ADULT CURRICULUM



***RUN THE RACE*!  Hebrews 12:1-2**

Endurance. Team Spirit. Discipline. Focus. These are the things that make great sports teams, but more importantly – great *SERVANTS* of God! Join us as we learn about Paul while we *run the race!*

We will have classes for all ages. Classes will be held in designated areas. The Adult Class will be held in the sanctuary.

**SERIES ON RUN THE RACE**

**OVERVIEW**

In a world where narratives often celebrate the rise to power but overlook the challenges faced along the way, there’s an undeniable allure in stories of perseverance and triumph.

The Bible is rich with characters whose lives unfold like epic sagas, filled with trials that would make even the strongest among us falter.

Yet, what sets these remarkable figures apart is not just how they began their journeys, but how they persevered through adversity and ultimately finished strong.

From faith-filled leaders to humble servants, these biblical heroes demonstrated unwavering resilience and steadfast commitment to their divine calling.

As we delve into the lives of these inspiring Bible characters who finished strong, we discover valuable lessons about courage, faithfulness, and redemption.

Their stories resonate across time—reminding us that setbacks are often setups for comebacks.

Whether overcoming personal failures or facing immense societal pressures, each character’s legacy invites reflection on our paths and encourages us to strive for a finish worthy of our beginnings.

**ADULT LESSONS FOR DISCUSSION**

Lesson No. 1 Jochebed

Lesson No. 2 Paul

Lesson No. 3 Joseph

Lesson No. 4 Esther

LESSON 1 \* **JOCHEBED**

Main Scripture Text : **Hebrews 12:1-2**

**Lesson Text** Exodus 1:15-17

**Lesson Focus:** **Exercise your faith**

**Memory Verse:** Philippians 2:13 says, “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

**Introduction**

**Desperate times warrant desperate measures.** This statement was never truer than in the time of today’s Bible mother, Jochebed. Jochebed lived during the Israelite enslavement in Egypt. God’s people had settled in this country during the time of Joseph. They had thrived there for years, but when Joseph died, a new Pharoah, who had not known Joseph, ruled. Not only did the Pharoah not know Joseph, but he also despised this family that was now grown into a great nation. In fear he sought to control their numbers by making an unthinkable law.

Most people are familiar with the life and legacy of Moses, the man who would eventually lead God’s people out Egypt, part the Red Sea, and receive the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. However, Moses’ journey to becoming God’s chosen leader of Israel began with the faith and courage of his mother, Jochebed.

What we know of Moses’ mother comes from the early chapters of the book of Exodus. There, the Bible tells us that Jochebed, whose name means “Jehovah is glory," was a daughter of Levi and had married a man named Amram, who was also from the tribe of Levi (see Exodus 2:1; 6:20; Numbers 26:59).

With all the craziness going on in our world right, you may be thinking, *“There has never been a harder time in history to raise a child.”*We are not alone in our plight or trepidations.

Throughout history people have faced insurmountable struggles. And down through the ages some have gone to great measures that required courage to guide and protect their children.

One such mother is Jochebed in the Bible. She found herself in a terrible time in Israel’s history. For 400 years the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt. At the risk of losing their own lives, two courageous midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, refused to murder the babies. These women, who were willing to jeopardize their own wellbeing to save the babies, were certainly heroes in their day.

When Jochebed hid her son for three months regardless of the consequences, she made a decision to exercise her faith which makes her a hero of faith. When she made a basket to put Moses in, she showed the strength of her faith.

She had no way of knowing that anyone was going to intervene to save her son. She did not know that God had already made provisions for his care and protection. All she knew at that time was that she didn’t want her son to be killed. She took a risk and put him in God’s hands.

**Discussion**

The frustrated Pharaoh decreed that all Egyptians were to throw newborn Hebrew boys into the river. Can you imagine the horror these Israelite mothers faced knowing that at any moment an Egyptian might snatch their baby boy from their arms and cast him into the Nile River?  (see Exodus 1:15-17).

It was at this time in history that Jochebed’s heroic story unfolds. And while the Bible doesn’t specifically outline her character qualities, we can certainly see them lived out in how she responded to her difficult situation. There is much to emulate from Jochebed’s character.

When Jochebed and her husband, Amram, gave birth to Moses, at the risk of their own lives, they hid him until he was three months old. How they must have dreaded the day that he might have discovered. Disregarding Pharaohs’ order would certainly cost them their lives––leaving their other children as orphans.

What unimaginable stress they must have endured.

Try to put yourself in Jochebed’s sandals. I don’t know about you, but three months after my son was born, I was still a hormonal, emotional mess! Attempting to hide my baby from people who wanted to kill him—coupled with the anxiety of trying to silence him when he cried––would have been too much to bear.  When Jochebed could hide Moses no longer, she likely prayed for a way to protect him. The plan devised in her heart must have been from Jehovah. But, while contemplating sending Moses down the Nile in a basket, I wonder if she questioned God’s plan? I’m pretty sure I would have been like, “Um, Lord, are you sure? I mean there are crocodiles and snakes in that water. And what if the basket capsizes? What if…?”

**Conclusion**

We will never know if Jochebed had misgivings before she courageously followed God’s plan. But this ordinary woman, a mom just like you and me, simply did the next thing in front of her to protect her child. You can learn from Jochebed’s example to seek the Lord and then courageously do the next thing He puts in your heart to do. Rather than focusing on how things might not work out, what if you focused on God’s sovereignty and refused to worry about the “what if’s” and “if only’s”?

Worry about tomorrow will steal your courage to follow God’s plan for today. Jesus said, “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things” (Matthew 6:34).

Philippians 2:13 says, “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” When you seek the Lord’s wisdom and walk in obedience, He will work in your heart to do His good pleasure. And He will give you the courage to follow His will.

The lessons we learn from Jochebed are love, faith and self-control. When faced with her greatest fear, she didn’t panic. She made a plan and boldly executed it. The Bible doesn’t mention it, but I believe she prayed. I believe Jochebed had a connection with Jehovah, and it was this connection that caused her to go forward in faith. The Bible shows us different characters who persevered through struggles yet glorified God. From Jochebed, may we find meaning in our sufferings and, most importantly, strengthen our faith in God. Jochebed knew as long as she trusted Jehovah, she had nothing to fear. Likewise, we have nothing to fear when we learn to rely on God. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us – including overcoming our greatest fears.

**Questions**

1.  How will you be encouraged by Jochebed to boldly face your fears today?

2. Can you imagine the level of self-control Jochebed demonstrated when she stood in front of Pharaoh’s daughter and accepted the care – and wages – for the very son whom Pharaoh wanted to destroy? (EXPLAIN)

LESSON 2 \* **PAUL**

Main Scripture Text : **Hebrews 12:1-2**

**Lesson Text** *2 Corinthians 12:9*

**Lesson Focus:** **Running the Race with Endurance**

**Memory Verse:** *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

**Introduction**

Paul’s life stands as a testament to what it means to run the race of faith with perseverance and purpose. Once a persecutor of Christians, Paul’s dramatic conversion led him to become one of the most influential apostles in history.

Paul, originally known as Saul, was notorious for persecuting the early Christian church. His zealousness for the law drove him to imprison and execute believers.

However, his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus transformed him, and Paul became a tireless advocate for the Gospel.

Paul’s ministry was filled with immense suffering—beatings, shipwrecks, imprisonment, and constant opposition. Yet, Paul never gave up. His letters, which make up much of the New Testament, were often written from prison, encouraging others to stand firm in their faith.

Paul’s endurance is encapsulated in his words: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” **(2 Timothy 4:7)**.

Even in his final moments, Paul remained resolute in his commitment to spreading the Gospel. His letters continue to inspire and instruct believers, leaving a lasting legacy of perseverance and dedication.

Paul’s life teaches us that finishing strong means remaining faithful to God’s calling, even when faced with the most difficult trials.

**Discussion**

Here is the thesis of this passage: "Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."

God has a race for you to run. God has a purpose for your life. To run this race means to acknowledge that God's purpose for your life is what matters, and to make it your #1 priority to discover and complete this purpose.

Known as the greatest missionary, Paul serves as another inspiring Bible character who persevered through struggle yet continued to praise God. However, unlike many other Bible characters who lamented their struggles, Paul "gladly boasted" when he was suffering.

Paul spoke of the "thorn of suffering," but he knew it was part of glorifying God. Suffering is never easy for any Christian, especially when it's a test of faith. Paul's words encourage us to let God's grace take over us when we are weak, for this will, even more, glorify God.

**Conclusion**

As we reflect on Paul who finished strong, we are reminded that the journey of faith requires perseverance, trust, and a heart that seeks after God. May his example encourage us to stay on the course and finish strong in our own spiritual race. Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who empowers us to overcome and reach the eternal prize. God has great purpose in our **endurance and our discipline**. Though it seems painful rather than pleasant, our Father in heaven disciplines us for our *good*. And He does so in order that we may share His holiness. How amazing it is that God would allow us to share in His holiness and shape us to be like Him! There is fruit that comes from discipline and endurance, and the fruit is righteousness and peace. There is a great reward to be had for us.

Questions/Discussion

1. What is the spiritual meaning of running a race?

2. What does running teach us?

3. How do you see Paul’s boldness on his journey?

4. What does it mean to "fix your eyes on Jesus?"

LESSON 3 \* **JOSEPH**

Main Scripture Text : **Hebrews 12:1-2**

Lesson Text *Genesis 45:7-8*

Lesson Focus: **Rising Above Betrayal and Injustice**

Memory Verse: *"God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God."*

**Introduction**

Joseph’s life is a powerful example of perseverance through suffering and injustice, only to rise in triumph.

Betrayed by his own brothers, sold into slavery, and wrongfully imprisoned, Joseph remained faithful to God throughout his trials.

joseph’s journey was marked by a series of painful experiences that could have easily led to bitterness. Yet, instead of losing faith, Joseph kept his trust in God.

Whether in Potiphar’s house, the prison, or later in Pharaoh’s court, Joseph’s integrity and dedication never wavered. He didn’t allow his circumstances to dictate his faith.

Through his unwavering faith, Joseph’s life turned around when he interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams, which led to his rise to power as the second-in-command in Egypt.

**Discussion**

Even in a position of great authority, Joseph continued to trust in God’s plan, using his role to save not only Egypt but also his own family from famine.

Perhaps the most profound aspect of Joseph’s story is his decision to forgive his brothers who had wronged him.

Joseph recognized that God had used his suffering for a greater purpose, saying, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” **(Genesis 50:20)**.

His act of forgiveness and his role in reuniting and saving his family demonstrates the power of finishing strong through reconciliation and faith in God’s sovereignty.

Joseph was most beloved by his father, Jacob, yet hated by his half-brothers. Joseph struggled at home and in a foreign land. At home, Joseph's brothers loathed him because of the dreams he told them about. He had dreams about his brothers bowing down to him, and their father saw it as God’s prophecy for the family. Driven by envy, the brothers sold Joseph to traveling merchants, making their father believe Joseph was already dead.

God has plans for all of us, whether we may be struggling at home or in a foreign place. Just like with Joseph, God's favors return to us in places and ways we least expect as long as we remain faithful to Him.

Joseph was betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, and unjustly imprisoned in Egypt. Throughout these hardships, Joseph demonstrated perseverance by remaining faithful to God. His integrity and wisdom eventually led him to become the second-in-command in Egypt, where he saved many lives during a famine. “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (Genesis 50:20)

**Conclusion**

In Egypt, Joseph's misfortunes continued as he was imprisoned because of a false accusation. Nonetheless, Joseph used God's gifts to help the Pharaoh lead the people during a famine. In return, Joseph received his life's greatest blessings—an admirable job, a family, and, most importantly, reconciliation and reunion with his brothers and father. Struggles will always be part of the Christian journey. Sometimes, we find it difficult to understand why all these challenges happen to us. That is why we must turn to the Bible and seek God's assurance in times of distress.

I do not doubt that God can speak to people today in dreams and visions. Think of how many Muslims are coming to Christ in this way. But we must always take care with them, and hold up everything to the light of the inerrant Scriptures.

**Questions/Discussion**

1. So, what can we take from this man and his life?

2. Forgiveness is one major lesson. Do we have those that we need to forgive?

3. Are there those who have mistreated us and abused us and turned on us that we still harbor resentment and bitterness towards?

4. Do we allow memories of past hurts to block present relationships?

LESSON 4 \* **ESTHER**

Main Scripture Text : **Hebrews 12:1-2**

**Lesson Text:** Esther 4:14

**Lesson Focus:** **Courage in the Face of Genocide**

**Memory Verse:** “*And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”*

**Introduction**

In the face of a potential genocide against her people, Queen Esther demonstrated remarkable courage by risking her own life to plead with the king, ultimately saving the Jewish people from annihilation.

Your heart races. Your palms sweat. That knot in your stomach tightens as you face a decision that could change everything. We've all been there – standing at the crossroads of fear and possibility, knowing we need to act but feeling utterly unprepared and overwhelmed.

Maybe it's confronting a toxic situation at work, stepping up to protect someone vulnerable, or making a life-altering choice that goes against the grain. In these moments, doubt creeps in. "Who am I to do this?" you might wonder. "What if I fail? What if I'm not strong enough?"

**DISCUSSION**

**Esther lesson 1: God’s invisible hand of deliverance was (and *is*) there**

The Jews had been exiled to the land of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar because of their disobedience to God’s laws, particularly for Sabbath-breaking and idolatry (Jeremiah 17:21-27; 25:6-7).

Despite their disobedience and subsequent punishment, God still cared about them and had future plans for them (Jeremiah 29:11). He had not completely rejected them!

Though some Jews had returned to Jerusalem about 60 years earlier because of King Cyrus’ edict (Ezra 6:1-11), thousands of Jews remained in other areas of the Persian Empire. (To learn more about King Cyrus and the return of some of the Jews to their homeland, read “Daniel 9: The 70-Year Prophecy of Jeremiah.”) So, during Esther’s time, her people were scattered around many areas of the Medo-Persian Empire.

Some have attacked the book of Esther for never directly mentioning God’s name. But that doesn’t mean God wasn’t present. In fact, His fingerprints are seen throughout the book—in the same way that we often see His guidance and deliverance in our lives today. God’s intervention can be seen throughout the book through a series of extraordinary events:

* Esther stood out from all the young girls throughout the land and was chosen to be the queen of Persia (Esther 2:15-18). *God’s hand was clearly at work to place her in this position.*
* Mordecai uncovered a plot to kill the king of Persia, King Ahasuerus. Mordecai reported the plot to Esther, who informed the king in Mordecai’s name, and the assassination attempt was foiled. This incident later elevated Mordecai before the king (Esther 2:21-23; 6:1-2). *God’s hand was clearly behind Mordecai’s learning of this plot and being able to report it to Esther.*
* One night the king asked for the historical records to be read to him to help him sleep. Mordecai’s good deed was read to him, and the king then decided to honor him. At the same time, Haman entered the king’s court to ask to have Mordecai executed on the gallows. But before he could make his request, the king asked Haman for his advice on how to honor someone. Long story short: Haman was forced to show honor to Mordecai instead of hanging him (Esther 6:1-11). *God’s hand was clearly behind the king’s desire to honor, not execute, Mordecai.*
* Esther gained favor with the king and was able to use that favor to reveal Haman’s genocidal plan to the king. This allowed Haman’s true colors to be made obvious, leading to his death and the deliverance of the Jewish people (Esther 7 and 8). *God’s hand was clearly behind the king’s favoring Esther so much that he listened to her over his trusted, but evil, official.*

God’s invisible hand was working in many ways and on many levels to save His people.

The lesson for us is that God is still working in the lives of His people today. The Bible assures us that “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

This same lesson was expressed by the prophet Hanani to King Asa: “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him” (2 Chronicles 16:9).

**Esther lesson 2: Have the courage to do what’s right**

When Mordecai found out about Haman’s plot to annihilate the Jews, he tore his clothes and put on “sackcloth and ashes.” This was an act of mourning (Esther 4:1).

Mordecai told Esther to go before the king to petition his favor on behalf of the Jews. (At this point, the king did not even know that she was Jewish.)

But Esther knew that it was forbidden to go before the king uninvited. Doing so could result in death. She initially feared the possibility of losing her life. After all, the king’s treatment of her predecessor, Queen Vashti, showed that he was capable of not showing favor to her!

Mordecai put things in perspective by suggesting that she might have been placed in her position for “such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). In other words, perhaps God had intervened to make her queen so that He could save His people through her.

Esther decided to fast and asked that the Jews in Shushan also fast on her behalf for three days. She wanted to ask for God’s direction and favor. After this fast, she would take the risk of going before the king without an invitation.

She told Mordecai, “If I perish, I perish!” This showed remarkable courage. God wants us to show courage in following His laws and doing what is right (Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:7; 1 Chronicles 28:20; Psalm 27:14). Often this involves going against the crowd, going against what society accepts as normal (Exodus 23:2).

We may not always be called on to show courage in major, history-altering events as Esther was. But Jesus taught that faithfulness begins in the small things (Luke 16:10). We can show the same courage of Esther in much smaller ways—by refusing to compromise on obedience to God’s law, for instance, or by continuously rejecting the sinful ways of society around us. And sometimes courage isn’t standing up in the face of something, but removing ourselves from a temptation.

**Esther lesson 3: The power of intercessory fasting and prayer**

To seek God’s favor and guidance, Esther instructed the Jews to beseech Him through fasting and prayer (Esther 4:15-16).

Fasting in the Bible means abstaining from food and drink for a period of time in order to draw closer to God and seek His guidance and intervention. Fasting can be used for various reasons, such as:

* For repentance (Jonah 3:5-9).
* For mourning over one’s own conduct and to humble oneself before God (1 Kings 21:27-29).
* For seeking God’s blessing and guidance in difficult situations (Ezra 8:21).
* For seeking strength to overcome wickedness and to help the needy (Isaiah 58:6-7).
* For seeking reconciliation with God on the solemn Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:26-32). For deliverance from a particular danger (2 Chronicles 20:1-24).

Few things humble us more than realizing our utter helplessness by going without food and drink for a period of time. Jesus taught His disciples that certain problems can be addressed only by fasting and prayer (Matthew 17:21). Fasting and prayer should be practiced together

**Conclusion**

Esther was a remarkable woman who helped save her people from an attempted genocide. The book of Esther is an amazing account that shows God’s hand in the deliverance of His people. It shows how He used an extraordinary young woman, Esther, to help save the Jewish people from an attempted genocide by a maniacal official in the Persian Empire. The lessons contained in the book are very relevant to Christians today. Esther risked her life by approaching King Xerxes without being summoned to save her people from a planned genocide. With wisdom and courage, Esther persevered, revealing the plot against her people and securing their safety.

**Questions/Discussion**

1. How does Esther show courage?

2. What are the six powerful life lessons from the book of Esther?

3. What is the famous verse of Esther?

**SERIES CONCLUSION**

Life is full of trials that test our faith and resolve. The stories of Jochebed, Joseph, Esther, and Paul in the Bible teach us that perseverance through faith is crucial. These characters faced immense challenges but emerged victorious by trusting in God. When we face our trials, we must rely on our faith and persevere, knowing that God’s plan for us is ultimately for our good. As James 1:12 reminds us, *“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”* We can overcome any obstacle through faith and perseverance, finding strength and hope in God’s unwavering presence.

(Proverbs 3:5-6) says, if you trust in the Lord with all of your heart, lean not on your own understanding and acknowledge Him in all your ways- He will direct your path.

**Action Steps**

To help you apply these principles of perseverance and faith in your own life, consider these five simple action steps:

1. **Pray Daily**: Begin each day with prayer, asking God for strength and guidance to face the challenges ahead. Trust that He is with you, no matter the difficulty.
2. **Seek Wise Counsel**: When facing trials, remember the wisdom of seeking advice from trusted mentors or spiritual leaders. Their guidance and experience can provide the reassurance and direction you need to navigate your challenges.
3. **Stay Connected to Scripture**: Regularly read and meditate on Bible passages emphasizing perseverance and faith. Let God’s Word be your constant source of comfort and strength, guiding you through your trials.
4. **Take Proactive Steps**: Like Joseph, take practical steps to improve your situation. Whether reaching out to others for help or seeking new opportunities, act with faith and trust in God’s plan.
5. **Reflect on Past Victories**: Recall times when God has brought you through challenging situations. Let these memories bolster your faith as you face new challenges.

**Discussion Questions**

To further explore the themes of faith and perseverance, consider discussing these questions with a small group or in personal reflection:

1. Which biblical character’s story resonates most with your current life situation? Why?
2. How has your faith been tested during a recent trial, and what did you learn from the experience?
3. What role does prayer play in helping you persevere through difficult times?
4. In what ways can you take proactive steps to face a current challenge while still trusting in God’s timing?
5. How can recalling past instances of God’s faithfulness help you navigate future trials?

NOTES

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