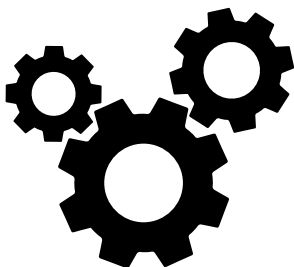


RAMADAN2019



carrying the name of *Jesus*
to Muslims



LEARN



PRAY



GO

a 30 day guide

What is this guide for?

Each year we ask our prayer partners to take an extra step of commitment during the month of Ramadan. It has been our experience that this month is a great time of openness to the Gospel as Muslims around the world are thinking about the things of God and their faith in a super-intense sort of way.

We hope this guide helps our prayer partners in the states 1) pray specifically for Muslims around the world and close to them and 2) have a better understanding of how to engage those in closest proximity. Our prayer is that this 30-day Ramadan Guide will help you in both of these areas!

We want to see you grow in your understanding of and heart for Muslims (be they in Niger or in Nashville). We need more and more folks standing in the gap, calling out to God for the salvation of Muslim men and women around the world. And we need more and more folks to bring that same passion into their own outreach and love for the souls of their Muslim neighbors and co-workers.

It is our prayer that over the next 30 days you will grow in your awareness and understanding of Muslims and the Islamic faith. We also hope that you grow in your desire for reaching the Muslims within arms reach of where you live.

It is our desire that at the end of this 30 days you will know the names of Muslims in your community, that they will be invited into your homes and into your lives and that many Muslims will hear (maybe for the first time) the Good News that God saves sinners!

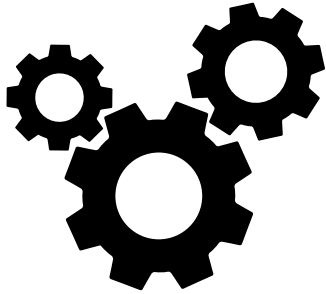
It is a joy to take this journey with you and we pray for much fruit!

Together,

Mark & Parker Phillips

How to use this guide:

This guide is designed to be completed over a 30 day period from June 18 to July 17 (the month of Ramadan). Each day you will be given the following 3 categories:



LEARN

In this section you will find information on Islam each day. This information will range from the global status of evangelism among Muslims to specific information or links to articles and good books about Islam. The goal of this section is simply to increase your understanding of Muslim lostness and to better understand some of the more basic elements of the Islamic faith.



PRAY

In this section you will find prayer points or even sample prayers each day to guide you as you pray for Muslims around the world and specifically in Great Bend. These will range from praying for laborers to praying for specific people and places to praying through certain passages of Scripture.



GO

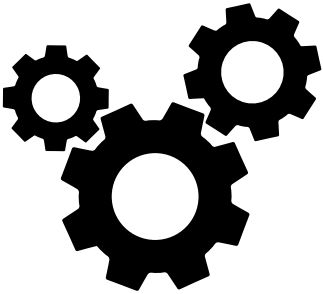
In this section you will find specific action plans to help you as you develop a heart for and intentionally engage Muslims around you. The goal of this section is that you will begin to take steps to befriend and engage the Muslims God has brought to your front door with the Good News of Jesus Christ!



NOTES

Use this space to keep track of names of people you meet, relationships you want to develop and things God is teaching you.

MAY 5 - DAY 1



Understanding People Groups

There are 11,755 distinct people groups (PGs) in the world today. A people group is a significantly large grouping of individuals who perceive themselves to have a common affinity with one another. For evangelization purposes, a people group is the largest group within which the Gospel can spread as a church planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance.



In Acts 26, Paul explains his conversion/commissioning to King Agrippa by saying God sent him "to open their eyes, so that they [Gentiles] may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith."

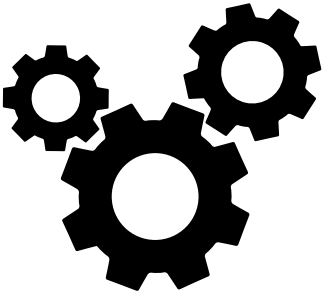
Father, you made each of these people groups in your image. You love them and you desire that they would turn from darkness to light. We trust that each of these groups will be represented around your throne. Teach me to love and desire the things you love and desire.



Ed Stetzer says "Satan's most effective strategy is not the opposition to the kingdom on mission fields around the world but the indifference of churches and God's people who have become self-centered and lost a passion for reaching a lost world." Today we ask you to **Go** to your prayer closet and ask God to burden your heart for the nations and specifically Muslim PGs. Passion for the nations is a choice. **Choose** to make the worship of Jesus from everyone of these 11,755 people groups a burning passion in your life.



MAY 6 - DAY 2



Understanding People Groups

Of the 11,755 PGs in the world today, 7,084 are considered unreached (UPGs). A PG is considered a UPG when there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers (>2% evangelical) or resources to evangelize their own people without outside assistance.



Father, we long for that day when "righteousness and praise will spring up before all the nations" (Is. 61:11) and you will receive the worship and the glory and the honor that you alone deserve. We lift up these 7,084 peoples you created and love and ask you to fan into flame a passion to carry the name of Jesus into places it has not yet gone. Raise up national believers and local churches and workers from the universal church to come alongside these brothers and sisters in Gospel partnership.

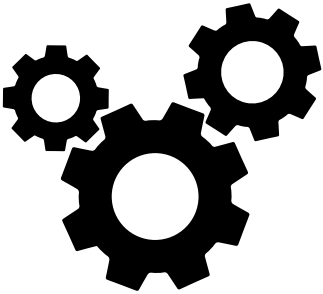


Determine an action plan to familiarize yourself with people groups of the world. **Purchase** a copy of Operation World to lead you through daily prayer for the nations **OR visit operationworld.org** for a free version.

Download the **Unreached People of the Day APP** from Joshua Project and begin to pray specific prayer requests for specific peoples each and every day.

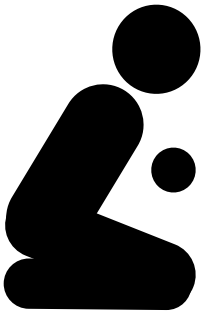


MAY 7 - DAY 3



Understanding People Groups

Of the 7,084 UPGs, there are 3,168 which are considered unreached AND unengaged (UUPGs). A PG is considered a UUPG when there is no known active church planting underway. A people group is engaged when a church planting strategy, consistent with evangelical faith and practice, is under implementation.



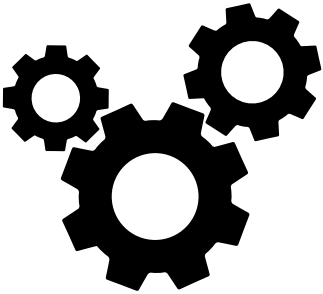
Father, that there are myriads of people groups in the world today who have little to no access to the Gospel breaks our heart. These people have not rejected the Gospel message but rather live in ignorance knowing only enough of you to condemn them to an eternity apart from you. Awaken the Church and awaken my heart to the lostness of the nations. We long to see your salvation reach the ends of the earth (Is. 49:6) so raise up your Church for your Glory to be made known among all peoples.



Go to your senior pastor (or call or email) and ask him to consider adopting one of these 3,168 UUPGs as a church. Together you can go to **imb.org** to find resources on how best to do this. If your church has already done this, ask him how you might be a catalyst in the church for leading the church to a deeper commitment to your people group.



MAY 8 - DAY 4



Peoples of Great Bend Cluster

There are **1,442 PGs** in the Great Bend Cluster which is 54% of all PGs in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Among these 1,442, are **828 UPGs** which make up 49% of all UPGs in SSA. Among these 828 UPGs are **203 UUPGs** which make up 39% of all UUPGs in SSA.



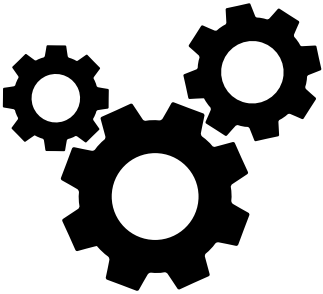
Despite the overwhelming numbers of people groups and unreached and unengaged people groups. The Great Bend Cluster only contains 12% of the IMB workforce in SSA. Pray for the Lord to raise up more long-term and mid-term families to come and plant their lives among the peoples of Great Bend.



Visit www.greatbendcluster.com and read through some of the information about the peoples of Great Bend. **Download and print out** the prayer guide offered in the resource tab.



MAY 9 - DAY 5



Muslims in the Great Bend Cluster

There are an **208 PGs** in Great Bend with a Muslim majority population. These Muslim majority PGs contain **over 121 million people** or more than 1/4 of the total population of Great Bend.



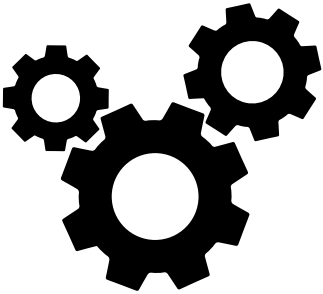
Pray **Psalms 63:1-3** over these 208 PGs. Pray that God would be gracious to these peoples and bless them and make his face shine upon them SO THAT His way might be known on earth, His saving power among ALL nations.



Most Americans view the world through a guilt/innocence worldview. However, most Muslims look through a lens of honor/shame. This means we must share the Gospel in appropriate ways. For help in understanding how to share a Gospel presentation which might resonate with Muslims, **go to** www.honorshame.com/videos/ and **watch** the "Back to God's Village" video.

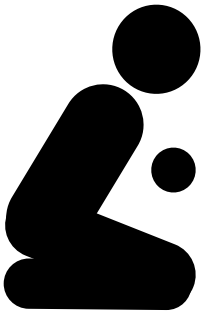


MAY 10 - DAY 6



The 10/40 Window

The 10/40 Window is the rectangular area containing parts of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude. The 10/40 Window is often called "The Resistant Belt" and includes the majority of the world's Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. There are **8,093** people groups (**4.75 billion people**) living inside in the 10/40 Window, 5,530 (63%) of which are unreached (2.91 billion people).



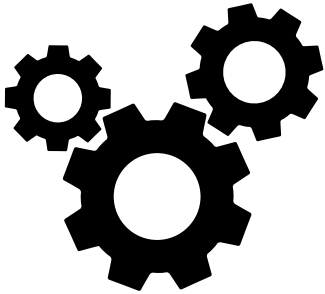
Take time today to pray for God to bring Muslims into your life. Ask God to cross your path with the Muslims living near you. Pray that when He answers that prayer you will be willing and ready to share with Muslims the hope you have in Christ (1 Peter 3:15).



Set aside today to **Fast** for the nations and peoples in the 10/40 window. Spend the day in consistent and intentional prayer for the overwhelming lostness in this window. **Use** the hunger pangs your body feels throughout the day to remind you of those starving for the Bread of Life. **Consider** developing a habit of fasting for the nations.

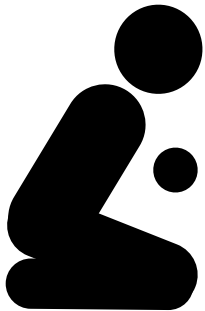


MAY II - DAY 7



Muslims in the 10/40 Window

There are an estimated **724 million** Muslims living inside the 10/40 window. It is also estimated that only **3.3%** of foreign missionaries are working inside this window. According to the World Christian Encyclopedia, of all the money designated for "missions" in the U.S. only 5.4% is used for foreign missions. Of that 5.4%, only **1%** is used to take the gospel to unreached people who don't have access to the gospel i.e., the 10/40 window.



In Luke 10:2 seems to show that it will not be a lack of response but rather a lack of going which stands in the way of Gospel advance. His strategy to remedy this problem is, in a word, shocking. Jesus believes that the greatest tool His people possess in the war on lostness is, sadly, one of the most neglected ones: prayer. Pray what Jesus challenged his disciples to pray, that is to "pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Pray for an unprecedented number of believers to answer the call to carry the name of Jesus to those in the 10/40 window.

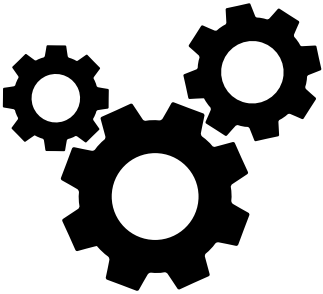


In your small group, ABF, Sunday School class or any other regular group you meet with, **bring their attention** to the 10/40 window by printing out a map or looking up one online.

Commit to educate yourselves and to **pray intentionally** for those in the 10/40 window. If your church takes mission trips into this region of the world, **consider** applying to be on one of the mission teams.



MAY 12 - DAY 8



Muslim Majority Countries in the World

There are **49** countries in the world today that have a majority population of Muslims. These countries can be grouped into what David Garrison calls the 9 rooms in the House of Islam.

(See resource guide for a map)



The 9 Rooms in the House of Islam: East Africa

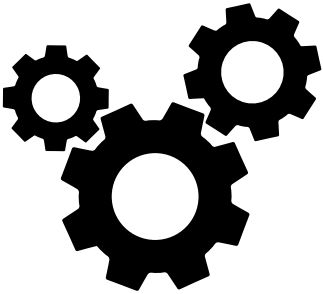
Pray for the 19 countries, 298 PGs, and 78 million Muslims which make up 22% of the total population of these 19 countries. While extreme Islam is on the rise in many of these areas, they are also areas that have historically had a huge Christian population. Pray for the Church in this area to rise up and carry the Gospel to their Muslim neighbors and fellow countrymen. Pray that they would not respond to violence with violence but rather peace, forgiveness, and bold sharing of the Good News.



To continue learning about honor/shame cultures, **take some time to look over** the theology guide in the resources section of this guide to see how you might **change your vocabulary** (not the Gospel) as you share Christ with your Muslim neighbors.



MAY 13 - DAY 9



Muslim Majority People Groups

There are an estimated **1,177** Muslim Unreached Unengaged People Groups (or MUUPGs) in the world today. Of them, **187** have a population of over 100,000 people.



The 9 Rooms in the House of Islam: Eastern South Asia

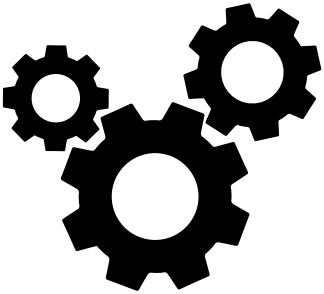
Pray for the 4 nations containing 65 PGs and 283 million Muslims which make up 34% of the total population of these 4 countries. There are many movements to Christ in these areas. Pray that God would raise up strong national believers, grounded in their faith, who will lead the way of taking the Gospel to those living in darkness and to plant Biblically sound churches that would serve as lights to their communities.



Go to **www.islamicfinder.org** and type in your zip code to find the nearest mosque or Islamic center near you. If possible, **drive** to this center and **prayer walk** near the premises for the people who are attending worship there and also for yourself to have boldness in seeking out and sharing with Muslims.



MAY 14 - DAY 10



Muslim in the USA

There are an estimated 4 million Muslims living in America and around 1200 mosques or Islamic centers. Many of these Muslims represent UPGs and UUPGs from countries inaccessible to missionaries. In fact, the USA has the 3rd highest number of UPGs in the world only behind India and China.



The 9 Rooms in the House of Islam: Arab World

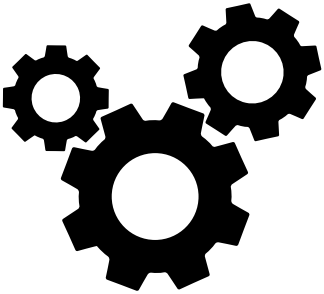
Pray for the 21 nations in this "room" stretching across North Africa and the Middle East. There are 240 PGs with a Muslim population of 204 million people which makes up 86% of the total population of these 21 countries. These are some of the most dangerous places in the world to follow Jesus. Pray for God to call many to faith in Jesus through visions and dreams and through bold testimonies of those counting the cost to follow Jesus.



Go to an internationally owned place of business (grocery store, gas station, restaurant). **Pray** for the Holy Spirit to lead you to people of peace as you walk into the business. Now simply try to **build relationships**. You might find items you're unfamiliar with and ask the employees to explain them to you. You could ask them to tell you about their country. The point is to build some rapport. Do not leave without exchanging names. **Commit** to pray for this new friend.

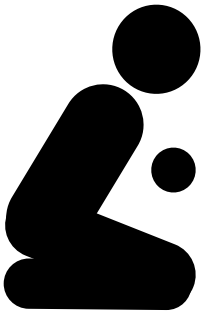


MAY 15 - DAY II



Missiological Terminology: Animism

Animism is the belief that personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces have power over human affairs and, consequently, that human beings must discover what beings and forces are influencing them in order to determine future action and, frequently, to manipulate their power.



The 9 Rooms in the House of Islam: Indo-Malaysia

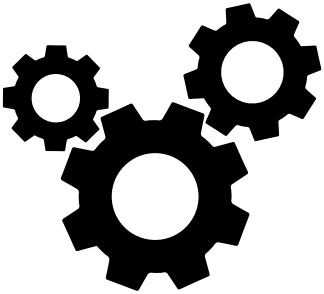
Pray for the 6 counties, 282 people groups and 201 million Muslims which make up 73% of the total population of these 6 countries living in this region of the world. Pray for the Muslims who come to faith in Christ to stand firm in their faith despite much persecution. Pray that their persecutors and their communities and families would be drawn to Christ as they see for themselves the afflictions of Christ in the bodies of these believers (Colossians 1:24)



Go back to the same location where you met your person of peace. As you exchange greetings and small talk, **ask** them if they are celebrating Ramadan. If they are, ask if they would be willing to explain it to you sometime. Explain that you are a Christian and because of that, God has given you a love for all peoples. Explain that you'd like to know more about their faith/country of origin/family. **Set a time to get together.**



MAY 16 - DAY 12



Missiological Terminology: Syncretism

Syncretism is the combining of different, often seemingly contradictory beliefs, while melding practices of various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merger and analogizing of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths.



The 9 Rooms in the House of Islam: North Africa

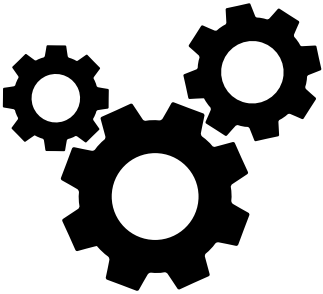
Pray for the 6 countries, 82 PGs and 99 million Muslims which make up 99% of the total population of these 6 countries. Pray for technology to be used to get the Gospel into areas where there are no Christians and no missionaries. Pray for satellite TV and radio along with internet to be used to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to those with no witness. Many of these people groups have little to no Bible translation in their language. Pray for those doing translation work and for more to join the task.



Look over the “5 steps to effective sharing” resource at the end of this guide. **Familiarize** yourself with the transition questions to help you better move a conversation from peripheral things to the Gospel. **Read** over the First and Last Sacrifice story and **commit** to share it with someone.



MAY 17 - DAY 13



Missiological Terminology: Folk Islam

It is estimated that around 70% of Muslims would fit into the category of "Folk Islam." Folk Islam, as opposed to Orthodox Islam is a blending (syncretizing) of animistic and Islamic practices. These Muslims would believe in traditional magic systems (such as the evil eye), the use of shrines and amulets, and the veneration of saints.



The 9 Rooms in the House of Islam: Persian

Pray for the 3 countries, 105 PGs, and 98 million Muslims which make up 99% of the total population of the 3 countries. Despite the overwhelming statistics and it being the unlikeliest of places, God is at work in this part of the world as tens of thousands of Muslims are coming to Christ. Pray for these new believers to be discipled as they grow in their faith. Pray for churches to be planted that will be places where men and women can be equipped for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:12)

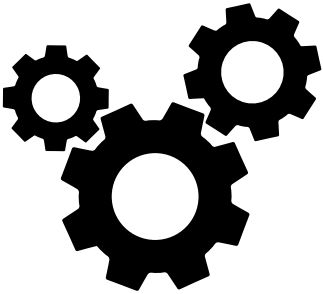


Go to www.welcomeafricans.com and **watch** "The Prophet's Story" for a good way to tell a Creation to Christ story with Muslims.

Bookmark the website or download this video so that you can show it to your Muslim friends.

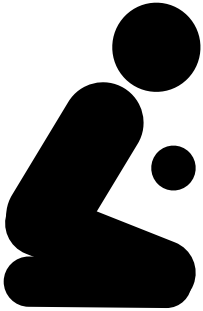


MAY 18 - DAY 14



The 5 Pillars of Islam: Shahada

This simple one-sentence confession of faith is the basis for everything Muslims teach and believe: "I bear witness and testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger (or prophet) of Allah." This creed is the gateway into Islam (which has no sacraments or priesthood and no rite of initiation, such as baptism. To solemnly recite this confession of faith, with sincerity, in the presence of at least 2 witnesses in its Arabic original is to become a Muslim. This phrase is whispered into the ears of newborn children at birth and is repeated throughout life in the daily salat (required prayers) and is said over the body of a Muslim about to be buried.



The 9 Rooms in the House of Islam: Turkesta

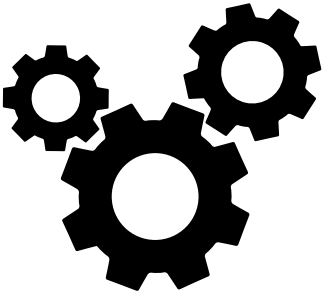
Pray for the 15 countries, 227 PGs and 159 million Muslims which make up 78% of the total population of these 15 countries. This is an area open to Western influence but not Western missionaries. Pray for God to call American doctors, businessmen, teachers, and other professionals to take the Gospel to this part of the world where traditional missionaries cannot go. Pray that they would be burdened to make it their ambition to preach the Gospel not where Christ has already been named (Rom 15:20).



Take your Muslim contacts or Muslim neighbors a small gift around sundown. This can be a small package of dates or cookies or perhaps a nice pack of tea. **Explain** that you just wanted to give them this small gift as a sign of friendship and that you'd like to talk with them sometime about their faith/life/country of origin.

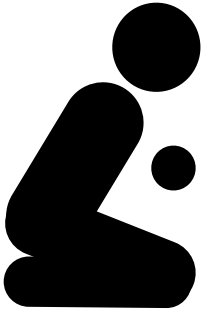


MAY 19 - DAY 15



The 5 Pillars of Islam: Salat

Five times a day (just before dawn, at noon, at mid-afternoon, just after sunset, and again sometime around midnight) the devout Muslim is required to bow down before Allah in the direction of the Great Mosque of Mecca. Every mosque (or masjid which means "place of prostration" or "house of prayer.") has a niche in the wall called the mihrab which points in the direction of Mecca. The worshipper must wash hands, face, and feet before each prayer.



The 9 Rooms in the House of Islam: Western South Asia

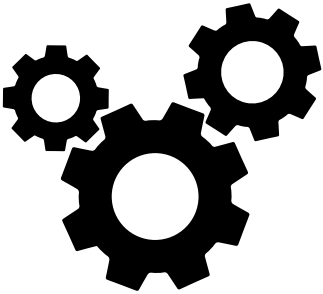
Pray for the 3 countries, 186 PGs, and 316 million Muslims which make up 44% of the total population of these 3 countries. Despite covering only a handful of geopolitical countries, this region is incredibly diverse. Pray that past histories, racism, classism and other cultural barriers would fall down as national believers do the most counter-cultural thing possible and love those who are from different cultures. Pray that the church would be a place that displays a diversity this region has never known (Rev 7:9)



Find out more about meeting international students by **contacting** groups like Inter-national Student, Inc. (www.internationalstudents.org) or email information@isionline.org, Bridges International (www.bridgesinternaional.com), or Student Services at a nearby university or college. Staff members generally are friendly and delighted to find volunteers to assist in their work with international students.

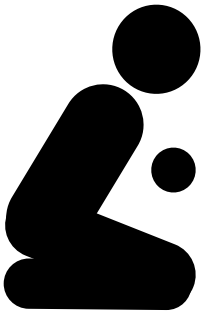


MAY 20 - DAY 16



The 5 Pillars of Islam: Zakat

This refers to the obligatory almsgiving required of all devout Muslims. According to tradition, 2.5% of one's annual income must be given for Zakat. These alms are supposed to be only for the poor and the destitute or for the advancement of Allah's cause or for the traveler in need. Generosity with resources is highly encouraged in the Quran.



The 9 Rooms in the House of Islam: West Africa

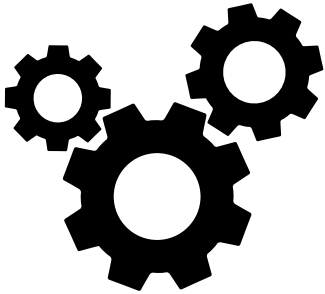
Pray for the 22 countries, 514 PGs, and 105 million Muslims which make up 31% of the total population in these 22 countries. In Islam (and in Africa in general) the umma (or community) is the key to survival. Following Christ almost always means being put outside this community which is a death sentence. Pray for entire families, groups of friends (called fada in Songhai), and even entire villages to come to Christ at the same time. Pray that, even though they lose one community, they will understand they have gained a new and better one (2 Cor 5:17)



Go to the mall or Walmart and simply walk around looking for Muslims. You will often see women wearing burkas or international looking families. **Pray** for God to lead you to people of peace and to give you a boldness to approach them. Don't have a script prepared but rather simply try to build a relationship.

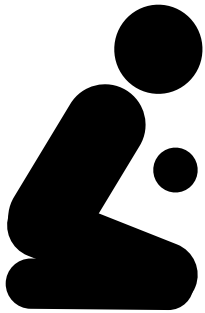


MAY 21 - DAY 17



The 5 Pillars of Islam: Sawm

Sawm refers to the duty to participate in the annual fast that takes place each year during Ramadan, the ninth month in the Islamic calendar. Because the Muslim year is lunar, this fast can occur at various seasons of the year. The purpose of the fast is to cultivate discipline and self-control and to encourage contemplation on the meaning of true submission to the will of Allah. The fast is from the first light of morning to the setting of the sun everyday during the month.



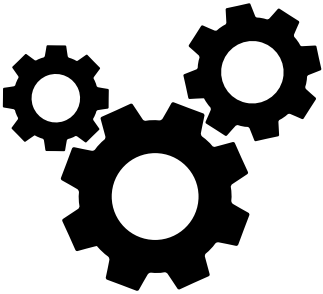
Pray for Jesus Christ to be exalted far above every god, idol, false religion, and manmade philosophy. Pray for demonic lies, arguments and pretensions to be torn down and cast aside. Pray for every knee to bow, and every tongue in the 9 rooms to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:11).



Most Muslims living in America tend to be interested in learning about America. **Invite** some of the Muslims you know (maybe whom you've met recently) to a backyard BBQ with you. Use it as a time to explain this American tradition and **ask questions** of them about their culture and their home country. If they accept your invitation, make sure you ask what types of food they like as they will be breaking their daylong fast. You can serve American food **but do not serve any pork products!**



MAY 22 - DAY 18



The 5 Pillars of Islam: Hajj

The Hajj is the pilgrimage to Mecca which every Muslim believer is expected to make at least once in a lifetime, unless prevented for reasons of health or financial need. Mecca is where Muhammad was born and where he cleansed the cube-shaped shrine called the Kabah which formerly housed the many idols of Arabia and, according to Muslim belief, is near the spot where Abraham offered Ishmael (not Isaac) as a sacrifice just before God substituted an animal to die in his place.



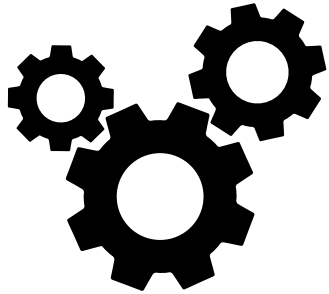
So much of the Islamic world is torn apart by war and terrorism leaving millions of Muslims as refugees or as collateral damage in a battle that is not their own making. Pray for peace to sweep through Muslim regions that are currently marked by unrest and instability. Pray for those fleeing their home countries to arrive safely at places of refuge. Pray that, in these new contexts, they will have opportunities to hear and respond to the Gospel. Pray that those who do respond will return to their homelands as ambassadors of Christ as they share the Hope they now have (2 Corinthians 5:20)



The majority of Muslims will try to make the Hajj this year from August 9-14. **Mark those dates** on your calendar as a reminder to be praying for the massive number of Muslims who will make this spiritual pilgrimage during this time.

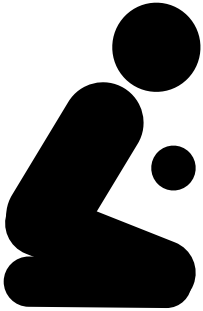


MAY 23 - DAY 19



Ramadan

Why do Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan? The answer is because Muslims believe that the angel first revealed the Quran to Muhammad during this month. The event is referred to in the Quran and is celebrated each year during Ramadan on what is called "The Night of Destiny (or Power)"



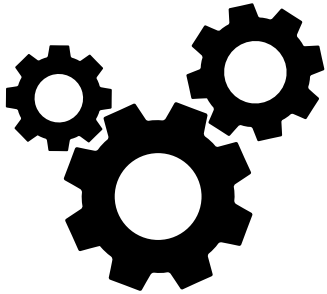
Pray for America today. Never in history has there been such an opportunity and resources available for finishing the task of global engagement of the nations. Yet, there is still such a great need for more people giving, praying, going and sending towards that end. Pray that the same Holy Spirit awakening many Muslim's hearts would bring revival to the church in America. Pray for a renewed passion for the nations in our churches.



Write a letter or email or possibly put together a small care package to **send** to missionaries serving around the world. Even a small note of encouragement goes very far to minister to these who are often serving in tough places without the community so often taken for granted.

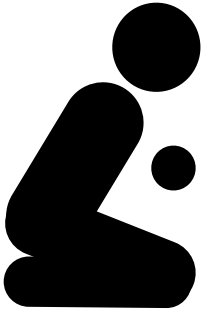


MAY 24 - DAY 20



Ramadan

Eid al-Fitr (festival of breaking of the fast) is one of two important religious holidays for Muslims as they mark the end of Ramadan. The breaking of the fast is a day marked with helping the poor and celebrating Allah's greatness in the context of community. It is a day of feasting, wearing new clothes, and being with the community.



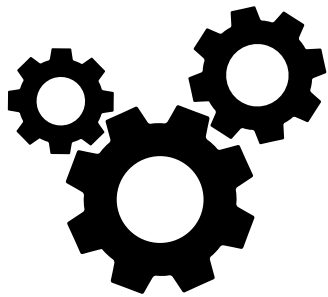
Pray for missionaries who are currently working with Muslims. It can often be difficult work for a number of reasons. First off, these are often dangerous areas to live and there is a constant stress that comes with living on heightened security 24/7. But even more than that, these are often places that missionaries will serve years before seeing any real fruit. Constantly sowing and never reaping can be challenging for the missionaries. Pray that God would sustain them and give them a peace that surpasses all understanding (Phil 4:7) and a steadfast commitment to their calling, no matter the results (1 Cor. 3:6-7)



Go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFO6GRMa7mc to watch "The Cost of Following Christ: One Man's Journey from Islam to Christianity" by Afshin Ziafat. Pray for God to give you a heart for Muslims like his Sunday School teacher had for him.

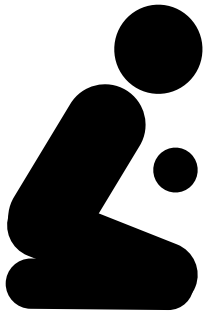


MAY 25 - DAY 21



Ramadan

Laylat Al Qadr is considered the holiest night of the year for Muslims, and is traditionally celebrated on the 27th day of Ramadan. It is known as the "Night of Power," and commemorates the night that the Quran was first revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, beginning with the exhortation, "Read!" Muslims observe this occasion with study, devotional readings, and prayer, as the night's holiness is believed to make it a very good time for prayers to be answered. Some Muslims participate in a spiritual retreat called itikaf, where they spend the last ten days in the mosque reading the Quran and praying.



All around the world there is a process of urbanization at work. This simply means that more and more people are leaving the country to move into the cities. Pray for the Gospel to take root in these cities and for churches to be planted that will reach young adults, business leaders, cultural influencers and the poor. The most unreached peoples in the world go to the cities often breaking their kinship ties as they are in a more pluralistic environment and become far more open to the Gospel than they ever would have been in their previous habitat.

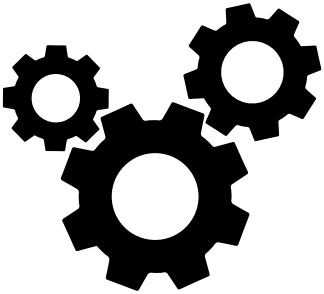


Read "7 Ways to Share Your Faith with Muslims" in the resource portion of this guide.

Pray that you will be intentional in your seeking out and engaging Muslims with the Good News of Jesus.



MAY 26 - DAY 22



4 Main Differences: Theological - The Trinity

Orthodox Islam rejects wholeheartedly the idea of polytheism (which they assume the Trinity teaches) and clings to a staunch monotheism. However, this tritheism they reject is also rejected by Christians and our monotheism should be a place of commonality not dispute. The difference between Christianity and Islam over the doctrine of the Trinity is not a question about the oneness of God but rather a question about the nature of that oneness.



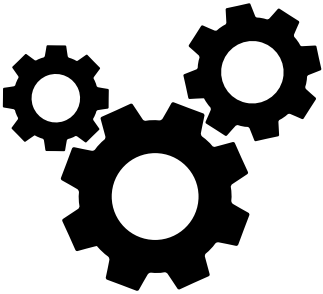
Pray for a great awakening in the American church to reach Muslims within her borders. Pray that your church would be one that intentionally seeks out Muslims to build relationships with and to engage with the Gospel.



Invite one of the Muslim families you've met to have a meal at your house. If you set a date during Ramadan **be wary** of the time as they will not be able to eat until sundown. **See** the suggested guide "Hosting Muslims in your Home" in the resource section for ideas.

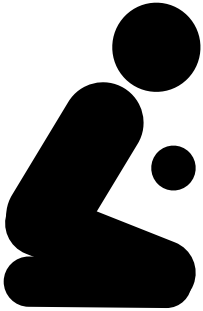


MAY 27 - DAY 23



4 Main Differences: Christological - The Incarnation

While Jesus is held in high esteem in Islam (called a prophet (and even Messiah which is not used for anyone else including Muhammad), seen as a miracle worker, was born of a virgin, and will return to judge the world) he is not the same Jesus we meet in the Bible, the eternal 2nd person of the trinity. The Quran rejects the idea of a man becoming divine which is again a misunderstanding of the Trinitarian nature of God. The Incarnation does not undermine the oneness of God and one should stress that the story of Christ is not the story of a man who became a god but of a God who became man.



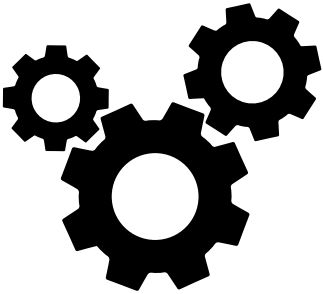
Pray for the Hausa people of the Great Bend. They are found in 12 of the 14 countries in Great Bend and number over 45 million in population. They are considered a UPG in 5 countries and a UUPG in 7. In many countries Hausa are the missionaries of Islam. Pray for God to change the Hausa people like he did Saul in the book of Acts. Pray that, like Saul, these antagonists of Christianity will become the advancer of the Gospel and the Kingdom of Christ.



Contact your city to see if they have an international Communities Liaison. This person will be an invaluable resource in making you aware of what nationalities are represented in your city. Even if this staff position isn't part of the city government, the city ought to be able to help you understand the demographics of your community.



MAY 28 - DAY 24



4 Main Differences: Soteriological - The Cross

The most glaring problem with the Quran's portrayal of Jesus is the absence of His death and resurrection which is explicitly denied. In Islam, sin is forgetfulness (lit. getting off the right path) so the remedy is remembrance (which was why so many prophets were sent). For Muslims there is no need for a bloody sacrifice as a substitutionary atonement because redemption is not a category Islam recognizes for every Muslim is his or her own redeemer leaving no assurance of salvation. There can be no Christianity without the cross and there can be no Islam with it.



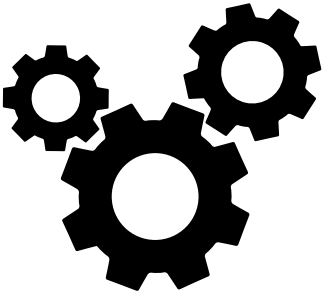
Pray for the Fulani people of the Great Bend. They are found in 9 of the 14 countries in Great Bend and number over 40 million in population. While some have become connected to terrorist groups there are also many who are coming to faith. Pray for more believers to hear and be saved and pray for Christians from other people groups to lay down generational racism against these herders.



Resistance to a Christian witness among Muslims is not just due to a hardened heart or antagonistic religious worldviews that have been ingrained in their culture. There is a spiritual adversary who is actively working against God. **Read** Dr. Rankin's "Spiritual Warfare: 12 Keys to Victory" article in the resource section. **Share** insights you learn with your small group/ABF/Sunday School class.



MAY 29 - DAY 25



4 Main Differences: Missiological - The Goal of Missions

There is an assumption (albeit false) that all religions are seeking the same thing. It is important to note that personal salvation is not the goal of Islam but rather bringing the world under Dar al-Salam (the house of Islam). Muslims do not look to Muhammad like we look to Christ. In fact, the closest thing Muslims have to Jesus is their Quran. It is not individual repentance and faith that drives Muslim missions but rather corporate submission.



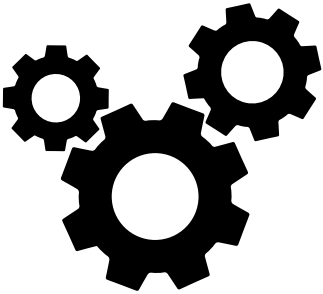
There are 116 Muslim Majority PGs in the Great Bend Cluster with no Bible in their heart language. Please pray for those who are working on Bible translation and for more to respond to this critical work. Please pray for pre-Scripture engagement projects using storying and Orality Training so that people can hear and respond to God's Word in their heart language.



Research the people group you've been praying for or perhaps with the people group you've begun to build relationships with. **Google** information about their country and customs. **Find** a recipe for a popular food in their country. **Make** this food for your family and eat it the way they would (sitting on the ground, with their hands, etc). As you eat the meal, talk about the people group and pray for them.

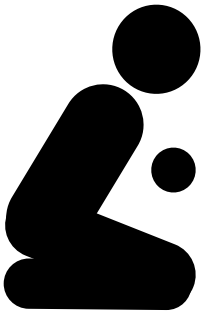


MAY 30 - DAY 26



Muslim Terminology 101 - The Quran

The name of the holy book of Islam, meaning "recital." For Muslims, the Quran is the supreme revelation of Allah (corresponding to Jesus Christ in the Christian faith). It is the authoritative word of God only in Arabic, the language in which it was revealed to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel gradually over a 23 year period. The Quran is divided into 114 surahs (chapters) arranged in order of descending length.



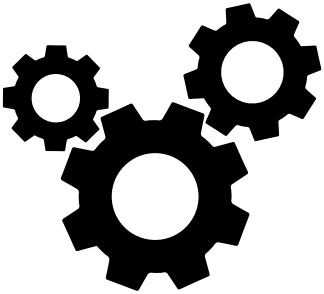
Pray for our Baptist Conventions across the Great Bend Cluster. Pray that they would be committed to reaching out to their Muslim neighbors and that they would be open to new strategies for reaching them. Pray that they would send missionaries to these UPGs and UUPGs. Pray that they would network together towards the same task.



Research the people group you've been praying for or perhaps with the people group you've begun to build relationships with. **Google** information about their country and customs. **Find** a recipe for a popular food in their country. **Make** this food for your family and eat it the way they would (sitting on the ground, with their hands, etc). As you eat the meal, talk about the people group and pray for them.



MAY 31 - DAY 27*



Muslim Terminology 101 - The Hadith

Literally meaning "story," this word refers to the sayings and deeds of the prophet Muhammad that were remembered by his companions and passed on orally to later generations. Eventually (over 100 years after Muhammad's death) these sayings were brought together in a number of collections, six of which are regarded as authoritative by orthodox Islam.



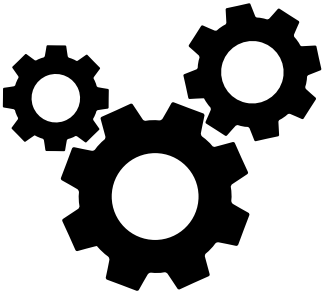
Tonight is the Night of Power. Many Muslims have had dreams or visions of Jesus on this night. Pray that through Jesus many will come to have the revelation of God that they desire. Pray for Muslims who are seeking revelation to have encounters with believers who can help them to understand the revelation we have of God through Jesus. Pray that on this night of heightened expectation, many will find what they are seeking (Matthew 7:7)



Purchase or **print** off a map that you can hang up somewhere in your house. **Mark** the countries you've been praying for or where the friendships you are developing come from. **Look up** information online about the country(s). **Incorporate** praying for these countries as part of your family devotion time.



JUNE 1 - DAY 28



Muslim Terminology 101 - Sunni

The Sunni are the majority in most Islamic countries outside of Iran, Iraq, Yemen, and Bahrain encompassing a suspected 90% of Muslims worldwide. The word Sunni comes from "Ahl al-Sunna" which means the people of the tradition. Sunnis venerate all the prophets mentioned in the Koran, but particularly Muhammad as the final prophet. All subsequent Muslim leaders are seen as temporal figures. Sunni Islam is seen as orthodox Islam.



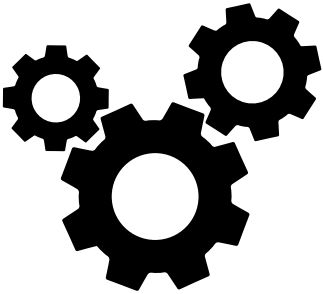
Pray for the leadership of the 49 countries that have a majority Muslim population. Pray for the presidents, mayors, governors, and chiefs (Romans 13:1) knowing that they only have authority that has been granted them from God (John 19:11). Pray for many of these to be called to faith in Jesus. Pray for them to lead their people properly and fight the temptations of corruption and greed.



Look over the guide in the resource section called "Being a Friend to Muslims" to consider how you might be a good friend to Muslims you know. **Commit** to implement these things in your life as you look for ways to put into practice some of these ideas.



JUNE 2 - DAY 29



Muslim Terminology 101 - Shirk

Shirk is the one unforgivable sin in Islam. Those who are guilty of shirk confuse the Creator with the creature by associating something that is not divine with God. Muslims believe Christians are guilty of shirk when they worship Jesus as the divine Son of God.



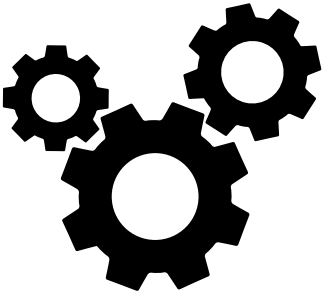
As we approach the end of this 30-day period, take time to ask God to continue to burden your heart for Muslims across the world and across the street. Pray that you would continue to seek out relationships with Muslims and ask God to continue to bring Muslims into your life.



Ask some of your Muslim contacts if they'd be interested in studying the Bible with you. You could walk through a book like John or just more of an overview look at the Bible. They should be interested in studying the Injil (the Gospels). Try to keep from debate or tearing down Islam but rather let God's Word speak for itself! **Check out** "The Story of the Gospel" in the Resource Section.



JUNE 3 - DAY 30



God at Work among Muslims

From the time of Islam's birth until the 18th century there were ZERO Muslim movements to Christ. The 19th Century saw the first Muslim movement to Christ. In the 20th century there were 10. However, in the first 19 years of the 21st century there have been over 60!



The current wave of Muslim movements to Christ has happened at the same time as an increase in prayer for the Muslim world. This is no coincidence as God is responding to the prayers of countless people crying out for the salvation of Muslims. Pray that the Spirit of God will continue to sweep through the Muslim world, drawing Islam's millions to realize their need for salvation in Christ alone!



Spend the day praising God for how He has grown you during these past 30 days. **Commit** to continue to cultivate a heart for Muslims as you intentionally seek them out. **Pray** for God to draw your new Muslim friends to salvation. **Pray** for God to bring more Muslims into contact with you and to give you a boldness to engage them with the Good News of Jesus Christ!





RESOURCES



Good books

Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus – Nabeel Qureshi
The Gospel for Muslims – Thabiti Anyabwile
Faith to Faith – Chawkat Moucarry
The Prophet and the Messiah - Chawkat Moucarry
Two Prayers for Today - Chawkat Moucarry
From Seed to Fruit - J. Dudley Woodberry
Bridges to Islam - Phil Parshall
The Cross and Crescent - Phil Parshall
The Unseen Face of Islam - Bill Musk
Muslims, Magic, and the Kingdom of God - Rick Love
Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad? - Timothy George
Muslims Next Door - Shirin Taber
Breaking the Islam Code - JD Greear
A Wind in the House of Islam – David Garrison
Operation World - Patrick Johnstone
Connecting with Muslims - Fouad Masri
Who is My Enemy - Lee Camp
In the House of Islam DVD (good for small groups)
Loving Muslims & Sharing Jesus DVD (good for small groups)



Good websites

www.imb.org
www.stories.imb.org/africa
www.bienvenueafricains.com
www.trainingleadersinternationally.org
www.uupg.com
www.joshuaproject.net
www.seekingthesonghai.com
www.honorshame.com
www.operationworld.com
www.zwemercenter.com



5 STEPS TO EFFECTIVE SHARING



GET CONNECTED



GET to GOD



GET to LOSTNESS



GET to JESUS



GET to DECISION

Step One: Get connected.

Ask questions such as: "Who are you?" or "How are you?" Take time to get acquainted with them & their family. Then use the following transition ...

Transition #1: *"Are you Muslim?"*

Step Two: Get to God

"Most religions are alike, aren't they? We are all trying to please God so that we can go to heaven some day and we're all trying to pay off our sin debt. We all sin, don't we? Even good people sin. Sinning is easy, but paying off our sin debt to God is much more difficult, isn't it?"

Transition #2: *"In your religion, what are you doing to get your sins forgiven?"*

Step Three: Get to Lostness

Listen attentively and don't be afraid to ask questions along the way. After they've answered, ask them 3 questions:

- 1) Are your sins paid off yet?
- 2) When do you think your sins will be paid off?
- 3) On Judgement Day, do you know that your sin debt will be paid?

Transition #3: *"What I believe is different. I know that my sins are forgiven. It is not because I am a good person, although I do try. I know my sins are forgiven because God himself has made a way for our sins to be forgiven."*

Step Four: Get to the Gospel

Ask if they'd like to hear a story &, if yes, tell C2C, The Story, or The First and Last Sacrifice (see below)

Transition #4 - *"According to the Bible, if we surrender our life to Jesus as Lord and believe that He has paid for our sins through His sacrifice and that God raised Him from the dead, our sins will be forgiven."*

Step Five: Get to a Decision

Simply offer a chance for them to respond

THE FIRST AND THE LAST SACRIFICE

Part One: Jesus

Jesus has been in Heaven with God from the beginning. He was born into this world through the Virgin Mary. Jesus never sinned, even though He was tempted in every way imaginable. Jesus overcame the desires of His flesh. He never married; never killed anyone; never gathered riches for Himself. Jesus once fasted 40 days and 40 nights while being tempted by the devil, yet he never sinned. Jesus performed great miracles. He cast out demons; healed the sick and blind; Jesus even raised the dead. It is interesting that, though Jesus was not yet old, He began prophesying about His death. To his followers He said, "I must die, but I will rise again." Do you know why Jesus said, "I must die?"

Part Two: Why did Jesus have to die?

The Adam and Eve Story

The answer is found in the Taurat (what Muslims call the five books of Moses). The Taurat tells us about the first persons God created, Adam and Eve. God put them in a perfect paradise, called the Garden of Eden. They were given great freedom to eat fruit from any tree in the garden except for the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God warned them that if they ate of that fruit they would die.

A Covering for Sin

One day, Satan visited Eve in the form of a serpent and tempted her to eat the fruit that God had forbidden. She ate the fruit, and gave it to Adam, who also ate it. Immediately, they were afraid, so they hid from God. But because God knows everything, he found them and punished Adam and Eve for their disobedience.

As punishment for their disobedience, God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden paradise, and eventually they did die. They could have lived forever but because of their sins, they lost paradise and died.

It is interesting that the Taurat says Adam and Eve committed just one sin and it resulted in their judgment and death. Adam and Eve seemed like good people, probably better than us. Perhaps they had already done hundreds of good works. They hadn't killed anyone, committed adultery, or stolen anything. But they disobeyed just once and it resulted in death. Some think that if our good deeds outweigh our bad deeds our sins will be forgiven, but that is not what the Bible says.

Promised Savior and New Clothes

Yet God still loved Adam and Eve. So He did something very interesting. God made a way for their sins to be covered. He changed Adam and Eve's clothes. God replaced the clothes made of leaves that Adam and Eve had made with new clothes made from animal skins. Of course, to make these clothes, an animal had to die. The death of an innocent animal was the price that God paid to cover the sins of Adam and Eve. Because He loved Adam and Eve, God himself offered the first sacrifice for the covering of their sins. The Bible teaches us that apart from the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. (Hebrews 9:22)

Since that first sacrifice, all of our forefathers have offered sacrifices trying to have their sins forgiven: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and others all tried this but it was never enough. Instead of bringing forgiveness, the sacrifices became a reminder of their sin.

After pronouncing His judgment on Adam and Eve, God also judged the serpent (Satan) who had deceived them. God promised that from among the woman's descendents a Savior would come who would crush Satan's head, although Satan would also injure Him. Over the centuries that followed, many prophets of God foretold the coming of a Savior who would take away the sins of the world.

Part Three: That is why Jesus had to die!

And then Jesus came, born of a virgin, the descendent of the woman. Jesus lived a sinless life and performed great miracles. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, a prophet named John looked to Jesus and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

That is interesting, isn't it? Jesus was called "the Lamb of God." Why? Because a lamb is an animal used for sacrifice. Do you remember my question: "Do you know why Jesus said, 'I must die?'" That is why Jesus said, "I must die." Jesus came to be God's sacrifice to pay for our sins. This is why He surrendered Himself to the Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers to be crucified. He was God's sacrifice for your sins and mine.

As He was dying, Jesus cried out, "It is finished," meaning that our sin debt had now finally been paid. There was now no need for another sacrifice. Then Jesus bowed His head and died. But on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, just as He had promised. For the next 40 days, Jesus appeared to more than 500 of His followers, and then was taken up into heaven.

We know that one day, Jesus will return to earth as judge over all mankind.

Conclusion: That is why I know my sins are forgiven

The Bible tells us that if we surrender our life to Jesus as Lord and believe that He has paid for our sins through his sacrifice and that God has raised Him from the dead, our sins will be forgiven. And that is why I know my sins are forgiven.



THEOLOGY GUIDE

GUILT

SHAME

FEAR

PROLEGOMENA			
Society	Individualistic	Collectivistic	Animistic
Existential Question	How can my sins be forgiven to be assured of heaven?	How can I be a part of the community to be respected?	How can I access the power to control life?
Christian Theology	Augustinian, Reformed	Undeveloped	Pentecostal, Charismatic
Principle Metaphor	Courtroom (legal)	Community (relational)	Combat (military)
Primary Location	West (Europe, N. America)	East (Middle East, Asia)	South (Africa, tribal)
Christian Status	Historically Christian	Minimally Christian	Recently Christian

GOD			
God	Lawgiver & Judge (sinless, perfect, just)	Father & Patron (glorious, superior, faithful)	Ruler & Deliverer (sovereign, transcendent)
God's Holiness	He alone perfectly keeps the absolute moral standard	He alone is infinitely glorious, deserving all reverence	He alone created and stands above all things and beings
God's Sovereignty	Forgives transgressors and enacts our future salvation	Honors lowly mortals and humbles the falsely proud	Defeats spiritual opposition and rules the world
God's Righteousness	Punitive justice	Covenantal Faithfulness	Cosmic Power

SN			
Sn	Transgression & Lawbreaking	Disloyalty & Rebellion	Usurpation & Idolatry
Sinfulness	Total depravity	Complete unacceptability	Utter vulnerability
Violation	God's laws and justice	God's face and glory	God's power and authority
Sinners	Condemned	Rejected	Cursed
Consequences of Sn	Judgment and punishment	Disgrace and humiliation	Domination and bondage
Emotions of Sn	Regret	Unworthiness	Anxiety
The Fall (Gen. 3)	Shifted blame	Covered nakedness	Hid in fear
Cultural Solutions	Justify, confess, restitution	Cover, flee, abandon	Animism, black magic
False Hope	Morality, works, merit	Identity, connections, name	Rituals, knowledge
The OT laws reveals	Our moral failure	Our defilement/separation	Our idolatry

JESUS			
Christ	Substitute & Sacrifice	Mediator & Brother	Conqueror & Liberator
Incarnation	Jesus becomes fully human to pay our debt	Jesus leaves glory to glorify the Father and us	Jesus arrives to destroy the works of the devil.
Jesus' Life	Lived sinlessly	Healed the impure, ate with outcasts, welcomed Gentiles	Cast out demons, worked miracles, signs & wonders
Jesus' Death	Bears the punishment for our moral transgressions	Removes our shame and restores God's face/honor	Defeats spirits and powers
The Cross	Appeases God's wrath	Changes God's evaluation	Establishes God's power
Atonement Theory	Penal Substitution	Satisfaction (Anselm)	Christus Victor
Jesus' Resurrection	Assurance of future salvation	Divine honor for the shamed	Victory over Satan and death

SALVATION			
Salvation	Innocence & Forgiveness	Honor & Face	Power & Freedom
Sphere	Next world	This world	Unseen world
Repentance	From works-righteousness (stop trying to please God with perfection deeds)	From boasting (resist using cultural systems to promote your status)	From idolatry (abandon false powers and magical rituals)
Grace (overcomes)	Wickedness	Worthlessness	Weakness
Forgiveness	Pardons wrongs	Reconciles relationships	Removes strongholds
At God's Right Hand	Acceptance and intimacy	Prestige and status	Power and authority
Reconciliation w/ God leads to peace w/	Self (soul, conscience)	People (family, community)	Creation (nature, spirits)
Discipleship	Obedience	Loyalty	Submission
Holy Spirit	Guidance for behavior	Communion with Trinity	Empowerment for battle
Ethics	Loving Others	Honoring Others	Blessings Others
Assurance	Am I saved and morally acceptable?	Am I a part of the right community?	Do I have enough power to overcome dark powers?
Missiology	Truth encounter	Community Encounter	Power encounter
Ephesians	2:1-10	2:11-22	6:10-17

EVANGELISTIC SUMMARY			
The intention of God	God loves us and has a wonderful plan for our life	God created us as children with his honor and glory	God is sovereign and offers spiritual authority to us
The human problem	Our personal sin creates a barrier between us and God/God's plan for our life	Our disloyalty dishonors God, so we are shamefully orphaned.	Our idolatry separates us from divine power and places us under the curse of darkness
The solution of Jesus	As a perfect sacrifice for our sins, Jesus bore the wrath of God's punishment	As our mediator, Jesus bore our shame, rose to glory, and restored glory to God's name	Jesus conquered death and evil powers so we could access God's power and blessings.
Salvific Response	Accept Jesus as our personal Savior and pray for forgiveness, turn from human morality	Give allegiance to God, receive adoption into His family, turn from false face & status	Trust in Jesus' alone for protection and power, turn from magic & syncretism

SUMMARY

	GUILT	SHAME	FEAR
Metaphor	Courtroom	Community	Combat
God	Lawgiver & Judge	Father & Patron	Ruler & Creator
Sin	Lawbreaking	Disloyalty	Idolatry
Christ	Sacrifice	Mediator	Conqueror
Salvation	Forgiveness	Honor/Face	Peace/Freedom
Mission	Truth	Community	Power

To learn the culture type of your group, take the free assessment at www.TheCultureTest.com.

View the e-book [THE 3D GOSPEL: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures](#)

Hosting Muslims in Your Home

- * Clean the kitchen and dining area of clutter before guests arrive
- * Set a table with your best dishes and cloth napkins
- * Serve appetizers (fruits, dates, small cookies, peanuts, etc) with hot tea, juice, and soft drinks.
- * Mingle before eating (don't rush)
- * Seat husbands and wives together
- * Avoid serving alcohol
- * Try to serve meat that is halal if possible
- * Prepare foods with a variety of colors and flavors
- * Avoid dishes with pork
- * Serve tea or coffee with dessert
- * Mealtime in a guests home is often fairly formal so dress appropriately (Muslims are typically not as casual as we as Americans have become)

Being a Friend to Muslims (& Internationals)

Imagine being somewhere other than home during the holiday season. Imagine missing graduations, births, funerals, and other important times with your family. Imagine living in a place where the food, language, and culture are totally different from your own. Imagine these things and you'll begin to see the world that most Muslims (and other internationals) in America live in. Here are some tips on how to be a friend to them:

- * Inquire about their family back home. Ask questions about their siblings, parents, etc. Ask about special times they would spend with family (traditions, meals, etc).
- * Inquire about their culture. Ask questions about traditions and customs. Ask them what they miss most about not being in their home culture. Ask them what they've noticed about American culture.
- * If they are alone in this country (college students especially) invite them to your home for the holidays. As most university students look forward to leaving school and going home for the holidays, most international students are left all alone on campus.
- * Have genuine dialog (not debate) about faith. Ask open-ended questions that cannot simply be answered with a "yes" or "no." Don't attack their faith but rather share honestly what God's Word says.
- * Offer to help them with their transportation needs if they do not own a car. For example, offer to give them a ride to the airport when they are flying home.
- * Invite them to dinner and ask to share a meal from their home country either at a restaurant or one you can cook together.
- * Suggest the name and phone number of a reliable physician, dentist, hairdresser, mechanic, accountant, etc.
- * Invite them to church with you and introduce them to your pastor.
- * Remember their birthday with a card and a small gift.

7 Ways to Share Your Faith With Muslims

by Trevor Castor

1. Share your testimony

A couple things to keep in mind, do not glorify your sinful life. "Amazing" testimonies about deliverance from addictions and immorality will not usually be effective with Muslims. In fact, they may be offensive. Instead, your testimony is an opportunity to tell how God is working in your life. You may want to start the story in your mother's womb (Psalm 139:13-14, Jer.1:5). Acknowledge the fact that God has been pursuing you from birth. Be sure to emphasize the peace you have with God because of the assurance of your sin being forgiven. Speak about being with Him one day in heaven. Muslims have no assurance of salvation and often are terrified of the Day of Judgment. Your confidence in approaching the throne of grace will be refreshing to many Muslims.

2) Find God at work in the lives of Muslims

Be assured that God working in their lives. The same goes for aspects of Muslim culture genuinely approved of by God. For example, when they are hospitable, demonstrate care for parents, concern for poor, or seem faithful in their prayers, tell them you thank God for placing this desire in them. You can say, "I find these parts of your life to reflect God's character and would like to take a minute and thank God for what He's doing in your life." Then pray for them! Or you could say something like "I see in every way you are very religious" (Acts 17). Don't let what radicals are doing in the name of Islam keep you from seeing good in individual Muslim friends. Give God credit where credit is due.

3) Pray for your Muslim Friend

Yes, you can pray in Jesus name. I have known Muslims for 15 years and to this date I have never had a Muslim refuse prayer or take offense that I pray in the name of Jesus. Did you ever consider that your prayers are sacred space and that by inviting a Muslim in they get to meet God in a way that they have probably never done before. You may find that your Muslim friend will begin coming to you with prayer requests. Do not say I will pray for you and send them on, pray right then and there. Before they leave your home, pray for them. Before you leave their home, pray for them. Ask the Lord to give them dreams and visions and to guide them to the truth. I cannot overstate the importance praying with your Muslim friends. If you don't, the assumption will be that you probably do not pray at all.

4) Talk about Jesus

Muslims like to talk about Jesus. He is mentioned numerous times in the Qur'an. Try to develop the skill of bringing conversations back to Jesus and do not become sidetracked with lesser things (al-Qaeda, ISIS, 9/11, wars, nationalism, Israel or another other political ideology for that matter). Resolve to know nothing except Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2). Believing in Jesus is the only sufficient stumbling block to Muslims following Him. You do not need to speak about Muhammad or Islam. There is no need to make Islam the Qur'an or Muhammad look bad for Jesus to look good. Jesus looks great all on his own. If you have other stumbling blocks between you and Muslims knowing Jesus, ask the Lord to remove them. If you have fear about speaking to Muslims about Jesus, ask the Lord to remove them.

5. Share Bible stories early and often.

Muslims must believe in parts of the Bible. Memorize a few stories and share them as early and often as possible. I try and share a story about Jesus the first time I meet with the Muslim. It's what they expect from a person who loves God. Typically, Muslim immigrants are struggling with anxieties of leaving home. I like to share the story of Jesus calming the sea. I emphasize that Jesus has power over all things. He has the ability to bring peace in the midst of chaos. Regularly share stories about Jesus that cause your Muslim friend to ask, "Who is this Jesus"? Think of all the times people asked that question in the New Testament, including the disciples. The question is not about the identity of Jesus but the essence. Who is this man that controls nature and forgives sin?

6. Minister to human need.

Muslims need to see you practice your faith. In the Muslim worldview faith without works is dead. A man of God will demonstrate his love for God through good deeds. Read the Sermon on the Mount and then strive to do these things (Matt 5:24): Love your enemies, don't retaliate, don't hate, don't lust, don't be materialistic; fast, pray, give to the poor, be pure of heart, be a peacemaker, and when you fail, share with your Muslim friend how you still have peace with God because of the work of Christ! Too often we misunderstand scripture verses about doing things in secret so not to be like the hypocrites. You may want to consider asking a Muslim to join you in serving human needs. Imagine the conversations you could have about Jesus when you ask you Muslim friend to join you in serving the poor.

7. Trust the Holy Spirit.

Take comfort in knowing that you will never convert a single soul. You are called to witness about the goodness of God in your life. The Holy Spirit has the job of convicting the world of sin and drawing people to Himself. You are the medium through whom Christ makes Himself known. You will never convince anyone to follow Jesus, believe in His divinity or accept the Trinity. It was only after walking with Jesus for two years that Peter finally got it, "You are the Christ, Son of the Living God"—something that God the Father revealed to him. Walk with Muslims in daily life, demonstrate the love and power of God, share your successes/failures and trust that the Holy Spirit will remove the scales from their eyes as they meet Christ in you!

Spiritual Warfare: 12 Keys to Victory

by Dr. Jerry Rankin

1. We have an Enemy.

Resistance to a Christian witness among Muslims is not just due to a hardened heart or antagonistic religious worldviews that have been ingrained in their culture. There is a spiritual adversary who is actively working against God being known and glorified among the nations. That's why Paul, in his testimony before King Agrippa in Acts 26, described his mission to proclaim Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, as an effort to "open their eyes, turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God" (verse 18). The word "devil" comes from the Greek "diabelein" which means to oppose. He is opposed to the church, the expansion of God's kingdom and the individual Christian experiencing the full and victorious life. And he is an adversary to mission efforts to penetrate the dominions of darkness where Christ is not known with the light of the gospel.

2. The enemy has real authority.

Among the temptations of Jesus, as described in Luke 4:5-7, Satan took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. He said he would give Jesus all these kingdoms with all the authority and glory if He would worship him. Of course, Jesus did not succumb to that temptation, but it is intriguing that he did not question the right of Satan to make that claim. 1 John 5:19 says, "We are of God but all the world lies in the power of the evil one." Where Christ is not known, where God is not worshipped, the nations, cultures and peoples of the world are in darkness and under the power and dominion of Satan. And the god of this world is not going to simply roll over and relinquish the kingdoms of the world to become the kingdoms of our God!

3. The battle is spiritual.

Spiritual warfare is not just a struggle between good and evil. It is not limited to injustice, oppression and immoral behavior. There is a cosmic battle "in the heavenlies" between a jealous, fallen angel and the One to whom has been given all power, glory and authority. We are told this is not a conflict of flesh and blood but one of principalities, powers of darkness and spiritual forces of evil. We are warned to be vigilant, sober, alert and on guard that we may resist the enemy who is described as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

4. The battlefield is the nations.

We need to understand how this plays out in the world today. Entire countries are closed to missionaries and a Christian witness due to godless political systems under the sway of the powers and principalities of the god of this world. Believers and churches are being persecuted and subjected to atrocities in an effort of the evil one to inhibit the spread of the gospel. Satan is robbing the Christian church of its spiritual vitality, leading it to become ingrown and self-centered instead engaging the battle to disciple the nations?

5. The battle is for God's glory.

Even when we are diligent to witness, Satan is actively deflecting the truth of the gospel. In the parable of the sower Jesus explained that some of the seed would fall on the hardened, beaten down pathway where it does not take root—certainly a description of the Muslim world. He said that the birds come and take away the seed. Then He explained in Luke 8:12 that the birds are the devil, taking away the truth of the gospel even as it is sown in witness. How does this happen? Satan is described as a deceiver and liar; there is no truth in him! It is not so much the evil that is perpetrated by those who do not know the love of God and external manifestations such as demon possession, territorial spirits and generational bondage. It is his deception that has been misleading generations to believe a lie and follow that which is false. Who has convinced Muslims worldwide that Jesus did not really die on the cross, the Bible has been corrupted and the trinity is a blasphemous worship of three gods?

6. The enemy deceives the nations.

As a new missionary filled with faith and idealism, I became disillusioned when those in the large Muslim nation where I served did not readily respond to embrace the gospel once the truth of God's redemptive love was proclaimed. I soon came to realize that expecting a Muslim to respond to the gospel is not unlike asking a blind man to read a newspaper. The Apostle Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel.

7. Our weapons are not carnal.

We must recognize the nature of the battle and that the weapons of our warfare "are not of flesh but are divinely powerful for the destruction of (spiritual) strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4). It should not surprise us that there are Muslims who hate and want to destroy Christians and Jews, savagely behead their enemies and subjugate and oppress those who do not adhere to their ideology. Those "without God in this world" (Ephesians 2:12), are pawns of the evil, destructive aspirations of Satan.

8. The enemy deceives the Church.

Our greatest vulnerability is not the threat of harm or even the loss of life but in allowing Satan, in his subtle and devious ways, to create discouragement, dissension and indifference toward our task of making Christ known. So, how can we prevail against a devious, unseen enemy, creating fear in our hearts and leading us to respond with hate instead of love toward those who need to know our Savior?

9. Faith is the victory.

In 1 John 5:4 we are told that "this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." Ephesians 6:16 reminds us that we have been equipped with the shield of faith that deflects Satan's fiery darts and temptations; it squelches his lies and deceit in our own minds. According to 1 Peter 5:9 we can resist Satan, "firm in our faith." That, however, is not just faith to believe in Jesus, but to believe the truth of God's word and accept it as reality, all evidence to the contrary. God's desire is to be exalted among the nations. We have His promise that there will be people from every tribe, language and nation gathered around the throne of God, worshipping the One who is worthy of all praise, honor and glory. That includes a remnant of every segment of Muslim people in the world—believe it!

10. Victory is assured.

The victory has been procured by the blood of Jesus who came to destroy the works of the evil one on the cross. Though Satan's power and influence seems to be pervasive in a world that does not know Christ, he is a defeated foe. We are already on the winning side. 1 John 3:8 say, "The Son of God appeared for this purpose that He might destroy the works of the devil." "Greater is He that is in us, than He that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). We are to stand firm in the power of His might.

11. Claim the power of the Spirit of God.

We cannot expect to have the wisdom and discernment to deal with a Muslim antagonist, or the courage to lift up Christ in a bold, positive witness if we are not walking in victory. God will not entrust His power to one who is casual in his own devotion, readily neglects the word of God and is equivocal in his obedience. The Spirit of Almighty God lives within us, empowering us to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. The Christ who told us to disciple the nations has promised to go with us, even to the end of the age.

12. Victory through prayer.

It is prayer that gives us access to power and wisdom to encounter the deception and influence of the real enemy. It is in prayer that we commune with the Father, and we are reminded of our own inadequacy so that we do not rely on logical arguments and the wisdom of men. Through fervent intercession hearts are softened and the Holy Spirit brings conviction. Jesus assured us that the gates of hell will not be able to prevail against the Church which faithfully confesses Him as the promised Lord and Savior. We are not to fight from a defensive position of fear and intimidation. The victory is assured. We are to engage the battle—not against Islam, but against the powers of darkness and the one who continues to deceive the nations and hold multitudes in bondage to sin and eternal destruction.

The 9 Rooms in the House of Islam



The Story of the Gospel

by Jody Fox

ENGLISH EDITION

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1 - The Eternal God

In the beginning was God, and God created all things. The Bible tells us that, "...the Lord is one" and that this one eternal God is made up of 3 different persons, The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These 3 persons of the one eternal God were not created but have eternally existed together. They are each fully God and no one of them is greater than the other. All together these three persons, the Eternal Father, the Eternal Son, and the Eternal Holy Spirit make up the one Eternal God who is above all things.

From the beginning, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had a perfect relationship with each other. God has never been alone but within Himself He had perfect fellowship as the 3 persons of God interacted with each other. Although each of these 3 persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are equally and fully God, they each have a different role in creation.

The Eternal Father is not greater than the Son or the Holy Spirit. But it is the will of the Father that the Son and Holy Spirit seek to accomplish.

The Eternal Son put on flesh and came to the earth as a man to bring salvation to mankind. His name is Jesus Christ. Since all sin is against God and His holiness, every person's sin punishment is death. So, Jesus Christ offered himself as a sacrifice and died on a cross in our place to save us from suffering our eternal punishment in hell. However, because Jesus had never sinned, 3 days after His death He rose from the dead, defeating sin and death forever. His blood was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people. Now all who trust only in the sacrifice of Jesus will receive eternal life with God. The Father seeks to put all things under the reign of Jesus Christ in His eternal Kingdom so all mankind will worship him.

The Eternal Holy Spirit, is the one Jesus said would come after him, to help and strengthen mankind. It's the Holy Spirit who gives a person the faith to believe in Jesus' sacrifice.

It has always been the plan of God from before the creation of the world that the Father would send the Son to die in humanities place and then rise again. And that the Holy Spirit would strengthen the hearts of people to believe and worship Jesus Christ.

The stories you are about to hear tell us of the history of the Hebrew nation. And from this nation Jesus Christ would come and bring salvation to all who would believe. For from the first man Adam came the prophet Abraham, and from Abraham's family came Moses, and from Moses's family came King David. And finally, from King's David's family would come Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who would bring salvation to the world.

Therefore, in the coming stories you will see the Eternal God make a promise to preserve and bless the Hebrew people. Although He punishes them for their sin, He will not let the Hebrew people be completely destroyed because from this nation Jesus, the Eternal Son, will come and bring salvation to all the nations of the world.

2 - Adam and Eve (Genesis 1-3)

In the beginning, God created everything we can see and everything we cannot see. However, when God created man and woman He made them in His own image and likeness. He called the man Adam and the woman's name was Eve. Because of God's love He planted a garden and put Adam and Eve in the garden to care for it and to enjoy it.

God had a good relationship with Adam and Eve and gave them his perfect law. He told them that they were to eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. But there was one tree in the middle of the garden, which God commanded them not to eat from. This was the tree which gives man the knowledge of good and evil, and if they ate of this tree they would die. If Adam and Eve would obey God's law they would live forever enjoying the company of God and the blessings God gave to them.

However, one day Satan came to the garden in the form of a snake to deceive Adam and Eve. He told them that if they ate of the tree in the middle of the garden that gives a man the knowledge of good and evil they would not die, but be like God. So the woman took the fruit and ate it and gave some to Adam who was with her and he also ate. In this way, both man and woman disobeyed God's command. Anytime a person disobeys God's command it's called sin.

After Adam and Eve ate the fruit and sinned against a holy God, their eyes were opened and they saw that they were naked. When they heard the voice of God calling to them in the garden they hid themselves because they were ashamed of their nakedness and sin. Even though Adam knew God's law, he blamed Eve for giving him the fruit to eat. However, Eve, who also knew God's law, blamed the serpent who had deceived her. But Adam and Eve could not place their blame on another and would now both face punishment and death for their own disobedience. Their perfect relationship with God was now broken. They would be cast out of the perfect garden and one day God would punish them with death. For death is the punishment for all sin.

But God would judge Satan for his deception. And He told Satan that one day a man would be born from the woman's descendants and that Satan would strike this man. However, this man would overcome him and crush the head of Satan forever.

Many years later, the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, came to the earth. He was born of a virgin woman and was a descendant of the first woman Eve. And just as God had promised Satan all those years ago, Jesus allowed Himself to be struck by Satan and crucified on a cross of wood as a sacrifice for our sins. But Jesus would not be defeated, and 3 days after His death He rose from the dead, overcoming death and crushing the head of Satan forever. Jesus' death was a sacrifice and a substitute for our death. Because He loved us He paid our sin debt before God. And His resurrection gives us confidence that if we trust in Him we also will one day be raised from the dead and given eternal life in heaven with God.

3 - The Call of Abraham (Genesis 12, 15)

Now many years had passed since the time of Adam and Eve and many people increased upon the earth. However, the Savior had not appeared and sin was growing in the hearts of men. God's punishment for sin was death, so death destroyed all mankind and all things.

During the time of Abraham, God came to Abraham and said to him, leave the land of your father and go to a new land that I will show to you. There I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. And through you all the nations of the world will be blessed. Abraham believed God and took his wife Sarah and all his possessions to the new land that God had sent him to.

The land that God had promised to Abraham and his descendants was a great and wealthy land. But Abraham was still without a son who would one day receive his inheritance and live in the land. So Abraham said to God, "O Lord God what will you give me, for I continue childless..." However, God promised to give Abraham a child and said to him, "If you are able to number the stars in the sky, so you will be able to number your descendants". Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.

At that time, Abraham's wife Sarah was old and had no son that would be their heir. So Sarah told Abraham, go to my servant Hagar so that maybe I would receive a child through her. In this way Sarah believed she would receive a son through Hagar her servant. Abraham listened to his wife and went to Hagar and she became pregnant and gave birth to a boy who they called Ishmael.

However, this was not good advice and displeased God. Abraham said to God, "if it pleases you, let Ishmael be my heir... and receive my inheritance." But God did not agree with Abraham's sin. And God said to Abraham, your wife Sarah is going to give birth to a baby boy, who you shall call Isaac. It is Isaac who will receive your inheritance. God would make an eternal covenant with Isaac and his offspring. He promised to protect and preserve Isaac's family so that one day they might be a blessing to all the nations of the world.

Many years later Mary, a descendant of Isaac, would give birth to a son who she called Jesus. And Jesus fulfilled God's promise to Abraham and Isaac by becoming a blessing to all the nations of the world. He did this by offering His sinless life as a substitute for our sinful lives. The punishment for our sin was death and because Jesus loved all people, He took that punishment in our place when He was crucified on a cross of wood. But Jesus could not be defeated by death and three days later He rose from the dead. Jesus defeated death and provided salvation to all those who would believe in Him. In this way, Jesus became a blessing to all the nations of the world, because salvation is offered to all people through faith in Jesus.

Just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. We must also believe in Jesus' death for our sins and His resurrection. Only then can we receive righteousness and eternal life in His Kingdom forever.

4 - Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19)

After Isaac was born, God said to Abraham, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and offer him as a sacrifice on the mountain of which I shall tell you." So Abraham awoke early in the morning and took his son and two servants and left for the place that God had told him to go. He had with him the fire for the sacrifice, but no sheep.

On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw that they were near the place where they were going to make the sacrifice. So he spoke to his servants telling them, "Stay here... I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." And Abraham took the wood for the sacrifice and laid it on Isaac his son to carry. As they went together Isaac said, "Father, we have the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" Abraham said to him, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the sacrifice."

When they came to the place where they were to make the sacrifice, Abraham built the altar and laid the wood on it. He then bound Isaac and laid him on the altar and took the knife to kill his son. But before Abraham could kill his son, the angel of God called to him from heaven. He said, "Abraham, Abraham! Do not kill your son, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your only son from me." Then Abraham looked and saw behind him a ram, caught in the bushes. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a sacrifice in place of his son Isaac. Abraham called the name of that place, God will provide.

Abraham knew that God had promised to make Isaac into a great nation. And Abraham knew that from Isaac's offspring all the nations of the world would be blessed. Because Abraham knew God's promise, he did not refuse God's command but trusted God. He believed that God would keep His promise and raise Isaac from the dead. God rewarded Abraham's faith by providing a ram that would die as a substitute for Isaac.

Many years later a woman named Mary, who came from the offspring of Isaac, would give birth to a son named Jesus. Even during this time sin was reigning in the hearts of all men and God in His justice would condemn all sinners to eternal fire. However, just as God provided a ram to die in Isaac's place, Jesus willingly took our punishment for sin and died in our place, when He was crucified on a cross of wood. However, three days after Jesus' death He defeated death and rose from the dead.

Therefore, just as Abraham called that place, "The Lord will provide." So now God has provided for us a way to be saved from our sins and eternal judgment. Jesus became the perfect Lamb of God whose blood and death paid the punishment our sins deserved. Therefore, God no longer accepts our sacrifice for sins because Jesus' sacrifice is enough. All we need to do is accept the sacrifice of Jesus and believe in His resurrection and we will find eternal life with God.

5 - The Story of Jacob (Genesis 24-27)

Abraham's son Isaac grew and was married to Rebekah. Isaac prayed for his wife because she was unable to have children and God answered his prayer and Rebekah became pregnant. God said to her, you will give birth to two sons, who will become two nations, and the older son will serve the younger. When the time came, Rebekah gave birth to twins, the oldest son was called Esau and the younger Jacob. Because Esau was the oldest he had the birthright and would receive his father's blessing.

As the children grew and became men, the older son Esau was a hairy man and a hunter of wild game and his father loved him. However, the younger son Jacob had smooth skin and stayed at home and his mother loved him. One day when Jacob was cooking food, Esau came in from the field and wanted food to eat. Jacob agreed to give his brother food if Esau agreed to sell his birthright to Jacob. Esau thought he may die of hunger so he swore to give his birthright to Jacob for food to eat. In this way, Esau hated his birthright.

When Isaac had grown old and his eyesight had left him, he asked his older son Esau to go, kill and prepare some food for him so that he could bless him before he died. When Esau had left, Rebekah covered Jacob's skin with animal hair, prepared some food, and sent him to deceive his father. He said to his father, "I have brought you the food you have asked for. Give me my blessing now." But Isaac was confused for Jacob's voice was not like Esau's. So his father asked the boy to come close to him so that he could feel his skin. When he touched Jacob's skin and felt the animal hair he believed he was speaking to Esau. So Isaac gave his blessing to Jacob, believing it was Esau. Therefore, Jacob deceived his father.

When Esau returned home, he went to his father to give him the food he had prepared. When Isaac heard the voice of Esau he trembled, for he had been deceived by Jacob and had blessed him. Esau begged his father to bless him also, but his father refused saying, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." So Esau hated his brother.

Jacob sinned by deceiving his father. However, Esau also sinned by not having faith in the value of his birthright. For God promised to bless Abraham's family and to send a Savior from his family to bring salvation to mankind. But Esau believes his life is more important than the blessing and salvation of God and trades his blessing for food to save his life.

Even today all people have sinned against God just like Esau. And this sin shows us that we value our needs over God's salvation. This sin is punishable by death. But because of God's great love for us, he sent His Son Jesus, who was born in Abraham's family, to bring salvation to the world. For Jesus would offer His life as a sacrifice for our sin when he was crucified. But three days later Jesus would raise Himself from the dead conquering death so that we might have salvation.

Although Jacob sinned he believed in God's promise and was given salvation, not by what he did, but by his faith in God and his coming Savior. Today, we know that Savior's name, it's Jesus Christ. And through faith in His death and resurrection we also can receive salvation.

6 - Joseph sent to Egypt (Genesis 37-41)

Jacob had 12 sons, but of all these sons he loved Joseph the most. One day Joseph had a dream that the sun, moon, and 11 stars were bowing down to him. When his father Jacob heard of the dream, he was angry saying, "Shall I and your mother and your brothers... bow ourselves to the ground before you?" Because of this dream Joseph's brothers hated him.

One day Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers as they watched the sheep. When Joseph arrived, his brothers sold him as a slave to travelers going to Egypt. Then they killed a goat, covered Joseph's clothes with blood and deceived their father making him believe that Joseph had been eaten by an animal.

When Joseph arrived in Egypt he was again sold as a slave to an officer. However, God was with Joseph and blessed Joseph. But the officer's wife had placed her eye on Joseph and tempted Joseph to sleep with her. One day when she caught Joseph alone in the house, she grabbed his clothes and begged him to sleep with her. But Joseph was a God-fearing man, and would not dishonor his master. So he ran away leaving his clothes in her hands. This angered the woman, so she lied to her husband, telling him that Joseph came to sleep with her. When Joseph's master heard his wife's story he had Joseph thrown in prison.

While in prison, God was still with Joseph. When two of the king's servants were also thrown in jail, Joseph with God's help, told them the meaning of dreams that they had. These dreams came to happen just as Joseph had said. When one of the servants was restored to the king's service, Joseph asked him to speak to the king for him that he might be free. However, the servant forgot about Joseph and he remained in jail two more years.

However, when the king also had a dream the servant remembered Joseph. So the king called Joseph out of prison to tell him the meaning of his dream. With the Lord's help, Joseph was able to interpret the dream. He told the king that there would be 7 years of great harvest, followed by 7 years of great famine. Therefore, the king was to save food now in order to sell food to the people during the famine. So the king made Joseph second in command over all Egypt and put him in charge of saving food for the people of Egypt.

The famine in the land was so severe that even Jacob and his family had no food. In this way, the famine threatened to kill Abraham's family. But God had promised long ago to make Abraham's family into a great nation that would bless all the other nations on the earth. Therefore, God had sent Joseph to Egypt where he would become a powerful man. In this way, he would be able to provide food for his family so that they would not die.

Because Joseph saved Abraham's family from death, Abraham's family became a great nation. And from this nation Jesus was born. Like Joseph, Jesus was sent by God to provide salvation. For all men had sinned and were under the punishment of God. But Jesus loves all people. And He took our punishment, suffering and dying by crucifixion in our place. However, 3 days later He defeated sin and was risen from the dead. In this way, he brought salvation to anybody who would confess their sins and have faith in the sacrifice of Jesus.

7 - Joseph saves his family (Genesis 42-47)

Now the King of Egypt had placed Joseph in charge of saving food through the 7 years of good harvest. In this way, the people would have food to eat when the 7 years of famine arrived. So Joseph gathered food until there was so much food that no one could count it. When the famine began, Joseph would sell the food to the people.

The famine was so great even Joseph's family had no food to eat. So Jacob, Joseph's father, sent 10 of his sons to Egypt to buy food. However, the youngest son, Benjamin, did not go for Jacob feared evil may come to him. When Jacob's sons arrived in Egypt, Joseph recognized his brothers, but his brothers did not know him. However, Joseph treated his brothers roughly, accused them of being spies and questioned them, asking if they had another brother and if their father was still alive.

Finally, Joseph agreed to allow them to return home, but he never told them who he was. Before they left, Joseph put one of the brothers in prison, and said that he would be released when they brought their youngest brother to Egypt to see him. If their younger brother did not come then they would receive no more food. When Jacob's sons returned home, Jacob was grieved that his son was thrown in prison, but he refused to send his youngest son Benjamin to Egypt.

When Jacob's family ran out of food, he again sent his sons to Egypt, but this time Benjamin went with them. When Joseph saw Benjamin, his younger brother who was also from the same mother as Joseph, he wept. He released the other brother from prison and served his brothers a great feast. But he still did not tell his brothers who he was.

However, when they went to leave, Joseph placed his silver cup in Benjamin's sack, without any of his brothers knowing about it. After his brothers had traveled a short distance, Joseph sent his soldiers after them and found the silver cup in Benjamin's sack. Then all Joseph's brothers returned to Egypt where they feared they would become slaves. However, Joseph told them that only Benjamin would stay and become a slave. When Jacob's son Judah heard this, he offered his life for Benjamin's life, for he feared that if Benjamin did not return home their father would die.

Joseph then revealed that he was their brother who they had sold into slavery. When Joseph's brothers heard this they were afraid, for they feared that Joseph would punish them. However, Joseph told them that even though many years ago they sold him as a slave, God had sent him to Egypt to save them from being destroyed by the famine. In this way Abraham's family would become a great nation in which the Savior of the world would come from, just as God had promised many years before.

This Savior is Jesus. And just as Judah offered his life for his brother Benjamin's life, Jesus has offered His life as a perfect sacrifice for our sins by dying on a cross. However, on the 3rd day Jesus conquered death when he rose from the dead. In this way, if we have faith in Jesus' death and resurrection we may one day be saved from the punishment of eternal death.

8 - Moses' Birth and the Burning Bush (Exodus 1-3)

After Joseph saved his family from the famine, he brought them to Egypt. However, after his death, a new king arose in Egypt who made Joseph's family into slaves. For 400 years the descendants of Abraham lived as slaves in Egypt and cried out for God to save them. At this time the descendants of Abraham were called Hebrews.

However, one of the kings of Egypt became fearful of the Hebrew people for they had become a great nation of people who lived as slaves in Egypt. So he ordered every son that was born to a Hebrew woman to be thrown into the river and killed. In this way, he hoped to keep the Hebrew people from growing in strength.

One day a Hebrew woman gave birth to a son, who she hid for three months. When she could not hide him anymore she placed him in a basket and put the basket in the river. The king's daughter found the baby and raised him as her own son, she called his name Moses.

When Moses had grown up he saw an Egyptian man beating a Hebrew slave. Moses knew that he had been born a Hebrew, so he went to the Egyptian and killed him. When the king found out what Moses had done he tried to have Moses killed. But Moses fled from Egypt. And he went to the land of Midian.

In Midian, Moses was married and became a shepherd. It was there that he lived for 40 years. One day as he was tending his flock, he saw a bush that was burning; yet the bush was not consumed by the fire. When Moses went to see this, God spoke from the bush and told Moses that He had heard the cry of the Hebrew people who were slaves in Egypt. And that He was sending Moses back to Egypt to rescue the people from slavery. God told Moses to tell the people that God, whose name is, "I AM" has sent Moses to deliver them.

Many years later during the time of Jesus, Jesus told the Hebrew people, that Abraham saw His day. However, the people were confused because Abraham had died many years before Jesus' time on earth. But Jesus was speaking of faith. In faith Abraham knew that a Savior would come to rescue the nations. Therefore, Abraham saw the day of Jesus through faith. But the people were confused. They asked Jesus "...have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "...before Abraham was I AM." The name that God gave to Moses at the burning bush is the same name that Jesus uses for Himself. In this way, Jesus was telling the Hebrew people, that He is the God who spoke to Moses in the burning bush. Therefore, Jesus is not just a man or prophet, but Jesus has claimed to be God in the flesh. And just as Moses delivered the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. Jesus as God is able to deliver all humanity from sin and its punishment by dying on a cross for our sins and rising from the dead three days later.

Just as the Hebrews were slaves to the Egyptians, we all today are slaves to sin and death. Sin is our master and death will rule over us. But just as Abraham had faith in God if we also have faith in Jesus as God who saves us through His death and resurrection, we will be saved from sin and death. And we will enter into His eternal and glorious Kingdom.

9 - The Ten Plagues and Exodus (Exodus 4-11)

After God spoke to Moses in the burning bush that was not consumed, Moses took his brother Aaron and returned to Egypt to help the Hebrew people. They first went to the Hebrew people and told them what God had said to Moses. The Hebrew people believed God and worshiped Him because He had not forgotten them and heard their cry for help.

Moses then went to the king of Egypt and spoke with him. He asked the king of Egypt to let the Hebrew people go into the wilderness to worship their God. However, God had hardened the heart of the Egyptian king and he refused to let the Hebrew people go. Instead the Egyptian king made the Hebrew people work even harder. However, God would punish the Egyptian king and his people.

One day when the Egyptian king went to the river, Moses also went and struck the water with his staff turning the river to blood. But still God had hardened the king's heart and he would not let the people go from Egypt. God would send 8 more plagues on the nation of Egypt. He sent frogs, gnats, flies, and locusts to cover the land. He also killed the Egyptians animals, allowed painful boils to come on the Egyptian people, great hail to fall from the sky, and for darkness to cover the land of Egypt for 3 days. But God continued to harden the king's heart and the king still refused to let the Hebrew people go and worship their God.

Finally, God would send the 10th and final plague on the Egyptians. He told the Hebrew people to kill a male lamb and put its blood above the door of their houses. For God would come through the land of Egypt and kill the first-born son in each home where there was no blood on the door. The Hebrew people listened and obeyed God. When the night of judgment came, God passed over the Hebrew people's homes because he saw the blood on the doors. However, when God came to the Egyptian homes there was no blood on their doors. So God entered their homes and struck down the Egyptians first-born sons. Even the son of the Egyptian king was killed. So there was great mourning in all the land of Egypt. After this final judgment, the king of Egypt called for Moses. He told Moses that the Hebrew people could leave the land of Egypt to worship their God.

Today all mankind are still slaves, whose slave master is our sin. For we are all slaves to sin because we have not obeyed God's word. In Moses' time, it was the sacrifice of an animal whose blood was put above the doors that saved the Hebrew people from death and gave them salvation from slavery. However, now many years later we also need a sacrifice. But the sacrifice of an animal is not enough for our salvation from sin. We need a sacrifice whose blood is greater than the blood of animals. Therefore, God sent His Holy Son Jesus to die as a sacrifice and shed his own blood on a cross for our sins and in our place. Jesus took our sin punishment to save mankind from their slavery to sin. And 3 days after Jesus' death, he rose from the dead to conquer sin and death forever. Just as God's judgment passed over the Hebrew people because of the blood above their doors, now God's judgment will pass over anybody who puts their faith in the sacrificial blood of Jesus that was spilled for our sins and His resurrection from the dead. Only through faith in Jesus can we receive salvation from our sin and enter into Jesus' eternal kingdom.

10 - The Ten Commandments (Exodus 13-20)

After the Lord had sent 10 plagues on the nation of Egypt, the Egyptian king allowed the Hebrew people to leave Egypt. Moses led them through the wilderness to the edge of the Red Sea. However, the king of Egypt changed his mind and went after them so that he might bring them back to Egypt. But God parted the waters of the sea so that a road was made through the sea. Therefore, the Hebrew people were able to cross over to the other side. When the Egyptian army also tried to pass through the sea, God allowed the waters to return and kill the Egyptian soldiers. God had saved his people from Egypt.

Moses led them through the desert to the mountain where he had seen the burning bush. When they came to the mountain, God called Moses to the top and gave him His law and commanded the people to follow His law. They must not worship or make other gods. They must not use God's name disrespectfully. And they were required to rest on the 7th day of the week. God also commanded them to honor their father and mother and not to murder, commit adultery, steal, lie, or desire anything that belongs to their neighbor. If the Hebrew people kept this law the Lord would bless and protect them. But if they break God's law He would punish them.

God also gave Moses directions on building a tent for God to dwell in. It would be in this tent that God would live among His people and where Moses would speak with God. However, even though the Hebrew people had the law of God they did not follow the law of God perfectly. So when the Hebrew people broke God's law they would bring a sacrifice to the tent of God. And the priests of God would make a sacrifice for the sins of the people.

However, these sacrifices were temporary because the sacrifices of sheep and goats can never take away the sins of people and because the priests who made the sacrifices were also sinful men. Although God required the people to make the sacrifice at that time the animal sacrifice was not sufficient. God commands a sacrifice that is better than the sacrifice of animals that is given by a priest with no sin.

Just as God had come to dwell in a tent during the time of the Hebrew people, many years later God would come again. This time He would dwell in the flesh and be called Jesus. Jesus was that perfect priest, who had never sinned. He was the only person qualified to make a perfect sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. For just like the Hebrew people, all mankind has sinned and broken God's perfect and good law. However, Jesus did not kill a sheep or goat. But He allowed people to shed his own blood on a cross for our sins. Jesus paid our sin punishment with His own blood.

All sacrifices that are given or killed are never expected to return. However, Jesus' sacrifice was different and better than the sacrifice of animals. Because even though Jesus died, on the third day after his death He would rise from the dead. Death could not hold Jesus in the grave. But because of His power and sinlessness, Jesus rose from the dead. The Bible teaches us that all men have committed sin and have broken the law of God. And every man needs a sacrifice for their sins to be forgiven. But there is only one sacrifice that will be good enough to bring us salvation. It is the sacrifice of Jesus.

11 - The New Land Rejected (Numbers 14)

After Moses and the Hebrew people received the law of God. They made their way to the land that God had promised to give Abraham many years before. Although Abraham had lived in the land for some time, he never possessed the land as his own but was just a foreigner in the land. However, now God was prepared to give the land fully to the Hebrew people. And to cast out the wicked people who lived in the land.

When they reached the land, Moses sent 12 spies into the land. At this time, there were many different nations living in the land, each serving and worshiping their own gods. When the spies returned they said that the land was filled with milk and honey, but that the nations in the land were strong and that their cities were fortified and large. At this news, the Hebrew people were very afraid to take the land by force. So they became mad at Moses. And they decided to choose a new leader to take them back to the land of Egypt to become slaves again.

But two of the 12 spies, Joshua and Caleb, said to the people, "If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us...Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land...Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us." But the Hebrew people would not listen and instead wanted to kill Caleb and Joshua.

Therefore, God was angry with the Hebrew people for their lack of faith. For they did not believe God would bring them into the land that God had promised to give to Abraham many years before. Therefore, God would punish the Hebrew people. He told the people that they would not go into the land at this time. But instead they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all who were 20 years of age and older had died. Then their Hebrew children, who would grow up, would go into the land and take possession of it.

The land that God promised to give to Abraham's descendants was a great land. But God punished the Hebrew people because they did not have faith in God to give them the land. By refusing to go into the land, the Hebrew people had rejected God's salvation.

Just like God had offered this land to the Hebrew people many years ago, today He offers this same land to us. For God's word tells us that one day God will return to make all things on this earth new. And when He returns He will establish his Kingdom in this land forever. For just as God had promised Abraham many years ago that he would give him a land, God also promised that He would give the nations a Savior. A Savior better than Moses, one who would save us from our sins. And just like the Hebrew people needed to have faith in God to receive the good land, today we must put our faith in God's Savior if we are to enter into God's eternal Kingdom and receive God's eternal salvation. The Bible tells us that this Savior's name is Jesus. And that He would die on a cross of wood to take the punishment our sins deserved. However, on the third day he would rise from the dead for His glory and our salvation. If we reject Jesus as our Savior we will be punished by God and left to die like the Hebrew people. Never getting to go into the eternal land that God promised to those who have faith in Him.

12 - Korah's Rebellion (Numbers 16)

After the Hebrew people refused to take the land that God had promised to give to Abraham's descendants, they made their way into the wilderness. There God would feed them with bread from heaven each morning. But no one 20 years or older would be allowed to return to the land. Instead they would die in the wilderness. And their children would grow up to go into the land in their place.

At this time, the Hebrew people did not follow God's law perfectly. So God chose Aaron and his sons to make daily sacrifices for the people. God gave Aaron and his sons a priestly holiness, so only their sacrifices were accepted by God. However, a man named Korah and his followers spoke to Moses saying that he and Aaron were exalting themselves over the Hebrew people. Korah also said that all the Hebrew people were holy and should be able to make sacrifices to God.

When Moses heard the words of Korah, he fell to the ground and said, "In the morning the Lord will show who is His and who is holy..." The next morning Korah and his followers gathered the Hebrew people against Moses and Aaron. However, God chose Moses and Aaron and sought to kill Korah and the people. So the ground opened and Korah and all who followed him were swallowed up and died. However, Moses and Aaron prayed to God so that He would not kill all the Hebrew people. And God heard their prayers.

However, the next morning the Hebrew people were angry with Moses and Aaron for they wrongly accused them of killing Korah and his followers. So God sent a plague that swept through the Hebrew people killing many of them. Moses told Aaron to take fire and incense from the altar of God and to run to the people to save them. So Aaron ran to the people and stood with the fire and incense between the living and the dead and God's anger was stopped. In this way, Aaron saved the Hebrew people from death.

Because all sin, seen or unseen, is offensive to a Holy God a sacrifice had to be made. However, only those who had been given the priestly holiness were allowed to make these sacrifices. Even today a sacrifice for sins is needed. However, like the Hebrew people, we are not allowed to make sacrifices for ourselves because we ourselves are sinful. Any sacrifice we make for ourselves will be rejected by God. And God's anger will fall on us as it did on Korah and the Hebrew people.

However, God has given us a priest in the place of Aaron today. His name is Jesus. And He is called the great High priest, for He is greater than Moses or Aaron. Jesus has been given the priestly holiness and is without sin. Therefore, Jesus offers a sacrifice for our sins. This sacrifice is much greater than the blood of sheep or the giving of alms for Jesus sacrificed His own life. He took the punishment that our sin required upon himself and died in our place. However, because of Jesus' high priestly position and his righteous life, His death could not keep Him in the grave. But on the third day Jesus rose victoriously from the dead. Now, like Aaron, Jesus stands between the living and the dead. And He offers all those who have faith in His sacrifice and resurrection, eternal salvation.

13 - The Bronze Serpent (Numbers 21:4-9)

After Korah and his followers were punished for their rebellion against God, the Hebrew people continued to wander in the wilderness. During this time of wandering, God provided food from heaven for the people to eat. Each morning when the people arose and went out they would find bread on the ground, which they gathered to eat. This bread provided salvation from death, for without food to eat the people would die. However, they had been eating the bread for such a long time that they now began to complain because they were getting tired of eating the bread.

Because the people were ungrateful for the bread that brought life, God became angry and punished the people. So God sent poisonous snakes that began to bite and kill the Hebrew people. The people then went to Moses and said, "We have sinned...Pray to God, that He take away the serpents from us. (Numbers 21:7). So God told Moses to make a bronze snake and place it on a pole in the middle of the people. If a person was bitten by a snake and went and looked at the bronze snake they would live and not die. In this way, God showed both His judgment of sin and His grace by giving the people a way to be saved from death.

Many years later Jesus would come to the earth as the Son of Man and say, "...as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life." Jesus is telling us that He too would be lifted up like the bronze snake. But Jesus would be lifted up on a cross of wood and be killed. Jesus' death would show the people God's punishment for sin. For just as God punished the Hebrew people for their sin, God now punishes Jesus. But because Jesus has never sinned God punishes Jesus for the sins committed by the people of the world. Jesus dies as our sacrifice as our substitute. But Jesus' death also shows us God's grace. For just as the people had faith in the bronze snake to save them from death, we must have faith in the death of Jesus to save us from eternal death and hell.

But Jesus' death on the cross is not the end of the story. Because of Jesus' perfection and holiness on the third day of his death, He rose from the dead. Jesus' resurrection gives us hope that one day after we die, we too will be raised from the dead, just as Jesus rose from the dead, and spend eternity with God in heaven.

If we believe that only the sacrifice of Jesus and His resurrection can bring us salvation, then we can know for certain that we will have eternal life with God in heaven. We will escape the wrath and judgment of God and instead experience His love and mercy.

14 - Joshua and the Promised Land (Joshua 1-6)

For 40 years, the Hebrew people wandered in the wilderness until every person age 20 and above had died. Even Moses and Aaron died in the wilderness having never gone into the promised land. Now God had raised up another leader named Joshua. He commanded Joshua to take the land He had promised to them by force. God said to Joshua, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for God is with you wherever you go."

So Joshua sent 2 spies into the city of Jericho. When the king of Jericho heard that 2 Hebrews came to the city he sent men to arrest them. But a prostitute named Rahab hid the spies in her home telling the soldiers that the spies had left the city. After the soldiers had left, Rahab said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land...Now then, please swear to me by God that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house...and deliver our lives from death." The spies gave Rahab a scarlet cord and told her to hang it in her window so that when the Hebrew people came to attack the city, they would know not to kill anybody in her house. She then let the men down the wall with a rope so they could escape.

When the men returned to Joshua, they said, "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands." So Joshua and the Hebrew people went to the city of Jericho. When they arrived, God told Joshua to have the people march around the city one time each day for 6 days. But on the 7th day, they were to march around the city 7 times and then give a great shout. The people obeyed God and on the 7th day when they gave a great shout the walls of the city fell down and the Hebrew people went straight in. Only Rahab and all who were in her house survived.

After Jericho was defeated, God commanded the Hebrew people to continue to go through the land driving out and killing all the evil nations that lived in it. After all these years God had given the Hebrew people the land that He promised Abraham many years before. God does not lie. He always keeps His promises. Now the people possessed the land as their own inheritance from God.

However, Rahab, because of her great faith in the God of the Hebrew people, would be saved and become part of the Hebrew nation. Rahab was a great sinner, a prostitute, but because of her faith in the God of the Hebrews, God saved her and redeemed her from evil. Just as Rahab needed the salvation of God we today, because of our sins, need God's salvation. And from Rahab's offspring, came the one man who could bring us that salvation, His name is Jesus. Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins by dying on a cross of wood to save us and redeem us from evil. He was punished by God the Father for our sins in our place. And on the third day of his death, He rose from the dead defeating death forever. If we will believe in Jesus as the Son of God and trust in His sacrifice for our sins we will receive eternal life in Jesus' Kingdom.

15 - Judges (The Book of Judges)

After God had given Abraham's descendants the land He had promised to give them, He divided the land into sections. The descendants of Jacob's children were given their own section of land, which was to be their inheritance.

Many years before this God had changed Jacob's name to Israel, so this nation became known as the nation of Israel. And Jacob's descendants were called the 12 tribes of Israel. These 12 tribes lived in the Promise Land and had no king for God was their King.

However, the 12 tribes of Israel were unfaithful to God. God had told them to drive all the wicked nations out of the land so that none remained. But in disobedience the nation of Israel did not listen. And again, and again, these wicked nations caused the 12 tribes of Israel to sin and turn away from God, for this reason they worshiped idols.

Each time the nation of Israel would worship the idols, God would allow the enemies of Israel to gain power over them. And each time the nation of Israel would call to God for help and repent. God in His compassion, would send a judge to deliver the nation of Israel from the hands of their enemies. And this judge would rule over them. However, after the judge would die, Israel would turn again to sin and worship the idols.

During this time God would raise up many judges. When one died another would take their place delivering the people again and again from their enemies. However, the people would continue to sin doing what was right in their own eyes. Even many of the judges committed evil acts of sin against God.

The nation of Israel needed a good and righteous judge who would not just deliver them from their enemies, but who also would deliver them from their sin. When Jesus came to the earth, He walked in perfect righteousness as a good and fair judge. Because He is a good judge, He knew that God must punish the sin of all the nations. However, because of Jesus' great love for all the nations, He allowed the punishment our sins deserved to fall on Him. And He offered His life as a sacrifice for our life when He died on a cruel cross in our place. He took our sin and shame and was buried in a tomb. But on the third day of His death Jesus rose from the dead.

Just as the many judges defeated Israel's enemies, Jesus our great judge has defeated His most powerful enemy, Satan, by His resurrection from the dead. And now He sits on the throne in heaven where one day He will judge all the nations of the earth. If anybody will put their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus, then Jesus' blood will pay for their sins and they will receive forgiveness. Because they received forgiveness in faith they will be given righteousness, a good judgment, and eternal life. But anybody who rejects the death and resurrection of Jesus will be punished by God for their own sin. They will receive a bad judgment and eternal death in hell. Because God is holy and just, His punishment for our sins is fair and just.

16 - Ruth (Ruth 1-4)

During the time that judges ruled in Israel, there was a great famine in the land. So a man from Israel took his wife Naomi, and their two sons and went to live in the land of Moab. While in Moab, the man's sons each took a Moab woman as their wife. However, before his son's wives could give birth, the man and his two sons died leaving Naomi alone with two daughter-in-laws.

At this time Naomi decided to return to the land of Israel. So she told her two daughter-in-laws that they should stay in the land of Moab and look for new husbands. However, one of them, a woman named Ruth, refused to leave her mother-in-law but said, "For where you go I will go...Your people shall be my people, and your God my God." Therefore, Naomi and Ruth returned to the nation of Israel. However, it was a great shame for Naomi to return to Israel without a husband or sons, for she had no heir that would come from her family.

Ruth and Naomi were very poor. So Ruth went to the field of a man named Boaz who was Naomi's relative. There she gathered food. When Boaz saw Ruth, he told his workers to leave Ruth more food and to make sure she was well taken care of. When Ruth returned home she had gathered much food. So Naomi told Ruth to return to the field of Boaz for he was a good man. At this time in Israel's history, a young widow with no children could be saved by a member of her dead husband's family. This person was a near relative to Ruth's husband and could marry Ruth, give her children, and save her. Boaz was the family redeemer who was able to marry Ruth and save Naomi's family from disappearing from the earth.

Naomi told Ruth to go to Boaz in the evening time where the men threshed the wheat. Ruth was to wait until Boaz had fallen asleep then she was to uncover his feet and lay down next to his feet. This was a sign that she was trusting Boaz to redeem her from being a widow and to take her as his wife. When Boaz awoke and discovered Ruth lying at his feet he told Ruth he would redeem her and make her his wife. For Ruth was an honorable woman who had taken care of her mother-in-law. However, there was one other man who was a closer redeemer than Boaz and was allowed to marry Ruth before Boaz. But this man refused, so Boaz was granted permission to marry Ruth. When Boaz and Ruth had a son, Naomi rejoiced. For God had now taken away her shame and had given her an heir, through the offspring of Ruth.

God blessed Ruth, who was a Moabite woman and a foreigner in Israel, because of her faith in the God of Israel. Both Ruth and Naomi were saved from their shame by Boaz who redeemed Ruth through marriage and gave her a son. Even today we all, like Ruth, have shame because of our sins against the eternal God. But we, like Ruth, also have a redeemer, one who will save us from our sin and shame. This Savior would come through the offspring of Ruth and His name is Jesus. Just as Ruth was trusting Boaz to save her and take away her shame, we also must place our trust in Jesus to take away our sin and shame. Jesus takes away our sin and shame by dying on a cross of wood and suffering the penalty for our sins. However, because of the righteousness and power that Jesus possesses, He conquered death and on the third day He rose from the dead. If we place our faith in Jesus who is our Redeemer and Savior, Jesus will remove our sin and shame and we will enter into Jesus' eternal kingdom.

17 - Samuel and King Saul (1 Samuel 1-15)

During the time the judges ruled over the nation of Israel, there was an Israelite man and his wife Hannah who were not able to have a child. Hannah promised God that if she had a son she would give him to the service of God. God heard Hannah's prayer and gave her a son. Hannah named her son Samuel. When Samuel was old enough, Hannah kept her promise to God. She gave Samuel to the high priest over all Israel. Here Samuel would grow to serve God as a faithful priest. When Samuel was old the people of Israel asked Samuel to appoint a king over them like the other nations on the earth. However, Samuel was not happy with this request for God was their king. But God said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people... for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them."

So Samuel called all Israel together to select a king for them. Among the people there was a man named Saul who was very handsome and, "From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people." God selected Saul and they appointed him the first king over the nation of Israel.

At first, Saul seemed to be a good king. He defeated the enemies of Israel and seemed to have a good and humble heart. However, Saul's heart quickly become proud and he would turn from following the commands of God. One day God commanded Saul to attack and destroy the enemies of God. God's command was to kill every person for their wicked deeds and destroy all their livestock. But after God gave victory to Saul and the Israelite army, Saul disobeyed God's command and kept alive the wicked king and the best of the livestock. When Samuel discovered Saul's unfaithfulness, he asked Saul why he did not destroy everything, as God had commanded him. But Saul said to Samuel, the people took the best of the sheep, and oxen so they could make sacrifices to God. However, Samuel reminded Saul that to obey God's word is better than sacrifice. Therefore, because of Saul's unfaithfulness God removed His Spirit from Saul. And God rejected him as king over the nation of Israel.

Saul reigned over Israel for 40 years as an unfaithful king who God had rejected. Finally, Israel's enemies struck down and killed Saul in battle. And God told Samuel that He would put a new king in Israel. This king would have a heart devoted to the God of Israel. He would be a man after God's own heart. Although Israel had sinned by rejecting God as their king, God would not forget about Israel. Many years later, God would put on flesh and come to earth to dwell among us as King Jesus. But Jesus was not a normal king, and He would not rule the nation of Israel like other kings before Him. He had no throne to sit on or crown for his head, but instead he was poor and often without a home. The people of Israel wanted a mighty king to rule over them, one who would establish the nation of Israel over the whole world. But instead Jesus healed the sick, preached righteousness, and called men to repentance. This upset the nation of Israel. So they mocked Him, treated Him shamefully, and hung Him on a cross to die. But from before He created all things, God's will was for Jesus' death and blood to be a sacrifice that would pay all mankind's sin debt.

But Jesus would not remain dead. On the third day after His death He rose from the dead. This shows us his kingly power. And later He ascended into heaven where He sat down on His eternal throne. If we reject Jesus as our eternal king, as the nation of Israel rejected Him as their king, we will be rejected by God forever in hell. However, if we believe by faith that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead as our Eternal King, our sins will be forgiven and we will inherit the righteousness that belongs to Jesus. In this way, we will be judged by God as righteous and enter His eternal kingdom.

18 - King David (1 Samuel 16-31, 2 Samuel 1-7)

During King Saul's 40-year reign over the nation of Israel, God had rejected Saul as king because of his disobedience. So God told Samuel to go to a man called Jesse. So that Samuel may anoint Jesse's son king over Israel. When Samuel came to Jesse's home he invited Jesse and his sons to a sacrifice. When they arrived at the sacrifice, Samuel saw Jesse's firstborn son and said, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord." But God said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance...The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

Seven of Jesse's sons appeared before Samuel, but God rejected each one from being king. Finally, Samuel asked Jesse if he had any more sons. Jesse told Samuel that his youngest son was watching over the animals. When Jesse's youngest son arrived, God said to Samuel, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one." So Samuel anointed Jesse's youngest son David as the future king of Israel.

Now the Israelites continued to follow King Saul for many years as David grew into a man. As David grew God's hand of blessing was on him. And David did many mighty things before the nation of Israel. But King Saul hated David, for God had selected David as the next King of Israel in place of Saul's sons. Many times, King Saul attempted to kill David. But each time David escaped. But David had much respect for the position of the king and although he had the opportunity to kill King Saul, he refused.

Finally, the judgment of God fell on Saul and he was killed in battle. And in time David became King of Israel. David was a good king. He led Israel to defeat their enemies and made the nation of Israel into a great nation. Although David did sin before God, he would repent and be called a man after God's own heart.

In Jerusalem, David built for himself a wonderful home. However, the temple of God, was still just a small tent. So David decided to build a great temple for God in Jerusalem. However, because David was a man of war, God would not allow David to build the temple for God. But David's son, who would rule after him, would one day build a temple for God. However, God would make a covenant with King David. He promised David that a man from his offspring would one day be king over Israel forever. David believed God's promise and worshiped Him.

God would keep his promise to King David. For many years after the death of King David, another King would be born from David's family who would become King over Israel forever. His name is Jesus. Jesus, whose parents were descendants of David, would not be a king like the kings of the earth. Instead, Jesus would be poor and rejected, and eventually killed by his own people. But this was part of God's will. For Jesus must first save mankind from their sins. For the sin of all people would keep them from entering into Jesus' glorious kingdom. So Jesus, the sinless king, made a way for mankind to receive forgiveness and salvation. Jesus took God's punishment for our sin upon Himself, when He died on a cross of wood. However, on the third day of his death Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus' death for our sins shows us the love our King has for us. He has come to grant us eternal life and a place in His Kingdom. And Jesus' resurrection from the dead shows us that Jesus is not a normal king. But He is the King that God promised to send to the nation of Israel from David's descendants. Today Jesus has sat down as King on His eternal throne in heaven. If we put our faith in Jesus' death for our sins and also in Jesus' resurrection from the dead we will be welcomed into Jesus' glorious kingdom forever.

19 – King Solomon (1 Kings 1-11)

King David ruled over Israel for 40 years as a good and righteous king. He delivered Israel from their enemies and was called a man after God's own heart. After King David's death, his son Solomon ruled over Israel in his father's place. At this time, there was peace in the land of Israel.

One night as King Solomon slept, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you." King Solomon knew that Israel was a great nation and that he was still young. So he asked God to give him an understanding mind so that he would govern the nation of Israel with great wisdom. God was pleased with King Solomon because he did not ask for long life, great riches, or victory over his enemies. So God said to King Solomon, "Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor..."

During the 40 years that King Solomon reigned as king over Israel, his wisdom and wealth surpassed all the other nations of the world. Kings and queens would come to hear the great wisdom of King Solomon and to see his great wealth. During this time, King Solomon built a great home for himself. And he built a great temple for God. It was in this great temple that the people would meet with God.

Even though King Solomon possessed great wisdom, Solomon did not follow God with his whole heart. For King Solomon sinned when he married over 700 women, many from the surrounding nations. And these women would turn King Solomon's heart from the true God of Israel. So that he began to worship the idols of his foreign wives.

God had promised King David that one of his descendants would rule over Israel forever. However, King Solomon was not that promised king. Although King Solomon had much wisdom, that wisdom would fail him as he turned from worshiping the true God of Israel. Instead he worshiped the idols of the nations. Therefore, the nation of Israel would need to wait for another king. A king who would possess perfect wisdom and do the will of God perfectly.

Many years would pass before this perfect king arrived, but when He did His name was Jesus. Jesus was a simple carpenter's son who came from the descendants of David. He would amaze the religious teachers with His teachings. He had a perfect knowledge of a person's heart. And His wisdom and understanding of God's law surpassed all of the religious teachers. This made the religious teachers angry and jealous and they sought to have Jesus put to death. But in Jesus' wisdom He knew He must die. So He allowed the religious teachers to kill Him. For God's law tells us that the punishment for our sin is death. So because of Jesus' great love for us, He was crucified and died for our sins in our place. Jesus' death paid our sin debt before His Father in heaven. Our sins demanded a punishment. Jesus, in His wisdom, took our punishment so that we could be saved from hell.

However, on the third day after His death, Jesus rose from the dead. After that He ascended into heaven where He took His place as King. One day, Jesus will come again. And when He does He will bring his glorious kingdom with him. All those who put their faith in the great wisdom of Jesus, and accept His death for their sins and His resurrection from the dead, will be welcomed into God's eternal kingdom.

20 - The Kingdom Divided (1 Kings 12)

King Solomon made the people of Israel work very hard so that the temple of God and Solomon's kingdom could be built. However, after Solomon's death, the nation of Israel gathered to make Solomon's son Rehoboam king over Israel. At this time, there were 12 tribes that made up the nation of Israel. And the people said to Rehoboam, "Your father made our work hard, now lighten the hard service... and we will serve you as king." However, Rehoboam refused to listen to the people. And he told the people that he would add to them more difficult work. So the 10 tribes in the north refused to follow Solomon's son Rehoboam as their king. When Rehoboam sent one of his servants to instruct the 10 northern tribes on the work the king wanted them to do, the 10 tribes stoned the servant until he was dead. In fear Rehoboam fled to Jerusalem in the south where he set up his kingdom and ruled over the 2 tribes. Rehoboam's kingdom was the southern kingdom and would be called the nation of Judah.

However, the 10 northern tribes made another man king. They lived in rebellion against Rehoboam and David's kingdom. Their kingdom was the northern kingdom and would be called the nation of Israel. So now this once great nation that was under the rule of God, was divided into two nations. The nation of Israel in the north who would reject David's kingdom. And the nation of Judah in the south which served David's kingdom. It was God's command that all 12 tribes make sacrifices to God in Jerusalem. However, the king of the nation of Israel in the north was afraid to let his people go to Jerusalem in the southern nation to make sacrifices. For he knew that if his people went to Jerusalem, they would turn back to David's kingdom and his nation in the north would be destroyed. So the king of the nation of Israel in the north made two idols of gold. He told his people not to go to Jerusalem to sacrifice, but instead they were to sacrifice to the idols of gold as their gods. The 10 tribes of the nation of Israel in the north agreed. They turned back from worshipping God to worship the golden idols, so they sinned against God.

The nation of Israel in the north lived in rebellion against God and against David's eternal kingdom. God had told all Israel that a perfect and great King was coming from David's kingdom. And this King would rule over David's kingdom forever. But the nation of Israel in the north rejected this promised king when they rejected Rehoboam as their king and worshiped the golden idols. Because of that their nation would be destroyed.

Many years later, after the nation of Israel in the north was destroyed, the promised King from David's family came. His name was Jesus. But Jesus' kingdom was not of this world. He did not bring power and wealth to the southern kingdom. The nation of Judah in the south became angry. And like the nation of Israel in the north they also rejected their promised King. Because the nation of Judah in the south had no faith in Jesus to reign as the promised King of Israel, they looked for a way to kill Jesus. But they did not understand that Jesus, the promised King of Israel, came to die to bring us salvation. Because of sin all people must be punished by God. But Jesus, the promised King who loves us, came to pay our sin punishment. His father in heaven judged and punished Jesus when He died on the cross in our place. In this way Jesus, the promised King of Israel, opened the way for all the nations of the earth to be saved from sin and hell. So Jesus is not just the King of Israel, but He is also the King of all the nations.

But what makes Jesus a great King is that on the third day of His death He rose from the dead. Our great King would not stay in the grave, but rose from the dead. And He promised everybody that if we believe in Jesus' death for our sins, and also in His resurrection, we can enter into Jesus' eternal kingdom.

21 - Elijah and the Prophets of Baal (1 Kings 17-18)

After the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel was divided into two nations. Both nations appointed a king to rule over them. When one king died another would take his place. Many of the kings were evil and did not follow the Lord as King David had done. After many years Ahab became king of the nation of Israel in the north. Ahab was a wicked king who built a temple and altar to the idol Baal. And he led the people to serve and worship the idol of Baal.

During this time the prophet Elijah, who spoke for God, appeared before King Ahab. Elijah said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives...there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word." So a great famine came upon the nation of Israel.

In the third year of the famine Elijah came to King Ahab. When King Ahab saw him he said, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" Elijah responded, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have...because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals." Then Elijah commanded King Ahab to assemble the nation of Israel in the north with the 450 prophets of Baal on a mountain named Carmel. When the people and priests of Baal arrived on the mountain Elijah spoke to all the people saying, "If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, then follow him." But the people of Israel did not answer Elijah.

So Elijah told the prophets of Baal to kill a bull and prepare it for a sacrifice. They were to place the bull on the altar, but they were not to place the fire on it. After this Elijah would also prepare a bull and place no fire on it. Then the prophets were to call to Baal and Elijah would call to God, "...and the God who answers by fire, He is the true and only God."

The prophets of Baal prepared their bull, cut themselves with swords, and called out to Baal from morning till evening, but "No one answered." Finally, Elijah prepared his bull and placed it on the altar he built. He dug a trench around the altar and had four jars of water poured on the sacrifice 3 times, until "...the water ran around the altar and filled the trench..." Then Elijah prayed, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel...and you are turning their hearts back." Then fire fell from heaven and consumed Elijah's sacrifice and licked up all the water. When the people saw this, they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, He is God." Elijah and the people of Israel then seized the prophets of Baal and killed them. After this Elijah prayed to the Lord and rain fell upon Israel again.

The people of Israel had fallen into idolatry. God is on trial and He would prove that He is the true God by setting the sacrifice on fire. Many years later Jesus would come to earth and would be judged. For Jesus would say that He was the true God of Israel who has come in the flesh to save mankind. However, the nation of Israel would reject Jesus and kill Him on a cross of wood. But just as God proved He was the true God by setting Elijah's sacrifice on fire. Jesus would also prove that He was the true God by rising from the dead. Therefore, because Jesus is the true God, Jesus' death on a cross was a sacrifice that he offered for our sin's punishment in our place. Therefore, anyone who has faith in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for their sins and believes in His resurrection from the dead will be saved and enter into God's eternal kingdom.

22 - The Prophet Isaiah (The Book of Isaiah)

During the time when the nation of Israel was divided into two nations, the people of these two nations turned from God. They began worshiping idols. This made God very angry. So God sent many prophets to the two nations to tell them that they would be destroyed if they did not repent.

One of the prophets who God sent to the nation of Judah in the south was the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah had a dream where he "...saw God sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up;" Angels were above him and they were covering their faces from the glory of God and crying out to each other "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

Isaiah was very afraid to be in the presence of God, for he knew he was a sinner. However, God showed Isaiah mercy and did not harm him. He told Isaiah to call the nation of Judah in the south to repentance. He also told Isaiah to show them God's purpose for their nation. For the promised King of Israel would come from their descendants. He will bring salvation to the world.

At this time, the nation of Judah in the south was not a faithful witness of the goodness of God. For they would not even protect the weak and poor people that lived in their land. They were very happy to make sacrifices. But these sacrifices did not make God happy because the people did not follow God's word. And for God, obedience is better than sacrifice.

Isaiah, who spoke for God, told the people of Judah in the south the charges that God had against them and the judgments that would come. That God would send a faraway nation to destroy and to take the nation of Judah in the south and to make them slaves. Through this slavery the wicked among them would be destroyed and killed. And they would not worship the false idols again. However, Isaiah also reminds the nation of Judah in the south that one day God would rescue them from their enemies and bring them back into their land.

Isaiah then prophesies about a coming Savior who would make a way for the nation of Judah in the south and also the whole world to receive salvation. This Savior he says is a suffering Savior. "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "He was wounded for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities...and with his stripes we are healed." However, the Spirit of God will be upon this suffering Savior. He will bring good news to all people. The good news is that he has provided a way to be saved from our sins and a way for us to enter into God's eternal kingdom.

Many years later, Jesus would enter the house of the Lord and read the words of Isaiah. Then He said, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus was saying that he was the suffering Savior who would bring good news to all people. He would make a way for all people to be forgiven from their sins. For Jesus was despised and rejected by His own countrymen. After this, they wounded and crushed Him as He died on a cross for our sins. But on the third day of His death Jesus would defeat death and rise from the dead. This is the good news that Jesus brings. That if we have faith that Jesus died for our sins, and if we have faith in Jesus' resurrection from the dead, we will be delivered from our sin and be raised up after death to enter into Jesus' eternal kingdom.

23 - The Prophet Hosea (The Book of Hosea)

While the prophet Isaiah was warning the nation of Judah in the south of God's coming judgment, the nation of Israel in the north was full of idolatry. Every king that came to power over the nation of Israel in the north did evil in the eyes of God. So God also sent prophets to the nation of Israel in the north to warn them of God's coming judgment and to call them to repentance. One of those prophets was a man by the name of Hosea.

God told Hosea to tell the people that they would be punished for their great sin and taken into exile. But one day because of His great mercy, He would also bring them back again to their inheritance. To show them this, God would give them a sign. For God would often give signs to His people to help them understand His prophet's words. This sign was a marriage. God commanded the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute. God is never pleased with prostitution, nor does He allow men to visit prostitutes. However, God did not command Hosea to sin by visiting a prostitute. But He commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute and to make her his wife. It would be through Hosea's marriage that the people of Israel in the north would understand God's hatred for sin and show His great love for them.

First, Hosea's marriage would show the nation of Israel in the north God's hatred for sin. For when Hosea's wife gave birth to their second and third children, God commanded Hosea to name the children "No Mercy," and "Not My People". For God would show compassion to the nation of Israel and He would reject them from being His people because of their wickedness. For just as Hosea's wife had committed sinful acts of adultery, so the people of Israel had committed adultery against a holy God by worshiping the idols of Baal.

Second, Hosea's marriage would show the nation of Israel in the north His great love for them. After Hosea's wife had given birth to their 3rd child, she returned to prostitution. However, God commanded Hosea to go and buy his wife and bring her home. Just as Hosea went and bought back his wife who had committed adultery against him, God will also bring back the nation of Israel in the north who sinned against Him by worshiping the false gods of Baal.

A few years later this prophecy and sign would come to pass. For the nation of Assyria came and attacked Israel in the north, they took them into exile, just as God said would happen. And to this day, Israel in the north has been lost among the nations, they have not returned to the land God promised to them.

However, even today God has not forgotten about the nation of Israel in the north. One day He will retrieve them from the nations, and keep His promises to them. But the nation of Israel is also a sign for us today. For just as God punished the nation of Israel for their idolatry, God will also punish us today because of our sins against Him. However, God in His great mercy became flesh and came to us as the man Jesus Christ. In this way, just as Hosea bought his wife back from prostitution, God would also buy His people back from sin by the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins. Jesus' death and shame was the penalty that needed to be paid so that we could be made right before God. But Jesus' death was not the end. For on the third day of His death, He rose from the dead proving that He has the power to overcome death. And today, Jesus still has the power to overcome death. For all who will put their faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus will also overcome death and receive eternal life in God's glorious kingdom.

24 – The Prophet Daniel (Daniel 2)

After the Assyrian army took captive the nation of Israel in the north and took them into exile, the nation of Judah in the south continued its long reign. Many kings came and went, some did what was right in the eyes of God, but many did what was evil. Finally, because the nation of Judah in the south continued to sin, God sent the nation of Babylon to rule over them. The Babylonian king allowed the nation of Judah to have its own king, but the king in Judah was now under the authority of the king of Babylon.

During this time, the king of Babylon took some of the men of Judah to Babylon. These men were "...youth without blemish...and competent to stand in the king's palace..." One of these young men was the prophet Daniel who became a wise man in Babylon.

During Daniel's time in Babylon, the king of Babylon had a dream that troubled him. So he called the wise men of Babylon to tell him the dream's meaning. However, when the wise men came, the king demanded that they tell him both the dream and the interpretation. The wise men were unable to do what the king asked. So the king ordered that all the wise men in Babylon be killed. When Daniel, who was a wise man in Babylon, heard that the king had a dream, he asked the king for time so that he might interpret the dream. The king agreed, so Daniel went to his home where God revealed to Daniel the dream and its interpretation.

Daniel then went to the king and told him the dream, saying, "You saw...a great image...The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron and partly of clay. As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces...so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

Then Daniel told the king the interpretation. The image made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay represented Babylon's kingdom and many other kingdoms that would come after them. These kingdoms would reign for a time, but would be destroyed. However, a final kingdom, not created by man, would be established by God and like a great mountain fill the whole earth. This kingdom would never be destroyed. The king was very happy with Daniel and gave him great power in Babylon.

This dream and its interpretation would come true many years later. Other kingdoms did come after Babylon, but just as the image in the king's dream was destroyed, each of these kingdoms also were destroyed. Finally, God sent His Son Jesus to make an eternal kingdom on the earth. This kingdom would be a holy kingdom where righteousness would reign. However, no one on earth was righteous, so no one would be allowed into Jesus' kingdom. However, because of Jesus' great love for us, He took mankind's penalty for sin upon Himself and was punished by His Father by dying on a wooden cross in our place. Therefore, if we have faith in Jesus, our sins will be forgiven and we will be given Jesus' righteousness. This righteousness that we receive when we have faith in Jesus allows us into Jesus' kingdom. It's not a righteousness we can work for or make a sacrifice for. But it's a righteousness that we receive because we have faith in Jesus. But Jesus' kingdom would not be destroyed by the death of its King, for on the third day of His death Jesus rose from the dead conquering sin and death forever. Today, Jesus sits on His eternal throne. And one day Jesus will come again and bring His eternal kingdom to fill the whole earth. All those who have received Jesus' righteousness by having faith in His death and resurrection will be saved from sin and allowed to enter His eternal kingdom.

25 - The Prophet Jeremiah (The Book of Jeremiah)

Even though the nation of Babylon had taken some of the people of the nation of Judah in the south into exile, many people still remained in the land of Judah. Even the wicked king of Judah remained on his throne, but he was now under the authority of the king of Babylon. It was at this time that the prophet Jeremiah called the nation of Judah to repentance and warned them of God's coming judgment.

Jeremiah was just a young man when he was called by God to proclaim God's word to the people of Judah. For God had said to Jeremiah, "Before, I formed you in the womb I knew you...I appointed you a prophet to the nations." However, Jeremiah's message would be a message that Judah would not want to hear. He told the people that because of their sins, their nation would be destroyed. And they would be sent into exile just like the nation of Israel in the north.

So God told Jeremiah to stand in the temple of God in the city of Jerusalem and to say to the people "If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law that I have set before you...I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth." Maybe the people of the nation of Judah in the south when they heard these words would repent and obey the voice of God. However, as Jeremiah spoke the word of God, the people wanted to kill him.

At other times, when Jeremiah spoke the words of God, the king and the people became angry. Once they threw him into prison and once they threw him into a well. They treated him shamefully. But God said to Jeremiah many years before, "They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you."

But Jeremiah's messages were not all bad news. For God told Jeremiah to remind the nation of Judah in the south that God was merciful and would not judge them forever. And after 70 years of exile in Babylon, God would bring them back to the land that God had given them. And God would make a new covenant with them. And God said "For this is the covenant that I will make...I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Even though God's promised judgment came on the nation of Judah in the south, God never forgot His promise to save them. For after 70 years, God brought them back to their land. But the covenant God promised to them would be fulfilled many years later, when God would put on flesh and come as the man Jesus Christ to save mankind. Jesus willingly sacrificed His life on a cross of wood to pay the punishment for our sins. However, on the third day of His death He rose from the dead. And Jesus established His Kingdom and demonstrated His power to raise from the dead all those who put their faith in His death and resurrection, so they may enter God's eternal kingdom.

God's new covenant will be fulfilled completely in Jesus' eternal kingdom. For in this kingdom, God's law will be written on the hearts of all people who have put their faith in Jesus. And they will worship Jesus forever. However, this new covenant is not just for the nation of Judah and the nation of Israel. But it is also for all the nations of the world. If anyone will believe in the death of Jesus for their sins and also in His resurrection, they too will one day enter into God's eternal kingdom. There they will enjoy and worship the true God forever.

26 - The Fall of Jerusalem (2 Kings 24-25)

For over 300 years the nation of Judah in the south, whose kings came from the family of King David, had established its reign over the land God had given to it. God had promised King David that a great king would come from his kingdom and from his family. And that this great king would establish His kingdom over all the people of the earth forever.

However, during the reign of Judah's kings many of the people of Judah and many of Judah's kings served the idols of the nations. So twice God sent the nation of Babylon to Jerusalem to punish the nation of Judah by taking some of its people into exile. During these times, the nation of Babylon did not destroy Jerusalem, but continued to allow the nation of Judah to have a king. However, Judah's kings would be under the authority of the King of Babylon.

Even after the nation of Babylon took many of the people of Judah into exile, Judah's kings and its people refused to repent of their sins. They would not listen to the words of God spoken by the prophet Jeremiah and they refused to repent of their idolatry. But instead they continued to walk in their wicked ways. When Judah's king finally rebelled against the King of Babylon, the nation of Babylon came again for a third time. However, this time they came to destroy Jerusalem. The judgment that God had promised, through the prophet Jeremiah, was coming on the nation of Judah in the south.

The nation of Babylon placed its soldiers around Jerusalem and would not let anything come in or go out. And for two years the people of Jerusalem could not farm or trade. When the food in Jerusalem was finished, the king and the men of war fled the city at night. However, the Babylon army caught the king of Judah, killed his sons, cut out his eyes, and took him away to Babylon. Since the men of war had fled from Jerusalem, the Babylon army burned down the city and its walls. They destroyed the temple of God, and took the rest of the people into exile in Babylon. However, they left a few of the weak and poor in the land of Judah to occupy it.

However, God would not destroy the nation of Judah forever. For just as the prophet Jeremiah had prophesied about Jerusalem's destruction, he also prophesied about their return to the land after 70 years in exile. For a great Savior would come and be king over the whole world, and He would be from the family of David and from the nation of Judah. This King is Jesus. And just like the nation of Judah killed the prophets, they also killed their eternal king by crucifying him on a cross of wood.

However, this was Jesus' plan from the beginning. For just as God punished the nation of Judah for their idolatry, He must also punish us for our sins. But because of Jesus' great love for us, he offered Himself as a sacrifice and took the punishment that we deserved by dying on a cross for our sins. However, on the third day of his death, Jesus rose from the dead. And He took His seat on the throne of His eternal kingdom in heaven.

God did not forget about the nation of Judah, but brought them back to their land after 70 years in exile. So now God will also not forget about us. He will one day bring His kingdom to earth to rule and reign for all eternity. And all those who believe in His death and resurrection will be given a place in His eternal kingdom.

27 - The Story of Esther (Esther 1-10)

After the king of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, he took the people of Judah away from their land. For 70 years the people of Judah lived in a foreign land. Finally, the nation of Persia came and conquered the Babylonians. At this time, the new king of Persia allowed the people of Judah to return to their land. But Judah's land was still under the authority of the new King. Many people of Judah returned to that land of Judah in the south. But many of the people of Judah chose to remain in the kingdom of Persia.

Many years passed by until a new king in Persia rose to power. This king held a great party where he ordered his queen to appear before his guests so they could see her beauty. However, the queen refused to come. This angered the king so he removed her as queen and began to search for a new queen. The king ordered all the beautiful young virgins in the kingdom to be brought to him. The young woman who won the king's favor would become the new queen. Among these women was a woman from the nation of Judah called Esther. Esther's parents had died so her uncle, whose name was Mordecai, was raising her as his daughter. At this time, Mordecai told Esther not to tell the king that she was from the nation of Judah. As time went by Esther won the favor of the king and he made Esther queen over the nation of Persia.

After Esther became queen, the king honored a man called Haman and gave him great power. All the people at the king's gate bowed down and honored Haman. However, Esther's uncle Mordecai refused to bow to Haman, telling the people that he was from the nation of Judah. When Haman heard that Mordecai refused to honor him, he was angry. So Haman asked the king to have all the people from the nation of Judah destroyed. The king agreed and gave Haman the power to destroy all the people of the nation of Judah. But because of Haman's hatred for Mordecai, he had special gallows built where he would hang Mordecai until he died.

At this time, the king and Haman did not know that Queen Esther was from the nation of Judah. Mordecai pleaded with Esther to tell the king that she was from the nation of Judah so that he may not kill her people. However, it was against the law for Esther to go to the king without being called. If the king did not receive her, she would be killed. However, Esther went and spoke to the king, even though she could be killed. And when the king learned that Esther was from the land of Judah he was angry with Haman. And he ordered Haman to be hanged, until dead, on the gallows that Haman had built for Mordecai. So God saved the people of Judah from being killed.

Many years before, God had promised to bless all the nations of the world through Abraham's offspring. However, Haman wanted to kill all of Abraham's offspring on one day. However, God gave Esther power so that she could save the people from death. And so the nation of Israel could become a great blessing one day to all the nations of the earth.

All the nations of the earth, including the nation of Judah, have another enemy who wants to destroy them. This enemy is called sin. And everybody who refuses to follow God's word commits sin. And God will put them in hell for their sins. But just as God in his great strength sent Esther to save the people of Judah, so God has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be a great blessing to all the nations of the earth because he saved them from eternal hell. Jesus saved us when He offered His own flesh and blood as a perfect sacrifice. This sacrifice is the only one that can save us from our sins. Jesus was crucified on a cross of wood and took sin's punishment in our place. But on the third day of His death, in his great power, He rose from the dead. And He gives salvation to everybody who puts their faith in His death and resurrection. God saved the nation of Judah because Esther was faithful to God. But Jesus is greater than Esther. Because He does the will of God by dying on the cross for our sins and making a way for all the nations of the world to be saved. And because of Jesus' death and resurrection He is able to save all people who put their faith in Him from eternal hell.

28 - The Ezra Story (Ezra 1-10)

After the nation of Persia had defeated the nation of Babylon, the new Persian king freed the people of Judah who were also called the Israelites. And he allowed them to return to their land and the city of Jerusalem. These Israelites rebuilt the temple of God that the king of Babylon had destroyed. And they lived in the land for many years. However, many of the Israelites chose to remain in Persia and serve the Persian king.

When a new Persian king rose to power, he also allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem. At this time, another group of Israelites returned to their land under a priest named Ezra. Ezra was a skilled priest who studied the laws of God so he could teach them to the people of Israel in Jerusalem. The Persian king instructed Ezra to appoint judges over the people of Israel. In this way, Ezra and the judges could teach the people of Israel how to live and worship God.

When Ezra arrived in Jerusalem, he discovered that the people of Israel had broken the same law from God that their ancestors had broken many years before. They had married the women of the foreign nations. These women had lead the people of Israel to worship the idols of the nations. Many years before, God had punished the nation of Israel for this sin by sending them into exile. But after God had shown them much grace, the people of Israel were committing this same sin.

Ezra was very angry with the people of Israel and he tore his clothes, pulled hair from his head and beard, and sat down. He could not believe the people had disobeyed God in the same way their ancestors had. So Ezra confessed the people's sin before God, he wept, and he cast himself down before the house of God. Finally, the people of Israel came to Ezra. They confessed their unfaithfulness. And they asked Ezra to lead them in putting away their foreign wives.

So the people of Israel called a great assembly and required all the people from Israel who had returned to their land, to come to Jerusalem. All the people listened and they came and sat in the open space in Jerusalem trembling because of their sin and the heavy rains. It was here that Ezra called the people of Israel to confess their sins before God and to put away their foreign wives. The people agreed with Ezra. In keeping with their repentance, they put away their foreign wives.

Like the people of Israel, we all have sinned before a holy God. And all of us have committed the same sins again and again. Because God is holy, He must and will punish our sin. This punishment is death. All people who have not followed God's words will be thrown into hell forever. But because of God's great love for all people, he has made a way for us to receive forgiveness and salvation in heaven. For God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to the earth to follow God's commands without failing. And because He never sinned He was able to offer His life as a sacrifice so that He could save us from being sent to hell. Therefore, Jesus died on a cross of wood taking our sin's punishment on Himself. And on the third day of His death He rose from the dead. And He has made a promise to one day raise up from the grave all those who put their faith in Him. And to bring them into His eternal kingdom.

The people of Israel had not followed God's word. But because of their faith in God they listened to Ezra's words and repented of their sins. Today, like the people of Israel, we have also not followed God's word. And like Ezra lead the people to repentance, God's word leads us to repentance today. God's word says that we must put our faith in the death of Jesus for our sins and in His resurrection from the dead and turn to God in repentance. If we have this faith and repentance, we will receive eternal life in God's eternal kingdom.

29 - The Nehemiah Story (Nehemiah 1-13)

Many years before Ezra returned to Israel, the people of Judah, who are also called the Israelites, had rebuilt the temple of God in Jerusalem. However, during Ezra's time the people of Israel living in Jerusalem were "in great trouble and shame" because many years before the Babylonian nation had broken down the walls of the city.

While Ezra continued to teach the people of Israel God's law in Jerusalem, a man of Israel named Nehemiah was serving the Persian king in the land of Persia. However, when a man came from Israel to the land of Persia, Nehemiah asked the man about the city of Jerusalem. This man told Nehemiah about Jerusalem's trouble. So Nehemiah's heart became very sad. Nehemiah asked the king of Persia, who he served, if he could go to the city of Jerusalem and rebuild the walls. The king of Persia agreed and allowed Nehemiah to go.

When Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem he did not tell anybody what he was there to do. But instead he went out by night and inspected the broken-down walls of the city to see how bad they were. Then Nehemiah gathered the people together. He told them to have strong hearts and to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The people listened to Nehemiah's words and each person began rebuilding their own section.

When the enemies of Israel saw the people of Israel rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem they were not happy. They mocked the people building the walls and threatened to attack the city to destroy their work. But Nehemiah would not listen to the enemies of Israel. He told the people of Israel not to be afraid, but to remember the Lord and to fight for their families. So the workers worked with one hand while they carried a sword with the other. And other people stood guard to protect the workers. So that the work on the wall could continue.

Finally, after 52 days of work, the wall surrounding the city of Jerusalem was finished. When the nations around Jerusalem heard that the people had finished the wall they were greatly afraid. For they believed that God had helped the people of Israel.

Without walls the city of Jerusalem was in great shame. The broken-down walls reminded the people of Israel of their great sin and of God's judgment on them many years before. For God allowed the Babylonian nation to destroy the walls and to carry off the people of Israel into exile because of their great sin. Without the walls the city of Jerusalem was also in great danger, for the city of Jerusalem would not be able to protect itself from their enemies. However, Nehemiah helped to take away the shame and fear in Jerusalem by rebuilding the walls.

Just as the people of Israel lived in shame because of their sin, today everybody lives in shame before God because of their sin. We can hide our shame from other people, but we can never hide our shame from God. God sees our sin and He will punish our sin by sending us to eternal hell. But just as Nehemiah came to take Israel's shame away and provide for them salvation from their enemies. God, because of His great love for us, sent His Son Jesus Christ to the earth. He came to take our shame away and to provide for us salvation from eternal hell. Because Jesus had never sinned, he had no reason to live in shame. But because of His great love for us, He died on a cross in our place and for our sins. He took our punishment for us and was shamed in our place. But Jesus' shame would not last long. For on the third day of His death He rose from the dead. To all those who put their faith in His death for their sins and in His resurrection from the dead, He gives them salvation and eternal life in His eternal kingdom.