

STEP 2

Bible Learning
15–20 minutes

Bible Basis:

Isaac trusts God's promises in the midst of difficulties and remains in the land (Gen. 26:1-6, 12-25).

Objective: That your students discover how Isaac experienced and confronted hostility while obeying God's directions

Materials:

- Bibles
- The Rock*
- Pencils or pens
- Paper

Have someone read aloud the introduction to the Bible study in *The Rock*.

■ From *THE ROCK*—Hard Times

Have you ever run into trouble from others when you were trying to do what was right? So did Isaac. Read Genesis 26:1-6.



Have your students turn to Genesis 26. Ask one student to read verses 1-6. Answer the questions together as a class, but allow time for the students to write the answer in the space provided.

- ▶ What were God's instructions to Isaac? (*Not to go to Egypt, but to stay in Gerar.*)
- ▶ Why do you think Isaac might have wanted to go to Egypt instead of staying in Gerar? (*Because there was famine in the land and he could find plenty of food in Egypt.*)
- ▶ Why do you think that God sometimes asks His people to do things that don't seem to make much sense? (*God can see the "big picture" and knows how our actions will eventually fit into His scheme of things. Sometimes God wants to test and develop our faith in situations like this.*)
- ▶ God told Isaac to stay in Gerar, and He made Isaac some promises. What were they? (*That He would be with Isaac, bless him and his descendants, and give him all the lands.*)
- ▶ In light of God's promises, what could the obedient Isaac expect from God if trouble came? (*Isaac could expect God's protection and blessing.*)
- ▶ What if God's protection and blessing don't come the way Isaac expects it? (*Isaac will have to trust God even more if he doesn't understand what God is doing.*)
- ▶ Sometimes things happen in life that we don't understand. Does this mean that God is unfaithful to His promises? (*No.*)
- ▶ What can we do when we have these feelings that God is being unfair or going against His promises? (*We can struggle through these issues with God. When we feel hurt because things are not as we think they should be, we should tell God. He is not worried about our questions and has compassion on our feelings. He will show us that He is faithful to His promises, even though we can not see it at the time.*)

As we know from the story, God does bless and protect Isaac in the ways he might have expected. However, it is always good to know that God deals in each situation with wisdom, compassion, love, and justice. Things may not always turn out as we expect or in our own time. But this doesn't mean that God is unfaithful.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Genesis 26:1-6, 12-25

¹Now there was a famine in the land—besides the previous famine in Abraham's time—and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar. ²The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. ³Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. ⁴I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, ⁵because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions. ⁶So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

¹²Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him. ¹³The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. ¹⁴He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. ¹⁵So all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth.

¹⁶Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us."

¹⁷So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar, where he settled. ¹⁸Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them.

¹⁹Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. ²⁰But the herders of Gerar quarreled with those of Isaac and said, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they disputed with him. ²¹Then they dug another well, but they quarreled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah. ²²He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth, saying, "Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the land."

²³From there he went up to Beersheba. ²⁴That night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham."

²⁶Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.

Isaac obeyed God's instructions and trusted His promises, but it wasn't easy. Read Genesis 26:12-25 and paraphrase the rest of the story in your own words.

Allow a couple of students to give their version of the story.

- ▶ Why do you think the wells were so important to Isaac and the people of his day? (*Wells were the only source of water for crops and herds. Settlements and cities often grew up around well sites in those days.*)
- ▶ Why do you think the Philistines showed such hostility to Isaac? (*Because they were jealous of him.*)
- ▶ **What other reasons might people have to be hostile to those doing God's will?** (*Envy, anger because someone might feel guilty about certain actions, the desire to be popular, to do what the crowd does.*)
- ▶ **How easy do you think it was for Isaac to trust God in the middle of this hostility?** *Students answer will vary. Have them explain.*
 - ▶ How would you have reacted to what they did? (*Allow a few students to share their answers. Then read the last paragraph of the Bible study together as a bridge to Bible Application.*)

Isaac kept on living in the land until he could settle peacefully. Despite all the hostility he encountered, he trusted God's promises. When we're faced with hostility, we are often tempted to give up, to stop doing what's right. But Isaac's story reminds us that we can trust God. He promises to be with us always, even when it seems like everyone is against us.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

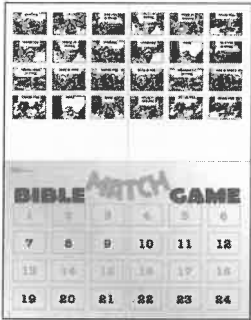
Materials:

- Bibles

Read Psalm 55:12-23 together. Discuss David's experience with hostility—from his enemies and a former friend. Emphasize that David knew to call on the Lord when experiencing hostility (vss. 16 and 22).

STEP 3

Bible Application
(5–10 minutes)



TIP

Prepare “Bible Match Game” for use in Bible Application by punching out flaps and making sure they fold up and down.

Objective: That your students play a game that shows God’s protection as seen in various Bible stories.

Materials:

- Bibles
- “Bible Match Game” from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

Introduce the “Bible Match Game” from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*. It is played like the old board game “Concentration.” Before class, punch out all the flaps, making sure they fold up and down. To play, students take turns flipping up two cards at a time. The object is to remember where matching picture cards are and choose them.

When a student makes a match, ask him or her to tell how that Bible story teaches us that God cares for His people, even in difficulty. Explain that God may not have removed the difficulty, but continued caring for the people involved.

Cain and Abel [Gen. 4]: Cain murdered his brother Abel because Cain was jealous; even so, God promised to protect Cain.

Tower of Babel [Gen. 11]: God put the brakes on human pride by confusing their language.

Noah and the Ark, The Dove [Gen. 6—9]: God protected Noah during the Flood; the dove brought Noah an olive branch—evidence of God’s coming promise.

Adam and Eve, Garden of Eden, Tree of Knowledge, and the Serpent [Gen. 1—3]: Adam and Eve were deceived by the serpent and disobeyed God. They ate from the tree of knowledge after God forbade Adam to do so. Consequently, God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden. But God promised to send a mediator [Jesus] who would one day crush the power of Satan and death.

Abraham [Gen. 14]: When Abraham’s nephew, Lot, was taken captive by foreign kings, God gave Abraham the military ability to rescue Lot.

Isaac [Gen. 26]: Students will probably refer to today’s lesson.

The World [John 16:33]: Jesus tells us to expect difficulty from the world, but reminds us that He has overcome the world.

The Cross [Col. 2:14, 15]: Through the adversity of the Crucifixion, Christ has disarmed the powers of darkness that fuel all hostility against Christians.)

Play the “Bible Match Game” for 10 minutes. Stop even if all the pairs have not been found.

STEP 4

Life Response
(5–10 minutes)

Bible Truth:

God calls us to perseverance.

Objective: That your students trust God to take care of them when they are confronted with hostility.

Materials:

- Pens or pencils
- Paper
- The Rock*

Our memory verse confirms what we have learned from this game and the lesson for today. Let's turn to page 8 in *The Rock* and read Psalm 55:22 together.



- ▶ **What does this verse promise us? What do we have to do?** (*God will keep me safe if I trust Him with my problems.*)
- ▶ **Does this verse say that God will keep Christians from experiencing hostility?** (*No, it only promises that God will sustain Christians in their adversity.*)

We've seen from stories in the Bible that God always remains in control, especially when adversity comes. He keeps up that same control today.

Have your students personalize the memory verse, Psalm 55:22, by rewriting it with the personal pronouns "I," "my," and "me." For example, "I will cast my cares on the Lord and He will sustain me. He will never let me be shaken."

In the beginning of our lesson, you talked about a time when you could imagine facing hostility for doing the right thing.

- ▶ **What would be your biggest fear in that situation?** (*My self-esteem could be hurt, I'd lose popularity, I'd get beaten up.*)
- ▶ **If any of these things were to happen, how would God sustain you through them?** (*If my self-esteem were hurt, God would remind me of my worth. If I lost popularity, God would remind me of the respect He holds for me. If I got beaten up, God would eventually heal my wounds and give me the ability to forgive my attackers.*)

Although God does not promise us protection from difficulty, He does promise protection in the midst of difficulty. Obeying God may actually upset some people, and they may even try to hurt us in some way. But God will be with us no matter what they try to do. God is bigger than any problem we can face.

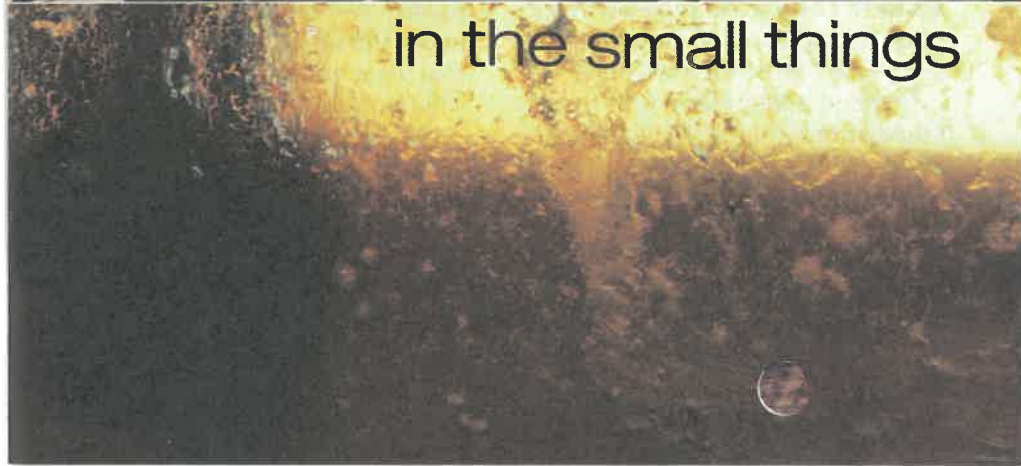
Close class in prayer, thanking God for His promise to protect us in the midst of difficulty.

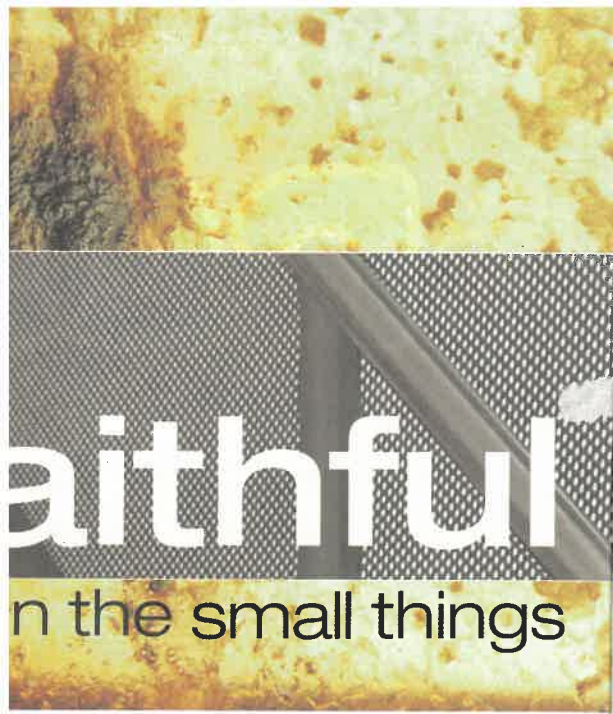
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Faithful

in the small things





faithful in the small things

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of the channels with raunchy titles. I wasn't comfortable with that, and I spoke up and told them that I felt it was wrong. When they decided that they wanted to watch them anyway, I knew it was time to go.

"I think they were all surprised and a little mad at me. Having someone their own age tell them it was wrong took away some of the fun of it. And I have to admit, I felt pretty stupid walking home by myself. But my dad and I talk a lot about the importance of purity and that what you see can influence what you do.

"It took about a week before any of them would really joke around with me again. I think they wanted me to apologize, but I wouldn't do it, and eventually everyone forgot about it. I don't know if they do any other things like that. If they do,

they don't ask me!" Confronting his friends was a difficult thing for Kevin to do.

The pressure to be like everyone else can be tough at times.

"I grew up with almost everybody in my class, so it's not like we're strangers," Kevin explains. "We don't have to make new friends every year. There are a group of kids who have always been the popular ones. I'm not one of them. Sometimes I think it would be great if I were. But most of the time I'd rather not hassle with it. It all seems like an act. I have fun with the friends I have. I really don't want it any different."

Yolanda, a 14-year-old girl who attends a Christian school, feels similar pressures.

"Sometimes you wish you could be one of the real popular kids. But then you think about it, you watch them for a while, and you realize you don't want to be like them at all."

And **Shalla,** a 12-year-old girl who was home schooled in the sixth grade, says, "There was a lot of pressure to be like the other kids when I was in the public school. Now that I'm in home school, I get along with my friends a lot better."

"I know my science teacher thinks I'm weird because I don't believe in evolution, . . . but I feel better knowing I spoke up once."

Certain school subjects can also challenge the beliefs of young teens today. "I know my science teacher thinks I'm weird because I don't believe in evolution," says Kevin. "When I told him I believed the world was created, he just gave me a strange look and kept talking. Of course, I have to learn the material and take the tests, but I feel better knowing I spoke up once."

Yolanda finds her parents are a source of help when there's a conflict in the classroom.

"If I disagree with a teacher, I don't usually say anything until I go home and talk to my dad," she says.

"He explains things in a way I can understand, and most of the time I find there's not too much of a problem."

If you are a Christian, you can be certain that what you believe and how you live will be tested. God tested Daniel by placing him in a lions' den. Abraham had to be willing to sacrifice his son.

Most teens today don't face such major challenges. As Kevin, Yolanda, and Shalla know, faith can be tested in small ways as well. But as they—and you—learn to be faithful in the small things, faith grows. And that's good. Because, who knows? Someday you might have to face the lions!



kept on living in the land until he settle peacefully. Despite all the hostility he encountered, he trusted God's promises. When we're faced with adversity, we are often tempted to give up, not doing what's right. But Isaac's story reminds us that we can trust God. His promises to be with us always, even when it seems like everyone is against us.

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Isaac copes with hostility, Genesis 26:1-6, 12-25.

Have you ever run into trouble from others when you were trying to do what was right? So let's read Genesis 26:1-6.

What were God's instructions to Isaac?

Do you think Isaac might have wanted to go to Egypt instead of staying in Gerar?

What did God tell Isaac to do, and He made him keep some promises. What were they?

Isaac obeyed God's instructions and trusted His promises, but it wasn't easy. Read Genesis 26:12-25 and paraphrase the rest of the story in your own words.

Do you think wells were so important to Isaac and the people of his day?

Do you think the Philistines showed such hostility to Isaac?

How would you have reacted to what they did?



MODERN-DAY REFLECTION OF PSALM 103:8-12

*The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love. He
will not always accuse, nor will he
harbor his anger forever; he
does not treat us as our sins*

*deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him; as
far as the east is from the west, so far has he
removed our transgressions from us.*



When a person wrongs us, it's hard to let it slide. Sometimes we're tempted to spread rumors about her or send dirty looks his way to make us feel better. Not so with God . . .

God is compassionate and gracious. That means He understands our sinful nature and is willing to give second chances. He isn't angered easily and has more love for us than we can comprehend. When we mess up, God doesn't lash out in punishment or hold our sins against us. Instead He looks for ways that we can reconnect with Him. God's

love for us stretches higher and further than any star we can see with a telescope. It's immeasurable! Most of all, when we confess our sins to God, He doesn't just forgive them but He truly forgets them! As far away as the east is from the west—our confessed sins will never, ever, be brought up before God.

**AS FAR AWAY AS THE
EAST IS FROM THE WEST—
OUR CONFESSED SINS WILL
NEVER, EVER, BE BROUGHT
UP BEFORE GOD.**

every day devos



Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous be shaken. Psalm 55:22

Ever get so frustrated trying to fix something that you just want to throw it away? That's the image in this verse. Get rid of your worries! Give them to God. He really does care about you.

Mon.

Read Psalm 139:1-4. God understands us. Tell the Lord

what's bothering you today, and thank Him for caring for you.

TUES.

Read Psalm 147:11. Did you ever think

that one of the reasons God cares about you is that He likes you? Go to the mirror and say to yourself, *God likes me.* Then thank Him.

Wed

Read Psalm 91:14-16. God will listen and

respond to your requests. What do you need to call upon the Lord for today?

THURS

Psalm 55:22 reminds us that God is compassionate.

He will never let us fall. Think back over your life and thank God for the times He has helped you.

Fri

Read Psalm 103:6. Do you ever feel oppressed or put down? Tell God about it.

Sat

Read Psalm 91:9-14. God may not

literally keep you from stubbing your toe, but He does have the power to protect you. Does this make you feel more secure? Write a prayer or draw a picture to express how you feel.

