

The following contains short excerpts from the beginning and end of Chapters 2 (Jedediah Smith), 4 (Cyrus Shepard), 6 (Henry & Eliza Spalding), and 7 (George Bush & George Washington). Each chapter ends with study questions.

Chapter 2

Jedediah Smith (1799-1831), The Praying Trapper

Attacked by a Bear

Late one autumn afternoon in 1823, Jedediah Smith led a column of fur trappers walking their horses through a bushy, narrow valley. Suddenly, a huge grizzly bear crashed through the middle of the line and ran alongside the startled men and horses. All they saw was a brown blur smashing through the brush. Men shouted and horses whinnied and reared. Smith ran ahead to a clearing for a better view and met the bear head on. It sprang on him before he could draw his knife or gun. The grizzly's mouth clamped tightly on Smith's head and flung him to the ground. It ripped its powerful claws across his belly, then bounded off into the thicket.

The men stared helplessly at their battered and bleeding leader. No one knew what to do, for they had always relied on Jedediah Smith to coolly handle all emergencies. Now he lay writhing in pain with broken ribs and a large bleeding head wound. The mountain men stood dumbfounded until one man said to Smith, "Captain, tell us what to do."

Despite the pain, Jedediah Smith calmed his men and said, "Someone go for water, and someone get a needle and thread out of my bag. Sew up the wound around my head."

While Smith directed him, a trapper sewed up the gash. After stitching across the crown of his head from his left eye to his right ear, he found that Smith's ear was almost completely torn from his head. "Captain, I can't do anything for your ear," he told him.

"Oh," Smith answered, "you must try to stitch it up one way or another."

So the man sewed the lacerated ear to the head, patching it together as best he could. Within a few days, Jedediah Smith regained his strength, mounted his horse, and again led the beaver-trapping expedition. He carried the signs of the attack for the rest of his life - a large scar across his head, a missing eyebrow and a torn ear.

Trapping Beaver

Jedediah became a fur trapper in the Rocky Mountains in 1822 when he was 23 years old. He worked for William Ashley who made him a captain of a company of trappers.

Ashley's men were a new kind of fur trader known as mountain men. Other fur trading companies, such as the Hudson's Bay Company, established trading posts to trade goods to the Indians in exchange for furs that the Indians trapped for them. Ashley's mountain men ranged freely over wide areas trapping beaver themselves without a home base. For years at a time, they lived off the land in the mountains and valleys of the Rocky Mountain region.

The mountain men learned from the Indians how to live off the land, often taking Indian wives in the wilderness. They gained an intimate knowledge of their surroundings, discovering where game could be found and finding the best routes through mountains, canyons and deserts. They spent most of their time around rivers and streams where beaver lived.

Beaver ordinarily live in burrows dug into the banks of rivers or streams. Trappers could tell the presence of beaver by the cuttings of small trees, even if a dam of sticks could not be seen. They looked for paths that the beavers used to get in and out of the water.

At dusk, the beaver hunters waded into the cold water to set their heavy iron traps where the beaver paths entered the water. Beaver fur was thickest and most valuable during the winter months, so trappers had to endure freezing winds, heavy snows and icy waters. The traps, baited with a small stick dipped in a musky oil from a beaver's castor gland, were anchored in place by a steel chain attached to a pole driven into the river bank.

When a beaver, attracted by the scent, touched the bait, the trap snapped shut on its paw and the beaver drowned. At dawn, the hunters checked their traps. They skinned the beavers at the water's edge and kept the furs, tails and castor glands. Back at camp, they scraped the pelts and stretched them on a wooden frame to dry. Trappers pressed the castor glands for the oil used in baiting traps. They roasted and ate the tail, a highly prized delicacy.

The Yearly Rendezvous

Once each summer the mountain men gathered at a prearranged spot to sell furs, buy supplies, hear news of the world and celebrate. The gathering was called a rendezvous. The yearly rendezvous often drew hundreds of Indians, trappers, fur buyers and supply merchants. They feasted, danced, ran races, gambled, partied and got drunk with alcohol. Often the rendezvous ended in a drunken brawl.

Ashley paid his men \$3.00 per pelt. He made his money by transporting the beaver furs to St. Louis where he sold them for \$6.00 each. The demand for beaver fur was high because beaver skin hats were fashionable in Europe and beaver coats were popular in China...



Mountain men and Indians celebrate at the annual rendezvous

Chapter 2 ends with a summary of Jedediah Smith's last journey and his life's legacy:

Jedediah's Last Journey

Smith, Jackson and Sublette decided to make a trading expedition to Santa Fe. Two of Smith's brothers, Austin and Peter, were in St. Louis and Jedediah wanted to help them get started in business. So Jedediah brought them along on the expedition. They went with twenty wagons, including a small mounted cannon. The most difficult part of the trail was a large dry plain in what is today southwest Kansas. It was late May and a terrible drought parched the land. The wagon train went without water for three days. The mule teams were near death. Jedediah set out on a desperate search for water on May 27, 1831. No one in the wagon train ever saw him again.

Jedediah pressed his exhausted and thirsty horse for several miles until he found a dry river bed. He dismounted, but as he dug for water, he saw nearly twenty Comanche warriors. Escape was impossible, Jedediah's only hope was to boldly approach the Indians, make known his peaceful intentions and try to make them understand by signs that he had gifts for them in his wagon. They did not respond.

Then the Comanches spread out and startled his horse. When his back was turned they shot him in the shoulder. Jedediah wheeled his horse around, and fired his rifle, killing the chief. The rest overpowered him with their lances and knives.

It fell to Jedediah's brother, Austin, to write his father the sad news. After giving the details of Jedediah's death, he wrote, "My dear father, do not take it to heart too sorely. 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be His name.' May we not hope, that Jedediah's faith was true, and will be rewarded."

His Legacy

During his eight years of fur trapping on the western frontier, Jedediah Smith discovered mountain passes that became important links in the Oregon Trail. He became the first American to travel overland to California, cross the Mojave Desert, cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains and travel overland from California to Oregon. His journals greatly expanded the knowledge of the American West, and proved invaluable to trappers and wagon trains who came after him. Today, he is recognized as the greatest American western land explorer after Lewis and Clark.

A year after his death, a magazine featured a long article on his life. After recounting his exploits and travels, the author wrote, "When his party was in danger, Mr. Smith was always among the foremost to meet it, and the last to flee...Without being connected with any church, he was a Christian. The lone wilderness had been his place of meditation, and the mountain top his altar...And though he fell under the spears of the savages and none can tell where his bones are bleaching, he must not be forgotten."

Chapter 2: Study Questions

1. How were mountain men different from other fur traders?
2. What was the rendezvous?
3. Describe Jedediah Smith.
4. List three of Smith's accomplishments that were firsts for an American citizen.
5. What made the life of the mountain man so hard?
6. How did Smith demonstrate his Christian faith in his work?

Chapter 4

Cyrus Shepard (1799-1840), Oregon's First Teacher

Indian Orphans Arrive

On a wet winter day in 1835, three missionaries bustled about an unfinished log cabin on the banks of the Willamette River. The roof leaked and mosquitoes swarmed as Jason Lee adjusted a window frame, Daniel Lee sawed a floor board and Cyrus Shepard stacked their scant food supplies.

Just then they heard a knock on the door. They opened it and found a nearly naked Indian boy shivering in the rain. He looked to be about seven years old, and was covered with dirt and crawling with fleas and lice. He was thin as a rail with a flattened forehead that rose to a peak at the top of his head.

By Indian words and signs he begged the men to let him stay and live with them. His parents were dead. He had no brothers or sisters. The relatives he did have didn't want him nor did anyone else in his tribe. He was alone and without hope in the world. The missionaries took him in.

Other Indian orphans came too. A little girl arrived with no more clothing than two small strips of deerskin, one draped over a shoulder and the other tied around her waist. She was filthy and starving. They washed her and clothed her in a dress that Shepard sewed from some cloth flour sacks. Their mission family grew rapidly. Although they greatly expanded the cabin and planted more fields, they barely kept pace with the need. But the missionaries welcomed every abandoned child who came to their door. "We could not turn them away," Shepard said.

How Shepard Became a Christian

Cyrus Shepard put his trust in Christ when he was a 26-year-old school teacher. Although he often went to church and heard the Bible preached, he was unwilling to repent. "It was my pride and vanity which kept me from God during those years," he said later. "I often wept over my sins, and still clung to my idols. I desired to have religion, but I would have worldly pleasures too. Thus I continued for years, until God's Spirit, I trust, conquered."

On New Year's Eve in 1825, he went to a midnight worship service. The preacher's message pierced his soul. After leaving church, he went home and poured out his heart to God, asking Christ to change his life. Overwhelmed with joy, he couldn't sleep, and spent the whole night praising God.

From that day forward, he never missed a meeting of the church. Three times a day he read his Bible and prayed. Shepard now saw his work as a school teacher in a different light. "These dear children," he said, "will be made better or worse perhaps happy or miserable forever, by my influence."

He believed he was training their minds for eternity. It drove him to earnest prayer for his students' souls, and many of them put their trust in Jesus Christ.

The story ends with his final days...

His Death

In the fall of 1839, an infection in Shepard's right knee forced him to lay flat on his back for weeks, but he continued teaching the Indian children who gathered around his bed in small groups. In the evenings, he kept himself useful by sitting up and making hats for the children. When his leg grew worse and it looked like the infection might spread through his body, a doctor concluded that amputation was the only hope for recovery. The doctor cut off his leg without anesthesia. Cyrus bore it patiently saying repeatedly, "God is good!"

"Through all his sufferings," his wife said, "I never heard a murmur escape his lips; but in his most trying hours, he rejoiced and sang praises to God!"

At first, the surgery wound healed, and he cheerfully returned to his duties, hopping around the mission with a crutch and signing letters to friends, "A part of Cyrus." But soon infection set in and he was laid low by fever and severe pain.

From his sickbed, he wrote Daniel Lee who was at his new mission at The Dalles. "I am very feeble in body, and obliged to lie on my back from morning till night...I do not think I shall get up from this bed... God has dealt with me in a manner that is impossible to describe to you. Such support, such removal of every care, my mind constantly far from every anxious thought, I could never have conceived to be possible. Under the most excruciating pain, when at every breath it seemed impossible to refrain from screeching as loud as strength would bear, these cries were mingled with shouts of praise!"

He greeted all his visitors with a smile and urged them to live for Christ. Shepard did not fear death. "I trust in the paradise of God," he said. He closed a note to a Christian friend, "Farewell! If on earth we meet no more, we will meet in heaven."

Cyrus Shepard, Oregon's first teacher, died January 1, 1840. He left behind a widow and two little daughters and a house full of Indian children.

"Brother Shepard was an ardent and constant friend," Daniel Lee wrote. "Though surrounded by many and great difficulties, yet he remembered it was written, 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.' I shall not soon see his equal."

Chapter 4: Study Questions

1. How did the work with Indian orphans begin?
2. How did Cyrus Shepard become a missionary to the Pacific Northwest?
3. What made Shepard's heart ache regarding the Indians' way of life?
4. What did Shepard do for the Indian orphans?
5. How did visitors to the mission describe Shepard's work?
6. What hardships did the missionaries face?
7. What lessons can you learn from how Shepard faced pain and death?

Chapter 6

**Henry Spalding (1803-1874),
Eliza Spalding (1807-1851)**

Hard Journey West

In June 1836, Eliza Spalding lay in the back of a Dearborn wagon, her thin body drenched in sweat. Her husband Henry held a cup of water to her cracked lips. Eliza slowly lifted her head and took a sip. Doctor Marcus Whitman listened to her labored breathing and checked her pulse. A few minutes later, the two men stood beside the wagon, looking at the Rocky Mountains looming in the west. Over the last three months, they had crossed the Great Plains, but the hardest part of their journey to the Pacific Northwest lay ahead. And Eliza's health had steadily weakened.

"I don't think she'll make it," Whitman told Henry.

But Eliza held on. A few days later she wrote in her diary, "We are now 2,800 miles from my dearest parents' home, expecting in a few days to begin ascending the Rocky Mountains. Only God who knows all things, knows whether my weak body will survive this undertaking. His will, not mine, be done."

Five missionaries serving under the American Board for Foreign Missions, Henry and Eliza Spalding, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and William Gray, were going to the Pacific Northwest with a fur-trading caravan. The caravan was rushing to arrive in time for the summer rendezvous in the Rockies, the annual meeting of Indians, mountain men and fur traders.

Meeting the Nez Perce

When they arrived at the rendezvous, a large party of Nez Perce men, women and children who had anxiously awaited their arrival rushed forward to meet them. They swarmed about the missionaries, shouting greetings, staring and touching their clothes. "The women were not satisfied short of saluting Mrs. Whitman and myself with a kiss," Eliza wrote. "All appear happy to see us. If permitted to reach their country and live among them, may our labors be blest to their physical and spiritual good."

Mrs. Whitman, a beautiful woman with long golden hair, attracted the interest of the mountain men at the rendezvous. They crowded around her, showing off their riding skills and regaling her with tales of wilderness adventures. While Mrs. Whitman was the center of attention, Eliza, though weak, got to know the Nez Perce women and worked at learning their language.

She started a list of Nez Perce words that she heard the women speak by writing the words phonetically and repeating them back to the Indians. Before long, Eliza could communicate simple ideas to them in their own language. She loved them at once. The feeling was mutual. “Mrs. Spalding, feeble as she was, seemed to be the favorite with the Indian women,” observed William Gray.

Henry was also making friends with the Indians. “Oh, that I may soon be settled among them,” he wrote in his journal, “and master their language, so as to point them to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”



Henry Spalding

The chapter closes with the story of a great revival among the Nez Perce and Spokane Indians:

Spiritual Revival Among the Nez Perce

Henry Spalding was unable to go back to Lapwai for many years. When he went back in October 1871, a great spiritual awakening among the Nez Perce began. Henry preached and traveled with the people to their hunting and fishing grounds. In less than eighteen months, more than 600 people were baptized and joined the church. “This is a glorious day,” Spalding wrote. “Bless the Lord, O my soul!”

The following year, Chief Garry of the Spokane Indians invited 70-year-old Henry Spalding to preach to his tribe. He rode nearly 1,500 miles, preaching to the Spokane as they fished and gathered roots. Hundreds of Spokane Indians confessed faith in Jesus and were baptized. “The labor has been fearfully severe to ride so much on rough horses in my old age,” Spalding wrote, “but my heart has overflowed with praises to God and joy in his wonderful work.”

Henry Spalding died at Lapwai in 1874, leaving behind several strong churches among the Nez Perce and Spokane Indians. Some of the churches thrive to the present, and Nez Perce believers still sing some hymns translated into their language by Henry and Eliza Spalding.

Chapter 6: Study Questions

1. Why was there tension between Henry Spalding and Narcissa Whitman?
2. Describe how Henry and Eliza spread God's Word to the Nez Perce.
3. Why did Henry Spalding think it was important to teach the Indians farming?
4. What were Henry and Eliza Spaldings' strengths as missionaries?
5. After many years of work, Henry Spalding wrote, "Our prospects as missionaries have become very dark." Why?
6. What happened to the Spaldings after the Whitmans were killed?
7. Describe the spiritual revival in the 1870s among the Nez Perce and the Spokane Indians.

Chapter 7

**George Bush (1790-1863),
George Washington (1818-1905),
Pioneers Against Prejudice**

Tired of Discrimination

George Bush

In 1844, George Bush, a black man, and John Minto, a white man, talked as they walked beside their wagons on the Oregon Trail. Both men were leaving Missouri and bringing their families to the Pacific Northwest. George Bush was weary of the discrimination he faced in Missouri. He was a veteran of the War of 1812 and a wealthy farmer, but Missouri did not grant free blacks citizenship, nor did they have the right to own land. He and his family often faced racial slurs and mistreatment.

Bush hoped to live where character counted more than skin color. But he was uncertain what racial prejudice he would find in the Northwest. "I'll watch when I get to Oregon," Bush told Minto, "to see how they treat people of color. If I can't have a free man's rights, I may go to California or New Mexico and seek the protection of the Mexican government."

On the Oregon Trail

Bush was a respected leader in the wagon train. He helped his fellow travelers by sharing his food and supplies. He had paid the expenses for two poor families so that they could make a new start in the Northwest.

The route to Oregon was difficult. Over paths blazed by mountain men, creaking covered wagons pulled by oxen or mules bumped along the 2,000-mile Oregon Trail. Like most wagon trains, George Bush and his companions left Independence, Missouri, as soon as the snow melted and headed west across the plains and through the Rockies by way of South Pass.

Their wagons moved slowly, covering approximately 15 miles per day. The people could not go faster than the pace of their farm animals that they herded beside the wagons. In the plains and high deserts, the travelers suffered from heat and thirst. They endured wet and cold in the mountains. The sick struggled to keep up. Families in nearly every wagon train buried loved ones who died along the way.

They woke before sunrise and the wagons began to roll not long after first light. In the evening, they made camp by circling the wagons, forming a corral for their livestock and a barricade for protection from Indians and wild animals. After supper, some sang or played games, while others repaired gear. George Bush and other faithful Christians in his wagon train worshiped the Lord together most evenings in prayer, Bible reading and hymn singing...

Laws Against Blacks

After an arduous eight-month trip, Bush and his companions arrived at The Dalles on the Columbia River. There they discovered that the settlers in the Willamette Valley had passed a law that forbade blacks from entering the region or claiming land.

It stated in part: "Any free Negro or mulatto coming to the country shall leave within two years. If he failed to leave the country after notice, he should be whipped on the bare back with not less than twenty, nor more than thirty-nine stripes, and flogged likewise every six months until he did leave."

Settling Near Puget Sound

However, when Bush and the others in his wagon train learned that the laws were not enforced north of the Columbia River, he and his family and several white families who wanted to stand by him decided to go north and settle near Puget Sound. They started the first permanent American settlements in the area. Bush claimed 640 acres on a fertile clearing a few miles south of present-day Olympia. The area is still known as Bush Prairie.

George Bush developed the most productive farm in the region. He planted fruit trees, grew wheat and vegetables, and bred cattle, chickens and sheep. Bush took seriously Christ's command: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' It led him to put his friends and neighbors ahead of his own personal gain...

George Washington

Another prominent African-American pioneer was George Washington. Washington was born in Frederick County, Virginia, on August 15, 1817. His father was a slave and his mother, a poor white woman. Not long after his birth, his father was sold to a new master far away. His mother gave George to a white couple, Anna and James Cochran. They agreed to raise him as their foster son.

The Cochrans moved to the backwoods of northern Missouri when George was nine. There he became a crack shot. By the time he was ten, he had killed several deer and could drop tree squirrels from branches 60 feet from the ground. He impressed all who saw him handle his rifle with a steady grip and sure aim.

Anna, or "Mother," as George called her, taught him how to cook, sew and knit. By the time he was a teenager, he could make his own shirts, pants and socks. She read the Bible to him and told him of God's love through Jesus Christ. She taught him to sing hymns. He learned dozens of them by heart.

Racial Prejudice

Missouri, like most slave states, had laws forbidding blacks to be taught to read and write, so George couldn't go to school. But by listening to Anna read to him and looking at books, he taught himself. He excelled at mathematics and could figure dimensions of land area in his head before others could work it out on paper.

George Washington grew to be a powerful young man - six feet tall and 200 pounds of lean muscle. He cut trees and ran a small sawmill. But he often faced racial prejudice. Once a white customer refused to pay him for a large load of lumber. When Washington tried to collect the money, the customer took him to court, claiming that a black man, slave or free, had no rights in Missouri. Although he eventually won his case, Washington tired of the unfair treatment he faced.

To the Northwest

One day he said to Anna, "Mother, I'm going to the Oregon Country."

She thought he was joking. But a few days later, he told the Cochrans, "Yes, I'm going to get a couple of yolk of cattle and I'm going to Oregon. If there is any decent place in the world, I'm going to find it."

"We want to go with you," his foster parents said.

George told them he would never leave them. "You can always depend on me," he said.

They crossed the Oregon Trail in a small group of fifteen wagons and reached Oregon City late in the summer of 1850. He got a job cutting timber, but ran into many of the prejudices he had hoped to leave behind in Missouri. In 1852, he left the Willamette Valley with the Cochrans in search of land of his own. He went north of the Columbia River to a sparsely populated area far from Oregon officials who had passed laws denying nonwhites the right to claim land.

He settled the Cochrans in a house at Cowlitz Landing, a small town on the Cowlitz River in present-day Washington state. Then George found a beautiful spot with fertile soil where the Skookumchuck River flowed into the Chehalis River. He staked a squatter's claim by building a small log cabin with one window and a dirt floor. He tilled the land and planted oats and wheat and vegetables. Washington fenced a pasture for his two cows.

When the salmon ran up the Chehalis River every summer and fall, the Indians camped near his cabin along the banks of the river and fished. He got along well with them. They called him "Noclas" which means "black face."

Others Try to Claim His Land

Washington's cabin door was always open to visitors. People traveling from Portland to Puget Sound often stopped in. Once two men spent the night in his cabin on their way to Olympia. While enjoying dinner, they told Washington that they were impressed with his land. As they left the next morning, they mentioned that they might file a claim on his land at the territorial land office in Olympia.

Since, at that time, blacks could not file land claims, a white man could claim a black man's land. All he had to do was pay the occupier for the cost of his cabin, fences and other improvements and register it with the government. George Washington had settled his land in the hope that in the future the laws would change and he, as a black man, would have the right to legally own his land.

Washington had to act quickly or he would lose his homestead. He ran to Cowlitz Landing and asked the Cochrans to buy his cabin. They did. Then George and Mr. Cochran raced back to his land on horseback. Not long after they got there, the two white men arrived. They told Washington that they had started the paperwork in Olympia to claim his land. They had come to pay him for his improvements. "Sorry, gentlemen," Washington told them. "Mr. Cochran here already paid for the improvements and he is going to take out the claim."

The Cochrans filed a land claim for 640 acres of George's land. George added on to his cabin and the Cochrans moved in with him. He expanded his fields and livestock and prospered. After four years, he bought the land and the cabin back from the Cochrans. He cared for them until they died.

Eventually, the laws against black land ownership were abolished, and George Washington bought more land. In 1869, he married Mary Jane Coonness, a widow with a young son named Stacey. He built a two-story house for his new family.

He Founds Centralia

In 1872, when the Northern Pacific Railroad crossed his land, Washington knew that newcomers would flock to the area. He decided to create a town on his property. When he shared the idea with his neighbors, they thought him foolhardy. "No town will grow out here," they told him.

But Washington was convinced. "This is the halfway point on the railroad between Kalama and Tacoma," he said. "It's a central point. I'll name it Centerville."

Later, the name changed to Centralia.

At the dinner table each night, George and Mary Jane talked about their plans for the town. They thought about the Bible's description of heaven with its gates of pearl and streets of gold. So they named one street Gold and another Pearl. Washington bought a surveyor's chain and with the help of Stacey and another man, he staked off the building lots. They sketched the townsite on paper and filed their plans at the county auditor's office in 1875.



George Washington, founder of Centralia, WA

Chapter 7: Study Questions

1. Why did George Bush and George Washington want to leave Missouri and come to the Northwest?
2. Describe some of the hardships of the Oregon Trail.
3. Why did Bush and Washington decide to settle north of the Columbia River?
4. Give examples of the generosity and kindness of Bush and Washington.
5. Describe how Bush and Washington each got legal title to his land.
6. How did Centralia become a town?