DECALOGUE

Superintendent—And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord hath made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it. School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

My soul be on thy guard; Ten thousand foes arise: And hosts of sins are pressing hard To draw thee from the skies. Superintendent—Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy ox, nor thy ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s. School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and write these laws upon our hearts. Nearer, my God, to thee! Nearer to thee! Even though it be a cross That raiseth me: Still all my song shall be, Nearer, my God, to thee! Nearer to thee!

Superintendent—Hear what Christ, our Savior, saith: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets. All—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
The Order of Service

I. Bell tap or organ voluntary as a signal for silence
II. Singing
III. The Apostles’ Creed
IV. Prayer, closing with the Lord’s Prayer in concert
V. Singing
VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
VII. Responsive reading of the lesson text by school
VIII. The Decalogue

The Lesson

I. Organ interlude while the classes are being arranged
II. Class study of the lesson
III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
IV. Closing bell — silence

The Closing

I. Singing
II. Review and application of the lesson
III. Secretary’s report
IV. The Church School Creed
V. Singing
VI. Benediction

The Apostles’ Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

The Church School Creed

I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus’ name.
Lesson 1

When Love Is Lost

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 37
Focus Scripture: Genesis 37:2-11, 23-24a, 28

Key Verse: So his (Joseph’s) brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind. Genesis 37:11 (NRSV)

GENESIS 37:2-11, 23-24a, 28 (NRSV)

2 This is the story of the family of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father’s wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves.

4 But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

5 Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

6 He said to them, “Listen to this dream that I dreamed.

7 There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it, and bowed down to my sheaf.”

8 His brothers said to him, “Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?” So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words.

9 He had another dream, and told it to his brothers, saying, “Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”

10 But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, “What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?”

GENESIS 37:2-11, 23-24a, 28 (KJV)

2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

4 And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

5 Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brethren, they hated him even more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

8 And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

10 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.
INTRODUCTION

This quarter’s lessons focus on love, an essential attribute for Christian disciples. We begin this series of lessons with the well-known story of Joseph, which illuminates love (or the lack thereof) as it was experienced in Jacob’s family. Jacob was the grandson of Abraham, whom God called to be “the ancestor of a multitude of nations.” God promised, “I will make you [Abraham/ Abram] exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you” (Genesis 17:6).

Life within a family with this divine inheritance would suggest, from a human perspective, an environment wherein love, peace, and harmony should prevail. Furthermore, God specifically

KEY TERMS

- **Agape Love** – A Greco-Christian term used to describe love and charity in their highest forms, including God’s love for humankind and love to be expressed for God by humankind.

- **Blended Families** – Also known as step-families; applies to more than 50% of families in the United States; includes children from previous relationships/marriages of one or both parents.

- **Polygamy** – A custom or practice wherein men legally can be married to more than one woman.

Lesson 1

11 So his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

23-24a

23 And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him;

24a And they took him, and cast him into a pit.

28 When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.
commanded Jacob (and all of Israel) to “teach their children so that they and future generations would know God and obey his commandments” (Psalm 78:5-8). Nevertheless, Jacob failed to demonstrate unconditional love among his children and to teach them to love unconditionally. Consequently, extreme jealousy, hatred, and serious familial dysfunctions arose within Jacob’s family.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Jacob’s was a “blended family.” He lived during a time when Jewish people practiced polygamy. The story of Jacob’s marriage to two sisters is well known. Perhaps less well known is the fact that Jacob fathered twelve sons and at least one daughter with four women, including Leah and Rachel, as well as their handmaidens. Jacob loved Joseph, one of Rachel’s sons, most. Jacob’s other children were well aware of this fact because Jacob openly conveyed his preferences for Joseph.

Parental Favoritism Produces Jealousy and Hate, Genesis 37:2-4

It is important to note that, in Jacob’s biological family, the practice of parental favoritism was intergenerational. His parents, Isaac and Rebecca, showed favoritism between Jacob and his twin brother, Esau. Isaac chose Esau, and Rebecca chose Jacob. Consequently, for many years, relations between Jacob and Esau were fraught with extreme jealousy and hate (Genesis 25:19–27:46).

Today’s scriptures begin with scenes suggestive of a peaceful pastoral setting. The interactions between Jacob’s sons, however, quickly change original perceptions. Seventeen-year old Joseph was working alongside his older (“half”) brothers as a sheepherder. Immediately, we can see that the brothers looked upon Joseph with disfavor. Why they disfavored Joseph gradually unfolds. In addition to their father’s favoritism, the brothers also disliked Joseph because he tattled on them (v. 4). Hence, the brothers “hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.” Like “the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back,” the special coat Jacob made for Joseph provoked the older brothers to violent
anger and destructiveness.

Jealousy and Hate Led to Violence and Destructiveness, Genesis 37:5-11

God used dreams to reveal to Joseph the special plans God had for his life. Young Joseph arrogantly reported on dreams that suggested he would be superior to his brothers. This made deep-rooted jealousies and festering grievances worse. Notably, Jacob rebuked Joseph for talking about his dreams (v.10), but he obviously did nothing to effect reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers. Jacob focused instead on what Joseph’s dreams might mean. Perhaps Jacob also recalled how he, the younger twin in his family, had attained the blessing that normally would have been passed on to Esau, the first-born. Nevertheless, the extreme jealousy and hate culminated with Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers for twenty pieces of silver, and lying to cover-up their deeds. Jacob, on the other hand, lived with inconsolable grief for many years. Until their reunion in Egypt, Jacob believed voracious wild animals had killed Joseph and devoured his body (Genesis 46:28-34).

SANKOFA

The strength, capacities, and contributions of contemporary African American families are testaments to our abilities to persevere and progress in spite of seemingly insurmountable adversities. Paradoxically, slavery’s cruel systems of oppression aimed to destroy African American families. Prohibitions against legal marriage were among its atrocities. Family separations were also common as parents and children were often sold and owned by different slaveholders. Multiple ownership created serious obstacles to family unity. Travel to different plantations for familial visits was wholly based upon the approval of slaveholders. In many cases, instead of allowing travel for familial visits, slave masters selected new mates for slaves to “marry.” Since legal marriages were prohibited, practices such as “jumping the broom” were established. One of the most horrible results of these oppressive acts is the fact that prior to the abolishment of slavery in the United
States, many African Americans grew up without knowing either their parents or their siblings. Despite all of the obstacles to family unity, love among African American families for each other is a remarkable characteristic for which contemporary African Americans are renowned.

**CASE STUDY**

Frederick Douglass, renowned orator, writer, abolitionist, and statesman, is an example of the kind of resiliency and perseverance that has propelled African Americans to claim and exhibit God-given rights, including “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Douglass was born into slavery around 1817 (the exact date is unknown). He was separated from his mother as an infant. He came to know her through infrequent visits when she would slip away from her owner’s plantation to visit him at night. Douglass never knew his father, who was believed to have owned his mother as a slave.

In his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave,* Douglass gave detailed, graphic accountings of his life as a slave. Childhood, as slaves knew it, ended for Douglas at age six, when he was taken from his grandmother and other family members. He was forced to live and work in his owner’s home. Severe beatings and oppressive, inhumane treatments pervaded his life until he escaped from slavery to freedom around 1838.

Memories of his mother are sad commentaries of slavery’s toll on Frederick’s family life: “She (his mother) died when I was about seven years old.…I was not allowed to be present during her illness, at her death, or burial.” Recalling how little contact he’d been allowed to have with his mother, Douglass said he “received the tidings of her death with much the same emotions I should have probably felt at the death of a stranger.”

Despite the pain and sufferings of his early life, Douglass developed love for God and determined to serve his oppressed brothers and sisters. Despite the pain and sufferings of his early life, Douglass developed love for God and determined to serve his oppressed brothers and sisters. Douglass attributed his aspirations for life beyond and without slavery as well as the faith that propelled him forward in spite of his struggles, to
LIFE APPLICATION

Children are socialized and personal identities are developed in the home, as lessons on love (positive and negative) are taught. Like Jacob’s family, through the blood of Jesus Christ, we are also heirs to a divine destiny. Failure to teach and practice agape love in our homes will not only “infect” the immediate family with major dysfunction, it can also spread to the church and other relationships beyond.

Jacob’s family’s story is rife with examples of family dysfunction. Agape love could never thrive in this environment! The family’s relationships were primarily characterized by unresolved conflicts that fostered extreme anger, envy, jealousy, and hatred. Parental favoritism, sibling rivalry, and feelings of estrangement were supporting frameworks from which the dysfunction emerged and continued.

Struggles for love are common among families today. However, we can rejoice in the fact that God has no stepchildren! All are equal, with assurances that God “is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34). Yet, the experiences of Jacob’s family can teach us a lot about the importance of love in family relationships, and especially how impactful the behavior of parents and guardians can be with creating loving relationships among children.

Fortunately, we also have scripture, such as 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, to help us understand what godly love looks like: patience and kindness, as well as familial relationships wherein envy, boastfulness, unselfishness, and so forth are absent.

Modeling Christian discipleship at home is imperative!

Serious reflection on the impact of our behavior in our own homes and with our families is also crucial. This forms the baseline for evaluating the prospects of our being able to persuade others to model Jesus’ teachings. Modeling love is more important than talking about it. Others, especially younger impressionable observers, are watching us. Finally, we must remember that we are obligated to love. Love is basic to
Lesson 1

Christian identities. “Beloved, let us love one another because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:7-8).

QUESTIONS:

1. What experiences do you have with parental favoritism?

2. What advice would you give to others who “struggle” because of parental favoritism?

3. How do you demonstrate love toward others – in your home, the church, and beyond?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Lord, we thank you for loving us, choosing us, and commissioning us to be your ambassadors. Your Word tells us to let our light shine before others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to you in heaven. We pray, Father, that love will be the fuel that powers our lights, and that we will never forget the importance of shining our lights at home before attempting to “light the way for the world.” In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

Closing Song: “I Don’t Know Why Jesus Loves Me” by Andraé Crouch

I don’t know why Jesus loved me I don’t know why he cared I don’t know why he sacrificed his life Oh, but I’m glad, so glad he did He left his mighty throne in glory To bring to us redemption’s story Then he died but he rose again Oh, but I’m glad, so glad he did (repeat)

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

August 31–September 6

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Lesson 2

God Rewards Obedience

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 41:14-57
Focus Scripture: Genesis 41:25-33, 37-40, 50-52

Key Verses: “So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only with regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”

Genesis 41:39-40 (NRSV)

GENESIS 41:25-33, 37-40, 50-52 (NRSV)

Genesis 41:25-33

25 Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “Pharaoh’s dreams are one and the same; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.

26 The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one.

27 The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, as are the seven empty ears blighted by the east wind. They are seven years of famine.

28 It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do.

29 There will come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt.

30 After them there will arise seven years of famine, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; the famine will consume the land.

31 The plenty will no longer be known in the land because of the famine that will follow, for it will be very grievous.

32 And the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.

33 Now therefore let Pharaoh select a man who is discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

37-40

37 The proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants.

38 Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find anyone else like this—one in whom is the spirit of God?”

GENESIS 41:25-33, 37-40, 50-52 (KJV)

Genesis 41:25-33

25 And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

26 The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

27 And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

28 This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

29 Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

30 And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

31 And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

33 Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

37-40

37 And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

38 And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?
Lesson 2

KEY TERM

- **Ishmaelites** – Descendants of Ishmael, Abraham’s oldest son; Hagar, Sarah’s handmaiden, was his mother.

INTRODUCTION

From human perspectives, Joseph had every reason to become bitter. As a young shepherd boy, Joseph’s brothers hated him so much that they forcibly took him from his father, who adored him, and sold him to a caravan of Ishmaelites. This ultimately led to Egyptian enslavement (Genesis 37:28-36). The scriptures tell us that “the Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master” (Genesis 39:2). However, scriptures also inform us that this period in Joseph’s life was turbulent, punctuated by false accusations from his master’s wife, unjustified imprisonment, and disloyalty from fellow prisoners. The latter might have helped Joseph gain release from prison at least two years before he was officially released. In all of this, Joseph proved bitterness/hatefulness do not necessarily reproduce the same emotions.

Joseph proved bitterness/hatefulness do not necessarily reproduce the same emotions.

39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.
40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command; only with regard to the throne will I be greater than you.”

50-52

50 Before the years of famine came, Joseph had two sons, whom Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him.
51 Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.”
52 The second he named Ephraim, “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my misfortunes.”

39 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:
40 Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

50-52

50 And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On bare unto him.
51 And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house.
52 And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.
emotions. With God’s teachings during this difficult period, Joseph emerged with his faith and integrity intact, along with a spirit of love instead of bitterness.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY
Joseph Rises to Power, Genesis
41:25-33; 37-40

Today’s lesson begins with the final days of Joseph’s imprisonment and the beginning of the “new purpose” to which God directed Joseph’s life. The cupbearer finally “remembers” to tell Pharaoh about Joseph, whom he met in prison. Since no one else could interpret Pharaoh’s dream, the cupbearer suggested that Pharaoh should send for Joseph. Joseph succinctly and convincingly interpreted Pharaoh’s dream. In a show of true leadership, Joseph also gave recommendations for Egypt to prepare for the famine that would definitely come. This was a fourteen-year plan, which was immediately adopted by Pharaoh as he also elevated Joseph, thereby giving him vast power to save the nation of Egypt.

Joseph Is Doubly Blessed, Genesis
41:50-52

Names, among the Hebrew people, had meaning! Joseph followed this tradition as he was blessed to have two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. With naming his first-born son, Manasseh, Joseph acknowledged forgetfulness and forgiveness. Notably, Joseph said, “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house” (v. 51b). While naming Ephraim, Joseph was praising God for prosperity and spiritual fruitfulness in spite of Joseph having suffered through Egyptian slavery and imprisonment for thirteen years. Indeed, Joseph’s obedience was blessed.

SANKOFA

Joseph was a seventeen-year-old Hebrew when his brothers sold him into slavery. Thirteen years later, he was released from prison and declared second in command over all of Egypt (Gen. 41:46). Hence, Joseph spent thirteen years in prison for a crime he did not commit. Due process was obviously
never a consideration in his case. Unfortunately, imprisonments of this nature are historically linked to African Americans and the institution of slavery in the U.S.A.

Of course, slaves were considered to be property, with no human rights. Therefore, they were notoriously imprisoned at the whims of slave masters or other authority figures. In 1865, when the Civil War ended and the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution passed, slaves were supposedly granted the same rights as all Americans. Following Reconstruction, Black Codes were established. These laws represented new forms of control over free Africans and, through imprisonments, guaranteed perpetuation of free labor practices. After Black Codes were declared unconstitutional, Jim Crow Laws, along with the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups, continued the cycle of oppression and abuse. In all cases, incarceration rates and forced free labor ensued for African Americans. This abhorrent trend continues!

Statistical reports indicate glaring discrepancies between incarceration rates for people of color versus Caucasians. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) report on criminal justice (2019) indicates that despite the fact African Americans and Hispanics comprise about 32% of the United States' total population, 56% of incarcerated people were African American and/or Hispanic. Disparities between sentences for drug-related offenses were equally as glaring. Although similar rates of drug usage were found, African Americans were six times more likely to be arrested than Caucasians. The effects of these disparities upon incarcerated individuals, their families, and our nation are catastrophic. The United States, according to the NAACP, “makes up about 5% of the world’s population and has 21% of the world’s prisoners.” Family separations, unemployment rates, and
The life story of Nelson Mandela exemplifies love versus bitterness, the underlying theme in today’s lesson.

CASE STUDY

The life story of Nelson Mandela exemplifies love versus bitterness, the underlying theme in today’s lesson. Because he actively resisted and engaged politically to end Apartheid in South Africa, his native land, Mandela was arrested and incarcerated with a life sentence. While incarcerated, Mandela continued his leadership among his people and completed a law degree, despite the harsh treatments he endured. He was ultimately a central player in the demise of Apartheid. Apartheid was legislatively enacted in 1948 by an all-white government. Similar to Jim Crow laws in America, Apartheid laws codified racial discrimination and oppression against Africans, despite their being the majority population. Consequently, Africans were forced to live in separate areas from the white population, use public facilities, and forced to severely limit interracial contacts. Along with many other atrocities, Africans were driven from their land and forced to live in tribal communities, designed to create further divisions and increase disempowerment of Africans. Thus, the minority population controlled the majority.

At age 72, in 1990, Mandela was released from jail, and he worked with a newly-established, more sympathetic government to end Apartheid in 1991. On May 10, 1994, Mandela was inaugurated, becoming South Africa’s first black president. His other accomplishments are too numerous to note. Among them was a Nobel Peace Prize for his role in mediating differences among all Africans.
to effect healing and restoration. In 1996, Mandela signed a new democratic Constitution that guaranteed majority rule, freedom of expression, and equality for minorities. Instead of bitterness for his incarceration and other offenses, Mandela later reflected upon his life with this comment: “Until I changed myself, I could not change others.” Like Joseph, Mandela suggested personal revival and new perspectives occurred during his incarceration and the long fight for freedom and democracy in Africa.

**LIFE APPLICATION**

Jesus warned that his judgment, at the Second Coming, will include the following indictment: “I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me” (Matthew 25:43). What will your response be? We can see from today’s discussions as well as the current injustices in our criminal justice system that not every prisoner deserves to be incarcerated. Also, in cases where guilt is established, disparate treatments, based on race and other personal characteristics, are unjust and must be noted and confronted. Jesus compels us to action, not to judgment. We are called to serve! God reserves judgment for himself (Romans 2).

Statistics infer that we are likely to have many more people among us, including church members, who are affected by our criminal justice system. Notably, the NAACP reported that one in every 37 adults, or 2.7% of America’s adult population, are “under some form of correctional supervision.” As with all charity, concerns for those affected needs to begin in our homes and with our families. The church is likely the next priority. However, the need to go beyond family and the walls of the church is almost screaming for our attention.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. How has this lesson changed your
perspectives on currently incarcerated individuals and those who have been released?

2. What new “in-reach” and “out-reach” ideas do you have for ministering to incarcerated individuals, as well as their loved-ones?

3. What ministries would you recommend your congregation sponsor to create more inclusiveness with incarcerated/imprisoned populations?

CLOSING DEVOTION

Dear Lord, we are grateful for the opportunity to see how you achieve your purposes in spite of life’s circumstances. Incarceration comes in many forms and presents innumerable challenges. Please anoint us and bless us with understanding to fulfill your callings for each of us. In the name of Jesus, please use us to bring honor and glory to your name in this and all areas of life to which you might send us. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 7 – September 13

Monday    Acts 13:1-5 (Paul and Barnabas Appointed for Ministry)
Tuesday   Genesis 41:9-13 (Joseph, Chief Interpreter of Dreams)
Wednesday Genesis 41:14-24 (Dreams of Cows and Corn Explained)
Thursday  Genesis 41:34-36 (Preparing for the Expected Famine)
Friday    Genesis 41:41-49 (Storing Grain for the Future)
Saturday  Genesis 41:53-57 (Egypt Feeds the Middle East)
Sunday    Genesis 41:25-33, 37-40, 50-52 (Leadership During Crisis)