

Examples

Lesson 1—Barzillai’s Example

OVERVIEW

Background Bible Passage: 2 Samuel 17:27-28; 19:31-39

Key Verse: Matthew 11:28-29; Luke 9:23; John 15:4.

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine the direction your class will go.*

- Consider what kind of example you are.
- How far have you gone in accepting God’s invitation to abide with Him?
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the teaching outline.
- Pray for each student by name.
- Use the Contact 1-2-3 system to the right to follow up on students who have recently missed on Sunday morning.
- Use postcards to reach out to your class.

CONTACT 1-2-3 SYSTEM

CONTACT 1--The first time a student is absent, give him a call.

CONTACT 2--Following the second absence, send him a postcard.

CONTACT 3-- The third week he is absent, pay him a visit.

THINK ABOUT IT: What does it say to a student when he misses multiple weeks in a row and is never contacted? It says, “It really doesn’t matter if you’re here or not.” Small things communicate great messages. Let the three “small” things above communicate that you care and miss your students when they are absent.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Discussion Questions

SAY: I am going to say some names and I want you to tell me what kind of example they are and what they might be an example of. For instance, if I said, “Michael Jordan,” you might say, “An example of a great basketball player.”

Names:

Arnold Schwarzeneger

Tiger Woods

The President

Ozzie Ozborn

Bill Cosby

Bart Simpson

Jay Leno

(Feel free to add a few others at this point.)

Paul the Apostle

King David

- *Who was King David in the Bible?*
- *What do you remember about David's life? (i.e., Goliath, Bathsheba, He wrote over half of the Psalms, etc.)*
- *Would you say that King David was a positive example?*

SAY: Today we're going to begin taking a look at "Examples" and the main character that we are going to examine in this lesson is a little known person who once helped King David. His name was Barzillai.

BIBLE LESSON

SAY: Before we read, let me give you the background of this story: King David's son, Absalom, and his chief advisor, Ahithophel, had rebelled against him to take his throne. David and his faithful men are on the run. With that in mind, let's read our first verses about Barzillai.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read 2 Samuel 17:27-28

(Note: Encourage your students never to get lost in "hard" names and long lists in the Bible. Everything that's in the Bible is there for a reason and many believers miss many marvelous stories and truths by skipping over names and lists.)

- *What do you learn about Barzillai from these verses? (He was obviously a very great man. These three allies of David provided for his entire army. He was also very generous. "Honey and curds" were the food typically eaten in times like this, a food of last resorts, but these three men provided well beyond just "rations" for David's company.)*

SAY: These verses reveal Barzillai to be A Man Marked by Excellence.

- *When you consider your life, how do you give to God? Do you give Him just the bear minimum? Or is your giving marked by excellence, that you give God only the best?*
- *What can you give to God? (Your life, your actions, your daily time, your gifts and talents, your money, your commitment, your service, your top priority.)*
- *Do you feel like you've held the best back from God in any area of your life?*

SAY: Let's read some more...David's son, Absalom, has now been defeated. David's advisor that turned against him has hanged himself and now David is heading back to Jerusalem. Listen to the discussion between the king and Barzillai.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read 2 Samuel 19:31-39

- *What did King David ask Barzillai to do?* (“Cross over with me and, and I’ll provide for you at my side in Jerusalem.” The king was giving Barzillai an invitation to abide with him, to eat at his table, and to be at his side. This might have even included being an advisor to him. Remember, David had just lost his chief advisor, a man whose advice “was like someone asking a word from God” [2 Samuel 16:23]. He wanted Barzillai to be with him.)

SAY: In a similar way, God gives us an invitation too—an invitation to walk with Him, to stay with Him, to eat daily at His table (meaning, to feast daily on His Word), to enjoy His presence and the praise that surrounds it. We too have an invitation from the King.

- *What was Barzillai’s response?* (He gave excuses.)
- *What were Barzillai’s excuses and how are they similar to excuses people give today for not serving or following God?*

Barzillai’s Excuses:

(1) **I’m too old**—Barzillai was 80 years old.

Today: This is still an excuse today. Or, if they’re young, they’ll say, “I’m too young.” Or, if they are in between, they’ll say, “I can’t do that at another time in my life.”

(2) **It’s too much**—Three times he says, “**Can I?**”—“*Can I* tell the difference between what is good from what is not?” [NOTE: He just did—He discerned the goodness of helping David against the bad of following after Absalom’s rebellion.] “*Can your servant* taste what he eats and drinks? *Can I* still hear the voices of men and women singers?” In other words, I can’t do that... Concerning the king’s table, Barzillai had no interest in it and no appreciation for it.

Today: People today still do the same. They say to God, “God, *can I* do such and such,” meaning, “God, I can’t do that...” Like Barzillai, although they have been invited into the king’s presence and to his service, they have no interest in it and no appreciation for it. And as a result they will miss the feast He has laid on the table before them and the worship of being in His presence.

(3) **It’s too far**—Barzillai tells the king that he will go with him a little ways.

Today: How many Christians have this attitude? “God, I’ll go with you a little ways.” Or, “I’ll go with you as long as it’s convenient or as long as I’m comfortable or as long as I don’t have to give up this or that...”

Thought: What if Jesus had only gone a little ways? What if He had said, I’ll go as far as being born in Bethlehem, but no further. Or, I’ll go as far as being the boy in the temple, or baptism, or the temptation in the wilderness, but that’s it. Or, as far as the Mount of Transfiguration where He could’ve said, “Now that Moses and Elijah are here, let them do the rest.” Or, I’ll go as far as Gethsemane and I’ll

suffer some, but I won't go all the way? But Jesus didn't do this. He went all the way and we should do the same.

- *What do you think it means to "Go all the way with God"?*
- *What would someone be like if they went "all the way" with God? (Totally surrendered to Him.)*

Consider the life of Jesus to ask the question: How far have you gone with God?

- Perhaps you've gone to Bethlehem where you were "born" again. Did you stop here?
 - Perhaps you've gone as far as Jesus being a boy in the temple—In other words, you've gone to church. Perhaps your parents even made you go, but that's as far as you've grown.
 - Perhaps you've gone as far as baptism.
 - Perhaps you've gone as far as the wilderness. Consider Jesus, Moses, the people of Israel, and the Apostle Paul. They all had wilderness experiences before God used them. Consider this quote: "God won't use you publicly until He has tutored you privately."
 - Perhaps you've gone to the place of temptation but it was too much for you and you went no further.
 - Perhaps you've gone as far as the Mount of Transfiguration. Remember, Peter, James and John caught a glimpse of Jesus in the fullness of His glory. Perhaps you've tasted powerfully of the presence and glory of God, but when you came down from the mountain (or a mountain-top experience like camp), it faded away and you stopped there.
 - Perhaps you've gone to Gethsemene, the garden where Jesus suffered in prayer before His crucifixion. Perhaps you too have agonized in prayer or shared in the fellowship of His sufferings, but went no further.
 - Or, perhaps you've gone all the way to full death on the cross, to total surrender and complete abandon so that you are dead to self as you take up your cross daily to follow Him. If you have done this, then you understand the new life you've been raised to in Christ.
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- *Where would you put your life on this time line? How far have you gone?*

KEY VERSE

SAY: In the Gospel's Jesus gives us three kinds of invitations.

(1) The Invitation to *COME*—The call to salvation

(2) The Invitation to *FOLLOW*—The call to discipleship

(3) The Invitation to *ABIDE*—The call to share life with (live with) Him.

SAY: Consider the following verses:

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Matthew 11:28-29 (COME)

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Luke 9:23 (FOLLOW)

Choose a volunteer to read—Read John 15:4 (ABIDE)

SAY: Where do you find your life in these verses:

- *Have you COME to Christ? Did you stop there?*
- *Are you FOLLOWING Christ, taking up your cross daily and learning from Him.*
- *Have you taken the King up on His invitation to ABIDE with Him—to feast at His table (His Word), to live in His presence, to have your life shared with His life?*
- *Barzillai turned down the king’s invitation to be with him. How often do you turn down God’s invitation to spend daily time with Him—To “eat at His table” and enjoy His presence?*
- *Would you say that you’re happy with where your relationship with God is? Why or why not?*
- *Is there anything that you feel might need to change in your walk with Christ?*
- *What’s your plan for making this change?*

BIBLE LESSON—Part 2

SAY: Now for the rest of the story...

- *Who remembers the name of the person that Barzillai sent in his place? (Chimham)*

SAY: We don’t know much else about Chimham but the name is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.

Choose a volunteer to read—Read Jeremiah 41:17

SAY: After the fall of Jerusalem, about four hundred years after the time of King David, Jeremiah and others were leaving the city and they stayed at “Geruth Chimham,” which means (Geruth), “the lodging place,” or essentially, the Inn of Chimham near Bethlehem. Some Bible scholars speculate that this is the same person mentioned in our story today although there is no proof for it. They speculate that King David, who was from Bethlehem, gave to Chimham lands there fulfilling his promise to “do for him whatever pleases you,” which would surely include some sort of land grant near Jerusalem so that Chimham could continue to stay with the king in Jerusalem (which was only about seven miles away from Bethlehem). These scholars speculate that Chimham began a lodging place there at which Jeremiah later stayed and that perhaps was even the inn to which Mary and Joseph came before Jesus was born. This is just speculation but it makes for an interesting thought and a point that we know is true—God uses and blesses those who are willing to go with Him.

WRAP IT UP

Prayer Time

SAY: Barzillai was willing to GIVE, but he was not willing to GO. He was a A Man Marked by Excellence but also a Man Marred by Excuses. He didn't go himself but was willing to send others in his place, just like so many Christians today. And instead of receiving the honor the king had set aside for him, another, Chimham, who was willing to go, received it instead. May it not be so with you life.

Pray specifically today that your students will go all the way with God.

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week. *Ask if any of your students want to pray today.*

Prayer Requests

*NOTE: This lesson was greatly influenced by a message shared by Bible commentary author John Phillips.