

Eve

Tempted to Want More . . .

How far are you willing to go to get what you want?

Do you think breaking a rule is no big deal?

Let's look at the life of a very special young lady. She had it all, but she wanted more. In her pursuit, she gave in to temptation and faced a much more challenging life.

No other woman has ever had the privilege Eve enjoyed of walking and talking with God in a perfect environment. Eve had more than any woman has ever had since—a problem-free life, everything she needed, and a perfect marriage. And yet she wanted more!

Satan, disguised as a serpent, convinced Eve to eat of the one tree God had declared off limits! She wanted more knowledge, power, and wisdom—to be like God. Therefore, “she saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too” (Genesis 3:6). Eve saw, wanted, took, ate, and gave. Through Eve, temptation and lies, and then sin and death, entered the world (1 Timothy 2:14). But through her descendant—the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Savior Jesus Christ—also came redemption from sin. Eve tasted the bitterness of personal sin and its consequences, but she also experienced God's goodness, provision, and protection (Genesis 3:21).

BEWARE!—Sin is always around the corner. Temptation is a part of daily life. “Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith” (1 Peter 5:8–9).

BELIEVE—Never doubt God's Word, His character, or His love. Satan spoke harmful lies about God and twisted His Word, but God had always taken care of Eve and Adam, and God always would. Like David, you can know and declare, “The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need” (Psalm 23:1).

TRUST—You can count on God's faithfulness and forgiveness. Rely on His promises, and have faith in His goodness. God is faithful to always provide a way out so that you aren't swallowed by your circumstances (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Your life is significant! Although you share Eve's sentence of physical death (Romans 5:12), you have spiritual life through Jesus and you can pass on this hope to other people.

IMPORTANT DETAILS: First woman, wife, and mother

MEANING OF NAME: “Living” or “life-giving”

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 2:1–5:5

Serpents

- Because many snakes in the Middle East are venomous, snakes are often seen as dangerous, crafty, and evil—creatures to be avoided at all costs.
- The Hebrew term for a snake (*nachash*) was probably derived from the sound of a serpent's hiss.
- It was Satan in the form of a serpent (Revelation 12:9) who tempted Eve to commit the first sin on earth (Genesis 3:1–6).
- That serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals that God had made (Genesis 3:1).
- The patriarch Jacob, in a very uncomplimentary prophecy, compared his son Dan to a “viper along the path that bites the horse's hooves so its rider is thrown off” (Genesis 49:17).
- John the Baptist called the religious leaders of Israel a brood of snakes (Matthew 3:7).

until you return to the ground from which you were made. For you were made from dust, and to dust you will return.”

Paradise Lost: God's Judgment

²⁰Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live.* ²¹And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

²²Then the LORD God said, “Look, the human beings* have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!” ²³So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. ²⁴After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Cain and Abel

4 Now Adam* had sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When she gave birth to Cain, she said, “With the LORD's help, I have produced* a man!” ²Later she gave birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. ³When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the LORD. ⁴Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his

gift,⁵ but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

⁶“Why are you so angry?” the LORD asked Cain. “Why do you look so dejected? ⁷You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.”

⁸One day Cain suggested to his brother, “Let's go out into the fields.”* And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

⁹Afterward the LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?”

“I don't know,” Cain responded. “Am I my brother's guardian?”

¹⁰But the LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! ¹¹Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your

The Children of Adam and Eve

- Cain (Genesis 4:1)
- Abel (Genesis 4:2)
- Seth (Genesis 4:25)
- Many others: “Adam . . . had other sons and daughters,” but their names are not revealed to us (Genesis 5:4).

3:20 *Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “to give life.”

3:22 *Or the man;* Hebrew reads *ha-adam*.

4:1a *Or the man;* also in 4:25.

4:1b *Or I have acquired.* Cain sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean

“produce” or “acquire.”

4:8 As in Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek and Syriac versions, and Latin Vulgate;

Masoretic Text lacks “Let's go out into the fields.”

Exodus

"So I have come down to rescue them from the power of the Egyptians and lead them out of Egypt into their own fertile and spacious land." (3:8)

THEME: Deliverance • **AUTHOR:** Moses • **SETTING:** From Egypt to Mount Sinai

From the final verse of Genesis to the first verse of the book of Exodus is about four hundred years in length. During those four centuries, the seventy members of Jacob's family (who settled with Joseph in Egypt in order to survive a severe famine) multiplied to over two million people. A new pharaoh, who did not know Joseph, ruled the land and forced the Israelites to become slaves. Exodus is a record of how God delivered His people from slavery in Egypt and led them to Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. There He gave them instructions on how to worship and serve Him as God.

After being slaves for four hundred years, it was difficult for the Israelites to adjust to freedom. Slavery in Egypt had its benefits. Egypt was the center of the world at that time, and all the wealth and learning of the world found its way to Egypt. Even though the Israelites were harshly treated, they did have food and shelter. After being delivered from Egyptian bondage, the children of Israel often looked back on their days of slavery with longing, forgetting that they had been treated badly.

LIFE APPLICATION: As God did with the Israelites, He extends to you deliverance from slavery—slavery to sin—through the shed blood of God's perfect lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. But, like the Israelites, you will often be tempted to look back, longing for the pleasures of sin while forgetting the harsh cruelty of living as a slave to sin. Let Exodus remind you of your deliverance. Keep looking forward! Keep remembering the glory of God and His Son's victory over your sin.

MEMORY VERSES: Exodus 4:12; 15:11, 18; 20:12; 33:14

WHERE TO FIND IT:

The burning bush (Exodus 3:1–4:17)

The ten plagues (Exodus 7:14–12:30)

The death of Pharaoh and his army
(Exodus 14:15–28)

The provision of manna (Exodus 16)

The principle of delegation
(Exodus 18:1–27)

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17)

The worship of the gold calf
(Exodus 32:1–35)

The Israelites in Egypt

1 These are the names of the sons of Israel (that is, Jacob) who moved to Egypt with their father, each with his family: ²Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, ³Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, ⁴Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. ⁵In all, Jacob had seventy* descendants in Egypt, including Joseph, who was already there.

⁶In time, Joseph and all of his brothers died, ending that entire generation. ⁷But their descendants, the Israelites, had many children and grandchildren. In fact, they multiplied so greatly that they became extremely powerful and filled the land.

⁸Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done. ⁹He said to his people, "Look, the people of Israel now outnumber us and are stronger than we are. ¹⁰We must make a plan to keep them from growing even more. If we don't, and if war breaks out, they will join our enemies and fight against us. Then they will escape from the country."¹¹

¹²So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. They appointed brutal slave drivers over them, hoping to wear them down with crushing labor. They forced them to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses as supply centers for the king. ¹³But the more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more the Israelites multiplied and

spread, and the more alarmed the Egyptians became. ¹⁴So the Egyptians worked the people of Israel without mercy. ¹⁵They made their lives bitter, forcing them to mix mortar and make bricks and do all the work in the fields. They were ruthless in all their demands.

¹⁶Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave this order to the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah: ¹⁷"When you help the Hebrew women as they give birth, watch as they deliver.* If the baby is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live." ¹⁸But because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king's orders. They allowed the boys to live, too.

¹⁹So the king of Egypt called for the midwives. "Why have you done this?" he demanded. "Why have you allowed the boys to live?"

²⁰"The Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women," the midwives replied. "They are more vigorous and have their babies so quickly that we cannot get there in time."

²¹So God was good to the midwives, and the Israelites continued to multiply, growing more and more powerful. ²²And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

²³Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: "Throw every newborn Hebrew boy into the Nile River. But you may let the girls live."

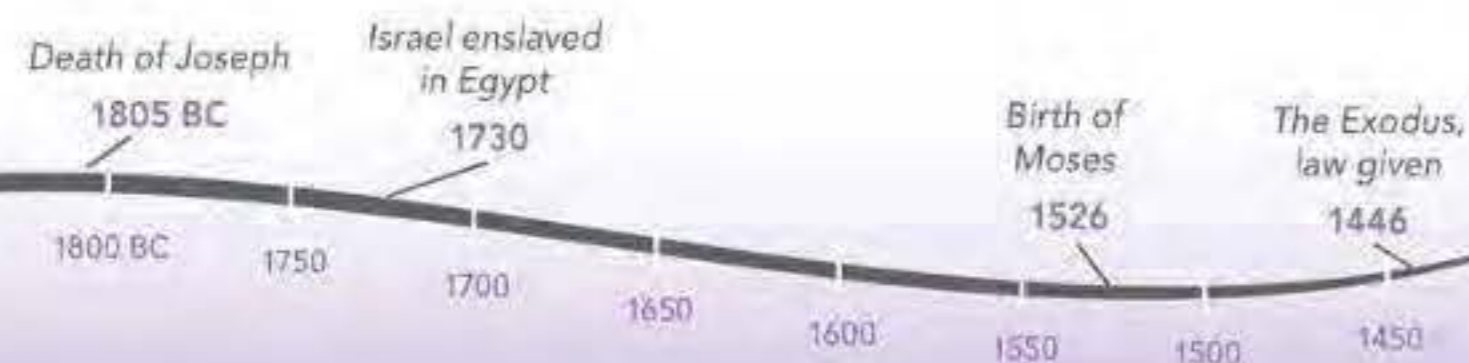
1:5 Dead Sea Scrolls and Greek version read *seventy-five*; see notes on Gen 46:27.

1:10 Or *will take the*

country. **1:16** Hebrew *look upon the two stones*; perhaps the reference is to a birthstool.

Moses, the Deliverer

- He was born to Amram and Jochebed, descendants of the tribe of Levi. He had a sister named Miriam (Exodus 2:4; 15:20) and a brother, Aaron (Exodus 4:14).
- Pharaoh's daughter gave Moses his name (which means "drawn out") because she literally drew him out of a basket floating on the waters of the Nile River.
- He was a prince of Egypt, educated in all the knowledge of Egypt.
- He is the only person in the Bible described as having a face-to-face relationship with God (Exodus 33:11).
- He was chosen by God to lead the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt and into the land of Canaan (Exodus 3:10).
- His friendship with God allowed him to intercede prayerfully for the people as a priest, to perform powerful miracles before Pharaoh as God's prophet, and to lead a great multitude effectively.
- He received the Ten Commandments twice (Exodus 20:1–17; 34:1–10).
- He authored the first five books of the Bible.
- He was a dominant figure in the Bible and continues to be a central figure in Judaism to this day.
- He lived 120 years (Deuteronomy 34:7).



the doors of the room and escaped down the latrine.*

²⁴After Ehud was gone, the king's servants returned and found the doors to the upstairs room locked. They thought he might be using the latrine in the room, ²⁵so they waited. But when the king didn't come out after a long delay, they became concerned and got a key. And when they opened the doors, they found their master dead on the floor.

²⁶While the servants were waiting, Ehud escaped, passing the stone idols on his way to Seirah. ²⁷When he arrived in the hill country of Ephraim, Ehud sounded a call to arms. Then he led a band of Israelites down from the hills.

²⁸"Follow me," he said, "for the LORD has given you victory over Moab your enemy." So they followed him. And the Israelites took control of the shallow crossings of the Jordan River across from Moab, preventing anyone from crossing.

²⁹They attacked the Moabites and killed about 10,000 of their strongest and most able-bodied warriors. Not one of them escaped. ³⁰So Moab was conquered by Israel that day, and there was peace in the land for eighty years.

Shamgar Becomes Israel's Judge

³¹After Ehud, Shamgar son of Anath rescued Israel. He once killed 600 Philistines with an ox goad.

Deborah Becomes Israel's Judge

4 After Ehud's death, the Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight. ²So the LORD turned them over to King Jabin of Hazor, a Canaanite

king. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-haggoyim. ³Sisera, who had 900 iron chariots, ruthlessly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years. Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help.

⁴Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a prophet who was judging Israel at that time. ⁵She would sit under the Palm of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites would go to her for judgment. ⁶One day she sent for Barak son of Abinoam, who lived in Kedesh in the land of Naphtali. She said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: Call out 10,000 warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun at Mount Tabor. ⁷And I will call out Sisera, commander of Jabin's army, along with his chariots and warriors, to the Kishon River. There I will give you victory over him."

⁸Barak told her, "I will go, but only if you go with me."

⁹"Very well," she replied, "I will go with you. But you will receive no honor in this venture, for the LORD's victory over Sisera will be at the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. ¹⁰At Kedesh, Barak called together the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and 10,000 warriors went up with him. Deborah also went with him.

¹¹Now Heber the Kenite, a descendant of Moses' brother-in-law* Hobab, had moved away from the other members of his tribe and pitched his tent by the oak of Zaananim near Kedesh.

¹²When Sisera was told that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor, ¹³he

3:23 Or and went out through the porch; the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain.

4:11 Or father-in-law.

Deborah

A Virtuous Woman and a Remarkable Warrior

What is it you want to be?

Do any fears about your future keep you from becoming the woman God created you to be?

What would it take for you to become that woman?

Let's meet Deborah—a judge, a warrior, a leader, a songwriter.

She knew how to live a remarkable life for God.

The author of Proverbs describes a virtuous woman (verse 10), and in Deborah we find an excellent example of this. A virtuous woman is a woman who has power of mind (moral principles and attitudes) and power of body (ability and effectiveness).

Deborah, a great judge in Israel, had both. Being strong in mind and morals, Deborah judged and administered according to God's law and wisely managed and counseled His people. And being strong in body, "Deborah went with Barak [to war]" (Judges 4:9). Deborah called upon her complete store of mental toughness and physical energy. Such toughness and energy are the primary traits of a successful army, and they also characterized Deborah, God's prophetess and remarkable warrior!

Don't you, too, desire to be a Deborah? Do you want the word *remarkable* to describe your life?

Your day-in, day-out duties call for you to possess significant power of mind and body. Mental toughness and physical energy will keep you from giving up, giving in, dropping out, or stopping short of God's goal for you. Like Deborah, serve as His remarkable warrior anywhere you are—at school, on the job, or at home!

Do you want to do great things for God? Then ask great things of God. Scripture says, "You don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it" (James 4:2). So ask for greater strength and endurance, greater faith, wisdom, and devotion. These qualities are all needed on the path to greatness.

Deborah needed all of the above, and so do you! You, too, can move through the challenges and duties of life with valor, courage, endurance, and power—His power.

Important Detail: The only female judge of Israel

Meaning of Name: "Bee"

Main Text: Judges 4-5

Great Escapes in the Bible

- Jacob escaped twice: first from his brother Esau (Genesis 27:41-45) and then from his father-in-law Laban (Genesis 31).
- Moses escaped from Pharaoh after murdering an Egyptian (Exodus 2:11-15).
- The Israelites escaped from Egypt when God miraculously parted the Red Sea (Exodus 13:17-14:31).
- Two Israelite spies escaped from Jericho with Rahab's help (Joshua 2).
- Ehud escaped after killing Eglon, king of Moab (Judges 3:15-30).
- Elijah escaped from Jezebel by running one hundred miles from Jezreel to Beersheba (1 Kings 19:1-18).
- Jonah escaped from a violent storm when God sent a great fish to swallow him (Jonah 1:17).
- When the Jews were plotting to kill him, Saul (Paul) escaped from Damascus by being lowered over the city wall in a basket (Acts 9:23-25).
- An angel helped Peter escape from prison (Acts 12:1-11).

The Labor of Love

MATTHEW 20:28

Regardless of how busy you are with work, family, friends, and activities, God wants you to serve and help others—just like Jesus, the Son of Man, who “came not to be served but to serve others” (Matthew 20:28).

First John 3:18 says we are not to “merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.” And love has work to do anywhere there are people. So roll up your sleeves and challenge yourself to do the labor of love. Keep your eyes open and your ear to the ground to discover who needs your love each day. Then show God’s love by your words, attitudes, and actions.

Father, show me ways to put Your love into action. Please open my eyes to see, my ears to hear, and my heart to show love. Amen.

Read the Bible in one year: Matthew 19–20

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two sons sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left.”

²²But Jesus answered by saying to them, “You don’t know what you are asking! Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of suffering I am about to drink?”

“Oh yes,” they replied, “we are able!”

²³Jesus told them, “You will indeed drink from my bitter cup. But I have no right to say who will sit on my right or my left. My Father has prepared those places for the ones he has chosen.”

²⁴When the ten other disciples heard what James and John had asked, they were indignant. ²⁵But Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. ²⁶But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. ²⁸For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus Heals Two Blind Men

²⁹As Jesus and the disciples left the town of Jericho, a large crowd followed behind. ³⁰Two blind men were sitting beside the road. When they heard that Jesus was coming that way, they began shouting, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

³¹“Be quiet!” the crowd yelled at them.

But they only shouted louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

³²When Jesus heard them, he stopped and called, “What do you want me to do for you?”

³³“Lord,” they said, “we want to see!” ³⁴Jesus felt sorry for them and touched their eyes. Instantly they could see! Then they followed him.

Jesus’ Triumphant Entry

21 As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. ²“Go into the village over there,” he said. “As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will immediately let you take them.”

⁴This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said,

⁵ “Tell the people of Jerusalem,*
 ‘Look, your King is coming to you.
 He is humble, riding on a donkey—
 riding on a donkey’s colt.’ ”*

⁶The two disciples did as Jesus commanded. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it.*

⁸Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut branches

21:5a Greek *Tell the daughter of Zion. Isa 62:11. on them.*

21:5b Zech 9:9.

21:7 Greek *over them, and he sat*



from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting,

“Praise God* for the Son of David!
 Blessings on the one who comes in the
 name of the LORD!
 Praise God in highest heaven!”*

¹⁰The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. “Who is this?” they asked.

¹¹And the crowds replied, “It’s Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Jesus Clears the Temple

¹²Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out all the people buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. ¹³He said to them, “The Scriptures declare, ‘My Temple will be called a house of prayer,’ but you have turned it into a den of thieves!”*

¹⁴The blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵The leading priests and the teachers of religious law saw these wonderful miracles and heard even the children in the Temple shouting, “Praise God for the Son of David.”

21:9a Greek *Hosanna*, an exclamation of praise that literally means “save now”; also in 21:9b, 15, 118:25–26; 148:1. 21:13 Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11.

But the leaders were indignant. ¹⁶They asked Jesus, “Do you hear what these children are saying?”

“Yes,” Jesus replied. “Haven’t you ever read the Scriptures? For they say, ‘You have taught children and infants to give you praise.’” ¹⁷Then he returned to Bethany, where he stayed overnight.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

¹⁸In the morning, as Jesus was returning to Jerusalem, he was hungry, ¹⁹and he noticed a fig tree beside the road. He went over to see if there were any figs, but there were only leaves. Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!” And immediately the fig tree withered up.

²⁰The disciples were amazed when they saw this and asked, “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?”

²¹Then Jesus told them, “I tell you the truth, if you have faith and don’t doubt, you can do things like this and much more. You can even say to this mountain, ‘May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen. ²²You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it.”

The Authority of Jesus Challenged

²³When Jesus returned to the Temple and began teaching, the leading priests and elders came up to him. They demanded, “By what authority are you doing all these things? Who gave you the right?”

²⁴“I’ll tell you by what authority I do these things if you answer one question,” Jesus replied. ²⁵“Did John’s authority to baptize come from heaven, or was it merely human?”

They talked it over among themselves. “If we say it was from heaven, he will ask us why we didn’t believe John. ²⁶But if we say it was merely human, we’ll be mobbed because the people believe John was a prophet.” ²⁷So they finally replied, “We don’t know.”

And Jesus responded, “Then I won’t tell you by what authority I do these things.

Parable of the Two Sons

²⁸“But what do you think about this? A man with two sons told the older boy, ‘Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹The son answered, ‘No, I won’t go,’ but later he changed his mind and went anyway. ³⁰Then the father told the other son, ‘You go,’ and he said, ‘Yes, sir, I will.’ But he didn’t go.

³¹“Which of the two obeyed his father?”

21:9b Pss

21:16 Ps 8:2 (Greek version).

⁵⁰Then the Jews stirred up the influential religious women and the leaders of the city, and they incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas and ran them out of town. ⁵¹So they shook the dust from their feet as a sign of rejection and went to the town of Iconium. ⁵²And the believers* were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Paul and Barnabas in Iconium

14 The same thing happened in Iconium.* Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers. ³Some of the Jews, however, spurned God's message and poisoned the minds of the Gentiles against Paul and Barnabas. ³But the apostles stayed there a long time, preaching boldly about the grace of the Lord. And the Lord proved their message was true by giving them power to do miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴But the people of the town were divided in their opinion about them. Some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

⁵Then a mob of Gentiles and Jews, along with their leaders, decided to attack and stone them.

13:52 Greek *the disciples*.

14:1 Iconium, as well as Lystra and Derbe (14:6), were towns in what is now Turkey.

⁶When the apostles learned of it, they fled to the region of Lycaonia—to the towns of Lystra and Derbe and the surrounding area. ⁷And there they preached the Good News.

Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe

⁸While they were at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas came upon a man with crippled feet. He had been that way from birth, so he had never walked. He was sitting ⁹and listening as Paul preached. Looking straight at him, Paul realized he had faith to be healed. ¹⁰So Paul called to him in a loud voice, "Stand up!" And the man jumped to his feet and started walking.

¹¹When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in their local dialect, "These men are gods in human form!" ¹²They decided that Barnabas was the Greek god Zeus and that Paul was Hermes, since he was the chief speaker. ¹³Now the temple of Zeus was located just outside the town. So the priest of the temple and the crowd brought bulls and wreaths of flowers to the town gates, and they prepared to offer sacrifices to the apostles.

¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul

My Life

Rebellion

How can you become a young woman after God's own heart? Be a person who "will do everything" God wants you to do (Acts 13:22). When you obey God, you show that you love Him. In fact, God wants your obedience more than He wants your religious activity. Here's what the prophet Samuel said to the rebellious King Saul: "What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22).

Everyone has rebellious thoughts, which they sometimes act out. Although this happens to everyone, it is up to you to decide how you will respond when these temptations to rebel come. Your response will reveal what's in your heart. Realize that delayed obedience is really disobedience and rebellion. But your obedience to God and His Word will place you in the center of His will. To do this, determine that the split second you think or do anything that does not please God, you will stop right away. This action will train your heart to be responsive to God in your daily situations. If you gossip—stop. If you think unworthy thoughts—stop. If you have a flash of anger—stop before you act on it. If you do sin—and you will—make sure you are quick to confess your sin to the Lord. First John 1:9 promises God "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness."

Learn more: Numbers 14:9; Deuteronomy 28:47-48; John 14:15

heard what was happening, they tore their clothing in dismay and ran out among the people, shouting, ¹⁵"Friends,* why are you doing this? We are merely human beings—just like you! We have come to bring you the Good News that you should turn from these worthless things and turn to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them. ¹⁶In the past he permitted all the nations to go their own ways. ¹⁷but he never left them without evidence of himself and his goodness. For instance, he sends you rain and good crops and gives you food and joyful hearts." ¹⁸But even with these words, Paul and Barnabas could scarcely restrain the people from sacrificing to them.

¹⁹Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowds to their side. They stoned Paul and dragged him out of town, thinking he was dead. ²⁰But as the believers* gathered around him, he got up and went back into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch of Syria

²¹After preaching the Good News in Derbe and making many disciples, Paul and Barnabas

14:15 Greek *Men*.

14:20 Greek *disciples*; also in 14:22, 28.

33, 36, 40.

returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia, ²²where they strengthened the believers. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, reminding them that we must suffer many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God. ²³Paul and Barnabas also appointed elders in every church. With prayer and fasting, they turned the elders over to the care of the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. ²⁴Then they traveled back through Pisidia to Pamphylia. ²⁵They preached the word in Perga, then went down to Attalia.

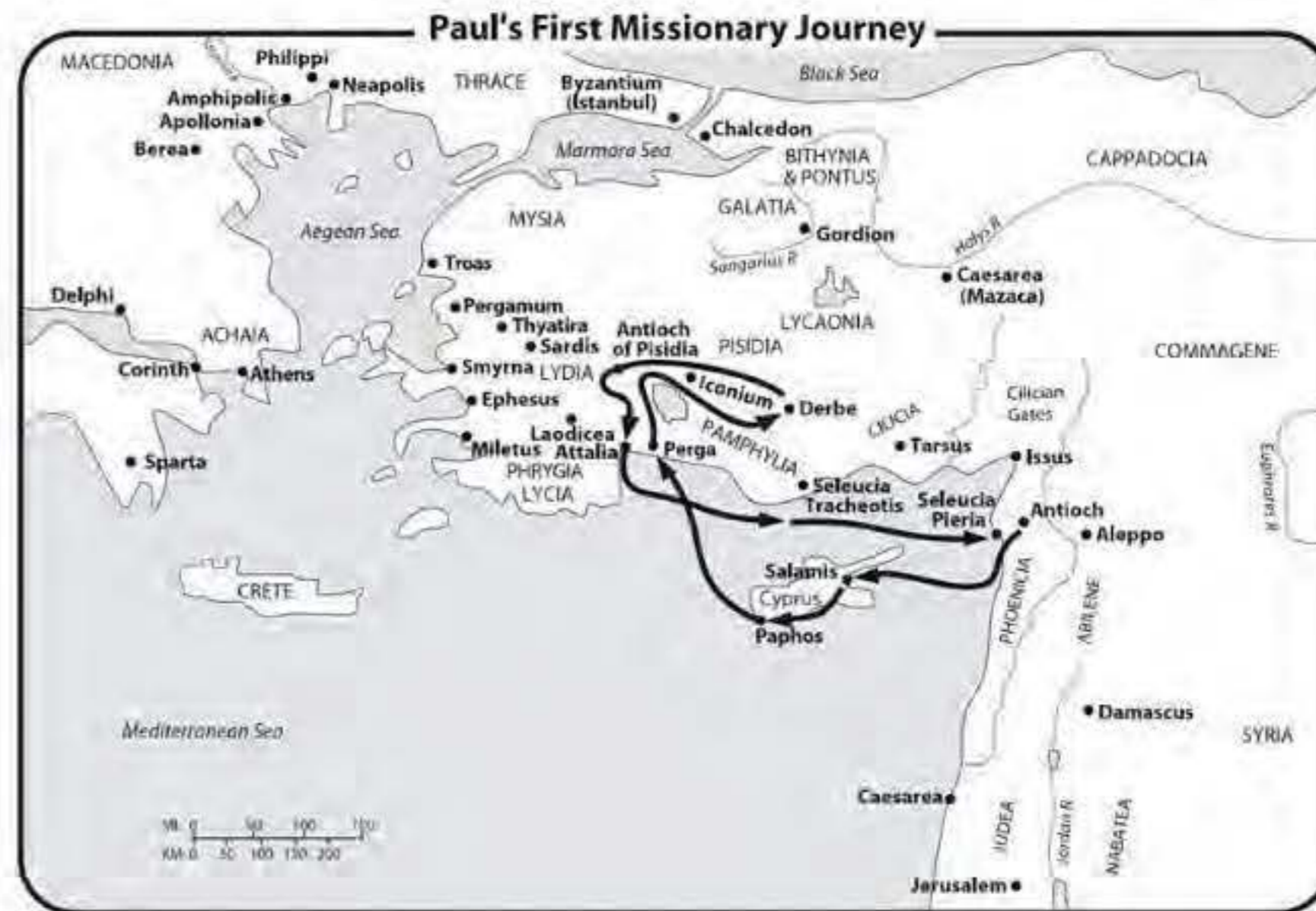
²⁶Finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun. The believers there had entrusted them to the grace of God to do the work they had now completed. ²⁷Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported everything God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, too. ²⁸And they stayed there with the believers for a long time.

The Council at Jerusalem

15 While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the believers*: "Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses,

15:1 Greek *brothers*; also in 15:3, 23, 32,

33, 36, 40.



Romans

"This Good News tell us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, 'It is through faith that a righteous person has life.'" (1:17)

THEME: The righteousness of God • **AUTHOR:** Paul • **WHERE WRITTEN:** Corinth

Toward the close of his third missionary journey, Paul wrote this letter to the church in Rome from the Greek city of Corinth. He does not write this letter to correct any doctrinal error, but rather to introduce himself to the church at Rome so the people can pray for him, encourage him, and help him with his future plans to minister in Spain. But being the teacher that he is, Paul can't help but also teach his new friends about the righteousness that comes from God and other great truths of the gospel of grace.

The letter to the Roman believers is the most forceful, logical, and concise statement on salvation ever written. The book of Romans has influenced the history of Christianity more than any other epistle.

The task to deliver this greatest of all documents hundreds of miles to Rome was given to a woman named Phoebe. What were her qualifications? Only that she was a faithful servant of the church and a beloved helper of many, including Paul.

LIFE APPLICATION: All people are sinners—and that includes you and me.

Our sin has separated us from a holy God. God graciously extends salvation to all who place their faith and trust in Jesus. Have you accepted God's offer of salvation? If you have, then you possess the righteousness of God in Christ. God now expects and empowers you to live a righteous life that honors Him.

MEMORY VERSES: Romans 1:16–17; 3:23; 4:20–21; 5:8; 6:23; 8:28; 8:38–39; 10:17; 11:36; 12:2; 14:8; 15:13

WHERE TO FIND IT:

All are without excuse and are accountable to God (Romans 1:18–23)

"Everyone has sinned" (Romans 3:23)

Those made right by faith have peace with God (Romans 5:1)

"The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)

"There is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ" (Romans 8:1)

The Holy Spirit prays for believers (Romans 8:26)

God has a plan for Israel (Romans 9–11)

Give yourself to God as a living and holy sacrifice (Romans 12:1)

"Everyone must submit to governing authorities" (Romans 13:1–7)

Greetings from Paul

1 This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News. **2** God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. **3** The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, **4** and he was shown to be* the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.* He is Jesus Christ our Lord. **5** Through Christ, God has given us the privilege* and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

6 And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ. **7** I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

God's Good News

8 Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world. **9** God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart* by spreading the Good News about his Son.

10 One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you. **11** For I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual gift that will help you grow strong in the Lord. **12** When we get together, I

1:4a Or and was designated. **1:4b** Or by the Spirit of holiness; or in the new realm of the Spirit.

1:5 Or the grace. **1:9** Or in my spirit. **1:13** Greek brothers. **1:14** Greek to Greeks and barbarians. **1:16** Greek also the Greek. **1:17** Or "The righteous will live by faith." Hab 2:4.

1:18 Or who, by their wickedness, prevent the truth from being known.

want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.

13 I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters,* that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles. **14** For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world,* to the educated and uneducated alike. **15** So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News.

16 For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.* **17** This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."*

God's Anger at Sin

18 But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.* **19** They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. **20** For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

21 Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became

The Letter to the Romans

- The church in Rome was established by Roman Jews who were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, were converted through Peter's message, and shared the gospel when they returned home (see Acts 2:10).
- Paul was writing to a group of people he had never met in a place he had never visited.
- Paul wrote this letter from Corinth while on his third missionary journey.
- Romans was not written to correct any doctrinal error but as a letter of introduction.
- In Romans, Paul taught his new friends about the righteousness that comes from God and the truths of the gospel of grace.

