

Great Expectations Ministries COGIC

Vacation Bible School 2025

CURRICULUM

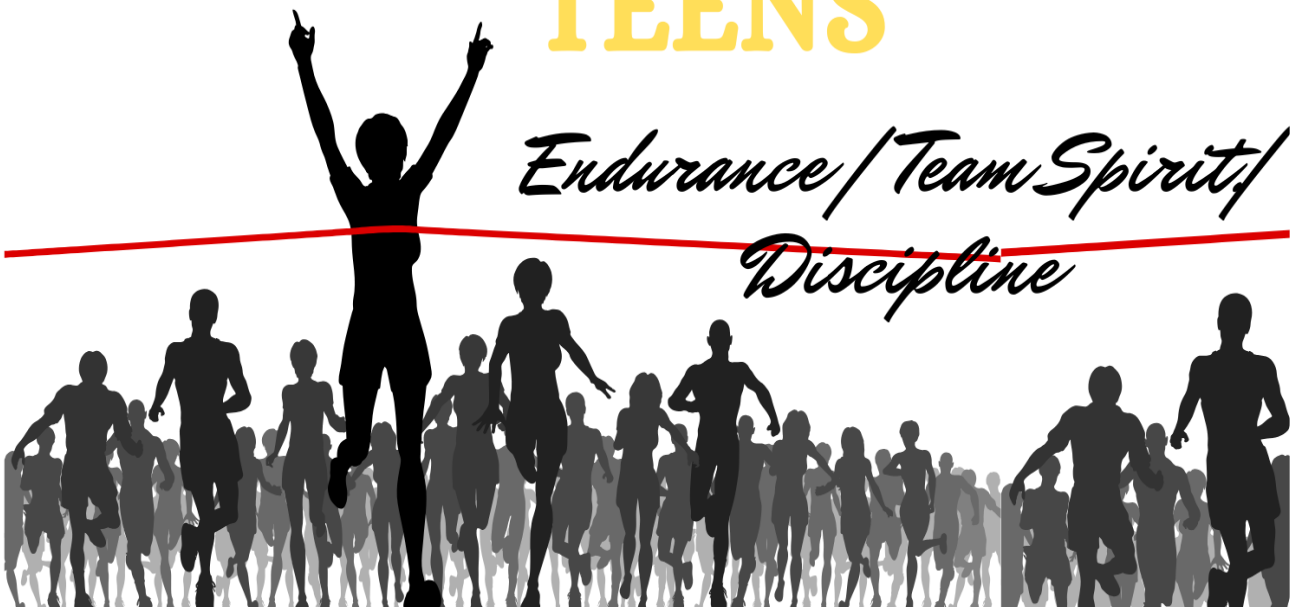
Run **THE RACE**

HEBREWS 12:1-2

BREAK-OUT SESSION

**FOR
TEENS**

*Endurance / Team Spirit /
Discipline*



OVERVIEW

Trials are designed to produce spiritual maturity and should therefore be counted as joy. God allows for difficulties in our lives because He desires for us to learn to be steadfast in Him so that we can become perfected in Him. God's Word is full of the good and bad experiences of men and women of old, placed there as examples for you and me.

Through the study of their lives, I know I have gained the wisdom and understanding to make decisions that have allowed me to avoid many of the hard knocks that come through trial and error. First Corinthians 10:11 says, "*Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [examples]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*"

Don't abandon your God given values in pursuit of your God given dreams.

—Pete Wilson

LET'S TALK

Perhaps you have questions and in need of answers. We got you! We will strive for biblical clarity concerning issues we face daily. Yes! Let's talk!

BREAKOUT SESSIONS for TEENS

- Life-Changing Decisions Under Pressure (Life of Joseph)
- Facing Temptations (The Hebrew Boys)

LESSON 1 Life-Changing Decisions Under Pressure (Life of Joseph)

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:1-2

Lesson Text: Genesis 37:6-7 and Exodus 9:16; ” (Romans 9:17).

Lesson Focus: ADVERSITY

Memory Verse: ‘For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.’

Let’s Talk!

In the story of Joseph, several key decisions and choices shaped his life and ultimately led him to a position of power and influence. His decision to remain faithful to God, even in difficult circumstances, proved to be a pivotal moment that set the course for his future.

Deuteronomy 8:18 says, “*Thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant.*” Joseph believed he was prosperous because he knew prosperity came from God, not man. He had an image on the inside that was not affected by circumstance, and it enabled Joseph to operate in faith. Instead of licking his wounds and complaining, Joseph served others and ministered wholeheartedly to their needs. As he diligently labored, God blessed the work of his hands. If Joseph could do it, so could you. You have the same power dwelling on the inside of you that raised Jesus from the dead. Joseph didn’t have that. Begin to see yourself as God sees you, a prosperous person, regardless of your physical circumstances. Recognize and acknowledge the fact that God is with you, that you are anointed and highly favored. Serve others with all your heart as unto the Lord. Eliminate murmuring and complaining, and replace them with praise and thankfulness, knowing God will complete what He has begun in your life.

Through Joseph’s example, I’ve recognized the importance of seeking God even more when things are going well. **Prosperity and success will test your character infinitely more than hardship!** When you’re in trouble and your back is against the wall, you know you need help. But did you know that success has corrupted more individuals than hardship ever has? It’s prosperity that often causes people to lose sight of their God-given vision or to attempt to bring it to pass through their own natural ability. Even with extreme wealth and power at his disposal, Joseph waited on the Lord and watched in faith as He brought the dream to fulfillment! “*And when Joseph came home, they [his brethren] brought him the present which was in their hand into the house and bowed themselves to him to the earth.*” (Gen. 43:26)

Introduction

Next to Jesus, Joseph may be the greatest example of godly character and integrity in the Bible. **Joseph’s story began with a dream** at the age of seventeen. He knew the dreams he was having were from the Lord and that they revealed God’s purpose and plans for his life. Genesis 37:6-7 and 9 say, “*And he [Joseph] said unto them [his family], Hear; I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance [bowed] to my sheaf.*” “*And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have*

dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me."

Joseph was a man who suffered years of adversity and suffering through no fault or wrongdoing of his own. He was hated by his brothers, sold into slavery, and imprisoned, though he had done nothing to deserve any of these things. As we study the life of Joseph, we will see that all of this suffering came about in his life, as it did in the life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, "by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). Joseph remained faithful to God through all of the hardships he endured, even though he could have had no idea at the time why God had allowed these things to happen to him, or what good could possibly come from any of them. We will see that through all of the unjust sufferings Joseph endured, God was working in his life to prepare him and to bring him to the place where he would do the work that He had determined Joseph would do in His service, work which would bear fruit to His glory.

Discussion:

Joseph believed what the Lord had spoken, and he immediately announced it to his family: "God told me that all of you will bow down to me someday!" Some believe that Joseph made a mistake when he shared this vision, but I believe he was simply excited about hearing from the Lord and shared it in simple faith and humility, not arrogance. However, this bold announcement only served to draw his father's rebuke and feed his brothers' growing hatred. (Gen. 37:8, 10-11).

Joseph had heard from God. He now had a purpose, or a vision, for his life, even if it wasn't received by others. **You were created for a divine purpose as well!** God may not speak to you through a dream, but if you will become determined to know His plan for your life, He will reveal it to you. If you can live without knowing His will for your life, you will. If you're not fulfilled in what you're doing, even if things seem to be going well, don't wait any longer; don't settle for anything less than knowing God's purpose for your life. The Bible makes it very clear in Ephesians 5:17 where it says, *"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."*

Not only will the pursuit of your vision bring fulfillment, but it will also keep you on track. Joseph's vision kept him on track during very difficult times and when faced with great temptation. Proverbs 29:18 says it this way, *"Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint"* (American Standard Version). Your God-given dream, or purpose, will inspire you, motivate you, and help restrain your flesh in the absence of any evidence that it's coming to pass. And don't be surprised if some of your fiercest opposition comes from those close to you. It did for Joseph. Joseph understood that what God had spoken to him and declared about him was true no matter what the circumstances indicated. Genesis 39:2 is one of my favorite verses in all of Scripture because it defies the logic of Joseph's circumstances. It says, *"And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian."*

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to

keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God....” (Genesis 45:4-8,

God’s purpose in bringing Joseph to this position of power in Egypt was to save the entire family of Jacob and his sons (Joseph’s brothers, who had sold him into slavery years earlier) from the famine that was to spread also to the land of Canaan where they were all living. The events that transpired whereby Jacob, his sons, and their families were brought to Egypt to be preserved through the famine are recorded in Genesis 42-47. We cannot know why God has chosen to bring about the bearing of spiritual fruit by means of suffering in the lives of His people. However, we do know that the suffering Joseph experienced in this process is completely consistent with teachings from the Scriptures. God’s will for all of His people is revealed to us through His word, and His will for each of us individually is revealed through the events, circumstances and conditions which He has ordained for our lives. In other words, God’s sovereign will for each of us individually is revealed through the things that He brings about in our lives and through the things that He allows to “happen” to us. And through some of these we will suffer the loss, or the “death”, of things that we want for ourselves in life.

We might question why God chose to bring Joseph to this position of power in Egypt and this place of service for Him by means of all this suffering and adversity in his life. We know that God is all-powerful and that nothing is too hard for Him, and we might ask why He did not bring all of this about in some other way – some easier way. After all, Joseph had done nothing to deserve all that he endured during this process. We might also question why God chose to bring about a famine at all, and why He chose to move His people to Egypt to be preserved through the famine, where they would later be enslaved and oppressed.

Conclusion:

The story of Joseph is power packed, full of wisdom and truth. I believe every Christian needs to study his story again and again. Many of us get stuck in the “what God is NOT doing” narrative. Or many of us get stuck treating God like a genie, thinking that if we jump through enough religious hoops, He will somehow grant us whatever we want. That’s not how it works and that’s why we ALL need to get to the place where Joseph was — trusting God despite our circumstances.

Let’s bring it all together with some lessons we can all learn from Joseph’s life:

- 1) God’s plans and purposes are far greater than our own!
- 2) God provides and blesses those who persevere to follow Him.
- 3) Suffering to God’s people is not always bad! God can use the most painful time of our life for His good.
- 4) There is value in self-control living in the do-whatever-you-want culture.
- 5) God honors patience and perseverance in time of troubles.
- 6) Strive for honesty and strong work ethics. They are sadly missing these days.
- 7) There is something to be said about fear of the Lord and faithfulness to Him.

In retrospect, Joseph was able to see what God intended to accomplish through the years of his suffering in slavery and in prison, though while he was enduring these troubles, he could have had no idea of the way events would unfold as a result of all that he was going through. Joseph had come to understand the sovereignty of God in the things that happen in men’s lives, as we see in

Genesis 45:5-8. He had also come to understand that God is working for good through the events and circumstances which He allows to touch the lives of His people, even when the intent of others is to do harm by their actions. We as believers have this same assurance that everything our sovereign God allows to affect our lives is working together for our good and for our eternal glory.

Even though your life might suck right now, do you have the courage to trust God despite your current circumstances?

DISCUSSION

1. What are the moral lessons of the life of Joseph?
2. How does Joseph inspire us?
3. What was God's purpose in Joseph's life?

LESSON 2 Are You Willing to Stand Alone?

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:1-2

Lesson Text: Daniel 3:23-25 KJV

Lesson Focus: Facing Temptations

Memory Verse: *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up” (Dan. 3:16-18).*

Let's Talk!

Life isn't easy, and sometimes it deals you a rotten hand. Find hope in the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and their miracle by fire.

The "pressures of obedience" in a religious context can be seen as the tension individuals feel when trying to align their lives with divine commands or teachings. This can involve feeling a need to conform to religious practices, beliefs, or rules, even if those seem challenging or contradict personal desires or perspectives. The lessons learned from this struggle can include a deeper understanding of faith, personal values, and the potential for both obedience and resistance in the face of authority.

When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives my brothers, don't treat them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character with the right sort of independence.
—James 1:2–4

For a Christian, success often means growing closer to God. A key aspect in this pursuit is the fight **against temptation**. So, what can you do when you're tempted? For the Christian wanting to overcome temptation to sin, consider these biblical strategies to grow in holiness before God.

Introduction

In a world filled with uncertainty, conflict, and struggle, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and discouraged. As Christians, we know that our ultimate source of strength and hope lies in God's Word. The Bible is filled with powerful verses that can provide comfort, guidance, and resilience during even the darkest of times. We believe in the transformative power of Scripture and its ability to bring light into the lives of those facing crisis, whether it's war, displacement, or personal hardship.

The beautiful promise from Isaiah 43:2 reminds us that no matter what challenges we face, God is always with us. He will not abandon us in our time of need, but will walk alongside us, providing the strength and comfort we so desperately seek.

Facing crises with the Word of God means relying on scripture for strength, comfort, and guidance during difficult times. It involves seeking God's presence through prayer and scripture, trusting in His promises, and finding hope in His love and care. The Bible offers various verses that can provide comfort and encouragement in times of crisis, such as Psalm 46:1, which declares God as "a very present help in trouble".

Philippians 4:6–7“. . . do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

For every crisis we face in Christ, and all its darkness, God has a dawn designed. He will help when morning dawns. Your dawn will come. God's help does not mean that his people are kept *from* crisis, but that he keeps us *through* crisis. In his perfect timing, when the appointed morning dawns, he rescues his people from their trouble, having preserved them through the long night.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. Isaiah 43:2 (ESV) Taking a stand can be an incredibly lonely position. Yet masses of people avoid it, due to the fear they battle within. When you choose to do what's right during opposition, it can open a door for fear to want to hold you back. Yet there is tremendous freedom and power available when you stand amid fear.

Too many are held back from standing because fear has so deeply conditioned them to live by polls of people more than by what they know is right.

Many times, taking a stand means living in a way that honors God when other people don't seem to care. It can mean making the choice of integrity while others cheat the system. Taking a stand can mean keeping a heart of forgiveness towards those who wrong you while everyone else judges and defames them.

We avoid standing for truth because of fear, but also because of our need to belong, to have people like us and approve of us. We want to be included and accepted so much that doing what's right can be blocked. The pull can keep people from making the decisions we need to make. Our longing for connection will override by taking the stands they need to take.

God is not interested in relieving you of the stands He has called you to take. In fact, freedom from fear and the deeper discovery of who God is can be discovered in greater clarity when we are willing to stand firm.

Discussion:

The Pressure Will Come. If life has pushed you too far, it is time to rise with the attitude of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego - an attitude where you are fully persuaded. You might expect a fully persuaded attitude would cause a breakthrough. Not necessarily. When Nebuchadnezzar

heard Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's words of defiance, he did not back down either. He turned up the pressure. Things got even hotter (Daniel 3:19).

In the book of Daniel, the account of three Hebrew men is a classic lesson in facing fear and taking a stand. Their example has humbled me and challenged me to seek for a greater level of inner boldness to stand for God in boldness and confidence. Their example would make the strongest men of battle cringe. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were pulled out of the captured Hebrews to serve in the Babylonian kingdom. While they served under an ungodly empire, God honored their integrity and faith by granting them favor before the king's leadership. They could have easily ridden the coattails of their favor to pursue pleasure because of their esteemed status. Yet their No. 1 concern was to honor God and keep His ways alive in their hearts.

If you want to go where God is leading, you will have to let go of comfort being your driving force. If you are always looking for places in life that feed pleasure and comfort, you will always find yourself in a status quo existence. These Hebrew men decided they were not designed for a life of comfort, but a life of power. They got comfortable with the uncomfortable.

We can face fear when we gain a revelation of what God thinks about us. Yet so many struggle to connect to that reality, because they feel separated from God's love and presence. When we experience the love and greatness of who our Father is, it overrides every other voice. These Hebrew men had such a deep revelation of God's awesome nature that their words to the king after being arrested for are astounding.

Conclusion

In a world that can often feel overwhelming and filled with despair, the Bible stands as a beacon of hope and strength. As you navigate your own challenges and hardships, we invite you to turn to the Bible for the strength, comfort, and guidance you need. Remember that no matter what you are facing, God is with you, and His Word has the power to sustain and transform you. May you find hope, peace, and resilience in the pages of Scripture, and may you be encouraged by the knowledge that you are not alone in your struggles. If the fires of life are threatening, take heart. The miracle of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is a miracle for you too. Be fully persuaded. Believe the promise, so when the pressure increases, you receive protection and ultimately promotion. The fire may have been your greatest test, but on the other side you will see promotion. You will experience spiritual promotion, for fire always refines. You may also encounter physical promotion in your job and experience greater favor with those you know. Others will recognize the goodness of God through your faith. Don't give up. Your miracle is in the fire.

Tying It All Together

1. Are You Willing to Stand Alone?
2. Explain This --- When you walk through the fire, chains will break.
3. Let's Talk... How does life deal you a rotten hand?