

the desert *Deshret*, meaning **Red Land**. The Nile's course through Egypt was about 600 miles. The river split into several channels north of what is now Cairo, forming the Nile Delta. Rolling desert land lay west of the Nile Valley, and mountains rose to the east.

The Nile River flooded its banks each year. The flooding started in July, when the rainy season began in central Africa. The rains raised the level of the river as the Nile flowed northward. The floodwaters usually went down in September, leaving a strip of fertile land that averaged about 6 miles wide on each side of the river [the **Black Land**]. Farmers then plowed and seeded the rich soil. The Egyptians also depended on the Nile as their chief transportation route. Memphis and Thebes—the main capitals of ancient Egypt—and many other cities developed along the river because of its importance to farming and transportation.

## FINE ARTS AND ACTIVITIES: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Fine Arts Background sections here in the Teacher's Notes will usually focus on Art History (including analyses of painting, sculpture, and architecture). Some basic Art History is often incorporated into history text books, but we will take time to look further at ancient art from an artistic perspective. To that end, we will spend some time in the upcoming weeks covering the formal art elements; we will also note important aesthetic trends, etc. Our commentary is here primarily to help you and your students learn to observe art with an analytical eye.

Directions for Hands-On Projects are found in the Student Activity Pages, though occasionally a long or complex project will require further commentary here. Details for the projects suggested in your Weekly Overview Charts are given in the Student Activity Pages. Doing activities adds interest to the study of history, so try to set aside time for your students to do some of them!

1. Drawing is an important skill for any student, regardless of age. It requires close observation, which is a valuable skill in any discipline. You need no special urging or instruction to make use of this tool as a teacher. For example, whether we suggest it or not, you could this week encourage your student to draw (from illustrations he finds in his resource books) the various aspects of Egyptian life. He could illustrate his writing assignments, such as descriptive paragraphs.
2. There are various coloring books of Egyptian life available, especially from Dover publishers. Younger students, or those who feel insecure about drawing, could spend some time coloring them with colored pencils and create lovely inserts for their portfolios or their lapbooks on Egypt.

## BIBLE SURVEY AND CHURCH HISTORY: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Perhaps you have never heard the terms “**common grace**” and “**special grace**.” Theologians use these terms to distinguish differing acts of God in believers' lives. Common grace describes the kindness and mercy that God pours out on the entire world. The sun shines, the rain falls, the crops grow. People live and love and laugh. All people enjoy life sometimes, and God has mercy time and again on all sinners everywhere, during all time periods.

**Special grace** is that grace reserved for God's chosen (saved, in the New Testament) people. It is His special care, concern, love, and mercy that is over and above common grace. Special grace may be likened to the special relationship your children have with you. While you are kind to all children, and wish them well, you are responsible to care for and love and instruct your own children in a special way that is different from the way you treat all other children.

Of course, grace is, well, grace! It is the unmerited favor of God towards human sinners. But it is often helpful to look at the ways God's grace works itself out in history, and these terms have helped many to more fully understand God's amazing grace. It has been aptly said that “God is kind in some ways towards all, and in all ways towards some.”

Make it clear, as you study the daily habits of Egyptians, that their lives contained only common grace. Even with common grace, they enjoyed no modern medical care, no electricity, and most endured grinding poverty or slavery. In the sidebars on this and the following page are some Scriptures that relate to this discussion of common and special grace.

### Scriptural basis for “common grace”

#### Matthew 5:44-45

*But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

#### 2 Peter 3:9

*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

#### John 3:16

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

## BIBLE SURVEY AND CHURCH HISTORY: RHETORIC DISCUSSION OUTLINE

Students have seen these questions before but have not been asked to answer them. Every week, this section of your Teacher's Notes contains information that students cannot get on their own from their readings. You can deliver it in a straight lecture, or you can deliver this information through Socratic (question and answer) format, or in some other creative way that's all your own! ("Lecture" information is printed in regular font; sample answers to questions we prompt you to ask of students during the discussion are in italics.)

We suggest you start your first class with this simple exercise. Get the students to pull out a piece of clean, lined paper and give them five minutes to write down "a history of them." Don't give any more direction than that: let them choose what information they will write. After they are done, go around the room asking, "What did you write?" Some will have put their names, their parents' and grandparents' names, where they live, when they were born, etc. History is an introduction: it tells us more about the person, or nation, we are interested in.

### Discussion Questions

- Why is it important to know the history in the Bible?
  - The past is prologue: it's an introduction.*
  - The Bible is a selected history of what God has done in the world.*
  - Knowing the past helps us predict future acts God might do.*
  - Studying Bible history helps us know what God does and what He says about what He does.*
- Ask students, "What pattern would you draw of history?"
 

*After attempts are made, tell them that, from the Bible, we learn that human history is linear, and apocalyptic: it is a planned progression of events that has a clear purpose (the glory of God) and will have an end. (An arrow with a fixed beginning and definite ending point can represent this view of history, as the bottom diagram, right, shows.)*
- This view of history is very different from other views. Consider with students these alternate visions:
  - Hindu and Buddhist and some New Age: Reincarnation means an endless cycle of life. (See the top picture, right.)
  - Existentialist: The here and now is all we can know; it's probably all that's real. (The single point in the diagram.)
  - Far Eastern and early pagan ancestor worship: My life/history is tied to that of my ancestors. Their choices affect mine. (See the continuous, intersecting circles, right.)
  - Darwinian: There is no beginning; there is no end; evolution just "happens." (See the wandering line, the fourth illustration at the right.)
  - Marxist: Surprisingly, Hegelian-Marxist theory is one of the few philosophies apart from Christianity that holds an apocalyptic vision of human history (bottom of the diagram at right). The difference is that Marx thought that "stuff" was the primary mover of history; Christians believe the glory of God is the primary mover of history.
  - What you believe about history influences your choices day by day. If you believe that life is an endless cycle of reincarnation, you might leave a child to starve in the streets, believing that he deserves this fate because of previous actions (karma) and will have a better life next time around. However, if you believe that, at the end of time, God rewards and punishes humans for their actions here and now, you will give the child a meal in the name of Jesus. If you believe that what you do influences future generations, you will act more purposefully and more wisely. Knowing Bible history and the message of the Bible itself helps give you both purpose and motivation as you make choices day by day.

### Scriptural basis for "special grace"

#### Job 36:7

*He does not take his eyes off the righteous; he enthrones them with kings and exalts them forever.*

#### Psalms 34:15

*The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry.*

#### Isaiah 41:9-10

*I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, "You are my servant"; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

#### Jeremiah 31:3

*The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness."*

#### Matthew 6:26

*Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?*

