The Bible Lesson at a Glance

When Joshua is an old man and about to die he calls the people together to say goodbye. In his speech he reminds the people of how God has led them every day since the exodus from Egypt many years before. He also reminds them of the many times they have rebelled. He asks them to evaluate their actions and their goals: “Choose . . . this day whom you will serve.”

This is a lesson about grace in action.

Our decisions and choices demonstrate whether we want to follow God or turn away from Him. Joshua asks the people to make a choice, but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

We respond to God’s grace by choosing to obey Him every day.

Teacher Enrichment

“After presenting the goodness of God toward Israel, he [Joshua] called upon them, in the name of Jehovah, to choose whom they would serve. The worship of idols was still to some extent secretly practiced, and Joshua endeavored now to bring them to a decision that should banish sin from Israel. . . . Joshua desired to lead them to serve God, not by compulsion, but willingly. Love to God is the very foundation of religion. To engage in His service merely from hope of reward or fear of punishment would avail nothing. Open apostasy would not be more offensive to God than hypocrisy and mere formal worship” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 523).

“We respond to God’s grace by choosing to obey Him every day. Our decisions and choices demonstrate whether we want to follow God or turn away from Him. Joshua asks the people to make a choice, but as for him and his family, they choose to worship and serve the Lord. God wants us to choose to obey and worship Him out of love, not fear. When we look at how He has led us in the past, we cannot doubt His love for us. We respond to His grace by loving and serving Him.

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Welcome
Welcome students at the door and direct them to their seats. Ask them how their week has been. Encourage learners to study their Sabbath School lesson regularly. You may debrief students on the previous lesson to help them see the chronological continuity of the Bible stories from one week to another. Then ask students to share a few things they have learned from the current lesson prior to Sabbath School. Ask: What was the most interesting part of the Bible story? What activity did you find the most helpful? Invite students to share their experiences and/or the handiworks they created for Sabbath School during the week.
Transition into the Readiness activity of your choice.

Program notes

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### LESSON 13

**READINESS ACTIVITIES**

Select the activity or activities that are most appropriate for your situation.

#### A

**Highway Signs**

Make five or six road signs on cardboard. These should be signs with which the students are familiar, such as stop; slow; slippery road; steep cliff, stay off the shoulder; yield; slow down; one-way; no parking; etc. Divide the students into two groups and ask each group to select a leader. Then one at a time, lift the highway signs and ask the groups to discuss and decide under what conditions they would choose to obey that sign. Ask each group leader to report the decision of their group.

**Debriefing**

Ask: What are the consequences of choosing to stop or not to stop? Why is yielding to other cars a good step to take? What would happen if you chose to stay close to the cliff shoulder? (Discuss each sign.)

Ask: In the same way, when we choose to follow God’s signs and advice for us, what will be the effect of that decision? If we choose to ignore God’s council and advice, what will be the effect of that decision? Let’s say together our power text, Joshua 24:15,

> “But if serving the **Lord** seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the **Lord**” (Joshua 24:15).

Remember,

We respond to God’s grace by choosing to obey Him every day.

#### B

**Is It an Idol?**

Distribute pens and three or four small slips of paper to each student. Ask them to write the things that they spend most of their time on and are important to them, such as sports, a paper route to earn some extra money, etc. Put the slips in a box. Shake the box and ask one of the students to pull a slip out and read what is on it. (Note: The slips are anonymous, and the student does not have to read their own slip, neither does the person who wrote the slip need to identify themselves.) Ask: How could this get in the way of our relationship with God? What can we do to prevent it from getting in the way? (Try to discuss all the slips in the box. If you have a large group, divide into smaller groups, each with an adult facilitator.)

**Debriefing**

Ask: What kinds of idols did people worship in Bible times? How did they get in the way of their relationship with God? What are some of the idols we just discovered that people today might worship? How can they get in the way of our relationship with God? What other possible modern-day idols can you think of that we didn’t already mention? (Allow time for discussion.)

Say: When we choose to follow God, He asks to be first in our lives. When we put Him first, He fills up our lives much more fully than anything else ever could.

Let’s say together our power text, Joshua 24:15,

> “But if serving the **Lord** seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the **Lord**” (Joshua 24:15).

Remember,

We respond to God’s grace by choosing to obey Him every day.
**Prayer and Praise**

**Fellowship**
Allow students to report things that they are pleased or troubled about. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special, warm greeting to all visitors. Get contact information from the adult who brought them to church. Early in the following week, send a postcard or e-mail letting the visitors know how much you enjoyed having them in your class and that you would like to see them again.

**Suggested Songs**
- “Father, We Love You” (*He Is Our Song*, no. 37)
- “Give Them All to Jesus” (*He Is Our Song*, no. 91)
- “Give Praise to Jesus” (*He Is Our Song*, no. 48)
- “Majesty” (*He Is Our Song*, no. 67)

**Mission**
Use *Adventist Mission for Youth and Adults* (go to [www.juniorpowerpoints.org](http://www.juniorpowerpoints.org) and click on MISSION) or another mission report available to you. For the mission story, have a map of the world where the students can identify the location of the mission story and compare it to where they are. You could use pushpins to mark where the mission story takes place.

**Offering**
Say: God gives us the opportunity of helping others learn to obey Him. One way we can do this is by giving our offering to support the missionary work in various parts of the world.

**Debriefing**
Say: What happened to Neil? (The nail should have a thin copper coating.) Neil’s “choices” had an effect. All our choices affect us for good or bad. Let’s say together our power text, *Joshua 24:15*:

> “But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” (*Joshua 24:15*)

Remember,

*We respond to God’s grace by choosing to obey Him every day.*
Introducing the Bible Story
If you chose Readiness C, go back and revisit Neil the Nail to introduce the lesson. Otherwise, you might have a selection of pictures from glossy magazines, sports magazines, or newspapers. Ask the students to look through the pictures and choose one that could become an idol for people today.

Stress that many of these in themselves are not bad, but when they become the focus of someone’s life, they prevent a saving relationship with God. Say: **In our lesson today Joshua gathered all the people together and asked them to choose whom they were going to follow.**

Experiencing the Story
Have an adult (if possible, dressed as a biblical character) be prepared to read the parts of Joshua 24 spoken by Joshua. Appoint someone else to read the narration and have the rest of the students read the parts of the Israelites.

**Narrator:** Joshua 24:1, 2 (first part)
**Joshua:** Joshua 24:2-15
**Narrator:** Joshua 24:16 (first part)
**People:** Joshua 24:16-18
**Narrator:** Joshua 24:19 (first part)
**Joshua:** Joshua 24:19, 20
**Narrator and People:** Joshua 24:21
**Joshua, People, Narrator:** Joshua 24:22
**Joshua, Narrator:** Joshua 24:23
**Narrator, People:** Joshua 24:24
**Narrator:** Joshua 24:25, 26
**Joshua, Narrator:** Joshua 24:27
**Narrator:** Joshua 24:28-31

Debriefing
Say: **As Joshua addressed his people for the last time, he reminded them of all the good things that the Lord had done for them. Let’s review some of the things of which Joshua reminded the Israelites.**

1. **How was God involved in the life of Abraham? How was He involved in the exodus from Egypt? How did God help the Israelites in the battles against the people east of the Jordan? How did God intervene in the conquest of the Promised Land?** (Joshua 24:2-13)
2. **What does Joshua ask the people to do in response to what the Lord had done for them?** (Verses 14, 15)
3. **How can the people show they are serious about serving the Lord?** (Verses 16-18)
4. **What symbolic representations did Joshua use to remind the people of their commitment to God?** (Verses 25, 26)

Say: **Joshua wrote down all the ways that God had led the Israelites. Think of a way that God has led you and blessed you in the past. Share that right now with one or two other people.**

**We respond to God’s grace by choosing to obey Him every day.**
Exploring the Bible
List the following texts where all can see. In smaller groups or together, find and read the texts, discussing what kind of promise is made to those who are obedient.

Genesis 22:18 (all nations blessed)
Deuteronomy 4:30, 31 (God is merciful)
Isaiah 1:19 (eat of the best)
Jeremiah 7:23 (be God's people; go well)
Luke 11:28 (be blessed)
John 8:51 (never see death)

Explain to the students that the second death is not the "going to sleep until the resurrection" death. It is the final, forever death that separates from God the people who chose not to follow Him.

John 14:23 (be God's home)
John 13:17 (be blessed)
Acts 5:32 (Holy Spirit)
1 John 3:22 (receive what we ask)

Debriefing
Ask: What do these verses tell you about God? Why do you think there are blessings connected with obedience? (Because God asks us to do only what is for our best anyway; He made us, so He knows what is best for us.)

Say: Let's remember that

We respond to God’s grace by choosing to obey Him every day.

Accommodations for students with special needs:
Have students with visual impairments and learning disabilities sit close to the board. Alternatively, prepare in advance for these students a handout with the list of Bible references and questions.

TeenTalk 980
Ahead of time, assign six students the parts in the skit on pages 148, 149 of this guide.

Say: Each day we’re faced with tough decisions. Yet making the right choices can often be made a little easier if we simply stop to think about the end result. Right now it’s time to tune in to TeenTalk 980 for a few “choice” morsels of conversation with Stan the Radio Man!

Present the skit.

Debriefing
Ask the following discussion questions:

Why is it important for Christians to make wise choices? How can we make wise choices in our daily lives?

What role does God play in the Christian’s decision-making process? What about others?

Who besides Christ can help us make wise choices?

How can we overcome the results of poor choices?

(From Randy Fishell and D. Gregory Dunn, The Best of Creative Skits for Youth Groups [Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1997], pp. 128-131.)

Say: Remember, our power point is:

We respond to God’s grace by choosing to obey Him every day.

YOU NEED:

- Bibles
- board
- markers
- six scripts (pp. 148, 149)
- table
- telephone
- two microphone props
- on-the-air sign (optional)
LESSON 13

SHARING THE LESSON

My Covenant
Allow students to share if they had the opportunity to tell someone about the benefits of choosing to obey God.

If possible, have a large rock in your classroom. Remind the students that Joshua set up a large stone under an oak tree to remind the Israelites of their promises to God. Give each student paper and pen or pencil. Ask each to write a personal covenant with God about how they choose to live. Allow a few quiet moments for them to think and write. Play a worship tape or CD while they write.

Alternatively: Students could use flat stones to each record their own covenant with permanent marker.

Debriefing
Say: Take your covenant home with you and keep it in your Bible. Ask God to help you be true to your covenant with Him.

We respond to God’s grace by choosing to obey Him every day.

Accommodations for students with special needs:
Allow those students who experience difficulty with writing to work with partners who may offer assistance to them.

Prayer and Closing Comments:
Ask students to join you in a commitment prayer, by following you line by line as you pray the following:

Dear Father in heaven,
    Thank You for Your help and guidance in the past.
    When we remember how You have led us we praise You.
    We ask forgiveness for the times when Your gifts have become more important to us than You, the giver.
    We ask for Your help to get everything into Your perspective.
    Thank You for helping us to obey.
    In Jesus’ name, amen.

Reminder to parents:
Say: Check out the student Bible study guide to find Parents’ Pages for your use in family worship, or however you wish to use them to spiritually guide your children. You may listen to the podcast of the lesson online at www.juniorpowerpoints.org/podcast.php?channel=1.

Coming up next week:
Say: Solomon asks for wisdom. We need God’s wisdom to be effective in our service.

YOU NEED:
- large rock & flat stones
- pieces of paper
- pens/pencils/markers

YOU NEED:

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LESSON 13

Whose Side Are You On?

It is always fun to be on the winning team. Often it is the team captain who gets to choose the team. There are always a few people whom everybody wants, and a few people nobody wants. How would it feel to be able to pick which side you were going to be on?

The Israelites were getting settled in their new homes in the Promised Land. Their beloved leader, Joshua, had served faithfully under Moses through all the years in the wilderness. Then he had been given directions from God to help them get settled in the new land.

Joshua was one of only two adults who had been on the entire exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land. Now he was about to die. He wanted to talk to the people one last time.

On the appointed day people began arriving in Shechem from everywhere. Respectfully they gathered, waiting for the final words of their 110-year-old leader. Slowly Joshua stood to speak. His voice was filled with kindness and authority. He began to tell them their own history, beginning with Terah, the father of Abraham. Carefully he outlined how God had chosen and led Abraham and his descendants until that very day.

As Joshua started telling the events of the exodus from Egypt, a hush fell over the crowd. These were stories all of them had heard from their parents and grandparents. These were stories that Joshua had lived himself. One by one he reminded them of all the days of God’s leading. But he also reminded them of all the times they and their parents had grumbled, complained, or outright rebelled.

Finally Joshua reminded them that they were now living in cities that they had not had to build. They were eating olives and grapes from groves and vineyards they had not had to plant. What a wonderful way God had fulfilled all His promises to them.

“Now,” Joshua was nearing the end of his long speech to his people, “fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:14, 15).

Joshua seemed to be finished, but it was hard to tell because of the noise of the people around him. They were clapping and cheering. They were yelling, “Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God” (verses 16-18). The cheering went on and on.

Joshua looked at the people with love and pity. It was true: they had done pretty well at honoring God while Joshua had been their leader.

But now that he was about to leave them, he was concerned. It was easy for people to say that they would honor and obey God. It was a harder thing to choose every day, in every little choice they made, to honor Him.

“You aren’t able to serve Him in your own power,” Joshua warned.

“But we will,” all the people shouted back.

“You are witnesses to your own promise,” Joshua said a little sadly.

“Yes,” the people assured him. “We are witnesses.”

“Now then,” Joshua responded, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel” (verse 23).

“We will serve the Lord our God and obey him,” the people cheered again (verse 24).

Joshua turned to his last task. He wrote down all the things that God wanted the people to remember as they chose to serve Him day by day. He wrote them in the Book of the Law of God. He also put a special, large rock under the oak tree there to remind the people of what they had promised the Lord that day.

Imagine one young man walking between his mother and father as they make their way into the hill country to their new home.

“What idols does Joshua want us to get rid of, Father? We don’t have any images of animals or other gods at our house.”

“I don’t think that is the only kind of idols that our leader was talking about,” the father replies thoughtfully.

“I believe that he was talking about anything that gets in the way of our choosing to make God our top priority.
“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15).

We respond to God’s grace by choosing to obey Him every day.

**POWER POINT**

We respond to God’s grace by choosing to obey Him every day.