

## Chapter 1

### AN ALL IMPORTANT DECISION

In this story we will focus on a young woman named Rebekah. However, before doing so we will take a brief look at a man named Abraham.

You can read of him in Genesis 12:1-3

***The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."***

Abraham had obeyed God and had taken his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot and his servants with him and they had travelled to the land of Canaan. Eventually they had a son named Isaac, as you can read in Genesis 21:1-5

***Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what He had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.***

Isaac grows up and one day Abraham instructs his servant to find a wife for his son. His instructions are very specific about who to choose as wife for his son Isaac as, you can read in Genesis 24:1-9

***Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed him in every way. He said to the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac." The servant asked him, "What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?" "Make sure that you do not take my son back there," Abraham said. "The Lord, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, "To your offspring I will give this land"- he will send His angel before you so that you can get a wife from my son from there. If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there." So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.***

And so the servant, being faithful to his master Abraham, sets off on his trip to find a wife for Abraham's son Isaac, as you can read in Genesis 24:10-14

***Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his way to the town of Nahor. He made the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was towards evening, the time the women go out to draw water.***

***Then he prayed, “O Lord, God of my master Abraham, give me success today and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, “Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,” and she says, “Drink, and I’ll water your camels too” – let her be the one You have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.”***

After a long journey, Abraham’s servant finds himself in Nahor where he has strategically placed himself at the well just outside the town. And he has brought with him all kinds of gifts to help make his offer of marriage acceptable to the young woman of his choice and her family.

The servant knows that in a practical sense he has done everything he possibly can but he knows too that it is not enough for he needs to prepare spiritually for this very important task his master has given him so after he has made the camels kneel down, he himself kneels down as well and prays that God will help him choose the right wife for his master’s son Isaac. And he is very specific in the way he asks the Lord to answer his prayer giving God full details as to where he is at that moment and that at this time of the day the young women of the town will come to the well to fetch water. Abraham’s servant may have felt the need to be so specific because God resides in heaven where, no doubt, things are done very differently than here on earth. However, God does know everything what happens on earth even while He is in heaven so He will have known that Abraham’s servant is at the spring and that the young women are about to go to the spring to fetch water. I think we can sometimes be like that, can’t we? Thinking we have to tell God how it is, not realising that God knows better than we how things really are for God is all-knowing. Does God answer his prayer?

Let’s read Genesis 24:15 – 27 to find out

***Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor. The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again. The servant hurried to meet her and said, “Please give me a little water from your jar.” “Drink my Lord,” she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink. After she had given him a drink, she said, “I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking.” So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water; and drew enough for all his camels. Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels. Then he asked, “Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?” She answered him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milcah bore to Nahor.” And she added, “We have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for you to spend the night.” Then the man bowed down and worshipped the Lord, saying, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the Lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master’s relatives.”***

God has answered Abraham servant’s prayer to the smallest details. The first thing he does is to thank God by bowing down and worshipping the Lord. He knows this would not have happened without the Lord’s help. Only the Lord can have made this encounter with the young woman Rebekah possible. Has the Lord prepared Rebekah’s family?

To find out, let's read Genesis 24:28 – 53

*The girl ran and told her mother's household about these things. Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he hurried out to the man at the spring. As soon as he had seen the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and he had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him standing by the camels near the spring. "Come, you, who are blessed by the Lord," he said. "Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels." So the man went to the house and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet. Then food was set before him, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say." "Then tell us," Laban said. So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. The Lord has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, and camels and donkeys. My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and he has given him everything he owns. And my master made me swear an oath, and said, "You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live, but go to my father's family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son." Then I asked my master, "What if the woman will not come back with me?" He replied, "The Lord, before whom I have walked, will send His angel with you and make your journey a success, so that you can get a wife for my son from my own clan and from my father's family. Then, when you go to my clan, you will be released from my oath even if they refuse to give her to you. – you will be released from my oath." When I came to the spring today, I said, "O Lord, God of my master Abraham, if you will please grant success to the journey on which I have come. See, I am standing beside this spring; if a maiden comes out to draw water and I say to her, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar," and if she says to me, "Drink, and I will draw water for your camels too," let her be the one the Lord has chosen for my master's son." Before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water and I said to her, "Please give me a drink." She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder, and said, "Drink, and I'll water your camels too." So I drank and she watered the camels also. I asked her, "Whose daughter are you?" She said, "The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him." Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms and I bowed down and worshipped the Lord. I praised the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son. Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn." Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the Lord; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has directed." When Abraham's servant heard what they said, he bowed down to the ground before the Lord. Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewellery and articles of clothing and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave costly gifts to her brother and to her mother.*

Abraham's servant gives a very detailed account of what has happened for he knows it is extremely important that these people in front of him know exactly how God has led him to Rebekah. After he has shared his story, they are completely convinced that only God can have organised the events. Consequently they give their blessing to Rebekah becoming the wife of Abraham's son. In response, Abraham's servant thanks the Lord. Then it is time to present gifts to Rebekah and her family.

We would have expected Abraham's servant to take a few days off before traveling back home, but the text tells us that the next day already he is ready to go back home for he has finished his task and is eager to tell his master what has happened to him as, you can

read in Genesis 24:54

***Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night there. When they got up the next morning, he said, "Send me on my way to my master."***

Will Rebekah be willing to go back with him? Let's read Genesis 24:55 –61 to find out her response.

***But her brother and her mother replied, "Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you may go." But he said to them, "Do not detain me, now that the Lord has granted me success to my journey. Send me on my way that I may go to my master." Then they said, "Let's call the girl and ask her about it." So they called Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?" "I will go," she said. So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the gates of their enemies."***

Rebekah's family realises that Rebekah is willing to go with Abraham's servant so they do not try to persuade her to remain at least for a few days but speak profound blessings over her life as she departs.

Please understand that God had chosen this young unknown girl from nowhere to become the wife of Isaac. Not only was she chosen by Him to be the wife of Isaac, she was chosen by God to become the mother of Jacob and the grandmother of his twelve sons, out of whom have come the twelve tribes of Israel. Now, Rebekah had no idea of these things when the question was put before her if she would be willing to go with this man to his home and his country far away from her home and her country to get married to someone she had never met. She could have said "No" and if she had, we would very likely never have heard from her again. But she said, "Yes", and showed thereby remarkable courage. She must have somehow known that this was the right path for her and that she should obey the God of Abraham whom she very likely did not know personally at that time. And the blessings pronounced upon her at her departure have been fulfilled, and will be more fulfilled in the future.

Just as God had a specific plan for a young unknown girl from nowhere so He does have a plan for you, as you can read in Jeremiah 29:11

***"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."***

And just as Rebekah dared to step out in obedience to God's plan for her life not knowing where it would lead to, so God wants you to be obedient to Him and He will lead you every day of your life as you walk with Him trusting Him in everything and for everything. God knows you. He knows your needs and He knows your desires. Just as Rebekah mattered to Him so you matter to Him, as Jesus says in Matthew 6:26

***"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"***

So be like Rebekah and learn from her to willingly follow Jesus wherever He leads you for He will take care of you as you fulfill His plan for your life. Your willingness to serve the Lord in whatever way He wants you to will bless you and cause you to be a blessing to others. You may not be asked to marry a total stranger in a foreign land as Rebekah was, but God has things for you to do which only you can do so go ahead and be obedient to Him no matter what the cost, knowing that God will equip you for the things that He has for you to do, as you can read in Ephesians 2:10

***For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God***

*prepared in advance for us to do,*

God wants to use you for His purposes and being obedient to Him will bring you true fulfilment.

## QUESTIONS

- 1: Who is the focus of this story?
- 2a: According to Genesis 12:1-3 what did God tell Abram to do?
- 2b: According to Genesis 12:1-3 what did God promise Abram He would do for him?
- 2c: According to Genesis 12:1-3 what else did God promise Abram?
- 2d: According to Genesis 12:1-3 what did God say to Abram about those who would bless him?
- 2e: According to Genesis 12:1-3 what did God say to Abram about those who would curse Abram?
- 2f: According to Genesis 12:1-3 what did God say to Abram about all peoples on the earth?
- 3: Who had Abraham taken with him when he left his country?
- 4: Where had Abraham travelled to?
- 5a: According to Genesis 21:1-5 what did the Lord do for Sarah?
- 5b: According to Genesis 21:1-5 what happened to Sarah?
- 5c: According to Genesis 21:1-5 did Abraham have his son at a young age?
- 5d: According to Genesis 21:1-5 at what time did God fulfill His promise to Abraham?
- 5e: According to Genesis 21:1-5 what name gave Abraham to the son Sarah had given him?
- 5f: According to Genesis 21:1-5 what did Abraham do when Isaac was eight days old?
- 5g: According to Genesis 21:1-5 how old was Abraham when Isaac was born?
- 6: What does Abraham tell his servant to do when Isaac has grown up?
- 7a: According to Genesis 24:1-9 who does Abraham give the task of finding a wife for his son Isaac?
- 7b: According to Genesis 24:1-9 by Whom does Abraham have the servant swear to him?
- 7c: According to Genesis 24:1-9 what does the servant have to swear to Abraham he is

not to do?

7d: According to Genesis 24:1-9 what does the servant have to swear he is to do?

7e: According to Genesis 24:1-9 what does the servant ask Abraham?

7f: According to Genesis 24:1-9 what is Abraham's reply to the servant's question?

7g: According to Genesis 24:1-9 what is the reason Abraham tells his servant not to take his son Isaac back to the land he has come from?

7h: According to Genesis 24:1-9 what is the reason for Abraham's confidence that the servant will find a wife for his son from the land he has come from?

7i: According to Genesis 24:1-9 what does Abraham say to the servant if the woman is unwilling to come?

7j: According to Genesis 24:1-9 what does Abraham repeat to the servant in relation to his son Isaac?

8: What does the servant do in response to his oath to Abraham?

9a: According to Genesis 24:10-14 How many camels does the servant take with him?

9b: According to Genesis 24:10-14 what else does the servant take with him?

9c: According to Genesis 24:10-14 what country does the servant set out for?

9d: According to Genesis 24:10-14 to what town does the servant make his way?

9e: According to Genesis 24:10-14 does the servant travel into the town?

9f: According to Genesis 24:10-14 what does the servant do when he arrives near the well outside the town?

9g: According to Genesis 24:10-14 at what time of the day does the servant arrive near the well outside the town?

9h: According to Genesis 24:10-14 who will be going out to the well at that time of the day?

9i: According to Genesis 24:10-14 why will the women of the town be going out to the well at that time of the day?

9j: According to Genesis 24:10-14 what does the servant do after having made the camels kneel down near the well outside the town?

9k: According to Genesis 24:10-14 what does the servant pray to the God of his master Abraham about?

9l: According to Genesis 24:10-14 what does the servant tell the God of his master

Abraham next?

9m: According to Genesis 24:10-14 what does the servant tell the God of his master Abraham about the daughters of the townspeople?

9n: According to Genesis 24:10-14 what does the servant want to ask one of the girls?

9o: According to Genesis 24:10-14 what would the servant like for the girl to say to him?

9p: According to Genesis 24:10-14 what does the servant pray about the girl who says to him, "Drink and I'll water your camels too"?

9q: According to Genesis 24:10-14 why does the servant ask the God of his master Abraham to let him know that the girl He has chosen for Isaac is the one who says to him, "Drink and I'll water your camels too"?

10: Why has the servant brought all kinds of gifts with him?

11: When praying why does the servant give God full details as to where he is at that moment and that at this time of the day the young women of the town will come to the well to draw water?

12: Does God know everything that happens on earth even while He is in heaven?

13: Can we sometimes be like Abraham's servant?

14a: According to Genesis 24:15-27 who comes out with a jar on her shoulder?

14b: According to Genesis 24:15-27 whose daughter is Rebekah?

14c: According to Genesis 24:15-27 what does the servant ask Rebekah to do?

14d: According to Genesis 24:15-27 what does Rebekah say to the servant?

14e: According to Genesis 24:15-27 what else does Rebekah say to the servant?

14f: According to Genesis 24:15-27 what does the servant do next?

14g: According to Genesis 24:15-27 what does the servant do when the camels have finished drinking?

14h: According to Genesis 24:15-27 what does the servant ask Rebekah?

14i: According to Genesis 24:15-27 what other question does the servant ask Rebekah?

14j: According to Genesis 24:15-27 what does Rebekah say to the servant in answer to his question whose daughter she is?

14k: According to Genesis 24:15-27 does Rebekah tell the servant they can spend the night at her father's house?

14l: According to Genesis 24:15-27 how does the servant respond to the words of Rebekah?

14m: According to Genesis 24:15-27 what words does the servant use to express his gratitude to God for answering his prayer?

15: Has God answered the prayer of the servant?

16: Why does the servant bow down and worship the Lord?

17a: According to Genesis 24:28-53 what does Rebekah do after her encounter with the servant?

17b: According to Genesis 24:28-53 what is the name of Rebekah's brother?

17c: According to Genesis 24:28-53 what does Laban do next?

17d: According to Genesis 24:28-53 what does Laban say to the servant?

17e: According to Genesis 24:28-53 does the servant eat as soon as he arrives at the house?

17f: According to Genesis 24:28-53 who does the servant tell them he is?

17g: According to Genesis 24:28-53 what does the servant say next?

17h: According to Genesis 24:28-53 does the servant tell them about his prayer at the well?

17i: According to Genesis 24:28-53 do Rebekah's brother Laban and father Bethuel agree with the servant that what has happened is from the Lord?

17j: According to Genesis 24:28-53 what decision do Rebekah's brother Laban and father Bethuel make with regards Rebekah?

17k: According to Genesis 24:28-53 does the servant then eat his meal?

18: Why does the servant give a detailed account of what has happened?

19: After the servant has shared his story is Rebekah's family completely convinced that only God can have organised the events?

20: According to Genesis 24:54 does the servant want to stay for a few days?

21a: According to Genesis 24:55-61 how many days do Rebekah's brother and mother want Rebekah to remain with them?

21b: According to Genesis 24:55-61 what is the servant's response to the request of Rebekah's brother and mother?

- 21c: According to Genesis 24:55-61 what do Rebekah's brother and mother next?
- 21d: According to Genesis 24:55-61 what is Rebekah's answer to the question her brother and mother put before her?
- 21e: According to Genesis 24:55-61 what are the specific blessings Rebekah's relatives speak over Rebekah at her departure?
- 22: Who chose Rebekah to become the wife of Isaac?
- 23: Did Rebekah know of these things when the question was put before her if she would be willing to go with this man to his home and his country far away from her home and her country to be married to someone she had never met?
- 24: Does God have a plan for you just as He had a specific plan for this young unknown girl?
- 25: Does God want you to be as obedient to His plan for your life as Rebekah was when she stepped out in obedience to God's plan for her life not knowing where it would lead to?
- 26: Will God lead you every day of your life?
- 27: Why will God lead you every day of your life?
- 28: Does God want you to learn from Rebekah's example?
- 29: Will your willingness to serve the Lord, in whatever way He wants you to, bless you and cause you to be a blessing to others?
- 30: Will God ask you to marry a total stranger in a foreign land as Rebekah was asked?
- 31: Will God equip you for the things He has for you to do?
- 32: What will obedience to God bring you?

## Chapter 2

### FROM THE PIT TO THE PALACE

Joseph was one of the twelve sons of Jacob. His mother was Rachel, as you can read in Genesis 30:22-24

***Then God remembered Rachel; He listened to her and opened her womb. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, "God has taken away my disgrace." She named him Joseph, and said, "May the Lord add to me another son."***

Now Joseph was Jacob's favourite son, as you can read in Genesis 37:3

***Now Israel (or Jacob) loved Joseph more than any of his other sons because he had been born to him in his old age, and he made a richly ornamented robe for him.***

As can be expected, Jacob's favouritism of Joseph caused his brothers to become very jealous of him as, you can read in Genesis 37:4

***When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.***

Their jealousy only increased when they found out that God had given Joseph a very special gift: that of receiving and understanding dreams, as you can read in Genesis 37:5-9

***Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of corn out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered round mine and bowed down to it." His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. Then he had another dream and he told it to his brothers, "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."***

Perhaps you too believe that God has put a desire in your heart, you could call it a dream, to do something specific for Him. You may not know exactly what it is but you know that it is from the Lord.

Now Joseph, apparently, felt the need to tell his brothers these dreams. This shows us that Joseph was far from ready to actually do what God called him to do so God sent him for training. This was a training programme which was tailor made for him to build Godly character into Joseph's life.

Likewise, in your life you may not have seen happen what you believe God has in mind for you, and you don't understand why that is so. Very likely that is because you need further training to be made ready for what God has for you to do. And it will be a training program specifically for you, for God knows you, and knows what needs to be done in you before He can work through you.

Joseph's training is done in Egypt. You may wonder how he got there. Let's read the story. You can find it in Genesis 37:12-28

***Now his (Joseph's) brothers had gone down to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them." "Very well," he replied. So he said to him, "Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me." Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron. When Joseph arrived at Shechem, a man found him wandering in the fields and asked him, "What are you looking for?" He replied, "I am looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?" "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, "Let's go to Dothan." So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him. "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams." When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said, "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father. So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe –the richly ornamented robe he was wearing –and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. As they***

***sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed. So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.***

When he arrives in Egypt he is taken into the home of Potiphar as, you can read in Genesis 37:36

***Meanwhile the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard***

Your training may not take you to another country. Your training may well take place where you were born. Wherever your training will take place, you can be certain that it will be at the place God intends it to be. You are not there by accident. You are there by God's design. He planned for you to be there at this time to prepare you for whatever He has for you to do, as you can read in Ephesians 2:10

***For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

Joseph's first training ground is in the house of a man named Potiphar. He will have learned many things there even though he may have wondered whether his dreams will ever come true. Things do look good though for him because he has great favour with Potiphar. Over time Joseph may well have begun to hope that one day Potiphar will give him back his freedom and allow him to return home so that his God-given dreams will be fulfilled. After all he has earned this man's complete trust as, you can read in Genesis 39:2-6a

***The Lord was with Joseph and he prospered and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favour in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the Lord blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the Lord was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.***

It looks like Joseph is more like a son to Potiphar than a slave... or is he?

Like Joseph you may find yourself in circumstances you would not have chosen, if you had been given a choice. However, God wants you to know that He is with you even in these circumstances and that He is teaching you things you would not otherwise learn. Perhaps you have been asking God for a change in your circumstances, believing that he will answer your prayers.

Joseph's circumstances are changed by God, Who all along has been watching the progress of Joseph. Yet God knows that there are still issues in his life which need to be dealt with and that further training is required to make that happen so God designs a plan whereby Joseph does indeed leave Potiphar's home. However his destination is not Jacob's tent but an Egyptian prison as, you can read in Genesis 39:6b-20a

***Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took***

*notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me." But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No-one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even to be with her. One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house. When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, she called her household servants. "Look," she said to them, "this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me but I screamed. When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." She kept his cloak beside her until his master came home. Then she told him this story, "That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house." When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, "This is how your slave treated me," he burned with anger. Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined.*

Joseph will have never expected to be thrown in prison, especially because he has done the right thing. How could God have allowed this to happen? And what will happen to his God-given dreams? Who will find him now? It is true, he is placed in a prison where only the king's prisoners, the prisoners from Pharaoh's Court are being held. That fact may not matter to Joseph, for to him, all prisons are alike, but to God it matters very much which prison Joseph spends time in, as you will find out later on.

Circumstances may have changed for some of you as well. However, just as in the life of Joseph, these new circumstances may not have been in line with what you have asked God for. You have asked God for easier circumstances. However, it seems He has allowed more difficult circumstances in your life. You don't understand why this is happening. As far as you know you have done the right things and you should be rewarded accordingly. But that is not what seems to have happened. You want to say to God, "Have you not heard my prayers, God? I have asked you for easier circumstances, not more difficult ones." If that is the case with you then God wants you to know that He has some more issues He wants to deal with in your life and He wants to use these new circumstances in your life as part of your further training.

One day Joseph gets to know two new prisoners, as you can read in Genesis 40:1-19 *Sometime later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them. After they had been in custody for some time, each of the two men—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison—had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no-one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams." So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, "In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters*

*ripened into grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup and put the cup in his hand." "This is what it means," Joseph said to him. "The three branches are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness, mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of prison. For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon." When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favourable interpretation, he said to Joseph, "I too had a dream. On my head were three baskets of bread. In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head." "This is what it means," Joseph said. "The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat away your flesh."*

Two men have been put into the prison where only the king's prisoners are being held because they have been serving at Pharaoh's court. God has made sure that Joseph is in the same prison so he can meet them. God then gives both men a dream and gives Joseph the interpretation. Everything works out exactly as Joseph has foretold; the baker is hanged and the cupbearer is reinstated in his position at Pharaoh's Court.

Joseph is convinced that God will use the cupbearer to help him come out of prison and so he waits to hear from Pharaoh's Court. Day after day he expects someone to knock on his cell door to tell him, "Joseph get dressed, the Pharaoh is expecting you." But days turn into weeks. Weeks turn into months and no one ever comes to get him....

Surely, God must have forgotten him and the dreams He has given him. After all thirteen years have passed since he had been sold into slavery...

Some of you may have come to believe that surely your training time has come to an end for it seems God has begun to put things in your life which might take you out of your circumstances. After all, it is not your fault that you are in your circumstances. You have done nothing to deserve them. But then, like Joseph, you wait and wait for a change to come but nothing happens. At last you give up. God must have forgotten you and the desires He had placed in your heart. After all it has been a long time since you first had these desires.

But God has not forgotten Joseph and just at the right time when God knows that Joseph is ready for the task God has prepared for him God gives Pharaoh a dream. In fact, He gives him two dreams, as you can read in Genesis 41:1-7

*When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream. He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted –thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.*

Pharaoh wakes up after a night of dreams. These dreams do not make sense to him but

he believes he knows who can interpret these dreams. However, he soon finds out that he is mistaken, as you can read in Exodus 41:8

***In the morning his mind was troubled so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dream, but no-one could interpret them for him.***

There was only one person in all of Egypt who has the God-given ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams and God has made sure he is in the right place at the right time as, you can read in Exodus 41:9-14

***Then the chief cup bearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged."***

The cupbearer may believe that he should have mentioned Joseph to Pharaoh before this day but he will not have realised that God has prevented him from speaking to Pharaoh about Joseph since it was not yet the time to do so. However, the day has come for Joseph to be released from prison according to God's schedule and, consequently, God gives Pharaoh two dreams that no-one can interpret, apart from the man chosen by God.

Now for Joseph this has been a night as any other night and when he gets up that morning he has absolutely no idea that his circumstances are about to change drastically. As far as he is concerned, he knows the day's routine.... But then there is a knock on his cell door. Who can that be? He does not expect anyone to knock at his cell door. It must be a mistake for no-one ever comes for him. He better tell that person who is outside his door that he has knocked on the wrong door. The last time he has been expecting a knock on his cell door has been two years ago. But no-one has ever come so he is no longer going to allow himself to hope for a miracle. That will be too painful to bear. But then the person outside his door just will not go away so he better open the door....

***"You mean, Pharaoh is asking for me? He wants me to come to his palace? Now? Only let me get ready for I cannot appear before Pharaoh in my prison outfit. I have been set free and I must wear the appropriate clothing."***

You can read this in Exodus 41:14

***So Pharaoh sent for Joseph and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.***

Likewise, God has not forgotten you either. Neither has He forgotten the desires, the longings He has placed in your heart. And at the right time, when you are ready, He will make these desires, these longings, come true.

And like Joseph you must make sure that you are wearing the right garment when that happens. So change your garment of despair to a garment of praise as, you can read in Isaiah 61:3

***To bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.***

It may be that you do not know that God has a plan for your life, just as He had for

Joseph. In that case, you need to ask God for His plan for your life and then trust God to work in your life through your circumstances to make you ready to fulfil His plan for your life.

Or it may be that you do know that God has a plan for your life but have not seen it happen as yet. Don't give up hope for you are in training and when the training has finished God will use you for His purposes. Just be patient for God is at work even when you don't know it.

Or it may be that you have gone through the training and you know that God has said, "Now is the time to serve Me in the way I have shown you". In that case, I would like to invite you to put on the garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair which may have crept in because of the long wait. Then go and serve the Lord in the way He has asked you to.

## QUESTIONS

1: Of whom was Joseph one of the sons?

2: How many sons did Jacob have?

3: According to Genesis 30:22-24 what was the name of Joseph's mother?

4a: According to Genesis 37:3 which son did Israel (Jacob) love more than any other son?

4b: According to Genesis 37:3 what had Israel (Jacob) made for Joseph?

5: According to Genesis 37:4 did Joseph's brothers love him?

6a: According to Genesis 37:5-9 why did Joseph's brothers hate Joseph even more?

6b: According to Genesis 37:5-9 what dream did Joseph tell his brothers?

6c: According to Genesis 37:5-9 what did Joseph's brothers say to Joseph in response to his words?

6d: According to Genesis 37:5-9 how did Joseph's brothers feel about Joseph's dream?

6e: According to Genesis 37:5-9 what happened next to Joseph?

6f: According to Genesis 37:5-9 what did Joseph do this time?

7: Does the fact that Joseph felt the need to tell his brothers his dreams show us that he was far from ready to actually do what God called him to do?

8: What did God do to get Joseph ready to do what God called him to do?

9: Do you perhaps question why you have not yet seen happen in your life what I believe God has in mind for you?

10a: According to Genesis 37:12-28 where had Joseph's brother gone to graze their

father's flocks?

10b: According to Genesis 37:12-28 what did Israel (Jacob) ask Joseph to do?

10c: According to Genesis 37:12-28 why did Israel (Jacob) sent Joseph to his brothers?

10d: According to Genesis 37:12-28 who found Joseph wandering in the fields at Shechem?

10e: According to Genesis 37:12-28 what did Joseph ask the man?

10f: According to Genesis 37:12-28 was the man able to tell Joseph where the brothers had gone?

10g: According to Genesis 37:12-28 were the brothers able to see Joseph when he got to Dothan?

10h: According to Genesis 37:12-28 what did the brothers plot to do to Joseph?

10i: According to Genesis 37:12-28 what did the brothers call Joseph?

10j: According to Genesis 37:12-28 what exactly did the brothers plan to do to Joseph?

10k: According to Genesis 37:12-28 what did the brothers say next?

10l: According to Genesis 37:12-28 which one of the brothers tried to rescue Joseph from the hands of the other brothers?

10m: According to Genesis 37:12-28 what did Reuben suggest they do with Joseph?

10n: According to Genesis 37:12-28 why did Reuben suggest to keep Joseph alive?

10o: According to Genesis 37:12-28 what did the brothers do to Joseph when he came to them?

10p: According to Genesis 37:12-28 what did the brothers do after they had thrown Joseph into the cistern?

10q: According to Genesis 37:12-28 who did the brothers see when eating their meal?

10r: According to Genesis 37:12-28 where were these Ishmaelites going?

10s: According to Genesis 37:12-28 which one of the brothers spoke up?

10t: According to Genesis 37:12-28 what did Judah suggest to the other brothers?

10u: According to Genesis 37:12-28 did the other brothers agree with Judah to let their brother Joseph live?

10v: According to Genesis 37:12-28 for how many shekels of silver did the brothers sell

Joseph to the Ishmaelites?

11: According to Genesis 37:36 to whom is Joseph sold when he arrives in Egypt?

12: Will your training take you to another country, like it did Joseph?

13: Will your training be at the place God intends for it to be?

14: According to Ephesians 2:10 what does God say about believers?

15a: Is Potiphar pleased with Joseph?

15b: Will Joseph have begun to hope that one day Potiphar will give him back his freedom?

16a: According to Genesis 39:2-6a Who is with Joseph?

16b: According to Genesis 39:2-6a what position does Potiphar give Joseph?

16c: According to Genesis 39:2-6a Who blesses Potiphar's household because of Joseph?

16d: According to Genesis 39:2-6a does Potiphar concern himself with anything?

17: What does God want you to know when you find myself in circumstances you may have not chosen?

18: Why is God allowing you to be in these circumstances?

19: Are Joseph's circumstances changed?

20: Are there still issues in Joseph's life that need to be dealt with?

21: What is required in Joseph's life to deal with these issues?

22: What does God do?

23: What is Joseph's destination?

24a: According to Genesis 39:6b-20a who notices Joseph?

24b: According to Genesis 39:6b-20a how does Joseph respond to the advances of Potiphar's wife?

24c: According to Genesis 39:6b-20a what does Joseph leave behind when he runs out of the house?

24d: According to Genesis 39:6b-20a what does Potiphar's wife tell Potiphar about Joseph?

24e: According to Genesis 39:6b-20a what does Potiphar do with Joseph?

- 24f: According to Genesis 39:6b-20a what kind of prison does Potiphar put Joseph in?
- 25: Will Joseph have expected to be thrown in prison having done the right thing?
- 26: Does it matter to God which prison Joseph spends time in?
- 27: Do you perhaps wonder why God has allowed more difficult circumstances in your life?
- 28a: According to Genesis 40:1-19 with whom is Pharaoh angry?
- 28b: According to Genesis 40:1-19 what does Pharaoh do with the cupbearer and the baker?
- 28c: According to Genesis 40:1-19 who does the captain of the guard assign the cupbearer and baker to?
- 28d: According to Genesis 40:1-19 what happens to the cupbearer and baker one night?
- 28e: According to Genesis 40:1-19 do the cupbearer and baker tell Joseph the reason they are sad?
- 28f: According to Genesis 40:1-19 Who does Joseph say dream interpretations belong to?
- 28g: According to Genesis 40:1-19 what does Joseph tell the cupbearer and baker next?
- 28h: According to Genesis 40:1-19 who tells Joseph his dream first?
- 28i: According to Genesis 40:1-19 what does Joseph tell the cupbearer his dream means?
- 28j: According to Genesis 40:1-19 what does Joseph ask the cupbearer to do for him?
- 28k: According to Genesis 40:1-19 why does Joseph want the cupbearer to mention him to Pharaoh and get him out of prison?
- 28l: According to Genesis 40:1:19 who else shares his dream with Joseph?
- 28m: According to Genesis 40:1-10 what does Joseph tell the baker his dream means?
- 29: Which prison have the cupbearer and the baker been put in?
- 30: Who else is in the prison where the king's prisoners are being held?
- 31: Who has made sure that Joseph is in the prison that the cupbearer and baker are?
- 32: Who gives the cupbearer and the baker their dream?
- 33: Who gives Joseph the interpretation of these dreams?
- 34: Do things work out exactly as Joseph has foretold?

- 35: What is Joseph convinced of the cupbearer will do for him?
- 36: Does anybody ever come to get Joseph?
- 37: How many years have passed since Joseph has been sold into slavery?
- 38: Do you feel at times that, like Joseph, God must have forgotten you?
- 39: Has God forgotten Joseph?
- 40: How do we know that God has not forgotten Joseph?
- 41a: According to Genesis 41:1-7 how many years have passed when God gives Pharaoh a dream?
- 41b: According to Genesis 41:1-7 how many dreams does God give to Pharaoh?
- 42: Do his dreams make sense to Pharaoh?
- 43: Does Pharaoh believe he knows who can interpret these dreams for him?
- 44a: According to Genesis 41:8 who does Pharaoh send for?
- 44b: According to Genesis 41:8 can the magicians and wise men of Egypt interpret Pharaoh's dreams for him?
- 45: Is there anyone in Egypt who has the God-given ability to interpret Pharaoh's dream?
- 46: Has God made sure that the person who has the God-given ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams is in the right place at the right time?
- 47a: According to Genesis 41:9-13 who speaks to Pharaoh?
- 47b: According to Genesis 41:9-13 what does the cupbearer say to Pharaoh?
- 48: Who has prevented the cupbearer from speaking about Joseph to Pharaoh?
- 49: Why has God prevented the cupbearer from speaking about Joseph to Pharaoh?
- 50: Why has God allowed the cupbearer to speak about Joseph to Pharaoh now?
- 51: When Joseph gets up that morning does he have any idea that his circumstances are about to change drastically?
- 52: What happens that day?
- 53: When was the last time Joseph expected a knock on his cell door?
- 54a: According to Genesis 41:14 who sends for Joseph?

54b: According to Genesis 41:14 is Joseph ready to come before Pharaoh?

55: What can you learn from Joseph's story?

## Chapter 3

### GOD MEANS IT FOR GOOD

Having looked at the first part of Joseph's life in the story "From the Pit to the Palace" you have learned that his father was Jacob and that his mother was Rachel, Jacob's favourite wife. You have, furthermore, learned that Jacob spoiled Joseph greatly by giving him a special coat. And that Jacob's actions caused the brothers of Joseph to become jealous of Joseph.

Moreover, God gave Joseph two dreams. From these dreams Joseph understood that one day his family would bow down to him. He announced that to his family and this caused his brothers to become even more jealous of Joseph. In fact, they began to hate him so much that they began to plot against Joseph how to get rid of him. They did this by selling him to merchants who were on their way to Egypt. Consequently he found himself sold as a slave to a man named Potiphar. However, that was not the end of his misery for after he had served Potiphar well he found himself thrown in prison for doing what was right.

He must have felt that God had forgotten him and his dreams. One day in prison things seemed to have taken a turn for the better when he was able to interpret the dreams of two men who had served at Pharaoh's Court but that too ended in disappointment for he never heard from either one of them again. And then, unexpectedly as far as Joseph was concerned, one day he heard a knock on the door of his prison cell and he was told he was needed at Pharaoh's Court. And that's where we pick up the story. For God had not forgotten Joseph neither had God forgotten Joseph's dreams. God had obviously decided that after 13 years Joseph's training at Potiphar's home as well as the prison had paid off and that Joseph was now ready for the task God had for him. A week before the knock on his prison cell door he was not completely ready. Even the day before the knock on his prison cell door he was not yet completely ready. But then the day came that he had passed all the tests God had prepared for him in order to be able to fulfil his God-given task. So that night God gave Pharaoh two dreams as, you can read in Genesis 41:1-7 ***When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream; He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the river bank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted –thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.***

God then made sure that Pharaoh would be so troubled by these dreams that he would ask for help. At the same time He made sure that the help Pharaoh had in mind would not be useful at all, as you can read in Genesis 41:8 ***In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men***

*of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no-one could interpret for him.*

God then brought back to the cupbearer's mind an experience he had had with someone when he was in prison, as you can read in Genesis 41:9-13

***Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, "Today I am reminded of my shortcoming. Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position and the other man was hanged."***

This caused the Pharaoh to call for Joseph, as you can read in Genesis 41:14

***So Pharaoh sent for Joseph and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.***

Now you need to remember that Joseph would not have known that that day things would be changing dramatically for him. As far as he was concerned, this day was going to be like any other day in prison and so would tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, and the day after...and the day after....

But then there was a knock on his cell door and life changed forever for him.

As he stood before the Pharaoh, the Pharaoh began to explain the reason for Joseph's coming to Court, as you can read in Genesis 41:15

***Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no-one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."***

You can see from Joseph's answer that he really has changed since he had his dreams.

Let's read Genesis 41:16

***"I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."***

It is clear from Joseph's answer that the pride he displayed in his youth, has completely gone. He has become a humble man who has learned that he can do nothing of himself, as you can read in John 15:5 where Jesus says:

***"I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing."***

And Joseph makes sure the Pharaoh knows that it is God who gives the interpretation of dreams. Pharaoh then tells him his dreams, in Genesis 41:17-24

***Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows came up –scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. But even after they ate them, no-one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up. In my dreams I also saw seven heads of grain, healthy and good, growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted – thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. I***

***told this to the magicians, but none could explain it to me.”***

The Pharaoh mentions as well that the magicians are not able to explain the dreams. No doubt this will have upset him. After all, these men claim to know things beyond the natural and he will have relied upon them all these years. But this time they have completely let him down and that at a time when he is in such a great need of understanding his dreams.

Pharaoh must have felt such a relief when he hears the words of Joseph that God will give him the answer he desires. And he is not disappointed because Joseph does indeed give him the explanation, as inspired by God in Genesis 41:25-27

***Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterwards are seven years and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind; they are seven years of famine.”***

However, God does not only enable Joseph to interpret the dreams for Pharaoh, He gives Joseph wisdom in knowing how to put the dreams into action as, you can read in Genesis 41:33-36

***“And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.”***

Pharaoh is wise enough to realise who should put that plan into action for it can only be the one who has been given the knowledge not only what his dreams mean but how these dreams should be implemented. And that person is Joseph, as you can read in Genesis 41:37-39

***The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?” Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no-one so discerning and wise as you. You should be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.”***

You can see here that Pharaoh recognises and honours the God that Joseph serves.

You can see here too that God is using all the practical skills Joseph has learned when he was in charge of the household of Potiphar as well as the time when he was overseeing everything in prison so that he can now administrate this great task of overseeing the storage of food. Likewise, you too may know that God has a specific calling for you but you are not at present walking in your calling. As a matter of fact, you are doing something which may not be remotely related to what you believe the Lord is calling you to do. Like Joseph, do not despair. God will use your present training to get you ready physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually and, at the right time, you too will walk in what God has for you. Going back to the story of Joseph, after the seven years of plenty, the seven years of famine start. This period does not just affect Egypt but its neighbouring countries, as you can read in Genesis 41:57

***And all the countries came to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world.***

The famine affects Jacob and his family as well so Jacob sends ten of his sons to Egypt to buy grain, as you can read in Genesis 42:1-2

***When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you just keep looking at each other?" He continued, "I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there, and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die."***

With these words Jacob sends his sons on a path which will end up them all bowing down to Joseph as foretold in the dreams of Joseph. Let's read Genesis 42:6

***Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.***

It is only then that God brings to Joseph's remembrance the dreams God had given him so many years ago, as you can read in Genesis 42:8-9

***Although Joseph recognised his brothers, his brothers did not recognise him. Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them: "You are spies. You have come to see where our land is unprotected."***

Joseph may have originally thought that his dreams would be fulfilled in his father's tent but God had never shown him how or when or where these dreams were to be fulfilled. It must have been such a bitter-sweet moment for he will not only have remembered the dreams themselves, he will have remembered that he had gone to his family members to tell them that they would bow down to him. O, how full of pride he had been, how full of arrogance, how full of foolishness. He recognises these things now but he had not then. Moreover, he recognises that God has been the source behind his brothers' scheme to sell him as a slave to Egypt... so that godly character could be formed in him and he could prepare the way for the eventual coming of his family to Egypt.

Joseph recognises his brothers but they do not recognise him so he puts them through some tests to find out if they have changed. He demands as well that that they return with their youngest brother, as you can read in Genesis 42:14-20

***Joseph said to them, "It is just as I have told you: You are spies. And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies." And he put them all in custody for three days. On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do.***

The brothers, except Simeon, go back home to Jacob and report everything to him. But Jacob is unwilling to let his youngest son, Benjamin, go. However in time they completely run out of food again so Jacob has no choice but to let them go and this time Benjamin has to go as well. Once again they meet with Joseph who still does not reveal to them who he is, as you can read in Genesis 43.

This chapter starts with the following words in verses 1-2:

***Now the famine was still severe in the land, so when they had eaten all the grain***

**they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little food."**

And ends with the words in verse 34:

**When portions were served to them from Joseph's table, Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's. So they feasted and drank freely with him.**

Joseph tests them once again and they pass each test. For their final test he has his personal silver cup placed in the grain sack of Benjamin, as you can read in Genesis 44:2 **"Then put my cup, the silver one in the mouth of the youngest one's sack along with the silver for his grain." And he did as Joseph said.**

Joseph then tells the brothers that Benjamin has to stay behind as a slave, as you can read in Genesis 44:17b

**".....Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace."**

However, a real change has taken place in the lives of these men, as you can see from the account of Judah in Genesis 44:18-34

**Then Judah went up to him and said, "Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. My lord asked his servants, "Do you have a father or a brother? And we answered, "We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother's sons left, and his father loves him." Then you said to your servants, "Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself." And we said to my lord, "The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die." But you told your servants, "Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again." When we went back to your servant, my father, we told him what my lord had said. Then our father said, "Go back, and buy a little more food." But we said, "We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us." Your servant my father said to us, "You know that my wife bore me two sons. One of them went away from me, and I said, "He has surely been torn to pieces. And I have not seen him since. If you take this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my grey head down to the grave in misery." So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy's life, sees that the boy isn't there, he will die. Your servants will bring the grey head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. Your servant guaranteed the boy's safety to my father. I said, "If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life." Now then please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father."**

Previously they had callously thrown away the life of Joseph which had brought so much grief to their father's heart. But their hearts have been so softened they cannot not do this again. God has been at work in the life and heart of Joseph but He has been at work in the lives and hearts of the brothers as well. Joseph knows the time has come to reveal himself to his brothers, as you can read in Genesis 45:3

**Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living? But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence."**

You need to remember that Joseph has known for some time already that these men are

his brothers for he recognised them the first time they stood before him. But his brothers have absolutely no idea that the “Egyptian” who stands before them is not who he claims to be. So Joseph’s revelation of who he really is comes as a great shock to them for they will have realised that the past has finally caught up with them. And there is no running away from it; they have to face it.

And that is how it is for you. Sooner or later God will want you to face anything you may have done in the past that has not been right. This is for your sake so that you can come clean of these things, can be forgiven and be set free from any guilt, condemnation in relation to these things.

Joseph understands then as well why God has allowed him to be sold into Egypt by his brothers for it has happened so that their lives will be saved as, you can read in Genesis 45:4-5

***Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed, and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, for it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.”***

Joseph, furthermore, tells his brothers to bring their families as well as their father with them to Egypt because the famine is going to continue for a number of years as yet as, you can read in Genesis 45:13

***“Tell my father about all the honour accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.”***

So Jacob and his family end up travelling back to Egypt where they meet Joseph as, you can read in Genesis 46: 28-29

***Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen. When they arrived in the region of Goshen, Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time.***

The moment that Joseph has been anticipating ever since he has told his brothers to return to him with their families has finally arrived; they have returned. But Joseph only sees one person; his aged father!! It is to him he runs. At that moment he is not the most important official in Egypt. No, he is the son who has been separated from his father for many, many years and the time to grief over the loss of that time has finally come. No doubt, this pain, this grief has been locked up on the inside of him and no one has ever been allowed to see it. But that day he can no longer hold it back and he allows the tears, which have been there for all these years, to freely flow so that a healing, a restoration can take place on the inside of him. Then it is time for Jacob and his family to settle in the land of Egypt.

Eventually Jacob dies in Egypt and the brothers are still afraid that Joseph will take revenge for all they have done to him, as you can read in Genesis 50:15-18

***When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?” So they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father left these instructions before he died, “This is what you are to say to Joseph: “I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly. Now, please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.” When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. “We***

***are your slaves,” they said.***

Perhaps, at an earlier stage in Joseph’s life he may have wanted to take revenge but God has done a great work in Joseph’s heart and God has shown him the reason he has suffered so much, as he explains this to his brothers in Genesis 50:19-20

***But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”***

It has taken Joseph many years to have a full understanding of God’s plan for his life but the day has come when he realises that him having been sold as a slave has not prevented his God-given dreams of his family bowing down to him from happening. On the contrary, God has used the circumstances in his life to make these dreams come true. Joseph has finally learned that with God nothing is impossible and He will do what he has promised to do but it will happen in His Way, in His time and for His purpose.

Joseph’s story is to encourage you that, just as God had a plan for Joseph which God fulfilled to its smallest detail, likewise God has a plan for you as, you can read in Ephesians 2:10

***For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

As was in the case of Joseph, you may well have to undergo a training program, specifically prepared for you, to get you ready for that which God has for you to do. That training program may not seem to fit the particular calling, you believe, God has for you. Nevertheless, if you do as Joseph did and are willing and obedient to serve the Lord wherever that may be and to do whatever He has for you to do then when the time is right you will walk in the fullness of your calling. And, like Joseph, you will then fully understand that your training was absolutely necessary, as preparation for the task God had prepared for you all along.

## QUESTIONS

- 1: Who was Joseph’s father?
- 2: Who was Joseph’s mother?
- 3: How did Jacob spoil Joseph?
- 4: How did Joseph’s brother feel about Jacob’s actions towards Joseph?
- 5: What did God give Joseph?
- 6: What did Joseph understand from these dreams?
- 7: Did Joseph share his dreams with his family?
- 8: How did Joseph’s brothers feel about his dreams?
- 9: How did Joseph’s brothers show their hatred for Joseph?

- 10: How did Joseph's brother get rid of Joseph?
- 11: What country were these merchants going to?
- 12: When Joseph arrived in Egypt to whom was he sold as a slave?
- 13: What happened to Joseph after he had served Potiphar well?
- 14: Why was Joseph thrown in prison?
- 15: What happened when Joseph was in prison?
- 16: Were these two men helpful for Joseph?
- 17: What happened to Joseph unexpectedly?
- 18: What was Joseph told?
- 19: Had God forgotten Joseph?
- 20: After how many years was Joseph ready for the task God had for him?
- 21: What did God do?
- 22: According to Genesis 41:1-7 how many years had passed since the cupbearer had gone back to Pharaoh's court before God gave Pharaoh two dreams?
- 23: According to Genesis 41:8 could anyone interpret Pharaoh's dreams for him?
- 24a: According to Genesis 41:9-13 who spoke to Pharaoh of his shortcoming?
- 24b: According to Genesis 41:9-13 who did the cupbearer mention to Pharaoh?
- 24c: According to Genesis 41:9-13 what did the cupbearer share with Pharaoh the young Hebrew had been able to do?
- 25a: According to Genesis 41:14 what did Pharaoh do next?
- 25b: According to Genesis 41:14 was Joseph ready to come before Pharaoh?
- 26: Would Joseph have known that that day things would be changing dramatically for him?
- 27: When did life change forever for Joseph?
- 28a: According to Genesis 41:15 what does the Pharaoh say to Joseph?
- 28b: According to Genesis 41:15 what has Pharaoh heard about Joseph?
- 29a: According to Genesis 41:16 does Joseph agree with Pharaoh that he can interpret a

dream?

29b: According to Genesis 41:16 Who does Joseph tell Pharaoh can give the answer that Pharaoh desires?

30: What does Joseph's answer show about Joseph?

31: What has Joseph learned?

32: From what Bible passage can we learn that we can do nothing of ourselves?

33: What does Joseph want Pharaoh to know?

34a: According to Genesis 41:17-24 what does Pharaoh tell Joseph?

34b: According to Genesis 41:17-24 what does Pharaoh say to Joseph about the magicians?

35: Will Pharaoh have been upset with the magicians?

36: Why will Pharaoh have been upset with the magicians?

37: Is Pharaoh in need of understanding his dreams?

38: How will Pharaoh have felt when he hears the words of Joseph that God will give him the answer he desires?

39: Is Pharaoh disappointed by Joseph's words?

40: According to Genesis 41:25-27 what does God reveal to Pharaoh is about to happen?

41: What other gift does God give Joseph?

42a: According to Genesis 41:33-36 who does Joseph tell Pharaoh to look for?

42b: According to Genesis 41:33-36 what does Joseph tell Pharaoh he should have this discerning and wise man do?

42c: According to Genesis 41:33-36 what other people does Joseph tell Pharaoh to appoint?

42d: According to Genesis 41:33-36 what are the commissioners to do?

42e: According to Genesis 41:33-36 what are the commissioners to do with the food they have collected during the good years?

42f: According to Genesis 41:33-36 when is the food that is to be held in reserve to be used?

42g: According to Genesis 41:33-36 why is the food that is to be held in reserve to be

used during the seven years of famine?

43: Does Pharaoh realise who should put that plan into action?

44: According to Pharaoh which person can put that plan into action?

45: Who is the person who can put that plan into action?

46a: According to Genesis 41:37-39 to whom does the plan sound good?

46b: According to Genesis 41:37-39 what does Pharaoh ask the officials?

46c: According to Genesis 41:37-39 what does Pharaoh say to Joseph?

46d: According to Genesis 41:37-39 what does Pharaoh tell Joseph he should be in charge of?

46e: According to Genesis 41:37-39 in what way will Pharaoh be greater than Joseph?

47: Can we see here that Pharaoh recognises and honours the God that Joseph serves?

48: Can we see here too that God is using all the practical skills Joseph has learned?

49: Does God want you to despair if at present you are not walking in your calling?

50: How will God use your present training?

51: Going back to the story of Joseph, what happens after the seven years of plenty?

52: Does this period only affect Egypt?

53: According to Genesis 41:57 who came to buy grain from Joseph?

54: Who is affected by the famine as well?

55a: According to Genesis 42:1-2 what has Jacob learned?

55b: According to Genesis 42:1-2 what does Jacob tell to his sons to do?

55c: According to Genesis 42:1-2 why does Jacob want his sons to buy grain in Egypt?

56: What will Jacob's sons end up doing?

57: Was Jacob's sons bowing down to Joseph foretold?

58a: According to Genesis 42:6 what is Joseph's position in Egypt?

58b: According to Genesis 42:6 who sold grain to all the people?

58c: According to Genesis 42:6 who arrive in Egypt?

- 58d: According to Genesis 42:6 what do the brother do before Joseph?
- 59: What does God remind Joseph of at that time?
- 60a: According to Genesis 42:8-9 does Joseph recognise his brothers?
- 60b: According to Genesis 42:8-9 do Joseph's brothers recognise him?
- 60c: According to Genesis 42:8-9 after having recognised his brothers what does Joseph remember next?
- 60d: According to Genesis 42:8-9 what does Joseph accuse his brothers of?
- 61: Where may Joseph originally have thought his dreams would be fulfilled?
- 62: Had God shown Joseph where these dreams were to be fulfilled?
- 63: Will Joseph have remembered what he had done after he had his dreams?
- 64: Had Joseph been full of pride at that time?
- 65: Who does Joseph recognise has been behind his brothers' scheme to sell him as a slave to Egypt?
- 66: Why did God allow Joseph to be sold as a slave to Egypt?
- 67: For what other reason did God allow Joseph to be sold as a slave to Egypt?
- 68: What does Joseph put his brothers through?
- 69: Why does Joseph put his brothers through some tests?
- 70: Who does Joseph demand the brothers return with?
- 71a: According to Genesis 42:14-20 how many of the brothers does Joseph say are to be send home to get their youngest brother?
- 71b: According to Genesis 42:14-20 what will happen with the other brothers?
- 71c: According to Genesis 42:14-20 why will the other brothers put in prison?
- 71d: According to Genesis 42:14-20 for how long does Joseph put the brothers in custody?
- 71e: According to Genesis 42:14-20 after three days what does Joseph say to the brothers?
- 71f: According to Genesis 42:14-20 what does Joseph insist his brothers do?
- 71g: According to Genesis 42:14-20 why does Joseph insist that his brothers bring their

youngest brother to him?

71h: According to Genesis 42:14-20 do the brothers leave for home?

72: Do all the brothers go home?

73: Is Jacob willing to let his youngest son Benjamin go to Egypt?

74: Does Jacob have to let Benjamin go one day?

75: Does Joseph reveal to his brothers who he is?

76a: According to Genesis 43:1-2 when does Jacob tell his sons to go back to Egypt?

76b: According to Genesis 43:1-2 what does Jacob tell his sons to do when they get to Egypt?

77a: According to Genesis 43:34 whose portion was larger than anyone else's portion?

77b: According to Genesis 43:34 how big was Benjamin's portion?

78: What is Joseph's final test for his brothers?

79: According to Genesis 44:2 what else is put in the sack of Benjamin besides the cup?

80: What does Joseph tell his brothers with regards Benjamin?

81: According to Genesis 44:17b does Joseph say that the other brothers have to stay behind as slaves as well?

82: Has a change taken place in the lives of these men?

83a: According to Genesis 44:18-34 who went up to Joseph to speak?

83b: According to Genesis 44:18-34 what does Judah remind Joseph of?

83c: According to Genesis 44:18-34 what more details about the aged father does Judah remind Joseph of?

83d: According to Genesis 44:18-34 what does Judah remind Joseph he told the brothers to do?

83e: According to Genesis 44:18-34 what does Judah remind Joseph the brothers told him about their aged father?

83f: According to Genesis 44:18-34 what does Judah remind Joseph of next?

83g: According to Genesis 44:18-34 what does Judah tell Joseph about their aged father?

83h: According to Genesis 44:18-34 what does Judah tell Joseph the brothers' response

to the father's request was?

83i: According to Genesis 44:18-34 does Judah explain to Joseph why the father was unwilling to let the youngest son go down to Egypt?

83j: According to Genesis 44:18-34 what does Judah tell Joseph he has promised the father?

83k: According to Genesis 44:18-34 what does Judah ask Joseph?

83l: According to Genesis 44:18-34 why does Judah ask Joseph if he can take the place of the youngest brother?

84: What had the brothers done previously?

85: What had their previous action done to their father's heart?

86: Are the brothers able to do the same thing again?

87: Who has been at work in the life and heart of Joseph?

88: Who has been at work in the lives and hearts of the brothers?

89: Who does Joseph reveal himself to?

90a: According to Genesis 45:3 what does Joseph ask his brothers?

90b: According to Genesis 45:3 why are Joseph's brothers not able to answer him?

91: Has Joseph already known for some time that the men in front of him are his brothers?

92: Do the brothers know who the "Egyptian" who stands before them is?

93: Will Joseph's revelation of who he really is have come as a great shock to the brothers?

94: What will the brothers have realised?

95: Can the brothers run away from the past?

96: Will God want you to face anything that you may have done in the past that has not been right?

97: Why does God want you to face anything that you may have done in the past that has not been right?

98: Does Joseph understand why God allowed him to be sold into Egypt by his brothers?

99a: According to Genesis 45:4-5 what does Joseph tell the brothers not to do?

99b: According to Genesis 45:4-5 why does Joseph tell the brothers not to be distressed and angry with themselves for selling him?

99c: According to Genesis 45:4-5 Who sent Joseph ahead of the brothers?

100: Who does Joseph want the brothers to bring with them to Egypt?

101: Why does Joseph want the brothers to bring their family and their father with them to Egypt?

102: According to Genesis 45:13 what does Joseph want the brothers to tell their father?

103: Where do Jacob and his family end up travelling to?

104: Who do Jacob and his family meet when they travel to Egypt?

105a: According to Genesis 46:28-29 who does Jacob send ahead of him to Joseph?

105b: According to Genesis 46:28-29 why does Jacob send Judah ahead of him to Joseph?

105c: According to Genesis 46:28-29 who makes his chariot ready?

105d: According to Genesis 46:28-29 why does Joseph make his chariot ready?

105e: According to Genesis 46:28-29 what happens when Joseph appears before his father?

106: Who does Joseph run to when the brothers, their families and his father arrives?

107: How does Joseph see himself at that moment?

108: Why does Joseph allow the tears, which have been there for all these years, to freely flow?

109: Who dies eventually in Egypt?

110: What are the brothers afraid of?

111a: According to Genesis 50:15-18 who sends word to Joseph?

111b: According to Genesis 50:15-18 what do the brothers mention in their word to Joseph?

111c: According to Genesis 50:15-18 what is Joseph's response to the message of the brothers?

111d: According to Genesis 50:15-18 what action take the brothers next?

111e: According to Genesis 50:15-18 what do the brothers say to Joseph?

- 112: Why does Joseph not want to take revenge on his brothers?
- 113: According to Genesis 50:19-20 what does God want to accomplish?
- 114: Has it taken Joseph a long time to have a full understanding of God's plan for his life?
- 115: Has Joseph having been sold as a slave prevented his God-given dreams of his family bowing down to him from happening?
- 116: What has Joseph learned?
- 117: Does God have a plan for you just as God had a plan for Joseph?
- 118: Will you have to undergo a training program, just like Joseph had to?
- 119: Why do you have to undergo a training program, specifically prepared for you?
- 120: Will your training program always fit your particular calling?
- 121: What is the Lord wanting you to do?
- 122: Why does the Lord want you to be willing and obedient to serve Him wherever that may be and whatever He has for you to do?
- 123: What will you understand about your training when you walk in the fullness of your calling?

## Chapter 4

### THE LONG JOURNEY HOME

A famine has broken out in the land of Israel and a family from Bethlehem decides to move to another country in order for them to survive, as you can read in Ruth 1:1-2 ***In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.***

They settle down in the country of Moab but, unfortunately, the husband whose name is Elimelech dies. However, his wife and two sons seem to be so settled into life in Moab that they remain there. The two sons grow up and their mother Naomi knows it is time for them to get married. Sadly, even then they do not return to Israel to find a wife for themselves among their own people but instead they look for a wife among the Moabite people, who are idol worshippers. Both of them end up marrying a Moabite woman as you can read in Ruth 1:3-5

***Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband died, and she was left with her two sons. They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they have lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.***

After a ten-year stay in Moab Naomi's two sons die as well. She will have wondered who will now look after her for she has no male relative left, at least not in Moab. It is true, she does have two caring daughters-in-law but they are not able to provide the protection that they are all in need of. Perhaps, even God does no longer care about her. After all, He has allowed her to lose her husband and her two sons. But then she hears the wonderful news that finally the famine in Israel is over. She knows it is time to go back to her own country and her own people. Who knows God will be merciful to her there, as you can read in Ruth 1:6-7

***When she heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home. With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.***

As she sets out on her trip back home, she is accompanied by her two daughters-in-law. They are obviously very fond of her and, likewise, she is very fond of them. Nevertheless, she knows that it will be better for them to remain in Moab so that they may find another husband, as you can read in Ruth 1:8-9

***Then Naomi said to her daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them and they wept aloud.***

However, both daughters-in-law insist they want to go with Naomi to her country, regardless of what that may mean for them, as you can read in Ruth 1:10  
***And (they) said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."***

But Naomi knows that going with her to her people and her country will be extremely difficult for these two young women. They are, after all, Moabites and will not be accepted by her people. They really should return to their own people and to their own gods and, hopefully, marry a Moabite man. She cannot do anything for them for she is too old and it seems God has turned His back on her, as you can read in Ruth 1:11-13  
***But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me –even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons – would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has gone out against me."***

One of Naomi's daughters-in-law Orpah decides that, yes, the words of her mother-in-law's words do make sense and she should return to her own people so she may be able to find another husband among them before it is too late. It breaks her heart to say goodbye to Naomi and Ruth for they have grown close together, especially after the death of all the men in their little family. Nevertheless, she cannot see any other way forward for her. You can read this in Ruth 1:14

***At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her.***

Surely, Orpah's decision will help Ruth realise that she needs to follow in the footsteps of her sister-in-law and go back to her own people in order for her to start a new life among them. However, Naomi sees that Ruth is not making any move to go back so she decides to try one more time to persuade her to do what she believes is the right thing for Ruth, as you can read in Ruth 1:15

***“Look,” said Naomi, “your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.”***

Finally Ruth speaks up and her answer convinces Naomi that, unlike Orpah, Ruth will not go back to her own people and the gods of her people but will go with Naomi to love her people and her God, as you can read in Ruth 1:16-18

***But Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”***

Ruth has had a heart change during the time she has stayed with Naomi in her home. Before marrying Naomi’s son she worshipped pagan gods but since entering Naomi’s household she has adopted her husband’s God as her God and over the years she has begun to realise more and more that her husband’s God is the true God and that any other god is a false god. Therefore, when this moment of decision in her life has arrived, she knows that it is not just a case of returning to her parental home; it is a case of returning to her parental gods. And she knows that she can no longer worship their gods for they are false gods. God has been at work in the heart and life of this young Moabite woman for He has a purpose and a plan for her life beyond what she has any knowledge of. But it requires of her a willingness to follow Him wherever He will lead, including following Naomi into a foreign country with people she has never met. It will mean too that she will never return to her own people. However, Ruth is determined to stay with Naomi and Naomi realises it, so she stops urging her to return and together they travel to Bethlehem, as you can read in Ruth 1:18-19

***When Naomi realised that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred, because of them, and the women exclaimed, “Can this be Naomi?”***

Naomi, believes that God has given up on her and does no longer care about her, as you can see from Ruth 1:20-21

***“Don’t call me Naomi,” she told them. “ Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me.”***

But God has not given up on Naomi and He has some wonderful surprises for her in store as yet. After their arrival in Bethlehem, God leads Ruth to work in a field that belongs to a man named Boaz, a relative of Naomi. Let’s read Ruth 2:1-3

***Now Naomi had a relative on her husband’s side, from the clan of Elimelech, a man of standing, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, “Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favour.” Naomi said to her, “Go ahead, my daughter. “ So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.***

Now, I want you to know it is not by chance that Ruth finds herself working in a field belonging to Boaz. God has planned all along that one day Ruth will find herself in Israel and He knows too that after she arrives in Israel she will have to go to a field in order to gather some food for her and her mother-in-law. However, He makes sure she does not just go to any field. No, He makes sure she goes to the field that belongs to a man named Boaz and this man is from the clan of Elimelech, the deceased husband of Naomi. God

has chosen for Boaz to play an important role in Ruth's life so God makes sure that Boaz notices Ruth and takes great care of her safety, as you can see from Ruth 2:8-9  
***So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."***

In fact, Boaz has already heard about Ruth even before they met as, you can read in Ruth 2:10-12

***At this she bowed down with her face to the ground. She exclaimed, "Why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me – a foreigner?" Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband –how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."***

While Ruth is working in the field her mother-in-law is at home. No doubt, she is concerned for her young daughter-in-law, realising that she is in a very vulnerable position. So when Ruth returns home that evening Naomi is full of questions, as you can read in Ruth 2:19-20

***Her mother-in-law asked her, "Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." Then Ruth told her mother-in-law about the one at whose place she had been working, "The name of the man I worked with today is Boaz," she said. "The Lord bless him," Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. "He has not stopped showing his kindness to the living and the dead." She added, "That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers."***

Naomi is very pleased to hear that Ruth has been working in the field of Boaz, who is a close relative of hers. Does she think that God might have a hand in this? Not necessarily so. At least she does not say it, but, no doubt, she will have recognised at a later point in time how God has been orchestrating events in her life and that of her daughter-in-law.

Naomi, being a good mother-in-law, knows that Ruth needs to be taken care of beyond what she can offer so she gives Ruth a certain set of instructions according to Jewish customs in relation to Boaz. Ruth follows these instructions carefully as, you can read in Ruth 3:1-7

***One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you where you will be provided for? Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours? Tonight he will be winnowing barley on the threshing-floor. Wash and perfume yourself, and put on your best clothes. Then go down to the threshing-floor, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he is lying. Then go and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what to do." When Boaz had finished eating and drinking and was in good spirits, he went over to lie down at the far end of the grain pile. Ruth approached quietly, uncovered his feet and lay down.***

Boaz responds to Ruth in the way Naomi has been anticipating, as you can read in Ruth 3:8-13

***In the middle of the night something startled the man and he turned and discovered***

*a woman lying at his feet. "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said, "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer." "The Lord bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character. Although it is true that I am near of kin, there is a kinsman-redeemer nearer than I. Stay here for the night, and in the morning if he wants to redeem, good; let him redeem. But if he is not willing, as surely as the Lord lives, I will do it. Lie here until morning."*

Boaz understands that Ruth is in need of protection beyond what Naomi can provide and that it is his responsibility, as a close relative, to take care of her, unless another close relative is willing to do so. However, the other relative is unwilling to provide for Ruth so Boaz keeps the promise he has made to Ruth to take care of her, as you can read in Ruth 4:9-10

*Then Boaz announced to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have bought from Naomi all the property of Elimelech, Kilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabitess, Mahlon's widow, as my wife, in order to maintain the name of the dead with his property, so that his name will not disappear from among his family or from the town records. Today you are witnesses."*

Consequently Boaz marries Ruth, as you can read in Ruth 4:13  
***So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife.***

Together, they have a son name Obed, a grandson for Naomi, as you can read in Ruth 4:17

*The women living there said, "Naomi has a son." And they named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.*

Naomi learns all over again that God is a faithful God and she is truly grateful. God showed Naomi He had not forgotten her. On the contrary, He blessed her with a grandson, who was like a son to her. Of course she did not know as yet that her grandson would one day have a grandson who would become king over Israel, as you can read in Matthew 1:5-6a

***...Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of king David.....***

Moreover, Nami's grandson Obed and his mother Ruth are included in the geneology of Jesus, as you can read in that same chapter in verse 16

***And Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.***

Almighty God, the Creator of the Universe chose a young Moabite woman to be rescued out of spiritual darkness by allowing her to be married into a Jewish family. He then brought her to live among His chosen people. He next gave her favour with His people, gave her a new husband from among His people and gave her a son who was the grandfather of king David and out of whose line would be born Joseph, the husband of Mary who would give birth to the Saviour of the world.

And just as you have seen God at work in the life of this young Moabite woman, who was not even of one of the chosen people, so God has chosen you to shine for Him in this world. All He asks is that you love Him, trust Him and obey Him in everything that He asks you to do, just as Ruth did. What He has for you to do will be different from

Ruth's task but it will be as important to Him because you are important to Him. And just as God used Ruth's circumstances in her life to bring her closer to Him so He wants to use your circumstances in your life to bring you closer to Him. All you need to do is to step out in faith and do all that God has for you to do, trusting Him to help you each step of the way because of His great love for you.

## QUESTIONS

1: Where has a famine broken out?

2: Who decides to move to another country?

3: Why does a family from Bethlehem decide to move to another country?

4a: According to Ruth 1:1-2 who are ruling Israel at the time of the famine?

4b: According to Ruth 1:1-2 to which country goes the family from Bethlehem to live?

4c: According to Ruth 1:1-2 what are the names of the family members?

5: Who dies in Moab?

6: When the two sons grow up do they return to Israel to find a wife for themselves among their own people?

7: Who do the two sons marry?

8a: According to Ruth 1:3-5 which Moabite women do the two sons marry?

8b: According to Ruth 1:3-5 what happens after they have lived in Moab for ten years?

9: After the death of her husband and her two sons what will Naomi have wondered about?

10: Will Naomi's two daughters-in-law be able to provide the protection they are all in need of?

11: What wonderful news does Naomi hear?

12: What does Naomi know?

13a: According to Ruth 1:6-7 with whom does Naomi leave Moab?

13b: According to Ruth 1:6-7 where do Naomi and her two daughters-in-law travel to?

14: What does Naomi know is better for her two daughters-in-law?

15: Why is it better for Naomi's two daughters-in-law to remain in Moab?

16a: According to Ruth 1:8-9 what does Naomi say to her daughters-in-law?

- 16b: According to Ruth 1:8-9 what does Naomi wish for her two daughters-in-law?
- 16c: According to Ruth 1:8-9 why does Naomi wish for the Lord to show kindness to her two daughters-in-law?
- 16d: According to Ruth 1:8-9 what does Naomi hope the Lord will give her two daughters-in-law?
- 17: Do the two daughters-in-law leave Naomi?
- 18: According to Ruth 1:10 what do the two daughters-in-law say to Naomi?
- 19: What does Naomi know about her people?
- 20: Why will Naomi's daughters –in-law not be accepted by Naomi's people?
- 21: Does Naomi believe that God has turned His back on her?
- 22a: According to Ruth 1:11-13 why does Naomi want her daughters-in-law to return home?
- 22b: According to Ruth 1:11-13 even if Naomi has sons now will her two daughters-in-law wait for them until they grow up?
- 22c: What does Naomi think her situation is like for her?
- 22d: According to Ruth 1:11-13 why does Naomi think that her situation is more bitter for her than for her two daughters-in-law?
- 23: Which one of the two daughters-in-law decide that her mother-in-law's words make sense?
- 24: What does Orpah decide to do?
- 25: Why does Orpah decide to return to her own people
- 26a: According to Ruth 1:14 does Orpah have affection for Naomi?
- 26b: According to Ruth 1:14 in what other way does does Orpah show her affection for Naomi?
- 26c: According to Ruth 1:14 does Ruth leave Naomi as well?
- 27: Does Naomi see Ruth make a move to go back?
- 28: What does Naomi try to do?
- 29: According to Ruth 1:15 how does Naomi try and persuade Ruth to go back?
- 30: What does Ruth do?

- 31: What does Ruth's answer convince Naomi of?
- 32: Who will Ruth go with?
- 33: Why will Ruth go with Naomi?
- 34a: According to Ruth 1:16-18 what does Ruth say to Naomi?
- 34b: According to Ruth 1:16-18 what does Ruth say next to Naomi?
- 34c: According to Ruth 1:16-18 what does Ruth say about Naomi's people?
- 34d: According to Ruth 1:16-18 what does Ruth say about Naomi's God?
- 34e: According to Ruth 1:16-18 what does Ruth say about where she will die?
- 34f: According to Ruth 1:16-18 what does Ruth say about where she will be buried?
- 34g: According to Ruth 1:16-18 how does Ruth show the seriousness of her commitment to Naomi?
- 35: Has Ruth has a heart change since staying with Naomi in her home?
- 36: Will there have been a time in Ruth's life that she worshipped pagan gods?
- 37: Has Ruth continued worshipping the pagan gods when in Naomi's home?
- 38: Has Ruth begun to realise over the years that her husband's God is the true God and that any other god is a false god?
- 39: What does Ruth know at this moment of decision?
- 40: What does Ruth know about worshipping her parental gods
- 41: Why can Ruth no longer worship her parental gods?
- 42: Does God have a plan and a purpose for this young Moabite woman, Ruth?
- 43: Does Ruth have any knowledge of God's purpose and plan for her life?
- 44: What does God require of Ruth?
- 45: What does God require of Ruth that she do?
- 46: Does following Naomi into a foreign country mean Ruth will never return to her own people?
- 47: Does Naomi continue to try to persuade Ruth to go back home?
- 48: Why does Naomi stop urging Ruth to go back home?

- 49a: According to Ruth 1:18-19 to which town do Naomi and Ruth travel to?
- 49b: According to Ruth 1:18-19 how do the people in Bethlehem respond to the arrival of Naomi and Ruth?
- 49c: According to Ruth 1:18-19 what do the women in Bethlehem say?
- 50: Does Naomi believe that God still cares about her?
- 51a: According to Ruth 1:20-21 what does Naomi want the women in Bethlehem to call her?
- 51b: According to Ruth 1:20-21 why does Naomi want the women in Bethlehem to call her Mara?
- 51c: According to Ruth 1:20-21 why does Naomi believe that the Lord has made her life very bitter?
- 51d: According to Ruth 1:20-21 what else does Naomi believe the Lord has done?
- 52: Has God given up on Naomi?
- 53: How do we know that God has not given up on Naomi?
- 54: After the arrival of Naomi and Ruth in Bethlehem, to which field does God lead Ruth to work in?
- 55: What is significant about Boaz?
- 56a: According to Ruth 2:1-3 to which clan does Boaz belong?
- 56b: According to Ruth 2:1-3 who makes the suggestion to go to the fields?
- 56c: According to Ruth 2:1-3 why does Ruth make the suggestion to go to the fields?
- 56d: According to Ruth 2:1-3 does Naomi agree with Ruth's suggestion?
- 56e: According to Ruth 2:1-3 what does Naomi call Ruth?
- 56f: According to Ruth 2:1-3 does Ruth plan to work in a field belonging to Boaz?
- 57: Is it by chance that Ruth finds herself working in a field belonging to Boaz?
- 58: Has God made sure that Ruth goes to a field that belongs to a man named Boaz?
- 59: Has God chosen got Boaz to play an important role in Ruth's life?
- 60: Does Boaz notice Ruth?
- 61: Does Boaz take care of Ruth's safety?

- 62a: According to Ruth 2:8-9 what does Boaz tell Ruth not to do?
- 62b: According to Ruth 2:8-9 who does Boaz tell Ruth to stay with?
- 62c: According to Ruth 2:8-9 what does Boaz tell Ruth she has to watch?
- 62d: According to Ruth 2:8-9 who does Boaz tell Ruth to follow along after?
- 62e: According to Ruth 2:8-9 what has Boaz told the men?
- 62f: According to Ruth 2:8-9 what does Boaz tell Ruth to do when she is thirsty?
- 63: Has Boaz already heard about Ruth even before they met?
- 64a: According to Ruth 2:10-12 what is Ruth's response to Boaz?
- 64b: According to Ruth 2:10-12 how does Ruth view herself?
- 64c: According to Ruth 2:10-12 what does Boaz reply to Ruth?
- 64d: According to Ruth 2:10-12 does Boaz provide more specific details as to all that Ruth has done for her mother-in-law?
- 64e: According to Ruth 2:10-12 what is Boaz's desire for Ruth?
- 64f: According to Ruth 2:10-12 under whose wings has Ruth come to take refuge?
- 65: Where is Naomi while Ruth is working in the field?
- 66: Is Naomi concerned for Ruth?
- 67: Why is Naomi concerned for her daughter-in-law Ruth?
- 68a: According to Ruth 2:19-20 what does Naomi ask Ruth when she returns home?
- 68b: According to Ruth 2:19-20 does Ruth tell Naomi in whose field she worked that day?
- 68c: According to Ruth 2:19-20 what does Naomi tell Ruth she would like the Lord to do for Boaz?
- 68d: According to Ruth 2:19-20 who would Naomi like the Lord to bless Boaz?
- 68e: According to Ruth 2:19-20 what does Naomi call Boaz?
- 69: Is Naomi pleased to hear that Ruth has been working in the field of a close relative of hers?
- 70: Will Naomi at a later point in time have recognised that God has been orchestrating events in her and Ruth's life?

- 71: What does Naomi know about Ruth?
- 72: What does Naomi do?
- 73: Who are these instructions in relation to?
- 74a: According to Ruth 3:1-7 what does Naomi know she should try to find for Ruth?
- 74b: According to Ruth 3:1-7 whose name does Naomi mention?
- 74c: According to Ruth 3:1-7 what does Naomi tell Ruth Boaz will do that evening?
- 74d: According to Ruth 3:1-7 what are the first instructions Naomi gives to Ruth?
- 74e: According to Ruth 3:1-7 where does Naomi tell Ruth to go to?
- 74f: According to Ruth 3:1-7 what does Naomi tell Ruth do to next?
- 74g: According to Ruth 3:1-7 what is Ruth to wait for?
- 74h: According to Ruth 3:1-7 does Ruth follow Naomi's instructions?
- 75: Does Boaz responds in the way Naomi has been anticipating?
- 76a: According to Ruth 3:8-13 what does Boaz discover in the middle of the night?
- 76b: According to Ruth 3:8-13 does Boaz know who the woman is?
- 76c: According to Ruth 3:8-13 does the woman tell Boaz her name?
- 76d: According to Ruth 3:8-13 with what title does Ruth present herself to Boaz?
- 76e: According to Ruth 3:8-13 what does Ruth ask Boaz to do for her?
- 76f: According to Ruth 3:8-13 why does Ruth ask Boaz to spread the corner of his garment over her
- 76g: According to Ruth 3:8-13 how does Boaz react to Ruth's request?
- 76h: According to Ruth 3:8-13 why is Ruth's kindness to Boaz greater than she showed earlier?
- 76i: According to Ruth 3:8-13 what does Boaz call Ruth?
- 76j: According to Ruth 3:8-13 what does Boaz promise Ruth he will do for her?
- 76k: According to Ruth 3:8-13 what does Boaz tell Ruth he knows about her?
- 76l: According to Ruth 3:8-13 what does Boaz explain to Ruth?

- 76m: According to Ruth 3:8-13 what does Boaz promise Ruth?
- 77: Does Boaz understand that Ruth needs protection beyond what Naomi can provide?
- 78: Does Boaz know it is his responsibility to take care of Ruth?
- 79: Is there someone else who may take care of Ruth in Boaz's place?
- 80: Is the other close relative willing to take care of Ruth?
- 81: Does Boaz keep his promise to Ruth to take care of her?
- 82a: According to Ruth 4:9-10 who does Boaz speak to?
- 82b: According to Ruth 4:9-10 what does Boaz talk to the elders and all the people about?
- 82c: According to Ruth 4:9-10 who will become Boaz's wife?
- 82d: According to Ruth 4:9-10 why will Boaz marry Ruth?
- 83: According to Ruth 4:13 does Boaz marry Ruth?
- 84: Do Boaz and Ruth have a child?
- 85a: According to Ruth 4:17 what is the name of the son of Boaz and Ruth?
- 85b: According to Ruth 4:17 what do the women living there say about the son of Boaz and Ruth?
- 86: What has Naomi learned about God?
- 87: What is Naomi's attitude towards God?
- 88: What had God shown Naomi?
- 89: According to Matthew 1:5-6a who would one day have a grandson son who would be king over Israel?
- 90: Who are included in the genealogy of Jesus?
- 91: Who chose a young Moabite woman to be rescued out of spiritual darkness?
- 92: How did Almighty God rescue a young Moabite woman to be rescued out of spiritual darkness?
- 93: What did God do next?
- 94: What did God do as well for this you Moabite woman?
- 95: Did God provide the young Moabite woman with a new husband from among His

people?

96: What did God give to the young Moabite woman and her new husband?

97: Who was the son of the young Moabite woman and her new husband a grandfather of?

98: Who else was in the genealogy of the son of the young Moabite woman and her new husband?

99: Has God chosen you to shine for Him?

100: What does God ask of you?

101: Will what God has for you to do be different than Ruth's task was?

102: Will what God has for you to do be as important to Him as Ruth's task was?

103: Why is your task as important to Him as Ruth's task was?

104: Does God want to use the circumstances in your life to bring you closer to Him, just as He used Ruth's circumstances in her life to bring her closer to Him?

105: What do you need to do?

## Chapter 5

### ONE SLING SHOT WILL DO

One of the enemies of the nation of Israel is a people named the Philistines. They have been Israel's enemies for a very long time. In Judges 3:1-4 you can read of the reason for their existence

***These are the nations the Lord left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan (He did this only to teach warfare to the descendants of the Israelites who had not had previous battle experience); the five rulers of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians and the Hivites living in the Lebanon mountains from Mount Baal Hermon to Lebo Hamath. They were left to test the Israelites to see whether they would obey the Lord's commands, which He had given their forefathers through Moses.***

God has a very specific reason as to why He has allowed this specific enemy to still be able to attack Israel; He wants each generation of Israelites to know they are not just part of any nation who can do what they want and follow after any god they choose. Instead, each generation of Israelites needs to know they are part of a nation specifically called by Him to worship only Him. Each generation is to be known as the people of the God of Israel and the army in each generation is to be known as the army of the God of Israel. No other nation around them is known as the people of the God of Israel and no army of any of these nations can claim to be the army of the God of Israel. Their enemies know that, including the army of the Philistines. They know that the Israelites serve a mighty God and that their army is not just an ordinary army but an extraordinary army because of the God they serve. After all, they have lost a number of

battles when fighting the Israelites.

We have one example in Judges 15 which tells us how an Israelite named Samson attacked one thousand Philistines. You can read this in Judges 15:14-15

***As he (Samson) approached Lehi, the Philistines came toward him shouting. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands. Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men.***

We know too from Judges 16:30 that at the end of his life Samson killed more Philistines than he had killed before.

***Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple of the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.***

And we have another example of the Israelites defeating the Philistines in I Samuel 7 when Israel was under the leadership of the prophet Samuel, as you can read in I Samuel 7:10

***While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the Lord thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites.***

In fact, the Philistines stopped invading Israel altogether, at least for quite some time, as you can read in I Samuel 7:13

***So the Philistines were subdued and did not invade Israelite territory again.***

But as time goes on the Philistines decide to attack the Israelites once again, as you can read in I Samuel 17:1-7

***Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Socoh in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Socoh and Azekah. Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them. A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armour of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him.***

The Philistines decide that in order for them to win they must devise a method by which the army of Israel will not remember they are the army of God and will, therefore, not rely on the power of God to help them have the victory. And in the passage we have just read, it seems the Philistines have found the perfect method or the perfect instrument to make the Israelites forget they are God's army. That instrument is a giant named Goliath. And he truly is a giant of a man for he is over nine feet tall. His height is sufficient in itself to make the army of Israel feel defeated. But it is not just his height that causes them to forget who they really are; it is his voice as well for his voice is loud as, you know from I Samuel 17:8-10

***Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and***

***serve us.” Then the Philistine said, “This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.”***

The Israelite army have heard his shouts every morning since they have gathered for battle. Each morning the message has been the same; he calls them the servants of Saul and challenges them to a battle. Perhaps the first few days they may have questioned his remark for they know they are not the servants of Saul; they are the servants of their God. But then as time goes on doubt has begun to set in and they have begun to believe that he may be right after all, and that they are just servants of Saul for they know no one among them who can fight this man; he is just too tall and too strong and too loud, as you can read in I Samuel 17:11

***On hearing the Philistine’s words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.***

The Israelite army may well have forgotten that they are God's army but God has not forgotten. And He knows something has to be done to remind His army who they really are. So God goes to work. And, as God so often does, He uses natural circumstances, for He uses the concerns of a man named Jesse for his sons to fulfil His plans.

Let's read I Samuel 17:17-19

***Now Jesse said to his son David, “Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from them. They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines.”***

And so David sets off for the camp, as you can read in I Samuel 17:20-22

***Early in the morning David left the flock with a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry. Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and greeted his brothers.***

While he is there, speaking to his brothers, Goliath appears on the scene shouting his usual defiance, as you can read in I Samuel 17:23-24

***As he was talking with them, Goliath the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear.***

David hears Goliath for God has made certain that David does not appear at the scene too early or too late but arrives just at the right time to hear Goliath shout his usual defiance. The other Israelites hear Goliath as well and all they do is run. But not David for David knows that this man Goliath, huge as he is, is nothing more than an uncircumcised Philistine, as you can read in I Samuel 17:26b

***..... Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?***

And how dare this uncircumcised Philistine defy the army of the living God. For that is what they are; the army of the living God, not the army of Saul as Goliath has been able to convince them. And God has send David to remind the army of Israel who they really are; the army of the God of Israel.

It is now time for action and David, who is not a soldier but a shepherd, looks for the kind of weaponry that he can use successfully, as you can read in I Samuel 17:40  
***Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in his shepherd's bag and with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.***

Goliath is not impressed with David's appearance, as you can read in I Samuel 17:41-44  
***Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field."***

Goliath looks at David with natural eyes but he does not realise that David does not rely on his own strength but on the strength of the Lord, as you can know from I Samuel 17:45-48

***David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give all of you into our hands."*** As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him.

It is time for David to use the particular weaponry he has selected, as you can read in I Samuel 17:49-50

***Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.***

And so God's instrument David kills the Philistine's instrument Goliath with nothing more than a stone. His actions so encourage the Israelite army that they pursue the Philistine army and defeat them, as you can read in I Samuel 17:52a

***Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron....***

This is such a great story. But it is not just a great story, it is a story you can learn so much from. After all, you too, as a believer, are part of the army of God, and you too may feel so defeated at times by the challenges you face on a daily basis that you may forget who you are and forget to rely on God's power to help you be victorious in your battles. Now you will know that your battles are not physical battles as was the case with the Israelite army. Your battles are spiritual battles and you will need spiritual weaponry in order to be victorious, which is described in Ephesians 6:10-17

***Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armour of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and, after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness***

***that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.***

Your weapon against the enemy is the sword of the Spirit or the word of God, as you can read in Hebrews 4:12

***For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.***

Moreover, as a believer, you need to make sure that you are dressed in the armour of God to protect you against the onslaughts of the enemy.

The first piece of this armour is the belt of truth. This refers to Jesus being the Truth, as you can read in John 14:6

***Jesus answers, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through Me."***

The next piece of this armour is the breastplate of righteousness. This speaks of the fact that, as a believer, you are righteous in Christ, according to II Corinthians 5:21

***God made Him who had no sin to become sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.***

Then Paul mentions that your feet are to be fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, for Jesus said in John 14:27

***Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you.***

Thereafter, you are told to take up the shield of faith for, according to II Corinthians 5:7

***We live by faith, not by sight.***

Next you are to take the helmet of salvation for, according to I Thessalonians 5:9

***God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

As a believer, you need to remember that His power to overcome the enemy is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All you need to do is to be obedient to God, be dressed in the armour of God and use the sword of the Spirit to defeat the enemy. Jesus used the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God to defeat Satan when Satan attacked Him in the desert, as you can read in Luke 4:1-13

***Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days He was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them He was hungry. The devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: "Man does not live on bread alone." The devil led Him up to a high place and showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to Him, "I will give You all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if You worship me, it will all be Yours." Jesus answered, "It is written: "Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only." The devil led him up to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If You are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: "He will command His angels concerning You to guard You carefully; they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike your feet against a stone." Jesus answered, "It says: "Do not put***

***the Lord your God to the test.” When the devil had finished all his tempting, he left Him until an opportune time.***

You must learn to use the same method when attacked by the enemy so you too will be as victorious against the enemy as David was against Goliath. God wants you to know that no matter the kind of battle you face, God will enable you to be victorious. All you need to do is to use the weaponry He has given you. This weaponry may not look powerful in the eyes of the world but it is powerful in God’s eyes. It will, therefore, cause you to be triumphant over your enemy and will give God the glory He so richly deserves.

## QUESTIONS

- 1: Which people are one of the enemies of the nation of Israel?
- 2: For how long have the Philistines been Israel’s enemies?
- 3a: According to Judges 3:1-4 which are the nations the Lord left to test all those Israelites who had not experienced any of the wars in Canaan?
- 3b: According to Judges 3:1-4 why were these nations left to test the Israelites?
- 4: What does God want each generation of Israelites to know?
- 5: Who is each generation of Israelites specifically called to worship?
- 6: How is each generation of Israelites to be known as?
- 7: How is the army of each generation of Israelites to be known as?
- 8: Is any other nation known as the people of the God of Israel?
- 9: Can any of the other armies claim to be the army of the God of Israel?
- 10: Do the enemies of the Israelites know that the army of Israel is the army of the God of Israel?
- 11: Does the army of the Philistines know that the army of Israel is the army of the God of Israel?
- 12: What does the army of the Philistines know about the army of Israel?
- 13: Has the army of the Philistines lost any battles when fighting the Israelites?
- 14a: According to Judges 15:14-15 who attacked the Philistines?
- 14b: According to Judges 15:14-15 what came upon Samson in power?
- 14c: According to Judges 15:14-15 what happened when the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson in power?

- 14d: According to Judges 15:14-15 what did Samson grab?
- 14e: According to Judges 15:14-15 how many Philistines did Samson struck down with the jawbone of a donkey?
- 15a: According to Judges 16:30 what happened when Samson pushed with all his might?
- 15b: According to Judges 16:30 how many Philistines were killed by Samson that day?
- 16: Did the Israelites defeat the Philistines when Israel was under the leadership of Samuel?
- 17a: According to I Samuel 7:10 who was sacrificing a burnt offering?
- 17b: According to I Samuel 7:10 while Samuel was offering the burnt offering who was drawing near?
- 17c: According to I Samuel 7: 10 why were the Philistines drawing near?
- 17d: According to I Samuel 7:10 how did the Lord respond?
- 17e: According to I Samuel 7:10 what happened to the Philistines when the Lord thundered against them?
- 18: Did the Philistines continue invading Israel?
- 19: According to I Samuel 7:13 who were subdued by the Israelites?
- 20: What do the Philistines decide to do once again?
- 21a: According to I Samuel 17:1-7 who gather their forces for war?
- 21b: According to I Samuel 17:1-7 who assemble?
- 21c: According to I Samuel 17:1-7 what do the Philistines occupy?
- 21d: According to I Samuel 17:1-7 what do the Israelites occupy?
- 21e: According to I Samuel 17:1-7 what is between the Philistines and the Israelites?
- 21f: According to I Samuel 17:1-7 who comes out of the camp of the Philistines?
- 21g: According to I Samuel 17:1-7 where is Goliath from?
- 21h: According to I Samuel 17:1-7 how tall is Goliath?
- 21i: According to I Samuel 17:1-7 how much does Goliath's coat of scale armour of bronze weigh?
- 21j: According to I Samuel 17:1-7 how much does the iron point of Goliath's spear shaft

weigh?

21k: According to I Samuel 17:1-7 who goes ahead of Goliath?

22: What do the Philistines decide they must do in order to win?

23: What will happen if the army of Israel does not remember they are the army of God?

24: Does it seem the Philistines have found the perfect method or the perfect instrument to make the Israelites forget they are God's army?

25: What is the instrument of the Philistines?

26: Is Goliath truly a giant of a man?

27: Is Goliath's height sufficient to make the army of Israel feel defeated?

28: Is it not just Goliath's height that causes the army of Israel to forget who they really are?

29: Why does Goliath's voice cause the army of Israel to forget who they really are?

30a: According to I Samuel 17:8-10 how does Goliath address the army of Israel?

30b: According to I Samuel 17:8-10 what does Goliath ask the army of Israel to do?

30c: According to I Samuel 17:8-10 what is that man to do?

30d: According to I Samuel 17:8-10 what will happen if that man kills Goliath?

30e: According to I Samuel 17:8-10 what will happen if that man is not able to kill Goliath?

31: For how long has the Israelite army heard Goliath's shouts?

32: What has been Goliath's message each morning?

33: Will the Israelite army have questioned Goliath's remark that they are the servants of Saul?

34: Why will the Israelite army have questioned Goliath's remark?

35: As times goes on what has happened to the Israelite army?

36: What has the Israelite army begun to believe?

37: Why has the Israelite army begun to believe that Goliath may be right after all that they are just servants of Saul?

38: Why does the Israelite army not know anyone among them who can fight Goliath?

- 39: According to I Samuel 17:11 how do Saul and the Israelites feel about the words of Goliath?
- 40: Has God forgotten that the Israelite army is His army?
- 41: Does God know something has to be done to remind His army who they really are?
- 42: What does God do to remind His army who they really are?
- 43: What does God do to remind His army who they really are?
- 44: What natural circumstances does God use to remind His army who they really are?
- 45a: According to I Samuel 17:17-19 to whom does Jesse speak?
- 45b: According to I Samuel 17:17-19 what does Jesse want David to do?
- 45c: According to I Samuel 17:17-19 where are David's brothers?
- 45d: According to I Samuel 17:17-19 what does Jesse want David to do as well?
- 45e: According to I Samuel 17:17-19 who does Jesse tell David his brothers are with?
- 45f: According to I Samuel 17:17-19 what does Jesse tell David his brothers are doing?
- 46a: According to I Samuel 17:20-22 who does David leave in the care of a shepherd?
- 46b: According to I Samuel 17:20-22 when does David leave the flock in the care of a shepherd?
- 46c: According to I Samuel 17:20-22 when does David reach the camp?
- 46d: According to I Samuel 17:20-22 what is the army doing when it is going into battle positions?
- 46e: According to I Samuel 17:20-22 what does David do when he arrives at the camp?
- 46f: According to I Samuel 17:20-22 why does David run to the battle lines?
- 47: While David is speaking with his brothers who appears on the scene?
- 48: What does Goliath do when he appears?
- 49a: According to I Samuel 17:23-24 when Goliath shouts his usual defiance who hears it?
- 49b: According to I Samuel 17: 23-24 when Goliath shouts his usual defiance what do the Israelites do?
- 50: Who has made certain that David arrives just at the right time to hear Goliath shout

his usual defiance?

51: Do the other Israelites hear Goliath shout his usual defiance as well?

52: What do the other Israelites do when they hear Goliath shout his usual defiance?

53: Does David run as well when he hears Goliath shout his usual defiance?

54: Why does David not run when he hears Goliath shout his usual defiance?

55a: According to I Samuel 17:26b how does David call Goliath?

55b: According to I Samuel 17:26b what does David remind the Israelites of?

56: What does David make clear to all those present?

57: What does David help the Israelites remember?

58: Who has been able to convince the Israelites they are the army of Saul?

59: Who has send David to remind the army of Israel who they really are?

60: What is it now time for?

61: Is David a soldier?

62: What kind of weaponry is David looking for?

63a: According to I Samuel 17:40 what does David choose?

63b: According to I Samuel 17:40 where does David put the fives smooth stones?

63c: According to I Samuel 17:40 who does David approach?

63d: According to I Samuel 17:40 what does David have in his hand when he approaches Goliath?

64: Is Goliath impressed with David?

65a: According to I Samuel 17:41-44 what does Goliath see when he looks David over?

65b: According to I Samuel 17:41-44 how does Goliath feel about David?

65c: According to I Samuel 17:41-44 in what way does Goliath say David treats him?

65d: According to I Samuel 17:41-44 why does Goliath say David treats him as a dog?

65e: According to I Samuel 17:41-44 who does Goliath say he will give David's flesh to?

66: How does Goliath look at David?

67: What does Goliath not realise?

68: On Whose strength does David rely on?

69a: According to I Samuel 17:45-48 in what way does to the Philistine, Goliath come against David?

69b: According to I Samuel 17:45-48 in what way does David come against the Philistine, Goliath?

69c: According to I Samuel 17:45-48 what will the Lord do that day?

69d: According to I Samuel 17:45-48 what will David do that day?

69e: According to I Samuel 17:45-48 what will happen to the carcasses of the Philistine army that day?

69f: According to I Samuel 17:45-48 who will know that there is a God in Israel?

69g: According to I Samuel 17:45-48 what will all those gathered there know?

69h: According to I Samuel 17:45-48 to Whom does the battle belong?

69i: According to I Samuel 17:45-48 Who will give all of the Philistines into the hands of the Israelites?

69j: According to I Samuel 17:45-48 who runs quickly toward the battle line to meet Goliath?

70: What is it time for?

71a: According to I Samuel 17:49-50 what does David do?

71b: According to I Samuel 17:49-50 what does David do with the stone?

71c: According to I Samuel 17:49-50 what happens to the Philistine, Goliath?

71d: According to I Samuel 17:49-50 what happens to the Philistine, Goliath after he has been struck by the stone on his forehead?

71e: According to I Samuel 17:49-50 who triumphs over the Philistine, Goliath?

71f: According to I Samuel 17:49-50 how does David triumph over the Philistine, Goliath?

71g: According to I Samuel 17: 49-50 does David use a sword to strike down the Philistine, Goliath and kill him?

72: Who is God's instrument?

73: Who is the Philistines' instrument?

- 74: What do David's actions do for the Israelite army?
- 75: Is the Israelite army successful in pursuing the Philistine army?
- 76: According to I Samuel 17:52a what do the men of Israel and Judah do?
- 77: Is this a story you can learn from?
- 78: As a believer, which army are you a part of?
- 79: Why can you at times feel defeated?
- 80: Can you sometimes forget who you are?
- 81: Can you at times forget to rely on God's power to help you be victorious in your battles?
- 82: Are your battles physical battles?
- 83: What kind of weaponry will you need in order to be victorious?
- 84a: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 what are believers to be?
- 84b: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 what are believers to put on?
- 84c: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 why are believers to put on the full armour of God?
- 84d: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 is the believer's battle against flesh and blood?
- 84e: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 who is the believer's battle against?
- 84f: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 what do believers have to wear as their armour of God?
- 84g: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 what are the believers to take up?
- 85: What is the weapon against the enemy for the believer?
- 86a: According to Hebrews 4:12 what is living and active?
- 86b: According to Hebrews 4:12 what does the sword of the Spirit, the word of God penetrate?
- 86c: According to Hebrews 4:12 what does the sword of the Spirit, the word of God judge?
- 87: What does the armour of God protect believers from?
- 88: What is the first piece of the armour of God?

- 89: Who does the belt of truth refer to?
- 90: In to John 14:6 how does Jesus refer to Himself?
- 91: What is the next piece of the armour of God?
- 92: What does the breastplate of righteousness speak of?
- 93a: According to II Corinthians 5:21 who has become sin for believers?
- 93b: According to II Corinthians 5:21 how does the fact that Christ has become sin affect believers?
- 94: What does Paul mention our feet are to be fitted with?
- 95: According to John 14:27 what does Jesus promise to give?
- 96: What are believers to take up?
- 97: According to II Corinthians 5:7 how are believers to live?
- 98: What are believers to take next?
- 99: According to I Thessalonians 5:9 what has God appointed believers for?
- 100: Is God's power to overcome the enemy available at all times for believers?
- 101: What do believers need to do?
- 102: Did Jesus use the sword of the Spirit, the word of God to defeat satan when satan attacked Him?
- 103a: According to Luke 4:1-13 where was Jesus led to by the Spirit?
- 103b: According to Luke 4:1-13 how long was Jesus in the desert?
- 103c; According to Luke 4:1-13 how did Jesus feel after these 40 days?
- 103d: According to Luke 4:1-13 who tempted Jesus in the desert?
- 103e: According to Luke 4:1-13 what did satan question Jesus about?
- 103f: According to Luke 4:1-13 what did the devil then tell Jesus to do?
- 103g: According to Luke 4:1-13 how did Jesus reply to the devil?
- 103h: According to Luke 4:1-3 what did the devil show Jesus?
- 103i: According to Luke 4:1-13 what did the devil offer Jesus?
- 103j: According to Luke 4:1-13 what did Jesus have to do in order to receive authority and

splendor over the kingdoms of the world?

103k: According to Luke 4:1-13 how did Jesus answer the devil?

103l: According to Luke 4:1-13 where did the devil take Jesus to?

103m: According to Luke 4:1-13 what did the devil tell Jesus to do?

103n: According to Luke 4:1-13 what did the devil tell Jesus God would command His angels concerning Him to do?

103o: According to Luke 4:1-13 how were God's angels to guard Jesus?

103p: According to Luke 4:1-13 how did Jesus reply to the devil?

103q: According to Luke 4:1-13 did the devil tempt Jesus any further?

104: What must you learn to do when you are attacked by the enemy?

105: Why must you learn to use the same method Jesus used when you are attacked by the enemy?

106: Who will enable you to be victorious?

107: What do you need to do in order to be victorious?

108: Does this weaponry look powerful in the eyes of the world?

109: Will this weaponry cause you to be triumphant over your enemy?

110: Who will receive the glory?

## Chapter 6

### NOT JUST ANY ARMY

The Israelites have an enemy named the Philistines. And the Philistines know that the Israelite army is a very special army because of the God they serve, for He enables them to be victorious in their battles. If only the Philistines could make the Israelite army forget that they are the army of God. And in I Samuel 17 it seems they have found just the right tool to make the Israelite army feel defeated, and this happened even before any physical battle has taken place.

The tool of the Philistine army is a giant named Goliath. He has the whole army of Israel convinced that they are only the servants of Saul and will never be able to win this battle. But then a young shepherd boy named David comes on the scene. He, too, sees and hears Goliath, but he is not impressed with his height or his sound, for he knows who this giant really is; he is nothing more than an uncircumcised Philistine. And how dare he defile the army of the living God!

David then takes action by preparing his weaponry, which consists of five smooth stones and he kills Goliath with the very first stone, because his God is with him. And his

actions make the Israelite army once again remember who they are; the army of the living God, so they go and defeat their enemies. Is this story relevant to you? Yes it is, for you too, as a believer, are part of the army of God. It is true you are not part a physical army and you do not have physical enemies. Nevertheless, you do have a real enemy. His name is Satan. Jesus teaches in John 10:10 what his aim is  
***The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.***

And Peter writes in I Peter 5:8 that Satan looks for those he can devour  
***Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking for someone to devour.***

So how can you be victorious in your battles against your enemy? You will need to wear the right outfit. That outfit is described in Ephesians 6:10-17  
***Finally be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground and, after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.***

No soldier goes to battle without the proper outfit. Likewise, you as a believer, need to make sure you are always clothed in the armour of God. The first part of that outfit is the belt of truth. According to John 14:6 Jesus says that He is the Truth  
***Jesus answered, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."***

And in John 17:17, Jesus prays to the Father for His followers when He asks the Father to Sanctify them by the Truth.  
***Your Word is Truth.***

The next item is the breastplate of righteousness. Paul explains in II Corinthians 5:21 how you receive righteousness when he writes  
***God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.***

Paul then speaks about the feet that are to be fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. Jesus promises to give you His peace, as you can read in John 14:27  
***Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid.***

The following item is the shield of faith for you are saved by grace through faith, as you can read in Ephesians 2:8-9  
***For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.***

And Paul writes that he now lives by faith in the Son of God in Galatians 2:20  
***I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I***

***live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.***

Paul then speaks of the helmet of salvation. This helmet is to protect your mind. As a believer, you are to have a renewed mindset, as you can read in Romans 12:2

***Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.***

You renew your mind by changing the way you think. Your ways of thinking may have become very established and may be against the Word of God so changes may be necessary even though that can be very challenging. Paul calls this waging war against your thought life, as you can read in II Corinthians 10:3-5, where he writes

***For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.***

Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8 the kind of thoughts you are to have

***Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.***

These thoughts are to be based on the truth in God's word. Therefore, you will need to spend much time in God's word in order for your mind to be changed. That is exactly what Paul has in mind when he writes to take up the Sword of the Spirit, or the word of God. In Hebrews 4:12 you can read how powerful God's word is

***For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.***

The reason it is so important for you, as a believer, to know the truth of God's word is because, as I have already mentioned, the enemy only wants to steal and kill and destroy and he tries to do that by putting his lies into your mind. However, when you know God's word you will recognise his lies for what they are and replace them with the right thoughts.

Furthermore, a change of mind will mean a change of actions. That happened to the Israelite army for they were able to successfully defeat their enemies as soon as they had changed their minds about whose servants they were; they were the servants of the living God and not the servants of Saul. And so it is for every believer for you too are to change your actions after you have changed your mindset, as you can read in Luke 6:27-38

***But I tell you who hear me: "Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you. And if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even "sinners" love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even "sinners" do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even "sinners" lend to "sinners," expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies. Do good to them. And lend to***

***them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great. And you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”***

So you too can be victorious each time the enemy tries to attack you by thinking thoughts that are pleasing to God and in line with His word and acting in a way that is pleasing to Him and in accordance with His word. This may well mean that you will have to think and act differently from the way you have thought and acted before and it may well mean too that you will have to think and act differently from those around you. Nevertheless, that is what you as a believer are to do, and with God's help you will be able to.

## QUESTIONS

- 1: What is the name of the enemy of the Israelites?
- 2: Do the Philistines know that the Israelite army is a very special army?
- 3: Why is the Israelite army a very special army?
- 4: What do the Philistines wish they could do in relation to the Israelite army?
- 5: What may the Philistines have found in I Samuel 17?
- 6: Has any physical battle taken place before the right tool has been found by the Philistines to make the Israelite army feel defeated?
- 7: Who is the tool of the Philistine army?
- 8: What has the giant Goliath been able to convince the army of Israel of?
- 9: Will the Israelite army be able to win any battle as servants of Saul?
- 10: Who comes on the scene?
- 11: Does David see and hear the giant Goliath?
- 12: Is David impressed with the height and the sound of the giant Goliath?
- 13: Why is David not impressed with the height and the sound of the giant Goliath?
- 14: Who is this giant Goliath really?
- 15: Does David know who the Israelite army really is?
- 16: What action does David take?
- 17: What does David do with just one of these stones?

- 18: Why is David able to kill Goliath with the very first stone?
- 19: What do David's actions make the Israelite army once again remember?
- 20: Is the Israelite army as the army of the living God able to defeat their enemies?
- 21: Is this story relevant to you?
- 22: Why is this story relevant to you?
- 23: Not being part of a physical army, do you have physical enemies?
- 24: Do you have a real enemy?
- 25: What does Jesus teach us in John 10:10?
- 26: What does Peter write in I Peter 5:8?
- 27: How can you be victorious in your battles against your enemy?
- 28: Where is the right outfit described?
- 29a: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 why do you have to put on the full armour of God?
- 29b: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 is your struggle against flesh and blood?
- 29c: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 who is your struggle against?
- 29d: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 how are you to stand firm?
- 29e: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 what are you to take up?
- 29f: According to Ephesians 6:10-17 what are you to take?
- 30: Does any soldier goes to battle without the proper outfit?
- 31: As a believer, do you need to make sure you are always clothed in the armour of God?
- 32: What is the first part of that outfit?
- 33: What does Jesus say about Himself in John 14:6?
- 34a According to John 17:17 for whom does Jesus pray?
- 34b: According to John 17:17 what does Jesus say is Truth?
- 35: What is the next item of the armour of God?
- 36a: According to II Corinthians 5:21 who became sin for you?

36b: According to II Corinthians 5:21 why did Christ, who had no sin, become sin for you?

37: What does Paul speak about next in relation to the armour of God?

38a: According to John 14:27 what does Jesus promise to give you in John 14:27?

38b: According to John 14:27 is the peace that Jesus gives the peace that the world gives?

38c: According to John 14:27 what does Jesus tell you in relation to any fears you may have?

39: What is the next item of the armour of God?

40a: According to Ephesians 2:8-9 how are you saved?

40b: According to Ephesians 2:8-9 Who gives you salvation?

40c: According to Ephesians 2:8-9 can you work for your salvation?

40d: According to Ephesians 2:8-9 can you boast about your salvation?

41a: According to Galatians 2:20 who has been crucified with Christ?

41b: According to Galatians 2:20 who does no longer live?

41c: According to Galatians 2:20 who lives in Paul?

41d: According to Galatians 2:20 how does Paul live in his body?

42: What does Paul speak of next in relation to the armour of God?

43: What is this helmet to do?

44a: According to Romans 12:2 what are you not to conform to?

44b: According to Romans 12:2 what needs to happen to you?

44c: According to Romans 12:2 how will you be transformed?

44d: According to Romans 12:2 what will you be able to test when you have a renewed mind?

45: As a believer, how do you renew your mind?

46: Has your way of thinking become very established?

47: Is your way of thinking against the Word of God?

48: If your way of thinking is against the Word of God are changes necessary?

- 49: What does Paul call changing your way of thinking?
- 50a: According to II Corinthians 10:3-5 do you wage war as the world does?
- 50b: According to II Corinthians 10:3-5 are the weapons you fight with the weapons of the world?
- 50c: According to II Corinthians 10:3-5 do the weapons you fight with have divine power to demolish strongholds?
- 50d: According to II Corinthians 10:3-5 what are you to demolish?
- 50e: According to II Corinthians 10:3-5 what are you to do with every thought?
- 51: According to Philippians 4:8 what kind of thoughts are you to have?
- 52: What are these thoughts to be based on?
- 53: What will you have to do in order for your mind to be changed?
- 54: What does Paul desire for you when he writes for you to take up the Sword of the Spirit, or the Word of God?
- 55a: According to Hebrews 4:12 how powerful is God's Word?
- 55b: According to Hebrews 4:12 what does the Word of God divide?
- 55c: According to Hebrews 4:12 what does the Word of God judge?
- 56: What does the enemy want to do in your life?
- 57: In what way does the enemy try to steal and kill and destroy you?
- 58: How will you be able to recognise the enemy's lies for what they are?
- 59: When you know God's Word how will you be able to deal with the enemy's lies?
- 60: Will a change of mind mean a change of actions for you?
- 61: What happened after the Israelite army changed their minds about how those servants they were?
- 62: Are you, as a believer, to change your actions after you have changed your mindset?
- 63a: According to Luke 6:27-38 how does Jesus want you to treat your enemies?
- 63b: According to Luke 6:27-38 how does Jesus want you to treat those who hate you?
- 63c: According to Luke 6:27-38 how does Jesus want you to treat those who curse you?
- 63d: According to Luke 6:27-38 how does Jesus want you to treat those who mistreat

you?

63e: According to Luke 6:27-38 what does Jesus want you to do if someone strikes you on one cheek?

63f: According to Luke 6:27-38 what does Jesus want you to do for the person who takes your cloak?

63g: According to Luke 6:27-38 what does Jesus want you to do with regards someone who has taken what belongs to you?

63h: According to Luke 6:27-38 what does Jesus want you to do to others?

63i: According to Luke 6:27-38 do “sinners” love those who love them?

63j: According to Luke 6:27-38 are “sinners” good to those who are good to them?

63k: According to Luke 6:27-38 do “sinners” lend to “sinners”?

63l: According to Luke 6:27-38 what does Jesus expect of you?

63m: According to Luke 6:27-38 what will be the consequence when you love your enemies, do good to them and lend to them without expecting to get anything back?

63n: According to Luke 6:27-38 Whose sons will you be when you love your enemies, do good to them and lend to them without expecting to get anything back?

63o: According to Luke 6:27-38 why will you be sons of the Most High when you love your enemies, do good to them and lend to them without expecting to get anything back?

63p: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to

63q: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you not to judge?

63r: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you not to condemn?

63s: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you to forgive?

63t: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you to give?

63u: According to Luke 6:27-38 when you give what will be poured into your lap?

63v: According to Luke 6:27-38 what measure will be used?

64: Can you be victorious each time the enemy tries to attack you?

65: Does that mean you may have to think and act differently from the way you have thought and acted before?

66: Could it mean that you have to think and act differently from those around you?

67: Is that what you, as a believer, are to do?

68: With Whose help will you be able to think and act differently?

## Chapter 7

### ONLY A LITTLE FLOUR AND OIL

The nation of Israel has had many kings. One of them is named Ahab. Unfortunately, he was a very evil king for he worshipped a false god Baal, as you can read in I Kings 16:32 ***He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria.***

God was very angry with him and sent the prophet Elijah to him with a message that there was going to be a drought in the land for a few years as a form of punishment.

You can read that in I Kings 17:1

***Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."***

No doubt, these words will have made the king very upset with Elijah so God sends His prophet to a safe place, a ravine where he hides and where he can drink from the brook, as you can read in I Kings 17:2-6

***Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah, "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there." So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.***

However, one day the unthinkable happens, for even that brook dries up, as you can read in I Kings 17:7

***Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land.***

What is Elijah to do now? Surely God will continue to take care of His prophet? After all, it is not his fault that there is a drought in the land. He has only been the one who has foretold the drought. But he is not the cause of it and he should not really have to suffer the effects of the drought. It is true, so far God has taken care of him. But now the brook has dried up too and God has not done something miraculous to make the brook continue to provide water for Elijah. Please read I Kings 17:8-9 to see what happens next.

***Then the word of the Lord came to him: "Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food."***

True to His faithful nature, God once again speaks to His servant and this time tells him to go to a place called Zarephath in Sidon. That is interesting because that place is outside Israel. We might think that God will want to keep Elijah in Israel because the nations surrounding Israel are all pagan nations. But apparently God does not mind for

his prophet to go to places he may not necessarily think of going.

Not only does God tell him which place He wants Elijah to go, He tells the prophet the person He has selected to take care of him: a widow. That seems to be quite an unusual choice, is it not? First of all, God is about to send his prophet to a place outside of Israel and the next thing He has decided to do is to send him to a widow. If God wants to send him to a widow, why not send him to a widow in Israel? After all, there are plenty of widows in Israel so it makes no sense whatsoever for God to send him so far away to a widow who, very likely, does not even know the God of Elijah. May be it is because this widow is better off. Most if not all widows in Israel are poor and God may have chosen this particular widow because she is a little wealthier so it will be easier for her to take care of Elijah and still take care of herself as well. Surely God must have His reasons as to why He is sending Elijah all the way to this widow in Sidon and it makes sense to send him to one who is able to provide for him. Whatever God's reasons, the prophet does obey God and goes to Zarephath, as you can read in read I Kings 17:10-11

***So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread."***

No doubt, before his arrival at Zarephath he must have wondered where exactly he will meet this widow, who is supposed to take care of him. Will he see her the moment he arrives or will he have to go into the town to look for her? And how will he even be able to recognise this widow God has commanded to take care of him? At his arrival he does notice a widow and he decides to try and find out if she is the one God has chosen for him. He suddenly realises as well that he is hungry and thirsty because he has not had anything to eat or drink for a long time so he asks this widow for something to drink and something to eat. Surely her answer will help him decide whether or not she is the widow selected by God to provide for him. Please read I Kings 17:12 to find out.

***"As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread – only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat – and die."***

This widow cannot possibly be God's choice for Elijah, can she now? If God has spoken to her about taking care of Elijah then she must know about it and welcome Elijah to her home. But it seems she has no idea that God has commanded her to take care of him. In fact, she makes it quite clear that she is not planning to entertain anyone, including Elijah, but that she is planning to cook one final meal for herself and her son. After that final meal she does not plan to cook anymore but to just lie down and wait for death to come for her and her son. Surely Elijah will have realised from her words that she cannot possibly be the one widow he is supposed to stay with. This woman has nothing to offer him. She does barely have enough food for one meal for herself and her son and then she plans to die rather than take care of him. Her story is a very sad story but there is nothing he can do for her and she certainly can do nothing for him. And he is really very hungry and thirsty. So, no doubt, he will make his excuses and leave her to her to do what she needs to do so that he can go into the town to find the widow who will provide for him. Let's read Elijah's words to her in I Kings 17:13 to find out what his

response is.

***Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son."***

Isn't that interesting? It seems he believes he has already found the widow God has selected for him. However, having heard her say that she has only a little flour and a little oil left, just enough to feed herself and her son one more time, he still insists that she feeds him first before making something for herself and her son. It seems he does not understand that there is only food for two people and not food for three people. Does he not care that if she gives him food, either she or her son will starve without one of them even having had their final meal? Apparently Elijah does not care and you may wonder why. Can it be because he knows something that you don't know? Please read I Kings 17:14 to find out if God has shown him something that you may not be aware of. ***For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says, "The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the Lord gives rain on the land."***

The reason Elijah is so persistent in asking that she make him some food first is because God has shown him that there will be flour and oil for the three of them until the time the rain returns on the land. And the widow, knowing that the rain stopped at the command of this prophet, believes his words that they will have food to eat while the drought last. And so she goes home to prepare a cake of bread for the prophet, as you can read in I Kings 17:15-16

***She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word the Lord spoke by Elijah."***

The story sounds a little bit like a fairy tale. I don't know if you know about fairy tales but they always end with the sentence "and they lived happily ever after." Well, the three of them; Elijah, the woman and the son seem to live happily ever after. But then one day something terrible happens, as you can read in I Kings 17:17

***Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing.***

Disaster strikes. The son of the widow gets ill and dies. And that right under the nose of the prophet. He who has been able to prevent rain from falling down for the last few years is not able to prevent this boy from getting ill, never mind from dying. It looks like the prophet Elijah has become a failure. More importantly, it looks like God has failed for, He has not prevented this son from becoming ill and dying.

The presence of the prophet is supposed to bring blessing to the home of the widow and not disaster. But that is not what has happened. What can possibly be the reason for this terrible tragedy? You can see who the woman thinks is to be blamed in I Kings 17:18 ***She said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"***

The widow believes the prophet is responsible for the death of her son. It seems she has forgotten that without the prophet's intervention in her life she and the boy would have

both died some time ago already. But we cannot blame her for her emotional outburst because God promised they would live through this drought and it seems He has not kept His promise so who better to blame than the one who represents him; the prophet?

How does Elijah respond to the woman's words? Does he get upset with her and walks out of the house telling her that he will have nothing to do with her anymore for she is an ungrateful woman who has completely forgotten what he has done for her?

Thankfully that is not what happens, as you can see from I Kings 17:19

***"Give me you son," Elijah replied. He took him from her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him out on his bed.***

The prophet takes the boy from the widow's arms and takes his body to his room. It is time for an encounter with his God for Elijah knows that he can do nothing without his God, as you can read in John 15:5b where Jesus says

***".....Apart from Me you can do nothing."***

To the widow Elijah is responsible for the death of her son but Elijah knows he cannot be blamed for it for he is not God. You can see what Elijah thinks of this tragic situation in I Kings 17:20

***Then he cried out to the Lord, "O Lord, my God, have You brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, causing her son to die?"***

Elijah knows he has not caused the death of this young boy so it must be God who is to be blamed for who else can be blamed for this tragedy? This whole situation does not make sense to him even as the prophet of God. After all, he knows that God has sent him to this widow and her son for the sole purpose of keeping them alive throughout the famine. How can God then take the life of this boy? How can God be so cruel to this widow? Having poured out his heart to God he decides that he needs to do more than just blame God for the tragedy, as you can read in I Kings 17:21

***Then he stretched out himself out on the boy three times and cried to the Lord, "O Lord, my God, let this boy's life return to him!"***

Elijah, having worked through his emotional outburst, once again relies on the intimate knowledge he has of his God. For he knows that his God desires to give life rather than death. So he cries out for the boy's life to be returned to him. And how does God respond? Please read I Kings 17:22 to find out.

***The Lord heard Elijah's cry and the boy's life returned.***

It seems the Lord waits patiently for Elijah to work through his emotions and then, in answer to his prayer, is delighted to give the boy back his life. Elijah is, of course, overjoyed. God has answered his prayer; the boy has come back to life. But what about his mother. Should she not be told? You can find out what happens next in I Kings 17:23

***Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive."***

When Elijah returns with the boy to the mother, there is no need for any word. The mother can see that death has left her child. Joy overwhelms her soul. Her son has been returned to her. And now she understands why God has allowed this ordeal in her life,

as you can read in I Kings 17:24

***Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth.”***

This tragedy has been used by God to help the widow trust the man of God as well as his God more fully. She has already experienced the truth of Elijah’s words and the trustworthiness of Elijah’s God for some time because of the daily miraculous provision of flour and oil. Yet, God knows that this widow still has some doubts about the prophet and his God. Something more needs to happen in her life for her to overcome her doubts. He, therefore, allows this tragedy in her life, knowing that it will make her fully accept Elijah as the man of God that he is and to trust his God completely

God selected this widow, who was not even a widow in Israel, to take care of His servant. This proves that He knew who she was, knew where she lived, and knew her circumstances. And yet He chose her for this special task. His prophet needed a safe place to stay where he could rest and where he would be fed. We may have expected God to choose someone who would have been better able to take care of Elijah, but God did not for He knew that He would multiply the little she had so that it would be enough for all of them to last them for the time they would need it.

You may feel you are somewhat like this widow for no one knows you, knows where you live, nor do they know your difficult circumstances. But I want you to know that just as God knew this widow, so God knows you, knows where you live and knows your circumstances. And just as God chose to use this widow so God wants to use you. And just as God used the little she had and multiplied it in her life, so He will use the little that you have as you give it to Him and He will multiply it in your life. You may say, “Well I don’t even have what she had for I do not have any flour or any oil.” But I tell you, you have something to give to God for God to multiply in your life for the benefit of others. You can show kindness to someone who may not deserve it, can’t you? You can give forgiveness to someone who has hurt you, can’t you? These are some of the things God is looking for you to give away so he can multiply them in your life for the sake of others. And as you give from your heart more shall be given to you so you have even more to give away. Jesus teaches these things in Luke 6:27-38, where He says ***But I tell you who hear me, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you. If someone strikes you one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even “sinners” love those who love them. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even “sinners” lend to “sinners”, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will***

***be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”***

The widow gave whatever she had and, because of it, she and her son lived. Likewise, God will cause you to come truly alive in Him when you are willing to give whatever you can be it in the form of kindness, love, mercy, forgiveness to those who may not deserve it. And you will experience His Joy, His Peace and His very Presence in a way you may not have known before.

## QUESTIONS

- 1: What is the name of one of the kings of Israel?
- 2: Was Ahab a very evil king?
- 3: Why was Ahab a very evil king?
- 4a: According to I Kings 16:32 what did king Ahab do?
- 4b: According to I Kings 16:32 were did king Ahab build a temple of Baal?
- 5: Who was angry with Ahab?
- 6: Who did God send to Ahab?
- 7: What message did Elijah give to Ahab?
- 8: Why was there going to be a drought in the land?
- 9a: According to I Kings 17:1 where is Elijah originally from?
- 9b: According to I Kings 17:1 Who does Elijah serve?
- 9c: According to I Kings 17:1 what does Elijah say to Ahab?
- 9d: According to I Kings 17:1 at whose words will the situation change?
- 10: Will Elijah's words have made Ahab very upset?
- 11: What does God do for Elijah?
- 12a: According to I Kings 17:2-6 where does God send Elijah?
- 12b: According to I Kings 17:2-6 how does God provide for Elijah?
- 13: What happens to the brook?
- 14: According to I Kings 17:7 why does the brook dry up?
- 15: Is it Elijah's fault that there is a drought in the land?
- 16: What has Elijah done?
- 17: Is Elijah the cause of the drought?

- 18: Should Elijah have to suffer the effects of the drought?
- 19: Has God done something miraculous to make the brook continue to provide water for Elijah?
- 20a: According to I Kings 17:8-9 what does the Lord tell Elijah to do?
- 20b: According to I Kings 17:8-9 who has God spoken to in Zarephath of Sidon?
- 21: Where is Zarephath of Sidon?
- 22: Do the nations outside Israel worship the God of Israel?
- 23: Does God tell the prophet who He has selected to take care of him?
- 24: Are there widows in Israel?
- 25: Does it make sense for God to send Elijah to a widow in Zarephath?
- 26: Does Elijah obey God and go to Zarephath?
- 27a: According to I Kings 17:10-11 who is gathering woodsticks at the town gate?
- 27b: According to I Kings 17:10-11 what does Elijah ask the widow to do for him?
- 27c: According to I Kings 17:10-11 what else does Elijah ask the widow to do for him?
- 28: Will Elijah have wondered where exactly he will meet this widow?
- 29: Does Elijah know how he is able to recognise this widow?
- 30: What does Elijah decide to do when he notices a widow?
- 31: Why does Elijah ask the widow for something to drink and to eat?
- 32: Will this help Elijah know whether or not she is the widow who has been selected by God to provide for him?
- 33a: According to I Kings 17:12 what does the widow call Elijah's God?
- 33b: According to I Kings 17:12 how does the widow respond to Elijah's request for bread?
- 33c: According to I Kings 17:12 what ingredients does the widow have?
- 33d: According to I Kings 17:12 what is the widow doing?
- 33e: According to I Kings 17:12 why is the widow gathering some sticks?
- 33f: According to I Kings 17:12 what is the widow planning to do after she and her son have eaten?
- 34: Does the widow seem to know that God has commanded her to take care of Elijah?

- 35: Is the widow planning to entertain anyone, including Elijah?
- 36: Can this widow offer Elijah anything?
- 37: Has she food for Elijah?
- 38a: According to I Kings 17:13 what does Elijah tell the widow to do?
- 38b: According to I Kings 17:13 does Elijah tell the widow to stay with him?
- 38c: According to I Kings 17:13 what does Elijah ask the widow to do first?
- 38d: According to I Kings 17:13 what else does Elijah say to the widow?
- 39: Does Elijah seem to believe he has already found the widow God has selected for him?
- 40: Does Elijah not understand that there is only food for two people and not for three people?
- 41: Is it possible that Elijah knows something that you do not know?
- 42a: According to I Kings 17:14 what does the Lord, the God of Israel say?
- 42b: According to I Kings 17:14 until what time will the jar of flour not be used up and the jug of oil not run dry?
- 43: What has the Lord shown Elijah?
- 44: What does the widow know about Elijah?
- 45: Does the widow believe Elijah's words that they will have food to eat while the drought last?
- 46: What does the widow do to show that she believes Elijah's words?
- 47a: According to I Kings 17:15-16 is there food every day for Elijah, the woman and her family?
- 47b: According to I Kings 17:15-16 what happens with the flour and oil?
- 47c: According to I Kings 17:15-16 is this in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah?
- 48: Do Elijah, the woman and the son live happily ever after?
- 49a: According to I Kings 17:17 what happens to the son of the woman who owns the house?
- 49b: According to I Kings 17:17 does the son of the woman who owns the house improve?
- 49c: According to I Kings 17:17 what does finally happen to the son of the women who

owns the house?

50: Is Elijah living in the house of the woman who owns the house when the son gets ill?

51: Is Elijah able to prevent the boy from getting ill?

52: Is Elijah able to prevent the boy from dying?

53: Does it look like Elijah is a failure?

54: Why does it look like God has failed?

55: Is the presence of Elijah supposed to be a blessing to the home of the widow and not a disaster?

56a: According to I Kings 17:18 what does the widow ask Elijah?

56b: According to I Kings 17:18 what does the widow believe Elijah has come to remind her of?

56c: According to I Kings 17:18 who does the widow believe has killed her son?

57: Has the widow forgotten that without Elijah's intervention in her life she and the son will have died some time ago already?

58: Why can you not blame the widow for her emotional outburst?

59: Does it seem God has not kept His promise that they would live through the drought?

60: Who represents God and is, therefore, the best person to be blamed for the death of the son?

61: Does Elijah get upset with the widow and walks out of the house?

62a: According to I Kings 17:19 what does Elijah say to the widow?

62b: According to I Kings 17:19 where does Elijah take the son?

62c: According to I Kings 17:19 what does Elijah do with the son?

63: What is it time for?

64: According to John 15:5b can you do anything apart from the Lord?

65: Who is responsible for the death of the son according to the widow?

66: Why does Elijah know he cannot be blamed for the death of the son?

67a: According to I Kings 17:20 what does Elijah do next?

67b: According to I Kings 17:20 what does Elijah question the Lord about?

- 68: Does Elijah know that he has not caused the death of this young boy?
- 69: Who does Elijah think must be blamed for the death of this young boy?
- 70: Why does Elijah think that God must be blamed for the death of this young boy?
- 71: Does this whole situation make sense to Elijah?
- 72: What has been God's sole purpose in sending Elijah to the widow and her son?
- 73: Does it seem to Elijah that God has been cruel to the widow?
- 74: After having poured out his heart to God does Elijah know he needs to do more than just blame God for the tragedy?
- 75a: According to I Kings 17:21 what does Elijah do after having poured out his heart to God?
- 75b: According to I Kings 17:21 what does Elijah ask the Lord to do?
- 76: What does Elijah rely on once he has worked through his emotional outburst?
- 77: What does Elijah know about his God?
- 78: Based on his knowledge of God what does Elijah ask God to do?
- 79a: According to I Kings 17:22 does the Lord hear Elijah's cry?
- 79b: According to I Kings 17:22 what happens to the boy?
- 80: Does the Lord seem to wait patiently for Elijah to work through his emotions?
- 81: How does God answer Elijah's prayer?
- 82: Should the mother be told that her son has come back to life?
- 83a: According to I Kings 17:23 what does Elijah do with the child?
- 83b: According to I Kings 17:23 where does Elijah take the child?
- 83c: According to I Kings 17:23 to whom does Elijah give the child?
- 83d: According to I Kings 17:23 what does Elijah say to the mother of the child?
- 84: Will joy have overwhelmed the mother's soul at the return of her son?
- 85: Does the widow now understand why God has allowed this ordeal in her life?
- 86a: According to I Kings 17:24 what does the woman now know about Elijah?
- 86b: According to I Kings 17:24 what else does the woman now know about Elijah?
- 87: How has this tragedy been used by God?
- 88: How has this widow already experienced the truth of Elijah's words and the

trustworthiness of his God for some time?

89: Does God know that the widow still has some doubts about Elijah and his God?

90: Why does God allow this tragedy in the widow's life?

91: Who did God select to take care of His servant Elijah?

92: What does this prove about God?

93: Why did God not choose someone who would have been better able to take care of Elijah?

94: Do you sometimes feel like this widow?

95: Does God know you?

96: Does God want to use you just as He used the widow?

97: What does God want you to do?

98: What can you give to God for Him to multiply in your life?

99: What else can you give to God for Him to multiply into your life?

100: As you give from your heart why will you be given more?

101a: According to Luke 6:27-38 what does Jesus say you are to do with regards your enemies?

101b: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do regarding those who hate you?

101c: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do with regards those who curse you?

101d: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do with regards those who ill-treat you?

101e: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do with regards the person who strikes you on one cheek?

101f: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do if someone takes your cloak?

101g: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do with regards those who ask you to give them something?

101h: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do with regards someone who has taken what belongs to you?

101i: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do to others?

101j: According to Luke 6:27-38 do "sinners" love those who love them?

101k: According to Luke 6:27-38 do "sinners" lend to "sinners"?

101l: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do with regards your enemies

101m: According to Luke 6:27-38 Whose son will you be if you do these things?

101n: According to Luke 6:27-38 why will you be a son of the Most High if you do these things?

101o: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to be?

101p: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you not to judge?

101q: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you not to condemn?

101r: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you to forgive?

101s: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you to give?

101t: According to Luke 6:27-38 what will be poured into your lap?.

102: How will you come truly alive in God

103: What are you to give to those who may not deserve it?

104: What will you experience when you give kindness, love, mercy, forgiveness to those who may not deserve it?

## Chapter 8

### THE RUNAWAY PROPHET

The prophet Elijah was a very bold person who has done some very amazing things. Yet James seems to think that your prayers can be as effective as the prayers of Elijah. You can read that in James 5:16-17

***Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain and the earth produced its crop.***

James makes here this interesting statement “***Elijah was a man just like us...***” Now, to be honest, I don’t think you really believe these words, do you now? After all, you may well have prayed at times that the rain would stop but that does not mean your prayer was answered at that time. And you certainly have never prayed for the rain to stop for three years and then to pray again for the rain to start and for the heavens to respond by pouring out rain. So, I think, that deep in your heart you think, “Excuse me, James, Elijah might be like you, but after all, you were the half-brother of Jesus and that made you a special person. But James, you do not know me. I am just an ordinary person. I try to hold on to my faith and there are many times when I doubt God and struggle with issues in my life for I know that I am not supposed to behave in the way that I do and yet I continue to do these very things I know I am not supposed to. So, how can you possibly tell me that Elijah was just like me....?” If James could know what you might be thinking he may well suggest that you study the life of Elijah to see whether or not he is right so why don’t you start by reading I Kings 17:1-6

***Now Elijah the Tishbite from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.” Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah, “Leave here, turn eastward, and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.” So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.***

We don't seem to know anything about Elijah's beginnings. All we know is that he is from a place called Tishbe. By the time we get to know him, most likely, he is already established as a prophet and is known by king Ahab. What he has to say to the king is not very encouraging but it does happen. In fact, his words to the king will have caused the king to become very angry with him so God tells him where to hide from the king. But in time even Elijah is affected by the drought he has pronounced because the brook where he stays dries up. Now, I am sure that God could have done something supernatural so that the water in the brook would have continued to flow but God does not do this for He has a better plan in mind for His prophet. So He tells Elijah to go to a widow who lives outside Israel, even though there will have been many widows in Israel. Elijah may well have questioned God's choice of this widow. Nevertheless, in obedience to God's command he goes to Zarephath and seeks out this widow whom he knows has been prepared by God to take care of him, as you can read in I Kings 17:7-13

***Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the Lord came to him, “Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food. So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?” As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.” “As surely as the Lord your God lives,” she replied, “I don't have any bread – only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat – and die.” Elijah said to her, “Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son.”***

Just imagine that you are Elijah. Would you not feel very uncomfortable after your encounter with this widow? You may well question yourself if you still have the same prophetic ability you used to have when you accurately predicted to king Ahab that there would be no rain for three years. That word has proven to be all too true. However, in the case of the widow, you may initially believe you have approached the right widow but then she tells you she plans on dying. So either you have picked the wrong widow or, dare you think it, God has not done what He has promised He would do; He has not commanded this widow to take care of you. But then you are not Elijah and it seems Elijah has no such doubts.

At the same time you might like to say to him, “Elijah how can you ask this poor widow to bake you a cake first? How can you be so selfish? You must know that she has no spare flour left for you so how can you insist that she not only make a cake for you besides making a cake for herself and her son, but you insist that she makes a cake for you before making one for her and son? You ought to realise that this poor woman may not have enough flour for three people. It will mean, therefore, that, very likely, she will end up giving her portion to you and that will surely mean death for her.” But, it seems, Elijah knows something that you may not be not aware of as, you can read in I Kings 17:14-16

***For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: “The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land.” She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah.***

It is very clear from these words that Elijah has great faith and you don't think you can match his faith so you may well want to say to James, “See James, look at the faith of this man. You know I don't have this kind of faith. And James, have you read what Elijah did do next?” This is recorded in I Kings 18:1- 1-2

***After a long time, in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah, “Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.” So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria.***

The meeting between Ahab and Elijah is arranged by a man named Obadiah. He is in charge of the palace and is a devout man who has been able to protect one hundred of God's prophets from Ahab's wife, queen Jezebel. Apparently, she does not like God's prophets very much and has shown that by having them killed off, as you can read in I Kings 18:3-16

***And Ahab had summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of his palace (Obadiah was a devout believer in the Lord. While Jezebel was killing off the Lord's prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water). Ahab had said to Obadiah, “Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. Maybe we can find some grass to keep the horses and mules alive so we will not have to kill any of our animals. So they divided the land they were to cover, Ahab going in one direction and Obadiah in another. As Obadiah was walking along, Elijah met him. Obadiah recognised him, bowed down to the ground, and said, “Is it really you, my lord Elijah?” “Yes,” he replied, “Go, tell your master, “Elijah is here.” “What have I done wrong,” asked Obadiah, “that you are handing your servant over to Ahab to be put to death? As surely as the Lord your God lives, there is not a nation or kingdom that my master has not sent someone to look for you. And whenever a nation or a kingdom claimed you were not there, he made them swear they could not find you. But now, you tell me to go to my master and say, “Elijah is here.” I don't know where the spirit of the Lord may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn't find you, he will kill me. Yet I your servant have worshipped the Lord since my youth. Haven't you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the Lord? I hid a hundred of the Lord's prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water. And now you tell me to go to my master and say, “Elijah is here.” He will kill me!” Elijah said, “As the Lord Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today.” So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah.***

Obadiah is very reluctant to do what Elijah asks of him and that is not surprising. After all, Ahab is very angry with Elijah, blaming him for the famine. Nevertheless, Obadiah does go and tell the king that Elijah is back in the land and wants to meet with him. You can read of the encounter between king Ahab and the prophet in I Kings 18:17-19

***When he (king Ahab) saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?” “I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father's family have. You abandoned the Lord's command and have followed the Baals. Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah***

***who eat at Jezebel's table."***

After three long years of drought the king and the prophet finally meet up again. God is going to send rain once again. It is clear from Ahab's words that he has no idea as to why there has been no rain for three years. According to him, this dreadful situation the nation finds herself in is entirely the fault of the prophet. It has nothing whatsoever to do with him. But Elijah sets the record straight by telling the king that he and his fathers are to be blamed for the misery the whole nation finds herself in: they have forgotten the God of Israel and have followed other gods. And it is time for an encounter between the God of Elijah and Ahab's god, Baal, as you can read in I Kings 18:20-22

***So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing. Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets."***

The king has all the people assembled together and Elijah shows them that they are compromised in their faith. His words are very powerful. Yet, in this section you can see a glimpse of Elijah's humanity, which you might easily miss and you can see it in his words "***I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left....***" It looks like Elijah is throwing a kind of a pity-party, as all human beings can do at times, because he really wants to say, "***People, look at me. I am the only one who still loves God. There is no one else who cares about Him.***" But what about all the prophets Obadiah has been taken care of? Elijah seems to have forgotten that fact and this continues to play a role in his view of things, as you will find out a little later on.

He then tells the people to get two bulls ready to be sacrificed. One bull is to be sacrificed by the prophets of Baal and the other is to be sacrificed by him, as you can read in I Kings 18:23-24

***"Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire –He is God." Then all the people said, "What you say is good."***

Elijah then gives specific instructions to the prophets of Baal in preparation for their sacrifice to their god, as you can read in I Kings 18:25-26

***Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire." So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "O Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response; no-one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.***

The prophets of Baal are giving a big display of their loyalty to Baal. But there is no response from their god. At noon-time Elijah begins to urge them on to greater action for it may be that their god is too busy, as you can read in I Kings 18:27-29

***At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said, "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. May be he is sleeping and must be awakened." So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no-one answered, no-one paid attention.***

No matter what the prophets of Baal try, their god does not respond. He does not even respond when they slash themselves with swords and spears! These prophets must have felt very despondent for their god does not seem to care about them, no matter what they do to try and appease him.

By the evening, Elijah takes over and begins to prepare the altar for his sacrifice, as you can read in I Kings 18:30-35

***Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here to me." They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord, which was in ruins. Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Your name shall be Israel." With the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he dug a trench round it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and the wood. Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.***

The altar is in ruins. This means it has not been used for a very long time because the people of Israel have been worshipping Baal instead of worshipping the God of Israel. So Elijah re-builds the altar using twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel. He has the wood placed on it and the bull that has been cut in pieces. What he does next is very unusual; he orders for water to be poured over the wood and the sacrifice and he has it done not just once but three times. You may well think, "Why do you do that, Elijah? Don't you know that it is now impossible for your sacrifice to be burned? Do you want to be the laughed at by the Baal prophets? Don't you realise that they are waiting their turn to humiliate you as you have humiliated them?" If that is what you are thinking, then Elijah would like to say to you, "It is true that, naturally speaking, it is impossible for this sacrifice to be burned. But just wait and see what God will do in this impossible situation." After all, Luke writes in Luke 1:37

***For nothing is impossible with God.***

Having prepared the sacrifice, Elijah next turns to prayer knowing that it is only God who can do what no man or false god can do, as you can read in I Kings 18:36-38

***At the time of the sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at Your command. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You are turning their hearts back again." Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up he sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.***

Elijah does not need to follow the example of the prophets of Baal to try and attract the attention of his God by shouting, dancing around the altar or even slashing himself with a sword or a spear. No, he just prays a simple but powerful prayer and God hears his prayer and answers by sending fire on the altar. And the people, seeing this, know who is the true God, as you can read in I Kings 18:39

***When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord – He is God! The Lord – He is God!"***

It is a good day for Elijah and the people, but it is not a good day for the prophets of Baal. They are shown to be false prophets and God's judgement falls on them that day; they are killed off, as you can read in I Kings 18:40

***Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley***

***and slaughtered there.***

It is only then that Elijah begins to intercede for the rain to come. Meanwhile the king returns to his palace, as you can read in I Kings 18:41-46

***And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of heavy rain." So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees. "Go and look towards the sea," he told his servant. And he went up and looked. "There is nothing there," he said. Seven times Elijah said, "Go back." The seventh time, the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea." So Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, "Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you." Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. The power of the Lord came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.***

God has told Elijah He is going to send rain today but it does not happen right away. In fact, Elijah has to pray seven times before a little cloud appears in the sky. The prophet could have said after praying one time, "God, I don't understand. You have told me that today You are going to send rain so why is it not coming? But he does not say that. Instead, he continues to pray for he knows that God will be true to His word and send the rain as promised. And He does. Once it arrives, Elijah makes a run for it, enabled by the power of the Lord, for he knows that it is not just going to rain, it is going to pour.

It has been quite a day for Elijah. He has shown himself to be a true prophet of God, full of faith and power. Nothing and no-one has been able to stand in his way. It has been a very good day for him. He plans to have a good dinner followed by a good night's sleep.

Ahab, at his return to the palace, tells his wife Jezebel everything that has happened. No doubt, she will have flown into a rage after she has heard that all the prophets of Baal have been killed off for she is a worshipper of Baal and it is through her that Ahab and the people have begun to worship Baal. And now her prophets have been slaughtered by Elijah! It is time for revenge and she knows exactly how she is going to do it; she is going to send a threatening message to this prophet who dared to do what no man in this nation, including her own husband, had dared to do; kill off the prophets of Baal. After having sent her message to the prophet Elijah, she feels much better and can settle down for a good night's sleep for tomorrow promises to be a much better day for her with the removal of this prophet.

Elijah is, no doubt, quite surprised to receive a note from the palace at this late hour of the day when he is about to go to bed. His initial thought may well have been that it is a thank you note from the king, inviting him for breakfast at the palace to show him his appreciation. However, once he has a good look at the addressee, he realises the note has come from the queen, as you can read in I Kings 19:1-2

***Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a message to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow, I do not make your life like that of one of them."***

We could say this is a somewhat frightening message. But surely the prophet will have dismissed it, as nonsense. Or has he....? You can read Elijah's response to queen Jezebel's message in I Kings 19:3-4

***Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to***

***a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."***

The note so upsets him that sleep evades him. What is he to do? He does not see a way out of his predicament, apart from running away. So, after a restless night, he gets up very early in the morning and hastily makes his departure. It does not matter where he is going. All he knows is that he wants to be as far as away as possible from queen Jezebel. What has happened to this mighty prophet of God? Is this the same Elijah, the one who the day before told Ahab to his face that he was the source of Israel's problems?

Is this the Elijah who only yesterday mocked the Baal prophets and later that day had all 450 of them killed? What has happened to him that this one woman causes him to become so afraid that he has begun to run for his life? In fact has become suicidal?

Whatever it may have been, God is aware of the goings on in His prophet's life and knows that His servant needs some rest and some food so He sends an angel to bake a special angel cake for him, as you can read in I Kings 19:5- 9a

***Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat for the journey is too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled for forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.***

Having been fed by the angel twice Elijah is sufficiently strengthened to travel a long distance. It is only then that God speaks to him, as you can read in I Kings 19:9b-10

***And the word of the Lord came to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected Your covenant, have broken down Your altars, and put Your prophets to death with the sword, I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."***

God asks the prophet an interesting question. ***"What are you doing here, Elijah?"*** No doubt, God knows why he is there, but Elijah needs to know why he is there. Elijah answers him in quite a melodramatic fashion. ***"God, You may not realise this so I better tell You that Your people are not good, except me, and I am the only one left and now they are trying to kill me too."*** Elijah's answer sounds very dramatic, is it not? After all, it is only one woman who is trying to kill him. But God is very patient with His prophet, as you can see from I Kings 19:11-13a

***The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.***

The Lord tells His prophet to wait for Him to pass by and then He speaks to Elijah again, as you can read in I Kings 19:13b

***Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"***

The Lord repeats His question, ***"What are you doing here, Elijah?"*** because He wants to confront Elijah that he is not in the place where God wants him to be. But Elijah once

again ignores the question and gives God the same reply he has given Him earlier on, as you can read in I Kings 19:14

***He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down Your altars, and put Your prophets to death with the sword. I am on the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."***

It seems Elijah thinks God is not aware of the situation in Israel as it really is and the danger he, Elijah, is facing, so he better inform God. However, God, does not take any notice of Elijah's complaints, nor does He take any notice of his earlier death wish. Instead he tells him what his next assignment is, but he has to go back first, as you can read in I Kings 19:15-18

***The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserved seven thousand in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him."***

The journey Elijah has been on has been by his own choice and is not part of God's plan for him. Therefore, he needs to go back to where he came from and he can then fulfill the assignments God has for him. God has not yet finished with him. There is still work for him to do regardless what the prophet may think or want. Moreover, God corrects Elijah by telling him that there are still seven thousand people left in Israel who worship Him, which are six thousand and nine hundred more than even Obediah may have known about.

So what do these chapters tell you about Elijah? It tells you that at times Elijah had great faith and at such times displayed great boldness. Yet, at other times he displayed great fear, suffered from depression and became even suicidal.

What may have been the reasons for his sudden fear, his sudden depression? I can think of a few reasons:

1. One thing could be that as part of his personality, he was inclined to perhaps overreact at times to situations as we have seen him do a few times.
2. Secondly, he may still have been very tired the day after his victories. His tiredness would not just have been a physical tiredness but an emotional and a mental tiredness. He may well have needed to take some time off. Even prophets of God are still human beings who are in need of sufficient food and rest, like the rest of us and Elijah may not have realised these things sufficiently.
3. Thirdly, the enemy would have been very angry and would have prepared a counter attack. It seems Elijah was not prepared for that to happen. Therefore, he was very vulnerable and completely broke down when the counter attack came.

Looking at these things perhaps you can now begin to agree with the words of James that "***Elijah was a man just like us***" for you too at times may display great faith and great boldness, while at other times you may be afraid, feel depressed and perhaps even get so depressed about life and its challenges that you would rather be in heaven with Jesus than continue on in this life.

Like Elijah, you too may need to consider that the reasons for your depression, your

bouts of fear may be because:

1. You have a certain personality which might make you inclined to overreact at times. If that is the case then you need to ask God to help you change in these areas.
2. Secondly, you must make sure you take sufficient rest and eat properly.
3. Thirdly, you must be aware that you too have an enemy who will want to launch a counter attack any time you have been victorious in your walk with God.

Peter says that so clearly in I Peter 5:8-9

***Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith...***

As for the assignments God had for Elijah, you most probably will never be called to stop the rain for three years. But you are called to be as obedient as Elijah was to fulfill the assignments God has for you, whatever they may be. And you can trust God to answer your prayers for you too are righteous in God's eyes because you are clothed with the righteousness of God in Christ, as Paul writes in II Corinthians 5:21

***"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."***

So having had a closer look at Elijah's life, I believe, you can now at least begin to agree with James that, yes, *Elijah was a man just like us...*

## QUESTIONS

- 1: Does James seem to think that your prayers can be as effective as the prayers of Elijah?
- 2a: According to James 5:16-17 what does James tell you to do?
- 2b: According to James 5:16-17 why does James want you to confess your sins to each other and to pray for each other?
- 2c: According to James 5:16-17 what does James say about the prayer of a righteous man?
- 2d: According to James 5:16-17 who does James say was a man like you?
- 2e: According to James 5:16-17 what did Elijah earnestly pray for?
- 2f: According to James 5:16-17 was Elijah's prayer answered?
- 2g: According to James 5:16-17 what else did Elijah pray for?
- 3: Do you really believe James's statement that Elijah was a man like you?
- 4: Have you sometimes thought that James might be like Elijah because he was the half-brother of Jesus?
- 5: Have you sometimes thought that you are just an ordinary person who tries to hold

on to your faith?

6: As an ordinary person who tries to hold on to your faith, are there times when you doubt God and struggle with issues in your life?

7: As an ordinary person who tries to hold on to your faith, do you at times continue to do the very things you know you are not supposed to do?

8: Have you sometimes thought that James cannot possibly tell you that Elijah was just like you?

9: If James knew what you might be thinking, what would he possibly suggest you do?

10a: According to I Kings 17:1-6 who is Elijah?

10b: According to I Kings 17:1-6 who does Elijah go to see?

10c: According to I Kings 17:1-6 Who does Elijah serve?

10d: According to I Kings 17:1-6 what does Elijah say to Ahab?

10e: According to I Kings 17:1-6 where does the Lord tell Elijah to hide?

10f: According to I Kings 17:1-6 where does the Lord say Elijah will drink from?

10g: According to I Kings 17:1-6 who does the Lord say will feed Elijah?

10h: According to I Kings 17:1-6 do the ravens feed Elijah?

11: Do you know anything about Elijah's beginnings?

12: By the time you get to know Elijah is he already established as a prophet?

13: Is Elijah already known by king Ahab?

14: Is what Elijah says to king Ahab very encouraging?

15: Will Elijah's words to king Ahab have made the king angry?

16: How does God protect Elijah from king Ahab's anger?

17: How is Elijah affected by the drought?

18: Why does God not do anything supernatural?

19: Who does God send Elijah to?

20: Why does Elijah obey God?

21a: According to I Kings 17:7-13 where does the Lord tell Elijah to go?

21b: According to I Kings 17:7-13 what has God commanded a widow in Zarephath of Sidon to do?

- 21c: According to I Kings 17:7-13 when Elijah arrives at the town gate who is there?
- 21d: According to I Kings 17:7-13 what is the widow doing?
- 21e: According to I Kings 17:7-13 what does Elijah ask the widow to do for him?
- 21f: According to I Kings 17:7-13 what else does Elijah ask the widow to do for him?
- 21g: According to I Kings 17:7-13 how does the widow address the God of Elijah?
- 21h: According to I Kings 17:7-13 is the widow able to give Elijah a piece of bread?
- 21i: According to I Kings 17:7-13 what does the widow have?
- 21j: According to I Kings 17:7-13 why is the widow gathering some sticks?
- 21k: According to I Kings 17:7-13 what does the widow plan to do after she and her son have eaten?
- 21l: According to I Kings 17:7-13 what does Elijah suggest the widow do first?
- 21m: According to I Kings 17:7-13 what does Elijah suggest the widow do next?
- 22: Suppose you were Elijah would you question your prophetic ability after meeting the widow?
- 23: Does Elijah seem to have such doubts?
- 24: Why would you want to ask Elijah how he can be so selfish in asking the widow to make a cake for him first?
- 25: Does Elijah seem to know something that you may not be aware of?
- 26a: According to I Kings 17:14-16 what does the Lord, the God of Israel say?
- 26b: According to I Kings 17:14-16 what does the widow do?
- 26c: According to I Kings 17:14-16 what happens to the food supply of the widow?
- 26d: According to I Kings 17:14-16 why is there food every day for Elijah, the widow and her son?
- 27: Is it very clear from these words that Elijah has great faith?
- 28: Do you perhaps want to say to James that you do not have the kind of faith that Elijah had?
- 29a: According to I Kings 18:1-2 when does the word of the Lord come to Elijah?
- 29b: According to I Kings 18:1-2 what does the Lord tell Elijah to do?
- 29c: According to I Kings 18:1-2 what does the Lord promise He will do?

- 29d: According to I Kings 18:1-2 what does Elijah do?
- 29e: According to I Kings 18:1-2 is the famine severe in Samaria?
- 30: Who arranges the meeting between king Ahab and Elijah?
- 31: How many of God's prophets has Obadiah been able to protect?
- 32: From whom has Obadiah been able to protect God's prophets?
- 33: What has queen Jezebel done to God's prophets?
- 34a: According to I Kings 18:3-16 how has Obadiah protected God's prophets?
- 34b: According to I Kings 18:3-16 who does Obadiah meet?
- 34c: According to I King 18:3-16 what does Elijah tell Obadiah to do?
- 34d: According to I Kings 18:3-16 what is Obadiah's response to Elijah's request?
- 34e: According to I Kings 18:3-16 how does Elijah reply?
- 34f: According to I Kings 18:3-16 does Obadiah arrange a meeting between king Ahab and Elijah?
- 35: Why is Obadiah very reluctant to do what Elijah asks of him?
- 36: Does Obadiah go and tell king Ahab that Elijah is back in the land?
- 37a: According to I Kings 18:17-19 what does king Ahab call Elijah when he sees him?
- 37b: According to I Kings 18:17-19 who does Elijah tell king Ahab are responsible for Israel's trouble?
- 37c: According to I Kings 18:17-19 why are king Ahab and his family responsible for Israel's trouble?
- 37d: According to I Kings 18:17-19 who does Elijah want king Ahab to summon?.
- 37e: According to I Kings 18:17-19 where are the people from all over Israel to meet Elijah?
- 37f: According to I Kings 18:17-19 who is king Ahab to bring to Mount Carmel?
- 38: Does king Ahab have any idea as to why there has been no rain for three years?
- 39: Does Elijah set the record straight?
- 40: What is the reason for the misery the nation finds herself in?
- 41a; According to I Kings 18:20-22 what does Elijah ask the people?
- 41b: According to I Kings 18:20-22 what does Elijah tell the people to do?
- 41c: According to I Kings 18:2-22 how do the people respond?

41d: According to I Kings 18:20-22 what does Elijah say to the people about himself?

41e: According to I Kings 18:20-22 how many prophets does Baal have?

42: What does Elijah do when the people are assembled together?

43: How can you see a glimpse of Elijah's humanity?

44: What does Elijah want to say?

45: What fact has Elijah forgotten?

46: What does Elijah tell the people to get ready?

47: What are the two bulls to be used for?

48: Who are to sacrifice the two bulls?

49a: According to I Kings 18:23-24 what are the prophets of Baal to do with the bull?

49b: According to I Kings 18:23-24 are the prophets of Baal to set fire to the wood?

49c: According to I Kings 18:23-24 what will Elijah do with the other bull?

49d: According to I Kings 18:23-24 is Elijah to set fire to the wood?

49e: According to I Kings 18:23-24 who are the prophets of Baal to call on?

49f: According to I Kings 18:23-24 Who is Elijah to call on?

49g: According to I Kings 18:23-24 who is God?

50: What does Elijah say to the prophets of Baal?

51a: According to I Kings 18:25-26 who is to prepare a bull first?

51b: According to I Kings 18:25-26 why are the prophets of Baal to prepare a bull first?

51c: According to I Kings 18:25-26 what do the prophets of Baal do next?

51d: According to I Kings 18:25-26 for how long do the prophets of Baal call on the name of Baal?

51e: According to I Kings 18:25-26 is there a response from Baal?

51f: According to I Kings 18:25-26 what else do the prophets of Baal do?

52: Are the prophets of Baal loyal to Baal?

53: What does Elijah urge them to do at noon-time?

54a: According to I Kings 18: 27-29 when it is noon what does Elijah tell the prophets of Baal to do?

54b: According to I Kings 18:27-29 why does Elijah tell the prophets of Baal to shout

louder?

54c: According to I Kings 18:27-29 what do the prophets of Baal do?

54d: According to I Kings 18:27-29 until what time do the prophets of Baal continue their prophesying?

54e: According to I Kings 18:27-29 is there any response from Baal?

55: Why will the prophets of Baal feel despondent?

56: What does Elijah begin to do by the evening?

57a: According to I Kings 18:30-35 what does Elijah say to all the people?

57b: According to I Kings 18:30-35 what does Elijah do next?

57c: According to I Kings 18:30-35 why does Elijah repair the altar?

57d: According to I Kings 18:30-35 what does Elijah use to build an altar?

57e: According to I Kings 18:30-35 what do the twelve stones represent?

57f: According to I Kings 18:30-35 what does Elijah dig around the altar?

57g: According to I Kings 18:30-35 how much seed can the trench hold?

57h: According to I Kings 18:30-35 what does Elijah do next?

57i: According to I Kings 18:30-35 what does Elijah tell the people to do?

57j: According to I Kings 18:30-35 how many times does Elijah tell the people to pour water on the offering and the wood?

58: Why is the altar in ruins?

59: Why has the altar not been used for a very long time?

60: It is usual for water to be poured over the wood and the sacrifice?

61: Is it now possible for the sacrifice to be burned?

62: Do you think the Baal prophets are waiting their turn to humiliate Elijah?

63: What might Elijah say to you in response?

64: According to Luke 1:37 with whom is nothing impossible?

65: After having prepared the sacrifice what does Elijah do next?

66: Why does Elijah turn to prayer?

67a: According to I Kings 18:36-38 Who does Elijah pray to?

67b: According to I Kings 18:36-38 what does Elijah want the people to know about the

Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel?

67c: According to I Kings 18:36-38 what does Elijah want the people to know about him?

67d: According to I Kings 18:36-38 why does Elijah want God to answer his prayer?

67e: According to I Kings 18:36-38 what does Elijah expect God to do?

67f: According to I Kings 18:36-38 what happens in response to Elijah's prayer?

67g: According to I Kings 18:36-38 what does the fire of the Lord burn up?

67h: According to I Kings 18:36-38 what happens to the water in the trench?.

68: Does Elijah need to follow the example of the prophets of Baal to try and attract the attention of his God?

69: What does Elijah do?

70: Does God hear Elijah's prayer?

71: Do the people know who is the true God?

72a: According to I Kings 18:39 what do the people do when they see the fire of the Lord fall on the altar?

72b: According to I Kings 18:39 what do the people say at that time?

73: For whom is it a good day?

74: For whom it is not a good day?

75: Why is it not a good day for the prophets of Baal?

76: Whose judgement falls on the prophets of Baal that day?

77a: According to I Kings 18:40 what does Elijah tell the people to do?

77b: According to I Kings 18:40 where has Elijah brought the prophets of Baal?

77c: According to I Kings 18:40 what happens to the prophets of Baal?

78: What does Elijah begin to do then?

79a: According to I Kings 18:41-46 what does Elijah say to king Ahab?

79b: According to I Kings 18:41-46 why does Elijah say to king Ahab to go, eat and drink?

79c: According to I Kings 18:41-46 does king Ahab go to eat and drink?

79d: According to I Kings 18:41-46 where does Elijah go?

79e: According to I Kings 18:41-46 what does Elijah do after he has climbed to the top of Mount Carmel?

79f: According to I Kings 18:41-46 what does Elijah tell his servant to do?

79g: According to I Kings 18:41-46 what does the servant say to Elijah?

79h: According to I Kings 18:41-46 how many times does Elijah say to the servant to go back?

79i: According to I Kings 18:41-46 what does the servant tell Elijah the seventh time?

79j: According to I Kings 18:41-46 what does Elijah say to the servant to tell king Ahab?

79k: According to I Kings 18:41-46 why does king Ahab have to hitch up his chariot and go down?

79l: According to I Kings 18:41-46 where does king Ahab ride off to?

79m: According to I Kings 18:41-46 what comes upon Elijah?

79n: According to I Kings 18:41-46 what does Elijah do?

80: Has God told Elijah He is going to send rain that day?

81: Does the rain come right away?

82: How many times does Elijah have to pray before a little cloud appears in the sky?

83: What could Elijah have said after praying one time?

84: Why does Elijah continue praying?

85: What does Elijah do, once the rain arrives?

86: Has Elijah shown himself to be a true prophet of God?

87: What does king Ahab do when he returns to the palace?

88: Why will queen Jezebel have flown into a rage after she has heard that all the prophets of Baal have been killed off?

89: Through whom have king Ahab and the people begun to worship Baal?

90: Who have queen Jezebel's prophets been slaughtered by?

91: How is queen Jezebel going to take revenge?

92: Why can queen Jezebel settle down for a good night's sleep?

93: Why will tomorrow be a much better day for Queen Jezebel?

94: Is Elijah surprised to receive a note from the palace at this late hour of the day?

95: Will Elijah have initially thought that the note is a thank you note from king Ahab?

96a: According to I Kings 19:1-2 does king Ahab tell queen Jezebel how the prophets of

Baal have been killed?

96b: According to I Kings 19:1-2 how does queen Jezebel respond to king Ahab's words?

96c: According to I Kings 19:1-2 what does queen Jezebel say to Elijah in her message?

97: What could you say about this message?

98: Can you expect Elijah to dismiss this message?

99a: According to I Kings 19:3-4 how does Elijah feel?

99b: According to I Kings 19:3-4 what does Elijah do since he is afraid?

99c: According to I Kings 19:3-4 where does Elijah go to?

99d: According to I Kings 19:3-4 who does Elijah leave behind in Beersheba?

99e: According to I Kings 19:3-4 where does Elijah travel to next?

99f: According to I Kings 19:3-4 under what tree does Elijah sit down?

99g: According to I Kings 19:3-4 what does Elijah pray?

99h: According to I Kings 19:3-4 why does Elijah pray that God will take his life?

100: Does queen Jezebel's note upset Elijah?

101: Do you know what has happened to Elijah to cause him to become so afraid of this one woman?

102: Who is aware of the goings on in Elijah's life?

103: What does Elijah need?

104: Who does God send to Elijah?

105a: According to I Kings 19:5-9a what does Elijah do when he is under the broom tree?

105b: According to I Kings 19:5-9a who comes to him and touches him?

105c: According to I Kings 19:5-9a what does the angel say to Elijah?

105d: According to I Kings 19:5-9a what does Elijah see?

105e: According to I Kings 19:5-9a what does Elijah do after he has eaten the cake of bread and drunk the water?

105f: According to I Kings 19:5-9a who comes to Elijah a second time?

105g: According to I Kings 19:5-9a what does the angel of the Lord say to Elijah this time?

105h: According to I Kings 19:5-9a what does Elijah do in response to the words of the

angel?

105i: According to I Kings 19:5-9a How many days does Elijah travel?

105j: According to I Kings 19:5-9a to which mountain does Elijah travel?

105k: According to I Kings 19:5-9a where does Elijah spend the night?

106: How many times has Elijah been fed by the angel?

Answer: Elijah has been fed twice by the angel.

107: What is Elijah able to do after having been fed twice?

108: After Elijah has traveled a long distance who speaks to him?

109a: According to I Kings 19:9b-10 what does the Lord ask Elijah?

109b: According to I Kings 19:9b-10 what does Elijah say to the Lord?

109c: According to I Kings 19:9b-10 what does Elijah accuse the Israelites of having done?

109d: According to I Kings 19:9b-10 what does Elijah claim about himself?

109e: According to I Kings 19:9b-10 what does Elijah complain to God the people are trying to do to him?

110: Why does God ask Elijah what he is doing there?

111: Does Elijah sound very dramatic when he answers God?

112: Does Elijah remember there are still many prophets in Israel?

113: Are many people trying to kill Elijah?

114a: According to I Kings 19:11-13a what does the Lord say to Elijah?.

114b: According to I Kings 19:11-13a why does God want Elijah to go out and stand on the mountain, in the presence of the Lord?

114c: According to I Kings 19:11-13a what tears the mountains apart?

114d: According to I Kings 19:11-13a is God in the wind?

114e: According to I Kings 19:11-13a what happens next?

114f: According to I Kings 19:11-13a is God in the earthquake?

114g: According to I Kings 19:11-13a what comes then?

114h: According to I Kings 19:11-13a is God in the fire?

114i: According to I Kings 19:11-13a what comes after the fire?

114j: According to I Kings 19:11-13a what does Elijah do when he hears the gentle whisper?

115: What does God tell Elijah to do?

116: What does God do when He passes by?

117: According to I Kings 19:13b what does God ask Elijah again?

118: Why does God repeat His question as to what Elijah is doing there?

119: Does Elijah answer God's question?

120a: According to I Kings 19:14 what does Elijah say to God?

120b: According to I Kings 19:14 does Elijah remember by now that there are still prophets left?

120c: According to I Kings 19:14 does Elijah now realise there is only one person who wants to kill him?

121: Does God take any notice of Elijah's complaints?

122: What does God speak to Elijah about?

123a: According to I Kings 19:15-18 where does the Lord tells Elijah to go?

123b: According to I Kings 19:15-18 what is Elijah to do once he gets to the desert of Damascus?

123c: According to I Kings 19:15-18 who is Elijah to anoint king over Israel?

123d: According to I Kings 19:15-18 who is Elijah to anoint as prophet to succeed him?

123e: According to I Kings 19:15-18 what does Jehu have to do?

123f: According to I Kings 19:15-18 what will Elisha have to do?

123g: According to I Kings 19:15-18 how many prophets has God reserved?

124: Why does Elijah have to go back to where he came from?

125: Has God finished with the prophet Elijah?

126: How does God correct Elijah's thinking?

127: How many prophets has Obadiah been taken care of?

128: what do I Kings 17, I Kings 18 and I Kings 19 tell you about Elijah?

129: What else do I Kings 17, I Kings 18 and I Kings 19 tell you about Elijah?

130: What may have been one of the reasons for Elijah's sudden fear, sudden

depression?

131: What may have been another reason for Elijah's sudden fear, sudden depression?

132: What may have been a third reason for Elijah's sudden fear, sudden depression?

133: Looking at these things can you now begin to agree with the words of James, that Elijah was a man like us?

134: Do you at times display great faith and boldness?

135: Do you at other times feel afraid, feel depressed and perhaps get so depressed about life and its challenges that you would rather be in heaven with Jesus than continue on in this life?

136: What could one of the reasons for your depression, your bouts of fear be?

137: What are you to do if you have a personality which might make you inclined to overreact at times?

138: What must you do as well?

139: What else must you be aware of?

140a: According to I Peter 5:8-9 what are you to do?

140b: According to I Peter 5:8-8 why are you to be self-controlled and alert?

140c: According to I Peter 5:8-9 how are you to deal with your enemy, the devil?

141: Will you be called to stop the rain for three years?

142: Why are you called to be as obedient as Elijah was?

143: Why can you trust God to answer your prayers?

144: Why are you righteous in God's eyes?

145a: According to II Corinthians 5:21 what does Paul write about Christ?

145b: According to II Corinthians 5:21 what does Christ becoming sin for you mean for you?

146: Having had a closer look at Elijah's life can you now at least begin to agree with James that Elijah was a man just like you?

## Chapter 9

### AN INSTRUMENT FOR HEALING

Sickness can come to all people, including important people, as you can read in II Kings 5:1

*Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man*

***in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the Lord had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy.***

However, a young girl in his household has the answer to his problem: Naaman should visit the prophet in Samaria, as you can read in II Kings 5:2-3

***Now bands of Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."***

No doubt, Naaman will already have been to every doctor in the land but to no avail. All the medicine he has received up till this moment will only have made him worse rather than better. Very likely, that is why he decides to listen to this young girl's advice. I doubt that he would have listened to her at any other time. In fact, he may not even have known of her existence in his household. But times are not normal for he is a very sick man and he knows it. Now Naaman has a very close relationship with his king so he goes to him and explains to him what the young girl in his household has suggested he should do. The king is only too pleased to do whatever he can to prepare the way for Naaman to be received with favour in Israel but he goes about it in the way that kings do by writing a letter to the king of Israel. After all, kings communicate with kings and not with ordinary people such as prophets, as you can read in II Kings 5:4-5

***Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, ten thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing.***

And so Naaman sets off on his journey to meet with the king of Israel. However, God has not prepared the king of Israel to be His instrument of healing for Naaman. He has chosen the prophet to be that instrument, just as the young girl has said. Consequently, the king becomes very confused when he reads the letter of the king of Aram for God has not told him about his plans for Naaman, as you can read in II Kings 5:6-7

***The letter that he took to the king of Israel read, "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you that you may cure him of his leprosy." As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!"***

Thankfully, someone does know what God intends to do for this important soldier of Aram and his name is Elisha, the prophet. As soon as he hears about the distress of the king, he sends a message to him telling the king to have Naaman come to him instead. Very relieved, the king sends Naaman on his way to the true man of God, Elisha. Let him deal with this very sick person. Perhaps he can do something for him, as you can read in II Kings 5:8

***When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message, "Why have you torn your robes? Make the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel."***

As instructed by the king, Naaman travels down to Elisha's home expecting a special welcome from the prophet. No doubt, the prophet will meet him the moment he arrives and will perform his special brand of magic to bring about his healing. However, that does not happen. In fact, when Naaman arrives at the door of Elisha's home. Elisha does not even come out but sends his servant with a message, as you can read in II Kings 5:9

***So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go wash yourself seven times in the***

***Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.”***

The message states that Naaman is to wash himself in the river Jordan and to do it not just once or twice but to do it seven times! These words hurt the pride of Naaman so much that he flies into a rage and declares that he may as well go home and wash in one of the rivers in his own country for they are so much better than the river Jordan, as you can read in II Kings 5:11-12

***But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord His God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters in Israel? Couldn’t I wash in them and be cleansed?” So he turned and went off in a rage.***

He is about to leave when his servants begin to speak to him. Their care for him is very obvious from the way they address him as “my father.” They are able to calm him down and go to the river Jordan after all, as you can read in II Kings 5:13

***Naaman’s servants went to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, “Wash and be cleansed?”***

When he gets to the river he begins to dip himself into the water. It is true, he has been told he has to do it seven times. However, he hopes that he will be healed after the first dip already. But that does not happen for, when he comes up out of the water after the first time, he is still as leprous as ever. So he dips into the water for the second time. But still there is no change. He dips into the water for the third time. Still nothing has happened to his skin condition. He is about to give up but his servants encourage him to go on for, after all, he is supposed to dip into the water seven times. For their sake, he dips into the water for the fourth time. Again, no change. The fifth time, still no change. Even the sixth time, as expected, there is no change to his skin condition. He really would like to give up but, it is true, he only needs to take one more dip and so he goes under the water one more time. And when he comes up out of the water this time, everything is different, for this time his skin is as smooth and beautiful as that of a young boy, as you can read in II Kings 5:14

***So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.***

The miracle has happened. He has been healed just as the man of God told him would happen. Naaman rides back to Elisha’s home. This time his heart is no longer full of pride but full of gratitude to the prophet and to the God of Israel who has healed him. And he determines that from now on he will serve the God of Israel, as you can read in II Kings 5:15-19a

***Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant.” The prophet answered, “As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.” And even though Naaman urged him, he refused. “If you will not,” said Naaman, “please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord. But may the Lord forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the Temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I bow there also – when I bow down in the Temple of Rimmon, may the Lord forgive your servant for this.” “Go in peace,” Elisha said.***

It seems this story is primarily about two people: Naaman, the soldier and Elisha, the

prophet of God. However, they are not the reason why I have chosen for us to look at this story. I chose this story because of **“a young girl in Israel”**. You see, if not for this young girl, Naaman would not have known about the prophet of God and he would not have received his healing. Therefore, this young girl has a very important role to play in this story. Let’s read again what has been written about her in II Kings 5:2-3

***Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel and she served Naaman’s wife. She said to her mistress, “If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.”***

Now these are only a few lines but there is a story behind these few lines that is worth investigating. First of all, you can learn from these few lines that there is a young girl who once lived in a village or a town in Israel where she will have lived at home with her family. Every day she will have gone about her usual business of helping in the home. Then one day a group of enemy soldiers arrives in the village or town where she lives. No doubt, she will have hidden because she will have known that these men will have been up to do no good. But to no avail for she is snatched from her home and taken far away to a strange country, where the people speak a different language, have strange customs and most of all serve a false god. And, instead of being a beloved daughter of her parents, she has become a servant of the wife of a man named Naaman.

Every day she will have cried as soon as she has gone to bed because she so desperately misses her mother and her father and her brothers and sisters. She will have worried about them for she does not know what has happened to them. She has often prayed to her God to bring her back home but He has not done so. However, she knows that He is taking care of her even in this strange land for He has given her kind people to serve. One day her master becomes ill with leprosy and his condition gets worse and worse. So eventually she dares to speak to her mistress about the prophet of God in her own nation who surely can bring healing to her master. She is very happy when her master does go to her country. And so she waits until his return. And then one day she hears voices outside the house, including the voice of her master and his voice sounds full of life and strength. So she knows God has healed her master. Right there and then in the middle of the room where she is cleaning she kneels down and thanks God for the miracle that only He could have performed....

Having shown this story from the young girl’s viewpoint I would now like for us to look at it from a heavenly viewpoint for God has His eyes on this young girl, as you can read in II Chronicles 16:9a

***For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him....***

She may be a nobody in the eyes of the world but God delights in choosing the weak, as you can read in I Corinthians 1:26-29

***Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things –and the things that are not –to nullify the things that are so that no-one may boast before Him.***

And He has chosen the plans for her life, as you can read in Ephesians 2:10

***For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***

So God chose the place where she was to live, when she was to live there, and the family she was to be part of. He even allowed her to be abducted. But the abduction took place by a specific people selected by Him, who took her back to a nation selected by Him, where she came to live in a home selected by Him. He allowed the master of the household to become ill and used this young girl as His tool to bring healing and restoration to this man. In fact, God used this young girl to bring salvation to this household, for you have learned that this man after his healing decided to worship the God of Israel instead of the god of his own country. No doubt, he will have introduced the God of Israel to his whole household. Paul explains these principles in Romans 8:28 ***For we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.***

Therefore, if God can use a young girl from Israel, whose name you do not even know, but whose name was known by God, then you can believe that God can and wants to use you too. You may not be known by the world but you will be known by God by name. And that is what really matters. So, know that God is the One who has chosen for you the place where you were to be born, when you were to be born there and chose the family you were to be born into. And He has a plan and a purpose for you because He knows you and loves you. So allow God to use you just as He chose to use this young girl. Moreover, following God's plan and purpose for your life will bring you a satisfaction beyond what you may have ever known.

## QUESTIONS

- 1: Can sickness come to all people?
- 2a: According to II Kings 5:1 who is the commander of the army of the king of Aram?
- 2b: According to II Kings 5:1 why does the king of Aram highly regard Naaman?
- 2c: According to II Kings 5:1 what does Naaman suffer from?
- 3: Who in Naaman's household has the answer to his problem?
- 4: Who should Naaman visit?
- 5a: According to II Kings 5:2-3 who has gone out of Aram?
- 5b: According to II Kings 5:2-3 who have these bands of Aram taken captive?
- 5c: According to II Kings 5:2-3 who does the young girl from Israel serve?
- 5d: According to II Kings 5:2-3 what does the young girl from Israel say to her mistress?
- 5e: According to II Kings 5:2-3 why does the young girl from Israel wish for Naaman to see the prophet who is in Samaria?
- 6: Will Naaman have been to every doctor in Aram?
- 7: Has any medicine that Naaman has taken made him better?
- 8: Why does Naaman decide to listen to the young girl's advice?

- 9: Why are times not normal for Naaman?
- 10: Who does Naaman go to see?
- 11: What does Naaman tell the king of Aram?
- 12: In what way does the king of Aram prepare the way for Naaman to be received with favour in Israel?
- 13: Why does the king of Aram write a letter to the king of Israel?
- 14a: According to II Kings 5:4-5 what does the king of Aram say to Naaman?
- 14b: According to II Kings 5:4-5 what does the king of Aram say he will do?
- 14c: According to II Kings 5:4-5 what does Naaman take with him?
- 15: who has God chosen to be His instrument of healing for Naaman?
- 16: How does the king of Israel feel about the letter from the king of Aram?
- 17: Why does the king of Israel become confused when he reads the letter of the king of Aram?
- 18a: According to II Kings 5:6-7 what has the king of Aram written in his letter?
- 18b: According to II Kings 5:6-7 what does the king of Israel do in response to the letter from the king of Aram?
- 18c: According to II Kings 5:6-7 what does the king of Israel say in response to the letter from the king of Aram?
- 18d: According to II Kings 5:6-7 what question does the king of Israel have?
- 18e: According to II Kings 5:6-7 does the king of Israel wonder about the reason the king of Aram has sent Naaman to him?
- 19: Does anyone know what God intends to do for Naaman?
- 20: Who knows what God intends to do for Naaman?
- 21: What does the prophet Elisha do?
- 22: What does the king of Israel do when he receives the prophet Elisha's message?
- 23a: According to II Kings 5:8 what has Elisha heard the king of Israel has done?
- 23b: According to II Kings 5:8 what does Elisha do when he hears that the king has torn his robes?
- 23c: According to II Kings 5:8 what does Elisha ask the king of Israel in his message?
- 23d: According to II Kings 5:8 what does Elisha write to the king of Israel with regards

Naaman?

23e: According to II Kings 5:8 why does Elisha write to the king of Israel to send Naaman to him?

24: What does Naaman do?

25: What does Naaman expect will happen?

26: What kind of welcome is Naaman expecting?

27: What happens when Naaman arrives at Elisha's home?

28a: According to II Kings 5:9 how does Naaman travel to Elisha's home?

28b: According to II Kings 5:9 who does Elisha send to Naaman?

28c: According to II Kings 5:9 what does the messenger say to Naaman?

28d: According to II Kings 5:9 what will happen after Naaman has washed himself seven times in the Jordan?

29: Does the message state that Naaman has to wash himself in the river Jordan once or twice?

30: Is Naaman's pride hurt by this command of the prophet Elisha?

31: Why do you know that Naaman's pride has been hurt?

32: How does Naaman reveal his rage?

33: Why does Naaman think he may as well go home and wash in one of the rivers in his own country?

34a: According to II Kings 5:11-12 what does Naaman do after the messenger speaks to him?

34b: According to II Kings 5:11-12 why is Naaman angry?

34c: According to II Kings 5:11-12 who does Naaman expect Elisha to have called on for his healing?

34d: According to II Kings 5:11-12 what does Naaman expect Elisha to have done besides calling on the name of the Lord, his God?

34e: According to II Kings 5:11-12 which rivers of Damascus does Naaman believe are better?

34f: According to II Kings 5:11-12 what does Naaman believe about the rivers Abana and Pharpar of Damascus?

35: Who begin to speak to Naaman?

- 36: Why do you know Naaman's servants care about him?
- 37: How do you know that Naaman's servants are able to calm him down?
- 38a: According to II Kings 5:13 does Naaman act as a soldier towards his servants?
- 38b: According to II Kings 5:13 what question do Naaman's servants ask Naaman?
- 38c: According to II Kings 5:13 what other question do Naaman's servants ask him?
- 39: What does Naaman do when he gets to the river Jordan?
- 40: How many times has Naaman been told he has to dip into the water?
- 41: Does anything happen after Naaman has dipped into the water for the first time?
- 42: Is there any change to Naaman's skin condition after he has dipped into the water for the second and third time?
- 43: Is there a change to Naaman's skin condition after he has dipped into the water for the fourth, fifth and sixth time?
- 44: Why does Naaman not give up now?
- 45: What happens after Naaman goes under the water for the seventh time?
- 46: Why is everything different when Naaman goes under the water for the seventh time?
- 47a: According to II Kings 5:14 does Naaman follow the instructions of the man of God?
- 47b: According to II Kings 5:14 what happens to Naaman's flesh after he has dipped himself seven times in the river Jordan?
- 47c: According to II Kings 5:14 how does Naaman know his flesh is restored?
- 48: What has happened to Naaman?
- 49: What miracle has happened to Naaman?
- 50: Who has told Naaman he will be healed?
- 51: To whose home does Naaman return?
- 52: What is Naaman's heart attitude?
- 53: Which God will Naaman serve from now on?
- 54a: According to II Kings 5:15-19a what does Naaman say to Elisha?
- 54b: According to II Kings 5:15-19a what does Naaman want Elisha to accept from him?
- 54c: According to II Kings 5:15-19a which God does Elisha serve?

54d: According to II Kings 5:15-19a how does Elisha respond to Naaman's offer of a gift?

54e: According to II Kings 5:15-19a what does Naaman ask Elisha that he be given?

54f: According to II Kings 5:15-19a which God is Naaman going to bring offerings and sacrifices to?

54g: According to II Kings 5:15-19a what situation does Naaman ask Elisha forgiveness from the Lord for?

54h: According to II Kings 5:15-19a why does Naaman need the Lord's forgiveness when he enters the temple of Rimmon with the king of Aram?

54i: According to II Kings 5:15-19a how does Elisha respond to Naaman's request to be forgiven by God when he enters the temple of Rimmon with the king of Aram and bows down?

55: About whom does this story seem to be about primarily?

56: Who else has an important role to play in this story?

57a: Going back to II Kings 5:2-3 what have you learned about this young girl from Israel?

57b: According to II Kings 5:2-3 who does this young girl from Israel serve in Aram?

57c: According to II Kings 5:2-3 who suggests that Naaman go and see the prophet who is in Samaria?

58: What can you learn from these few lines in II Kings 5:2-3?

59: What has happened to this young girl?

60: Do the people in that strange country speak the same language that she speaks?

61: Do the people in that strange country serve the same God that this young girl serves?

62: Who has this young girl begun to serve?

63: Does this young girl know that God takes care of her even in this strange land?

64: What happens to her master Naaman?

65: What does this young girl eventually do?

66: Why does she speak about the prophet in her own nation to her mistress?

67: How does this young girl feel when her master Naaman goes to her nation?

68: What does this young girl hear one day?

69: How does the voice of this young girl's master sound?

- 70: What does this young girl do when she hears the voice of her master Naaman?
- 71: Who has His eyes on this young girl?
- 72a: According to II Chronicles 16:9a Whose eyes range throughout the earth?
- 72b: According to II Chronicles 16:9a why do the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth?
- 73: Is this young girl from Israel an important person in the eyes of the world?
- 74: Who does God delight in to choose?
- 75a: According to I Corinthians 1:26-29 were those who were called considered wise?
- 75b: According to I Corinthians 1:26-29 were many who were called influential?
- 75c: According to I Corinthians 1:26-29 were many who were called of noble birth?
- 75d: According to I Corinthians 1:26-29 what did God choose?
- 75e: According to I Corinthians 1:26-29 why did God choose the weak things of the world?
- 75f: According to I Corinthians 1:26-29 what else did God choose?
- 75g: According to I Corinthians 1:26-29 why did God choose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – the things that are not?
- 75h: According to I Corinthians 1:26-29 why did God want to nullify the things that are?
- 76: What has God chosen for you?
- 77a: According to Ephesians 2:10 as a believer what are you?
- 77b: According to Ephesians 2:10 as a believer what are you created to do?
- 77c: According to Ephesians 2:10 Who prepared the good works for you?
- 78: Who chose the place where this young girl from Israel was to live?
- 79: Who chose the time when this young girl from Israel was to live there?
- 80: Who chose the family this young girl from Israel was to be part of?
- 81: Who allowed this young girl from Israel to be abducted?
- 82: Who selected the people by whom this young girl from Israel was abducted?
- 83: Who selected the nation this young girl from Israel was to be taken?
- 84: Who selected the home this young girl from Israel was to live in?
- 85: Who allowed the master of the household, Naaman to become ill?

- 86: Who was used by God as His tool to bring healing and restoration to Naaman?
- 87: Who was used by God to bring salvation to Naaman's household?
- 88: How do you know that God used this young girl from Israel to bring salvation to Naaman's household?
- 89: Will Naaman have introduced the God of Israel to his whole household?
- 90a: According to Romans 8:28 Who works in all things?
- 90b: According to Romans 8:28 how does God work in all things?
- 90c: According to Romans 8:28 for whom does God work for the good in all things?
- 90d: According to Romans 8:28 who are those who love God?
- 91: Do you know the name of this young girl from Israel?
- 92: Did God know the name of this young girl from Israel?
- 93: If God could use this young girl from Israel, can you believe that God can and wants to use you too?
- 94: Are you known by the world?
- 95: Are you known by God?
- 96: What matters most?
- 97: What are you to know?
- 98: Why does God have a plan and a purpose for you?
- 99: What are you to allow God to do?
- 100: What will bring you a satisfaction beyond what you may have ever known?

## Chapter 10

### BORN FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Esther was a young Jewish girl who lived in Persia. Her parents had died and she was brought up by her cousin Mordecai, as you can read in Esther 2:5-7  
***Now there was in the citadel of Susa, a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai, son of Jair, son of Shimei, the son of Kish, who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah. Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This girl, who was also known as Esther, was lovely in form and features, and Mordecai had taken her as***

***his own daughter when her father and mother died.***

At that time king Xerxes ruled over Persia and he wished for a queen to be beside him so many young girls were brought to the palace for the king to choose a queen from among them, including Esther, as you can read in Esther 2:8-11

***When the king's order and edict had been proclaimed, many girls were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king's palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem. The girl pleased him and won his favour. Immediately he provided her with beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven maids selected from the king's palace and moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem. Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. Every day he walked to and fro near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.***

So young Esther has been taken from the safety of her cousin Mordecai's home to the palace. To be honest, neither she nor Mordecai have any say in the matter. Their separation has been enforced upon them. It must have been a frightening experience for Esther to be suddenly placed in this unknown environment. Moreover, she has to keep secret the fact that she is not Persian, but is of Jewish descent. However, we will learn that God is very involved in Esther being placed at the palace, even if she does not know that and may well have wondered at times if God actually cares about her having been taken to the palace, since she is just a young girl and He has, very likely, many more important things to take care of than consider her situation and do something about it.

But God does care and God has allowed her to be there for a very special reason as you will find out later on.

One day Esther is presented to the king, as you can read in Esther 2:16-17

***She was taken to king Xerxes in the royal residence in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. Now the king was attracted to Esther more than any of the other women, and she won his favour and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.***

God touches the heart of the king so he chooses Esther to become his queen. After all, the heart of the king is in the Lord's hand, as you can read in Proverbs 21:1

***The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases.***

And so Esther becomes queen and lives a very pleasant life, no doubt, far removed from any difficulties, any challenges. In the meantime, God allows her cousin Mordecai to uncover a plot to kill king Xerxes. He tells Esther about it. She in turn mentions it to the king and this event is recorded in the annals, as you can read in Esther 2:21-23

***During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate king Xerxes. But Mordecai found out about the plot and told queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. And when the***

***report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows. All this was recorded in the book of annals in the presence of the king.***

Now Esther has told no one, including the king, that she is Jewish. However, the day comes that she has to reveal her true identity even to the king. This all happens because of a plot to kill all the Jewish people. Since Esther is Jewish her life is in danger too, as you can read in Esther 3:1-6

***After these events king Xerxes honoured Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honour higher than that of all the other nobles. All the royal officials knelt down and paid honour to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honour. Then the royal officials at the king's gate asked Mordecai, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" Day after day they spoke to him but he refused to comply. Therefore they told Haman about it to see whether Mordecai's behaviour would be tolerated for he had told them he was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honour, he was enraged. Yet, having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of only killing Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.***

The king has raised a certain man named Haman to a high position and Haman is to be treated with great honour. But Mordecai knows that, as a Jew, he can only kneel down before his God. Haman becomes so enraged at Mordecai's behaviour towards him that he decides to have him killed. However, Haman's hatred is not just directed towards Mordecai but towards all of Mordecai's people; the Jews. Therefore, Haman sees an opportunity to not just get rid of Mordecai but to get rid of all Jewish people. All he needs is to get the king's consent. Sadly, the king cares so little about the Jewish people in his vast Empire that he is willing for them to be killed off, as you can read in Esther 3:8-11

***Then Haman said to king Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business." So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. "Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please."***

Now the king has absolutely no idea that with these words he has sent the queen to her death. While this meeting takes place, Esther will have been in the palace, completely unaware of the fact that her life is being threatened. To her life is very pleasant and comfortable. She has found favour with the people and with the king. As far as she is concerned, nothing can possibly happen to interrupt her wonderful existence.

But it is time for Ester to realise that God has a purpose for her being queen. He, therefore, allows Mordecai to learn about the plot to kill all the Jewish people and Mordecai is able to send a message to Esther's servant Hathach, as you can read in

Esther 4:6-9

***So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate. Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and to explain to her, and he told him to urge her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and to plead with him for her people. Hathach went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said.***

Esther learns from Mordecai about the grave danger all her people are in. She is challenged by him to go before the king and plead for mercy for her people. However, Mordecai is obviously not aware of the fact that she cannot go to the king unannounced for that will, very likely, mean her death, as you can read in Esther 4:10-11

***Then she instructed him (Hathach) to say to Mordecai, "All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception to this is for the king to extend the gold sceptre to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king."***

Esther is fully confident that her words of explanation will make Mordecai change his mind about her going to the king unannounced for surely he loves her so much that he does not want her life to be endangered. But that is not what happens, as you can read in Esther 4:12-16

***When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back his answer. "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"***

Mordecai does not change his mind. On the contrary, he sends a more forceful message back to Esther. Mordecai understands why Esther has been given the position of queen and Esther needs to understand it as well. Thankfully, after reading Mordecai's latest message she begins to grasp the reason why God is allowing her to live at the palace. She is not there so she can enjoy a luxurious lifestyle. No, God is allowing her to live at the palace in order for her to plead for her people before the king even if that means she will die, as you can read in Esther 4:15-16

***Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai, "Go, gather together all the Jews, who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."***

Esther knows that her life is really in God's hands and not in the king's hands. Since God has allowed her to live in the palace, He is the One who will protect her as she goes before the king without his permission. However, she knows she needs to spend time in preparation first and so she arranges a three-day period of prayer and fasting before

going to see the king. Then the day arrives for her to see the king as, you can read in Esther 5:1-2

***On the third day Esther put on her royal robes and stood in the inner court of the palace, in front of the king's hall. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the hall, facing the entrance. When he saw queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of his sceptre.***

God touches the heart of the king and he stretches his gold sceptre to Esther to let her know she is welcome to enter his presence. Esther is allowed to live and speak to the king. She invites the king over for a meal and the king accepts her invitation. At the meal all Esther asks for is that the king return for another banquet the next day and he accepts. The next day the king returns for another banquet and this time Esther pleads her case before the king, as you can read in Esther 8:3-8

***Esther again pleaded with the king, falling at his feet and weeping. She begged him to put an end to the evil plan of Haman, the Agagite, which he had devised against the Jews. Then the king extended the gold sceptre to Esther and she arose and stood before him. "If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favour and thinks it is the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?"***

*King Xerxes replied to queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have hanged him on the gallows. Now write another decree in the king's name on behalf of the Jews as seem best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring – for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked."*

Esther finally shares with the king her concerns for her people. The king hears her plea and has another decree written, which states that her people will be able to defend themselves against any attack of their enemies.

God, who knew that one day Haman would try and attack His chosen people, had chosen a young Jewish girl, an orphan living with her cousin, to be taken into the palace to become queen so that she could come before the king and be His instrument to save her people. Esther did not know this when she was forced to enter the palace. Neither did Mordecai know that this was God's plan for his cousin Esther. But God knew. And when the time came for Esther to act she was prepared to be obedient to her calling, no matter what the cost.

God wants to use the story of Esther to encourage you for He wants you to know that He has a plan for your life, just as He had a plan for the life of Esther. Now, His plan for your life will not be like the plan He had for Esther's life. His plan for your life will fit your circumstances, just as God's plan for Esther's life fitted her circumstances. But I do want you to know that the God, who loved Esther and cared for her throughout her life and gave her strength, ability and wisdom to do what He had for her to do, will do the same for you because He loves you and cares for you. So He will strengthen you in your

circumstances and enable you to do whatever it is you are to do for Him. Moreover, God will give you wisdom to do whatever He has for you to do so you can do it well. For God wants your life to be a testimony to His goodness and mercy just as Esther's life was a testimony to the goodness and mercy of God.

## QUESTIONS

1: Who lives in Persia?

2: By whom is Esther brought up?

3a: According to Esther 2:5-7 who lives in the citadel of Susa?

3b: According to Esther 2:5-7 what is the name of the Jew of the tribe of Benjamin who lives in the citadel of Susa?

3c: According to Esther 2:5-7 whose son is Mordecai?

3d: According to Esther 2:5-7 who has been carried into exile from Jerusalem?

3e: According to Esther 2:5-7 by whom has Kish been carried into exile?

3f: According to Esther 2:5-7 which king has Kish been taken captive with?

3g: According to Esther 2:5-7 who has Mordecai brought up?

3h: According to Esther 2:5-7 why has Mordecai brought up Hadassah?

3i: According to Esther 2:5-7 how is Hadassah known also?

4: Who rules over Persia at that time?

5: What does king Xerxes wish for?

6: Who are brought to the palace?

7: Why are many young girls brought to the palace?

8a: According to Esther 2:8-11 what has been proclaimed?

8b: According to Esther 2:8-11 who are brought to the citadel of Susa?

8c: According to Esther 2:8-11 under whose care have these many young girls been put?

8d: According to Esther 2:8-11 who has also been taken to the king's palace?

8e: According to Esther 2:8-11 to whose care has Esther been entrusted?

8f: According to Esther 2:8-11 who pleases Hegai?

8g: According to Esther 2:8-11 what does Hegai provide Esther with?

8h: According to Esther 2:8-11 who does Hegai assign to Esther?

- 8i: According to Esther 2:8-11 where are the seven maids selected from?
- 8j: According to Esther 2:8-11 where does Hegai move Esther and the seven maids to?
- 8k: According to Esther 2:8-11 has Esther revealed her nationality and background?
- 8l: According to Esther 2:8-11 why has Esther not revealed her nationality and background?
- 8m: According to Esther 2:8-11 who walks to and fro near the courtyard of the harem every day?
- 8n: According to Esther 2:8-11 why does Mordecai walk every day to and fro near the courtyard of the harem?
- 9: Do Esther or Mordecai have any say in the matter of her having been taken to the palace?
- 10: Will it have been a frightening experience for Esther to suddenly have been placed in this unknown environment?
- 11: What does Esther have to keep secret?
- 12: Is God involved in Esther having been placed at the palace?
- 13: Does God care about Esther?
- 14: Who is Esther presented to one day?
- 15a: According to Esther 2:16-17 to whom is Esther taken?
- 15b: According to Esther 2:16-17 where is king Xerxes?
- 15c: According to Esther 2:16-17 in which month is Esther taken to king Xerxes?
- 15d: According to Esther 2:16-17 what is the name of the tenth month?
- 15e: According to Esther 2:16-17 in which year is Esther taken to king Xerxes?
- 15f: According to Esther 2:16-17 who is king Xerxes most attracted to?
- 15g: According to Esther 2:16-17 who does king Xerxes make queen?
- 16: Who touches king Xerxes' heart so he chooses Esther to become queen?
- 17a: According to Proverbs 21:1 in whose hand is the heart of the king?
- 17b: According to Proverbs 21:1 Who direct the king's heart?
- 18: As queen, is Esther aware of difficulties, challenges?
- 19: What does God allow Mordecai to uncover?

- 20: Who does Mordecai tell about the plot?
- 21: Who does Esther tell about the plot?
- 22a: According to Esther 2:21-23 who are two of king Xerxes' officers?
- 22b: According to Esther 2:21-23 what is the task of Bigthana and Teresh?
- 22c: According to Esther 2:21-23 what do Bigthana and Teresh conspire to do?
- 22d: According to Esther 2:21-23 who finds out about the plot to assassinate king Xerxes?
- 22e: According to Esther 2:21-23 who does Mordecai tell about the plot to assassinate king Xerxes?
- 22f: According to Esther 2:21-23 who does Esther tell about the plot to assassinate king Xerxes?
- 22g: According to Esther 2:21-23 is the report investigated?
- 22h: According to Esther 2:21-23 what happens to the two officials Bigthana and Teresh?
- 22i: According to Esther 2:21-23 where is this event recorded?
- 23: Has Esther told anybody that she is Jewish?
- 24: Does Esther have to reveal her true identity one day?
- 25: Why does Esther have to reveal her true identity one day?
- 26: Is Esther's life in danger?
- 27a: According to Esther 3:1-6 who does king Xerxes honour?
- 27b: According to Esther 3:1-6 whose son is Haman?
- 27c: According to Esther 3:1-6 how does king Xerxes honour Haman?
- 27d: According to Esther 3:1-6 what has king Xerxes commanded all the royal officials do?
- 27e: According to Esther 3:1-6 who will not kneel down and pay honour to Haman?
- 27f: According to Esther 3:1-6 what do the royal officials at the king's gate ask Mordecai?
- 27g: According to Esther 3:1-6 how often do the royal officials at the king's gate speak to Mordecai?
- 27h: According to Esther 3:1-6 does Mordecai comply with the wishes of the royal officials at the king's gate for him to bow down and pay honour to Haman?

27i: According to Esther 3:1-6 who do the royal officials at the king's gate tell about Mordecai's refusal to bow down and pay honour to Haman?

27j: According to Esther 3:1-6 why do the royal officials at the king's gate tell Haman about Mordecai's refusal to bow down and pay honour to him?

27k: According to Esther 3:1-6 why do the royal officials at the king's gate want to see whether Mordecai's behaviour will be tolerated?

27l: According to Esther 3:1-6 how does Haman feel about Mordecai not bowing down to him to pay honour to him?

27m: According to Esther 3:1-6 what has Haman learned about Mordecai?

27n: According to Esther 3:1-6 what idea does Haman scorn?

27o: According to Esther 3:1-6 what does Haman look for?

27p: According to Esther 3:1-6 who are all Mordecai's people?

28: Who has raised a certain man to a high position?

29: What is the name of the man king Xerxes has raised to a high position?

30: Who is to be treated with great honour?

31: Who can Mordecai, as a Jew, only kneel before?

32: Who becomes enraged at Mordecai's behaviour towards him?

33: What does Haman decide to do?

34: Towards whose people is Haman's hatred directed?

35: What does Haman need to get rid of all of Mordecai's people, the Jews?

36: Does king Xerxes care about the Jewish people in his vast Empire?

37: How can you know that king Xerxes cares little about the Jewish people in his vast Empire?

38a: According to Esther 3:8-11 about whom does Haman talk to king Xerxes?

38b: According to Esther 3:8-11 what does Haman say about the people who are dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of king Xerxes' kingdom?

38c: According to Esther 3:8-11 what does Haman say about the people who are dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of king Xerxes' kingdom in relation to obeying the king's laws?

38d: According to Esther 3:8-11 what does Haman want to be done?

38e: According to Esther 3:8-11 why is a decree to be issued?

- 38f: According to Esther 3:8-11 what will Haman put into the royal treasury?
- 38g: According to Esther 3:8-11 to whom are the ten thousand talents of silver to be given?
- 38h: According to Esther 3:8-11 what does king Xerxes give to Haman?
- 38i: According to Esther 3:8-11 whose son is Haman?
- 38j: According to Esther 3:8-11 who is the enemy of the Jews?
- 38k: According to Esther 3:8-11 what does king Xerxes say to Haman with regards the money?
- 38l: According to Esther 3:8-11 what does king Xerxes say to Haman with regards the people that are dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of his kingdom?
- 39: Does king Xerxes have any idea what will happen to Esther because of his words?
- 40: Where will Esther have been when this meeting between Haman and king Xerxes takes place?
- 41: Is Esther aware of the fact that her life is being threatened?
- 42: How is life for Esther?
- 43: With whom has Esther found favour?
- 44: Does Esther expect anything to happen to interrupt her wonderful existence?
- 45: What is it time for?
- 46: What does God allow Mordecai to learn?
- 47: Who does Mordecai send a message to?
- 48: What is the name of Esther's servant?
- 49a: According to Esther 4:6-9 who goes out to Mordecai?
- 49b: According to Esther 4:6-9 where is Mordecai?
- 49c: According to Esther 4:6-9 what does Mordecai tell Hathach?
- 49d: According to Esther 4:6-9 what does Mordecai give Hathach?
- 49e: According to Esther 4:6-9 why is the edict written?
- 49f: According to Esther 4:6-9 where has the edict been published?
- 49g: According to Esther 4:6-9 what does Mordecai want Hathach to do?

49h: According to Esther 4:6-9 what does Mordecai want Hathach to explain to Esther?

49i: According to Esther 4:6-9 what does Mordecai tell Hathach to do?

49j: According to Esther 4:6-9 why does Mordecai want Hathach to urge Esther to go into king Xerxes' presence?

49k: According to Esther 4:6-9 for whom is Esther to plead before king Xerxes?

49l: According to Esther 4:6-9 what does Hathach do?

50: What does Esther learn from Mordecai?

51: What has Mordecai challenged her to do?

52: What is Mordecai not aware of?

53: Why can Esther not go before king Xerxes unannounced?

54a: According to Esther 4:10-11 what does Esther instruct Hathach to say to Mordecai?

54b: According to Esther 4:10-11 what is the one law that king Xerxes has for any man or woman who approaches him in the inner court without being summoned?

54c: According to Esther 4:10-11 is there an exception to king Xerxes' law that any man or woman who approaches him in the inner court without being summoned will be put to death?

54d: According to Esther 4:10-11 how many days have passed since Esther was called to go to king Xerxes?

55: Why is Esther fully confident that her words of explanation will make Mordecai change his mind about her going to king Xerxes unannounced?

56: How much does Esther believe Mordecai loves her?

57: Is that what happens?

58a: According to Esther 4:12-16 whose words are reported to Mordecai?

58b: According to Esther 4:12-16 what does Mordecai do in response to Esther's message to him?

58c: According to Esther 4:12-16 what does Mordecai say to Esther in his message to her?

58d: According to Esther 4:12-16 what else does Mordecai say in his message to Esther?

58e: According to Esther 4:12-16 what does Mordecai ask?

59: Does Mordecai change his mind?

60: What kind of message does Mordecai send back to Esther?

- 61: Does Mordecai understand why Esther has been given the position of queen?
- 62: Who needs to understand why she has been given the position of queen as well?
- 63: When does Esther begin to grasp the reason why God is allowing her to live at the palace?
- 64: Is Esther at the palace so she can enjoy a luxurious lifestyle?
- 65: Why is God allowing Esther to live at the palace?
- 66: Will going before king Xerxes in order to plead for her people mean that Esther will die?
- 67a: According to Esther 4:15-16 what reply does Esther send to Mordecai?
- 67b: According to Esther 4:15-16 what does Esther ask Mordecai and all the Jews, who are in Susa, to do for her?
- 67c: According to Esther 4:15-16 how long does Esther ask Mordecai and the Jews, who are in Susa, to fast for her?
- 67d: According to Esther 4:15-16 what will Esther and her maids do as well?
- 67e: According to Esther 4:15-16 what will Esther do after she has fasted for three days and three nights?
- 67f: According to Esther 4:15-16 is going to king Xerxes unannounced against the law?
- 67g: According to Esther 4:15-16 might Esther perish?
- 68: Does Esther know in whose hands her life is?
- 69: Who has allowed Esther to live in the palace?
- 70: Who will protect Esther as she goes before king Xerxes without his permission?
- 71: What does Esther know she needs to do first?
- Answer: Esther knows she needs to spend time in preparation first.
- 72: What does Esther arrange before going to see king Xerxes?
- 73a: According to Esther 5:1-2 what does Esther do on the third day of the fast?
- 73b: According to Esther 5:1-2 where does Esther stand?
- 73c: According to Esther 5:1-2 who is sitting on his royal throne, facing the entrance?
- 73d: According to Esther 5:1-2 who does king Xerxes see standing in the court?
- 73e: According to Esther 5:1-2 is king Xerxes pleased to see Esther?

73f: According to Esther 5:1-2 how does king Xerxes show he is pleased to see Esther?

73g: According to Esther 5:1-2 what does Esther do?

74: Who touches the heart of king Xerxes?

75: Who stretches out his gold sceptre?

76: Why does king Xerxes stretch out his sceptre?

77: Does Esther have to die?

78: What does Esther ask king Xerxes?

79: How does king Xerxes respond to Esther's invitation?

80: What does Esther ask king Xerxes at the meal?

81: Does king Xerxes accept Esther's invitation to return for another meal?

82: What does Esther do when king Xerxes return for another banquet the next day?

83a: According to Esther 5:3-8 what does Esther do?

83b: According to Esther 5:3-8 with whom does Esther plea?

83c: According to Esther 5:3-8 what does Esther beg king Xerxes to do?

83d: According to Esther 5:3-8 against whom has Haman, the Agagite devised an evil plan?

83e: According to Esther 5:3-8 what does king Xerxes do?

83f: According to Esther 5:3-8 how does Esther respond when king Xerxes extends his gold sceptre to her?

83g: According to Esther 5:3-8 what does Esther ask of king Xerxes?

83h: According to Esther 5:3-8 what is the written order to overrule?

83i: According to Esther 5:3-8 why has Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite devised and written dispatches?

83j: According to Esther 5:3-8 what can Esther not bear to see?

83k: According to Esther 5:3-8 what can Esther not bear to see with regards her family?

83l: According to Esther 5:3-8 who replies to Esther and to Mordecai?

83m: According to Esther 5:3-8 whose estate has king Xerxes given to Esther?

83n: According to Esther 5:3-8 what has happened to Haman?

83o: According to Esther 5:3-8 what does king Xerxes tell Esther and Mordecai to

write?

83p: According to Esther 5:3-8 on whose behalf is the decree in the king's name to be written?

83q: According to Esther 5:3-8 with what is the decree in the king's name to be sealed?

83r: According to Esther 5:3-8 can any document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring be revoked?

84: Did God know what Haman would try and do one day?

85: Why had God chosen a young Jewish girl, an orphan living with her cousin, to be taken into the palace to become queen?

86: Did Esther know when she was forced to enter the palace that she was chosen by God to be His instrument to come before king Xerxes to save her people?

87: Did Mordecai know God's plan for his cousin Esther to come before king Xerxes to save her people?

88: Who knew of God's plan for Esther to come before king Xerxes to save her people?

89: When the time came for Esther to act was she prepared to be obedient to her calling?

90: How does God want to use the story of Esther in your life?

91: Does God have a plan for your life?

92: Will God's plan for your life fit your circumstances?

93: Did God love Esther and care for her throughout her life?

94: Does God love you and care for you?

95: Will God give you wisdom to do whatever He has for you to do?

96: Why will God give you wisdom to do whatever He has for you to do?

## Chapter 11

### WEAK AND FOOLISH

God has a way of doing things that may be very different from how we would do things, as you can read in I Corinthians 1:27-28

***But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are.***

From these verses we can see that God delights in choosing the least, the unknown, the weak of this world as His instruments. Let's look at some examples from the Bible to show you that God can use anybody He chooses to work through.

Our first example is Gideon. We find his story in Judges 6. Let's read Judges 6:1-6 ***Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years He gave them into the hands of the Midianites. Because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelter for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds. Whenever the Israelites planted their crops, the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples invaded the country. They camped on the land and ruined the crops all the way to Gaza and did not spare a living thing for Israel, neither sheep nor cattle nor donkeys. They came up with their livestock and their tents like swarms of locusts. It was impossible to count the men and their camels; they invaded the land to ravage it. Midian so impoverished the Israelites that they cried out to the Lord for help.***

Israel has turned away from the Lord and the Lord disciplines the nation by allowing an enemy to oppress her. This continues for seven years and after seven years the Israelites finally cry out to the Lord for help. So God chooses someone in their midst to deliver the nation from her enemies, as you can read in Judges 6:11-13 ***The angel of the Lord came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon, he said, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." "But sir," Gideon replied, "if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all His wonders that our fathers told us about when they said, "Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?" But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian."***

God's choice is a man named Gideon. And the angel of the Lord addresses him as a ***"mighty warrior"***. That is very interesting in light of the fact that Gideon is threshing wheat in a winepress because of his fear for the Midianites. Moreover God's chosen instrument feels the need to make a complaint against God because, to him, God has not been good to them at all but has abandoned them and Gideon does not understand why that has happened. Let's pick up the story by reading Judges 6:14-16 ***The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" "But Lord," Gideon asked, "how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." The Lord answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites together."***

The Lord simply ignores Gideon's complaints and tells him to go and deliver Israel out of the hands of their enemies. However, Gideon just knows that somehow the Lord must have gotten His facts mixed up for he is not a mighty warrior as the Lord makes him out to be. It seems to Gideon that the Lord does not know his background so he better spell out the facts for Him that his clan is the weakest and that he is the least in his family. This means he is the weakest of the weakest and cannot possibly be God's choice of a deliverer for the nation. However, God tells him that He will be with him and that, therefore, Gideon will be successful.

It is clear that Gideon did not know the principles laid out in I Corinthians 1:27-28 ***But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things***

**that are.**

If he had known these principles then he would have agreed with God that he was the perfect choice for he fitted the bill exactly by being the weakest of the weakest.

However, Gideon did not know this and God had to tell him

**“Yes, Gideon I know who you are, I know all the facts about your clan and your position in your family. But these things don’t matter to Me for I will be with you, Gideon, and because I will be with you, you will be successful in all that I have for you to do.”**

The fact that God was going to be with Gideon would make all the difference in the world. Without God he would fail but with God he would succeed. And did Gideon succeed? To find out let’s read Judges 8:28

***Thus Midian was subdued before the Israelites and did not raise its head again. During Gideon’s lifetime, the land enjoyed peace for forty years.***

So God was true to His word and used a man named Gideon, who considered himself the weakest of the weak, to deliver a nation because He was with Gideon.

Another example of a lowly and weak person I would like for us to look at is Esther. You can find her story in the Book of Esther. Esther was a young Jewish orphan girl who was brought up by her cousin Mordechai. She and her cousin were living in exile in Persia with other Jewish people. She had been taken into the Court of king Xerxes, as you can read in Esther 2:5-8

***Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin, king of Judah. Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up for she had neither father nor mother. Esther was lovely in form and features, and Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died. When the king’s order and edict had been proclaimed, many girls were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther was also taken to the king’s palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem.***

Esther spends one year preparing to be received by the king and when she does meet with him, he is so pleased with her that he makes her his queen, as you can read in Esther 2:17

***Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favour and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.***

Esther has not revealed to anyone at the Court, including the king, that her background is Jewish. Then one day something happens that threatens Esther’s very existence, as you can read in Esther 3:8-11

***Then Haman said to king Xerxes, “There is a certain people dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and who do not obey the king’s laws; it is not in the king’s best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the treasury for the men who carry out this business”. So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews.***

***“Keep the money,” the king said to Haman, “and do with the people as you please.”***

A certain official at the Court, a man named Haman hates Mordecai because Mordecai is unwilling to bow to him whenever Haman passes by. Knowing that Mordecai is a Jew, he decides that he is going to get rid of Mordecai and all other Jews. The king, not caring what happens to the Jews who live in his vast empire, seals the edict to have all of them killed. By his action he signs a death warrant for his queen and her people. This happens without Esther having any knowledge of it. As far as she is concerned, everything is perfect and she and her people are very secure.

However, her cousin Mordecai, though not living at the Court, learns about the edict and he knows that Esther needs to be awakened to the fact that her life and that of her people are in grave danger. He knows that this is going to be a very rude awakening for her since she has been pampered from the day she entered the court, as you can read in Esther 2:9

***The girl (Esther) had pleased him (Hegai) and won his favour. Immediately he provided her with beauty treatments and special food. He assigned to her seven maids selected from the king’s palace and moved her and her maids into the best place in the harem.***

The time has come for Esther to be more than just a somewhat spoiled, pampered young woman who has pleased everyone with her beauty, including the king. Let’s read Esther 4:6-8

***So Hathach went out to Mordechai in the open square of the city in front of the king’s gate. Mordechai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to urge her to go into the king’s presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.***

No doubt, these words will have shocked Esther and will have caused her to feel grief towards her people for what is about to happen to them. But they are out there some where and she lives inside the Court so how can she relate to them? Surely, Mordechai cannot expect her to do anything about it, especially at a time like this, when she is already somewhat concerned about her relationship with her husband, for she has not seen him for a month. Mordechai must be made to understand that she cannot do what he is asking of her. After all, he is not the one married to the king so he cannot possibly know the kind of pressure she is under. Really, Mordechai is asking too much of her. All she can hope for right now is that she will not be killed herself. But that will only happen if she keeps quiet. So she writes a note to Mordechai believing that as soon as he reads it he will understand her position, as you can read in Esther 4:10-11

***Then she (Esther) instructed him (Hathach) to say to Mordecai, “All the king’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that he be put to death. The only exception for this is for the king to extend the gold sceptre to him and spare his life. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.”***

Esther is fully confident that, having explained her position to Mordechai, he will let her off the hook for he will surely see that she is the wrong person to give this most important task to. Do her people deserve to be saved? Yes, of course. But she is not the right person to intercede on their behalf. Mordechai should look for someone else,

someone of great importance, who has great influence with the king. And she just knows she is not that person. She is, after all, just a young Jewish girl and an orphan at that. And Mordechai knows that and he will, no doubt, sympathise with her and apologise to her for having placed her under such duress. So she waits for Mordechai's answer to her note. But when it comes it is not what she expects it to be, as you can read in Esther 4:13-14

***Do not think that because you are in the king's house, you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?***

Far from sympathising with her and allowing her to remain silent, Mordechai takes his cousin to task for not speaking up for herself and her people. Most importantly, he shows her that God has orchestrated events in her life in such a way that she is queen at this time in history in order to save her life and that of her people.

That insight enables Esther to take action and enter the king's presence to present her request to him, as you can read in Esther 5:2-4

***When he (the king) saw queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased with her and held out to her the gold sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther approached and touched the tip of the sceptre. Then the king asked, "What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."***

***"If it pleases the king," replied Esther, "let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him."***

God is with Esther and touches the heart of the king so he holds out his gold sceptre to Esther when she enters the king's hall. Furthermore, God uses her to deliver her people from certain death, as you can read in Esther 8:7-8

***King Xerxes replied to queen Esther and to Mordechai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have hanged him on the gallows. Now write another decree in the king's name on behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring – for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked."***

Esther speaks to the king and her people are able to defend themselves against any attack of their enemies because of her intervention.

God was able to use Esther in the way that He desired because she was willing to be used by Him, even though she may have felt too weak, too insignificant within herself. Like Gideon and Esther you too may feel too weak, too insignificant to ever be used by God. But God wants to say to you that He delights in using weak, insignificant people for when you are weak you will be made strong in Him.

The Apostle Paul understood that when he wrote in II Corinthians 12:9

***But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.***

Paul had to learn that he could not use his weaknesses as an excuse not to do God's will. Likewise, you cannot use the fact that you may not be important in the eyes of the world as an excuse not to do the things God may call you to do for surely He will strengthen and equip you for your task whatever that may be. All you have to do is be willing and

obedient and God will make you able.

## QUESTIONS

1: Does God have a way of doing things that may be very different from how you would do things?

2a: According to I Corinthians 1:27-28 why did God choose the foolish things of the world?

2b: According to I Corinthians 1:27-28 why did God choose the weak things of the world?

2c: According to I Corinthians 1:27-28 why did God choose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not?

3: What can you learn from these verses?

4: Are there examples from the Bible to show you that God can use anybody He chooses to work through?

5a: According to Judges 6:1-6 what do the Israelites do?

5b: According to Judges 6:1-6 into whose hands does God give the Israelites?

5c: According to Judges 6:1-6 for how long does God give the Israelites into the hands of the Midianites?

5d: According to Judges 6:1-6 where do the Israelites prepare shelter for themselves?

5e: According to Judges 6:1-6 what happens whenever the Israelites plant their crops?

5f: According to Judges 6:1-6 where do the Midianites, Amelekites and other eastern peoples camp?

5g: According to Judges 6:1-6 what do the Midianites, Amelekites and other eastern peoples ruin?

5h: According to Judges 6:1-6 do the Midianites, Amelekites and other eastern peoples spare a living thing?

5i: According to Judges 6:1-6 with what do the Midianites, Amelekites and other eastern people come up?

5j: According to Judges 6:1-6 how do the Midianites, Amelekites and other eastern peoples come up?

5k: According to Judges 6:1-6 is it possible to count the men and their camels?

5l: According to Judges 6:1-6 what do the Midianites, Amelekites and other eastern peoples do to the land?

- 5m: According to Judges 6:1-6 what does Midian do to the Israelites?
- 5n: According to Judges 6:1-6 what do the Israelites do?
- 5o: According to Judges 6:1-6 why do the Israelites cry out to the Lord for help?
- 6: Who has turned away from the Lord?
- 7: How does the Lord discipline the nation Israel?
- 8: How long does the oppression continue?
- 9: What happens after seven years?
- 10: Who does God choose to deliver the nation Israel from her enemies?
- 11a: According to Judges 6:11-13 who comes?
- 11b: According to Judges 6:11-13 where does the angel of the Lord sit down?
- 11c: According to Judges 6:11-13 to whom does the oak in Ophrah belong?
- 11d: According to Judges 6:11-13 what is the name of Joash the Abiezrite's son?
- 11e: According to Judges 6:11-13 what is Gideon doing?
- 11f: According to Judges 6:11-13 why is Gideon threshing wheat in a winepress?
- 11g: According to Judges 6:11-13 who appears to Gideon?
- 11h: According to Judges 6:11-13 what does the angel of the Lord say to Gideon?
- 11i: According to Judges 6:11-13 what does the angel of the Lord call Gideon?
- 11j: According to Judges 6:11-13 how does Gideon respond to the words of the angel of the Lord?
- 11k: According to Judges 6:11-13 what are Gideon's last words to the angel of the Lord?
- 12: Who is God's choice?
- 13: How does the angel of the Lord address Gideon?
- 14: Why is that very interesting?
- 15: Why does God's chosen instrument feel the need to make a complaint against God?
- 16: Does Gideon understand why God has abandoned them?
- 17a: According to Judges 6:14-16 what does the Lord say to Gideon?
- 17b: According to Judges 6:14-16 who is sending Gideon?
- 17c: According to Judges 6:14-16 what does Gideon say to the Lord?

- 17d: According to Judges 6:14-16 what does Gideon say to the Lord about his clan?
- 17e: According to Judges 6:14-16 what does Gideon say about himself to the Lord?
- 17f: According to Judges 6:14-16 how does the Lord answer Gideon?
- 18: How does God handle Gideon's complaints?
- 19: What does God tell Gideon to do?
- 20: Why does Gideon just know that God must somehow have gotten His facts mixed up?
- 21: Why does Gideon think he has to spell out the facts to the Lord?
- 22: What are the facts Gideon spells out for the Lord?
- 23: What do the facts that Gideon's clan is the weakest and that he is the least in the family mean?
- 24: Who does God say will be with Gideon?
- 25: Why will Gideon be successful?
- 26: Which principles from I Corinthians 1:27-28 did Gideon not know?
- 27: If Gideon had known these principles would he have agreed with God that he was the perfect choice?
- 28: Why would Gideon have agreed with God that he was the perfect choice?
- 29: Did God have to tell him that He knew who Gideon was?
- 30: Did the facts about Gideon's clan and about his position in his family matter to God?
- 31: Why did the facts about Gideon's clan and about his position in his family not matter to God?
- 32: Why did it matter to Gideon that God was going to be with him?
- 33a: According to Judges 8:28 what happens to Midian?
- 33b: According to Judges 8:28 during whose lifetime does the land have peace?.
- 33c: According to Judges 8:28 for how long does the land have peace?
- 34: Was God true to His word?
- 35: How was God true to His word?
- 36: How was God able to deliver a nation through Gideon?
- 37: What is another example of a lowly and weak person?

- 38: In which Book of the Bible can you find the story of Esther?
- 39: Who is Esther?
- 40: By whom is Esther brought up?
- 41: Where are Esther and her cousin Mordecai living?
- 42: Into whose Court has Esther been taken?
- 43a: According to Esther 2:5-8 who is a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin?
- 43b: According to Esther 2:5-8 where does Mordecai live?
- 43c: According to Esther 2:5-8 what is the name of Mordecai's cousin?
- 43d: According to Esther 2:5-8 what is another name for Hadassah?
- 43e: According to Esther 2:5-8 when has Mordecai taken Esther as his own daughter?
- 43f: According to Esther 2:5-8 when are many girls brought to the citadel of Susa?
- 43g: According to Esther 2:5-8 under whose care have the many girls been put?
- 43h: According to Esther 2:5-8 who has also been taken to king Xerxes' palace?
- 43i: According to Esther 2:5-8 to whom has Esther been entrusted?
- 43j: According to Esther 2:5-8 who has charge of the harem?
- 44: How long does Esther spend preparing to be received by king Xerxes?
- 45: Is king Xerxes pleased with Esther?
- 46: According to Esther 2:17 to whom is king Xerxes more attracted than to any of the other women?
- 47: According to Esther 2:17 who does king Xerxes make queen instead of Vashti?
- 48: What has Esther not revealed to anyone at the Court, including King Xerxes?
- 49: What happens one day?
- 50a: According to Esther 3:8-11 who speaks to king Xerxes?
- 50b: According to Esther 3:8-11 what does Haman say to king Xerxes?
- 50c: According to Esther 3:8-11 do the people that are dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces of king Xerxes' kingdom obey the king's laws according to Haman?
- 50d: According to Esther 3:8-11 what is to be issued?
- 50e: According to Esther 3:8-11 what will Haman put into the treasury?

- 50f: According to Esther 3:8-11 for whom are the ten thousand talents of silver?
- 50g: According to Esther 3:8-11 what does king Xerxes give to Haman?
- 50h: According to Esther 3:8-11 what does king Xerxes say to Haman?
- 50i: According to Esther 3:8-11 what does king Xerxes say to Haman with regards the people that are dispersed and scattered among the peoples in all the provinces in his kingdom?
- 51: Who is unwilling to bow before Haman?
- 52: What fact does Haman know about Mordecai?
- 53: What does Haman decide to do with regards Mordecai?
- 54: What does Haman decide to do with regards all the other Jews?
- 55: Does king Xerxes care what happens to the Jews who live in his vast empire?
- 56: Why do you know that king Xerxes does not care what happens to the Jews that live in his vast empire?
- 57: What does king Xerxes do by his action?
- 58: Does Esther have any knowledge that king Xerxes has signed an edict to have her and her people killed?
- 59: As far as Esther is concerned are she and her people secure?
- 60: Who learns about the edict?
- 61: What does Mordecai know?
- 62: Is this going to be a rude awakening for Esther?
- 63: Why is it going to be a rude awakening for Esther?
- 64a: According to Esther 2:9 who won Hegai's favour?
- 64b: According to Esther 2:9 what does Hegai provide Esther with?
- 64c: According to Esther 2:9 who does Hegai select for Esther?
- 64d: According to Esther 2:9 where does Hegai move Esther and her seven maids to?
- 65: Has the time has come for Esther to be more than just a spoiled, pampered young woman?
- 66a: According to Esther 4:6-8 who goes out to Mordecai?
- 66b: According to Esther 4:6-8 where is Mordecai?

- 66c: According to Esther 4:6-8 what does Mordecai tell Hathach?
- 66d: According to Esther 4:6-8 what does Mordecai give Hathach?
- 66e: According to Esther 4:6-8 who is Hathach to show the edict to?
- 66f: According to Esther 4:6-8 what does Mordecai tell Hathach to urge Esther to do?
- 66g: According to Esther 4:6-8 why does Mordecai tell Hathach to urge Esther to go into king Xerxes' presence?
- 67: Will these words have shocked Esther?
- 68: Will these words have caused Esther to feel grief towards her people?
- 69: Can she relate to her people?
- 70: Can Mordecai expect her to do something about the killing of her people?
- 71: Why can Mordecai not expect her to do something about the killing of her people at this time?
- 72: Why is Esther already somewhat concerned about her relationship with king Xerxes?
- 73: What must Mordecai be made to understand?.
- 74: Can Mordecai know the kind of pressure Esther is under?
- 75: What is the only thing Esther can hope for?
- 76: How will Esther not be killed?
- 77: What does Esther do?
- 78: What does Esther believe?
- 79a: According to Esther 4:10-11 what does Esther instruct Hathach to say to Mordecai?
- 79b: According to Esther 4:10-11 is there an exception to the one law that anyone will be put to death who approaches the king without having been summoned?
- 79c: According to Esther 4:10-11 how many days have passed since Esther last was called to go to king Xerxes?
- 80: What is Esther fully confident of?
- 81: Why will Mordecai let Esther off the hook?
- 82: Do Esther's people deserve to be saved?
- 83: Is Esther the right person to intercede on behalf of her people?
- 84: Why does Esther know that she is not the right person to intercede on behalf of her

people?

85: Does Mordecai know that Esther is just a young, Jewish orphan girl?

86: Will Mordecai sympathise with Esther?

87: Is Mordecai's answer to Esther's note what she expects it to be?

88a: According to Esther 4:13-14 can Esther think that, because she is in the king's house, she alone of all the Jews will escape?

88b: According to Esther 4:13-14 what will happen to Esther if she remains silent at this time?

88c: According to Esther 4:13-14 what will happen to Esther and her father's family if Esther remains silent at this time?

88d: What question does Mordecai ask Esther?

89: Does Mordecai sympathise with Esther and allows her to remain silent?

90: What does Mordecai show Esther?

91: What is Esther enabled to do?

92a: According to Esther 5:2-4 who does king Xerxes see standing in the court?

92b: According to Esther 5:2-4 is king Xerxes pleased with Esther?

92c: According to Esther 5:2-4 how can you know that king Xerxes is pleased with Esther?

92d: According to Esther 5:2-4 what does Esther do?

92e: According to Esther 5:2-4 what does king Xerxes ask Esther?

92f: According to Esther 5:2-4 what will be given to Esther if requested?

92g: According to Esther 5:2-4 what is Esther's request?

93: Who is with Esther?

94: Who touches the heart of King Xerxes?

95: How do you know that God touches the heart of king Xerxes?

96: How does God use Esther?

97a: According to Esther 8:7-8 what estate has king Xerxes given to Esther?

97b: According to Esther 8:7-8 who has been hanged on the gallows?

97c: According to Esther 8:7-8 what does king Xerxes tell Esther and Mordecai to do?

- 97d: According to Esther 8:7-8 on whose behalf is the decree to be written?
- 97e: According to Esther 8:7-8 with whose signet ring is the decree to be sealed?
- 97f: According to Esther 8:7-8 why is the decree to be sealed with king Xerxes signet ring?
- 98: Who does Esther speak to?
- 99: What are Esther's people able to do because of her intervention?
- 100: Who was God able to use in the way He desired?
- 101: Why was God able to use Esther in the way He desired?
- 102: Will Esther have felt weak, insignificant within herself?
- 103: Do you perhaps feel too weak, too insignificant to ever be used by God?
- 104: What does God want to say to you?
- 105: Why does God want to use weak, insignificant people?
- 106: Who understood that?
- 107a: According to II Corinthians 12:9 what did the Lord say to Paul?
- 107b: According to II Corinthians 12:9 why was the Lord's grace sufficient for Paul?
- 107c: According to II Corinthians 12:9 what did Paul boast about?
- 107d: According to II Corinthians 12:9 why did Paul boast all the more gladly about his weaknesses?
- 108: What did Paul have to learn?
- 109: Can you use the fact that you may not be important in the eyes of the world as an excuse not to do the things God may call you to do?
- 110: Why can you not use the fact that you may not be important in the eyes of the world as an excuse not to do the things God may call you to do?
- 111: What do you have to do?
- 112: Who will make you able?

## **Chapter 12**

### **FAR FROM HOME**

Every day you are faced with choices. Some of them are very easy to make, such as what you are going to have for dinner. However, other choices are more difficult to make and may well have far reaching consequences. In the Book of Daniel you can read

about a young Jewish man named Daniel and his three friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah and the choices they had to make. Their story begins when they are taken from their country to a foreign nation Babylon, as you can read in Daniel 1:1-2

***In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure-house of his god.***

Daniel and his friends are, in fact, only teenagers when they are taken from their country. Their nation has sinned against God and God disciplines His people by allowing them to be taken into exile. And Daniel is one of the people taken into exile, even though he himself has not sinned against God.

This means that Daniel finds himself among a people who speak a foreign language, whose customs are foreign to him and whose gods are foreign gods.

Furthermore, he is not allowed to choose his education system. It is chosen for him by the king. And he is even given a Babylonian name. And all of these things are for one purpose only: that Daniel and those with him will forget that they are Hebrew people who serve the Hebrew God, as you can read in Daniel 1:3-7

***Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of the court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility – young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace. He was to teach them the language and the literature of the Babylonians. The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king’s table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king’s service. Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names; to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.***

It seems that Daniel accepts all these changes. After all, he is a prisoner of the Babylonian king so what can he do as a prisoner? He knows very well that if the king is not pleased with his behaviour he can order for Daniel’s head to be cut off. So it makes sense for Daniel to play it safe and to just go along for nothing is worth losing his life over, or is it....?

One of the things the king has ordered is that Daniel and his friends are to be fed the food and wine from the king’s table. This will have meant that their food and drink are of the very best quality and we would expect Daniel to be very pleased that he has been selected to eat the food and drink the wine from the king’s table.

Let’s read Daniel 1:8 so see if that is so.

***Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.***

How strange. Daniel accepts everything the king has decided for him but when it comes

to some food and drink items he decides not to eat any of these foods or drink any of these wines. We would want to say to Daniel, “Please, Daniel, don’t refuse to eat the food and drink the wine selected for you for if the king finds out that you refuse to eat the food and drink the wine that is served on his table he is bound to become very angry and it will only mean you will lose your head after all. You have been so careful up to now. You have accepted whatever the king has told you to do and that is very wise of you. But why have you suddenly decided to go against the king’s wishes for you? Please think again, for surely you are just talking about some food and drink items and it is not worth losing your life over these items. Apparently, to Daniel, this food and drink issue is important enough to take a stand. The reason behind his refusal is that Daniel knows that he is a Hebrew. Learning a different language, learning the Babylonian literature, even receiving a Babylonian name has not changed him into a Babylonian. On the contrary, he remains a Hebrew. And as a Hebrew, he is committed to keeping certain dietary laws. And breaking these laws means disobedience to his God. That is why Daniel is determined not to eat the food and drink the wine of the king’s table.

Now you may say:

“That story does not apply to me for I am not a Hebrew living under the Old Testament laws. I am a Gentile believer and even Jesus makes it very clear that a person is not made “unclean” by what he eats.”

And that is true, for in Matthew 15:11 Jesus says

***“What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him unclean, but what comes out of his mouth makes him “unclean.”***

Therefore, eating and drinking does not affect the condition of a person’s heart.

However, Jesus does not stop there but explains in Matthew 15:18-20 how a person becomes “unclean” when He says

***“But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man “unclean”. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man “unclean”.....”***

Daniel will have known these things as a young man and, apart from making the right food and drink choices which are in line with the Old Testament dietary laws, he will have watched his thought life. You are to do the same as you can know from Philippians 4:8, where the Apostle Paul writes

***Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.***

This means that you will need to select what you read, what you watch, or what you listen to for these things affect your way of thinking. So there will be times when you need to make a choice and not watch something, read something, or listen to something for these things not only affect your thinking; they affect what you say.

That can be awkward at times for you may well be tempted to compromise by reading something or watching something or listening to something that you know is not in line with the Word of God. You may even be tempted to think it does not matter for you

believe no one else is aware of what you are doing. But remember, God knows for God sees everything you do. Therefore, act like Daniel did, and make a decision not to watch, not to read or not to listen to something you know will not please God for God wants you to have a renewed mind, as you can read in Romans 12:2

***Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.***

You receive a renewed mind when you spend time reading, meditating and studying God's Word in order for you to learn to think in a way that is pleasing to God. Having a renewed mind will cause you to speak in a way that is pleasing to God and will cause you to act in ways that show your love for God and for others, as you can read in Luke 6:27-38, where Jesus says,

***“But I tell you who hear Me; Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even “sinners” love those who love them. And if you are good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even “sinners” do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even “sinners” lend to “sinners” expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”***

Now you know that Daniel is only a young man when he makes this decision not to eat the food and drink the wine of the king's table. But does he remain committed to obeying His God as time goes on? After serving king Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel next serves king Belshazzar. This king so displeases God that God allows Babylon to be taken over by the Medes when king Belshazzar is killed, as you can read in Daniel 5:30-31

***That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.***

However, Daniel remains at the Royal Court and now serves king Darius, as you can read in Daniel 6:1-2

***It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss.***

Daniel remains faithful and loyal to the one he serves for he knows that he is not just serving a king, he is serving his God. Likewise, you too are to serve God in whatever you

do, for the Apostle Paul writes in I Corinthians 10:31

***So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.***

The king is very pleased with Daniel's faithful service to him, as you can read in Daniel 6:3

***Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.***

Unfortunately, the other administrators are not as pleased with Daniel as the king is so they want to take action against him, as we can read in Daniel 6:4

***At this the administrators and satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.***

These men are not able to accuse Daniel of anything because he lives a life totally devoted to his God and pleasing to Him. And is that how you live? Do you live your life in such a way that no-one can accuse you of any wrong doing?

Does that mean that the enemies of Daniel stop trying to take action against him? Sadly no, and they think they may have found something to accuse him of, as you can read in Daniel 6:5

***Finally, these men said, "We will never have any basis for charges against this man Daniel, unless it has something to do with the law of his God."***

The question is: Are they successful? You can find out from Daniel 6:6-9 what happens next.

***So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said, "O, king Darius, live forever! The royal administrators, satraps, advisors and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered –in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." So king Darius put the decree in writing.***

King Darius, no doubt very flattered by the request of his administrators, puts out the decree as requested by them. Their flattery has made him forget one very important thing and that is that his foolish action may well cause him to lose his most treasured servant Daniel to the lions. For Daniel has never in all his years of service at the Court given up on worshipping the God of Israel. But perhaps this time he will at least give up his daily practice of praying to his God three times a day in front of his open window. Surely, even God will not mind if he stops praying in front of that window? After all, God will be able to hear his prayers even when they are prayed in another part of the room where no-one can see him. Moreover, his knees must be worn out because of all the kneeling he has done over the years and his body is, very likely, no longer strong enough to be able to fight off lions. Therefore, God will not mind if he changes his habit somewhat so that his life can be preserved and he can continue to serve his God. But is that how Daniel reasons? Daniel 6:10 tells you what he does when he gets home.

***Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.***

That day Daniel goes back home and he prays at his usual spot, in front of his open window facing Jerusalem. He once again makes a choice to continue to obey his God, regardless of the cost, knowing full well that his action will bring him before lions, as you can read in Daniel 6:16

***So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God whom you serve continually, rescue you!"***

The king has no choice but to have Daniel thrown before the lions. All he can hope for now is that Daniel's God will keep Daniel safe. That night sleep evades the king and as soon as it is light, he gets up to check on Daniel hoping against hope that he is still alive, as you can read in Daniel 6:19-23

***At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel answered, "O king, live for ever! My God sent His angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in His sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king." The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.***

Words cannot describe how the king feels when he hears the voice of his trusted servant Daniel declaring that, yes, he is alive and well for his God has watched over him and has not allowed him to be touched by the lions.

So, we know from this account that Daniel obeyed his God throughout his life. Likewise God wants you to live a life of obedience regardless of the challenges you may face. As a believer, you will face a being that acts like a lion, as Peter writes in I Peter 5:8

***Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.***

This "lion" is obviously not a physical lion as Daniel had to deal with but is the devil who is a fallen angel. Moreover this fallen angel makes himself look like an angel of light, as you can read in II Corinthians 11:14

***And no wonder, for satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.***

Therefore, the devil's ways are very deceptive and that means you are to have a close walk with the Lord in order to be able to withstand him, as James writes in James 4:7

***Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.***

You are to live this life of faith in God on a daily basis and it ought to affect the way you think, how you speak and how you act. You are not to compromise on your faith in any way for that would mean you are denying the Lord the place you have given Him in your

life. If He is your Lord then He is to be your Lord for all times and in all circumstances. Regardless of what that might mean. It may mean you will be misunderstood or even mocked for your stand. If that is so, then you are to simply forgive those who do these things to you for they do not know what they are doing. Jesus is your example for He forgave those who crucified Him, as you can read in Luke 23:34

***Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."***

And you are not to give up doing what you know to be right, as Paul writes in Galatians 6:9

***Let us not become weary of doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.***

God wants you to trust Him to take care of you. And He will do so for He has promised to never leave you, as you can read in Hebrews 13:5

***"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."***

And God wants you to look forward to the day that you will hear the Lord's praise, which you can read in Matthew 25:21

***"Well done, good and faithful servant."***

So be like Daniel and ask the Lord to help you to obey Him every day of your life regardless of what may happen for God will take care of you in the same way that He took care of Daniel. The author of the Book of Hebrews writes that the Lord never changes in Hebrews 13:8

***Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.***

Therefore, you can trust the Lord to help you live a life that is pleasing to Him just as He helped Daniel to be faithful and obedient to God in everything that he did.

## QUESTIONS

1: Are some choices difficult to make?

2: About whom can you read in the Book of Daniel?

3: What are the names of Daniel's three friends?

4: Where are Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah taken to?

5a: According to Daniel 1:1-2 who comes to Jerusalem to besiege it?

5b: According to Daniel 1:1-2 where has king Nebuchadnezzar come from?

5c: According to Daniel 1:1-2 who is king of Judah?

5d: According to Daniel 1:1-2 when does king Nebuchadnezzar come to Jerusalem to besiege it?

5e: According to Daniel 1:1-2 who delivers king Jehoiakim into the hand of king Nebuchadnezzar?

5f: According to Daniel 1:1-2 what does king Nebuchadnezzar take from the temple of God?

5g: According to Daniel 1:1-2 where does king Nebuchadnezzar carry the articles from the temple of God off to?

5h: According to Daniel 1:1-2 where does king Nebuchadnezzar put the articles from the temple of God?

6: How old are Daniel and his friends when they are taken from their country?

7: What has the nation of Daniel and his friends done?

8: How does God discipline His people?

9: Who is one of the people taken into exile?

10: Has Daniel sinned against God?

11: What does that mean for Daniel?

12: Is Daniel allowed to choose his education system?

13: Who chooses Daniel's education system for him?

14: What other name is Daniel given?

15: What is the purpose for all these changes?

16a: According to Daniel 1:3-7 who is the chief of the court officials?

16b: According to Daniel 1:3-7 what does king Nebuchadnezzar order Ashpenaz to do?

16c: According to Daniel 1:3-7 what are the requirements of these young men?

16d: According to Daniel 1:3-7 where are these young men to serve?

16e: According to Daniel 1:3-7 what is Ashpenaz to teach these young men?

16f: According to Daniel 1:3-7 what does king Nebuchadnezzar assign these young men?

16g: According to Daniel 1:3-7 for how long are these young men to be trained?

16h: According to Daniel 1:3-7 whose service are these young men to enter afterwards?

16i: According to Daniel 1:3-7 who are from Judah?

16j: According to Daniel 1:3-7 what new names does the chief official give to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah?

17: Does Daniel accept all these changes?

18: Why does Daniel accept all these changes?.

- 19: What can happen to Daniel if king Nebuchadnezzar is not pleased with his behaviour?
- 20: Does it make sense for Daniel to play it safe and to just go along?
- 21: What is one of the things king Nebuchadnezzar has ordered?
- 22: Will this have meant that the food and wine for Daniel and his three friends are of the very best quality?
- 23: Would you expect Daniel to be very pleased that he has been selected to eat the food and drink the wine from king Nebuchadnezzar's table?
- 24a: According to Daniel 1:8 what does Daniel resolve not to do?
- 24b: According to Daniel 1:8 what does Daniel ask the chief official?
- 25: Why would you want to say to Daniel to not to refuse to eat the food and drink the wine selected for him?
- 26: Why would you want Daniel to think again?
- 27: Is this food and drink issue important enough for Daniel to take a stand?
- 28: What is the reason behind Daniel's refusal?
- 29: Has learning the Babylonian language and literature as well as receiving a Babylonian name changed Daniel into a Babylonian?
- 30: As a Hebrew, what is Daniel committed to keep?
- 31: What does breaking these dietary laws mean for Daniel?
- 32: Could you say that this story does not apply to you?
- 33: Why could you say that this story does not apply to you?
- 34: What are you?
- 35: What does Jesus make very clear about a person?
- 36a: According to Matthew 15:11 what does Jesus say about a man's mouth?
- 36b: According to Matthew 15:11 what does Jesus say makes a man "unclean"?
- 37: Does eating and drinking affect the condition of a person's heart?
- 38a: According to Matthew 15:18-20 where do the things that come out of someone's mouth come from?
- 38b: According to Matthew 15:18-20 why is the heart the place of a man's "uncleanness"?
- 39: Will Daniel have known these things as a young man?

- 40: What will Daniel have done?
- 41: Are you to watch your thought life?
- 42: According to Philippians 4:8 what does Paul write?
- 43: What does that mean for you?
- 44: Why do you need to select what you read, watch or listen to?
- 45: Why will there be times when you need to make a choice to not watch something, read something or listen to something?
- 46: Why can choosing not to watch something, read something or listen to something be awkward at times?
- 47: How can you be tempted to compromise?
- 48: Why can you be tempted to think it does not matter what you read, watch or listen to?
- 49: What should you remember?
- 50: How are you to act?
- 51: What does God want you to have?
- 52a: According to Romans 12:2 what are you no longer to conform to?
- 52b: According to Romans 12:2 what are you to be?
- 52c: According to Romans 12:2 how are you to be transformed?
- 52d: According to Romans 12:2 what will you be able to test and approve then?
- 53: How will you receive a renewed mind?
- 54: What will reading, meditating and studying God's Word enable you to do?
- 55: What will having a renewed mind enable you to do?
- 56: What will speaking in a way that is pleasing to God enable you to do?
- 57a: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do about your enemies?
- 57b: According to Luke 6:27-38 how are you to treat those who hate you?
- 57c: According to Luke 6:27-28 what are you to do about those who curse you?
- 57d: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do about those who mistreat you?
- 57e: According to Luke 6:27-28 what are you to do when someone strikes you on one cheek?

57f: According to Luke 6:27-38 what are you to do about someone who takes your cloak?

57g: According to Luke 6:27-38 to whom are you to give?

57h: According to Luke 6:27-28 what are you to do about someone who takes what belongs to you?

57i: According to Luke 6:27-28 do “sinners” love those who love them?

Answer: According to Luke 6:27-38 “sinners” love those who love them.

57j: According to Luke 6:27-28 are “sinners” good to those who are good to them?

57k: According to Luke 6:27-38 do “sinners” lend to those who lend to them?

57l: According to Luke 6:27-28 when will you be a son of the Most High?

57m: According to Luke 6:27-38 why will you be a son of the Most High when you love your enemies, do good to them and lend to them without expecting to get anything back?

57n: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you not to judge?

57o: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you not to condemn?

57p: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you to forgive?

57q: According to Luke 6:27-38 why are you to give?

57r: According to Luke 6:27-38 what will be poured into your lap?

57s: According to Luke 6:27-28 what will be measured to you?.

58: When does Daniel make the decision not to eat the food and drink the wine of king Nebuchadnezzar’s table?

59: Who does Daniel serve next after having served king Nebuchadnezzar?

60: How does God view king Belshazzar?

61: How can you know that God is very displeased with king Belshazzar?

62a: According to Daniel 5:30-31 what happened to Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians?

62b: According to Daniel 5:30-31 who takes over the Babylonian kingdom?

62c: According to Daniel 5:30-31 how old is Darius the Mede when he takes over the Babylonian kingdom?

63: Where is Daniel?

64: Who does Daniel serve?

- 65a: According to Daniel 6:1-2 how many satraps does Darius appoint?
- 65b: According to Daniel 6:1-2 what are the satraps to do?
- 65c: According to Daniel 6:1-2 who are placed over the 120 satraps?
- 65d: According to Daniel 6:1-2 who is one of the administrators?
- 65e: According to Daniel 6:1-2 to whom are the satraps made accountable?
- 65f: According to Daniel 6:1-2 why are the 120 satraps made accountable to the three administrators?
- 66: Why does Daniel remain faithful and loyal to the one he serves?
- 67: Are you, likewise, to serve God in whatever you do?
- 68: According to I Corinthians 10:31 what does Paul tell you to do for the glory of God?
- 69: Is king Darius very pleased with Daniel's faithful service?
- 70a: According to Daniel 6:3 who distinguishes himself among the administrators and the satraps?
- 70b: According to Daniel 6:3 how does Daniel distinguish himself among the administrators and the satraps?.
- 70c: According to Daniel 6:3 what does king Darius plan to do?
- 71: Are the other administrators as pleased with Daniel as king Darius?
- 72: What do the other administrators want to do?
- 73a: According to Daniel 6:4 what do the other administrators and the satraps try to do?
- 73b: According to Daniel 6:4 in what way do the other administrators and the satraps try to find grounds for charges against Daniel?
- 73c: According to Daniel 6:4 are the other administrators and the satraps able to find grounds for charges against Daniel?
- 73d: According to Daniel 6:4 why are the other administrators and the satraps unable to find grounds for charges against Daniel?
- 73e: According to Daniel 6:4 why can the other administrators and the satraps not find corruption in Daniel?
- 74: Why are these administrators and the satraps not able to accuse Daniel of anything?
- 75: Does that mean that the enemies of Daniel stop trying to take action against him?
- 76: According to Daniel 6:5 what do these administrators and satraps say?

- 77a: According to Daniel 6:6-9 who goes to king Darius?
- 77b: According to Daniel 6:6-9 what do the other administrators and the satraps say to king Darius?
- 77c: According to Daniel 6:6-9 what should the edict enforce?
- 77d: According to Daniel 6:6-9 what do the other administrators and the satraps tell king Darius to do?
- 77e: According to Daniel 6:6-9 why is the edict to be put in writing?
- 77f: According to Daniel 6:6-9 which laws cannot be repealed?
- 77g: According to Daniel 6:6-9 what does king Darius do?
- 78: Does king Darius put out the decree?
- 79: Has the flattery of the other administrators and the satraps made king Darius forget one very important thing?
- 80: Why can king Darius' foolish action cause him to lose his most treasured servant Daniel?
- 81: What is Daniel's daily practice?
- 82: Will God hear Daniel's prayers even when they are prayed in another part of the room where no-one can see him?
- 83: Has Daniel's knees worn out because of all the kneeling he has done over the years?
- 84: Is Daniel's body strong enough to fight off lions?
- 85: Will God mind if Daniel changes his habit somewhat?
- 86: Is that how Daniel reasons?
- 87a: According to Daniel 6:10 what does Daniel do when he has learned that the decree has been published?
- 87b: According to Daniel 6:10 what does Daniel do when he is home?
- 87c: According to Daniel 6:10 what does Daniel do in his upstairs room?
- 87d: According to Daniel 6:10 how many times a day does Daniel pray in front of the open windows facing Jerusalem in his upstairs room?
- 87e: According to Daniel 6:10 has Daniel prayed three times a day in front of the open windows facing Jerusalem in his upstairs room before?
- 88: Does Daniel go home and pray at his usual place?
- 89: What is Daniel's usual place of prayer?

- 90: What choice does Daniel make?
- 91: What does Daniel know?
- 92a: According to Daniel 6:16 what does king Darius do?
- 92b: According to Daniel 6:16 what happens to Daniel?
- 92c: According to Daniel 6:16 what does king Darius say to Daniel?
- 93: Does king Darius have a choice about having Daniel thrown before the lions?
- 94: What is the only thing that king Darius can hope for now?
- 95: Can king Darius sleep that night?
- 96: When does king Darius get up?
- 97: What does king Darius do when he gets up?
- 98: What does king Darius hope for?
- 99a: According to Daniel 6:19-23 who gets up at the first light of dawn?
- 99b: According to Daniel 6:19-23 where does king Darius go to?
- 99c: According to Daniel 6:19-23 to whom does king Darius call out?
- 99d: According to Daniel 6:19-23 in what voice does king Darius call out to Daniel?
- 99e: According to Daniel 6:19-23 how does king Darius address Daniel?
- 99f: According to Daniel 6:19-23 what does king Darius ask Daniel?
- 99g: According to Daniel 6:19-23 what does king Darius know about Daniel?
- 99h: According to Daniel 6:19-23 how does Daniel begin his answer king Darius?
- 99i: According to Daniel 6:19-23 who has sent an angel to Daniel?.
- 99j: According to Daniel 6:19-23 what has the angel done?
- 99k: According to Daniel 6:19-23 have the lions hurt Daniel?.
- 99l: According to Daniel 6:19-23 why have the lions not hurt Daniel?
- 99m: According to Daniel 6:19-23 has Daniel ever done any wrong before king Darius?
- 99n: According to Daniel 6:19-23 what is king Darius' response to Daniel's words?
- 99o: According to Daniel 6:19-23 what orders does king Darius give?
- 99p: According to Daniel 6:19-23 what is Daniel's condition when he is lifted out of the lions' den?

99q: According to Daniel 6:19-23 why is no wound found on Daniel when he is lifted out of the lions' den?

100: Can words describe how king Darius feels when he hears the voice of Daniel?

101: What does Daniel say to king Darius?

102: What do we know from this account about Daniel?

103: What does God want you to do?

104: As a believer, who will you face?

105a: According to I Peter 5:8 what are you to be?

105b: According to I Peter 5:8 why are you to be self-controlled and alert?

105c: According to I Peter 5:8 who is your enemy the devil looking for?

106: Is this "lion" a physical lion?

107: How does this fallen angel make himself look like?

108: According to II Corinthians 11:14 how does satan masquerade himself?

109: What are the devil's ways?

110: What does that mean for you?

111: Why do have you to have a close walk with God?

112a: According to James 4:7 Who should you submit yourself to?

112b: According to James 4:7 what are you to do after you have submitted yourself to God?

112c: According to James 4:7 after you have submitted yourself to God and resisted the devil, who will flee from you?

113: How are you to live this life of faith in God?

114: In what ways ought living this life of faith in God affect you?

115: Why are you not to compromise on your faith in any way?

116: Is the Lord to be your Lord for all times and under all circumstances?

117: What are you to do when you are misunderstood or even mocked for your stand?

118: Do those who misunderstand you or even mock you for your stand know what they are doing?

119: Who is your example?

- 120: According to Luke 23:34 what did Jesus say?
- 121: Are you to give up doing what you know to be right?
- 122a: According to Galatians 6:9 what does Paul tell you to do?
- 122b: According to Galatians 6:9 why does Paul tell you to not be weary of doing good?
- 123: What does God want you to do?
- 124: Why will God take care of you?
- 125: According to Hebrews 13:5 what does the author say about God?
- 126: What does God want you to look forward to?
- 127: According to Matthew 25:21 what does Matthew tell you God wants say to you?
- 128: Who are you to be like?
- 129: How are you to be like Daniel?
- 130: Why are you to ask the Lord to help you obey Him every day of your life regardless of what may happen to you?
- 131: What does the author of the Book of Hebrews write about the Lord?
- 132: According to Hebrews 13:8 Who does the author says remains the same?
- 133: Why can you trust the Lord to help you live a life that is pleasing to Him just as He helped Daniel to be faithful and obedient to Him in everything that he did?