

Prophets and People

Bible Knowledge, Part 2

Summary for Teachers

Theme

Follow Bible principles!—Fulfilled prophecies about Jesus build our faith that the Bible is true. Learning more about the people of God who lived in Bible times, we see that they were imperfect men and women like we are.—“We also are men with the same nature as you” (Acts 14:15). This should encourage us that we, too, can follow God.

Aim

The main aim of this class is to show the students that Bible principles are within their reach. The class aims to increase their faith that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and that Jesus is the Savior by looking at the prophecies He fulfilled. Next, it aims to show them that the characters of the Bible were people like we are; they made mistakes and were not perfect. The Lord is not expecting perfection from us. He just wants our love and our sincere efforts to do His bidding. The challenge is to live the Word, not just fill our heads with knowledge, but to put the Word into action in our lives.

Roundup

Prayer and Opening Activity (30 minutes)

Prayer

[Optional] Songs

Activity: Halfway-Through Self-Assessment Quiz

Class Section 1: Fulfilled Prophecy about Jesus (45 minutes)

Born of a virgin

Born in Bethlehem

Triumphal entry into Jerusalem

His Betrayal

His Crucifixion

His Burial

His Resurrection

Exact year of His crucifixion

Destruction of Jerusalem after His coming

Class Section 2: Heroes with Clay Feet (35 minutes)

[Optional] Songs

The people God uses!

Moses

King David

Paul

Learning from our mistakes

Within reach!

Closing Activity and Prayer (10 minutes)

Get Prepared

- This class is halfway through the *12 Foundation Stones* course, which is why we try to include some time of assessment. What have the students gained from the course so far?—And how much have they retained from the classes they’ve had? The one-page “Halfway-Through Self-Assessment Quiz” is included at the end of the class for your reference. A blank version (without answers) can be found in the Teacher’s Supplement. If possible, make photocopies beforehand so that the students can fill this in during the class.
- Other Teacher’s Aids available to help teach this class: “Year of the Crucifixion” Chart; Promise verse sets on “Strength.”
- Remember to try to get as much participation as you can during the Bible study, with the students looking up the verses. There are no anecdotes in this class, as it centers on the stories from the Bible, so it will be up to your prayerful inspiration to help this class to be lively and interesting.
- You do not need to read every prophecy and every example of Bible people’s mistakes. You can pick and choose as much as you have time for.
- Depending on how much background knowledge your students have on the Bible, you may need to explain more or less of the details.
- Here is some advice from Jesus on the delivery and purpose of this class:

(Excerpts of prophecies:) The main purpose of this class is to show those attending that they can follow Me—that the Bible principles are within their reach; that My yoke is easy and My burden is light; that if they take one step for Me, I will take two for them. That is the main point to get across—they can also follow Me and serve Me. It should serve to dispel their fears and their apprehensions that they’ll never be able to make it and show them that they can—that I love them and I will do the works in them.

The authors of the Bible, or rather, the channels through whom I spoke and which the Bible tells of, were people just like them; they were men with clay feet who made mistakes and committed sins. But I still used them, just as I can use these dear ones who are opening up their lives to Me today.

Remember always that this course is supposed to be inspiring them to action, getting them moving, doing things. All the Bible knowledge without love in action will be nothing.

- Related material in *Activated* magazines:
 - Activated* Issue No. 3, pages 8–10—“Proof at Last!”
 - Activated* Issue No. 11, pages 8–10—“Dare to Be Different.”

Student Reading Material

None

Prayer and Opening Activity

30 minutes

► Prayer

① Pray for the meeting. You could ask one of the students to volunteer to pray.

► [Optional] Songs

♪ Sing one or two songs from the “Devotional Song Sheet.”

► Activity: Halfway-Through Self-Assessment Quiz

- ① You can pass out the “Halfway Through Self-Assessment Quiz” papers for the students to fill in. If you weren’t able to make these forms available, you could write on a white board or call out the questions and have the students write their answers on paper.
- ① After everyone has had a chance to fill in the quiz, you can read off the answers or ask for volunteers to tell the answers. People can check their own papers and keep the results to themselves.
- ① A copy of the quiz (with answers) is at the end of this class.

Class Section 1: Fulfilled Prophecy About Jesus

45 minutes

- ① Teachers: You don’t have to read all of these prophecies, just go over as many as time allows for.

► Born of a virgin

Nearly 750 years before Christ’s birth, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah prophesied:

Isaiah 7:14—Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Fulfillment: Mary was a virgin engaged to be married to Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth, when the angel appeared to her saying,

Luke 1:35—“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”

Immanuel means “God with us,” and that’s who Jesus is when we receive Him; God is with us!

► Born in Bethlehem

Micah, prophesying in the eighth century B.C., predicted:

Micah 5:2—But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

Fulfillment: The Gospel says Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea.

Matthew 2:1—Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king ...

► Triumphal entry into Jerusalem

Around 450 B.C., the prophet Zechariah commanded the people by the Spirit of the Lord to:

Zechariah 9:9—Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Fulfillment: Five days before his crucifixion, Jesus returned to Jerusalem and told His disciples,

Matthew 21:2–10—“Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.” (6) So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them. (7) They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set Him on them. (9) Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

Besides the fact that Jesus, riding into Jerusalem on an ass, fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah, another outstanding aspect of this passage is that the same people who were shouting “Hosanna to

the Son of David” when He rode in, were five days later going to demand His crucifixion. It was like riding into your enemy’s stronghold and expecting a warm welcome! But that’s what He did! He knew that the Scripture had to be fulfilled that the people were going to shout when He rode in. He even said to some of the religious hypocrites, who were trying to make the crowd keep quiet,

Luke 19:40—“I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.”

► His betrayal

In 450 B.C., Zechariah also prophesied:

Zechariah 11:12–13—Then I said to them, “If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain.” So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. (13) And the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter”— that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter.

Fulfillment:

Matthew 26:14–15—Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests (15) and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver.

Matthew 27:3–7—Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. (5) Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. (6) But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood.” (7) And they consulted together and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in.

► His crucifixion

About 1000 B.C., King David prophesied:

Psalms 22:16–18—For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; (17) I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. (18) They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.

(See also Zechariah 12:10; 13:6.)

Fulfillment: That was written by King David, who died a natural death (recorded in 1 Kings Chapter 1), so he wasn’t talking about himself. But being a prophet, he predicted the type of death that Christ would die! It says in the New Testament:

John 19:23–24—Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus [pierced His hands and feet], took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. (24) They said therefore among themselves, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be.”

Crucifixion was not practiced by the Jews of David’s time (they used stoning), but David predicted this type of death for the Messiah, a method of execution unknown to the Jews of his time—foretold 1000 years before it happened!

► His burial

Isaiah 53:9—And they made His grave with the wicked— but with the rich at His death.

Fulfillment: Jesus died as a criminal (“with the wicked”) in the eyes of the world, as there were

Matthew 27:38—Two robbers were crucified with Him.

And after His death—

Matthew 27:57–60—A rich man named Joseph went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ... When Joseph had taken the body, he ... laid it in his new tomb.

—a grave with the rich!

► His resurrection

Psalm 16:10—For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

The Hebrew word here sheol is sometimes translated “hell” (the place of eternal punishment) and other times “grave” or the “unseen state.” King David, who gave the prophecy, died and was buried and his flesh saw corruption, but Jesus was raised from the grave and Hell three days after His death.

Acts 2:31—His soul was not left in Hades [the underworld of the dead], nor did His flesh see corruption.

As the angel said to the mourners who came to Jesus’ tomb,

Luke 24:6,5—He is not here, but is risen! ... Why do you seek the living among the dead?

Jesus is alive! The Scriptures show that He walked the earth for 40 days after His resurrection and was seen by hundreds of followers!

Acts 1:3—To whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 15:4–6—He was buried ... He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, (5) ... He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. (6) After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

He then ascended up to Heaven where He sits at the right hand of the throne of God, and from which He shall soon return to take over the earth and rule it for a thousand years!

Mark 16:19—So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

Now, of course, one of the arguments used against these prophecies is, “Well, the Church had almost total control of the old manuscripts from which the Bible is translated and they just doctored up the Old Testament prophecies so that they’d look like Jesus fulfilled them.” This argument fell apart in 1947, when an Arab shepherd boy in Palestine stumbled across a cave containing ancient scrolls of the Old Testament, all dated before 68 A.D., and some as early as 200 B.C.! The scrolls agreed in almost every respect with the traditional Hebrew texts used in the translation of our Bible, containing the same prophecies word for word. (For more on this, see the section “Dead Sea Scrolls” in the previous class.)

The other argument is that the New Testament was doctored up a little in order to make it appear that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. If that’s so, how do you explain the following three prophecies and the now historical events they describe?

► Exact year of His crucifixion

① *Use the Teacher’s Aid “Year of the Crucifixion” chart to illustrate this.*

Daniel 9:25–26—Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. (26) And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

■ Summary of the prophecy, given by Daniel around 530 B.C., and its fulfillment:

1. There would be a decree to rebuild Jerusalem.
2. Jerusalem and the Temple would be rebuilt.
3. Then an “anointed one” (Messiah) would arrive.
4. But the Messiah would be “cut off” (an idiom for rejected or killed; see Isaiah 53:8).
5. Then Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed again.

All of these historically recorded events later happened, in the same order in which they are described in Daniel 9:24–26:

1. The neo-Babylonian empire was conquered by the Persian empire about 2539 years ago. The Persians ruled a vast empire that included the Jewish homeland (Israel). The Persian king Cyrus gave permission to the captive Jews in Babylon to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple. Then, about 2453 years ago (about 453 B.C.), the Persian king Artaxerxes gave permission to the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem, which was still in ruins after having been destroyed earlier by the Babylonians.
2. The Jews rebuilt the Temple and the city of Jerusalem.
3. Then, about 2000 years ago, Jesus entered Jerusalem as the Messiah that was promised by the Old Testament prophets.
4. But, many of the people rejected Jesus as the Messiah and He was crucified and killed.
5. Then, about 40 years after Jesus was crucified, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. (The Temple has not been rebuilt since then).

Let's look at the details of this amazing prophecy.

- The commandment to “restore and build Jerusalem”—453 B.C.

In 453 B.C., Artaxerxes Longimanus, king of the Persians, commanded the Jews who remained in other parts of the Persian Empire to return to the land of Israel “to restore and to build Jerusalem.”

- 69 “weeks” or $69 \times 7 = 483$ years from the commandment to build Jerusalem until the “cutting off” of the Messiah

The prophecy of Daniel predicted that from the time of this commandment unto the Messiah the Prince shall be—how long?—“seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks”—or $7 + 62 = 69$ weeks.

The word that's translated “weeks” here in the Bible is the Hebrew word *shabua* which means “seven.” Therefore a little better, more literal translation would be “69 sevens,” instead of “69 weeks.” Taken literally, 69 “shabuas,” or 69 sevens, would be 69×7 , which equals 483.

In the book of Genesis, a week was symbolically used to represent Jacob's seven-year service for his wife Rachel. His uncle told him,

Genesis 29:27—Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.

- 453 B.C. until 30 A. D.—the year of Jesus' crucifixion = 483 years!

69 sevens of years, or 483 years, were to pass between the going forth of the commandment to build Jerusalem and the cutting off the Messiah.

Modern historians now date the birth of Jesus at 4 B.C. and His crucifixion or “cutting off” in 30 A.D.

(This is because of a miscalculation on the part of the Catholic monk, Dionysius (“Denis the Short”), who in the sixth century devised our present Christian-centered calendar system without the use of the more precise archaeological information we now have.)

So Jesus actually began His ministry at 30 years of age (Luke 3:23), in the year 27 A.D., and was crucified three years later, in 30 A.D.

We know from history that the commandment went forth in 453 B.C., and Jesus was “cut off” in 30 A.D. Therefore, if we add the 453 years B.C. to the 30 years A.D., it equals 483 years, the fulfillment of the 69 sevens or 483 years that Daniel predicted would transpire between the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the death of the Messiah!

—And this was prophesied in the year 538 B.C.—almost 600 years before Jesus the Messiah was crucified!

■ Why the prophecy is divided into two parts

Just as the prophecy divides the 69 weeks into two parts, one of seven weeks, and then 62 weeks, so there were two events that were fulfilled in these two time periods.

- 1) The wall and the city were built in the first seven weeks or 49 years.
- 2) After that, there were still 62 weeks, or 62 sevens (434 years), before the crucifixion of Christ.

Daniel's prophecy continues with undeniable proof that this Messiah had to be Jesus...

► Destruction of Jerusalem after His coming

Daniel 9:26—And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city [of Jerusalem] and the sanctuary [the temple].

This prophecy given in 540 B.C. shows that after the Messiah's death the city of Jerusalem and the Jews' temple would be destroyed.

Fulfillment: After Jesus was cut off [crucified] in 30 A.D., not for Himself, but for the sins of the world, do you know what happened to Jerusalem and to the Jews' temple? In 70 A.D., the Roman legions marched in and burnt Jerusalem to the ground.

Class Section 2: Heroes with Clay Feet

35 minutes

► [Optional] Songs

① *You may like to have a little Praise Time here as a break before you begin the next section. Alternatively, you may prefer to have this at the end of the meeting.*

♫ *Sing two or three Praise Time songs (see "Praise Song Sheet").*

► The people God uses!

Acts 14:15—And saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them."

The people we read about in the Bible, including the ones whom the Lord used to write the Bible, were people just like us. They were men and women "with clay feet" who made mistakes and committed sins. The Lord still used them, just as He can use any of us who open our lives to Him today.

God's Word portrays its heroes as they really were! It doesn't depict them as men who were perfect and never made a mistake and supernatural and all that sort of thing, but they were just ordinary men like you and me. They made their big mistakes just like you and I do, and if it weren't for God, why, they really would have been a mess—just like you and I are without God!

In fact, one of the proofs that the Bible is a supernatural, miraculous book of God and not man, is that when man writes history, much of the time he covers up the failings and mistakes of his heroes, whereas God lays them out wide open there, the mistakes that they made and their sins!—And yet they repented and God forgave them and they were restored and they were still useful in spite of it all, which gives all of us sinners hope.

Let's look at a few examples. We've chosen three characters who did great things for God, and we're giving you one example each of how they failed.

► Moses

Moses lived around 1400 B.C. He led the Israelites out of their bondage as slaves in Egypt. Through Him, God gave the Israelites the first five books of the Bible that contained the Law, a mixture of both civil and religious ordinances, by which they were to be governed.

A mistake: When Moses was 40 years old, he got in a hurry to deliver the children of Israel and killed an Egyptian. He had to flee for his life, and lived 40 years in the wilderness with the sheep and his father-in-law. It was only after 40 years of patiently and humbly tending sheep in the wilderness, with time to listen to the Voice of God instead of his own impulses, that he was ready for the slow, laborious, patient work of the Exodus to deliver the Israelites from Egypt—slow, but sure!

Exodus 2:11–12, 15—Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. (12) So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. (15) When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian.

[Optional] Striking the rock

Another example is when Moses disobeyed and struck the rock twice in the energy of the flesh rather than in the power of the Spirit.

The Children of Israel had left Egypt and were passing through the wilderness. The Lord had already done miracles to supply them with water and food. On this occasion, again there was no water and the people began to murmur. God directed Moses through to bring forth water out of the rock by speaking to it.

Numbers 20:8—Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.

But instead Moses shouted angrily at the people,

Numbers 20:10–11—"Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

The Lord was angry with Moses for having behaved in this very wrathful and impatient fashion before the people in this display of a fit of anger and impatience with them in which he also acted almost as though he were angry at the rock as well, which was a type of Christ, so that he smote it angrily twice with his rod instead of just speaking to it. Well, it got the results that he wanted and needed and got the water out of the rock to supply the people and their beasts with their needs, but God didn't like the way he did it!

He did the right thing but in the wrong way, and God was so angry with him for this display of temper (angry impatience is a sign of lack of perfect faith and rest in the Lord) that He punished Moses by telling him,

Numbers 27:14—You rebelled against My command to hallow Me at the waters before their eyes. (These are the waters of Meribah, at Kadesh in the Wilderness of Zin.)

Numbers 20:12—Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.

Because he wasn't a better example of God's own patience with the people, therefore Moses was only allowed to see the Promised Land from afar, from the top of a mountain, before he died.

► King David

David was the greatest king of ancient Israel and lived around 1000 B.C. Although a man of force and faults who sinned greatly, the Bible says of him that he was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 3:14). He wrote many of the songs of praise that constitute the largest book of the Bible, the Book of Psalms.

A mistake:

④ *Read all of 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12 (up to verse 25), or read the explanation below:*

David fell in love with Bathsheba, a beautiful woman, who lived within the shadow of the walls of the palace. Her husband Uriah, a heroic general, was battling in David's army. David saw Bathsheba taking a bath. He stood up on the roof, breathing in the night air and taking a look at Bathsheba every now and then. The king fell in love with Bathsheba. He eventually invited her to the palace where he made love to her and she conceived.

David then recalled her husband Uriah home from the battlefield with the feint of having him report how the war went. Once he had heard the report, he told Uriah to go spend the night with his wife. He refused to do so. He said, "My lord Joab and the men of Israel are sleeping in tents and on the ground. How can I go down and enjoy my wife and my own home?" So instead, he slept out by David's gate.

This made David really angry, as he wanted Uriah to sleep with his wife so it would appear that he had fathered the child. So he arranged with his top general Joab to have Uriah placed in the frontline of the battle and then have his escort withdraw, so he would be killed—which he was! He sent Uriah to his death!

As God's punishment, the son born to David and Bathsheba got sick and died. But God allowed David to marry Bathsheba, who became the queen. Then after they were married, their next child, Solomon, later became the next king—one of the forerunners of Christ Himself!

It's a strange thing how the Lord let this happen. Perhaps, if Bathsheba was the one that God wanted for the job (of being the mother of the next king), God could have done it some other way—without David committing murder! But sad to say, that's the way it happened! The way David went about this was a very great sin in the sight of the Lord!

The incident of David's sin brought Nathan the prophet to David's side. The prophet poured out upon him such a scathing denunciation that David cried out: "I have sinned against the Lord!" (2 Samuel 12:13.) And so he had!

David greatly repented. However, the Lord pronounced certain judgments upon him that would happen, even in spite of his repentance: Their first child would die, the sword would never depart from his house, the kingdom would be taken from his heirs, and it would be divided!

Psalm 51 is David's prayer of repentance on this occasion. King David is a great inspiration and comfort to many of us, because if such a big sinner could be forgiven such big sins and the Lord still turned around and called him a man after His own heart, then you know how great the love and mercy of the Lord is! Despite David's sins, the Lord forgave him because he loved the Lord. He knew he was a sinner and he confessed it and he repented.

► Paul

④ *Regarding the following example, some students may contend that Paul's action in returning to Jerusalem was bravery rather than a mistake. One point to make in return is to ask, where was his ministry and place of fruitfulness? He was having much success in Asia. His return to Jerusalem resulted in him spending most of his remaining life in bonds. We will never know how much more he would have accomplished if he had retained his freedom.*

Paul was the greatest evangelist and teacher of the early Christians. He was not one of those who personally followed Jesus while He was on earth, but was, in fact, a persecutor of the early Christians after Jesus' ascension. That changed when, while on a mission to arrest some Christians,

he was temporarily blinded by a brilliant light out of which Jesus spoke to him. After being blind for three days, his sight was restored after a Christian prayed for him, and from that point on Paul became the dynamic leader of the early Christians. Aside from tirelessly traveling to preach the Gospel and establishing Christian communities in many cities in the eastern areas of the Roman empire, he also wrote many letters of instruction, 14 of which were incorporated into the New Testament over 150 years later.

The Apostle Paul did not consider himself to have “attained.”

Philippians 3:13–14—Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

A mistake:

Besides having been a vicious persecutor of the Christians before he got saved, Paul later curtailed his own ministry by stubbornly going back to Jerusalem and trying to appease the religionists of his time. After being warned not to by the Spirit, Paul returned to the temple at Jerusalem and was arrested. He spent most of his remaining life in bonds until his final execution in Rome.

It certainly seems that it was a mistake when he went back to the temple. He went in spite of every warning that God’s prophets gave him not to go.

Acts 20:16—For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

Acts 20:22–23—[He told his friends:] “And see, now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, (23) except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.”

Paul obviously disobeyed the checks of the Lord! God tried to stop him from going to Jerusalem. He even got to one place where a prophet took his belt and tied his hands together and said, “If you go to Jerusalem, this is what’s going to happen to you!” God was warning him not to go, yet he went anyway.

Acts 21:10–12— And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. (11) When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’” (12) Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.

In spite of all the warnings God gave Paul not to go he went anyway, and it didn’t do anything but cause him trouble.

The Lord used him anyway. He wrote a lot of letters and he got to witness to Caesar’s household, and perhaps it was of the Lord in order to get him to go to Rome. Maybe that’s why the Lord let it happen, but it certainly didn’t do the Jews any good and it certainly didn’t bring about any peace with the Temple or the religious leaders. So it was just a matter of God using Paul’s mistake for His glory; it didn’t vindicate or justify Paul in what he did.

The Lord did use him, but how much more might he have accomplished if he had not been imprisoned. Compare this with the time he did act more wisely (for example, his preaching in Athens, see Acts 17:16–34).

► Learning from our mistakes

One important point to note is that we only make progress if we learn from our mistakes. Not all of God’s people have learned from their mistakes and therefore they didn’t make the progress He was hoping they would! Mistakes are useful tools for learning, but only if we learn from them.

► Within reach!

Some people make characters in the Bible sound so far above and beyond us that they seem unrelatable to our present existence.—But the Lord wants us to realize how human they were and how much like us they were. We've pointed out a few of their mistakes to show you that even the greatest heroes were not perfect!

It's important to bring some of these characters down closer to our level where we can see there is hope for us. If those in the Bible could serve the Lord, despite their weaknesses and character flaws and mistakes, so can we!

- The Lord is not going to expect more of you than you're able to bear.

He's not going to ask more of you than what you are capable of, and what He asks of you He will give you the strength for.—And even when you fail, as long as you ask His forgiveness, He will forgive you and help you up and help you try again.

1 Corinthians 10:13—No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

Philippians 4:13—I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Proverbs 24:16—For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again.

Daniel 11:34a—Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help.

Isaiah 41:10—Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

- The Lord has shown us that anyone who accepts Him, and wants to serve Him, He accepts.

Jesus walked those dusty roads and talked to the simple fishermen and the tax collectors, prostitutes and drunks, as well as the influential and the educated, in order to show them that God loved them all and they could all love God, they could all love each other and serve each other and serve the world with the Gospel.

He came to try to make it as easy as He could!

—And that's why the religious leaders of His day wanted to crucify Him, because they taught the people that you couldn't get close to God without them and without following all of their religious laws.

But that's not what Jesus preached! The only standards and requirements He has given us are contained in the Law of Love: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37,39).

Closing Activity and Prayer

10 minutes

① *Pass out promises on the subject of "Strength" and ask for a few volunteers to pray that the Lord will help everyone to fulfill whatever He has for them in their lives.*

① *Your concluding prayer and comments can include these thoughts:*

All the Bible knowledge without love in action will be nothing. Knowing the Bible backwards and forwards is not going to help us if we're not living it and applying it. Lord help us all to apply what we read, to be doers of the Word, not hearers only.—And Lord help us all never to be discouraged by our limitations or failures, remembering the sample of God's people of years gone by, and

how they, too, fell and made mistakes, yet because of their love for the Lord He could keep on using them. Help us to follow that example, of love and dedication of the heart.

Written Quiz: “Halfway-Through Self-Assessment”

① *Teachers: You can pass out the “Halfway-Through Self-Assessment” forms for the students to fill in. If you weren’t able to make these forms available, you could write up the questions. After everyone has had a chance to fill in the quiz, you can read off the answers or ask for volunteers to tell the answers. Everyone can check their own paper and keep the results to themselves.*

■ How are your spiritual habits developing? In general:

(The right answers should all be “yes.”)

Yes No

- Do you read something from God’s Word daily?
- Have you been reading through any of the Gospels?
- Do you have Quiet Time with the Lord daily?
- Have you memorized Scriptures?
- Have you reviewed the verses you’ve memorized?
- Have you been taking time to praise the Lord each day?
- Have you been making prayer a habit?
- Do you pray before you go somewhere?
- Have you told anyone about Jesus or given out any tracts?
- Do you stop and ask the Lord for guidance?

■ How much do you remember from the classes?

- Give three reasons for reading the Word. *(Answers can include: For our own spiritual benefit—the Word gives us faith, guidance, strength, wisdom; it cleanses us; makes us happy. To get closer to the Author and to know His mind. For the sake of our witness to others. To know the future.)*
- Give two reasons for memorizing. *(Answers can include: For our own edification; to make it easier for God to speak to us; for the sake of our witness; preparation for darker days when the Bible is not available.)*
- Which book of the Bible tells the history of how the Early Church was anointed by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel? *(Answer: Acts.)*
- What is the main purpose of the Holy Ghost? *(Answer: To give us power to witness.)*
- Name three of the gifts of the Spirit. *(Answers can include: Wisdom, knowledge, faith, discernment, prophecy, healing, miracles, tongues, interpretation of tongues.)*
- “Prayer is a two-way conversation.” True or false? *(Answer: True.)*
- Give an example of one verse that is a “promise” that you can claim when praying. *(Answer: Any appropriate verse.)*
- What is the key verse that tells us that the gift of prophecy will be poured out in the last days? *(Answer: Acts 2:17–18.)*
- Jesus said we could judge a prophet by his _____. The answer is in Matthew 7:20. *(Answer: Fruits.)*
- What is the Golden Rule? *(Answer: Treat others as you would have them treat you. [Matthew 7:12].)*
- What two commandments did Jesus say are most important? *(Answer: Love God and love your neighbor.)*
- How many books are there in the Bible? *(Answer: 66.)*