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Ages 18-Up

Roderick D. Belin, President/Publisher
Garland F. Pierce, Executive Director, Department of Christian Education
Andre’ Wright, Chief of Operations
Orlando Dotson, Layout and Design

SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Superintendent—And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy ox, nor thy ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor’s.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor’s.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and write these laws upon our hearts.

Nearer, my God, to thee, 
Nearer to thee! 
Even though it be a cross 
That raiseth me; 
Still all my song shall be, 
Nearer, my God, to thee! 
Nearer to thee!

Superintendent—Hear what Christ, our Savior, saith: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
The Order of Service

I. Bell tap or organ voluntary as a signal for silence
II. Singing
III. The Apostles’ Creed
IV. Prayer, closing with the Lord’s Prayer in concert
V. Singing
VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
VII. Responsive reading of the lesson text by school
VIII. The Decalogue

The Lesson

I. Organ interlude while the classes are being arranged
II. Class study of the lesson
III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
IV. Closing bell — silence

The Closing

I. Singing
II. Review and application of the lesson
III. Secretary’s report
IV. The Church School Creed
V. Singing
VI. Benediction

The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

The Church School Creed

I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus’ name.

A.M.E. Discipline
Hello, AME Church School Member!

The Home Daily Bible Readings will continue to appear at the end of each Sunday's lesson but they will be the readings for the following week. We made this change in response to your requests. The readings for the first week are below.

Sunday, October 17, 2021 will be AME Church School Sunday. This Sunday will highlight the vital work of the Church School and recognize the excellent work of Church School students and leaders. Please visit our website- www.iamame.org- for ideas to observe AME Church School Sunday and to find other worship and study resources to empower you and enhance the life of the church.

For over a year we have used Zoom and Facebook to facilitate our weekly Connectional Church School with teachers (lay and clergy) from around the AME Connection. They generously share their knowledge, talents, and expertise with a weekly average of 500 participants viewing via Zoom and 1500 on Facebook.

This virtual AME Connectional Church School was birthed due to the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The blessings from the teachings have been immeasurable. We will continue this Connectional Church School on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. EST. Join us! Zoom Meeting ID: 829 9325 1894.

Visit our website- www.iamame.org- to find worship and study resources to empower you and enhance the life of the church.

Like our Facebook page so you will be informed about programming and important announcements from the Publishing House and The Christian Recorder: www.facebook.com/amecpublishing.

Join our Facebook Group to continue conversations after Church School and share ideas, thoughts, and best practices with other AME Church School members and teachers: www.facebook.com/groups/amechurchschool.

Thank you for purchasing Liberating Faith Studies. We are working every day to fulfill our mission to provide high quality resources to empower us to spread Jesus Christ’s liberating gospel, pursue justice, and enhance the social development of all people.

And, always remember, I am praying for you.

Roderick D. Belin
President/Publisher
### HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

#### August 30–September 5

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EXODUS 15:11-21 (NRSV)

11 “Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?
12 You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them.
13 In your steadfast love you led the people whom you redeemed; you guided them by your strength to your holy abode.
14 The peoples heard, they trembled; pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
15 Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.
16 Terror and dread fell upon them; by the greatness of your arm they became still as a stone; until your people, O Lord, passed by, until the people whom you acquired passed by.
17 You brought them in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O Lord, which you made your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established.
18 The Lord will reign forever and ever.
19 When the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his chariot drivers went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them; but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground.
20 Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing.
21 And Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.”

EXODUS 15:11-21 (KJV)

11 Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?
12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.
13 Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.
14 The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.
15 Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.
16 Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.
17 Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.
18 The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.
19 For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.
20 And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.
21 And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.
KEY TERMS

- **Anthropomorphism** (an-thro-po-mor-phism) – Derives from Greek terminology. It refers to the practice of using human terms to refer to God. God is spirit (John 4:24)! Human terminology enhances understandings of the scriptures.

- **Worship** – Expressions of reverence and adoration that celebrate our sovereign God, God’s love, and faithfulness.

INTRODUCTION

What is your favorite worship song? Why is it your favorite? Everybody tends to have a favorite song or hymn! Answering the first question is usually easy and quick. Articulating reasons for favorite songs, however, usually takes more time and reflection because “favorites” derive from personal experiences. The “Song of Moses,” which is the first song recorded in the scriptures, originated in the same way. The song resulted from Moses’ recollections of Israel’s experiences with God as God used him to lead Israel out of Egypt. Notably, Miriam, Moses’ sister, also worshipped in song (Exodus 15:20-21). This quarter’s thirteen lessons focus on worship. Singing is one of many forms of worship in which Christians engage. Others will be explored throughout this quarter’s lessons.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Moses employs anthropomorphism (an-thro-po-mor-phism) throughout his song. There are actually five stanzas in the song (Exodus 15:1-18). The first stanza (vs. 1-5) focuses on God as a warrior. The second stanza (vs. 6-10) focuses on God, the triumphant warrior, over Egypt, the enemy of his people. Today’s lesson is focused on the third, fourth, and fifth stanzas (vs. 11-21). They highlight God’s incomparable powers as a warrior, motivated by love and compassion for God’s people. God has just miraculously saved the Israelites by parting the Red Sea and letting them walk through on dry land. Simultaneously,
God has allowed Moses and the Israelites to witness their enemies’ destruction. God used the same sea and its waters to drown Pharaoh and his armies as they went into the Red Sea, chasing the Israelites. Hence, “Moses’ Song” was born.

**God Is Incomparable (Exodus 15:11-13)**

Although Egypt had many gods, none could compare to the God of Israel. Considering the length of Israel’s time in Egypt, some Israelites may have been impressed with Egypt’s many gods. Moses includes many specific blessings in his song, including God’s most recent victory for Israel, to emphasize incommensurable differences between Yahweh and other gods. Having been eyewitnesses to God’s powerful acts as they have journeyed this far toward the Promised Land, Israel needs to celebrate! Spontaneous worship was a natural response. “Moses’ Song” embodies highest levels of praise and worship. Through his song, Moses also invites the whole nation of Israel to praise God. This celebratory song transcends time into eternity. Revelation 15:3-4 notes that all of the redeemed sang “the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.”

**More Blessings and Deliverances Await God’s People (Exodus 15:14-18)**

News of God’s conquests was to go before Israel. Warriors carried their weapons in their right hand, from which victories derive. Therefore, God’s right hand is joyfully extolled. Enemies, including inhabitants of Philistia, Edom, and Moab, would hear the news of God’s powerful protections of God’s people and fear the Lord as well as God’s people. Sorrow, dismay, trembling, fear, dread, and surrender are responses to expect as the Promised Land journey continues. We see the fulfillment of this prophecy in the Canaanites’ fearful responses...
(Joshua 2:10). The ultimate promise of victory to Israel is in verse 17, wherein God’s promise to bring them to their inheritance is fulfilled. Israel is high on praises and gratitude at this point, and they gladly proclaim God’s sovereignty and his rightful rule over their lives forever and ever (v. 18).

**SANKOFA**

“Lift Every Voice and Sing,” or the “Negro National Anthem,” is a song of special significance for all people of the African diaspora. “Lift Every Voice and Sing” was written as a poem by James Weldon Johnson to commemorate the birthday of President Abraham Lincoln and the actions he took to abolish slavery in the United States. It was set to music by his brother, Rosamond Johnson, in 1899. To celebrate President Lincoln’s birthday, on February 12, 1900, five hundred children performed this song in Jacksonville, Florida. It was later adopted by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as the organization’s official song. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s brought greater prominence and appreciation to the song, as it became one of the most cherished songs of the movement.

Like the “Song of Moses,” this song lives on in our hearts as it evokes memories of our heritage and history, inclusive of the pain, triumphs, challenges, and successes we have experienced. At the heart of this commemoration is an unbroken thread and theme that traces our history with almighty God. The song is celebratory and projects future victories as it evokes images of our being overcomers, with God as our leader.

**CASE STUDY**

Twenty-two-year-old Amanda Gorman achieved status as the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history on January 20, 2021. With exceptional excellence and passion, Ms. Gorman recited her poem, *The Hill We Climb*. She wrote the poem to commemorate the inauguration of President Joseph Biden and Vice
President Kamala Harris. *The Hill We Climb* immediately gained recognition as a “Best Seller.” Of course, Ms. Gorman has gained celebrity status that continues to grow.

Ms. Gorman and her poem deserve much more attention and serious study than permissible in this assigned space. Certainly, her talents will have long-lasting impacts on America’s history and culture. She captured hearts as she spoke to the call for national unity amid unprecedented divisiveness and other challenges. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Ms. Gorman gave the following explanation: “In my poem, I’m not going to in any way gloss over what we’ve seen over the past few weeks, and dare I say, the past few years. But what I really aspire to do in the poem is to be able to use my words to envision a way in which our country can still come together and heal. It’s doing that in a way that is not erasing or neglecting the harsh truths I think America needs to reconcile with.” Ms. Gorman’s performance at the inauguration can be viewed at [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com).

**LIFE APPLICATION**

We know that the Israelites were the original audience for “Moses’ Song.” It captured their heritage and history with almighty God. Yet, we know that adoption by God positions us to also be God’s children. “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” on the other hand, allows us to see and appreciate God and God’s actions from our own personal experiences. Let us reflect and remember:

> Lift every voice and sing  
> Till earth and heaven ring  
> Ring with the harmonies of Liberty  
> Let our rejoicing rise  
> High as the listening skies  
> Let it resound loud as the rolling sea  
> Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us  
> Sing a song full of the hope that the present has taught us  
> Facing the rising sun of our new day
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way
Thou who has by thy might Led us into the light
Keep us forever in the path, we pray

QUESTIONS:
1. How has this lesson impacted your perspectives on worship?
2. How do you think this lesson can be used in evangelism?
3. How do “The Song of Moses” and “Lift Every Voice and Sing” motivate you to worship?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Song: “Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Closing Prayer: Lord, we thank you for teaching us more about worship. Please bless us with commitments to worship you more, both individually and corporately. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.
### HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS
#### September 6-September 12

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<th>Reading</th>
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2 SAMUEL 6:1-5, 14-19 (NRSV)

1 David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.
2 David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim.
3 They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart.
4 With the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark.
5 David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

14-19

14 David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod.
15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.
16 As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.
17 They brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord.
18 When David had finished offering

2 SAMUEL 6:1-5, 14-19 (KJV)

1 Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.
2 And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims.
3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was at Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.
4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.
5 And David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

14-19

14 And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod.
15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.
16 As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal Saul’s daughter looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.
17 And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the
the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts,

19 and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

**KEY TERMS**

- **Abinadab** (“my father is generous”) – Owner of the house that provided a twenty-year resting place for the Ark of the Covenant.
- **Ahio and Uzzah** – Sons of Abinadab, who attempted to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem on a cart.
- **Ephod** – A garment, like a vest or tunic, worn by priests. Its length extended across the shoulders to at least the waist, front and back.

**INTRODUCTION**

Just thinking about a parade brings exciting visions. Joyful music, marching bands, dancing, and so forth tend to create instant bonds of exuberant fellowship among crowds of people. This is particularly true with homecoming parades, which are special, commemorative events. Obviously, King David loved this kind of excitement. He took 30,000 “chosen men of Israel” (2 Sam. 6:1) with him to Baale-judah to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. Although the trip would take less than a day’s journey, David’s celebration was delayed because God’s instructions for handling the Ark were disobeyed. After a three-month delay, David made a second attempt to achieve his goal. This attempt was successful, and the long-awaited celebration, which is described in our **Key Verse**, began.

**TELLING THE BIBLE STORY**

King David, who was described by God as a man after his own heart
(Acts 13:22), openly expresses his love for God and his own desire to have the nation of Israel also love and honor God. The events occur after Judah and Israel have been reunited, with Jerusalem being designated as the capital city. David wants Jerusalem to be the center of worship and permanent home for the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant serves as tangible evidence of the immediate presence of God among his people (Ex. 25:8). The Ark had been confiscated and held by the Philistines for seven months. The Ark was subsequently recovered from the Philistines and left at the house of Abinadab for twenty years. King David decided to bring the Ark to Jerusalem.

**David’s Failed Attempt (2 Samuel 6:1-5)**

King David prepared himself and the military to recover the Ark. He chose 30,000 of Israel’s best soldiers to accompany him. He was also well prepared to celebrate! After gaining possession of the Ark, David and his army formed a parade, and they “were dancing before the Lord with all their might with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals” (v. 5). Despite their jubilance and perceived success, this effort failed because they failed to comply with God’s instructions for transporting the Ark (2 Sam. 6:3; 1 Chronicles 13:5-13). Later scriptures reveal how the actions angered God and resulted in death of Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:6-7).

**King David, who was described by God as a man after his own heart (Acts 13:22), openly expresses his love for God and his own desire to have the nation of Israel also love and honor God.**

**David’s Successful Attempt (2 Samuel 6:14-19)**

Following Uzzah’s death, King David was angry and afraid to take the Ark to the city of Jerusalem (Samuel 2:8-10). So, he left it at the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months. Hearing how the Lord had blessed Obed-Edom “and all that belonged to him,” King David made a second attempt to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. This second attempt was successful, which indicates...
King David had learned from the first attempt that God’s instructions require total obedience.

With his mission accomplished, King David was overjoyed! He was exuberant and unconcerned about how he might appear to others. For example, he wore an ephod (a linen apron, or vestment for priest) instead of his royal robes, and he allowed the public to see him dance with such fervor that he leapt into the air. Michal, his wife, “despised him in her heart” (v. 16). At this point, David ignored Michal and proceeded to set the Ark in place as planned (v. 17), offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, blessed the people, and provided food before everyone departed for their homes (vs. 18-19). Later, Michal openly rebuked David for “un-kingly” behavior. David, however, rejected Michal’s rebuke as he promised to become even more contemptible (2 Samuel 6). Michal is severely punished for her behavior (2 Samuel 6:23).

**SANKOFA**

Clearly, no human event is comparable to David’s recovery of the Ark and bringing it to Jerusalem for permanent residency. However, the meaningfulness of Nelson Mandela’s release from prison in South Africa gives a more contemporary glimpse of pure human joy and celebration of a homecoming. Mandela had been falsely convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment twenty-seven years earlier by the South African government. Actually, Mandela was arrested because of his dedicated work and services to the people, the majority of whom were black, and especially his efforts to end apartheid in the country.

The end of apartheid did not come immediately upon Mandela’s release, but he continued his quest until the “legalized” segregation and discriminatory practices were abolished. Although the government
had worked hard to end his leadership and power as a leader, Mandela maintained his resolve to help effect an end to three centuries of domination. “The Day Mandela Walked out of Prison,” which is a National Public Radio (NPR) report, gives a graphic accounting of the public’s reactions.

According to the report, “Black South Africa exploded with joy. A boisterous crowd of some 100,000 people squeezed into the Grand Parade Grounds outside Cape Town’s City Hall, infusing it with energy that might be expected at a rock concert. Mandela was to deliver his first speech there, at what was almost certainly the largest black crowd ever to gather for an event in what was still formally a white city.” Detailed perusal of the report is recommended as it contains much more graphic information about the people’s responses. Suffice it to say, the people reveled in this event and the accompanying parade as they signaled fulfillment of long-held hopes of freedom and liberty for the oppressed.

**CASE STUDY**

King David’s worship styles and habits created deeper understandings about the role of worship in Christian life as well as how to worship in ways that please God. First of all, David never presented himself as a perfect person. Like most of us, King David assumed many roles in life. His roles included being a shepherd, a poet, a giant-killer, and ultimately an ancestor of Jesus Christ. He sinned, like all of humankind, and although the scriptures are replete with examples of David’s failures, God still referred to him as “a man after my own heart” (Acts 13:22).

As we explore biblical revelations about David, certain attributes, reflective of God’s character, emerge. For example, David steadfastly believed in God’s faithfulness and forgiving spirit. Hence,
confession and repentance were naturally forthcoming as David recognized his own sinful behavior. Psalm 51 exemplifies these characteristics. Along with the joys of forgiveness, David also accepted consequences. Again, there are many confirming biblical examples, including his response to the news that God was not going to save the life of the child that David had illegitimately conceived with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:1 to 15-17).

The vigor, spontaneity, and varieties of David’s worship habits confirmed that he never restricted himself to any human standards for appropriate worship. Neither Michal nor any other human could restrain him. David personifies the need to approach God with clean, forgiven hearts (Psalm 51:10), to be guided by the Holy Spirit, and to worship him “in truth and in spirit” (John 4:23-24).

**LIFE APPLICATION**

This lesson provides great incentives and information for strengthening our worship practices. Perhaps the strongest message is that there are many ways to worship God. These include dance, poetry, songs, music, prayers, meditation, and so forth. The pivotal common thread governing them all is the fact that true worship focuses on God.

There is a tendency to see worship as a corporate or congregational activity only; but, as true worshippers we don’t need a crowd, and we don’t need humankind’s approval, including any Michals, in our lives. We can worship God anywhere – in our bedrooms, kitchens, any place where we can focus on God and his goodness, and where we can allow the Holy Spirit to direct our responses. Amen! It makes us feel good, and it strengthens our faith as we are drawn into the very presence of God almighty. Psalm 22:3 tells us that “God inhabits the praises of his peoples.”

**QUESTIONS:**

1. What impressed you most about David’s dancing?
2. How can you use this lesson to strengthen your worship practices?

3. How could you use this lesson to enlighten critics who declare that “if people are worshipping a certain way, they can’t be saved or know Jesus?”

**CLOSING DEVOTIONS**

**Closing Song:** “Lord, Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary”

**Closing Prayer:** Lord, thank you for being the source of our strength and the strength of our lives. We know that it is in you that we live and move and have our beings. Please bless us to become more faithful, spontaneous worshippers. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

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**HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

**September 13-September 19**

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<th>Scripture</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Psalm 96 (Declare God’s Glory Among the Nations)</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Psalm 115:1-3, 9-18 (Glory to God’s Name Alone)</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Mark 10:17-22 (Only God Is Good)</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
<td>Mark 10:42-45 (Greatness through Servanthood)</td>
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<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Psalm 146 (Praise the Lord, O My Soul!)</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Mark 10:46-52 (Praise God for Healing!)</td>
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Glorifying God

Lesson Scripture: Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43
Focus Scripture: Mark 10:46-52

Key Verse: Then Jesus said to him “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Mark 10:51 (NRSV)

MARK 10:46-52 (NRSV)
46 They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside.
47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”
48 Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”
49 Jesus stood still and said, “Call him here.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.”
50 So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.
51 Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.”
52 Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

MARK 10:46-52 (KJV)
46 And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.
47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me.
48 And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.
49 And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee.
50 And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus.
51 And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.
52 And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.
Lesson 3

KEY TERMS

• Capernaum – A fishing town, located about 79 miles from Jerusalem; Capernaum was a center for commerce and the center of operations for Jesus’ Galilean ministry.

• Cloak – An outer garment that could be used as a coat and as bedding at night. Bartimaeus may have also used his cloak to hold money that he gleaned from begging.

• Jericho – Also known as the “city of palm trees”; located about 15 miles from Jerusalem, Jericho is the place where Jesus encountered and healed Bartimaeus.

INTRODUCTION

Physical and spiritual blindness are on display in this lesson. One is obvious and readily acknowledged. The other is unnoticeable and unacknowledged. For both, Jesus is the source of healing. His purpose in doing so is to glorify God.

Jesus, in today’s lesson, is concluding the last three months of his earthly ministry. He and the disciples have left Capernaum and are traveling through Jericho to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. This will be Jesus’ final trip to Jerusalem before he is crucified. However, as they are leaving the city of Jericho, they are unexpectedly interrupted by Bartimaeus, a man with physical blindness who cries out to Jesus for mercy.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Jesus has tried to prepare the disciples for what lies ahead in Jerusalem, but they still focus on beliefs that Jesus’ life and power will be dedicated to overturning the Roman government’s powers. Some competitiveness for more power exists among the disciples. Just before their arrival in Jericho, James and John ask for seats on either side of Jesus when he comes into his glory (Mark 10:37). Jesus, however, reiterates his mission and the purpose for his ministry:
“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom” (Mark 10:45; Matthew 20:28). Subsequently, Bartimaeus is encountered.

**Bartimaeus Cries Out for Mercy (Mark 10:46-48)**

Begging was Bartimaeus’ vocation. He most likely sat by this busy roadside and begged every day. Occupations in this economy required physical movement and labor that people with physical blindness could not perform. It is obvious that Bartimaeus had heard of Jesus and had faith in his healing powers. Note that Bartimaeus refers to Jesus as “the Son of David,” and as “Rabbi,” or “Teacher.” Son of David referred to Jesus’ divinity and role as Messiah. Referring to Jesus as “Rabbi” indicates acknowledgement of Jesus as a religious authority to be respected as God’s spokesperson. Although he is rebuked for “making noise” as he seeks Jesus’ attention, Bartimaeus persists. He is determined to get Jesus’ attention.

**Jesus Responds to Bartimaeus’ Faith (Mark 10:49-52)**

Jesus hears Bartimaeus. Moreover, he hears the man’s faith in his speech and actions! Jesus stops! Surely, this allows the man with blindness to know where Jesus is because he recognizes where Jesus’ voice is coming from. Bartimaeus can now have a “face to face” conversation with Jesus. When he was told to come to where Jesus was standing, Bartimaeus immediately throws his cloak aside, jumps to his feet, and comes to Jesus (v. 50).

Bartimaeus knows what he wants from Jesus! When Jesus asks, he immediately says to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Jesus declares Bartimaeus to be healed because of his faith. Bartimaeus continues to demonstrate faith as he “immediately
received his sight and followed Jesus along the road” (v. 52).

SANKOFA

Blindness, like many other disabilities, can lead to the marginalization of those affected. This was certainly the case with Bartimaeus. He was relegated to a life of begging. He also lived in a world that commonly believed blindness to be a curse from God. This must have been a lonely existence for Bartimaeus. Engaging through reading was not an option for him as braille had not been invented at this time. Nevertheless, Jesus saw Bartimaeus differently than his contemporaries. He was worthy of Jesus’ full attention, healing powers, and ultimately leaving the margins of society to go “mainstream” as Jesus’ follower.

Jesus saw Bartimaeus differently than his contemporaries. He was worthy of Jesus’ full attention, healing powers, and ultimately leaving the margins of society to go “mainstream” as Jesus’ follower.

God heals in many ways. Not every blind person receives sight. However, there are many instances wherein God has blessed other people, with blindness, to become productive, actively engaged citizens. Some, such as Ray Charles, the famous singer, songwriter, and composer, have been blessed to engage on exceptional levels with people from all walks of life. Although he was born into poverty, deserted by his father at a very young age, and raised by a single mother, Ray Charles gained world-wide acclaim and innumerable awards, including Life-Time Achievement Awards in 1984 and 1987. He may have been marginalized during his early life, but Ray Charles was blessed to excel in a career spanning five decades.

Education and braille were obviously acute factors in Ray Charles’ success. He completely lost his sight (perhaps from glaucoma) when he was about seven years old. He was fortunately able to attend a state school in St. Augustine, Florida for students with deafness and/or blindness. There he learned to read and discover his music.
abilities and talents. He also gained exposure to various kinds of music, including classical music, and he learned to play various musical instruments. Of course, most of us are familiar with his mastery of the piano.

Ray Charles’ story demonstrates the fact that God doesn’t always deliver or heal us in the way we might prefer or request. Although he certainly could have, God chose not to deliver Ray Charles from blindness. Instead, he gave Ray Charles the tools he needed to thrive in a world designed to accommodate people with physical blindness. Surely, we can see that Ray Charles’ successes were testaments to God’s glory.

CASE STUDY

The well-known, beloved song, “Amazing Grace,” was borne out of deliverance from spiritual blindness. Most of us start humming as soon as the music or lyrics begin. The deliverance is a shared one: “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.”

The song was written in 1772 by John Newton, an Englishman, who became a slave trader. Orphaned at an early age, Newton lived through a troubled childhood. He developed a rebellious spirit that became evident early in his life. His rebelliousness even led to his trying unsuccessfully to desert from the Royal Navy while in his twenties.

Newton began his spiritual journey during a violent storm, while at sea. Believing the ship would sink and facing the possibility of death, Newton’s perspectives on life changed completely. He confessed to having transported many slaves from Africa to England, and to having been extremely inhumane to them. Many had become extremely ill and died. However, Newton made a dramatic change and abandoned his sinful lifestyle.

Like the “new creation” promised in the scriptures, Newton began living for God. He became an ordained Anglican priest, popular preacher, and hymnologist.
“Amazing Grace” was one of his greatest hymns. Newton not only ended his involvement in slave trading, but he also became a leader among the abolitionists and lived to see the Slave Trade Act of 1807 enacted.

**LIFE APPLICATION**

“There is none so blind as he who will not see.” Bartimaeus had accepted Jesus as the Messiah – the Son of David, and Rabbi. Despite having lived and walked with Jesus daily, and having observed him as teacher, preacher, healer, and miracle worker, the disciples obviously still were uncertain about Jesus’ identity and mission. This was later evidenced in the fact they deserted him (at least temporarily) as Jesus was persecuted and crucified. Praise God, he gave them second chances as he does for you and me.

So, where are you? It is introspection time! Which are you more like: Bartimaeus or the disciples? Are you ready to throw off “your cloak (completely), and follow Jesus?” Throwing off our cloaks equates with casting aside the burdens of earthly cares. How about taking up your bed and walking? Here’s the test of faith: it means we are no longer in control. We’re giving our allegiances and controls to Jesus Christ. Bartimaeus didn’t know where Jesus would lead him, but he was ready to follow. How about you?

**QUESTIONS:**

1. What new thoughts do you have about blindness?
2. What lifestyle changes do you suppose Bartimaeus experienced after gaining his sight?
3. How do you think Bartimaeus may have used his life experiences to glorify God?

**CLOSING DEVOTION**

*Closing Prayer:* Dear Lord, as we close this discussion, please bless us by closely examining us. Spiritual blindness is always a threat to our relationships with you. Jesus taught that if we abide in him and he abides in us, we can be fruitful. Lord, we want to be fruitful, and to glorify you in everything we do. Please
Lesson 3

September 19, 2021

bless us to be whom you have called us to be, individually and collectively. In the name of Jesus, we pray, and thank you. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 20-September 26

Monday  Exodus 19:1-8 (A Priestly Kingdom, a Holy Nation)
Tuesday  Exodus 20:1-6 (Worship God Alone)
Wednesday Psalms 133; 134 (When Kindred Live in Unity)
Thursday Revelation 4 (Praise in the Heavenly Community)
Friday Acts 2:1-12 (The Day of Pentecost)
Saturday Acts 2:22-36 (Jesus Is Lord and Messiah)
Sunday Acts 2:37-47 (A Community of Praise)
Lesson 4  
September 26, 2021

Believers Praise God

Lesson Scripture: Acts 2:32-33, 37-47  
Focus Scripture: Acts 2:32-33, 37-47  
Key Verse: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42 (NRSV)

ACTS 2:32-33, 37-47 (NRSV)

Acts 2:32-33

32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.
33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.

37-47

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”
38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
39 For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”
40 And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”
41 So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.
42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.
44 All who believed were together and had all things in common;
45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any

ACTS 2:32-33, 37-47 (KJV)

Acts 2:32-33

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

37-47

37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?
38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.
39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.
40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.
41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.
42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.
43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.
44 And all that believed were together, and had all things in common;
45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.
had need.

46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

KEY TERMS


- **Breaking bread** – Refers to traditional celebrations of the Lord’s Supper as well as the act of sharing common meals. Today’s scriptures refer to both.

- **Praise** – Acknowledging and appreciating God for his worthiness. “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised” (Psalm 145:3, KJV).

INTRODUCTION

2021 unfolded with the world facing unprecedented chaos and threats to routine daily life experiences. The world-wide COVID-19 Pandemic, police brutality, violence, social inequalities, political, social, and economic upheaval and unrest, and corrupt leadership were pervasive. Although most people express desires for unity, strong differences of opinions on what unity should look like exist. Who should benefit from a unified society? Even determining how unity should be achieved seems to present immutable barriers to humankind being “on one accord.”

Today’s scriptures give vivid pictorial accounts of what a unified community looks like as well as the values
to be derived from living in harmony with others. This is Holy Spirit inspired unity! The benefactors are believers who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, and commit to living their lives in accordance with the life and precepts of Jesus, the Christ. Bonded together through steadfast love for Jesus Christ and commitments to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these early Christians enjoy unity despite the chaos and disunity that exists in the broader society around them.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

The disciples have watched Jesus ascend into heaven, and they have obeyed his command to wait in Jerusalem for the arrival of the Holy Spirit. While waiting, they select a replacement for Judas, who betrayed Jesus Christ. By praying and casting lots (Acts 1:23-26), they choose Matthias. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit makes a grand entrance while the disciples, including Matthias, are all together in one place. “Filled with the Holy Ghost, the disciples begin speaking in other tongues” (Acts 2:1-4). As others, including pilgrims from many nations (Acts 2:5), observe the disciples’ reactions to the Holy Spirit, they are amazed and bewildered by the fact that they are hearing the disciples speak in their native languages. Some accused the disciples of being drunk. Peter challenges that suggestion and launches into a powerful sermon.

The Disciples as Eyewitnesses (Acts 2:32-33)

For his sermon, Peter uses the scriptures to confirm Jesus’ Messiahship, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, with a seat at God’s right hand. Peter also notes that Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit is being witnessed by everyone as they observe the events on this Day of Pentecost. In a powerfully persuasive way Peter brings credibility to himself...
and his colleagues by pointing out the fact that, as eyewitneses to Jesus' ministry, the disciples (now Apostles) have personally watched Jesus perform miracles and fulfill prophecies throughout his earthly ministry. This includes Matthias, whose eligibility for consideration has been based upon the fact he had been with Jesus from the time of his baptism by John the Baptist until his resurrection (Acts 1:22-26).

For scriptural validations, Peter uses several Old Testament scriptures, including the Psalms, as well as the books of Jeremiah and Joel.

**Convicted Hearts Lead to New Lifestyles**  
*(Acts 2:37-47)*

Peter’s sermon continues from Acts 2:14 through Acts 2:36. As a result, the community of believers increases exponentially, beginning with about 120 disciples (Acts 1:15), and adding over 3000 more that day (Acts 2:41). The new converts included many devout pilgrims who have traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover and are staying over for Pentecost. When the crowd asks Peter what they should do after hearing his message, Peter commands them to repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus for forgiveness of their sins, and to “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” In essence, Peter tells them to change their lives immediately and receive the Holy Spirit.

Consequently, we see the whole community engaging in new lifestyles as described in our **Key Verse** *(Acts 2:42). Since “everything was held in common and everyone’s needs were met,” *(Acts 2:43-45), praising God, breaking bread together, and fellowshipping with each other are now daily routines. As others observe this community of believers, the numbers of believers continued to grow.

**SANKOFA**

Family reunions, for people of the African diaspora, are occasions when most families congregate, fellowship, and break bread together while remaining “on one accord.”
break bread together while remaining “on one accord.” The reunions are usually carefully planned, with focus on strengthening and unifying family relationships. Relatives who travel great distances look forward to seeing those who live closer to the reunion site as well as those who may not have attended the last reunion. It is a time for reuniting with familiar family members, meeting new family members, celebrating kinship, and recalling family histories. Family values and legacies are passed on from one generation to the next.

Power of a special kind is derived from these reunions. The family has been the quintessential structure for the transmission of culture and values that sustain Africans of all nations. Wisdom from the elderly is easily accessed and passed on to younger generations. In many cases, oral histories, including periods of pain and suffering as well as triumphs, are recalled and freely shared. Through them, family members gain greater senses of personal worth and positive identities. Celebrations that the world, in general, might totally ignore are typically reunion highlights. Neither slavery nor Jim Crow Laws, apartheid, or other structural impediments that affect us individually and/or collectively have been able to obliterate the power, resilience, and optimism that strong family ties and relationships produce.

**CASE STUDY**

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu’s leadership, as head of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has garnered worldwide acclaim. The Commission’s goal was to help South Africans heal and unify after apartheid ended. Unification in South Africa involved bringing together a nation, including oppressors and victims, that had been legally separated by race-based policies or systems of segregation and discrimination. Apartheid had been in existence more than 40 years.

Bishop Tutu’s recollections of his work as the head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission epitomizes King David’s belief that “God inhabits the praises of his people.” Prayer, according to Bishop Tutu’s recollections of his work as the head of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, has garnered worldwide acclaim. The Commission’s goal was to help South Africans heal and unify after apartheid ended. Unification in South Africa involved bringing together a nation, including oppressors and victims, that had been legally separated by race-based policies or systems of segregation and discrimination. Apartheid had been in existence more than 40 years.

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Tutu’s report, undergirded his work. In addition to his own frequent prayers, he called on others to pray. One example is cited in the following personal account: “when we started (the commission), I wrote to the secretary-general of the Anglican consultative council and asked him if he would please put this request to the religious communities of our church around the world, to say, ‘please pray for this enterprise.’”

**LIFE APPLICATION**

An obvious message from this study is the fact that praise is not to be limited to Sunday morning worship, or other corporate settings. For believers, it is to be incorporated into daily life experiences. How can we perseve, or expect to flourish, unless God is with and within us? Proverbs 3:6 promises that if we acknowledge God in all our ways, he will direct our paths. As we look at the community of believers in today’s lesson, we can find a model for patterning our lives.

In these challenging times, our need for God is magnified every day. He has promised never to leave us nor to forsake us. Therefore, we can depend on him. Yet, we should never take him for granted. Remember, he deserves our praise. As we praise him, we are strengthened as we are reminded of his presence, his goodness, and his faithfulness.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. How comfortable are you with your praise habits?
2. How often do you stop all distractions and just focus on God’s presence?
3. Are you filling your prayers with praise as well as petitions?

**CLOSING DEVOTIONS**

**Closing Song:** “Jesus, You Are the Center of My Life”

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Lord, we thank you that each of us can experience your presence wherever we are. Thank you for being our Father, our Lord, our Savior, and everything we need. It is in you that we live and move and have our being, and for that we say “thank you.” In the name of Jesus, please bless us to stay close to you and to remember how you cover us “under your wings,” and protect us from the storms of life. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.
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<th>Day</th>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>Psalm 95 (Praise the Rock of Our Salvation)</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Luke 19:28, 36-40 (Stones Shout Out!)</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1 Peter 1:3-9 (Indescribable and Glorious Joy)</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Psalm 98 (Sing to God a New Song)</td>
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<td>Hebrews 13:12-16 (A Continuous Sacrifice of Praise)</td>
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<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Psalm 66:1-7 (Rejoice in God’s Mighty Rule)</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Psalm 100 (Enter God’s Courts with Praise)</td>
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