>	<i>Nothing is recorded.</i>
What happened?	<i>Joshua copied the Law of Moses onto stones. Joshua read the Book of the Law.</i>	<i>Joshua recited the Lord's acts in Israel's history. He recorded that the covenant was made and set up a stone.</i>
How did the people respond?	<i>Nothing is recorded.</i>	<i>They said, "We will serve the Lord."</i>

# INTERVIEWS

We have been studying the story of how God worked in the lives of people in ancient Israel. We want to update the story to include our own families. You may interview a parent, a grandparent, or someone in your church.

*Directions: Let the person you interview see and think about the questions ahead of time. Give him or her a copy of this paper and then make an appointment to meet. When you do the interview, ask the questions and write down the answers. You may want to tape the interview.*

1. I would like to hear about God's work in the life of someone in our congregation or family. It can be your own story or someone else's. It can be about someone living now or someone who lived a long time ago. Who have you chosen to tell about?



2. In what ways did this person see God at work in his or her life?

3. What decisions did this person make that grew out of a desire to follow God?



4. What did this person do or say because of faith in God?

5. What more can you tell me about how God was at work in this person's life?



6. What does this person's life teach us?

*Now write a brief (3 to 5 paragraph) essay with the information you have gathered in your interview. You might want to consider sharing your essay with the person you interviewed when you're finished!*

# The Promised Land

## LESSON 3: WINDOWS TO GOD’S WORK

### Objective

Students will examine previous Bible stories from the fifth grade curriculum and reflect on God’s work in each one.

### Key Concepts

- Reciting God’s acts of deliverance, protection, and provision is an important component of our faith journey.
- God wants us to remember and affirm God’s work by sharing the story with others.
- The Israelites were not only interested in renewing the covenant for their own good, but also on behalf of their ancestors that had received God’s protection and provision.

**Texts:** Review texts from earlier lessons

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 40 minutes

### Materials

- Student Bibles
- Variety of art supplies—could include pencils, crayons, markers, paints, collage materials, computer graphics programs, etc. (*see lesson step #2*)
- Dark paper for framing illustrations
- Travel logs

### Teacher Preparation

- Gather materials.

## INTRODUCING THE LESSON

**Stories of protection and provision.** Review the last lesson about Joshua and the people renewing their covenant with God. Explain that the Israelites renewed their relationship with God not just for their own good, but also to serve God on behalf of all their ancestors. God had protected and provided for the Israelites for generations. Today you will examine the stories of the ancestors and note God’s provision and presence in each situation.

## LESSON STEPS

**1. Names and stories.** Brainstorm names and stories of significance that the class has studied so far this year, writing them on the board or an overhead transparency. When completed, the list should include, but is not limited to:

Adam  
Eve  
Cain and Abel  
Tower of Babel  
Isaac

Joseph  
Jacob and Esau  
Abraham and Sarah  
Moses  
Slavery in Egypt  
Ten Plagues  
The Passover  
Mount Sinai  
The Ten Commandments  
Joshua  
Crossing the Jordan River

**2. “Windows” illustrations.** Assign students or let them choose a person, group, or story to illustrate. They will be creating snapshots of the persons or events. If someone looked out a window at this person or event, what might they see? Give students the freedom to create their illustrations in whatever way they feel most comfortable and can convey God’s provision and goodness. Options could include: pencil drawing, graphic design using a computer program, crayon or marker illustration, painting, collage, etc.

Allow plenty of time for students to complete their illustrations; then post each one on a darker piece of paper to give the appearance of a window frame. Display the finished products on a bulletin board or along a wall. If they are displayed in the hallway, ask each student to write a brief paragraph explaining the person or event and God’s provision in that situation.

**3. Write in travel logs.** Ask students to write in their own voices on this prompt: “How has God provided for you? When have you felt God’s presence during your life? Write a letter to God about it.”

### **EXTEND THE LESSON**

*(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 40 minutes.)*

- **Post finished “windows”** in younger-age classrooms, where students are hearing the stories for the first time.
- **Create personal “windows.”** Invite students to also create windows into their own lives.

# The Promised Land

## LESSON 4: ISRAEL'S CONFORMITY

### Objective

Students will reflect on how humans tend to conform to peer pressure. They will study how Israel conformed to its neighbors and note the consequences. They will learn to recognize cultural norms that pull them away from following God.

### Key Concepts

- Israel tried to combine worshipping the Lord with idol worship, as they followed the religious practices of their neighbors.
- We, as humans, are easily tempted to ignore what we know is right and join in activities and ways of thinking that harm others and tear us away from God.
- God is displeased when we choose to do things to fit into our culture that are not in accordance with serving God.
- God provides a way out for us when we are tempted, if we are willing to rely on God.

**Texts:** Judges 2:10-20; Deuteronomy 31:19-21

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 40 minutes

### Materials

- One of the following films:
  - TV: The Anonymous Teacher (15 minutes)
  - Seeing through Commercials (13 minutes)
  - I Think (19 minutes)
- Bible
- Notebook paper
- For Extend the Lesson: card stock or other heavy paper; markers, crayons or gel pens; decorating supplies—beads, yarn, stickers, etc.; laminating supplies (optional)

### Teacher Preparation

- Gather materials.
- Preview film(s).
- If using the Extend the Lesson activities, cut card stock or heavy paper into strips to be used for bookmarks.

### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

**Different types of actions.** Have students divide a sheet of notebook paper into two columns. In one column, they should list things they do that make them proud (*obeying parents, respecting teachers, telling the truth, following directions, worshipping God, resisting temptation to steal, etc.*). In the other column, they should list actions that make them ashamed (*lying, gossiping, being jealous, cheating, being impatient, disobeying their parents, fighting with siblings, etc.*). Then have them put their lists away for later.

## LESSON STEPS

**1. Read Judges 2:10-20**, and discuss the Israelites' tendency to follow their neighbors' religious practices. Point out that this was predicted in Deuteronomy 31:19-21. Joshua also knew that this was the people's tendency, and he had tried to keep them on the right track with the covenant renewals. With Joshua gone, the people were floundering. We can be a lot like the Israelites at times.

**2. Discuss modern cultural pulls and peer pressures** the students face. Often our shameful actions are a result of wanting to fit in with our peers. Other times, they are just a result of human nature. Invite students to share things from their list, if they're comfortable. Remind them that *Israel* means "one who struggles with God." How do we act like the Israelites?

**3. Watch one or more of the films** or show a similar video to illustrate temptations from our culture.

### 4. Discuss the following questions:

- Can we serve God and still try to do everything that others around us do?
- Do we owe our allegiance to God or other people?
- What makes us want to fit in?
- Is fitting in with our peers always a good thing? When is it all right? When isn't it?
- How can we affirm each other for the times we choose behaviors or ways of thinking that are pleasing to God? (*See that column on the lists they created.*)
- What are examples of the ways we allow others to influence our actions in both positive and negative ways?
- What can be the consequences of fitting in by doing things that we know aren't right?
- How can we as a group hold each other accountable for our actions?

**5. Israel's new leaders.** Explain that after Joshua died, the Israelites had no appointed leader. Basically, everyone did as they saw fit. As a result, many were tempted to turn to sin and turn away from God, to try and fit in with the others around them. Serving an invisible God who required ethical behavior was difficult for them. The path of least resistance led the Israelites to idol worship. God appointed judges to save them from their wrong ways. Reread Judges 2:16-19.

**6. Being accountable.** Although we don't have judges to guide us in the same ways the Israelites did, we can hold each other accountable. Jesus is our ultimate guide and showed us through his life how to be close to God and honor God as we serve those around us. Jesus' followers, writers of the New Testament, gave us scripture that helps us when we feel tempted to disobey God and conform to the ways of those around us.

Ask a student to find Matthew 6:13, another Hebrews 4:15-16, and another Philippians 4:13. Have them read the scriptures aloud, then discuss with the class how these verses can bring us strength and courage. Discuss why and how a full and whole relationship with God always outshines and outlasts the joys of fitting in or conforming.

## **EXTEND THE LESSON**

*(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 40 minutes.)*

- **Make bookmarks.** Give students time to create bookmarks with a passage of encouragement. These bookmarks are meant to be used in a Bible, novel, journal, or any place the students will see them often and be reminded of God's presence and help in resisting temptation. Students may choose from the passages read in class—Matthew 6:13, Hebrews 4:15-16, and Philippians 4:13—or other verses that are meaningful to them. *(Direct them to Psalms or the Gospels to look for such verses.)*
- **Bookmark gifts.** Invite students to create bookmarks for their friends, family, or someone in need of encouragement. You might want to laminate the bookmarks to make them into lasting gifts.



# The Promised Land

## LESSON 5: DEBORAH THE PROPHETESS

### Objective

Students will learn the story of Deborah and recognize her as a prophetess, a judge, and a woman of deep wisdom and great leadership ability.

### Key Concepts

- Deborah was the only woman judge, and the only judge in the book of Judges said to have been a prophet(ess).
- Deborah serves as an example that even in the time of the Old Testament, women could be effective leaders of God’s people.
- The book of Judges can be discouraging, because the people continually turned from God, but Deborah’s story shows evidence of both God’s presence and her obedience in serving God.
- It is important that students view women as well as men as being leaders of God’s people. Because few stories of women are recorded, special attention should be given to Deborah’s story.

**Text:** Judges 4 and 5

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 40 minutes

### Materials

- Student Bibles
- “Twelve Tribes of Israel in the Promised Land” map (p. 229)
- Travel logs

### Teacher Preparation

- Gather materials needed.
- Make copies of the “Twelve Tribes of Israel” map, one for each student or pair of students.

### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

**A female leader.** Explain that in this lesson you will be studying a unique judge—Deborah, the only female judge and the only one said to have been a prophet(ess). Give some background on the situation at the time of Deborah’s life: A Canaanite coalition led by Jabin, their king, was threatening. Israel stood in danger of losing the Promised Land. Fearful travelers abandoned the roads. Village life in Israel ceased (Judges 5:6-7). Deborah, who belonged to the tribe of Ephraim, became recognized throughout all Israel as a leader.

### LESSON STEPS

**1. Read aloud the story of Deborah** in Judges 4 and 5. Point out that when Deborah told Barak to fight Sisera and Jabin’s army, he went under the condition that she accompany him. This shows his high regard for her, as well as her wisdom

and strength. The story also shows that the Israelites trusted in God rather than their own military strength.

**2. Hand out the “Twelve Tribes” maps.** Have students find the following places that are pertinent to the story:

- location of the tribe of Ephraim (*Deborah’s tribe*)
- Zebulun and Naphtali (*who participated in this story*)
- Bethel (*she ruled under a palm tree here*)
- Kishon River (*where Sisera marched his troops and chariots*)
- Mt. Tabor (*where the Israelites waited to attack*)

**3. Write in travel logs.** Ask students to write in Deborah’s voice on the following prompt: Describe the wisdom and courage you possess by giving examples of your words and work.

### **EXTEND THE LESSON**

*(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 40 minutes.)*

- **Bible research.** Have students locate other women in the Bible that possess similar character traits to Deborah.
- **Retell the story as a newscast,** writing scripts, assigning parts and videotaping the news story.

# THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL IN THE PROMISED LAND



# The Promised Land

## LESSON 6: RUTH'S LOVE AND DEVOTION

### Objective

Students will pause from studying the key components in the history of God's people to reflect on the story of Ruth. They will learn to view Ruth as a faithful, devout, loving Israelite.

### Key Concepts

- The biblical account of Ruth's life demonstrates that she was loving and devout, a woman of deep conviction and strength. She is an appropriate model for us as followers of God, and personalizes the picture of an Israelite woman.
- The author of the book of Ruth is unknown, although its literary style suggests that it was written during the monarchy. Thus, the story of Ruth is looking back at a faithful servant of the Lord. This perspective is important.
- Ruth was the great-grandmother of David, and an ancestor of Jesus (Matthew 1:1, 5).
- The story takes place in the time of the judges and reflects a temporary time of peace between Israel and Moab.

**Text:** Book of Ruth

**Estimated Lesson Time:** 40 minutes

### Materials

- "Ruth Story Groups" (p. 232)
- Student Bibles
- Travel log evaluation sheet (p. 233)

### Teacher Preparation

- Gather materials needed.
- Prepare an overhead transparency of the "Ruth Story Groups" page.

### INTRODUCING THE LESSON

**Background on the story of Ruth.** Introduce today's lesson using information from the objective and key concepts (*above*). This story takes place during the time of the judges, which was a difficult time. Moab and Israel were usually bitter enemies. Ruth took a risk by emigrating to a land that might treat her as a despised foreigner. The love and loyalty in this story offers hope for others who are in difficult circumstances.

### LESSON STEPS

**1. "Ruth Story Groups."** Put up the overhead and divide the class into six groups. Assign each group one of the following passages:

- Naomi left alone (Ruth 1:1-5)
- Naomi returns from Moab (Ruth 1:6-22)

- Ruth and Boaz meet in the harvest fields (Ruth 2:1-23)
- Ruth goes to Boaz at the threshing floor (Ruth 3:1-18)
- Boaz arranges to marry Ruth (Ruth 4:1-12)
- Genealogy of David (Ruth 4:13-22)

**2. Retell the story.** Assign each group the task of retelling their portion of the story in their own words. Allow at least 20 minutes to work on this. It should be put into writing. Then sit in a circle and ask each group to tell their portion in order.

**3. Note Ruth's determination and devotion** in Ruth 2:16-17. Discuss how this can inspire us as followers of God.

**4. The kings are coming.** The last group told of how Ruth was an ancestress of King David. Explain that your studies in the next unit will focus partially on the kings, including David.

### **EXTEND THE LESSON**

*(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 40 minutes.)*

- **Dramatize the story.** Invite students to retell the story of Ruth using drama. Provide simple props and costumes.
- **Rewrite the story of Ruth** as though it were occurring today. Keep the plot and characters the same, but adjust the setting and other details to modern times.

# RUTH STORY GROUPS

- 1) Naomi left alone (Ruth 1:1-5)
- 2) Naomi returns from Moab (Ruth 1:6-22)
- 3) Ruth and Boaz meet in the harvest fields (Ruth 2:1-23)
- 4) Ruth goes to Boaz at the threshing floor (Ruth 3:1-18)
- 5) Boaz arranges to marry Ruth (Ruth 4:1-12)
- 6) Genealogy of David (Ruth 4:13-122)



# Travel Log Evaluation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

PROMPT	EVALUATION COMPONENT	POINTS
<b>Voice:</b> Israelite crossing Jordan River <b>Prompt:</b> What did God’s words from Joshua 1:9 mean to you as you crossed the river?	Writing is thoughtful and best effort is given.	___/10
	Writing reflects understanding of the concepts.	___/20
<b>Voice:</b> Own <b>Prompt:</b> What is your “stone?” What does it mean? <i>(Extend the Lesson, lesson 1)</i>	Writing is thoughtful and best effort is given.	___/10
	Writing reflects understanding of the concepts.	___/20
<b>Voice:</b> Own <b>Prompt:</b> How has God provided for you? When have you felt God’s presence during your life? Write a letter to God about it.	Writing is thoughtful and best effort is given.	___/10
	Writing reflects understanding of the concepts.	___/20
<b>Voice:</b> Deborah <b>Prompt:</b> Describe the wisdom and courage you possess by giving examples of your words and work.	Writing is thoughtful and best effort is given.	___/10
	Writing reflects understanding of the concepts.	___/20
	<b>TOTAL</b>	___/150

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Unit Review, Lessons 4-6

Use your Bible to help you. Look at the list of Bible passages below. Choose one to write several paragraphs about.

- Judges 2:6-19
- Judges 4 and 5
- Ruth 1-4

Your paragraphs should include the following:

**Paragraph 1**—Summarize what is happening in the passage. Who are the main characters? What is the action? What did this mean for the Israelites?

**Paragraph 2**—How was God working in this situation?

**Paragraph 3**—What does this mean for you in your faith walk? What can you learn from the story?



## Unit Review, Lessons 4-6—Answer Key

Answers will vary. Teachers may use the following grading rubric in grading this review.

<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Points</b>
Paragraph One is complete with details that show understanding of the concepts.	1	5	10	15	20
Paragraph Two demonstrates student's attentiveness in class discussions.	1	5	10	15	20
Paragraph Three shows that student has processed and internalized lessons and can apply concepts to his/her faith walk.	1	5	10	15	20
Student follows directions and his/her writing shows effort. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are correct.	1	5	10	15	20

**Total Points Earned:** \_\_\_\_\_/80