

SABBATH SCHOOL

Preteen Sabbath Instruction Program — Teacher's Outline

Level 4 • Unit 10 • Week 2

BE A PERSON OF YOUR WORD

OBJECTIVE:

To define and demonstrate the value of honesty and the adverse effects of swearing, promising and taking false oaths. We will use the example of Jephthah (Judges 11) and Joseph (Genesis 39) to illustrate these points.

ATTENTION GETTER:

Say: Close your eyes. Now imagine you just got out of school for the day. It's a hot afternoon and you're walking home on a sidewalk that's hot enough to fry eggs—you can't walk barefoot without burning your toes. You're almost home and you're thinking, I'd do anything to jump into a cool swimming pool. But you don't have a pool. If only I had a pool in my backyard... I would sell my bike for a pool... I'd learn to cook, and I'd make dinner for the rest of the year... I'd promise my Dad that I'd mow the lawn for the entire summer without pay...

Today we're going to find that some promises will just make trouble for you.

BIBLE LESSON:

Say: Jephthah was an army commander in ancient Israel. One day he was engaged in a fierce battle. It was scary. He could die at any moment. So he said to God, "If you'll help me win this war, I promise I'll sacrifice the first thing that comes out my door when I get home." (In Jephthah's time, animals were often kept inside the house, so Jephthah was probably thinking that a goat would come out to greet him.) God allowed Jephthah to win the battle.

Ask: What do you think was the first thing to come out of the door when Jephthah arrived home?

Say: When Jephthah got home, his daughter was the first to run outside to congratulate him on his victory. She was his only child.

Ask: What do you think Jephthah did when his daughter was the first to come outside?

Say: He was horrified! His only child! He tore his clothes! Can you imagine the state you'd be in if you were *tearing* your clothes?

Jephthah realized his horrible mistake in swearing rashly. Jephthah wouldn't have needed to promise God anything. All he would have needed to do is ask in faith and God would have given him what he needed.

Explain: Some have wondered if Jephthah really did sacrifice his daughter in flames of fire. We can read from the account that his daughter mourned the fact that she never had children. We also know that God detests sacrificing children as burnt offerings (Deuteronomy 12:31). Some commentators say that Jephthah's daughter's sacrifice was that she never married. Perhaps she served God in the tabernacle for the rest of her life.

Ask: Can someone read the words in Matthew 5:33-37 for me?

Say: Here we see that Jesus told us we should not swear at all. If we do make a promise, all we need to do is affirm that we will do it without swearing. Our word should be good.

Ask: What if your Dad or Mom promised God that they'd sacrifice *you* for something? Can you see how swearing and promising can have horrible consequences?

Say: If you are a person of your word, then you should not promise something that you might not be able to do. You should try your hardest to do what you know is right and not commit yourself to anything more—God will take care of what you need. Joseph is a good example of someone who made a decision to stand by what he knew was right and was greatly blessed for doing so. A person of integrity is someone who stands by that which they know is right and good.

Ask: Can you think of anyone you know who has a lot of integrity?

Say: Joseph showed God that he had integrity, but not through a promise. Joseph's brothers sold him to Egyptian slave traders because they were jealous that Joseph was their father's favorite. The slave traders took Joseph to Egypt and sold him to a man named Potiphar, whose wife lusted after Joseph. She wanted Joseph to respond to her too.

Ask: What do you think God thought about this?

Say: Joseph knew that to commit adultery with another man's wife was wrong, so he refused. Potiphar's wife was very angry, and she had Joseph thrown in prison.

Ask: Did Joseph do anything wrong?

Say: Because Joseph did what God wanted him to, God knew that He could trust Joseph. So God let Joseph get out of prison and have a very important position under the Pharaoh of Egypt. Many people were saved from starving because of Joseph. God made him a hero.

Say: Now let's go back to what we were imagining at the beginning of our lesson: a hot day and a real longing for a swimming pool.

Ask: Is having a pool so important that you would do anything for it?

Say: If you are honest and trust and obey God's commands, God will make sure you have everything you need. Jephthah's promise was not necessary and was really a case of bad judgment. We can see that we don't need to promise or swear to receive God's protection and help. Joseph just showed he had integrity, and God took care of him.

LESSON APPLICATION:

Supplies: Drawing paper
Pencils

Do: Have students think of something they *would do anything for*, then ask them to draw a picture of that one thing.

Share the pictures. Point out to the class that their desires are small compared to the enormous problem of making promises that they can't keep or that will bring bad consequences.

Options: You can spice this activity up by having them draw with charcoal or white chalk on dark paper. Or have them draw on a very small piece of paper (perhaps one inch by one inch), so that it's so small they have to explain it for others to understand what it is (thus tying in with the point of the lesson).

MUSIC:

Teacher's choice from the United Church of God hymnal.

MEMORY VERSE:

Matthew 5:34-37 "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."

family activity

THE POINT:

To define and demonstrate the value of honesty and the adverse effects of swearing, promising and taking false oaths.

ASK ME...

- What happened to Jephthah's daughter when her father made a foolish vow (Judges 11:1-12:7)?
- What should Jephthah have done instead of making a vow?
- What happened to Joseph for obeying God?
- How was Joseph finally blessed for obeying God?

FAMILY TOGETHER TIME:

Find the following words among the letters below. Have the family discuss the meanings of the words and the stories behind the names. The words might be from right to left, left to right, bottom to top, top to bottom or diagonal.

Integrity Swear	Jephthah Joseph	Oath Hero	God Egypt	Trust Famine	Sacrifice								
F	I	L	M	K	A	J	E	P	Q	T	S	G	O
E	A	J	O	S	E	P	H	F	E	A	P	T	X
G	I	M	N	U	R	A	M	T	C	M	I	R	D
Y	K	O	I	S	W	E	A	R	L	C	N	U	F
P	O	A	L	N	A	N	I	U	P	O	T	L	I
T	P	T	I	L	E	F	H	S	I	X	E	P	N
G	L	H	E	G	I	V	U	T	D	Z	G	T	Y
O	A	Y	W	C	K	P	J	E	M	K	R	E	H
D	T	J	E	P	H	T	H	A	H	O	I	Z	J
F	R	Z	F	N	O	R	F	L	E	C	T	A	N
T	B	E	A	S	Q	O	S	T	R	U	Y	S	P
L	O	L	D	N	I	N	I	N	O	E	G	R	O

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