

Vacation Bible School 2007
A Walk through the Scriptures for the Week
VBS Sunday, July 29, 2007
Rev. Deborah Dail

Vacation Bible School is probably by favorite week of the whole church year ministry. This week at “Avalanche Ranch” has been a week of learning God’s Word.

As the name Vacation BIBLE School would suggest, the Bible has been our main text for the week. Obvious, of course. However, at VBS we pull out all the stops and experience the Bible stories of the week in fun ways. The lessons are reinforced in creative ways in every activity—crafts, recreation, and music. We always hope that the Bible stories will come alive and that every student will find something to apply to his/her daily life.

Here’s what we explored this week:

The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt. Finally, God delivered them from the slavery and bondage in Egypt. The people were led by Moses as God opened the Red Sea for the Israelites’ safe escape and sent them forth on their journey to the Promised Land.

At VBS we met up with those Israelites 40 years after they miraculously crossed the Red Sea. They are 40 years into their journey to the Promised Land. They are now ready to enter the land and take over the cities in that land, under the leadership of Joshua.

It’s time to take over Jericho. First, however, Joshua sends spies to Jericho to check out the situation there. The spies are sheltered by a woman named Rahab, who has come to believe in the God of Israel (unlike most others in Jericho). Rahab risks her own safety to help the spies, sneaking them out of her house and down the city wall with a red cord, but not without first making a deal with the spies. They agree that they will spare Rahab and her family when they return to Jericho. How will they identify her house? She will hang the red cord from her window.

Rahab is in a long line of believers who’ve risked their own lives for the sake of others and for the sake of God’s greater purposes. When you believe **God is real**, you take risks.

Now the Israelite army is poised to enter the Promised Land. There is one obstacle—the Jordan River. The priests carry the Ark of the Covenant to the river bank and, once again, God parts a body of water to make way for the Israelites. The Israelites believed God was with them when the Ark of the Covenant was with them. In parting the Jordan River, God once again made a way for His people when there seemed to be no way.

What rivers do you need to cross today? What seems impossible?
God is with you.

Jericho was a walled city. The Israelite Army had probably assumed they would take the city by conventional warfare. But God has more surprises in store. Joshua tells the army to march around the outside of the city wall. On the seventh time they are to shout and blow the trumpets. What happened?

(Singing of “Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho . . . and the walls came a-tumblin’ down.”)

One house was protected: the one house with a red cord hanging out of the window; Rahab’s house.

God is strong. What walls are in the way of your freedom? Your peace? Your hope? Is that wall fear, addiction, pride, prejudice or something else? Those walls can tumble down, too. God is strong.

Next we encountered Naaman. Now there was a prideful guy. He was an Army commander from the pagan land of Aram. Naaman was used to being in charge and in control.

Naaman, however, had an incurable disease—leprosy—over which he had no control. At the advice of a servant (note the irony in that), in-charge Naaman travels to Israel to see the prophet Elisha—a so-called “man of God”; a prophet said to have healing powers.

Naaman was disappointed from the get-go. Naaman is insulted that he—the great military commander—is not even given an audience with Elisha. Instead, Elisha’s servant delivers this message to Naaman: “Wash yourself in the Jordan River seven times and you will be healed.”

“You’ve got to be kidding!” scoffs Naaman, who turns to walk away. Yet another servant in this story says to Naaman: “It’s worth a try. It’s simple. What do you have to lose?”

Naaman humbles himself and takes seven dips in the Jordan River. He is healed and believes in the God of Israel.

Does our pride ever get in the way of our spiritual, emotional, and even our physical healing? Too proud to see a doctor, a counselor, a pastor,

or other caregiver? Too proud to read a book or go to a seminar? Too proud to reveal your need, to take off the mask, to ask for help? Who's in charge of our lives? Naaman decided to allow God to be in charge.

This week we studied one story from the New Testament—the Greatest Story Ever Told. God had delivered His people out of bondage in Egypt, out of various messes, and out of exile. Now, in Jesus Christ, God would offer all people deliverance from the ultimate bondage—bondage to sin and death.

At VBS, we journeyed to the cross where we remembered how Jesus died out of love for us. Jesus did not want us to be in bondage. Jesus was willing to open up his arms so that we would have a way to journey out of slavery into the Promised Land of God's amazing grace and salvation.

We celebrated the resurrection of Jesus. Death was not the final word. Life is. **God is awesome.** Out of love God gave His only son so that we might be set free from sin and death to live forever in freedom, hope and eternal joy.

God is real. God is with us. God is strong. God is in charge. God is awesome.