

1.2

THE PRIVILEGE OF
RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD

LESSON BIG IDEA
I will pursue a close
relationship with
God.

FOCUS VERSES
Exodus 19:5-6

⁵ Now therefore,
if ye will obey my
voice indeed, and
keep my covenant,
then ye shall be a
peculiar treasure
unto me above all
people: for all the
earth is mine:
⁶ And ye shall be
unto me a kingdom
of priests, and an
holy nation. These
are the words which
thou shalt speak
unto the children of
Israel.

LESSON TEXT
Exodus 19:1-25

TRUTH ABOUT GOD
God desires close
relationship with
people of faith.



Thinking about Last Week:

Have students refer to their Daily Devotional Guide to answer the following questions:

1. What most affected you as you read through the Bible Reading Plan, the Lesson Text, and the Biblical Insights?
2. How did it shape your prayers and thoughts throughout the week?
3. Do you feel you grew closer to the Lord this past week? Why or why not?

LESSON CONNECTION I

Teacher Option:

Show Image to help illustrate the Lesson Connection.

Throughout our lifetime we are regularly extended the privilege to develop relationships with dynamic people. However, we often do not recognize their greatness due to close proximity or familiarity. Therefore, we lose out on the greatest opportunities ever afforded us. It is important for us to pay attention to those with whom we interface. Great mentoring relationships can be created when we acknowledge the capabilities of the dynamic people God often puts in our lives.

One article notes:

Former Apple Inc. CEO the late Steve Jobs served as a mentor to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg. The two developed a relationship in the early days of Facebook and often met to discuss the best business and management practices for the company.



Former Morehouse College President Dr. Benjamin Mays was an outspoken critic of segregation before the rise of the modern civil rights movement and a mentor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The two men first met during King's undergraduate years at Morehouse College, and remained close until King's death in 1968. Mays's "emphasis on two ideas in particular—the dignity of all human beings and the incompatibility of American democratic ideals with American social practices—became vital strains in King's language and in the civil rights movement.



Former Super Bowl champion Darrell Green was mentored by his middle school football coach. 'I had a coach who in a different way encouraged me that I could be a great running athlete . . . He was always encouraging me to participate, and I did. And so I think he helped me to identify the possibilities, which I never even thought about,' Green said.



Astronaut and former U.S. Senator John Glenn was mentored by his high school civics teacher. He is an advocate of mentoring and has spoken about the importance of being a mentor. 'I think a mentor gets a lot of satisfaction in a couple of ways. They're doing something constructive, so they feel good about that. And when they see the results of this, with the young people they're working with, it's very, very rewarding,' Glenn said.

(evidencebasedmentoring.org, "Top 25 Mentoring Relationships in History")

The children of Israel received the greatest privilege ever offered to humanity: the privilege of relationship with God. They were chosen from among all the people groups in the world, given the blueprints for worship of the almighty God, given the privilege of communication with the Lord almighty, chosen to record and preserve Scripture, and called to be an example to the world and evangelize the world. Yet their faith proved weak. It became obvious they squandered the ultimate relationship.

SG TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: Who is someone either famous or not famous you have enjoyed meeting in person?

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection on page 139. **I**

I. FAITH IS THE REQUIREMENT FOR CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- A. The People of Israel Were Weak in Faith
 - » *Why was it important for Israel to learn to trust God for the necessities of life: protection, food, and water?*
- B. To Have Faith Is to Trust God Regardless of Life's Circumstances
- C. We Can Trust God at All Times
 - » *How does a pattern and history of trust develop into healthy respect?*

II. THE NEW COVENANT PROVIDES CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- » *How did God's unselfish love redeem the hate and brutality of the Crucifixion to develop the ultimate relationship?* **V**
- A. The New Covenant Is Better Than the Old Covenant
- B. Mount Zion Is Better Than Mount Sinai
- C. We Can Enjoy the Benefits of the New Covenant
 - » *What is the difference between a relationship based upon love and respect versus one of strict authority and outward conformity?*

III. THE CHURCH IS A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD AND A HOLY NATION

- A. The Old Testament Priesthood Was Exclusive, But We Have Been Made Priests unto God
- B. God Has Called Us into Covenant with Him as a Holy Nation
- C. We Can Pursue a Close Relationship with God
 - » *What is the difference between experiencing God through an Old Testament priest and experiencing God as a New Testament priest?*



Internalizing the Message

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- That our faith and trust would be found only in the Lord
- That we would pursue a close relationship with God

LESSON COMMENTARY

I. FAITH IS THE REQUIREMENT FOR CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). This verse emphasizes the requirement of faith in order to please God. One must, at the very least, believe that God exists in order to please Him. The same Scripture indicates God rewards those who put diligence into their efforts of seeking Him. Action is required to obtain the reward. Faith is active. Faith demonstrates. Faith is action lived out in positive and trusting obedience from the heart, energized by both the spirit of man and the Spirit of God. Faith brings us into relationship with God and solidifies that relationship.

A. The People of Israel Were Weak in Faith

The people of Israel demonstrated an immature and weak faith. No sooner had they finished rejoicing over the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and the decimation of Pharaoh’s army that the congregation began murmuring against Moses and Aaron (Exodus 16). The point of contention was a belief that Moses and Aaron had taken them into the wilderness simply to die from hunger. They cited that they sat by “flesh pots” and “did eat bread to the full” while in Egypt (Exodus 16:3).

The Lord chose to be merciful and sent quail to cover the camp in the evening and introduced them to manna each morning. Some gathered quantities beyond the authorized daily serving, and the unauthorized portions stunk. Gathering more than a daily allotment for any other than Sabbath Day coverage demonstrated continued unbelief after a significant miraculous provision. That type of unbelief stinks in the nostrils of God. The people of Israel continued to demonstrate their immature and weak faith by chiding with Moses (Exodus 17:2). The Lord demonstrated great patience in developing Israel’s capabilities to trust Him for protection, food, and water.

B. To Have Faith Is to Trust God Regardless of Life’s Circumstances

To have faith is to act according to the promises of God. Faith is not permission to be lazy or negligent and simply wait on God to start providing. Nor is faith believing that God is going to thrust us into a lifestyle of luxury and riches untold. Rather faith is conducting our lives in a responsible and forthright manner and believing that the Lord will honor our actions conducted within ethical and biblical guidelines. Faith does not give us permission to bypass education, thinking the Lord will simply make us a professional or skilled craftsman. This idea is delusion and not

Why was it important for Israel to learn to trust God for the necessities of life: protection, food, and water?

faith. Faith is entering a trade or gaining the education necessary to succeed and believing God to open doors accordingly.

Life is full of unanswered questions and uncertainty. We can choose to fill the unanswered questions and uncertainty with beliefs conducive to biblical faith, or we can choose to fill in the blanks with fear, anxiety, and expectations for the worst. It is all a matter of choice. If our past has been a history of trauma, negligence, and adversity—such as a childhood with an alcoholic parent—one can easily fill in the gaps with large doses of negative expectations. If we, however, can believe God and establish a history of prayer-answering events in our lives, we create a catalogue of answered prayers and faith-filled living to draw upon. Thus, we can more easily fill our expectations with faith instead of fear.

C. We Can Trust God at All Times

We can trust God with our hearts and our most intimate needs. Jesus already satisfied God's wrath at Calvary. We are safe to give our hearts to Him. We can lower our barriers and allow the Holy Ghost to infiltrate our hearts and minds with faith. It is okay. It is safe. God is not an abusive Father, nor is He a manipulative charlatan waiting to exploit us at our first indication of weakness. We can certainly respect Him. God's history, biblically and personally, is one of looking out for our best interests.

The Lord set the stage to earn Israel's respect in Exodus 19. Mount Sinai was the stage to develop respect and take their relationship to the next level. At this stage of development, the Lord had to make an authoritative statement with dramatic demonstrations that did induce some fear. This fear, however, was not toxic fear in the form of abuse or manipulation—this was the development of a healthy respect for the sacred aspects of their lives. These extreme demonstrations of power were necessary at this stage in holy history, and decisive action was necessary. Boundaries between the secular and the sacred had to be established. Israel was still immature in their revelation and relationship with God. God was preparing them for introduction to His covenant.

How does a pattern and history of trust develop into healthy respect?

Teacher Option:

Show Video to either take the place of the question or to help illustrate it.

How did God's unselfish love redeem the hate and brutality of the Crucifixion to develop the ultimate relationship? ▼

II. THE NEW COVENANT PROVIDES CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The New Covenant founded in the blood of Jesus provides close relationship with God. God did not stay aloof in the heavenlies to play a game of hide-and-seek. Rather, He came directly and revealed Himself. Humanity's sin nature was intimidated by the glory revealed in Christ; that sin nature became the murderous force God used to redeem us. This act of murder by the human race shed the very blood that empowers our redemption. Jesus' unreserved love made the way for our close relationship with Him, making us a royal priesthood and giving residence to His very own Spirit, the ultimate relationship.

A. The New Covenant Is Better Than the Old Covenant

Jesus established a new covenant: “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). The Law made men high priests who had infirmity. They had to offer up sacrifices for their own sins first and then the people’s sins. These men served as an example and as a shadow of heavenly things according to the pattern shown Moses on Mount Sinai.

Jesus, however, made one final sacrifice of Himself, not needing to offer a sacrifice first for Himself. He is both the sacrifice and the High Priest. He was already purified, for He had no sin. He was also the spotless Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world. The Old Covenant consisted of outward ordinances requiring perpetual repetition that encouraged behavioral conformity. The New Covenant changes hearts and minds and writes itself on the tables of people’s hearts, changing their very nature. Sanctified lifestyles become intuitive and our heart’s response when we are filled with the Spirit of the New Covenant.

B. Mount Zion Is Better Than Mount Sinai

The giving of the Law on Mount Sinai was a dramatic event, characterized by tangible, visible, audible, earthly phenomena. These phenomena underscore that the Law, which is not of faith (Galatians 3:12), had existed in an environment radically different from that of the New Covenant. Faith, however, does not demand visible evidence, but is convinced even of things that exist only in the realm of hope (Hebrews 11:1). The New Covenant thus involves coming to a “mount” (Hebrews 12:18), but one that human eyes have not actually yet seen (Hebrews 12:22). Those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ have arrived at Mount Zion, not Mount Sinai. This is not the earthly Mount Zion (II Samuel 5:6-9; Psalm 78:68-69), which merely serves as a type or shadow of the heavenly reality (Hebrews 10:1), but the heavenly Mount Zion—upon which stands the Lamb (Galatians 4:25-26; Revelation 14:1; 21:2, 10-23). Those who partake of the new covenant presently have access to its spiritual privileges (Hebrews 4:16; 9:8; 10:19-22.)

C. We Can Enjoy the Benefits of the New Covenant

The benefits of the New Covenant are exponential. We can begin understanding the innumerable benefits of the New Covenant over the Old by understanding some basic biblical concepts:

1. We enjoy a more complete and fulfilling relationship with God as He lives inside of us and writes His commandments upon our hearts.
2. We are no longer confined to animal sacrifices for temporary forgiveness of sins, but the full and final sacrifice of Christ authorizes unlimited relationship with God.

What is the difference between a relationship based upon love and respect versus one of strict authority and outward conformity?

3. We can enjoy a relationship with God based upon love and respect and not be confined to the outward conformity of the Law humanity failed to follow dismally and repeatedly.

III. THE CHURCH IS A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD AND A HOLY NATION

In the New Testament (Covenant), we are privileged to be priests unto God. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9). We serve under the authority of our High Priest, Jesus Christ. No longer do we have to be represented before God through a human mediator; instead, we go directly to God as priests unto the Lord.

A. The Old Testament Priesthood Was Exclusive, But We Have Been Made Priests unto God

The priests of the Old Covenant including Aaron, the high priest, descended from Levi. Only descendants of Levi could fulfill priestly privileges and experience the fulfillment of ministering in the Tabernacle or the Temple—the act of sacrificing an animal for the pardon of sin, eating the shewbread, igniting the incense, cleansing oneself in the laver of water, or engaging the Holy Place. Only the high priest could experience the Holy of Holies. However, in the New Covenant, we have been made a kingdom of priests unto God. We can engage in repentance, experience the cleansing waters of baptism, and enter the Holy of Holies by the Holy Ghost.

B. God Has Called Us into Covenant with Him as a Holy Nation

God originally entrusted the sacred duties of worship, evangelism, and preservation of the sacred to Israel. After Israel rejected their Messiah, God turned to the Gentiles and invited them into His priesthood. Now Jew and Gentile alike can be a holy nation to God in His church. The church is now God’s holy nation. Through the blood of Christ and the impartation of His Spirit, we are invited into the New Covenant. All who repent of their sins, take Jesus’ name in water baptism, and receive the Holy Spirit enjoy citizenship in His holy nation—the church of the living God.

C. We Can Pursue a Close Relationship with God

We can pursue as close and as intense of a relationship with God as we choose. Barriers are down; the way has been made ready for whosoever will to engage in blessed communion with God. The Old Covenant served as a type and shadow of what is real and fulfilling. The Tabernacle displayed a picture of salvation and worship, but the Holy Spirit, making us the Temple of God, fulfills God’s purpose in salvation and relationship. God began to reveal Himself in the Law and in the Tabernacle, imparting concepts and principles for limited relationship with Him. But Jesus Christ, the actual Temple of God, provides the means for mature and fulfilling relationship with Him. We experience the fullness of God through the Holy Ghost.

What is the difference between experiencing God through an Old Testament priest and experiencing God as a New Testament priest?

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

We have the unique privilege in the New Covenant to live a life of faith by walking in the Spirit. We have many examples of people living lives of faith without the Spirit living inside of them under the Old Covenant. Hebrews 11 cites extensive examples. These were extraordinary people who obediently followed God's call without the benefit of God's revelation in Christ, nor the indwelling Holy Spirit. These heroes lived their lives in obedient faith.

How much more blessed are we on this side of Calvary and Pentecost. We understand, from those who had personal contact with Jesus, the character and attributes of God in a more comprehensive manner. Jesus was the image of the invisible God; the fullness of God manifested itself in Him. The Tabernacle and the Temple guided humanity to God and spoke about God in a type and shadow but did not bring humanity into the fullness of relationship and experience with God.

Today's technology offers us the opportunity to engage loved ones with e-mail, text, telephone contact, and even audio-visual apps when separated by distance. We can see loved ones, communicate with them, and experience them to a certain depth. There is, however, no replacement for being with that loved one. Oh, how hearts can hurt when distance parts us. There is just no substitute for being with family—together—at home sweet home.

There is no substitute for actually engaging the Spirit of God as He dwells inside of the New Testament Christian. The Old Covenant can indicate, point to, and show examples of New Covenant relationship with God, but it cannot impart the indwelling Spirit of God into the human heart. Thankfully, God in His rich mercy gave us direct access to Him through this New Covenant.

We are His priests, enjoying the washing of the water of the Word of God, raising praises of sweet incense to Heaven, enjoying the Bread of Life, and entering into the Holy of Holies through the power of the Holy Ghost.

