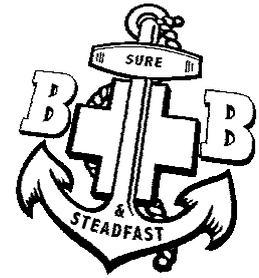


The Boys' Brigade – Glasgow Battalion



Christian Faith Programme Syllabus C

Under Brigade Regulations, the responsibility for Christian Faith within the Company rests with the parent Church to which the Company belongs. This also helps develop good working relationships with local Churches. Your minister, who is an officer in the Company, may wish to take an active role in supervision and assessment or this may be delegated to an elder, officer or other suitable person in the Church.

This syllabus provides a resource under Bible Knowledge in the Community Area of the Company Section Discover Programme.

There are four prepared syllabi : -

- A. Jesus – Teacher and Healer
- B. God's Young Church
- C. Preparing the Way – God's Men
- D. Key Events in the Life of Jesus

The following syllabus is for "Preparing the Way – God's Men". Notes to support this are attached, as are specimen examination papers at three levels, however, the final programme followed and methods of assessment should be agreed by the individual company and their parent church, according to local needs.

Where new programmes, assessment methods or resources are developed locally, it would be helpful if these could be shared with the Battalion Office so that local successes can be shared more widely with other companies in the Battalion and we can expand our resources for everyone in the years to come.

As with all Brigade awards, assessment should take account of individual Boy's circumstances and appropriate alternative means of assessment may be advisable.

Christian Faith Programme – Preparing the Way – God’s Men

Jesus is the most significant person in the Christian tradition, and the Bible is important to Christians because of the unique witness it provides to Him. That witness is pre-eminently contained in the four Gospels and in the New Testament as a whole. However, Christians also believe that the Old Testament, with its story of Gods dealings with the people of Israel over many centuries, has its own valuable contribution to make to our understanding of that unfolding purpose of God which reaches its climax in Jesus.

This modules syllabus aims to introduce the Boys to the Old Testament through a few of the better known characters in that story.

The following are the passages which have been selected for study. Additional notes are provided for the guidance of those conducting the course.

It is recommended that the passages are studied in the Good News Bible, the New English Bible, the New International Version or some other suitable translation.

1		Genesis	11:27 – 12:9	Abraham
2	(a)	Exodus	3: 1-12	Moses
	(b)	Exodus	14: 5 - 31	
	(c)	Exodus	19:17 – 20:17	
3	(a)	1 Samuel	16: 1 - 13	David
	(b)	1 Samuel	17: 12 - 51	
4	(a)	1 Kings	18: 17 – 39	Elijah
	(b)	1 Kings	21: 1 – 20	
5		Nehemiah	2: 1 – 18	Nehemiah
6		Daniel	6: 1 – 23	Daniel

1 GENESIS 11:27 - 12:9 - ABRAHAM

Abraham is a much respected figure in both the Jewish and Christian tradition where he is identified as performing a key role in the emergence of God’s people as a distinctive community. Still acknowledged as ‘Father’ Abraham by members of the Jewish community - a fact frequently alluded to in the New Testament - he is revered as the person with whom God first entered into that special relationship which was to mark them out as a ‘chosen’ people (Genesis 15:18; 17:4). In the New Testament he is honoured for his spiritual qualities, in particular, as a shining example of the unquestioning faith and obedience which should characterise the response of the Christian to God.

The story which is related in this passage demonstrates how these qualities enabled him to embark on a course of action which was to have far reaching consequences not only for Abraham and his immediate family, but for their successors and the future religious development of mankind.

The story itself tells of how a group of people emigrated first from Ur in the south of Mesopotamia to Haran in the north (both recognised as major centres of population and of moon worship) and, subsequently, under Abraham’s leadership, travelled into Caanan, the Promised Land. Elsewhere (Deuteronomy 26:5) he is described as ‘a wandering (or homeless) Aramaean’ which is consistent with the view that he and his people were semi-nomadic herdsmen who settled in the vicinity of major centres of population and contributed to the food supply. Then, as now, many factors may have encouraged people to leave the safety and security of familiar surroundings but, in Abraham’s case, it was the firm conviction, shared in hindsight by later writers, that it was God who was urging him to make the move. It was a brave decision because, as observed by the writer to the Hebrews, it involved his leaving home without knowing where he was to go (Hebrews 11:8), but he went because he believed that it was what God wanted him to do. For Abraham, God’s wish was his command, and what follows more than justified his response.

GRADE 3: QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Abraham was prepared to leave the comfort and security of Haran even though he did not know what lay ahead of him. Do people still need to have that kind of faith today if they want to follow Jesus?

2 (a) EXODUS 3: 1-12 - MOSES

Moses is one of the outstanding characters in the Old Testament and was deeply involved in a series of events that were of crucial importance in the development of the Israelites’ sense of destiny.

This passage focuses attention on his ‘call’, an experience that was to have a profound effect on the whole future direction of his life. The earlier chapters in Exodus tell the story of his childhood and of how he had to flee from Egypt after becoming involved in the murder of an Egyptian taskmaster. Having taken refuge in Midian in the Sinai peninsula, he was employed by his father-in-law as a shepherd, and it was while working in that capacity that the incident of the burning bush took place. Much time and effort have been expended in attempts to identify the bush and explain what happened, but what matters is that Moses was convinced that it was God who had stopped him in his tracks and was sending him back to Egypt to rescue his people from their slavery. Overwhelmed by the

enormity of the task and his inability to measure up to its demands, Moses protests. But his objections are overruled with the assurance that he will not have to confront the Pharaoh single-handed. God will be with him. With that assurance, Moses, the reluctant hero, proceeded to attempt and achieve the impossible.

GRADE 3: QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

God spoke to Moses through the unusual spectacle of a burning bush. Does God still speak to people today, and how would you help someone to understand that He might be speaking to him?

2 (b) EXODUS 14: 5-31 - MOSES

As was noted in the previous passage, Moses was under no illusions about the dangers and the demands of the task confronting him when he returned to Egypt. The intervening chapters of Exodus relate the graphic story of his encounter with Pharaoh, and of his growing frustration as the Egyptian ruler reneged on promise after promise made in the wake of the plagues that afflicted his people. Persuaded finally by the death of his son and heir and the first-born of his people - a fate not shared by the Israelites - Pharaoh agreed to their release and, after a hurried meal (still remembered and re-enacted each year by the Jewish community when it observes the festival of Passover and participates in the Seder meal), they set out on their long-delayed return journey to the land their forefathers had left nearly 500 years before, but, true to form, Pharaoh changed his mind yet again. The Hebrew slaves and their labour were not to be so lightly dismissed. A task-force was assembled with a view to pursuing them and bringing them back, and it is the dramatic consequences of that decision that are related in this passage.

The story of the Israelites' escape from Egypt at the Red Sea (or Sea of Reeds) has had a profound effect on the Jewish people. Celebrated and relived each year at the festival of Passover, so that each new generation can relive the experience of their forefathers, it is an event that is interpreted as confirming their special relationship with God as his 'chosen' people. With an Egyptian task-force closing in upon them, and the escape route effectively barred by a stretch of water, the Israelites appeared to have little or no hope of survival but, at that crucial moment, when all seemed lost, a strong east wind blew all night creating dry land where previously there had been water. They were convinced that it was no accident. It was God's doing - an unmistakable sign that he was, in a special sense, for them. The escape had been nothing short of a deliverance in which God and Moses had been the leading actors in securing their release.

GRADE 3: QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Moses leadership was an important factor in enabling his people to escape from Egypt. What do you consider are the qualities of a good Christian leader?

2 (c) EXODUS 19:17 - 20:17 - MOSES

If Moses is remembered as the architect of his people's deliverance from Egypt, he is also identified as the person to whom God chose to give his people the Law. In the Jewish community it is often referred to as the 'Law of Moses' and those books which contain the Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy) are attributed to him. They are described as the 'Five Books of Moses'.

This passage focuses attention on the best-known and most important part of the Law - the Ten Commandments. For Christians, as for Jews, they represent the basic values that should govern their behaviour, and more than 3,000 years after the event, their influence is still reflected in the laws of contemporary society.

Although Moses is often described as the law-giver, the passage makes it clear that it is God who makes the rules. To disobey the Commandments is to disobey not Moses, but God. In addition, his demands are not unreasonable since they represent an appropriate response to what he has already done for his people in bringing them out of the land of Egypt (Exodus 20:1) and delivering them from slavery. One of the most significant features of these Commandments, whose stark simplicity seems to reflect the stern conditions of desert life, is that they establish an essential link between man's duty to God and to his fellow men. The first four Commandments have to do with maintaining proper relationships with God while the remaining six deal with the nature of our relationships with other people. It was a link which Jesus was to highlight in later years when he agreed that the law was all about loving God and one's neighbour as oneself (Luke 19:27-28).

As the person chosen by God to communicate the Law to his people, Moses remains a highly respected figure in both the Jewish and the Christian traditions.

GRADE 3: QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Moses is honoured for the part he played in giving the Israelites the Law. How far should we feel bound by all or some of the Ten Commandments today?

3 (a) 1 SAMUEL 16: 1-13 - DAVID

David, like Moses, is one of the great figures of the Old Testament. The second King of Israel, he was responsible for establishing and extending the kingdom inaugurated by his predecessor, Saul. Such was his success that later generations were to regard him as the ideal king and the dynasty he established as enjoying a special relationship with God - an essential link in the chain that bound God to his people. The House of David (the dynastic succession which began with him and was perpetuated by his family in successive generations) and the City of David (the City of Jerusalem which he captured and established as the religious and political capital of his kingdom) were destined to become two of the nation's greatest assets. Consequently, when later generations began to anticipate the emergence of an ideal King to restore their flagging fortunes, it was for 'a king like David' that they looked. That ideal king became identified as the Messiah, and it is significant that later, when Christians claimed that Jesus was the fulfilment of these expectations, they were at pains to emphasise his connection with David.

This particular passage describes how David is selected as Saul’s successor and set apart as the future King of Israel. The incident is of particular interest because of the leading part played by Samuel in the whole process. As a recognised religious leader (he is identified as both a priest and a prophet) he is God’s representative. It is, therefore, God who lays down the criteria which governed David’s selection and it is God who chooses him as King. Samuel seals his appointment by anointing him with oil (a practice still performed at the coronation of British sovereigns). The entire procedure makes it clear that God reserves the right to ‘hire and fire’ and that David is responsible to God for the way he exercises the authority entrusted to him. The people of Israel wanted to have a king like other nations. They got their wish but God remained their true King and even David, unlike his royal neighbours, could not please himself. He ruled for God and he could only do so effectively so long as God’s Spirit was in him.

GRADE 3: QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

When Samuel came to select the future King of Israel, he was warned not to judge by appearances. Do you think that was good advice? If so, why?

3 (b) 1 SAMUEL 17: 12-51 - DAVID

The story of David and Goliath is one of the best-known stories in the Old Testament. It is a story which celebrates the triumph of the weak over the strong and confirms the wisdom of God’s choice as related in the previous passage. David displays all the qualities of a successful leader and demonstrates how God can take the weak things of the world to confound the mighty.

The Philistines (People of the Sea), who occupied the coastal plain between the hills and the shores of the Mediterranean, had long been a thorn in the flesh of the Israelites as they struggled to establish themselves in the land which they believed God had given them. A part of the break-up of the sophisticated Minoan Empire, they were more than a match for the loosely knit tribes of Israel, and it was in response to a disastrous defeat they suffered at the hands of the Philistines that the Israelites stepped up their demands for a king. To have humbled the Philistines as he did was a major boost to David’s popularity and a source of great encouragement to people who had suffered greatly at their hands. Little wonder that when the time came for David to be publicly proclaimed king, there was widespread popular support for his appointment.

GRADE 3: QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

The story of David and Goliath has inspired many other stories like it. Why do you think it is so popular, and how do you think its popularity can be judged?

4 (a) 1 KINGS 18: 17-39 - ELIJAH

Elijah was one of that great line of prophets who had such a powerful influence on the religious and political life all of God's people from the middle of the 9th century BC. A prophet is literally a person who speaks for God, and Elijah did so with such effect that future generations thought of him as exemplifying the whole prophetic tradition.

In particular, it was believed that he would return to announce the arrival of the Messiah and, to this day, when Jewish families celebrate Passover, an extra glass is provided for Elijah just in case that may be the occasion when he chooses to make his appearance. It is also significant that when Jesus is transfigured in the presence of his disciples, he is accompanied by Moses and Elijah, the great representatives of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 17:3).

This passage depicts Elijah in conflict with the prophets of Baal, representatives of a religious tradition that had a widespread influence in that part of the world, and that posed a constant threat to the religion of Israel. Ahab, the King of Israel had married Jezebel, a princess from the neighbouring kingdom of Sidon. She had insisted on practising her own religion and had imported a large number of prophets to promote it amongst the local people. She had even persuaded the king to take action against the religious leaders of his own people, but at that point Elijah intervenes and challenges them to a trial of strength on Mount Carmel. The people must make up their minds. They can no longer 'limp between two options'. They cannot have the best of both worlds. They must decide whether they are for Baal or for the God of Israel. The very first Commandment had made it clear that the God of Israel would brook no rivals (Exodus 20:3). Elijah's stand was as courageous as it was necessary, but the final outcome more than justified his action. The God of Israel must be defended at all costs and no prophet worth his salt could do less.

GRADE 3: QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Elijah took a big risk challenging the prophets of Baal as he did. How important is it to stand up to people who make fun of what we believe and how best can we encourage them to change their ideas?

4 (b) 1 KINGS 21: 1-20 - ELIJAH

In the previous passage Elijah is seen defending the purity of his people's religion. In this incident he is championing the rights of the individual and promoting the cause of justice, and it is important to realise that, in the eyes of the prophets, these two things are inseparable. As has been noted already, the Ten Commandments bring the God-ward and the man-ward aspects of human responsibility together, and it was the constant complaint of the prophets that what God had so clearly joined together, his people seemed intent on separating. The story once again underlines the courage of Elijah in initiating an eyeball to eyeball encounter with Ahab, and his conviction that as a prophet (God's spokesman), he had a right and responsibility to confront no less a person than the king and challenge him over the treatment of Naboth.

Having failed to persuade Naboth to give up his vineyard, Ahab, egged on by Jezebel, who had no appreciation of how the monarchy operated in Israel and how it differed from that of its neighbours, had resorted to tactics designed to bully him into submission. Elijah's fearless condemnation of his action in God's name is typical of the prophets and their outspoken warnings of God's judgment upon those who do what is wrong in his eyes.

GRADE 3: QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Elijah showed courage when he confronted Ahab with the evil he had done. What evils in our society would Elijah have been most likely to challenge today?

5 NEHEMIAH 2: 1-18 - NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah belongs to a much later period in the story of God's people but his practical commitment to their welfare makes its own distinctive contribution to their recovery after one of the most traumatic periods in their history. Jerusalem and its temple had been destroyed and many of its citizens deported to Babylon (597/586 BC). Despite the opportunity to return home 50 years later (538 BC), many of the exiles chose to remain where they were while those who did return showed little inclination to restore the damage. Reluctantly, they had been persuaded to rebuild the temple (520-516 BC) but much of the city, including the walls, showed little signs of improvement. Morale in the city and its surroundings was low, and no one seemed able or willing to do anything about it. Help eventually came from the surviving and expanding Jewish community in Babylon in the person of Nehemiah, a trusted court official, who sought and obtained permission to return to Jerusalem and provide his people with some much-needed leadership. It was a bold move which could easily have been misinterpreted by his political masters, but it paid off and the recovery of Jerusalem and all that followed from it owes much to his intervention. Given the important part the city and its people played in later events, Nehemiah and his contribution should not be underestimated.

The passage describes Nehemiah's efforts to obtain the necessary permission to make the journey to Jerusalem and the protection and supplies he needed to be successful. A restored Jerusalem could pose a serious threat to its neighbours who were more than happy that it should remain in its weakened state. Even its inhabitants might be suspicious of his motives - a concern which led him to adopt the secretive, cloak-and-dagger tactics that marked his arrival in the city and his initial reconnaissance of the wall. In the event, his detailed plans were greeted with enthusiasm by the people and their leaders who set to work with a will under his direction. Their neighbours, as anticipated, continued to voice their opposition in no uncertain terms, but it was Nehemiah's conviction that God was behind what he was doing that enabled him to stand up to them as he did. The fact that work was started at all, far less completed, was a remarkable tribute to Nehemiah's leadership and his ability to motivate a dispirited community.

GRADE 3: QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Nehemiah was a great motivator who cared deeply about the fate of his people. Identify a major need in your community and suggest ways in which you could motivate people to do something about it.

6 DANIEL 6: 1-23 - DANIEL

The story of Daniel goes back to the great exploits of a man who, like Nehemiah, rose to a position of considerable power and influence in Babylon despite belonging to the immigrant Jewish community. Like many others in similar circumstances, he incurred the wrath of his rivals who bitterly resented someone from his background filling one of the most prestigious and influential posts in the kingdom. Unable to find fault with his performance in the job, they resorted to a devious scheme to bring about his downfall. His devotion to the God of Israel was well-known and it was that aspect of his life they proceeded to target. Daniel's unrelenting refusal to abandon God to save his own skin became legendary and, generations later, the story was written up to encourage others to stand firm, even in the face of persecution. The occasion was the persecution of God's people in their own land by a fanatical foreign king (the Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes) who deliberately set out to destroy their religion and force them to worship the Greek god Zeus. It was a policy which finally led to the revolt of the Jewish people under the inspired leadership of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers. Like Daniel, they were prepared to defend their right to worship God as he required in an appropriate way, whatever the cost, and the successful outcome of the conflict vindicated the stand they took.

The passage itself describes the opposition Daniel faced and gives details of the plot his enemies hatched against him. Despite the decree they secured from the king, and its obvious implications for his own safety, Daniel resolutely refused to make any concessions. Despite his personal misgivings, the king allowed the law to take its course and Daniel is condemned to be thrown to the lions. But for Daniel, unlike his enemies, it is a story with a happy ending. His loyalty is rewarded. He emerges from his ordeal unscathed. God does not abandon those who honour him.

It is a story that is still sometimes quoted when people are thrown into situations in which they are surrounded by people who are hostile to them. Daniel remains an inspiration to all who are sensitive to the dictates of conscience, and who are prepared to put God and their loyalty to him before all other considerations.

GRADE 3: QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Daniel refused to be intimidated by his enemies and openly practised his faith in spite of their opposition. How important is it for Christians to stand up and be counted today, and how can they do so most effectively?