

The material here is linked to the April–June issue of *Today's Light*, a quarterly magazine designed to lead God's people as they read through the Bible in two years.

We've included enough discussion starters for about 45 minutes of study. Feel free to duplicate the questions and use them with *Today's Light* readers.

Suggestions for Using *Today's Light* Discussion Questions

- You could gather a group of *Today's Light* readers during Sunday morning Bible class time.
- You could invite all *Today's Light* readers in your congregation to a midweek home or online discussion.
- You could make copies of the questions available to all *Today's Light* readers in your congregation and encourage them to partner with other people in the evening or over lunch once a week.

To subscribe to *Today's Light*, contact Concordia Publishing House via email at cphorder@cph.org, via phone at 1-800-325-3040 or via fax at 1-800-490-9889.

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TODAY'S LIGHT (ISSN 1084-4775) is published quarterly by Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63118-3968. Subscription rate: 1 year, \$35.00; 2 years, \$61.00; single copy, \$9.50. Periodicals postage paid at St. Louis, MO, and additional mailing offices.

April Week 1 Discussion Questions

April 1–7; Deuteronomy 1–6

1. Moses' words in the first chapter of Deuteronomy provide an apt picture of our heavenly Father's love and care for us. Verses 30–31 record, "The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight for you, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way you went until you came to this place." In what ways has God fought for you or carried you as a man carries his son?
2. Deuteronomy 2:7 tells how the Lord had blessed the work of the hands of His people. In what ways has God blessed the work of your hands?
3. Moses told Joshua, "You shall not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you" (Deuteronomy 3:22). What comfort do these words bring to you as you face the challenges and fears of your life as a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus?
4. God has sent His only Son to redeem us from sin, death, and Satan's power and to make us a people dedicated to Him. What promises does God's Word attach to the obedience He works in those who belong to Him, according to Deuteronomy 4:39–40?
5. God has given us the Ten Commandments for our good. What do God's own words recorded for us in Deuteronomy 5:29 reveal about the regard He has for us?
6. Do you think it is easier to serve God in times of plenty or in times of need? See Deuteronomy 6:10–12. Explain your response.

April Week 2 Discussion Questions

April 8–14; Deuteronomy 7–15

1. According to Deuteronomy 7:7–8, why did God choose you to be among those who belong to Him through faith in Christ Jesus? According to Ephesians 1:4–6, how do those of us who are not biological descendants of Abraham also come under the promise God made to the ancestors of the nation of Israel?
2. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 as He fended off the devil's temptation (Matthew 4:4). How does remaining close to the Savior through His Word help you to avoid the temptation to ignore your need for Jesus and the salvation He earned for you on Calvary?
3. Deuteronomy 10:12–22 praises God for His greatness and His love. Verse 21 records Moses' words about God: "He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen." To what wonders is Moses referring? What wonders come to your mind as you reflect on God's goodness to you through Jesus?
4. In Deuteronomy 11:2–7, God reminded the adults that their children had not seen with their own eyes the wonderful things God had done for them. In verses 18–20, God reminded these same adults to make His words prominent in their lives and to share them with their children intentionally and continuously. What specifically would you like to share with the young people in your life about what God has done for you in Christ Jesus? What avenues for sharing God's Word with the younger generation are open to you?
5. Like God's Old Testament people, contemporary believers also hear enticements such as "Let us go after other gods" (Deuteronomy 13:2). In what form does that call come to you most loudly in your daily life? What can you do to avoid or silence that call in your life? How does God's Spirit empower us to resist the temptation to "go after other gods"? See 1 Thessalonians 2:13.
6. Deuteronomy 15:10–11 describes the attitude God desires His people to have toward those less fortunate. Describe this attitude and the promise God associates with it. God's Word deals with this same topic in 2 Corinthians 9:10–11. What is the "inexpressible gift" God has given us? See 2 Corinthians 9:15.

April Week 3 Discussion Questions

April 15–21; Deuteronomy 16–26

1. Review Deuteronomy 17:18–20. Consider yourself in the leadership roles God has given you. Through what means will God empower and direct you as you serve Him in your leadership roles?
2. In Deuteronomy 18:17–18, Moses records, “The LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.’” In Jesus, this prophecy found its fulfillment. In what ways is Jesus similar to Moses?
3. See Deuteronomy 20:1–4. Explain the source of confidence God’s people possess in the face of danger. Why does this confidence seem foolish to those without faith in the one true God?
4. Compare Deuteronomy 22:1–4 with the commandment “You shall not steal” (Deuteronomy 5:19). How do these two sections from Deuteronomy relate to each other?
5. Review Deuteronomy 24:17–22. Describe how God desires His people to treat those who are in need, even those in need who are not among the fellowship of believers. See also Hebrews 13:16.
6. According to Deuteronomy 26:16–19, how does God desire His people to differ from unbelievers? As God’s power works in us through the Means of Grace, what difference would God have us make among those unbelievers whose lives we touch? See 1 Peter 2:9–12.

April Week 4 Discussion Questions

April 22–28; Deuteronomy 27–32

1. The final curse shouted by the people from Mount Ebal summarizes our condition under God's Law, because we are unable to obey it: "Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them" (Deuteronomy 27:26). But for those of us with faith in Christ Jesus, the curse of the Law is only half of the story. See Romans 6:23. Explain.
2. Deuteronomy 28:13 describes God's blessings to His people: "The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them." Tell how these words are fulfilled in the life of a believer through the obedience of Christ. See John 3:36.
3. Those who have fallen into thinking, "I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart" (Deuteronomy 29:19), have swallowed one of the devil's most convincing lies. In his second epistle, Peter writes about this same expression of unbelief. According to Peter, what quality of God's Word are the scoffers failing to acknowledge? See 2 Peter 3:3–7.
4. God's Word clearly tells us that we do not choose God: rather, He has chosen us to be His own dear children through faith in Christ Jesus. Yet, speaking to the people of God near the end of his life, Moses writes, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying His voice and holding fast to Him, for He is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them" (Deuteronomy 30:19–20). As children of God—New Testament believers through faith in Christ Jesus—what does it mean to you to "choose life"?
5. Deuteronomy 31:8 records, "It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed." When in your life will these words be especially comforting to you?
6. Consider the image of God's Word (delivered by Moses in his song), "May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb" (Deuteronomy 32:2). How do these words describe God's Word at work? See Isaiah 55:10–11.

April Week 5 Discussion Questions

April 29–30; Deuteronomy 33–34

1. According to Deuteronomy 33:29, what is distinctive about the people of God?
2. In a sense, all of us are like Moses standing at the top of the mountain and gazing out over the land that God had promised to give to His people (Deuteronomy 34). See Hebrews 11:13–16 and explain.

May Week 1 Discussion Questions

May 1–5; Joshua 1–7

1. In Joshua 1:1–9, God directs Joshua to remain in His Word (see especially verse 8), assuring Joshua that He would be with him in his leadership just as He was with Moses. God's promises to Joshua as a leader of God's people extend also to His people in leadership positions today. What opportunities has God given you to lead others as His representative at home? at church? elsewhere?
2. Canaanite prostitute Rahab welcomed the believing spies and asked them to spare her and the members of her family (Joshua 2:1–24). Why did God's people spare her? See Hebrews 11:31.
3. In Joshua 4, God provided a miracle so that His people could enter the Promised Land on dry ground, just as they had miraculously crossed the Red Sea upon leaving Egypt. What two results did God bring through this miracle? See verse 24.
4. After marching for six days around the city of Jericho while carrying the ark of the covenant, God's people marched around it seven times on the seventh day. The seventh time, the priests blew the trumpets and Joshua commanded the people, "Shout, for the LORD has given you the city" (Joshua 6:16), and the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. What other walls has our loving God destroyed in order to bless and benefit His people? See Isaiah 59:2; Ephesians 2:11–14.

May Week 2 Discussion Questions

May 6–12; Joshua 8–19

1. Joshua 8:34 records that Joshua read all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses just as they are written in the Book of the Law. All of God's Word points us to Jesus, our Savior. Relate the saving work of Jesus to the blessings and curses written in the Book of the Law. See 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 4:4.
2. God's willingness to act effectively to help and save His people is evidenced vividly in Joshua 10:11–14. In what two ways did God use the forces of nature to fight for His people? What does Jesus' command over the wind and the waves (Luke 8:22–25) reveal to us about Him?
3. Joshua 11 and 12 records how God gave the Promised Land to His people as an inheritance (Joshua 23:4). For God's people of today, the Promised Land provides a picture of heaven. Even now, those who trust in Jesus as their Savior live as citizens of heaven. See Philippians 3:20–21. What does it mean to you that—even now—you are a citizen of heaven? How does this impact your "resident alien" status while on this earth?
4. In Joshua 13–15, we read about Joshua and his friend Caleb, now elderly gentlemen (Joshua was between ninety and one hundred years old, and Caleb was eighty-five). These chapters remind us that God still had work for both to do (see especially Joshua 13:1 and 14:10–12). Reflect on Caleb's words (14:10–12) as you think about God. How is or how might God be at work in your life during your advanced years?
5. In Joshua 17:17–18, Joshua urges on the people of Ephraim and Manasseh. Why doesn't Joshua refer to God as their source of power and strength? Why didn't God's people need to concern themselves with the iron chariots they faced? See Matthew 6:25–35. What formidable opposition needlessly concerns you?
6. Consider Joshua 18:7. How did the tribe of Levi differ from the rest of the tribes with regard to the inheritance they received? Relate the inheritance of the tribe of Levi to those serving God in church-work careers today. See also Numbers 18:20.

May Week 3 Discussion Questions

May 13–19; Joshua 20–24; Judges 1–2

1. Joshua 21:44 describes how, in providing His people with their inheritance, God gave them rest on every side. Hebrews 4:8–10 refers to the salvation that is ours through faith in Christ Jesus as our rest. What does it mean for God's people to rest in the completed work of Christ? See also Matthew 11:28.
2. Review Joshua 22. Explain the appropriateness of Witness—"a witness between us that the LORD is God"—as a name for the altar built by the Reubenites and Gadites (v. 34). What symbols of unity in Christ does this altar remind you of?
3. Does Joshua's warning recorded in Joshua 23:6–8 still apply to God's people living in our day? If so, how? Through what gifts does God's Spirit empower us to "cling to the LORD" (v. 8)?
4. In his parting words to God's people, Joshua proclaims, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). In what way do his words remind us of the words "I believe" that begin the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds?
5. Compare Judges 1:22–26 with Joshua 6:25 and note the similarities between Rahab and the man who assisted the spies at the city of Bethel. What may be one difference? See James 2:25–26, especially verse 26.
6. See Judges 2:11–19. Describe human actions and God's salvation. How does this cycle of sin and deliverance evidence itself in your life? Explain how God is always at work, calling and saving sinful people.

May Week 4 Discussion Questions

May 20–26; Judges 3–16

1. Describe the three sin/salvation scenarios you find in Judges 3. Describe the sin/salvation scenarios in your life in which Jesus is your deliverer.
2. Review the introduction to the Song of Deborah (Judges 5:1–3). For what saving action provided by God do the singers praise God (v. 2)? For whose beneficial work or contribution are you motivated to give thanks to God today?
3. How does Gideon's grateful worship of God, recorded in Judges 7:15, give evidence of his faith in God? Of what future event can we, as God's people, be most certain?
4. Review Judges 10:11–16. Identify Law and Gospel in these verses.
5. Judges 11:1–11 tells of the rise to power and God's blessing upon the leadership of Jephthah. How do the qualifications of Jephthah compare with others God calls and equips? See Judges 6:15 and Luke 1:52.
6. Read of the announcement of the birth of Samson in Judges 13:1–14. How do Samson's parents show their faith in God as they anticipate their role as parents?

May Week 5 Discussion Questions

May 27–31; Judges 17–21; Ruth 1–4

1. How did Micah attempt to combine the worship of idols with the worship of the true God in Judges 17?
2. Review Judges 19. Reacting to the rape and murder of his concubine, a man cut up the murder victim into twelve pieces and sent the pieces to each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Held in the devastating wake of this atrocity, the people planned to mete out punishment for the deed. They responded, “Think about it. Consider it! Tell us what to do!” After hearing Peter’s sermon at Pentecost, the people responded somewhat similarly, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). How did Peter respond? See Acts 2:38.
3. How might the words of Judges 21:25 apply to people today? What does it mean to have Jesus as King of our lives? See Ephesians 1:20–23.
4. Apply the rich imagery of the last portion of Ruth 2:12 to Ruth herself. Then, apply it to yourself as a follower of the true God.
5. God always gives His people more than they could ever ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). How was this especially true for Ruth and Boaz? See Ruth 4:9–12; consider especially verse 11.

June Week 1 Discussion Questions

June 1–9; 1 Samuel 1–8

1. After Hannah had prayed to God in anguish and grief over her inability to have children, Eli the priest said to her, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to Him” (1 Samuel 1:17). Why can God’s people always “go in peace” from the house of God at the conclusion of the Divine Service? See Luke 2:29–31 and John 14:27.
2. Hannah’s song reminds us of the song of Mary (Luke 1:46–55). Comment on the portion of the song recorded in 1 Samuel 2:6–9 as you reflect on your new life in Christ Jesus.
3. “And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground” (1 Samuel 3:19). Why might God’s people today also pray that the same might be said of our words? See also James 3:3–12.
4. The conclusion of 1 Samuel 4 (v. 22) records the dying words of Eli’s daughter-in-law, who said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.” What was the glory of Israel? Was it the ark of the covenant or was there some other source? What similar examples of misplaced focus might capture the attention of contemporary believers?
5. After the capture of the ark of the covenant, “the hand of the LORD was heavy against” the Philistines (1 Samuel 5:6). God’s Law brings judgment and condemnation upon those without faith. What distinction must we keep in mind in order to understand the Bible? See John 1:17.
6. After God gave His people victory over the Philistines, Samuel set up a stone as monument. He named the stone Ebenezer, saying, “Till now the LORD has helped us” (1 Samuel 7:12). How has God helped each baptized believer “till now”? See Romans 6:4 and Philippians 1:6.
7. What was implicit in God’s words to Samuel, “They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them” (1 Samuel 8:7). See also verse 5.

June Week 2 Discussion Questions

June 10–16; 1 Samuel 9–15

1. Note how Samuel describes the effect the power of the Holy Spirit will have on Saul in 1 Samuel 10:6. Explain the change the power of the Holy Spirit has brought into your life. See John 3:5–6 and 1 Corinthians 12:3, 13.
2. What does 1 Samuel 11:6 suggest about the role of anger in the life of a believer? See also Ephesians 4:26.
3. See 1 Samuel 12:24. What great things that God has done for us should we consider as, moved by the Holy Spirit, we pledge to “fear the LORD and serve Him faithfully with all [our] heart”?
4. Samuel confronts Saul about his sin with the words “What have you done?” (1 Samuel 13:11). These words confront the sinner with the Law. The goal of the Law is to bring people to repentance. What does God’s Word indicate is the result of repentance? See Acts 3:19–20.
5. Saul seemed willing to put his son Jonathan to death because of the foolish oath Saul had made earlier. But the men of the army interceded for Jonathan and saved his life. “Then the people said to Saul, ‘Shall Jonathan die, who has worked this great salvation in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day.’ So the people ransomed Jonathan, so that he did not die” (1 Samuel 14:45). Contrast and compare Jonathan and Jesus.
6. In a feeble attempt to clear himself before God, Saul tells Samuel that the reason he did not follow God’s instructions for total destruction was so he could provide animals for a sacrifice. Explain Samuel’s response to Saul recorded in 1 Samuel 15:22.

June Week 3 Discussion Questions

June 17–23; 1 Samuel 16–23

1. Review 1 Samuel 16:1–13. Then describe Saul and David in light of Mark 12:33.
2. With the Lord's help, young David killed the evil, vulgar Goliath, who blatantly defied God. Apply 1 Samuel 17:47 to the evil foes Jesus faced on our behalf.
3. How does Jonathan, the prince of Israel, remind us of Jesus, the prince of heaven? See 1 Samuel 18:1–4 and 2 Corinthians 8:9.
4. Saul reprimanded his son with these words: "As long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Therefore send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die" (1 Samuel 20:31). On what grounds did Jonathan rightly disobey his father? See also Acts 5:29.
5. See 1 Samuel 22:1–4. How did David provide for the welfare of his parents at a time when he might well have rationalized that their care was not his responsibility?
6. According to 1 Samuel 23:1–14, how did David demonstrate his reliance upon God's grace and protection?

June Week 4 Discussion Questions

June 24–30; 1 Samuel 24–31

1. Review 1 Samuel 24:1–10. Explain David's attitude and actions toward King Saul.
2. Abigail graciously interceded with David on behalf of her wicked and foolish husband, Nabal (1 Samuel 25:23–30). Her loving actions designed to rescue Nabal remind us of our Savior's actions on our behalf. Explain. See 1 John 2:1 and 1 Corinthians 15:3.
3. David offered the following comment when talking with Saul after once again sparing Saul's life: "As your life was precious this day in my sight, so may my life be precious in the sight of the LORD, and may He deliver me out of all tribulation" (1 Samuel 26:24). How has Jesus showed the value He places on David's life and ours? See Mark 10:45. As God's Spirit empowers us through Word and Sacraments, how are we moved to regard our enemies? See Romans 12:20.
4. Consider 1 Samuel 28:7–10. What evidence do these short verses provide of the hold sin had on Saul? See also James 1:15.
5. Truly amazing are the ways in which God protects and otherwise provides for His people. The enemies of God's people giving protection to David and his men for a period of time in 1 Samuel 29 is but one example. What examples of God's care and provision in your life illustrate the amazing ways in which God works? See also 1 Corinthians 1:25–31.
6. When disaster or troubles overtake us, we can respond in one of two ways. See 1 Samuel 30:6 and explain.
7. 1 Samuel 31 describes Saul's tragic death at his own hand. Review 1 Samuel 31:1–4 and Matthew 27:41–50. Contrast the death of Saul with the death of Jesus.

Leader Notes

Many of the questions call for group participants to share personal insights, examples, or life experiences and applications. Answers to these questions will vary. If no one answers right away, allow a moment or two of silence to give everyone time to think through the question.

Other questions call for specific factual or analytical responses. Suggested answers for these appear below.

April Week 1 Leader Notes

April 1–7; Deuteronomy 1–6

1. Answers will vary. Throughout our life, God sustains us in His baptismal grace and “carries us” through the challenges, obstacles, and hardships that attack us from all sides. Great is the faithfulness of our eternal God and Savior!
2. Answers will vary, since this question calls for personal accounts of God’s blessings upon the efforts of individuals.
3. With these words, God reminds us that we need not fear those enemies of the people of God who oppose us. God Himself will fight on our behalf. Stress that God has already fought for each of us by sending His only Son to do battle with and overcome our greatest enemies—sin, death, and Satan’s power.
4. God directs those trusting in Him to “keep His statutes and His commandments . . . that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time” (Deuteronomy 4:40).
5. God always has at heart the best interests of His people. He promises to bless those who trust in and obey Him.
6. Although answers may vary, Deuteronomy 6:10–12 describes times of ease and abundance as moments in which people tend to forget their need for God, His salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, and the good gifts we have received solely at His generous provision.

April Week 2 Leader Notes

April 8–14; Deuteronomy 7–15

1. God chose us not because of our merit or worth but because of His love and because of the promise He made to the patriarchs. Ephesians 1:4–6 describes those believers not biologically descended from Abraham as having been adopted into the family of God “through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will” (v. 5).
2. Through God’s Word, the Holy Spirit continues His gift of faith, empowering us to fend off the attacks and enticements of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh.
3. Moses no doubt refers to the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea and to the other miraculous signs and wonders through which God provided for His people during their sojourn in the wilderness. God’s people today can reflect on Jesus’ holy life, innocent death, and dynamic defeat of death demonstrated in His resurrection victory.
4. Responses will include personal reflection on God’s saving grace in participants’ lives through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Avenues for sharing God’s Word with the younger generation may include but are not limited to having personal conversations with young people, teaching Sunday School and Bible class, writing, and living a life of faithful witness as a child of God.
5. Responses may vary but are likely to include the enticements offered by unbelieving family members and friends, the influence of popular media, and other manifestations of a predominantly unbelieving culture. Through His Word, received either alone or with the Sacraments, God’s Spirit empowers and equips His people to trust in Jesus and to resist the allurements to follow other gods.
6. God promises to bless the generosity that is motivated by God’s power and presence in our lives. Deuteronomy 15:10 records, “Because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.” The promise of 2 Corinthians 9:11: “You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way.” The inexpressible gift, which energizes unconditional, generous giving (2 Corinthians 9:15), is none other than God’s gift of Jesus, the Savior of the world.

April Week 3 Leader Notes

April 15–21; Deuteronomy 16–26

1. God promises to direct and guide through His Word those leaders who belong to Him so that they serve humbly and in accordance with His will.
2. God provided salvation for His people through both Moses and Jesus. Jesus, however, provided salvation for all people from their sins. Both Moses and Jesus began life during the reign of a ruler who sought to put them to death; both Moses and Jesus interceded on behalf of a wayward, unfaithful people; both Moses and Jesus performed miracles to heal and save others. Moses was a mere mortal; Jesus was the holy Son of God.
3. Worldly wisdom suggests the foolishness of confidence when facing opponents of greater power and number. During such times, God's people do well to remember that our God, the Creator and Redeemer of the world, remains always in control.
4. Deuteronomy 22:1–4 describes how God's power moves His people to act with regard to the property and possessions of others. These verses illustrate the explanation of the Seventh Commandment, in which Luther states, "We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income."
5. God's grace moves and empowers His people to share their bounty with those who may be in need, such as the alien, the fatherless, and the widow. These acts of generosity flow from God's power in the life of those He has saved from bondage and oppression.
6. God, who has made us His treasured possession, desires His people to live in obedience to Him. He would have those He has called "out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9) to lead such good lives that unbelievers will take notice. Taking notice may lead to an opportunity for believers to bring observers the Gospel so that they too come to believe.

April Week 4 Leader Notes

April 22–28; Deuteronomy 27–32

1. Although each of us is dead under the curse of the Law, the Good News is that Jesus has given us the free gift of eternal life, won for us through His innocent life and atoning death.
2. Regardless of the observable circumstances of the life of a believer, God's people have the greatest of all possessions—eternal life through faith in Christ Jesus. Those with faith stand at the head; those who reject the Son find themselves “at the tail”—under the wrath of God.
3. Unbelievers fail to acknowledge the power of God's Word, which called the world into existence, brought forth the waters that covered the world at the time of the great flood, and will one day bring fire to the heavens and the earth.
4. For the people of God through faith in Christ Jesus, to “choose life” means to enjoy the full and complete life God in Christ Jesus offers those who belong to Him. See also John 10:10, 28.
5. Responses will vary but may include times of turmoil, indecision, hardship, disillusionment, and at the time of death.
6. God gives His Word for the purpose for which He intends it. God's Word brings faith to people and nourishes them “like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb” (Deuteronomy 32:2).

April Week 5 Leader Notes

April 29–30; Deuteronomy 33–34

1. Believers are “a people saved by the LORD.” He is our shield and helper and our glorious sword, as Deuteronomy 33:29 explains.
2. Through faith in Christ Jesus, God’s people recognize the temporary state in which they currently exist, anticipating an eternal home—“a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:16). See also John 14:2–3.

May Week 1 Leader Notes

May 1–5; Joshua 1–7

1. Opportunities for leadership will vary according to the role, station, and life interests of participants. Point out that each of us leads in any number of ways. As God's Spirit equips and directs us, we can witness about our Savior in our words and actions as we lead and encourage others.
2. God's people spared Rahab because she believed in the true God. Hebrews 11:31 records, "By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies."
3. God performed the miracles as demonstrations of His power before all the people of the earth, including believers, so that they might always fear the Lord their God (Joshua 4:24).
4. God in Christ has destroyed the wall of hostility between believing Jews and believing Gentiles, uniting all believers in the blood of Christ. Jesus has overcome the wall of sin separating us from our Father in heaven (Isaiah 59:2). Ephesians records, "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4–6).

May Week 2 Leader Notes

May 6–12; Joshua 8–19

1. Jesus, our Savior, took upon Himself the curse of the Law that should have been placed on us. Because He obeyed the Law in our place, we receive the blessing of righteousness He merited in our place (2 Corinthians 5:21).
2. God brought His people victory over their enemies by hurling down large hailstones upon them (Joshua 10:11) and by extending the daylight so the battle might conclude (Joshua 10:12–13). Jesus showed Himself to be true God by demonstrating His control over the forces of nature, such as when He stilled the storm (Luke 8:22–25).
3. Answers will vary. Because we have a citizenship in heaven, we, as the people of God, can remember that the conditions and circumstances of our earthly existence—however happy or unhappy—are but temporary. We await the second coming of the Savior, who will come to “transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body” (Philippians 3:21).
4. Caleb’s words suggest that even in his advanced age, he was still willing and able to be a soldier for the Lord as God gave him the strength to do so. Such an attitude evidences a dynamic faith in a person of any age.
5. Joshua gives them a strong hint when he says, “You are a numerous people and have great power” (17:17). The power is not their own strength, but God, who is at their side. Without God’s power, they would have been helpless against the iron chariots—but with God, those chariots were of no help to their enemies. Whether weak or strong, God’s people can trust in His power at work on their behalf. Examples of opposition will vary. Stress that God is at work through the Means of Grace to empower, encourage, and sustain His people.
6. The Levites were dedicated to the service of the Lord. They were not to be tied to the land but to find their inheritance in Him. Comparisons might be made to contemporary full-time church workers who often are called from one congregation to another and relocate, willingly establishing themselves in new homes and communities.

May Week 3 Leader Notes

May 13–19; Joshua 20–24; Judges 1–2

1. God's people rest in Christ when they trust in Him for salvation rather than in their own works or merit.
2. Examples of symbols of the unity Christ provides may vary. One obvious symbol is the cross: the vertical line represents the unity Christ brings between God and humanity; the horizontal line represents the unity Christ brings among people.
3. Joshua's warning about the influences of those who do not know or believe in the true God is just as relevant in our day as it was when it was first given. God keeps His people steadfast and faithful through the Means of Grace—Word and Sacraments.
4. Each person can speak only for himself or herself with regard to matters of faith. In this instance, Joshua, as the spiritual head of his family, speaks for his family, stating simply, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).
5. It may be that the man who assisted in the capture of Bethel did not become a believer who remained among God's people as Rahab did. Instead, he moved among the unbelieving Hittites and there built a city named in remembrance of the city captured by the people of God.
6. The cycle of sin described in Judges involves God's people falling into the sinful behaviors of the unbelieving neighbors surrounding them, God allowing the people to fall upon hard times, the people crying out for help in their time of need, and God sending a judge to deliver them. Similarly, when hard times, troubles, despair, or persecution enters our lives, God can use it to bring us to a renewed recognition of our need for Him. He reminds us of His love and the power of the Spirit He offers through the Means of Grace to strengthen and sustain us. Jesus has already solved our greatest problem, conquering sin, death, and Satan for us.

May Week 4 Leader Notes

May 20–26; Judges 3–16

1. Judges 3 records three times that the people of God fell into sin, serving the gods of their neighbors, and three times God raised up deliverers—Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar. Although we daily sin and continually need God's forgiveness, Jesus is the once-for-all deliverer. He suffered and died to earn forgiveness for all sin ever committed. Remembering our Baptism, we can daily receive His forgiveness and rejoice in the new life He gives us to live in Him.
2. In Deborah's song, the singers begin by praising God for the leadership of the princes in Israel and the people's willing offering of themselves (Judges 5:2). Similarly, we can thank and praise God for the leaders He provides His people today. Through leaders, God provides us with peace, protection, security, and the freedom to live and share the one true faith.
3. Gideon praises God for outcomes that had been revealed to him but had not yet occurred. Somewhat similarly, God's people today can thank and praise God for the resurrection of the body, which we believe in and anticipate this side of the grave.
4. God told His people as they remained steeped in their sin to seek the help of the false gods they had adopted (Law). But when they came to Him in repentance, God "became impatient over the misery of Israel" (Judges 10:16) and came to their aid (Gospel).
5. Those God would have serve Him in special ways may not be the kind of people human reason would gravitate toward. God often raises leaders from the humblest and most unlikely of circumstance. (Isaiah 55:9 reminds us, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.")
6. Upon hearing from his wife about the visit of the angel, Manoah prayed to God, asking for the angel to return to teach them "what [they were] to do with the child who [would] be born" (Judges 13:8). Manoah's concern evidenced the desire he and his wife had to bring up their son in a God-pleasing manner.

May Week 5 Leader Notes

May 27–31; Judges 17–21; Ruth 1–4

1. Both mother and son had mixed the worship of the true God with idolatry. After saying, “Blessed be my son by the LORD” (Judges 17:2), the mother solemnly consecrated her money to the Lord yet directed her son to cast an idol from it. Later, a Levite was installed as priest of Micah’s house. The son reasoned, “Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest” (Judges 17:13).
2. Peter comforted those struggling under the burden of their sin and its consequences with the sweet assurance of the Gospel. Jesus has taken the punishment for all sin. Peter responded, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).
3. These words apply to anyone who is self-absorbed, seeking only to satisfy his or her sinful desires. Jesus is the King of all who by faith have become members of His Body. God’s people recognize Jesus as supreme over all things, including every dimension of the new life His Holy Spirit gives us to live in Him.
4. The words of Boaz to Ruth are a wonderful blessing for anyone to receive from another person: “The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge” (Ruth 2:12). In these words, Boaz asks that God bestow upon Ruth the full blessings of the true God, including the forgiveness, new life, and salvation that God would bring through the coming Messiah (who would be born many years later as one of Ruth’s descendants).
5. Together, Boaz and Ruth received the blessing of the elder upon themselves and their progeny. This blessing found ultimate realization in that one of their descendants was Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the world. See also Matthew 1:1–17, especially verse 5.

June Week 1 Leader Notes

June 1–9; 1 Samuel 1–8

1. Upon leaving the Divine Service, each of God's people can "go in peace," confident that Jesus has earned forgiveness for all our sins, that God has heard our prayers, and that the triune God loves and cares for us.
2. God has richly blessed us in Christ Jesus. In Him, we have the forgiveness of sins and a new and eternal life to live in His name. In the words of the hymnwriter, "We are rich, for He was poor; Is not this a wonder?" (*Lutheran Service Book* 390:3).
3. As James clearly attests, spoken words often are the source of great trouble and corruption. God's people might well ask God to help them speak truthfully, faithfully, and honorably in a manner befitting the children of God. Samuel gained the trust and respect of the people because of the reliability of his words.
4. The glory of Israel was to be found not in the ark of the covenant but in God Himself. Somewhat similarly, God's people today might focus their Christian life on health or wealth, on a particular pastor/preacher, or on a congregational affiliation or church building rather than upon Christ Himself.
5. In order to understand the Bible, we must keep in mind the need to distinguish rightly between Law and Gospel. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, the Law brings us to a knowledge of our sinfulness. By the Gospel, the Holy Spirit works in repentant hearts the assurance that God in Christ has purchased forgiveness and freedom from our sin. Even when God's "hand is heavy" in His application of the Law, He is at work, reaching out with a call to repentance so that He might forgive, heal, and save.
6. God has helped each believer "till now" by sending His Son to earn forgiveness, new life, and eternal salvation for us. In Baptism, He has made us new people. By the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the Means of Grace, "He who began a good work in [us] will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).
7. In asking Samuel to give them a king, the people were asking not only for king but also for "a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:5). Once again, God's people showed their natural inclination to follow the ways of their unbelieving neighbors.

June Week 2 Leader Notes

June 10–16; 1 Samuel 9–15

1. Samuel told Saul, “The Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man” (1 Samuel 10:6). When we receive the Holy Spirit in Baptism, we are born again, changed from our natural condition, and forgiven, restored, and empowered for the new life we have been given to live in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
2. Not all anger is sinful. Saul’s anger at the boldness of Israel’s unbelieving neighbors is an example of righteous anger. Uncontrolled anger, however, can lead to sin (Ephesians 4:26).
3. God empowers His people as they recall the Word of God, which reveals the great things God has done for us through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.
4. Acts 3:19–20 records the words of Peter, “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”
5. Like Jonathan, Jesus won a great victory for the people of God. Whereas Jonathan was spared from death, Jesus won the great victory by dying and then overcoming death for us and for our salvation. Jonathan won his victory with God’s help; Jesus won His victory to win the eternal “help” of God’s forgiveness.
6. In Samuel’s words to Saul, he upholds the worship of God in a spirit of obedience and devotion to God. Samuel asks Saul, “Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22).

June Week 3 Leader Notes

June 17–23; 1 Samuel 16–23

1. Mark 12:33 describes an attitude of true love and devotion to God. David possessed this attitude by the power of the Holy Spirit. Saul did not. Mark 12:33 records, “To love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”
2. The battle Jesus fought was won not with sword or spear (see Matthew 26:52–56) but rather with the Lord’s strength, when He crushed the foes of sin, death, and Satan for us. Unlike that of David, Jesus’ victory is complete.
3. Like Jonathan, Jesus willingly set aside His position in His kingdom and gave of Himself for us and for our salvation. Jonathan also set aside his place as the prince of Israel; he also gave generous gifts to David. Jesus gave the ultimate gift to us; He gave His very life for us and for our salvation.
4. Jonathan recognized Saul’s desire to take David’s life as wrong. Jonathan obeyed God rather than his father and king. Followers of Christ are charged to “obey God rather than men” when there is a conflict (Acts 5:29).
5. The power of the Holy Spirit evidenced itself in David’s life in his regard for his parents and their welfare. While living as a fugitive from King Saul, David sought a home for his parents with the king of Moab (the home country of their ancestor Ruth), where he knew they would be safe. David might have rationalized that his siblings might care for his parents, that he had enough concerns as the king’s enemy, or that God would protect his parents without them having to relocate to a foreign land.
6. As David continued to hide and flee from Saul’s pursuit, he relied on God, seeking His direction and guidance in prayer. In spite of Saul’s unrelenting search, David remained protected and safe, for “God did not give him into his hands” (1 Samuel 23:14).

June Week 4 Leader Notes

June 24–30; 1 Samuel 24–31

1. Promoting an example of honoring God according to the Fourth Commandment, David's regard for Saul and his authority evidences God's power in David's life. God's Spirit brought David to serve God by respecting and honoring His anointed servant, even though Saul was not a person of faith.
2. Abigail's intercession for her husband, Nabal, reminds us of Jesus' intercession for us as our advocate (1 John 2:1). Abigail's willingness to take Nabal's blame upon herself pictures Jesus, our Savior, who died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3).
3. Jesus demonstrated the value He places on all human life by living and dying in our place as the ultimate act of servitude (Mark 10:45). Jesus' love empowers us to love and serve all others, including our enemies (Romans 12:20).
4. Saul piled one sin upon another. He disobeyed God's Law and his own law and consulted with the medium, therefore practicing witchcraft. He then evoked the name of the Lord to assure the woman of her safety. Unchecked, one sin will always lead to others, as sin seeks always to tighten its grasp.
5. Examples of God's amazing acts of protection and care will vary. "Prime the pump" by offering examples from your own life. Review with the group 1 Corinthians 1:25–31 to underscore the wondrous aspects of God at work.
6. When disaster or troubles come into our life, we can either become bitter and cast blame or we can find strength in our gracious and loving God.
7. Both felt the distress of the heavy burden of sin and its consequences. Saul was guilty of unbelief and many other sins; Jesus was completely innocent. Saul sought to escape abuse; Jesus endured abuse on our behalf as He suffered the penalty we deserved. Saul took his own life; Jesus willingly gave His own life so that others might live.