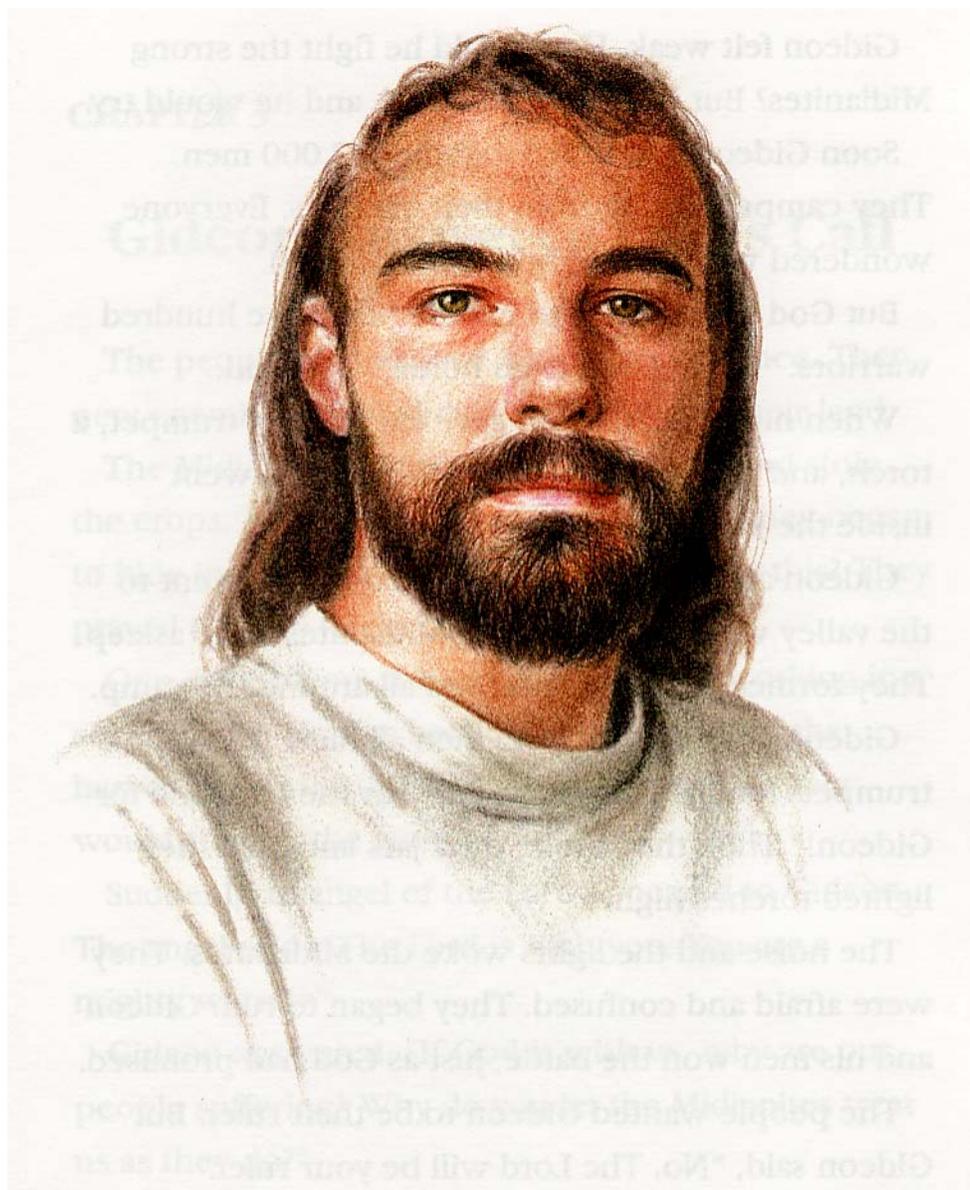


SERVANTS OF GOD





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Chalice Year—Primary, Unit I

Text by the editors of the Episcopal Children's Curriculum

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CHAPTER 1

After Moses Came Joshua

For forty years Moses led God's people through the wilderness. He chose a young man named Joshua to be his helper. Joshua's name means "God will save."

When Moses climbed up the mountain called Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments from God, Joshua went with him. After forty days, they returned. Moses carried the tablets of stone. He would share these Commandments with the people so they would always remember God and would know how God expected them to live.

How surprised Joshua was when he heard loud voices below! He thought the people must be at war.

What Joshua heard was not a battle. The people had made a golden calf and were bowing down to worship it. They were having a great, noisy feast in the presence of this idol. Joshua watched as Moses grew very, very angry at what the people had done.

Moses threw the tablets. They broke into pieces. Then he destroyed the calf of gold. After a time, he went back up the mountain and received the Commandments once again, on new tablets of stone.

Later, Moses asked Joshua to watch over the big Tent of Meeting where the people met to worship God.

As Moses grew old, he depended on Joshua more and more. The chosen people were now close to the land God had promised. But Moses knew that he would die before they crossed into Canaan. He took Joshua into the Tent of Meeting. There they heard God say to Joshua, "Be strong and bold, for you will lead."

Soon after Moses died, Joshua led the people across the River Jordan and on into the Promised Land. He was in charge at the famous battle of Jericho. The high walls fell, and God's people entered the city.

Joshua was leader for many more years until the people were settled and safe in their new home.

The end of Joshua's life drew near. He called all the tribes of Israel together and told them they must choose whom they would serve—the one true God or false gods. Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

The people promised they would serve only God.

Joshua died at the age of one hundred and ten years.

CHAPTER 2

Deborah Sang to God

The people of Israel wanted to live at peace in the promised land of Canaan where Joshua led them. But they did not always listen to God. Some even worshiped the strange gods of their neighbors. These neighbors were the people Israel had defeated, and they wanted their land back. They began to make war.

The king of Canaan built a great army. He had nine hundred chariots made of iron. For twenty years, this army was cruel to the tribes of Israel.

What would God's people do? They were afraid and timid. At last they cried out to the Lord for help in their time of trouble.

God heard the people.

In the hill country there lived a woman of God named Deborah. She was wise and strong. Like Moses of long ago, she believed in the Lord with all her heart.

Deborah sat under a palm tree, and people came to her for advice. Because she was always sitting in this place, the tree too was named "Deborah."

Deborah was called a prophet because she listened to God. She was also called a judge because she knew how to help God's people with their problems.

Deborah knew that someone must lead against the army of Canaan. She called for a man named Barak and said to him: "God commands you to battle against our enemy. We will win, for God will be with you."

But Barak was not so sure. He did not want to lead all by himself. He said to Deborah, "If you will go with me, I will go. But if you will not go with me, I will not go."

Deborah did go. She stayed by Barak's side. They gathered forty thousand men from the tribes of Israel. A great rain began to fall. Deborah told Barak it was time to attack.

The enemy was driven into the roaring waters of the River Kishon. The iron chariots of Canaan were no help, and their people drowned.

Deborah and Barak sang a great song of victory. They said, "Bless the Lord!"

The people of Israel honored brave Deborah. They called her their mother.

CHAPTER 3

Gideon Answered God's Call

The people of Israel had forty years of peace. Then new enemies called Midianites came into their land.

The Midianites trampled over the farms and stole the crops. The farmers were so afraid that they began to hide in caves. How could they go on like this? They prayed to God: "Help us!"

One day Gideon, the son of Joash, was working in a secret place. He was beating out wheat from the harvest. The Midianites must not see him, or they would steal all the grain.

Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon. The angel said, "The Lord is with you. You are a mighty warrior."

Gideon answered, "If God is with us, why are our people suffering? Why do you let the Midianites treat us as they do?"

The angel told Gideon he must lead his people with mighty power into battle against the Midianites.

Gideon felt weak. How could he fight the strong Midianites? But he believed in God, and he would try.

Soon Gideon had called together 32,000 men. They camped not far from their enemies. Everyone wondered when the fighting would begin.

But God told Gideon to choose just three hundred warriors. "Let the others go home," God said.

When night fell, Gideon gave each man a trumpet, a torch, and an empty stone jar. The torches went inside the jars.

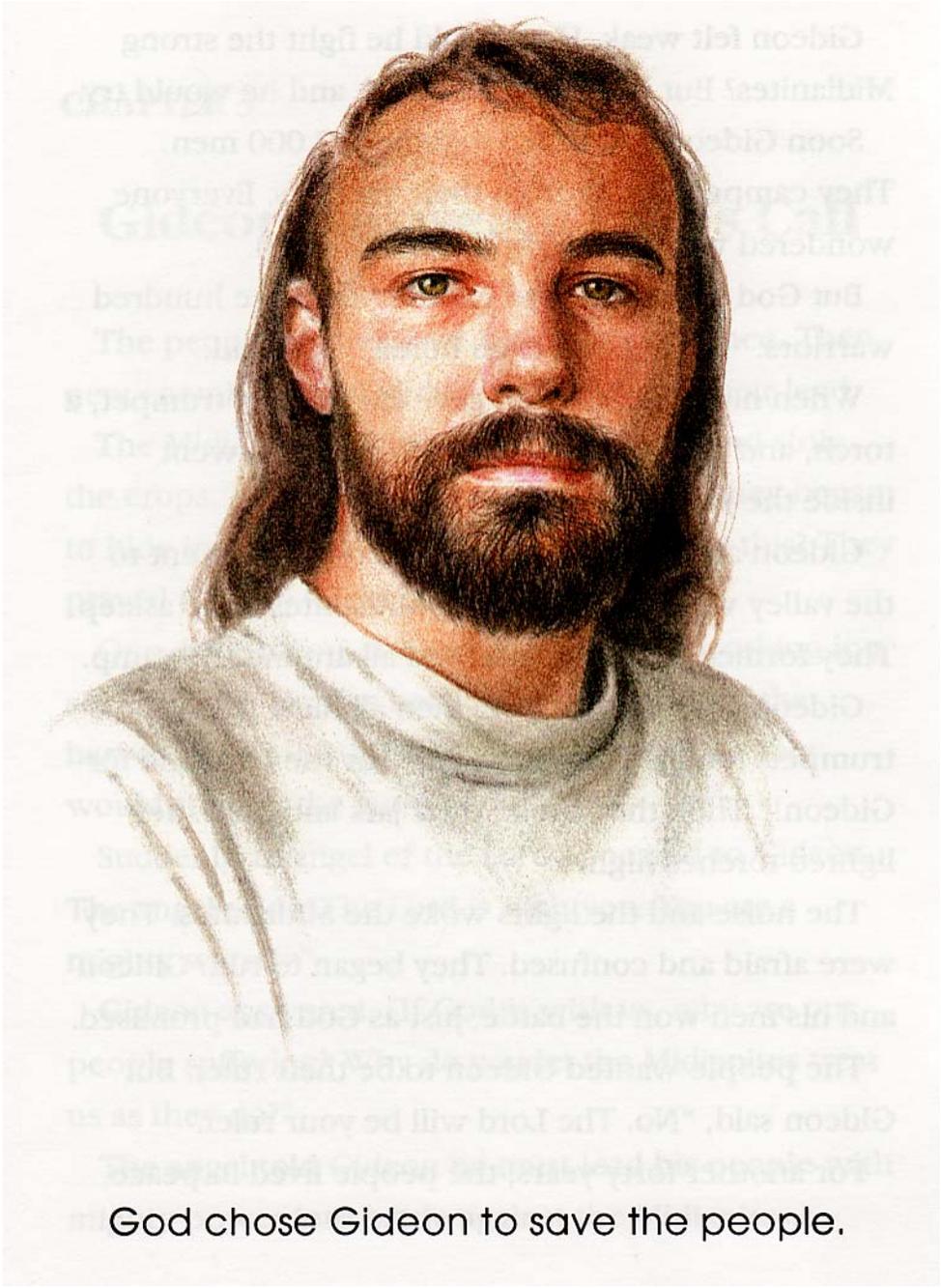
Gideon and his men moved quietly. They went to the valley where thousands of Midianites were asleep. They formed a line that reached all around the camp.

Gideon gave a signal. The men all blew their trumpets loudly. They shouted, "For the Lord and for Gideon!" Then they broke their jars and held their lighted torches high.

The noise and the lights woke the Midianites. They were afraid and confused. They began to run. Gideon and his men won the battle, just as God had promised.

The people wanted Gideon to be their ruler. But Gideon said, "No. The Lord will be your ruler."

For another forty years, the people lived in peace.



God chose Gideon to save the people.

CHAPTER 4

Samuel, Son of Hannah

Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, wanted to be a mother. But for a long time she was disappointed. She had no children.

One year, Hannah went with her husband to Shiloh where there was a temple. She felt very sad. She prayed over and over, "O Lord, if only you will give me a son, I will offer him to you."

The priest of the temple was named Eli. He saw Hannah praying silently with her face lifted up to God. Eli said, "You are drunk. When will you stop acting like this?"

Hannah said, "No, no. I am deeply troubled. I have been pouring out my soul to the Lord."

Now Eli knew she was telling the truth. He said, "Go in peace. May God give you what you asked for."

Hannah was happy. She and Elkanah went home. It was not long until she had a baby boy. She named him Samuel and cared for him tenderly.

When Samuel was very young, Hannah took him to Shiloh. She found Eli in the temple. She said, "I am the one who came here to pray for a child. Here he is! As long as he lives, he is given to the Lord."

Young Samuel stayed in the temple. His mother made a little robe and took it to him each year. He grew strong and served Eli, who was getting very old.

One night, Samuel was lying down near the ark of the Lord. He heard a voice, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Samuel thought it was Eli calling. But Eli said, "I did not call. Lie down again."

The same voice called again and again. Each time Samuel went to Eli. After the third time, Eli said, "If you hear the voice once more, answer, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"

God gave Samuel a message: Eli's sons had done evil things. God must do something new to help the people be faithful again. The day would come when Eli and his sons would no longer be priests.

Eli said, "It is the Lord. Let God do what seems good."

All the people of Israel knew that Samuel was a prophet of God who could be trusted.

CHAPTER 5

God Cared for Ruth

During the time of the judges there was a famine in the land. A man named Elimelech, who lived in Bethlehem, decided to take his whole family to the country of Moab where there would be enough food.

Elimelech's wife was Naomi, and they had two sons—Mahlon and Chilion.

While they were in Moab, the sons married women named Orpah and Ruth.

Elimelech died. Then Mahlon and Chilion also died. Naomi was in great sorrow. She said, "I must go back to the land of my own people. I will return to Bethlehem."

Ruth and Orpah loved Naomi very much, and they began the journey with her. But Naomi said to them, "No, it is better for you to remain in Moab." Orpah and Ruth wept.

Then Orpah decided to turn back. But Ruth would not. She said to Naomi, "Where you go, I will go. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God."

When Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem, they knew they must find a way to get food.

It was the time of the barley harvest. At once, Naomi remembered Boaz, a man who was kin to Elimelech. "I am sure he is very wealthy," she said to Ruth.

Ruth said, "Let me go to the fields of Boaz. I will gather up grain behind the reapers. I hope Boaz will be kind to me."

Ruth carried out her plan. When Boaz saw her in the field, he asked about her. The reapers explained who she was.

Boaz was very kind to Ruth. He said, "I know the whole story of your love for Naomi and all that you have done for her."

God was caring for Naomi and Ruth.

In time, Boaz and Ruth were married. They had a baby boy named Obed. Naomi loved the child and held him close. She became his nurse.

Obed had a son named Jesse. Jesse was the father of David.

That is how it came to be that Ruth was the grandmother of the great King David.

CHAPTER 6

David Returned the Ark

Long ago, in the time of Moses, the people of God made a precious wooden box covered with gold. It was called the Ark of the Covenant.

On the two long sides of the ark were gold rings. Golden poles went through these rings so that the ark could be carried. On top of the ark were two figures with wings called cherubim (little angels).

No one today knows for sure what was inside the ark. But it must have been the tablets on which Moses wrote the Ten Commandments!

Wherever God's people went, the ark was with them:

- As they wandered in the wilderness for forty years, the ark was carried by the sons of Levi.
- As Joshua led across the Jordan River, the priests carried the ark.
- When the city of Jericho fell, the ark was carried by priests behind the soldiers.

Through most of the years, the ark was kept inside a tent-like place called the Tabernacle. The people worshiped there, praying and singing to God.

Then a terrible thing happened. The enemy Philistines captured the ark! It was very hard for God's people to face this loss.

But when David became the great and powerful king, he got the ark back and took it to Jerusalem in a joyful procession.

David and everyone with him danced and sang with all their might. They shouted and blew horns.

The ark was brought into a new tent. David made offerings to God. He blessed the people in the name of the Lord. Then he gave food to all the men and women of Israel. Everyone received a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins.

The people returned to their homes. They said to one another, "How wonderful it is to have the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem, the city of David, our King."

CHAPTER 7

Solomon Built God's Temple

David chose his son, Solomon, to be the one who would follow him as king over God's people. Solomon was about twenty years old when he began to rule, and he was king for the next forty years.

We remember Solomon for his wise words. Everyone respected his wisdom.

We remember Solomon also because he finished the temple of God his father had dreamed of building.

King David had wanted the temple to be in Jerusalem. He collected much money and many of the materials needed. But he died before the work could begin.

The temple of Solomon would not seem big if it were still standing today. In those days it was a grand building about a hundred feet long, thirty feet wide, and forty-five feet high. It was very, very costly.

King Solomon sent many thousands of workers to the hills of Lebanon to bring back giant cedar trees. Hundreds of others covered the wood with gold. Everywhere you looked there was gold. Carved ivory and olive wood were also used. The furniture was the finest in the world.

It took seven years and six months to complete the beautiful temple. When the work was done, Solomon took the Ark of the Covenant from the tent where his father had placed it. He laid the ark gently in the new temple and prayed to God, "I have built a house for you, a place for you to live for ever."

Solomon blessed the many people who were with him. Then he offered a long prayer of dedication. After that, the people had a great feast that lasted for eight days! Everyone had food to eat. Solomon sent them back to their homes, and they were joyful about the wonderful house of the Lord.

Each year, Solomon went to the temple three times to offer sacrifices. He truly loved God.

Solomon also built many other giant buildings. He spent too much money, and the taxes were very high. By the time he died, his people were no longer happy.

CHAPTER 8

The Boy Who Became King

After Solomon's death, God's people were divided into two kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The temple Solomon built was in Jerusalem, in the kingdom of Judah.

Three hundred years went by, and many kings followed one another. One of these was Amon of Judah, whose rule was very short because he was killed by servants in his own house.

Amon was followed by his son, Josiah, who was just eight years old. He was faithful to God and wanted always to do what was right.

When Josiah had been king about eighteen years, he sent his secretary, Shaphan, into the temple to collect the money people had given. Josiah said, "Ask the priest, Hilkiah, to count the money and give it to the workers who are repairing the temple. They can buy wood and stone. I trust these men. They are honest."

When Shaphan entered the temple, Hilkiah was excited. "Look! I have found the book of the law here in the house of the Lord!" (It was the book of Deuteronomy, and it had been lost for a long time.)

Shaphan read the book aloud to King Josiah.

Josiah heard the words and was very troubled. He tore his clothes. "We have not obeyed the Lord. We have not followed God's laws!" he cried.

Hilkiah the priest went to see Huldah, a woman who was a prophet. She said, "God wants the people to obey the Commandments and all the laws in the book that was found. God knows Josiah is sorry the laws were forgotten. God will be kind to him."

When Josiah heard Huldah's message, he called all the people of Judah together. He read the words of God's law aloud to them. Then he made a covenant to obey God, and the people joined in the promise.

Josiah destroyed all the idols the people had been worshiping. He tore down the altars where people had sacrificed to strange gods. Then he commanded the people to keep the passover feast. No one had done this since the time of the judges!

Josiah "turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might." After he died, there was never again such a good king.

CHAPTER 9

Saints Are Faithful People

All the men and women we have read about in this book believed in God. They were not perfect, but they did much good in God's name. They prayed. They served others. We will not forget them.

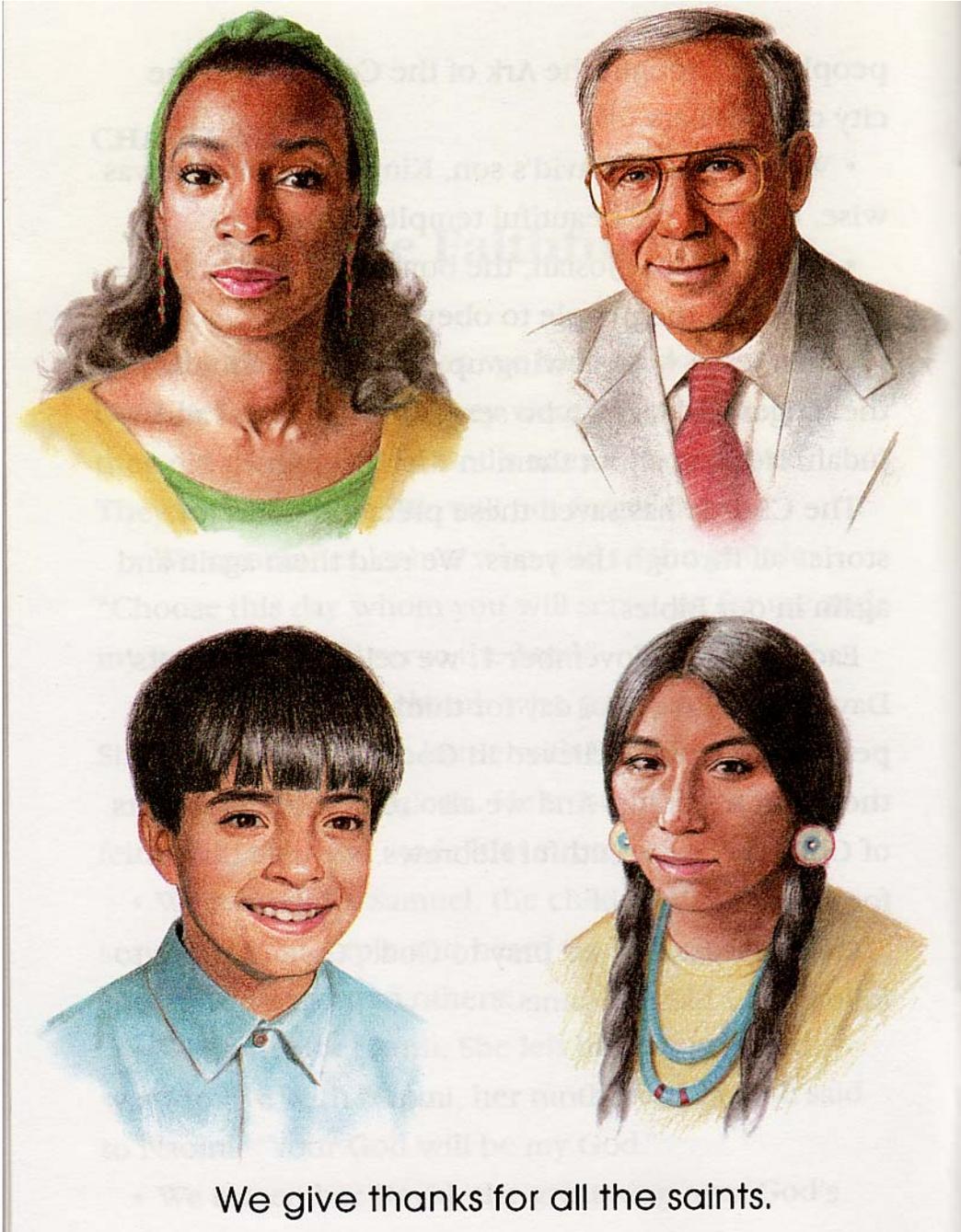
- We remember Joshua who said to the people, "Choose this day whom you will serve. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."
- We remember Deborah who gave good advice. She went bravely into battle with Barak.
- We remember Gideon. He trusted God when he felt weak, and God made him strong.
- We remember Samuel, the child of Hannah. He served in the temple and heard the voice of God. He spoke God's word to others.
- We remember Ruth. She left her country and went to live with Naomi, her mother-in-law. She said to Naomi, "Your God will be my God."
- We remember David, the great king over God's people. He brought the Ark of the Covenant to the city of Jerusalem.
- We remember David's son, King Solomon. He was wise. He built the beautiful temple of the Lord.
- We remember Josiah, the boy who became king. He called on the people to obey God's law.

When Jesus was growing up, he learned about all the judges and kings who served God in Israel and Judah. He sang about them in the synagogue.

The Church has saved these precious Hebrew stories all through the years. We read them again and again in our Bibles.

Each year, on November 1, we celebrate All Saints' Day. It is a wonderful day for thinking about all the people who have believed in God. We remember all the Church's saints. And we also remember the saints of God who were faithful Hebrews. We give thanks for them all.

On this feast day, we pray to God: "Give us grace to follow your blessed saints."



We give thanks for all the saints.