

Joining the Story

An old, worn book with a metal cross on its cover, resting on a textured orange surface. The book's cover is made of a dark, possibly metal or heavily worn leather, and the cross is a simple, raised metal design. The pages of the book are visible at the bottom, showing age and discoloration. The background is a textured orange fabric or paper.

**a chronological study
of the Old Testament
by
Lee Yates**



About the author



The Rev. Lee Yates serves as an Associate Minister of First Christian Church, Lawrenceburg, Ky. An alum of Chapman University and Lexington Theological Seminary, Lee has been an active part of Disciple youth ministry since his childhood in Ashland, Ky where he attended First Christian Church. Lee has led camps and youth workshops all across the country. Most recently Lee has serving as Co-Director of ICYF 2008.

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Edited by The Rev. Dr. Debbie Phelps



Joining the Story is a chronological study of the Old Testament that explores the story of God's people from creation through the prophets. The hope of the study is that by exploring the stories of God's people, connecting these stories in a timeline, and discovering how God has cared for God's people from one generation to the next, today's youth will find their own place in the story.

Wisdom literature and stories that fall outside of the narrative time-line are presented at the end of the study, and allow students to reflect back how the story of God's people influenced those writings.

While written with "Sunday Best" in mind, activities in *Joining the Story* are appropriate for both Sunday School or more casual gatherings in the life of the Church. Lessons are aimed at youth in grades 8-9, allowing an easy application with both Middle School and High School youth.

Teachers might consider creating a physical time-line in the primary learning space where youth can look back on previous lessons and have visual reminders of each story's context.



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Lesson 1

Creation: And It Was Good!

Teacher's Notes:

The story of creation can be found in Genesis 1 and again in Genesis 2. Yes, two different stories. The first story is very orderly, with a different part of creation created each day. Although it seems to follow a logical process, the first story reflects the recorder's understanding of how the world is put together, not so much modern science. For example, the waters are separated into those above the dome and those below. This was reflects common belief in that time, that the heavens were like a dome above the Earth, with holes in the dome allowing rain to fall through. Another example of belief of the time shows up in the telling of light and darkness being created, followed by the creation of the Sun and Moon.

The second story of creation starts around Genesis 2:4. This version is more of a story, with a narrative flow that carries over into the "Temptation" story. In this version, God seems more human, with hands to press the earth into the shape of a person, and lungs to breathe life into that person. In this version, God walks and talks in the garden with his creations. The order of parts of creation is different from the order within the Genesis 1 story.

Much like the value of having four Gospels that are each different and unique, the two creation stories show different aspects of God. Genesis 1 shows a cosmic creator who speaks and commands things into existence. Genesis 2 shows a personal and intimate creator who has relationship with what has been made. There are times when we want God to be bigger than everything else is and in control of the universe. Other times, we want God to be right by our side. Together these stories show the power and intimacy of our creator.

Scriptures: Genesis 1: 1- 2: 3
Genesis 2: 4 – 25

Supplies:

- Play-doh™ (small or mini cans) or modeling clay
- Legos™ or other types of building blocks
- White board / markers (or butcher paper / markers)

Preparation:

- Have enough Play-doh for every class member
- Prepare the whiteboard or butcher paper at front of room

Activity	Instructions	Time
Creator For A Day	Invite everyone to make something with their Play-doh. It can be something real or from their own imagination. Give class members time to make their creations, then go around and have individuals share what they have made and why they chose to make it. If this is early in the school year, you may want to have each person share his or her name as well.	10 min.



Ask:

- What does your creation mean to you?
- How does it feel to feel the dough/clay in your fingers?
- How did you choose what to create?
- Were there other things you chose not to make?
- If your creation could change one thing about itself, what do you think that would be?
- If your creation could ask you a question, what do you think it would ask you?

****Have the group place their creations somewhere safe! They will need them again later.***

**Story
Time**

Divide into two groups. Give each group one of the scriptures for the day. Instruct them to read the scripture together, write down the order in which things were created, and any questions they may have about the story. When they are done, bring the groups back together to share their lists. Start with the order of creation and allow them to discuss the “real” order of Creation. Then, give a chance to share their written questions about the story, and to share their thoughts on the questions. Do not feel pressured to find actual answers. We are talking about creation, and no human answers can make everyone happy. God created, and how God did it remains a mystery. It is not unfaithful to have questions with no answers. That is what we call “mystery”!

10 min.

**Creation
Teams**

Divide into the teams again, giving each team some blocks or Legos to work with. Instruct them to build a “perfect church” with their blocks. Everyone should give input and help build. When they are done, invite them to share their creation with the whole group.

5 min.

Ask:

- How did you come up with your “perfect church”?
- Did you agree or disagree as a group?
- How did you make decisions?

**Group
Think**

Invite everyone to turn their attention to the front of the room (whiteboard or paper). Explain that they will be creating something together. This work of art will include all of their ideas and each person will contribute to the drawing. Invite one

5 min.



member of the class to draw a line. It can be straight, curved, squiggly, or whatever; it just needs to be a line. Don't let them get too detailed. Invite each member of the class to take a turn going to the board and adding a line or shape. Some will have more artistic skill than others. This is not about talent, but the process. When you are "done" take some time to talk about your picture.

Ask:

- How do you feel about what we created?
- Was it easier to work alone or as a group?
- Was it easier to work in a small or a large group?
- Whose work gave more direction to this drawing, those who went first or those at the end?
- Those who drew first, does it look like you intended?
- Those who drew later, do you feel like you got to really shape this creation?

**What Does
That Mean?**

Read Genesis 1: 26 again.

5 min.

Ask the group what "dominion" means. After Thoughts are shared, pull them together, reminding (if they didn't say this) that dominion also means being responsible for something. Kings and queens have responsibility for all that is in their dominion.

Ask:

- If God gives us dominion over creation, what is our responsibility?
- Have we done a good job with our responsibility?
- How could we do better...
 - as a church?
 - as a family?
 - as a community?
 - as myself, individually?
- Who are the people who help us to care for the earth? (e.g. government leaders, sanitation workers, park rangers).

**Creation
Exchange**

Have each person get their Play-doh creation from earlier. As the group sits in a circle, have each person pass their creation four people to the left. Go around the room and have each person share one thing they would change about the creation they now hold in their hand. After everyone has shared, go back to the original creator how they feel about the proposed changes.

5+ min.



Ask:

- How is this activity like God's creation and our responsibility of dominion?
- How does it feel to see your creation in somebody else's hands?
- Do you worry about your creation?
- Do you think someone else is worried about the creation in *your* hands?
- How do you think God feels about us having God's creation in our hands?
- As creation expanded, and there were more people on Earth, do you think it was easier or harder to take care of creation? (consider more help but also more mess).
- What does it say about us that God chooses to trust us with dominion?
- What does it say about God that God chooses to trust us with dominion?

Closing

Ask the class to combine their creations into one new creation. It should be something that connects the group or represents everyone. They need to decide as a class what they will make with their creations. After choosing what to make, they need to choose who will be form responsible for making the creations into one. Will one person do this, or all of those who now hold them? When the group is finished making their new creation, ask them how they feel about it.

5 min.

Prayer

Create a prayer by standing in a circle and holding hands. Ask each person to add one word, much as they did with the drawing. Go around the circle three times, then close with, "and all God's creation said..." with the group responding, "Amen" in unison.

2 min.



Lesson 2

A Big Flood

Teacher's Notes:

Last week's lesson was Creation. From Genesis 3 – 6 we hear about the serpent tempting Adam and Eve. We hear about them leaving the garden after eating the forbidden fruit. We learn about their sons, Cain and Abel. We mostly hear about how poorly those who followed Adam and Eve did with free will. We do have a genealogy from Adam to Noah, putting eight generations between these portions of the story. The ages that people lived to then seems amazing (the oldest living person listed in scripture is Methuselah at 969 years). Most were over 70 before having children. This raises the mystery if they used our modern way of telling time, or something different. However, an important part of that period was the problem of humanity (where did all the people come from? More mystery!) in living up to their responsibility to care for creation and each other.

By the time Noah comes into the story, God is frustrated. It is important to know that every culture known has some sort of creation story, and most also have a flood story. Does that mean some sort of global flood must have happened? Does it prove a climate shift and massive melt and freeze such as what we hear predicted by "Global Warming?" It is impossible to know, so here we only deal with our tradition's flood story in scripture. Yes, God's anger is troubling, but it won't be the last time we hear about God being angry. Also, it is good to remember that in the time these stories were put down on paper (papyrus actually), there was no understanding of good and evil as separate or opposing forces. People thought that all things came from God and whatever came, good or bad, was surely deserved. They thought that if bad things happened to good people, it must be due to the sins of their parents or children (Thus the expression, "sins of the father..."). Noah seems to have done well, however; that is where today's story begins.

Scriptures: Genesis 6: 9 – 22
Genesis 7: 11-16
Genesis 8: 13-19
Genesis 9: 8-17

Supplies:

- Construction paper, tape and markers
- Microphones (not working) as drama props

Preparation:

Activity	Instructions	Time
Weather Story	Invite each person to share their name and a story about weather, such as when they got caught in the rain, when a storm scared them, or when rain stopped to let them do something fun. Stories can be scary or fun.	8 min.
Weather Watch	As a group, name as many places as you can think of to find up-to-date weather information.	5 min.



Ask:

- Why do we care so much about weather?
- Why do people always talk about weather?
- What is “good weather”... for play? for farmers?
- What controls the weather? Where does it come from?
- What makes “bad weather”?
- Does our answer change when weather is really bad?
(Tornado, hurricane, tsunami, flood, drought)
- How do you feel about the expressions,
“Natural disaster”? “Act of God”?

15 min.

**Weather
Channel**

Split the class up into three “broadcast teams.” One group will be doing *forecasts*. Another will be reporting *on site*. A third team will be giving *commentary* on the events.

Give each group the list of scriptures for the day. The *forecast team* is to put together an evening weather report like would be seen on local news. A large white board or chalkboard and art supplies will be needed to draw a map and to make symbols to go on the map. Team members could also pretend to be symbols on the map (sunshine mask?).

The *on-site team* (could have a reporter, camera person, and others in the background as locals) give their report “in the field” as events happen.

The *commentary folks* will talk about what these events mean, give tips on dealing with the events, talk about the impact on other areas of life, and who is to blame. They can bring in other “experts” as guests.

Allow the three groups to give their reports to the other two. You might even record the reports to share with a larger church group. You will need extra time if actually recording.

Ask:

- What parts of the scripture got left out in your telling?
- What is the lesson or moral behind this story?
- What questions do you have about this story?
- What gives you hope in this story/
- What makes you uncomfortable?
- What does this story tell us about God?
- What could you leave out of this story without changing the meaning?
- What could you not leave out?



What If...	<p><i>Invite the class to respond to this situation:</i></p> <p>While on vacation, a powerful storm hits your hometown. You see news coverage where trees have fallen and homes have large holes in the roof. You finally reach a friend by cell phone and find that their house was destroyed. They know that you are active in your church but their family doesn't really believe in God. Your friend asks, "How could God do this to us?"</p> <p>Working in pairs, have group members share their personal answers with their partner. Together, invite them to share a response (combined or one person's) with the group.</p>	<i>8 min.</i>
Symbols	<p>Think about parts of the flood story that are often used as symbols in the Church. The dove, with the olive branch in its mouth and the rainbow are all common symbols.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do these symbols mean to you?• Do these symbols reflect the meaning of the story?• Which symbol do you relate to more? Why?	<i>5 min.</i>
Good Thing / Bad Thing	<p>Share the following choices and ask the class to say which they believe to be more true and why. Allow them to debate and discuss.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is rain a good thing or a bad thing?• Is sugar a good thing or a bad thing?• Is free time a good thing or a bad thing?• Is passion a good thing or a bad thing?• Is freedom a good thing or a bad thing?• Is religion a good thing or a bad thing?	<i>5 min.</i>
Prayer	<p>Ask the class to hold hands and form a circle. Invite each person to lift up a prayer of thanksgiving for something, or a prayer of concern for something. As each person finishes praying (or wishes to have the prayer pass on to the next person), have them squeeze the hand of the person next to them, until the opportunity to pray has gone around the circle.</p>	<i>3 min.</i>



Lesson 3 **Abraham and Sarah's Sacred Journey**

Teacher's notes:

The story begins with Abram and Sarai, whose names are later changed to Abraham and Sarah. This lesson covers their entire journey and so, for sake of consistency, "Abraham" and "Sarah" are used throughout. At the core of their journey is the establishment of a covenant between God and the descendants of Abraham. It is important to remember that the covenant is with the descendants of Abraham, and not exclusive to Abraham and Sarah. At one point in the story, Abraham and Sarah get impatient with God's promise of a child and try to make things happen through Sarah's servant, Hagar. Hagar's child with Abraham causes much drama in the family. Eventually God promises that Ishmael, Hagar's son, will also have many descendants and be blessed. The story of Abraham's blessing and covenant with God is a common story for Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Each tradition has seen the covenant with a different perspective, based upon their understanding of God and the scriptures.

Abraham and Sarah are called by God to leave home and go to a new place. This is a common experience in their life; each time they move, they wonder if God will be in the new place. Of course, each time, God is there with them. They also practice the ritual of building altars of stacked rocks as reminders of God's presence with them. The lesson's story focuses on their travels from Haran to Shechem, to Bethel, to Egypt, and to Hebron.

Along Abraham and Sarah's journey, we find many shorter stories about their family. Scripture tells us about Sarah laughing at God's promise that she will have a child. We read about God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac (Don't worry. It was just a test and the kid comes through just fine!). We hear about their travels with their nephew, Lot. Themes of testing, judgment, hospitality and deceit come up regularly in this portion of scripture. Although this curriculum only gives one week to this special journey, it deserves special attention as a core story in the understanding of God's special relationship with people.

Scriptures: Genesis 12 – 13 (selections through story)
 Genesis 12: 1 – 8 (focus verses)

Supplies: • Small rocks (lots! 3 per person, plus 15 for story telling)
 *creek stone works well (purchased by the bag at Wal-Mart)
 • Paper and markers or pens
 • Large flat container of sand

Preparation: Have 15 rocks in a small basket and the two figures and script from *Children Worship and Wonder's* "Abram and Sarai: Genesis 12-13 (Sonia Stewart: ***Young Children and Worship***, p. 100-103). (See: www.discipleshomemissions.org/FamilyandChildren/CWW.htm)
You will also need a "desert box" (flat box with sand in it).
Practice the story or invite a storyteller to join you in class.
Have a blank sheet of paper for each class member and pens or markers for each person. Have another basket full of rocks so that each person can take three small rocks with them.



Activity	Instructions	Time
Moving Time	<p>Invite class members to think about a move they have made or will make. This can be a move to a new house, a new town, a new state, or another “transition” (maybe a new school, new bedroom at home, etc.) Ask those who would like to share the when, how and why of the move. Older youth might already be thinking about their move to college.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What makes you nervous about moving?• What gives you comfort in the midst of moving?• Does one change in your life affect other parts of your life?	<i>5 min.</i>
Story Time	<p>Tell the Abraham and Sarah story from Children Worship and Wonder, or have a trained Storyteller come and share the story.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I wonder how Abraham and Sarah felt when they were asked to move to a new home?• I wonder how it felt to leave their home and not know where they were going?• I wonder, have you ever gone somewhere and not known where you were going?• I wonder if God sounded different in each of these places?• I wonder how they knew God was with them?• How do we know when God is with us?• How did Abraham and Sarah remember God’s presence on their journey?• How do you mark God’s presence in your life?	<i>10 min.</i>
Time Line	<p>Give each person in class a piece of paper. Explain that no one will have to share their work if they don’t want to. Ask each to put a mark on the paper for the beginning of their life and one for this moment in time. Explain that the space in between is the time-line of their life. Ask them to put in five important moments in their life on the time line. They can draw a picture to represent that moment or write it in.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can anyone share one of the moments on your timeline?• As you look at your timeline, are there places you felt “settled”?• When were you most comfortable? Why?• When were you least comfortable? Why?• What were the most challenging parts of your journey?	<i>10 min.</i>



- Where do you think God might send you next?
- Where do you hope God will send you next?
- How do you feel about God calling you to new places or God calling you to do new things?
- How do you feel God's presence, or hear God in your life?
- Do you ever wonder if God is with you or will be with you? (new camp, new church, going to college)
- How do you respond to those feelings?
- What have you made, built, written, or done to help you remember that God was, is, or will be with you?
- Have you ever thought of those things as altars?
- Are your "altars" more about God or about you? How?

Monument Moment Explain to the class that they will be taking some time to think about how our culture records and remembers. *15 min.*
Ask them to list any public monuments they are familiar with. Make a list of monuments from Washington D.C., around your state or even in your community. Are there any at school? What about at the cemetery?

Ask:

- What is the purpose of such structures?
- Do they achieve their purpose?
- What meaning do they hold for your?
- What meaning do they hold for other people?
- Do any of them tell a story?
- Where is God in each monument's story? Is God in the story?

Invite the class to think about the ideal public monument that would show God's presence. They can choose where it goes, what it looks like, and how it is built. Money is no object... that is the beauty of imagination! Provide some craft supplies to let them build a model of their monument to God.

Closing Give each student three rocks. Remind them about the story they were told and about Abraham and Sarah's journey, where they stacked rocks to form an altar to remind them that God was in that place. As we leave, we each take rocks with us. Invite them to stack them in a place where they could help them remember God's presence, or a place they want to celebrate God's presence. *3 min.*

Prayer Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. Ask each person to thank God for a special place where they remember that God is with them. *2 min.*

**Lesson 4****Joseph: The Journey to Egypt****Teacher's notes:**

Joseph's story is well known, partly due to the narrative form of the story in scripture and Andrew Lloyd Webber's, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*. The story of Joseph as the dreamer sold into slavery by his jealous brothers is a major transition story in scripture. As the people have done in the past and as the baby Jesus will in the future, they follow God's lead into Egypt for safety and for food. Of course, this path to Egypt is not direct or explicit. Joseph gets bought from Ishmaelite traders by Potiphar. Joseph excels and becomes head of the household (top slave). Unable to keep her hands off of Joseph, Potiphar's wife lashes out at Joseph for denying her. Joseph lands in jail where he starts interpreting the dreams of others. It seems that focusing on the dreams of others, rather than his own, marks a turn in Joseph's fortunes. Before long, he is serving Pharaoh and is second in command in all of Egypt. When Joseph's brothers come before him in search of food, he wonders if they have grown. He puts them in jail, manipulates and tests them. The final test is passed as Judah comes to the defense of his falsely accused little brother, Benjamin. Judah's offering to take Benjamin's punishment shows Joseph that Joseph is not the only brother who has grown up.

The reunion leads to Jacob (known also as Israel, with the names used interchangeably in the text) coming to Egypt. This part of the story ends, although not in the scriptures in this lesson, with a promise from God to Jacob. God says that God will go with them to Egypt and one day bring them out of Egypt. This foreshadows the beginning of Exodus when a Pharaoh rules Egypt who "does not know (remember) Joseph." This is a story of pride, arrogance, hope, and visions from God.

Scriptures: Genesis 37: 1 – 8
Genesis 37: 23 – 28
Genesis 41: 14 – 36
Genesis 42: 1- 9
Genesis 45: 1 – 15

Supplies:

- Small craft rings
- Yarn (or leather straps / hemp cord / other)
- Glue
- Beads / Feathers / Ribbon

Preparation:

- Make sure there are enough Bibles for everyone in the class.
- Have "Dream Catcher" supplies ready for each person.
- Think about your own dreams before talking about dreams with your class.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Campaign Poster	You are running for "Best Person in the World." Draw a campaign poster and on the back, write a couple of sentences about why you should win. Invite each member of the class to share their poster.	7 min.



Ask:

- How many of you were comfortable with this activity?
- If you were uncomfortable with it, what may have led to this feeling?
- How do you feel about self-promotion?
- What are the ways you are forced to promote yourself?
(dating, scholarships, sports teams, parents' attention)
- What are the benefits of self-promotion?
- What are the downsides of self-promotion?

**Joseph
Part 1**

Read Genesis 37: 1 – 8 (might have a youth read)

5 min.

Ask:

- How do you respond to people who act like they are better than you?
- Have you ever said something like Joseph did to his family?
- Is it OK to want to do better than others in your family?
- Is it OK to tell them?
- How would you feel if you were a sibling of the boy Joseph?

**Joseph
Part 2**

Read Genesis 37: 23 – 28

5 min.

Ask:

- Did Joseph get what he deserved?
- Do you remember what happened to Joseph next?
(help them with these major plot points if needed)
 - *gets sold to Potiphar as a slave
 - *Joseph works hard to get promoted
 - *Potiphar's wife falls for Joseph
 - *Potiphar sends Joseph to jail.
 - *Joseph is all alone!
- How have things gone when you try to make dreams come true?
- Do things always go like you think they will?
- How do you respond when things don't work out as you dreamed?
- Do you ever have scary dreams where things go wrong?
- What kind of scary dreams do you have?
- Do nightmares have meanings? Can they have a message?

**Joseph
Part 3**

Read Genesis 41: 14 – 36

6 min.

Explain:

In Jail, Joseph's focus was on the dreams of others. He couldn't do anything about his own so he listened and advised those around him.



Ask:

- How is Joseph's listening different from his early days?
- How did listening to others help Joseph?
- Who always gets the credit when Joseph speaks?
- How is that different from Joseph's early days?

**Dream
Catchers**

- Give each person in the class a small craft ring. *15 min.*
These are available at most craft stores or even Wal-Mart.
- Provide different colors of yarn and instruct them to cut strands of one color to tie onto the craft ring.
(*Leather cord or hemp may be substituted for yarn.*)
- The first few strands should reach across the ring. Use a little glue to keep them in place if needed.
- Once a few anchor lines have been tied, students may start weaving other strands between them to make a web effect.
- Beads may be added to the web. Native American tradition includes one black to represent bad dreams and one white to represent good dreams. The idea is that both get stuck in the web, but only the good ones are allowed to "drip" down into our dreams at night.
- There is no wrong way to form the web. Once a web is created, take a long strand of yarn and wrap it around the craft ring, completely covering the ring. Yarn, ribbon, or feathers may be tied, and allowed to dangle down.
- Invite the class to work on these while conversation goes on.
- Allow the class to take their work with them to finish.
- Invite them to bring them back to decorate the classroom, or to take home to put over their beds. The Dream Catchers can remind us that God is with us, even when sleeping. We can also remember that dreaming is a good thing!

**Joseph
Part 4**

Read Genesis 42: 1- 9

4 min.

Ask:

- Would this be a fair ending to the story? Why or why not?
- Do you remember what happens next?
(Help them with these major plot points if needed)
 - *Joseph tests his brothers
 - *Golden cup placed in Benjamin's bag
 - *Benjamin accused of stealing
 - *Judah stands up for Benjamin
 - *Joseph sees that his brothers have changed



Joseph Part 5	Read Genesis 45: 1 – 15 Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is this a fair end to the story?• How did Joseph’s dreams come true?	<i>3 min.</i>
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You Part 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invite the class to think about the “dreams” they have held for their own lives. Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When you were a small child, what did you want to be when you grow up?• What led you to that “dream” ?	<i>3 min.</i>
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You Part 2	Invite the class to think about the “dreams” they still hold from childhood. Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Now that you are older, what dreams do you have for the future?• What are you doing or what can you do to make them come true?• Does God still speak to people in dreams?• What do you think God would dream for you?• Are good dreams stronger than nightmares? How? Why?• Are there any dreams you have already forgotten?• Are there any dreams you wish you could get back?• Do you ever dream for other people? Who? How?• What do you dream for our church?• What do you dream for our world?• How do we make dreams come true?• What lessons can we take from Joseph?	<i>5 min.</i>
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Prayer	Ask the class to form a circle holding hands. Invite each person to pray for someone else’s dream. It can be a person’s or a group’s dream. Ask them to squeeze the hand of the person next to them when they are finished with their part of the prayer.	<i>2 min.</i>
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**Lesson 5****The Birth Of Moses****Teachers Notes:**

In Genesis, the Children of Israel journeyed to Egypt to survive a famine at home. According to the continuation of these stories in Exodus, the Hebrews did more than survive the famine; they flourished. In time, a new Pharaoh came to rule over Egypt, one who did not know Joseph. The new Pharaoh did not have the same generous attitude as the first Pharaoh. He feared the Hebrews. To keep them from being a threat due to their vast numbers, he set them to work doing hard labor on his building projects.

That did not stop the Hebrews from multiplying. Pharaoh ordered midwives of the Hebrews to kill all baby boys born to Hebrew women. The midwives pretended that they were not speedy enough to intercept Hebrew babies at birth, saying that the Hebrew women were so hardy that they gave birth before the midwives could get there. Because the midwives' wily tactics foiled the plans of the Pharaoh to cut back on population growth among the Hebrews, he commanded all of his people: "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews, you shall throw into the Nile" (Exodus 1:22). Into this story of cultural mayhem, Moses, a man of Levite lineage, was born.

The story of Moses' birth is filled with questions and ironies. The very source of the threat to Moses' life ends up being the source of his salvation: not just Egypt itself but an Egyptian river. Furthermore, this man who comes to be a heroic leader of the Hebrews is not named by his Hebrew mother but by an Egyptian woman. The basket into which his mother puts him is literally an "ark" in Hebrew, just as was used in the Noah story to save the lives of his family and all humanity. Another interesting feature of this passage is that other than Moses, the other characters are not referred to by name.

Moses' birth story leads us to understand that the story is about the liberation of the Hebrew people. When Moses' mother saved his life and then nursed him as the child of an *Egyptian* woman, she saved an entire nation of people who were yet to be born.

Scripture: Exodus 2: 1-10

Supplies:

- Paper, Pens, Butcher Paper (or Chalk board/dry erase Board)
- Construction paper or "thank you" cards.

Preparation:

- Have enough paper and pens for every member of the class.
- Have extra paper for groups to record discussion answers.
- Have construction paper or a box of blank thank you cards, with pens or markers for decorating.

Activity	Instructions	Time
What Would I Give Up?	Ask everyone to make three columns on their paper. In one column write, "For Family," in another, "For Friends," and in the last, "For Strangers." Tell the class to list in each column some of the things that they would be willing to give up for the people in their lives who fit into each column's title. Ask the class not to think only of physical things, but ideas such as time and fame. Have the class share when finished.	10 min.



Ask:

- What would be the hardest to give up?
- What would be the easiest to give up?
- For which group would it be easiest to give up things?
- For which would it be the hardest?
- What is the hardest thing that you have ever given up?
- Have you ever given up something for someone, and did not even realize you were doing it?

Story Time

Divide into groups. After reading Exodus 2:1-10 together, each group should use one side of a piece of paper to list each time that someone in the reading gave something up, along with what happened because they gave it up. Ask the groups to share their results.

Who Was That?

On the other side of the paper, have groups list the characters in the story who are mentioned, but whose names are not given. Have the class share their results.

7 min.

Ask:

- Why do you think these people are unnamed?
- Were these unnamed people important?
- How would the story be different without these people?

Let's Look Again

Invite the class to read the story again. Think about each character in the story.

7 min.

Ask for each character:

- What might have this person been thinking at the time?
- How might things have been different without this person's actions?
- Do you think he/she realized all the consequences of his or her actions?
- How might God have been working through this character?

Say: When Moses' mother saved his life and then nursed him as the child of an *Egyptian* woman, she saved an entire nation of people who were yet to be born.

Ask:

- What do we show God through our sacrifices?
- How do we make God harder to see when we fail to act?

Let's Name Them!

Divide the Board or butcher paper into two sections. In one section list "People who do things for us, but that we do not name." In the another put, "People who helped us and they didn't even know it." Have the class list people who have helped them and people who have helped

15 min.

the church. Next have the class either make thank-you cards with construction paper, or write on purchased thank-you cards. Let each person write to the person who helped him or her individually, and have the whole class sign cards that go to people who helped the church. After church, have the class deliver these letters. If the class named someone who is deceased, if it is practical, have the class deliver these to the spouse or other family members of the deceased

**Pray
For Those
Unthanked**

Invite the class to stand and form a circle, holding hands. *5 min.*
Have each person name a person who perhaps has gone unthanked for their sacrifice. Encourage people to think outside the church and their personal lives. After each person has been named, list all of the persons named. Pray for the people named, pray that we may see God in the sacrifices of others, and pray that we realize that our own sacrifices can be ways others see God.





Lesson 6

Call of Moses

Teachers Notes:

This text tells the story of God calling Moses to save the Israelites. Moses was not perfect and clearly had his flaws. But Moses was God's choice. Moses was the one who could challenge the Egyptian authority, lead the people through the wilderness, and receive the law from God. Surely, God could see the frailties and limitations of Moses, but called him based on his potential. One of the biggest struggles in this story is Moses claiming his gifts while letting go of his excuses and insecurity. Luckily, Moses is not alone. His brother Aaron comes along for the journey, and we learn later in Exodus that his sister Miriam (she eventually gets a name!) lead the people in worship along the journey.

Scripture: Exodus 2: 11-25, 3: 1-10, 3: 11-21

Supplies:

- paper and pens for each class member
- chalkboard (etc)
- a coin, and random extra objects (see “Impulse” game)

Preparation:

- Think about the members of your class and positive traits of each.
- Decide how to do the readings, either reading them yourself or having volunteer class members read.
- Look over the game, “Impulses” to be clear how to lead it.

Activity	Instructions	Time
The Story	Read Exodus 2: 11-25 (take your time!)	5 min.
Part 1	<p><i>Before the scripture is read, ask students to listen carefully to the scripture, trying to remember words, phrases, and ideas that pop out at them.</i></p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stood out to you? • What words or phrases got your attention? <p>Read the scripture again</p>	
The Good and the Bad	<p>Instruct class members to each write down 5 positive things about themselves (talent, ability, smile, can pray/speak in public, good listener, etc.).</p> <p>Next, have class members write 5 things that they consider could be negatives about themselves (habits, subjects they struggle with in school, physical features or challenges).</p> <p>Repeat this whole process twice (should have 10 positives and 10 negatives).</p> <p>As with all such self-reflection lists, remind group members to respect the privacy of others, not being nosey about other people's lists.</p>	8 min.



Ask:

- Which were easier to come up with, positives or negatives? Why?
- Were you afraid to write down any such qualities? Any idea why?
- Which do you think more about, your positives or negatives? Why?
- What would it take to get you to see past your negative qualities?
- Do you think being focused on their negative qualities makes people miss out on some good things in life? How/Why?

**The Story
Part 2**

Read Exodus 3: 1-10

5 min.

Before the scripture is read, ask class to listen carefully and remember any words, phrases or ideas that pop out at them

Ask:

- What stood out to you?
- What words or phrases got your attention?

Read the scripture again

**Holy
Ground**

Make three columns on a chalkboard (or other)

13 min.

Label the columns with these questions.

What are some things that are Holy to you?

Where are some places that are Holy to you?

Who are some people who are Holy to you?

Fill in the columns by having the class give answers.

Ask:

- What makes these things Holy?
- Have the group break into smaller groups to come up with their definitions of what “Holy” means.

As the groups come back together, have them share their answers with the whole group.

Explain that a common definition of Holy is “set apart,” such as for God. Things can be Holy by being set apart, different from the world they are in.

Go back to the things, people and places they said were Holy.

Ask:

- What makes them ‘set apart’?
- Are you Holy? Why or why not?

**The Story
Part 3**

Read Exodus 3: 11-21

5 min.

Before the scripture is read, ask class to listen carefully and remember any words, phrases or ideas that pop out at them

Ask:

- What stood out to you?
- What words or phrases got your attention?

Read the scripture again



Acting on Impulse

1. Divide the class into two equal groups, each sitting in a line that is back-to-back with the other team. *10 min.*
2. At one end of the two lines, place an object (doesn't matter what).
3. The leader should stand at the other end of the line from the object. The leader's position becomes the front.
4. The two group members sitting closest to the leader may watch the leader; the remaining members must look down or close their eyes.
5. The leader flips the coin, so that both team members watching can see the result. As soon as they see, "heads," they should squeeze the hand of the person next to them. The team quickly passes the "squeeze" down the line.
6. When the last person in line receives the "squeeze," that is their signal to grab the object. The first team to grab the object wins the round.
7. The winning team gets to send their first person to the back of the line, moving everyone else up by one spot.
8. A false grab, caused by a false squeeze or a squeeze on "tails" causes the group to go backwards in their rotation (the last person in back moves to the front). To win, a team must rotate through all their group members.

Ask:

- Which was harder, being at the front and not being able to grab the object, or being at the end and having to trust others to tell you when you could act?
- Do you ever let other people dictate your actions?
- Do people ever nudge you into doing something?
- Do parents ever nudge you into doing something?
- Does God ever nudge you to do things? If so, how?
- How do you think Moses felt when he saw the "burning bush?"
- How long do you think it took to realize that God was talking to him?
- Why do you think Moses came up with excuses for why he couldn't do what God asked of him?
- Have you ever felt God talked to you... such as, a burning bush, a nudge to do something helpful, or a nudge to speak up when you normally would not speak?
- Did you act on the nudge? Why or why not?
- If you didn't act, what excuses did you come up with?
- If you did act on the nudge, how did you feel?
- Which are more common: burning bushes or gentle nudges?
- How would the message of God be most direct to you?
- What do you think God might be calling you to do with your life?
- What gentle nudges has God given you about your future?

Prayer

Ask the class to form a circle holding hands. Invite each person to say, "thank you" to God for something they are good at. Close by saying: "God, help us use our gifts, and gift us with the courage to do things we are not good at when called." *2 min.*

**Lesson 7****Plagues and Wonderings****Teacher's Notes:**

This third part of the Moses story will deal with hardship, hope and reality. The Israelites and the Egyptians both suffered. In the story, the biggest difference between the two groups is that the leader of the Israelites (Moses) brings a message of God's hope and reality to his people. The Egyptian leader, Pharaoh, brings dominance and oppression to the Israelite people. Both ultimately had to deal with what they had been through. Some died, some wandered, but all had to cope with a new reality.

Scripture: Exodus, chapters 7 through 11

Supplies:

- 5.5" x 8" piece of card stock for each person
- 1 black crayon for each person
- several brightly colored crayons for the class to share
- one paper clip per person

Preparation: Reflect on the questions and coloring activity.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Happy Days	Give each member of the class a piece of card stock. Invite class members to think about the happiest moments in their life and to choose colors to represent those moments. Explain that they need to color their paper, covering it completely (yes, all of it!). When they are finished, invite them to share their art with the class.	7 min.
Despair	Read Exodus 7: 14-21; 8: 1-6, 16 & 17, 20-24; 9: 1-5, 8-12, 17-19; 10: 3-6, 21-23; 11: 4-6 Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How have people suffered in the Exodus story? (don't forget events in lessons 6 – 7)• How do people in our world suffer today?• How is their suffering similar or different to that in our story?• How have you suffered?• How is your suffering similar or different to that in our story?<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Some may not feel they have.-Some may struggle to admit their suffering.-Don't be afraid to ask follow up questions. Some examples to throw out to get people talking:<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Divorce-Loss of or illness of loved one-Illness-Bad grades-Failure-Broken relationships-Abuse-Loss of innocence	20 min.



After everyone has had a chance to share, give each person a black crayon. Ask them to think or pray about the suffering they have known and the suffering they know about in the world—as they completely cover the colors on their page with the black crayon.

Hope

Read Exodus 13: 1-22

10 min.

Ask:

- Where was hope in this reading?
- How important is hope to those who are suffering?
- Where have you seen light in your suffering?
- What special people or places have brought light to you? (friends, family, camp, vacation, worship, etc.)

Give each class member a paper clip with one point straightened out. Ask them to use the paper clip to make a design by scratching a line through the black on their paper. The color will show through. They can make a fancy design or simply put marks for each source of hope that comes to mind.

Reality

Read Exodus 14: 5-30

10 min.

Ask:

- How did you the Egyptians react when the Israelites left?
- What effect did their reaction have? Physically, emotionally?
- How do you think the people felt, seeing Egyptian bodies wash up on the shore?
- How much does hope protect us from sorrow?
- How might God have felt about what happened in this story?
- I wonder how the Hebrews felt once they were free but had no home?
- I wonder what the hardest parts of the story were for the Hebrews? What would the hardest part be for you?
- What reality are you living through?
- Remind the class that even though there is hope to get through hard times, we still have to live in them.

Say: Maybe you can see hope but you still live with divorce, a loss of a family member or friend, a broken leg, or a bad mistake you made.

What helps you get through the day?

Where do receive help?

Do you need help?

**Do not give time for questions to be answered.*

Teachers note: This lesson is purposely left open ended because life is open-ended.

Just as this marks the beginning of the Exodus story and the beginning of the Israelites' wandering, our sorrow and suffering may be a current reality for which we cannot see an end. Just because we have healed from one loss does not mean we won't have others. But we should never forget that we will always have hope.

(Please do not try to force a conclusion to this. Having lots of questions and no sense of closure is a reality for many.)

**Closing
Prayer**

Have group members choose a partner, then go to a place in the room where they can sit apart from the others. Partners should exchange pictures and look at them quietly. Without asking for detail about the picture, have each person pray silently for their partner. When both are finished, invite them to say "Amen" together and leave quietly.

5 min.





Lesson 8

The Law and the Wilderness

Teacher's Notes:

Once the Israelites crossed the sea and found themselves “safe” on the other side, they faced many unexpected challenges. Some rules were needed to help everyone get along outside the structure of Egyptian society and law. Common expectations and community norms were needed. As the people journey together, Moses presents them with the “Law” from God. At the core of God’s Law for the Israelites is the Ten Commandments. Received by Moses and delivered to God’s people, these laws have become a part of the social norms of many cultures and governments. In our own nation today, the Ten Commandments are widely accepted as social and spiritual norms.

When we look closely at the Ten Commandments, we can see a list of prohibitions, or things not to do. Before the prohibitions are laws focusing more on faith than on works, with the question of worshiping God or idols the basic point. In the middle of the two types of rules is the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy. For many, ‘keeping the Sabbath’ helps bring success in following the other commandments. When we honor the Sabbath we keep our focus on God rather than on things that might become idols. This focus also helps us sort out the struggles and feelings in our lives. For example, those who take a Sabbath—a rest—are less likely to be stressed out and want to kill someone. This may seem an extreme and somewhat silly example, but it helps illustrate the point. The Ten Commandments are deeper than ten rules that we may imagine Moses holding up on stone tablets. Of course, rules don’t mean much unless people follow them, which Israel did to varying degrees of success. Like all of us, Israel had its share of failures and successes. This lesson will explore both, and help us find ourselves and our lives reflected in Israel’s journey.

Scriptures: Exodus 20: 1 - 21

Supplies: Paper and pens

Preparation: Stuff to get ready

Activity	Instructions	Time
Rules At Home	Ask each person to share the three biggest rules in their home. Allow them some time to think about the three, and even write them down as they go. As they hear others share, they may want to adapt or amend their own list.	<i>5 min.</i>
Rules at School	Ask each person to share the rule they have the hardest time with at school. Allow them some time to think about their choice. Allow them to share their answers and talk About the different rules others have lifted up.	<i>4 min.</i>



Unwritten Rules	<p>Divide the class up into small teams or pairs. Ask each group to make a list of rules that are unwritten but everyone knows to follow. This might include rules about how to act among friends, at parties, on dates, on teams, or other general cultural rules.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do these rules affect your behavior?• How are such rules fair or unfair?• How are such rules made and enforced?• How are such rules challenged or changed?	8 min.
Rules & Radicals	<p>Explain that there are many different levels of obedience in following rules. Some are diligent rule followers. Others tend to rebel. In between are a wide range of behaviors.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are you more of a rule follower or a radical?• What affects your willingness to follow rules?• How does the person giving you the rule affect your choices?• How does the importance of the rule affect you?• How do you judge a rule?• How do you decide what rules to follow or break?	5 min.
Rule Makers	<p>Divide the class into groups of three or four. Explain that each group will be a country. They can make up their own name and need to come up with ten major rules for their nation. The group needs to prioritize the rules from 1 – 10 in level of importance. Bring the two groups back together and let them share their work.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How did you choose the rules for your country?• What determined the importance of the rules?• Are the most important rules ones that benefit the ruler or the citizens?• Are some designed to make you more likable as a leader?• How would your rules change if you just focused on what the people wanted? Be specific.• How would your rules change if you just focused on what you wanted? <p>Explain:</p> <p>Announce to the class that all of the countries are being merged together. As a class, they must come up with a common set of rules for the new united land. Give them time to make their rules.</p>	20 min.



God's Rules

Read Exodus 20: 1 - 21

7 min.

Ask:

- How did God's people respond to the Ten Commandments?
- I wonder how we would respond to these rules if they were new to us?
- I wonder how many of these rules were already norms for them?
- I wonder how Moses felt as the one chosen to deliver the law?
- I wonder how Moses felt as the leader and possible enforcer of the law?
- I wonder how God felt about the people's response to the Law?
- How do you think God feels about our response to the Law?
- How do you think God feels about our response to society's laws?
- How might God's laws ask us to break society's laws?
- How do we prioritize God's and society's expectations?

Prayer

Ask the class to form a circle holding hands.
Invite each person to say thank you for a rule
or a person who helped change or shape rules.
Ask the last person in the circle to say, "Amen."

2 min.





Lesson 9

Joshua: Passing Over to Home

Teacher's notes:

Joshua is a difficult book because it raises many questions about God's role in war and violence. Before diving into this, we have an important point to review from past lessons. We remember from the Flood story (and can see in other stories as well) that Israel believed that all things came from God. All occurrences, great and small, bad and good, were understood to be from God, even though they often came at the hands of other people. They had no cultural understanding of evil as a separate power from God.

The events of Joshua were passed along in oral tradition and not written down until generations after the events had occurred. The book of Joshua answers many of the questions that a younger generation may have asked the generation before them: When did God stop sending manna from heaven for food? How did we get to this land? How did our family come to this region?

In Joshua we see details of how the people of Israel built altars. Each tribe took a stone from the Jordan River as they were crossing, with the waters held back by the power of God through the ark of the covenant (Joshua 4). The narrative tells that the stones were stacked into an altar so that when the children saw and asked about the stones, the adults could tell them about all that God has done. Acts of dedication and affirmation of the covenant appear throughout the book of Joshua.

One theme that might be overlooked, but is at the core of Joshua, is the connection between their crossing over and the Passover. The book tells the details of crossing, or passing over into the "Promised Land." The first step is sending out spies who find refuge with Rahab, a prostitute living in Jericho. In exchange for hiding and protecting the spies of Israel, Rahab asks for protection for herself and family when the invasion comes. She is instructed to hang a red cord outside her tent to mark the home and thus save it from any harm—similar to the blood of the lamb on the doors in Egypt. The theme comes up again when all of the men are circumcised in preparation of the Passover. The familiar story of Jericho's defeat takes place over seven days, seeming to fall over the seven days of Passover. Along with crossing the Jordan River on dry ground, these references to the Passover provide the context for the events of Joshua.

Scripture: Joshua 1: 1-3
Joshua 2
Joshua 20
Joshua 24: 1-27

Supplies:

- Paper, multi-colored markers or pencils, rulers (straight-edges)
- Large paper or white board with multi-colored markers

Preparation: Pray about the youth in your class. Think about the families you know. Think of any pastoral concerns this lesson might raise for class members. Think about your own family background. Name your own issues.



Activity	Instructions	Time
My Space	<p>Give each member of the class a piece of paper and ask them to draw the floor plan of where they live. Ask them to color in each room with a different color. One color should be their own space. Another color could be used for each family member's space, including anyone who has their own chair or spot on the couch. Don't forget pets and their special places. They may want to use a special color for shared family space. Allow them to use their creativity.</p> <p>Invite each member of the class to share their floor plans. While they are answering, ask them how those spaces were assigned. Were they assigned, or simply developed over time?</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any paces outside of your home that are 'yours'? (My-Space on line, table in cafeteria, seat in class, their car or seat in family car, pew at church, etc.) • In any way, can you claim that God gave you your space? • Do you ever have any conflicts caused by your space or another's? • How is your space holy? If it is not holy, why not? • Do you remember ever being promised your own space? (get a new bed, bedroom, or a car one day?) • What other promises have required patience to see come true? • Have you ever had to share something special? (toy, TV, computer, car, clothes, pictures, jewelry, etc.) 	8 min.
Their Space	<p>Read Joshua 1: 1-3</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you remember where the promise of land came from? (God's covenant with Abraham) • What other promises did God make? (Many nations, blessed nations, no more flood, etc.) • Do you think anyone gave up on God's promise after 40 years? • I wonder if people thought "the Promised Land" was just a myth? • I wonder when people started wondering which part was theirs? • Do you think there were conflicts over who got the best areas? • Joshua splits the land among the tribes. How do you think that works? 	5 min.
Rahab's Space	<p>Explain that before the land can be divided, they have to conquer the people already living there. The first city is Jericho.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <p>What do you know about the story of Jericho? How does Joshua lead the people to defeat Jericho? (walking around the walls 7 times, then they fell.)</p>	5 min.



Read Joshua 2

Ask:

- What kind of person do you think Rahab was?
- Was Rahab's space Holy? Why or why not?
- How do you think Rahab felt with the spies staying in her home?
- How do you think her family felt about her decision?

**Safe
Space**

Read Exodus 12: 11 – 14

8 min.

Ask:

- How is this story similar to the story in Joshua 2?
(mark on the door, cord and blood both red, etc.)
- Are there places you feel are "protected" in your life?
- Are there really any protected places in the world?
- What makes a "safe space" for you?
- If you were in trouble, where would you go?
- If you were in trouble, who would you turn to?

Read Joshua 20

Ask:

- What does "refuge" mean to you?
- What is a refugee?
- What kind of structures do we have today that are like
"cities of refuge?"
- Have you ever wished you could go away until things were better?
- Who, in our society, could use such a safe place?
- How should Church be a place of refuge?
- What does "sanctuary" mean to you?
- How does God provide refuge or shelter?
(literally, spiritually, emotionally)

**Space
At the
Table**

Draw a floor plan of your Church's sanctuary. It does not *15 min.*
have to be perfect but should have the major elements.
Make sure the drawing is big enough for the class to mark
on during their discussion. Ask them to use a similar
color system to mark people's space in the sanctuary.
Ask them to write names of families, or types of people.
Make sure places where youth sit are marked. Don't
forget choir, musicians, ministers, and worship leaders.

If the group does not color or mark the communion table,
baptistery, pulpit and other places be sure to have them
fill in those spaces.



Ask:

- Is our Church sanctuary Holy? Why or why not?
- Is our Church sanctuary a place of refuge?
- Who in our church is a refugee?
- When have you felt like a refugee at church?
- What message does Communion hold for a refugee?
- How does Communion connect to Joshua?
 - (Passover remembered)
 - (God's protection for all who believe)
 - (place of refuge for those who feel outcast)
- Whose space is the Communion Table?
- Do those who need refuge know about our Church?
 - Why or why not?
- What are other places of refuge in your community?
 - (shelters, public parks, ball fields, parking lots, etc.)
- How can our Church be in ministry in those places?
- What can our Church do better in providing refuge?
- What can you do as an individual to provide refuge?
- Do you think you could do what Rahab did?
 - Why or why not?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. Inform them that each person will have a turn standing in the middle of the circle. Invite them to think of a person who needs the refuge of a church like ours. When each person steps into the middle, invite that person to share a prayer, silent or aloud, for the person needing to find a place of refuge—and to ask God to help them in opening safe space to others. Go around the circle, letting each person have a turn in the middle. The rest of the group closes the circle by holding hands while the person in the middle prays. When the person in the middle is done, they return to the circle and the next person in the circle enters.

8 Min.

At the end, close in a silent prayer of forgiveness for all the times we have failed to provide refuge.

OPTION: play the song *Would you Harbor Me?*
by Sweet Honey and the Rock
*available on I-Tunes



Lesson 10 Deborah and Jael: Women of Wisdom and War

Teacher's notes:

In the historical story of Israel, Judges is a bridge from individual leaders such as Moses and Joshua to Kings such as Saul, David, and Samuel. Joshua brings us from wilderness into the “promised land” and ends with God’s people renewing the covenant as they settle into their new home. The question that comes with Joshua’s death is, “Who will lead?” The Hebrew word for “Judge” can also mean “rule” or “ruler.”

Along with a confusing timeline, Judges presents the stories of twelve characters that might be called leaders, rulers, or heroes. The first is brief and focuses on Ehud, a leader who sounds more like an assassin. Another leader is Deborah. Deborah is listed as a “prophetess,” who was judge over the people of Israel in her day. Deborah seems to be available for people to come with their problems and questions. Her role changes into government leader who calls Barak as military leader and gives him orders for battle.

Barak is the military leader called to lead the people, but is unwilling to follow God’s command (given through Deborah) unless Deborah comes with them to the battlefield. The relationship between these two characters is strange and difficult to define. We know the name of Deborah’s husband, who is mentioned only briefly in Deborah’s introduction. Strangely, most people know Deborah’s name but few know Barak as a Biblical name. Deborah’s story includes the story of Jael, one of the rare places in scripture where we are told more about the women than the men of a story. Judges has many female characters, with a large number of them having names (a rarity in scripture). In the midst of the inclusion of women we also find the story of Jephthah and his daughter, which seems out of place in a book filled with strong women who have names (more about this in the next lesson).

Scripture: Judges 4: 1-24

Supplies: Whiteboard, chalkboard, or large sheets of paper

Preparation: Have markers / chalk ready
Reflect on the role of women in your congregation.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Who’s In Charge?	This is a “wake up” activity to help the class get going. Have everyone sit in a circle (should be, anyway) so that everyone can see each other. Send a volunteer out of the room while the rest of the room chooses a “leader.” Everyone must do what the leader does, but the leader should try to be subtle so they are not discovered. Everyone but the volunteer must remain seated. Bring the volunteer back and explain that the volunteer’s job is to stand in the middle of the group and try to figure out who the leader is. You can play a few rounds with different volunteers and different leaders.	7 min.
Look at Leaders	Ask class members to think about leaders in the world and in their lives. Ask them to name titles that rulers	8 min.



are known by and write them on a whiteboard, or a large sheet of paper while the class brainstorms.
(i.e. king, queen, dictator, Scout Master, team captain)

After the class has a good list of leaders, ask them to compare and contrast the different leader roles. Make sure to lift up different styles and structures, such as the difference between being a President or king.

- Ask:**
- How do leaders get selected?
 - How do leaders get their authority?
 - How are leaders judged? How is this fair or unfair?
 - Can anyone be a leader? Why or why not?
 - What makes a good leader?
 - What makes a bad leader?

Leader Games The class will play two games: *12 min.*
 “Follow the Leader” and “Simon Says”
 Play “Follow the Leader” first, having everyone follow one designated leader on a walk around the church.
 Once the group returns, assign a new leader and play “Simon Says.” At the end, invite the class to take their seats.

- Ask:**
- How is the job of leader different in these two games?
(*one leads by example and the other by instruction.)
 - Which game do you like better?
 - Which type of leader would you rather be?
 - Which type of leader would you rather follow?
 - What are some situations where a leader who gives instructions would be helpful?
 - What are some situations where a leader who sets an example would be helpful?
 - What are some situations where a leader who gives instructions would be *unhelpful*?
 - What are some situations where a leader who sets an example would be *unhelpful*?
 - What kind of leader are you?

Leaders In Our Lesson **Read Judges 4** *10 min.*
 Invite the class to retell the story so that everyone has an understanding of the narrative. The difficult names of people and cities can make it hard to follow the first time through.

Invite the group to add to their list of leaders by adding the names of leaders in the story. Be sure not to forget the names of Kings and other minor characters.

Ask:

- What do you think about the leaders we read about?
- Who do you think were the best leaders? Why?
- Who do you think were the worst leaders? Why?
- Which character could you relate to best? Why?
- Does it bother you that Barak didn't want to go to battle without Deborah? Why or why not?
- What role do women play in this story?
- Who do you think people responded to Deborah leading?
- What challenges do women have in leadership today?
- What is the role of women in church leadership today?
- Are there parts of our culture that would be challenged by our reading from Judges? *(be respectful of other church traditions that do not allow women in leadership but do not be afraid to let the class talk about any issues that may come up.)*
- Do you think Jael was a leader? Why or why not?
- Are all faithful people leaders?
- Who is more responsible for the outcome of a situation? - leaders or followers?
- Can a person be a hero without being a leader?
- Who in today's society would you consider a hero?

Look for Leaders

Using your same list of leaders, invite the class to add the names of leaders in the church. This can be leadership positions (i.e. Elder, Minister, board member) or names of people who lead. Give each member of the class a note card and invite them to write down the leadership jobs or titles they think they might have the gifts to hold. Also invite them to write down the names of leaders they respect. Invite them also to write down how God leads them in their life. This question may be difficult. Try not to help them too much as they wrestle with its meaning.

7 min.

Ask:

- Would anyone like to share some of their answers?
- Would anyone like to share how God leads them?

Invite the class to keep their card in their Bible or somewhere special to think about how God leads them and their role in the story of God's people.

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. Ask each person to give thanks for a leader that from the class's list. This can be from any of the lists added and can be a person, job, or title. Anything on the list can be used. The last person can say "Amen."

2 min.



Lesson 11 *Three Not-Always-So-Wise Guys? (Sampson, Jephthah, and Gideon)*

Teacher's notes:

This lesson covers three characters that are prominent in Judges. Gideon, Jephthah, and Sampson are very different stories. Gideon's story gets told some, but the name is more frequently associated with the modern organization that gives out Bibles. As a ruler, Gideon was a little slow to accept Gods' command even when it was explicit. He ruled well, but gave in to idolatry late in the story. Jephthah is not a common story but a profound critique and satire of how we speak to God. The saddest character in the story is Jephthah's daughter (we call her that because we don't know her name). She is the victim of Jephthah's rhetoric. Sampson is the best known of the three. His affair with Delilah is a commonly told story about men and women's relationship. Sampson is known for his strength, which is attributed to the length of his hair. His weakness is often given as the loss of his hair, but misses the point of the story. It is not truly Sampson's hair but God that stands as the source of power. The rest is metaphor and superstition.

Although these three stories can stand on their own, together they lift up a variety of fatal flaws and lead us to ask the question, “what is our weakness?” This lesson will explore all three stories with this question in mind. Understanding where we need to grow allows us to challenge ourselves and deepen our faith.

In preparation for this lesson, it would be helpful to read the Teacher's Notes for the previous week's lesson from Judges if you have not already done so.

Scripture: Gideon: Judges 6: 11-41
Judges 8: 22-32
Jephthah: Judges 11: 29 - 40
Sampson: Judges 13: 1-7
Judges 14: 1-20
Judges 16: 1 - 31

Supplies: Note-cards and pens

Preparation: Have note-cards and pens ready.
 Reflect on what your own personal weaknesses are.
 Read all three stories and be familiar with the strengths
 and weaknesses of each of the main characters.

Activity	Instructions	Time
You Did What?	Invite each member of the class to think of one silly thing they have said or done. It can be something naïve, or a time they misspoke, or just an embarrassing moment.	<i>5 min.</i>
We Did What?	Explain to the class that they will have a silly face contest. Each person gets to make their best silly face. The teacher gets to be the judge.	<i>2 min.</i>



**They Did
What?**

Split the class into three groups and assign each one a different story. Inform them that their task is to read the story and know it well enough to convince the other two groups that the main male character in their story (Gideon, Jephthah, or Sampson) used the poorest judgment of the three.

33 min.

Give the groups 10 minutes to read their story and prepare for the debate. Allow another 10 minutes for discussion. When each group has had a chance to share their position, allow some given and take. Invite each group to respond to the case presented to the other, still trying to convince the class their character used the poorest judgment.

As conversation winds down, ask the groups to split up again and give them time to plan for another round of debate. Explain that they should now look at the other character's stories and find good points about these other characters. Give them at least 5 minutes to look at the other stories. Bring the groups back together and open the debate again, using the new information.

At the end of the time period, ask the groups to vote. Each group gets one vote and cannot vote for their own. Give each group a minute to huddle and decide who to vote for, then call for a final vote. Finally, announce a winner and celebrate the dubious winner.

Ask:

- Which character did you feel the most in common with?
- Which character do you think was the most faithful? Why?
- Do you learn more from these characters' faults or strengths? Why?
- What do you learn from these stories?
- If a story was written about you and God, what instance of poor judgment or what challenging character trait might have the potential to become your 'fatal flaw'?
- Thinking about each main character:
 - What keeps you from trusting God's promises?
 - What silly deals have you tried to make with God?
 - When have you given something or someone else credit for what God has done?
 - Have you ever given God credit for a negative action or occurrence in life caused by someone else?
- Thinking about the other characters:
 - What was the role of the women in these stories?
 - How do you feel about Jephthah's daughter?
 - How do you feel about the role of women in Sampson's story?



**I'll Do
What?**

Give each member of the class a note card.
Invite them to write down one thing in their life that is their most challenging flaw—perhaps, if let run loose, could become a ‘fatal flaw,’ like that of the characters. Tell them that no one else will see their card. Give them a moment to write. Ask them to make some notes on how they can address that issue in their life. Invite them to put their card in their Bible, or somewhere they can reflect on it in their prayers.

3 min.

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands.
Ask each person to share a prayer saying aloud or silently, “God I’m sorry about _____,” but filling in the blank only silently. When they have completed their silent prayer, they may squeeze the hand of the person next to them who will continue the pattern. When the prayer comes back to the teacher, close by saying “Amen.”

2 min.





Lesson 12 *Family Matters (Ruth and Naomi)*

Teacher's notes:

Ruth is a book that fits into a general area on the time-line but its depth lies in its universal message. Ruth is a book that everyone can relate to on some level. It is a story of family and life's journey. The story includes loss, redemption, and hope. The story brings up issues of immigration, inclusively, generosity, genealogy, and more.

Today's lesson focuses on the role and definition of family. Besides the genealogical importance of this book in the lineage of King David and Jesus, the example of family demonstrated by Naomi and Ruth is powerful. We live in a culture that acts as though "family" is a word with a firm definition. In reality, family may have different meanings to different people. Ruth and Naomi were not the average family in their day, and today can provide a context for us to explore what "family" means to us in our own context. Youth come from diverse backgrounds. Divorce rates and the mobility of our culture are just two of the issues that lead us to define "family" in a plethora of ways today.

Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah find themselves bound first by marriage (Ruth and Orpah had each married one of Naomi's sons, who each had then died) and second by Ruth's faithfulness (or stubbornness). When their husbands all die and Orpah follows Naomi's direction to return to her own people but Ruth chooses to stay with Naomi, Ruth and Naomi are left with nothing but each other.

The two travel to Bethlehem, Naomi's former home, in hopes of finding charity within the larger family and community. At the time Naomi had left home, she was married to a husband and had two sons. She knew the stability and protection of a strong family in a culture that demanded just that. Returning home with no husband or sons but only a foreign woman, Naomi's fortunes seem to have completely changed.

Ruth follows Naomi's directions and finds herself gleaning in the fields of Boaz. It was tradition for widows to be allowed to follow the harvesters and pick up anything they left behind. Boaz is part of Naomi's late husband's family and turns out to be very generous, telling his workers to leave behind extra for Ruth to pick up.

The connection between Ruth and Boaz becomes something more after they spend a night together on the threshing room floor. The text seems unclear as to exactly what happened, but in the original Hebrew it would have been much clearer. Ruth has followed Naomi's instructions to go to the threshing room floor where Boaz is sleeping and to lie at his feet. The expression for "feet" used in this way usually refers to a male's genitals. With this information, Ruth's being at Boaz's "feet" takes on a new meaning, as does Boaz's willingness to take Ruth as wife when he wakes up and finds her there.

In the end, Ruth reconnects Naomi with the family that protected, loved, and defined her before she left Bethlehem years before. Together they have shown the power of family and covenant. Ruth and Naomi's story of family and love needs no context or timeline to be significant—and is able to speak to each new generation of reader.

Scripture: Ruth 1: 1-19
 Ruth 2: 1-2, 8-12
 Ruth 3: 6-11
 Ruth 4: 13-17



- Supplies:**
- Note cards and tape or nametags and markers
 - White paper and markers
 - Digital Camera (optional)

- Preparation:**
- Read the book of Ruth. (not very long)
 - Have nametags or note cards ready when class members arrive.
 - *Look through the activities as you think very carefully about the homes your class members come from. What adaptations will you need to make so as not to exclude or embarrass any in your group who are not privileged to have a biological family or traditional home to live in? For such situations you might offer the whole class the choice of drawing/considering their ideal image of the family table that they see themselves sitting at 30 years in the future.*

Activity	Instructions	Time
Name	As each member of the class comes in, give them a name tag or note card and ask them to put their name on it, large enough to read. Below their own name ask them to write the name of a parent or other adult family member. They can put a parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle. Those who do not live with a relative could write the name of a guardian, mentor, or even favorite teacher. The two names should be the same size, with their name on top of the family member's name. Inform them that they will be known, at least for today, as their name, the word "of," and their family member's name. For example, a youth whose name is John and writes down Martha as the name of a family member would be called, "John of Martha" for the day. Explain that our story today comes from a time when people were known by their family or clan more than they were as individuals. This was especially true for women.	7 min.
Game	<p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever been introduced as "_____'s kid" ? • How does it feel to be recognized by family or group rather than self? • Are there times you want to be known as part of your family or group? • Are there times you don't want to be known by your family or group? • Has your family ever been introduced as "_____'s family?" (insert name of a class member in blank). • What do you think it is like for children of celebrities? 	
Family Table	Give everyone a piece of white paper and put out some markers. Ask everyone to think about their "family table" at special dinners (Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.). (If they do not have the privilege of such dinners, ask them to draw what they imagine would be the ideal 'family' table.) Ask them to draw a shape to represent the table, then put marks (pictures, names, symbols, etc.) around the table to represent the people who sit there. Encourage them to choose colors appropriate	8 min.



to each person. Remind them to pay attention to who sits next to each other. When all are done, invite them to share their tales. (*remember, this may be emotional for those who have lost family members in recent times.*)

Ask:

- Was this activity easy or difficult? Why?
- How is this table different from your regular family table?
- Do members of a family behave differently at the special table?
- How would eating with this group compare to eating with friends?
- Who do you eat more meals with: family or friends?
- Who has more influence on your life?
- Who is more like you: family or friends?

Bible Study

Read Ruth 1: 1-19

8 min.

Ask:

- Can you imagine leaving most of your family to follow another family member?
- I wonder what it was that made Ruth want to stay with Naomi?
- I wonder what Ruth's other family in Moab was like?
- I wonder what else Ruth left behind? Friends, memories?
- I wonder how Orpah felt about going back to her family?
- I wonder what it felt like for Naomi to go home again?
- I wonder what it felt like for Ruth, entering a new place?
- Have you ever felt people looking at you like they may have looked at Ruth and Naomi in Bethlehem?

Family Photo

Pull out an old church directory (a few if available). 9 min.
Before passing them around, invite the class to think about how they would pose their family (or ideal family) to get a realistic picture. Pass directories around and look at all of the smiling faces. Invite the group to think up stories of what could have really been going on behind the camera as some of the directory photos were being taken. This can be fun (but remind the class to remain respectful).

Invite the class to take turns posing their family's "real family photo." They can use other members of the class to pose as family members. They are welcome to play themselves in the photo or have someone else fill in for them. They should place people next to the person they are always next to. They should have people make the faces they always make. When they have everything the way they want it, they yell, "Cheese!"
(You may take digital pictures if you want.)



**Bible
Study 2**

Read Ruth 2: 1-2, 8-12

10 min.

Ask:

- Can you think of a time that an extended family member was a blessing to you?
- How far out of their way should family go for each other?
- How close a relative do you have to be to have expectations of each other as family?

Read Ruth 3: 6-11 (*If class is 6-8th grade, skip this section*)

Ask:

- What do you think is happening in this scene?
- What questions do you have about this part of the story?

Explain:

“Feet” did not always mean “feet” in Ruth’s day.

Ruth was uncovering more than it first appears.

In Ruth’s day, sex and marriage were connected
(not that they aren’t today)!

In some ways, Ruth was proposing to Boaz; in other ways, she was manipulating him. Boaz says this act of devotion to Naomi’s family line is her greatest.

Ask:

- How do you feel about the interaction of Ruth and Boaz?
- If the “slang” were written explicitly, how do you think the story would be received today?

Read Ruth 4: 13-17

Ask:

- I wonder what this story tells us about the family that would grow out of it? (David and Jesus)
- What teachings of Jesus do we hear in Ruth?
- What lessons about family does Ruth teach us?
- Our church is often described as a family. Is that good or bad?
- What lessons about church can studying Ruth teach us?
- Are there people at church who have been like family to you?
- Have you ever thought about how the younger children at church look up to you? How so?

Reflection

This is a review exercise that may be done as a group, in pairs, or as individuals. That is up to the teacher, and should be done based on the needs of the class. Family issues can be difficult for some youth. Do not put anyone in a position where they will feel ashamed or attacked. Answers may be written on a piece of paper, shared with another person, or simply thought about in their head.

7 min.



1. Invite everyone to look at their Family Table pictures.

Ask:

- How is this picture like the communion table?
- How is this picture different from the communion table?
- What could God be calling you to do at either table?

2. Invite everyone to think about their Family Photo.

Ask:

- How accurate is this picture?
- How would other family members pose this picture?
- How could changing your place in the picture change the whole picture?

3. Invite everyone to pick one character from Ruth.

Ask:

- How is that person like you?
- How is that person different from you?
- What do you wish you knew about that person?
- What lesson can they teach you about your family?
- What lesson can they teach you about your church?
- What might this character inspire you to do differently?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. Ask them to give thanks for a member of their “family,” however they define it. Each person should squeeze the hand of the person next to them to let them know they are done with their turn in the prayer. The last person ends the prayer by saying, “All God’s Family said...” and the group responding with “Amen.”

2 min.



Lesson 13

Samuel: Anointer

Teacher's Notes:

1 Samuel and *2 Samuel* were historically one book. They were divided when translated because scrolls in that time were only so long. The division of the books has been maintained over time, even though Samuel does not appear as a character in *2 Samuel*.

The story takes us through the transition from scattered tribes with a common history to a monarchy that is firmly established. By the end of these two books, David stands as a central figure in the biblical story. Along the way we learn the stories of Samuel's birth and dedication, the people's desire for a king, the rise of Saul as the first King, David's adventures, and friendship of David and Saul's son Jonathan.

In today's lesson, the class will learn about Samuel's birth, his calling, and his duties in appointing a king. The story suggests that God is not happy about the people's desire for a king and that they have not understood God as their king. God gives in to the people's cries and appoints Samuel to appoint Saul as King. We hear about Saul's less than impressive rise to royalty. Students will be invited to think about their own birth, God's call on their life, and how they hope to respond to the ways God will call them in life.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 1: 1-28
 1 Samuel 3: 1-21
 1 Samuel 8: 1-9
 1 Samuel 9: 1-6; 27 – 10:1
 1 Samuel 10: 17 – 24

Supplies:

- Oil (cooking)
- Chalice or other small but nice looking container
- Note pads and pens
- Interview questions (provided in lesson)

Preparation:

- Pour a small amount of oil into a chalice or other container.
- Have enough note pads and pens for a few groups / pairs
- Put interview questions on note cards for each group.
- Think about your own birth story. Can you tell it? If applicable, think about the birth of your children. Can you tell the story?
- Think about God's call in your life and your sense of purpose in life.

Note: You may want to consider how to talk about birth stories in your individual class context, perhaps even sending out advance notice telling parents/guardians that a part of the upcoming lesson plan involves talking about birth stories. This would give the family the advance option of discussing birth stories within their own context, but also to raise any issues with you before the lesson. You also should consider talking with the senior minister (unless that is you!) for any precautions or guidelines within your particular church that it would help you to know. Consider that some of your class members may have been conceived/ born under less than happy circumstances, may be pregnant themselves, or may have parented a child or had an abortion or miscarriage. Some may live in non-traditional homes or may be adopted (and may or may not know about being adopted).



Sharing private information with the class may not be what a young person (or parent(s)) want done before the class. This also might be something they might later regret, as individuals can be cruel when armed with such ‘gossip-tempting’ information. Be considerate, never going somewhere with a lesson that might hurt or embarrass a class member for the simple sake of sticking to a lesson format.

If you need to take a less personal approach with this lesson, either omit the ‘Happy Birthday to you!’ questions, or redirect them to stories you bring in from a lighter side, such as a variety of interesting or unusual stories about the diverse way lives come into being in this world. This may include stories out of history, of farm animals or pets (which class members may know about and like to discuss), or the unusual, such as ‘pregnant’ male seahorses, or a female dog nursing orphan kittens).

Developmental age and maturity of your particular class should be considered. If needed, professional middle and high school teachers are usually a wealth of wisdom on this subject!

Activity	Instructions	Time
Happy Birthday To Sam!	Read 1 Samuel 1: 1-28 Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you think it was like to be Hannah?• How do you think she felt about being pregnant?• How do you feel about her giving up her child?• What do you think this child’s life will be like?	5 min.
Happy Birthday To You!	Talk about the birth stories as you have decided (see Note , previous page). Invite them to think about any interesting birth story they have heard, which could include their own, that of someone they know or read about, or even of the birth of a pet or animal they saw or heard about. Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is significant about you being born and being here in class? (Work at the idea that every person is valued before God, and each and every person is a child of God with equal potential to be called to serve God.)	7 min.
Get a Job!	Read 1 Samuel 3: 1-21 Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have you had any experience to compare to Samuel’s night?• How have you felt called by God to do something?• What jobs does God call people to do and which ones just get left to chance?• How do people know what their “calling” is?	25 min.

Divide the class into small groups or pairs and give them the following questions to use in interviews. Send them out to interview two people in the church. You can raise or lower the number based on time and the number of groups you are sending out. They do not need to interrupt other classes or musicians practicing before worship. There are usually



plenty of people around the building. Remind them that God calls people of all ages! Give them a set time to be back in the classroom. **Remind them to be respectful, not push a person who does not want to share information, and to thank each person they interview for their help.** When they return, invite them to share some of their results.

Questions:

1. What activities or responsibilities are you involved with at church?
2. How did you know you should help with these?
3. How do you choose which jobs to do at the church?
4. How do you decide when to say “yes” and when to say “no” to serving?
5. Does God have a special calling for you in life? If so, would you be able to share any information with us about hearing this calling?
6. What advice could you give a young person trying to hear God’s call in their life?

Do Your Job!

Read 1 Samuel 8: 1-9, 7 min.
 1 Samuel 9: 1-6; 27 – 10:1
 1 Samuel 10: 17 – 24

Ask:

- How would you feel if Saul were suddenly your king?
- How do you think God felt at the end of the story?
- How would you feel if you were in Samuel’s place?
- How do you think Saul would have answered our interview questions?
- How would you hope to answer the interview questions if you were called to be king / queen?
- How would things have been different if Saul had told God “no.”
- I wonder if there are times we tell God “yes” or “no” without meaning to?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. 5 min.
 As leader, stand in the middle of the circle.
 Have the chalice with oil in your hands.
 Ask each person to give thanks for the person next to them in the circle and pray that they might hear God’s call in their life. As each person is prayed for, dip your finger in the oil, blot your finger on the rim of the chalice to remove excess oil, then mark their forehead with the oil, anointing them for God’s calling in their life. Once everyone has prayed for the person next to them, say “God bless us all as we seek to commit our lives to your service. Amen.”

Follow – up: *You might want to consider letting the class type up their interviews as news stories and include them in the church’s newsletter, or even create their own newspaper to distribute about God’s callings to people in the church. This could become an ongoing project as the class interviews more and more people.*



Lesson 14 *Saul and David: The Royal Families*

Teacher's Notes:

God didn't seem to like the idea of Israel having a king in the first place, and Saul did nothing to make it seem to work. Then, David is given to the people as king and anointed, but not publicly. Saul still reigns, and David's journey brings him into Saul's service.

David first comes to Saul as a musician to calm Saul, who felt he had lost favor with God. David impresses Saul and stays on in Saul's service. As Saul and his men are trying to figure out how to defeat Goliath, David is in the area, and finally convinces them to let him try—and is successful. As much as Saul appreciates David's service, he is smart enough to see David's strength, charm, and faith as a threat to his throne. Saul tries to make David part of his family by giving David his oldest daughter. But David is not interested in Saul's oldest daughter and seems insecure about joining a royal family. David does not see himself as royalty. Later, Saul's daughter Michal expresses her feelings for David. Partially due to the encouragement of other servants, David agrees to marry Michal.

Saul seems to think that bringing David into his family will hurt him in his battles with the Philistines. In reality, David continues to be successful in all he does, including battle with the Philistines. This makes Saul even angrier. Luckily for David, Saul's son Jonathan has become David's best friend. There is a special bond between these two men that is described in scripture in covenantal language. Jonathan saves David's life on more than one occasion. The story of Samuel shows division coming at the death of Saul and his sons, including Jonathan. By this time, David has taken many wives, won many battles, and is well known throughout the kingdom.

Scriptures: 1 Samuel 16: 1, 11-13
 1 Samuel 16: 14 – 23
 1 Samuel 17: 1-9, 32 – 49
 1 Samuel 18: 1-16

Supplies: • Large note-cards and pens
 • Gift box or bag
 • Rocks
 • Small gift / prize

Preparation: • Look up the words “expectation,” and “entitlement” in a dictionary.
 • Get a small prize and put it in the box / bag.
 (cookies, small ball, book, coupon for a free hug... anything!)

- Have a small bucket in the middle of the room.
- Place the box / bag by the bucket till the game starts.
- Have enough rocks to play the opening game.



Activity	Instructions	Time
What's in The Box?	<p>Place a small bucket in the middle of the classroom.</p> <p>Give each student a few rocks (all get the same number).</p> <p>Have a gift box or bag, large enough to make them curious.</p> <p>Show the class the gift and explain that the person who puts the most rocks in the bucket from their seat will win the gift.</p> <p>Let each person take a turn tossing their rocks, with the class counting aloud the number that go in. If there is a tie, go to a second round, and so on.</p> <p>Once you have a winner, announce them as winner, but do not give them the gift yet--hold it until the end of class.</p> <p>Don't let them know what it is. Give no hints.</p>	6 min.
What's in It for Me?	<p>Give each member of the class a large note card.</p> <p>Invite the class to finish the following statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- If I study hard at school... 2- When I turn 16... 3- When I turn 18... 4- When I finish school, I will be... 5- The salary I will make for my full time career... 6- When I turn 50... 7- Next summer I will... 8- Because I am a good friend... <p>Invite the class to look back at their answers.</p> <p>Give them a chance to share if they are willing.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is an “expectation” ? • What is an “entitlement” ? • What is the difference? • What things are you entitled to? • When have you expected something but acted entitled? • How do leaders often struggle with this issue? • How do your expectations affect your attitude? 	8 min.
Beyond Expectations	<p>Read 1 Samuel 16: 1, 11-13</p> <p>1 Samuel 16: 14 – 23</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the youngest son, what was David entitled to? (Nothing really!) • Once anointed, how did David's entitlements change? • How did David's expectations change? • How do you think David's life changed? Why? • What are Saul's entitlements and expectations? • I wonder how Saul's perspective might have been seen before God? • What are the expectations of others for David and Saul? • If you could give one bit of advice to David or Saul, what would it be? 	8 min.



**Know
Fear**

Read 1 Samuel 17: 1-9, 32 – 49

8 min.

Ask:

- How did the actions of David and Saul compare to: their expectations? Expectations of others?
- When have you exceeded the expectations of others?
- I wonder what David expected after his victory?
- I wonder if David felt entitled to anything?
- What did David expect from his battle with Goliath?
- Why did David have those expectations?
- Why was David the one facing Goliath?
- What is the bravest thing you have ever done?
- What expectations did you have at the time?
- Have you ever won something?
- What expectations did you have at the time?
- What expectations do you have for our prize box?
- Did it take any courage to win the prize?
- What fears do you have about the prize?

**Know
Friends**

Ask:

10 min.

- What expectations do you have for your friends?
- What expectations do your friends have of you?
- When has a friend acted entitled to something from you?
- When have you acted entitled to something from a friend?
- What makes a good friend?
- What level of friends do you have?
- How does a person's family effect expectations for friendship?
- Have you ever felt entitled to someone's friendship?

Read 1 Samuel 18: 1-16

Ask:

- What do you think of David and Jonathan's friendship?
- What do you think of Saul's actions?
- How do you think Jonathan felt as a friend?
- What expectations do you think Jonathan felt as a son?
- What do you think Jonathan was entitled to?

**The
Box!**

Explain that class time is almost over. Get out the prize box. *8 min.*

Ask:

- What do you all think is in the box?
- What would an appropriate prize be?



Ask the winner:

- What do you expect?
- What would be a disappointment?
- Having waited this long, do you feel entitled to anything?

Present the prize and allow them to open it.

Ask:

- How do you feel about the prize?
- How do you respond to expectations being met?
- How do you respond with expectations fail to be met?
- What expectations do you have for God in your life?
- What is God entitled to?
- What are you entitled to from God?
- What have you acted like you are entitled to from God?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands.

2 min.

Ask each member of the class to share an expectation they have for God and either give thanks for that expectation or ask forgiveness for having it if the expectation is not fair. The last person in the circle can close by saying, "Amen."





Lesson 15 *Even Kings Make Mistakes: David*

Teacher's Notes:

This lesson will explore David's rise to power and how David ruled. Along with some of David's success stories, the lesson looks at David's adultery and the murder he committed to justify it. David is far from perfect as a person, yet is still called upon to lead God's people. The lessons explores the joy of David's new position as king, David's indecision about the ark, and his infamous affair and marriage to Bathsheba (after having her husband killed). The class will be challenged to think about their own decision-making processes. Depending on the age of the students, many will not understand why David sends Uriah (you-RYE-uh) home from the army. The paternity of the baby would be in question if Uriah had not been home to visit his wife for a long period of time, and her visit to the king would be more suspicious, even without CNN and modern media.

David holds a unique place in Israel's history and in the Christian story. David is lifted up as the greatest of the kings and is often the historical root of Jesus' genealogy.

Scriptures: 2 Samuel 5: 1- 5
 2 Samuel 6: 1 – 15
 2 Samuel 11: 1 – 12:15

Supplies: Whiteboard or poster and markers

Preparation: Think about how you make decisions.
 Think about how you have learned from mistakes.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Kingdom	Read 2 Samuel 5: 1 – 5	<i>3 min.</i>

Ask:

- What do you remember about David from past stories?
- How was the decision made to make David a king?
- How was that decision similar to decision-making in our church?

King-duh	Read 2 Samuel 6: 1 – 15	<i>8 min.</i>
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Ask:

- What do you know about "The Ark"?
- Why was David afraid of The Ark?
- What led him to bring The Ark into Jerusalem?
- What role does fear play in this story?
- What other issues affect decisions in this story?
(make a list on whiteboard or poster)
- What role does fear play in your decision making?
- How do other issues that David faced also challenge you?
(look back at your list and give time for examples)



King-Dumb! Read 2 Samuel 11: 1 – 5

30 min.

Record:

On the whiteboard or poster, start an outline of the story.
Allow the class to lift up parts of the story to be included.
Leave room for the story to expand as the class reads further.

Ask:

- How do you feel about David's decision?
- Do you think anyone knew what David had done?
- If David's kingdom had modern media, how would this be covered?

Read 2 Samuel 11: 6 – 13

Record: Continue your outline of the story.

Ask:

- How does David respond to his indiscretion?
- How would David's actions have helped his situation?
- If David's kingdom had modern media, how would this be covered?

Read 2 Samuel 11: 14 – 27

Record: Continue your outline of the story.

Ask:

- How is David making decisions at this point in the story?
- If David's kingdom had modern media, how would this be covered?
- How does this change your image of David?

Read 2 Samuel 12: 1 – 15

Record: Continue your outline of the story.

Review the whole story of David and Bathsheba

Re-Write:

- Split the class into two groups.
- Explain that they will be writing a modern version.
- Give each group some time to work on their story.
- Ask each group to share their story with the class.
(This may be done by reading, or re-enactment.)

Ask:

- What do you think of David? As King? As a person?
- How was David treated compared to modern leaders?
- What can we learn from David's life and leadership?
- How do you think these stories changed David?
- How would these experiences change you?
- Do you think leaders should be held to a higher standard?
- What do you expect of your leaders?
* church * government * school
- How much freedom do leaders deserve?
- How much forgiveness do leaders deserve?

King/Queen For a Day Give each student a note card and pen. 7 min.
Explain that each of them will pretend they are King/Queen for a day. They need to make a list of their top 5 priorities. Are they more worried about security, healthcare, their image, the happiness of their family, being faithful to God, etc.?

Then ask each person to flip their card over and make their own personal priority list for their real life today.

Once everyone has written theirs, invite students to share and discuss their lists with the class.

Ask:

- How does your royal priority list compare to your personal list?
- What things change when you are a leader?
- How is it different for a pre-school line-leader compared to a king?
- What is the range between these two leadership roles like?

Prayer Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. 2 min.
Ask each person to lift up a leader in prayer, or pray for their own needs as a leader. Ask the last person to say “Amen.”





Lesson 16 *Solomon: Too Much of a Good Thing*

Teacher's Notes:

Solomon is one of the most well known characters in scripture. The “wisdom of Solomon” is known well enough to be referenced in popular culture. When it came to abundance, Solomon had more than wisdom. Wealth, vision for construction, and concubines were all a part of Solomon’s abundance. In some ways this fulfills David’s wish that Solomon would succeed and become even more successful than David himself. Adonijah, David’s oldest son, assumes he is the next in line and even begins the process of sacrificing and preparing himself to be king when David instead takes action from his deathbed to make Solomon the king.

Early in his reign, Solomon has a dream where God invites him to ask for anything he wants and Solomon asks for wisdom. God is impressed by Solomon’s request and blesses Solomon. Along with wisdom, Solomon is known for large building projects. From his own home to the building of the temple, Solomon spends part of his reign as a contractor. A fleet of ships is also credited to Solomon and was part of an economic boom that brought great wealth and the attention of the Queen of Sheba into Solomon’s Kingdom. She was not the only female to cross Solomon’s path. Solomon used marriage as a form of trade negotiation. By Solomon’s later days he had accumulated 700 wives and 300 concubines, many from countries from which Israelites had been warned not to marry (1 Kings 11).

Scripture suggests God becomes angry in Solomon’s later days due to Solomon’s lack of commitment to God. Solomon has taken on the beliefs and gods known to the cultures of his wives. Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, succeeds him as king after his death. Unfortunately, this ends the Davidic line because, just as God foretold, Rehoboam does not last long as king. He ignores the guidance of his father’s advisors and decides to be heavy handed with the people. All the tribes but his own choose to recognize Solomon’s adversary, Jeroboam, as king.

Scripture: 1 Kings 3: 1 -28
 1 Kings 10: 1-9, 23-25
 1 Kings 11: 1 - 11

Supplies: Paper and pens
 Poverty Map posted at www.Wikipedia.com
 -Search “Poverty” and select a few maps to use with the class
 -You will want to print on a color printer
 -Percentage of population living on \$1 per day map recommended

Preparation: Think about the things you have an abundance of.
 Think about the things that distract you from God.
 Think about the struggle of abundance.
 Print out copies of poverty map for class.
 Look online for other up-to-date resources and statistics.



Activity	Instructions	Time
Stuff	Give each member of the class a sheet of paper. Invite them to make a list of everything in their room. After the list is done, ask them to include everything they own that is not in their room. Once everyone has had time to finish their list, invite them to share them.	<i>5 min.</i>
More Stuff	Invite the class to make a second list of other things they wish they had. This can be things they hope to get one day. They are not limited by money! As a group, ask them to make a combined list, answering the question, “If you had 10 million dollars what would you spend it on?” They need to come to agreement as a group.	<i>7 min.</i>
Solomon’s Stuff	Read 1 Kings 3: 1 – 15 Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would Solomon compare to modern personalities? • What did Solomon do to deserved all he was given? • How do you feel about God’s blessing of Solomon? Read 1 Kings 10: 1-9, 23-25 Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did Solomon fail God? • How do you feel about God’s disappointment with Solomon? • How would Solomon compare to modern personalities? 	<i>10 min.</i>
Others Stuff	Pass out copies of the poverty map. Allow the class some time to look at the map. Invite them to share their first thoughts. Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think people in other countries would see us? • How do you think poor people in other countries look at those who are wealthy? • How does the percentage of poverty in a country change the way poor people look at wealthy people? • How do people in your school look at people who have more wealth than them? • How do you think Solomon would have fit in as a kid in your school? • How do you think Solomon would have fit in as an adult in our world? • What things do we take for granted, and need to go back and add to our list of “things” from earlier? 	<i>20 min.</i>

- How does wealth change people?
- How does wealth change the way we treat others?
- How do you feel when rich people fail? Why?
- How do you feel when poor people do well? Why?
- How should the church deal with wealth?
- How does your church deal with money?
 - Who is in charge of it?
 - Who makes decisions about money?
- What role do you play in your church and its money?
 - Give it? -Spend it?
 - Collect it? -Count it?
 - Ask people to give more? -Complain about it?
- What are other things we have too much of?
 - Food? -Time?
 - Attention? -Empty Praise?
 - Expectations? -Freedom?
- How do you deal with having more than you need?
- What have we done to deserve those things?
- How would life be different without those things?

Who's Stuff?

Read 1 Solomon 3: 16 – 28

13 min.

Ask:

- How do you feel about Solomon’s decision-making?
- What things are as important to you as the child to the mother?
- What do you think would have happened if this argument was over a piece of property?
- How do we define ownership in our world today?
- How many things on your list of possessions would your parents/guardians say belong to them rather than you?

Read and Respond (read quotes out loud and invite response):

1. "Everything belongs to God - we are just paying rent."
-C.C. Chapman
2. "Justice is finding out what belongs to who and returning it."
-Walter Brueggemann
3. "Possession is nine tenths of the law."
-Common expression

Wise Stuff

Invite the class to make up their own “wise saying” about wealth and faith to share with others.

5 min.

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. 4
Ask each person to mention something they are thankful
for. Have each person silently ask God to help them with one
possession or abundance they feel trapped or distracted by.

4 min.



Lesson 17 Elijah: Kings, Widows, and a Still, Small Voice

**This lesson may take more than one session but if you are teaching a time-line of God's people, it is important to go through each part of this lesson.*

Teacher's Notes:

The Kingdom of Israel has divided. David and Solomon's kingdom has become the southern kingdom--Judah. Ahab is now king of the northern kingdom of Israel when Elijah comes into the story. Elijah's life as a prophet is filled with stories. King Ahab is a central figure in Elijah's day. Much of Elijah's ministry is in response to Ahab and his wife Jezebel's leadership. Elijah predicts a drought early in his ministry and then follows God's lead into the wilderness where ravens bring him food and he drinks from a designated stream until it completely dries up. This story ends with Elijah in need of sustenance and him finding a widow who helps him. The next story in Elijah's ministry centers on this widow and her son. She is about to make the last of her grain into a bread that she and her son will share as their last meal before starving. Elijah tells her to make him a cake and that her jar of meal nor her oil will be empty. God provides for the widow and her son and Elijah stays with them. Things turn for the worse when the son dies but Elijah revives him through the power of God.

After three years away from the public eye, Elijah returns to confront King Ahab who has been leading his people through the drought that Elijah predicted (warned them of). Elijah gives advice for keeping the animals alive. Elijah confronts Ahab about the number of prophets from other religions that eat at his (and Jezebel's) table. A contest is set up between Elijah and those prophets and in the end Elijah survives and the rest are dead. At this point, the drought comes to an end. While fleeing from Jezebel in the aftermath of her prophets' deaths, Elijah takes refuge at Horeb. Elijah waits for God to speak. There is wind, an earthquake, and fire—but God does not speak through any of these. Instead, God speaks in the silence that follows (a still, small voice).

Scripture: 1 Kings 17: 8 – 16
1 Kings 18: 17 – 39
1 Kings 19: 11 – 13

Supplies:

- Whiteboard and markers
- Blindfolds (for half the class)
- Multiple translations of the Bible (NRSV should be one of these)

Preparation:

- Think about the things you trust to God.
- Have the text marked in a few translations of the Bible.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Explaining Prophets	Open by telling the class that they are entering a new time in the history of God's people. After Solomon comes a debate about who should rule, and the kingdom divides. Israel is the Northern Kingdom and its capital will eventually become Samaria. Judah is the Southern Kingdom with its capital in Jerusalem. This makes it more difficult to keep up with the history of God's people. Rapid transition in the story from one kingdom to another also makes it	2 min.



hard to keep up with all the characters. With the people divided and kings not looking to God for guidance, the role of “prophet” enters into the story.

**Pondering
Prophets**

- Ask the class what the word “prophet” means. *10 min.*
- Record the responses on the white board or poster.
- Ask them to list as many prophets as they can.
They may include Biblical characters or people from history or their own experience. Many would call Martin Luther King, Jr. a modern prophet. The Islamic community would put Mohamed on the list.
Allow the class to list who ever they want.
- Keep this list and definition for the next couple of months.
- Allow the class to edit the definition and list each week.

Ask:

- What challenges do you think prophets faced?
- What do you think would be the hardest part of being a prophet?
- How do you think prophets got through difficult times?
- What do you think was different about prophets’ relationship with God?

**Trust
God**

Explain that Elijah is one of the earliest prophets we really get to know in scripture. Others are mentioned earlier in the text but not much character development is included. *15 min.*

When we first meet Elijah, he is predicting a drought. Then God sends him to widow who will care for him.

Read 1 Kings 17: 8 – 16

Ask:

- What did God ask of Elijah?
- What did God ask of the widow?
- I wonder who had the more difficult task?
- With what do you trust God?
- How hard is it to trust God?
- What would your life look like if you trusted God as did Elijah and the widow?

What things do you trust to God in prayer?

Are there things you don’t share or won’t let go of?

Pray:

Invite everyone to hold their hands out together, cupped.

Explain that we will be imagining prayer concerns in our hands.

Invite everyone to lift their hands, still together, up towards God.

Explain that we will lift our concerns to God in prayer.

Invite everyone to pull their hands apart and flatten their palms.

Explain that we will let go of our concerns, trusting them to God.



Make sure everyone knows the motions and the concept.

Leader says:

-- hands cupped –

“In your hands, imagine a person you care about. Think about their need and what they mean to you. Now lift them up to God.”

-- hands lifted up –

“Now take a deep breath and remember that you cannot fix them or make all their troubles go away. All you can do is support them and care for them. Trust this concern to God and trust God will listen.”

-- separate hands –

“When you are ready, release the concern to God.”

Repeat with some of the following concerns:

- Needs of others in our community
- Needs of the poor
- Needs of children or the elderly
- Needs of those in other countries

Keep the category vague enough to allow each person to create their own image in their hand.

End with this one:

“In your hands, imagine a person that is difficult for you to care about. Think about the ways they have hurt you. Think about the ways others have hurt them. You have a choice. You can hold onto the hurt or lift it up to God.”

-- hands lifted up –

“If you are able, lift that person up to God. Remember that you cannot fix them or un-do the pain they have caused you or others. You cannot heal the pain they have endured. All you can do is seek to understand and forgive.”

-- separate hands –

“When you are ready, release them to God.”

**Trust
Others**

Skip this activity if short on time.

10 min.

Pair up everyone in the class.
Do not pair close friends or family members.
Give each pair a blindfold and have one wear it.
Allow the other partner to guide them on a walk.
Have the pairs line up single file and follow you.
Half way through stop and trade who is blindfolded and who is the guide.
End the walk back in your classroom.



Ask:

- What was the hardest part of this activity?
- What fears did you have?
- How did trusting your partner in this activity compare to trusting God in prayer?

**Speak
For God**

Explain:

7 min.

Elijah's next task is to *speak for God* to King Ahab.
Jezebel is Ahab's wife and she believes in many gods.
Ahab has not been faithful to God and has supported her beliefs.
In our next reading we see Elijah, bold and brash.

Read 1 Kings 18: 17 – 39

Ask:

- I wonder what part of this story scared Elijah the most?
- How did Elijah continue to show trust in God?
- How good are you at talking about God with others?
- How does your ability to trust yourself in talking about God compare with your trust of God in prayer?
- How does your ability to trust yourself in talking about God compare with your ability to trust others?

**Listen
For God**

Explain:

13 min.

Ahab and Jezebel were furious and rose up against Elijah.
Elijah goes to Horeb and waits for God to speak.

Read: 1 Kings 19: 11 – 13 (multiple translations will help here!)
(Read 1 Kings 19: 12 – 13 in each translation.)

Ask:

- What are the three things that happened before the voice Elijah heard?
- What was the voice of God? What did it sound like?
- Have you ever experienced God in silence?
- What does a "moment of silence" mean in our culture?
- How do we use silence in worship?
- Where else is silence important?
- How does your ability to be still and silent relate to your being able to trust God, trust others, or speak about God?

**Be Still
With God**

Explain:

5 min.

Contemplative prayer is a style of prayer that is more focused on listening to God rather than speaking to God. Some people describe it as "spending time with God." We will take a few minutes of silence and stillness. This may be difficult because we are used to a world that moves very quickly. Try your best to follow the direction and please do not distract others in prayer.



- a. Ask the class to get into a comfortable place where they will not fidget or need to move again.
- b. Tell them not to close their eyes, but to focus on something boring that will not move or change (the floor or a spot on the wall is great for this).
- c. Ask the class to focus on breathing out and nothing else. As they hear sounds other than your voice, invite them to try and “turn down the volume” or tune them out.
- d. If they have thoughts, ask them to save them for later. The goal at the beginning is to stop thinking. This will seem like a strange concept but it is possible. Give them at least 30 seconds of pure silence. You can go longer as your group is able.
- e. After the silent opening, invite them to imagine a place where God would speak to them. Leave the room in silence for another 20 seconds.
- f. After that period of silence, invite them to imagine a place or person to where God might send them. Leave the room in silence for another 20 seconds.
- g. After that period of silence, invite them to think about how God might challenge them or the church. Leave the room in silence for another 20 seconds.
- h. Invite them to move back to their original seats as ready.

Ask:

- How did you experience the discipline of silence?
- Can anyone share their experience of this prayer?
- How is this prayer different from ways you have prayed?
- What was the easiest part of this prayer?
- What was the most challenging part of this prayer?

**Sharing
God**

Explain that God asks Elijah to take on Elisha (e-LYE-sha) *2 min.*
as a disciple (or an apprentice).

Invite the class to think about people they know who could benefit from today’s lesson.
Challenge them to share what they have learned with others by speaking about God or bringing others to church.

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. *2 min.*
Ask each person to lift up a silent prayer, squeezing the hand of the person next to them when they are done.
The last person in the circle will say “Amen” for everyone



Lesson 18 Review: What Struck?

Teacher's Notes:

This week's lesson is intended as a review of lessons 1 – 17. If you have not been with the class during these lessons you may want to look over the lessons and themes.

This review is designed to support the learning that has taken place, while helping teachers evaluate the needs of the group for future lessons. This lesson uses review materials for individual and group memory activities looking over the lessons, and the books of the Bible. The concern of this lesson is review and retention and does not introduce any new scripture or ask for new reflection on any texts previously studied. If the class seems to need a longer review process, you may want to repeat some past lessons (maybe from weeks when attendance was low) or reflect on some previous lessons' themes. Handouts and copy sheets for this lesson are at the end of Lesson 18.

- Supplies:**
- a. Handout, *Review: What Struck?*, (1 set per person, or group if you want)
 - b. Cards on card stock or paper, cut out, put in envelope or zip lock bag
 - Lessons (Stories) and Books of the Bible names cards

Preparation: Look back over the past lessons and time-line.

Prepare cards of Lessons, and Books of the Bible names:

- print or copy the sheet(s) of names onto card stock, then cut into individual names with a paper cutter.
- keep in an envelope or zip lock bag.
- if preparing multiple sets, you may want to use different colors to keep the sets from getting mixed together.
- if you include New Testament names in this challenge, you can make it tougher by using the same color for New and Old, or easier by using different colors for the two parts.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Stories	Give groups of 2 or 3 an envelope/zip lock containing the "Stories of the Bible" (Lesson) names. Ask them to work together to put them in the order we studied them. Challenge them to do it as quickly as possible. Try to tell the story as a class, in brief, connecting one to the next.	5 min.
What Struck?	Give individuals the <i>What Struck? Review</i> sheets. Have them work alone to start for about 10 minutes (or until they start to want to talk about the activities—this might not take long). Next, have partners or groups work together to share their combined or collective memory. Finally, come together as a group to see what is in the group memory.	20 min
What Struck?	Ask: Think about the lessons and stories. What were the lessons and stories that you (and other group members): • found easiest to remember and remember accurately? Why do you think this may be? • found most difficult to remember and remember accurately? Why do you think this may be?	



- What insight does this give you about how oral lessons of the Bible were passed along from one generation to the next before finally being written down?

Favorites

Ask:

13 min.

- Share something about your favorite of the characters we have learned about.
- Share something about your favorite of the stories we have learned about.
- In your views, what is the biggest issue we have discussed, and how does this issue affect you?
- How have the stories we have learned challenged you?
- How have the stories we have learned encouraged you?
- How have the stories we have learned comforted you?
- What questions do you still have about the lessons we have studied?

Books:

Give the class the “Books of the Bible” note cards.

15 min.

Ask them to work together to put them in order.

Challenge them to do it as quickly as possible. You could ask an adult class to do the same activity to set a “time to beat.”

Not all of the books have been covered in this study so the class may struggle.

Many of the books have not been explored yet in the timeline of this curriculum and will be covered in future lessons.

Include them anyway.

Judge the success of the class based on Genesis to 2 Kings.

When they have finished, gather the class and debrief.

Ask:

- How do you feel about this activity?
- What made it harder?
- What made it easier?
- Do you think this task’s content is important?
- What value is there in knowing the books of the Bible?
- What stories or types of stories are in each of these books?

Next

Ask:

5 min.

- Looking at the remaining Bible books and the stories...
 - What are you most curious about?
 - What are you most excited about?
 - What are you least excited about?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands.

2 min.

ask each member of the class to give thanks for a story, character, or lesson they have learned about in these lessons.



What Struck? What Do You Remember?

See what you can remember about the lessons below: people, places, themes, what you did or made, and prayers or commitments to God or yourself. What struck for you?

First, work quietly on your own for a few minutes. Then, merge your memory with that of a partner. Finally, combine your memories into group memory, sharing as a class. Those new to class or absent during the lessons can learn by what you pass on to them!

Lesson 1: Creation: And It Was Good. Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 2: A Big Flood Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 3: Abraham & Sarah's Sacred Journey Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 4: Joseph: Journey to Egypt Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 5: The Birth Of Moses Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:



Lesson 6: Call of Moses

Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 7: Plagues & Wonderings

Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 8: Laws and the Wilderness

Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 9: Joshua, Passing Over to Home

Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 10: Women of Wisdom and War

Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 11: Three Not So Wise Guys?

Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:



Lesson 12: Family Matters (Ruth & Naomi) Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 13: Samuel: Anointer Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 14: Saul & David: The Royal Families Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 15: Even Kings Make Mistakes Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 16: Solomon: Too Much of a Good Thing Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:

Lesson 17: Kings, Widows, & a Still Small Voice Theme: _____

ppl:

plces:

did, made:

remember:



For Leader: Below is a list of the books of the Bible, in the order found in most Protestant Christian Bibles. Also are the Lessons in the order we have studied them. On the next pages are names that can be photocopied or printed onto card stock, cut apart, and used to try to put them in order.

Hebrew Bible (Old, or

First Testament)

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Leviticus
4. Numbers
5. Deuteronomy
6. Joshua
7. Judges
8. Ruth
9. 1 Samuel
10. 2 Samuel
11. 1 Kings
12. 2 Kings
13. 1 Chronicles
14. 2 Chronicles
15. Ezra
16. Nehemiah
17. Esther
18. Job
19. Psalms
20. Proverbs
21. Ecclesiastes
22. Song of Solomon
23. Isaiah
24. Jeremiah
25. Lamentations
26. Ezekiel
27. Daniel
28. Hosea
29. Joel
30. Amos
31. Obadiah
32. Jonah
33. Micah
34. Nahum
35. Habakkuk
36. Zephaniah
37. Haggai
38. Zechariah
39. Malachi

New Testament (Second Testament)

1. Matthew
2. Mark
3. Luke
4. John
5. Acts
6. Romans
7. 1 Corinthians
8. 2 Corinthians
9. Galatians
10. Ephesians
11. Philippians
12. Colossians
13. 1 Thessalonians
14. 2 Thessalonians
15. 1 Timothy
16. 2 Timothy
17. Titus
18. Philemon
19. Hebrews
20. James
21. 1 Peter
22. 2 Peter
23. 1 John
24. 2 John
25. 3 John
26. Jude
27. Revelation

LESSONS:

- Lesson 1: Creation: And It Was Good.
- Lesson 2: A Big Flood
- Lesson 3: Abraham & Sarah's Sacred Journey
- Lesson 4: Joseph: Journey to Egypt
- Lesson 5: The Birth Of Moses
- Lesson 6: Call of Moses
- Lesson 7: Plagues & Wonderings
- Lesson 8: Laws and the Wilderness
- Lesson 9: Joshua, Passing Over to Home
- Lesson 10: Women of Wisdom and War (Deborah, Jael)
- Lesson 11: Three Not Always So Wise Guys? Sampson, Jephthah, Gideon
- Lesson 12: Family Matters (Ruth & Naomi)
- Lesson 13: Samuel: Anointer
- Lesson 14: Saul & David: The Royal Families
- Lesson 15: Even Kings Make Mistakes
- Lesson 16: Solomon: Too Much of a Good Thing
- Lesson 17: Kings, Widows, & a Still, Small Voice



Genesis	2 Chronicles	Daniel
Exodus	Ezra	Hosea
Leviticus	Nehemiah	Joel
Numbers	Esther	Amos
Deuteronomy	Job	Obadiah
Joshua	Psalms	Jonah
Judges	Proverbs	Micah
Ruth	Ecclesiastes	Nahum
1 Samuel	Song of Songs	Habakkuk
2 Samuel	Isaiah	Zephaniah
1 Kings	Jeremiah	Haggai
2 Kings	Lamentations	Zechariah
1 Chronicles	Ezekiel	Malachi

Matthew	2 Thessalonians	Revelation
Mark	1 Timothy	Creation: And It Was Good
Luke	2 Timothy	A Big Flood
John	Titus	Abraham & Sarah's Sacred Journey
Acts	Philemon	Joseph: Journey to Egypt
Romans	Hebrews	The Birth Of Moses
1 Corinthians	James	Call of Moses
2 Corinthians	1 Peter	Plagues & Wonderings
Galatians	2 Peter	Laws and the Wilderness
Ephesians	1 John	Joshua, Passing Over to Home
Philippians	2 John	Women of Wisdom and War (Deborah, Jael)
Colossians	3 John	Three Not So Wise Guys? Sampson, Jephthah, Gideon
1 Thessalonians	Jude	Family Matters (Ruth & Naomi)
		Samuel: Anointer
		Saul & David: The Royal Families
		Even Kings Make Mistakes
		Solomon: Too Much of a Good Thing
		Kings, Widows, & A Still, Small Voice



Lesson 19 Amos Brings Bad News

Teacher's Notes:

Not long after the death of Elisha, a new threat comes into the life and story of God's people. "Exile" is just a warning in Amos day, but becomes a reality that is historically intertwined with prophecy for those who follow Amos. Exile became historic reality and had profound theological ramifications. Prophecy is a message to God's people about what is about to happen. Although there have been previous prophets, Amos is the first to bring prophecies of doom that conclude with God's people meeting their end. Other prophets follow Amos style and concern for the oppressed.

Although Amos is often quoted in modern times, especially in reference to social justice ministry, history has not given much attention to this prophet. Although Amos lacks a message of hope, Amos has a strong ethical message that stands as a turning point in the theology of Israel. We know little about Amos as a person. Instead of focusing on who Amos was, it is best to focus on the message Amos delivered and the events that brought about God's message through Amos.

Amos writes in the time of King Uzziah in Judah and King Jeroboam II of Israel, dating the events between 783 – 745 BCE. The kingdom has already divided and both Israel and Judah are in a time of prosperity. Amos takes issue with the peoples' ethics of prosperity. Amos predicts the end of Israel (N. Kingdom) and claims it is God's punishment for being unfaithful, but specifically for taking advantage of the poor rather than taking care of them.

Amos takes on Israel's neighbors, judging the Gentile countries that have failed to live up to God's standards of justice. The idea that God calls all nations, including Gentile nations, to care for their people is powerful, translating even into modern times.

Scripture: 2 Kings 14: 23 - 29
 Amos 5
 Amos 6: 1 - 8
 Hosea 10: 1 – 6
 Hosea 14: 4- 7

Supplies: Whiteboard and markers or poster and markers

Preparation: Make a chart with two large columns for writing in.
 Reflect on punishment and justice in your own life.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Opening	<p>Inform the class that today's lesson continues into a difficult time in the history of God's people. This is a time of darkness for the people and confusion for historians who try to understand that time. Today's lesson takes place in the Northern Kingdom, known as Israel, with their capital in Samaria. After a series of unfaithful kings, Amos comes to bring a message of doom and God's punishment.</p>	2 min.



Punishment Possibilities	<p>Ask the class to make a list of punishments. 15 min.</p> <p>This can be things they have experienced, things they have heard about, or things they think up. List things that parents choose for their children as well as punishments handed down from a criminal justice system. Don't forget about social punishments such as, "I am not talking to them anymore!"</p> <p>Leave room on your list to write next to each item.</p> <p>Once you have a long list, ask the class to go back and rate them from bad to worst on a scale of 1 – 10. Give the easiest to endure a '1' and the worst a '10.'</p> <p>After you are done rating the punishments, go back and write in what action that punishment would be appropriate in response to. If there are some that you think should never be appropriate, write that next to them.</p> <p>Invite the class to look back at their number rankings and see if the ranking of the punishment fits the severity of the offense they have matched with that punishment.</p>
Punishing the Past	<p>Read 2 Kings 14: 23 – 26 10 min.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What would be the appropriate punishment for sinning, supporting idolatry of various gods and leading an entire nation to do the same?• Is this a scenario that could happen in our world today? (Consider: separation of church and state, diversity of beliefs, voting with no consideration of God) <p>Read Amos 6: 4-7 Hosea 10: 1 – 6</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What faults do you hear in this passage? (<i>Extreme wealth and indulgence? Complacency, apathy, and laziness? Lack of consideration of the needs of others?</i>)• What would be the appropriate punishments for these offenders?• Are these sins ones that we see in our world today?• How should these sins be punished today?• How are these sins punished today?
God Speaks	<p>Read Amos 5: 6 – 11 15 min.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you think verse 11 means? What has happened? (*wealthy have taxed (levied) the poor so the wealthy can build additions to their own fancy homes.)• What do you think an appropriate punishment would be?



Read Amos 5: 12 – 13

Ask:

- What charges does Amos bring against the people?
(taking bribes, casting aside the needy, etc.)
- What do you think an appropriate punishment would be?

Read Amos 5: 21 – 27

Ask:

- How do you feel about God being angry?
- How appropriate is God's anger?

Read Amos 5: 26 – 27 again

Ask:

- What is the sin? (Idolatry)
- What is the punishment? (Exile)
- How do you feel about God's punishment?

Read Amos 5: 24 again

Ask:

- What does this verse mean to you?
- How is this good news?
- How is this bad news?

God's Hope

Read Hosea 14: 4- 7

15 min.

Ask:

- How should we respond to punishment?
- Does our response change based on its fairness?
- How do Hosea's words of God's promises for the future affect how you feel about God punishing?
- What do you wish parents and others who punish would know from this lesson?
- Who have you ever punished and how did you punish them?
 *babysitting *cold shoulder to friend
 *self punishment *not talking to parents or sibling
- What lesson do you need to learn from Amos and Hosea?
- Where is hope in the way you punish others?
- Where is hope in the way you punish yourself?
- How does forgiveness fit into all of this?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. Ask each to lift up a silent prayer for each of the following as you name them:

3 min.

Forgive those who punish us unfairly...
 Forgive us for those we have punished unfairly...
 Forgive those who have taken advantage of others...
 Forgive us when we have taken advantage of others...
 Forgive us when we have made light of someone else's pain...
 Help us to be more faithful to you, God...
 Hear our silent prayer requests... "Amen"



Lesson 20 Down South with Hezekiah and Josiah

Teacher's Notes:

Assyria makes Amos' prophecy a reality, capturing and taking many Israelites into exile—especially young promising members of upper class and ruling families. Meanwhile, Hezekiah (hez-uh-KIE-yah) has come into power in Judah and has restored the temple, reorganized the Priests and Levites, and in the process celebrated Passover in grand fashion. Assyria is turned back when they attempt to take Jerusalem, showing God's protection for Judah. Hezekiah is followed by Manasseh (ma-NASS-eh) who is not faithful and finds himself a captive of Assyria until he repents and is restored. Amon follows Manasseh as king and is unfaithful, but Josiah (joe-SIGH-uh) follows him and continues the restoration that Hezekiah began. During Josiah's reign, workers in the temple discover "the Book of the Law." Upon this discovery, Josiah leads the people in renewing the covenant and celebrating Passover.

Isaiah (which seems to be the work of at least three writers contributing under the name, combined into one book) warns about what is still to come. Isaiah warns about a day when Babylon will come and take all that belongs to Hezekiah's people, even his own sons. Hezekiah is very old and seems content that none of this will happen until after his reign. Although Hezekiah has been faithful to God there is a sense that the wealth and prosperity that some would attribute to faithfulness may actually be a vice to which they will soon fall victim.

Toward the end of our readings, Josiah consults the prophet Huldah. As one of the few named women in the Old Testament, she is an important figure. She has praise for Josiah but a long-range forecast of gloom and doom for God's people.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 29: 1 – 6
2 Chronicles 32: 9 – 23
Isaiah 39
2 Chronicles 34: 1 – 3, 14 – 19, 22 – 28, 33

Supplies: Whiteboard and markers

Preparation: Think about good karma, good energy, faithfulness, and pride.
Where do they connect, conflict, or diverge?
How are church and state connected?
Can self-righteousness of a nation affect spiritual folks?

Activity	Instructions	Time
Now and Later	Give the class the following choices to discuss. Ask them for each pair, "would you take this deal?" After each Now/Later, invite the youth to debate each deal. Now: Peace while you live (no war), except- Later: war on U.S. soil for the next 50 years after you die. Now: You will make at least \$200,000 a year, except- Later: school budgets are cut in half in the next 20 years.	20 min.



Now: Give up the remote control for the rest of your life and-

Later: HIV/AIDS no longer exists.

Now: Comfortable winters while you are old, except-

Later: For two generations after, people can't go outside in any season without protective clothing from sun.

Now: Designer clothes for \$20 or less per item for life, except-

Later: civil war kills half of Cambodian children and youth who rebel against sweatshop managers.

Now: Wear a lie detector with a display screen and-

Later: have lifelong friends and a happy marriage that doesn't end.

Now: You live, disease and cancer free until you die, except--

Later: half of your family's next generation will face either cancer or AIDS.

Read Isaiah 39

Re-read Isaiah 39: 5 – 8.

Ask:

- How do you feel about Hezekiah's response?
- How is Hezekiah's response similar or different to our game?
- Can you name real world choices that seem similar to our game?
(i.e. pollution, national debt, global warming, Social security, etc.)
- How have previous generations responded to the real choices that may be similar to our game?
- What does it mean to "leave the world better than we got it" ?

Good Intentions

Explain: Hezekiah meant well in the beginning.

20 min.

Read 2 Chronicles 29: 1 – 6

Ask:

- How does this reading change your image of Hezekiah?
- Are there lessons from the past that Hezekiah should have learned from the restoration of the temple?

Read 2 Chronicles 32: 9 – 23

Ask:

- How does this reading change your image of Hezekiah?
- If Hezekiah were running for office would you vote for him?
- How should we judge those who go before us?
- How will later generations judge your parents?
- How will later generations judge you?



Explain:

A couple of generations after Hezekiah's death, Josiah becomes king and continues much of the restoration Hezekiah began.

Read: 2 Chronicles 34: 1 – 3, 14 – 19, 22 – 28, 33

Ask:

- Compare Hezekiah and Josiah.
- How did their responses to future prophecy differ?
- Do you think Huldah was afraid to deliver her prophesy?

**Passover
Pass On**

Explain:

In the tradition of the Passover, the role of children is to ask the adults: "What makes this night different?" *10 min.*

Adults then tell the story to name and remember who they are. The children asking was a way of holding adults accountable.

Ask:

- What are ways that young people hold adults accountable in our world?
- What things get passed on from one generation to the next?
- How is faith passed on from one generation to the next?
- How will you pass on your faith to another generation?
- What will you do to serve the next generation?
- What are you willing to sacrifice for them?
- Which children in your church or community now look to you for care and leadership?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. *2 min.*
Ask each person to share one thing they will do for future generations of Christians.

If they need some structure for their sharing, ask the class to say,

"In service to the church of the future,
I will _____ today."



Lesson 21

Micah’s Three Things

Teacher’s Notes:

Micah speaks from Judah—the Southern Kingdom. Samaria and the Northern Kingdom fall during Micah’s lifetime and Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom has survived a siege. In the Northern Kingdom, Amos and Hosea are contemporaries. The earliest writings under the name ‘Isaiah’ come from the Southern Kingdom. As with the Northern Kingdom, the Southern Kingdom has a gap between social classes, and more trouble seems to be on the horizon. Micah warns of an exile to come, and lifts up the idea of a “remnant” of God’s people that will be gathered.

Although the teachings of Micah are important to Jewish as well as Gentile people of faith, many Christians see the prophecy of Micah 5:2-5, speaking of a leader who will come out of Bethlehem, as referencing the birth of Jesus. The most well known portion of Micah’s prophecy is in chapter 6, which reads like a legal proceeding between God and God’s people. Micah 6:8 is one of the most famous texts in all of scripture: *“God has told you, O’ mortal what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with God?”* The rest of chapter 6 talks about injustice that had become common in the time of Micah, and God’s judgment to follow. The rest of Micah’s words are a promise for the future and a reminder of God’s compassion and love.

Scripture: Micah 6: 1 - 13

Supplies: Note cards and pens
Whiteboard and markers

Preparation: Reflect on your own faith and your core beliefs.

Activity	Instructions	Time
The Basics	<p>Give each member of the class a note card.</p> <p>Ask each person to list five beliefs that are at the core of and essential to their faith.</p> <p>Pair up members of the class and invite them to compare.</p> <p>As they compare, invite them to edit based on the conversations.</p> <p>Combine pairs into groups of 4 and repeat the process.</p> <p>Finally, bring the class back together and share thoughts from each group.</p> <p>Ask everyone to look at their own card again, and remove one of their five, picking the least of the important.</p> <p>Give them a moment to make their decision, then ask them to remove one more.</p> <p>Invite everyone to share their final three core beliefs.</p> <p>As a class, vote on the top three using each person’s card as the options to choose from.</p> <p>Once the class has their top three, debrief...</p>	25 min.



Ask:

- How does this list reflect the faith of the whole class?
- How does this list reflect the faith of individual members?
- What was the hardest part of this process?
- What was the easiest part of this process?
- As a group, did you lift up things we do for God or for other people?
- How simple is your faith?
- How complicated is your faith?
- How do you think other people would respond to your three core beliefs on your card?
- Would these three be a good way to share your faith with other people?

Micah's Basics

Read Micah 6: 8

12 min.

Ask:

- How does Micah's list of three compare to your list?
- Is Micah's list more about what we do for God or for others?
- What do you think it means to "seek justice?"
- What do you think it means to "love kindness?"
- What do you think it means to "walk humbly with God?"

Read Micah 6: 1 – 8

Ask:

How does reading the text before this scripture change its meaning?

Read Micah 6: 8 – 13

Ask:

How does reading the text after this scripture change its meaning?

God's Basics

Explain that Micah 6 reads like the sentencing in a court case. God has an accusation to make and the people want to know what to do to make up for their faults. They ask, "with what shall we come before the Lord?" Micah answers God with 6:8. The verses that follow show some details in God's case against the people. Cheating each other was a big concern.

15 min.

What concerns do you think God has with people of faith today?

Make a list of the answers given by the class.

Ask (assuming God will use Micah 6:8 as the criteria):

- If God were to put you on trial for faithfulness, how would you do?
- If God were to put our church on trial, how would we do?
- If God were to put all Christians on trial, how would we do?
- If God were to put all faiths on trial, how would we do?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands.

2 min.

Ask each person to share a concern for justice, an encouragement for kindness, or a statement of humility.



Lesson 22

Exiles and Remnants

Teacher's Notes:

The story of God's people takes place on a stage that is central to trade and important to the transition of power in the ancient world. With Egypt as an established power to the South and West, Israel stands as a major trade route from what we now know as Turkey and Greece, as well as other nations that came to power in the ancient world. The Assyrians and Babylonians played a major role in Israel's history of conquest and exile. Not only was Israel's location important strategically, their loyalty to one unseen God over any ruler or national power was seen as strange and insulting to whoever thought they ruled the world at that time.

Since the Davidic Kingdom was established and the ark brought to Jerusalem, the city has been the center of cultural and religious life for the Jewish community and central to the Christian story. Solomon builds the temple there, with the ark secure in the center. Threats to Jerusalem would have been seen, by many, as a threat to the dwelling place of God. As one superpower after another comes to reign in the Eastern Mediterranean coast, Jerusalem is always in the path of danger. With the fall of Samaria and the Northern Kingdom, even more pressure is put on Jerusalem's strength and stability.

The city survives one siege, leading Micah and the first voice writing under the name Isaiah to give warnings to Jerusalem. Based on historical events, such as the reign of kings (such as Hezekiah) referenced in scripture, scholars tend to agree on three distinct writers writing under the voice of Isaiah, a common way of writing with authority in that day. The first voice echoes Micah's vision of Jerusalem falling, and an ensuing exile.

At first, Jerusalem does not come under direct attack when the king refuses to join Israel and Syria in an alliance. Jerusalem survives a siege by this alliance, but after Assyria destroys the Northern Kingdom and Hezekiah ignores Isaiah's advice and joins a rebellion of nations against Assyria, Jerusalem is sacked by Assyria. As a result, Jerusalem falls under an even heavier burden of servitude to Assyria. Jerusalem finally falls to the Babylonians, who have defeated the Assyrians to become the major power in the region. Jerusalem is later rebuilt when the Babylonians fall to the Persians.

Scripture: Isaiah 10: 5 – 7, 10 - 11
Isaiah 10: 20 – 27

Supplies: Copies of "Prophets Time-line" (see last page of this lesson).

Preparation: Get a large map, globe, or copies of individual maps for groups to look at. Look over time-line and map to familiarize yourself.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Racing the Gap	Draw two lines that teams will follow in a race. The lines should start out a fair distance apart, gradually move closer, until the middle when they are about a foot apart. Then the lines should move back away from each other until the end, when they should be the same distance apart as at the start. Divide the class into two teams (<i>an easy way to do this is to have everyone number off, 1,2,1,2,1,2...etc.</i>). Assign each team to a line. Each team must stay on their line and not step off of it during the race.	10 min.

Race 1: Have each team race, relay style, down and back.

Race 2: Have each team race, relay style, down and back while one person from each team stands in the narrow point between the lines.

Debrief:

- How many times did those in middle get bumped?
- Did those racing worry about bumping them?
- How did those in the middle affect the outcome?

Race 3: Have each team race, relay style, down and back while a cup of water sits on a stool in the narrow point between the lines. Run this version more than once, encouraging the class to speed up. You may want to put a towel under the stool. Stop Race 3 if the cup of water is knocked over.

Debrief:

- How long did you think it would take for a spill?
- How did the water make you personally feel?
- Did anyone act like they were “good enough” to avoid it?”
- What was the best way to keep it from spilling?

The Map

Gather the class around a globe or a large world map, or give each member of the class their own map of the world.

25 min.

Invite them to reflect on where Israel sits compared to other nations and regions. Invite them to share what they know about that part of the world’s history.

Ask:

- How would you get to Egypt if you were in France?
- How would you get to Turkey if you were in Ethiopia?
- How would you get to the Baltic Sea if you were in Yemen?
- Assuming people lived in these places before they had their modern names, and assuming they were actively trading stuff, how do you think this affected Israel?
- What are the major “trade routes” today in our world?
(Airplanes go anywhere but leave/arrive through big cities.)
(Trains often go through industrial areas as well as big cities.)
(Interstates go through big cities.)
(Ships are important to carry large loads around the world.)
- How are modern locations changed by traffic?
(Restaurants, hotels, gas stations, more roads, etc.)
- How much wealth do people near trade routes have?
(Some people have become rich making money from trade.)
(Some people have low paying jobs with trade industries.)
- How is Israel’s place on the map in trading like the relay race games we played?
- Did/do travelers worry about people living in Israel?


Map of the Future

Explain that Isaiah predicted a time when Jerusalem would fall and they would no longer live in security. Isaiah lived through the fall of the N. Kingdom and a siege of Jerusalem by Assyria. He warned that God will use Assyria to punish Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom for not being faithful.

7 min.

Read Isaiah 10: 5 – 7, 10 - 11

Ask:

- Who do you think is talking? (God?)
- Who do you think “him” is? (Assyria?)

Read Isaiah 10: 20 – 27

Ask:

- What do you think “remnant” means?
- Would you be comforted by the promise of a remnant?
- Does the promise of a remnant make up for the fear of being in exile?
- What would be the worst part of being an exile?
- If you were Assyria who would you take away first?
Or, rephrased...
- If you could take away a player from another team who would you take?
- Would it make you feel better to know your teammate would be returned after the game?
- How long do you think it would take for a new place to feel like home?
- How long do you think it would take for returning “home” to Jerusalem to seem strange?

Map of Time

Give each member of the class a timeline. Look at the timeline to see when God’s people went into exile.

6 min.

Ask:

- How do you think the experience was different for those who were born while in exile?
- How long do you think people kept hope alive?
- What do you think “home” meant to those in exile?
- Is there any experience in your life that helps you understand what the exiles would have felt?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. Ask each person to give thanks for one thing about “home.”

2 min.

Prophets Timeline

DATES (BCE)	PROPHET	KING	LOCATION	CONTEXT
750 – 724	Amos Hosea		N. Kingdom	Judgment
742 – 735		Jotham	Judah	
735 – 715		Ahaz	Judah	
722	FALL OF SAMARIA – N. Kingdom (Israel) falls; 10 tribes lost			
715 – 687		Hezekiah	Judah	
701	ASSYRIAN SIEGE ON JERUSALEM – Sennacherib			
742 – 687	Micah		Judah	
	Isaiah		Judah	
687	Obadiah		Judah	Anti-Edomites
640 - 609		Josiah	Judah	Faithfulness
630 - 612	Zephaniah ben Cushi (“Yahweh protects” son of “Africa”)			
626	BABYLON rises to power under King Nabopolassar			
612	Nahum		around Judah	Predicts Nin.
612	BABYLONIANS DEFEAT ASSYRIANS, Ninevah falls			
627 – 586+	Jeremiah	Josiah / Judah Jehoiakim		
	Ezekiel			Exile
605 - 586	Habakkuk	Jehoiakim	Judah	Bab. invasion
605 - 562	<i>Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, is King of Babylon</i>			
597	BABYLONIANS INVADE JERUSALEM			
593 -	Ezekiel	Jehoiakim	In Exile	No return
587 - 586	BABYLONIANS DESTROY JERUSALEM AND TEMPLE			
586 - 538	<i>Hebrews are exported (exiled) to Babylon</i>			
538	PERSIANS UNDER KING CYRUS DEFEAT BABYLON			
500 – 350	Joel		Judah	Nationalistic
520	Haggai		Judah	Temple build
	Zechariah			Post-exile
515	Malachi			Reform
480 – 450	Ezra and Nehemiah			
332	PERSIANS NO MORE			
????	Jonah		Dispersed all over	Fable



Lesson 23

Long Way From Home

Teacher's Notes:

When Assyria conquers the Northern Kingdom, God's people are taken away into exile, and we hear no more of the story of those ten tribes. We get no glimpse into the life of those in exile until Babylon conquers Assyria then turns its forces to attack Jerusalem. The best and brightest were taken into exile. This would have included military, political, and economic leaders, and their promising young sons and daughters. Many of the eldest were killed if they were influential, died along the journey to Babylon, or were left behind to fend for themselves.

After the fall of Jerusalem, among the exiles was the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel had been warning for years about the fall of Jerusalem and Judah. Ezekiel's early message had been one of doom and gloom, with God's wrath and judgment and the destruction of God's holy city at the center of his message. However, during the exile in Babylon when God's people start to lose heart and feel alone in the strange land, Ezekiel's message changes to one of hope and restoration. Through Ezekiel, God promises to restore Israel as a nation.

The book of Ezekiel is not the only source available for exploring the exile experience. Psalm 137 shares the feelings and experience of God's people living in a strange land. This psalm shows the connection between God, the land, the temple, and the people—as well as the emotional distress of the exiles. You can hear their lament and their hatred towards those who have taken them so far from home. The last line of the Psalm is troubling, expressing a desire for revenge, even upon the children of Babylon.

How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land? Some considerations:

The temple had been the center of worship - what now?
 They don't worship our God. They serve foods we are not supposed to eat
 Many of our friends and family weren't taken in exile; are they okay?
 We have lost so many familiar things that we had taken for granted.
 What do we need in order to be happy again?
 How do you survive as an outsider who doesn't even know the customs?
 How strange is it to feel alone even in the middle of so many people?
 What makes home feel like "home"?

Scripture: Psalm 137
 Ezekiel 37:1-15

Supplies: •Note cards and pens
 •Article: Fahid's story (Refugee story, from resources)

Preparation: Stuff to do

Activity	Instructions	Time
Emergency!	Ask each member of the class to list things they would take from their home if there was an emergency and they only had time to grab 10 things. Give each person a note card to write their list.	15 min.

Have each person cut their list from 10 to 5 and then invite them to share their lists. Have them remove 3 more items from the list (leaving only 2) and share again.

Move!

Tell class members to imagine that they are moving and may never be back to the state they live in. Ask them to make a list of 10 things they would want to take a picture of. They can be things at home or the surrounding area.

Have each person cut their list from 10 to 5 and then invite them to share their lists. Have them remove 3 more items from the list (leaving only 2) and share again.

Ask:

- How many of the things on either list are religious in nature?
- If you moved, would you worry about feeling far from God?
- What would you miss most about your faith life if you moved?
- How would your relationship with God change?

Bible Study

Explain:

10 min.

The scripture we are about to read takes place after Babylon has conquered Assyria and attacked Jerusalem. They have taken their strongest leaders and community members into exile. As you listen, remember that they are far from home and don't know when or if they will ever return home. Note that Zion is the name of a mountain near Jerusalem and the name was often used to refer to the whole region. It was Jerusalem that had been the center of cultural life and their religion. The temple was in Jerusalem and they thought, in some way, that God was present in the temple in a way unlike any other place.

Read Psalm 137

Ask:

- What questions do you have about this reading?
(Use teacher's notes to answer as you are comfortable.)
- What would you like to ask one of the exiles singing this Psalm?
- What would you like to say to one of the exiles singing this Psalm?
- When have you ever left a place that was very important to you?
- How does it feel to leave a special place?
- Why do people leave places they call "home" ?
(What about in other countries? Refugees?)
- What would it take to make you as angry as the Psalmist?
- What do you think God might want the exiles to know?



Respond! Explain to the class that they will be writing a message *15 min.*
As though they are a prophet representing God’s word to the exiles. Tell the class that they have 10 minutes to construct a message that God might want the exiles to know. You may want to split the class into small groups for this project if you have a large class. After 10 minutes, invite them to share their work.

Ask:

- How did you start this project? Did you pray?
- Would you feel comfortable telling anyone it is a message from God?

Bible Study **Explain:** *13 min.*
Our next text is a response from the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel was one of the exiles, known for strange images in his messages that sometimes read like science fiction. In his earliest prophecies, Ezekiel brought warnings about the fall of Jerusalem and judgment from God.

Read Ezekiel 37:1-15

Ask:

- What might God have been trying to tell Ezekiel?
- What might God have been trying to tell the exiles?

Fahid’s Story **Read** the story of Farid, a modern-day refugee, in resources
Ask:

- How are modern-day refugees like the exiles?
- How are modern-day refugees different than the exiles?
- What would you like to say to Farid?
- What do you think God might say to Farid?

Prayer Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. *2 min.*
Ask each person to lift up a prayer of hope for someone else who feels lost or alone.

BBC On-line Thursday, 18 October, 2001, 18:18 GMT 19:18 UK

A refugee's story

Farid Ahmad, a 16-year-old pupil at Villiers High School in Southall, west London describes his life in Afghanistan, his journey to Britain and how he feels today

“My name’s Farid Ahmad. I am from Afghanistan. It’s a very beautiful country in the heart of Asia. It has very nice, peaceful, hospitable, brave, innocent, war-threatened and poor people.

“I am from Ningarhar, the border province of Afghanistan and Pakistan. We were living a peaceful life. Everyone was happy, everything was OK. Suddenly a plan was made by the Russians and they invaded our homeland.

“A war started, a holy war against the Russians. My father started fighting for his country as a pure Afghan.

“They fought with the Russians for more than 10 years and won. When the Russians left our country our leaders started fighting with each other for some purposes and some causes which had bad effects.

“I was a very small boy during this time. I was a kid who didn’t know anything. We lost our father. My mother searched for my father. She asked many people, she had many problems, everything was destroyed, our lives were in danger, our future was destroyed because we lost our father.

“He was missing for a long time. Then some people told my mother that my father had been killed. This was the worst day in our family life.

“Then some people told us our father was alive. We waited for him but never heard anything from him anymore. My mother confirmed that our father had died. That was the darkest period in our history. We didn’t have anyone to look after us.

“We were Muslims but not restricted Muslims, our family were social people. My parents wanted to give us a modern life and a modern future. They wanted us to study not only Islam but modern studies and much more.

“My brothers and sisters were studying but we still had feelings about our father because we never saw his live body or dead body.

“Then the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, they stopped women from working, studying and having a normal life.

“Our problems became more and more. We didn’t have anyone to give us something to make a living although we were from the Khan family.

“Khan in Afghanistan means landlords and people with much power, money and strength.

“At this time, I, my brothers and sisters were studying at school. We were studying Eng-



lish language courses and computer courses.

“My elder brother Nisar Ahmad left our beloved country and came to the UK because he didn’t want to fight against our own Afghan brothers. My mother didn’t want him to go on fighting.

“When I was 15, I was old enough to look after my family. But my mother was afraid and made arrangements for me to leave and join my brother.

“I remember the day when I left my family. I looked at my brothers and sisters and they could all see me crying because we didn’t know when we would see each other again.

“I love my family, I love my country and my people with whom I could never fight. It’s impossible to fire even one bullet towards my Afghan brothers even if they’re wrong. That’s why my mother wanted me to leave Afghanistan.

“On my way to the UK I faced hundreds of problems. I walked for several hours in deserts, mountain, in dark nights, in forests, rain, cold weather and hunger.

“I spent many nights underground without any bed or blanket with very little food to survive on. I feared and worried for my life. But I was not upset for myself because I am a man and a man never gives up. I think I was on my way for more than two months.

“Now on TV I am watching my country and my people being attacked by the United States. My people are again facing a very big problem.

“Now I do not know the whereabouts of my family and I miss them very much.

“Some people say they’re in Pakistan, others say they’re in Iran or Afghanistan. I am here in the UK. I feel safe but I am not happy. I miss my brothers and sisters and my mother very much.

“I hate terrorism, killing of innocent people and shooting of human beings. I’ll never do anything wrong according to humanitarian law.

“I want the world to hear my story because I want to tell them that Afghanistan is a very nice country with nice people and nice culture.

“Our people do not want to fight, they do not want to kill each other but I don’t know what the causes are of the fighting.

“I don’t know how one Afghan can kill another Afghan. Our religion doesn’t tell us to kill any innocent human beings, it teaches us peace, love, freedom, justice and human rights.

“People in Afghanistan are very poor, they do not have shelter. Sometimes they only eat once a day or once every two days.

“I pray to my God to help Afghanistan, they are fed up of fighting, of all the problems and being refugees.”

**Lesson 24****Holy, Holy, Holy****Teacher's Notes:**

Those who were not taken into exile faced a great deal of change. Although they had the comfort of home, their community leaders and many of their youth were missing. Those left behind had to deal with the loss of friends and family as well as the holes left in community structure. Imagine the struggle of people, not used to leadership, trying to rediscover a “normal” routine. School, banking, and other structures would have taken a big hit by those taken into exile. On top of these changes in community, they were now under rule of a foreign government, while vulnerable to outside attack as well.

The biggest change may not have been what was taken away, but what was destroyed. The loss of the temple cannot be overstated. Those in exile had to find new ways to worship far away from the temple. Those who remained had to find an expression for their faith while the temple lay in a ruin that they could see every day. If God “lived” in the temple, where was God now? Had God gone away? Such questions force reflection on the true nature of God and the definition of holiness. Was the rubble that had once been the temple still a “holy” place? Was holiness to be found in the land, the building, or the people?

Things changed for those who stayed behind. Jeremiah was a prophet who had warned the leadership of Judah about the rise of Babylon. People did not want to hear Jeremiah but could not seem to escape his message. Jeremiah was jailed, put on house arrest, threatened, rescued, summoned, and ignored. His personal safety swayed with the politics and fears of the royal court. Unlike other prophets, Jeremiah is right in the middle of everything and has access to the highest places of power. Habakkuk is a much lesser known prophet but spoke at a similar time in history. Habakkuk echoes the plea of God’s people, seeking to understand the events around them. Habakkuk calls out to God with the cries and prayers of the people.

Scriptures: Jeremiah 1: 1-8
2 Chronicles 36: 11-21
Habakkuk 2: 18 – 19
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Supplies:

- Bibles
- Some personal objects and random objects (for, *Can things be holy?*)

Preparation: Think about the things that are “holy” in your life.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Holy	Invite the class to think about “holy” places.	<i>30 min.</i>
Ground	Have them list the three most “holy” places they have ever seen or visited. Invite them to share their lists.	



Ask:

- What makes these places special to you?
- What makes these places holy?
- How do you define holy?
- What are some other holy places in other cultures?
- How important are holy places? Why?
- How does a place become holy?
- Can a place stop being holy? If so, how?

Read 2 Chronicles 36: 11-21

Ask:

- How would it affect your faith if our church building was destroyed by winds or a fire?
- What about the loss might be the hardest to get over?
- What about the loss would make it easier to face?
- How do you think our church would worship without our sanctuary?
- How do you think our church members would stay connected without our building?
- If you were re-building our church, what would you change?
- Can you think of big changes that have been made in our church building over the years?
- Do you remember how generations before you dealt with change in the building?
- Are there other special places in your life that have changed? (church camp, school, home, park, ball field, etc.)
- How did physical changes affect your experience of that place?

Interviews:

Group class members into pairs and send them out to find older members of the church to interview with the previous questions. Bring back notes to share with the class. They could even invite an older member of the church to come back to class with them. Let each pair share what they heard from another generation.

As before, remind class members to be respectful, to not force people into talking if it seems they would prefer not to, and to generously thank them when finished.

Ask:

- Where do you think God really lives?
- What else can be holy? (writings, songs, etc.)
- In what way are people holy?
- In what way may some people be more holy than others?

**Holy
People**

Read Jeremiah 1: 1 – 8

10 min.

Ask:

- What does this text suggest about the holiness of people?



Read Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Ask:

- What does this text suggest about the holiness of people?
- How do you see yourself as a holy person?
- Who are the most holy people you know?
- Are they different from you? If so, how?
- Are there people you think you may be more holy than?
- If all people were treated as holy, how would it change the way you treat them?

**Holy
Stuff**

Lay out a few small personal objects and some random things that have no meaning to them. *10 min.*

Ask:

- What else can be holy? (already asked this earlier)
- Which of these things do you think is holy?

Explain:

Tell about some of the objects you have shared.

Share why they are important or represent something holy to you.

Invite the group to share or tell about some of their own items.

(Many may have them in pockets or purses.)

Ask:

- What makes these items special to you?
- Are they holy?

**Holy
Bible**

Place a Bible in front of the class.

8 min.

Ask:

- What makes this holy?
- If we spilled water on the pages, would it still be holy?
- If there was a fire and it burned, would it still be holy?
- Many times in history, including during the Holocaust, Jewish Bibles (the Tanakh) have been taken from Jewish people and burned in bonfires, sometimes by Christians, and sometimes with other persecutions and killings of Israelite (Jewish) people. *(The Tanakh is the same Hebrew Bible as the Christian Old Testament, although after the first seven books, the scriptures differ in the way they are arranged and categorized.)* Do you think the scriptures that were burned were holy?
- If a Bible remains un-opened and un-read, would it be holy?
- If this Bible were old and pages falling out, do you think it would it be more or less holy? Why?
- Are there any writings that are not in the Bible but are holy?
- Do you think there are different levels of holiness?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands.

2 min.

Ask each person to give thanks for something holy to them.

The last person can close the prayer by saying, "Amen."



Lesson 25

Call for a Messiah

Teacher's Notes:

One of the most influential messages of the prophets was the promise of a Messiah who would come to rescue God's people. The word messiah is translated as "anointed one," or anointed leader, with the term considered applicable to other Jewish leaders who came to lead throughout Jewish history.

The New Testament references many texts of the Hebrew Bible in narratives about Jesus. Although Jesus does "fulfill" many of these prophecies, it is important to remember that some prophecies were "fulfilled" in their own day. For example, Isaiah spoke of one who was to come and set the people free; he later named Cyrus of the Persians (see lesson 26) as the "messiah," who set the people free from Babylonian captivity.

The promise of a messiah continues to be a major theme in Judaism. By the time of Jesus, a majority of Jewish people had been dispersed to live in areas far from Jerusalem. With no modern news services, most probably heard little or nothing about the Jewish teacher named Jesus during his short ministry. Some Jewish people who did hear about Jesus did not believe that he could be the promised Messiah, because their understanding was that the Messiah was to come bringing a reign of peace, order, justice, and love for all—and they didn't see this happening, but often the opposite. Jewish people who did not know about, or did not believe Jesus of Nazareth was the prophesied Messiah, became ammunition for anti-Jewish (against Judaism) and anti-Semitic (against the Jewish race) condemnation and persecution, and some Christian leaders to teach that God's promise to be faithful to Israel had become null and void.

In the years to come, Christians didn't always represent Jesus Christ (Christ is the Greek word for 'Messiah' as being concerned with love, justice, and mercy to neighbors, much less to God's chosen people of Israel. Throughout history countless Christians killed, persecuted, and treated unjustly Jewish people for being "Christ killers." Christians led or approved as Jewish people were given choices of exile or death, baptism or death. The same was true as they were publically ridiculed, made to live in set-apart ghettos, and stripped of the rights of other citizens. As Jewish people were being persecuted by Christians and as well as those of other faiths, they continued to draw strength from the stories that had been passed down through the generations about the exile, Babylonian captivity, and later atrocities (for instance, in the *Apocrypha*, see 2 Maccabees, chapter 7). Such stories of faithful devotion and strength inspired generations of Jewish people to remain strong and devoted in their faithfulness to God and God's teachings.

It is important to read prophetic texts in their own context without projecting our Christian beliefs onto the events. That does not mean we cannot see Jesus reflected in those events. That is a fair reading of scripture, but the original writers lived in a specific context that should not be forgotten. Nor should God's covenant and faithfulness to Israel be treated as promises that God went back upon. God remains faithful to all generations of God's children.

Scriptures: Isaiah 11: 1 – 9 Isaiah 44: 21 – 28 – Cyrus named
 Zechariah 9: 9-10 Isaiah 45: 1 – 4 – Cyrus description
 Micah 5: 2-4
 Isaiah 52: 13 – 15



Supplies: Bibles

Preparation: Look over this lesson carefully and make sure you are prepared to answer any of your own questions.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Waiting Game	Have two volunteers line up for a race. You can set any distance. It doesn't matter. Say, "Ready, set..." But don't say, "Go!" Keep the two racers waiting. Start over with "Ready, set..." But don't say "Go." Just keep them waiting. Have the volunteers sit down (no, there is no race).	10 min.

Ask:

- How did it feel to keep waiting?
- How good are you at waiting on things?
- What are the hardest things for you to wait for?
- Can you share a memory where you were bad at waiting?
- What makes waiting hard?
- What makes waiting easier?

Waiting Time	Explain that another word for waiting is <i>anticipation</i> . In the church we have two special times of year when we talk about anticipation. See if the class can name both (Advent and Lent).	10 min.
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Ask:

- What is Advent? (preparation for Christmas)
- How long is Advent? (4 weeks before Christmas)
- What traditions does the church have around Advent?
(purple, wreath, music, Hanging of the Greens, etc. ?)
- What is Advent getting us ready for?
- What things do you, personally, look forward to in Advent?

Explain:

Christmas is a celebration of Jesus birth, but has also been a time when the Church looks forward to a time when the Messiah will come into the world again (the Jewish people see that this will be the first time the Messiah will come; Christians believe that this will be the Messiah's second time to come).

Ask:

- What is Lent? (Preparation for Easter)
- How long is Lent? (60 days running from Ash Wednesday to Easter)
- What traditions does the church have around Lent?
(purple, special worship services, Baptism preparation, etc. ?)
- What is Lent getting us ready for?
- What things do you, personally, look forward to during this time?

Explain: Easter is the celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Part of Easter is the reminder that Jesus died as a sacrifice for our sins and Easter reminds us that we are forgiven and have



new life. We celebrate the promise of this new, eternal life and look forward to a day when we will all live eternally with God.

- | | |
|--|---|
| Waiting
For What? | <p>Ask: <i>7 min.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which do you look forward to or celebrate the most?
Jesus' birth or Jesus' coming again? • New life in God's forgiveness or eternal life? • How do you think age might change your answers? • How do you think living in poverty might change your answers? • How do you think living in a war zone might change your answers? • What other factors could change your answers? |
| Hope | <p>Split the class up into pairs or small groups. <i>11 min.</i></p> <p>Give each group a different scripture to look at.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Isaiah 11: 1 – 9</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Zechariah 9: 9-10</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Micah 5: 2-4</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Isaiah 52: 13 – 15</p> <p>Instruct each group or pair to read their scripture and discuss. They should reflect on what life was like for God's people, and why a "messiah" would be important to them. Tell them to be prepared to share their passage with the class, lifting up descriptions of what a messiah is, and why they would look forward to a messiah.</p> |
| Waiting
For Who? | <p>Read Isaiah 44: 21 – 28 and Isaiah 45: 1 – 4 <i>8 min.</i></p> <p>Ask: Who do these passages say the Messiah is? (Cyrus)</p> <p>Explain:</p> <p>In that day, God used Cyrus to help God's people.</p> <p>We will learn more about Cyrus and the Persians next week.</p> <p>Christians often use passages from Isaiah to talk about Jesus.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think prophetic scriptures that were fulfilled, like those discussing Cyrus, can also be about Jesus? Why? |
| Writing
For those
Waiting | <p>• As a class, or in small groups, think about concerns in the world today and compose a short message of hope. <i>12 min.</i></p> <p>• Write what you think God would have a prophet say to people.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the church bring words of hope to people? • Do we need a new message from God or do we already know the messages helping us to reach the needs of God's people? • How could your church do better in bringing hope to people in need? |
| Prayer | <p>Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. <i>2 min.</i></p> <p>Have each person share in the prayer, asking God to help bring hope to someone or a group of people.</p> <p>The last person can close the prayer by saying, "Amen."</p> |

**Lesson 26****Cyrus and the Persians****Teacher's Notes:**

Isaiah's words are proven true as Babylon falls to the Persians, led by King Cyrus. Rather than making people convert to the religion of his kingdom, Cyrus's plan was to incorporate the beliefs of all people. Cyrus seemed to believe a god exists, but wasn't sure which gods were the true ones. Cyrus thought that by praying to a diversity of gods, he would cover his bases and best serve his people. By incorporating the beliefs of the newly conquered people, Cyrus kept people from rebelling for cultural reasons, and actually endeared himself to those who had been conquered. Compared to other empires and rulers, the Persians were a welcome change to many. To the Hebrews, one of Cyrus' most popular acts was beginning the work to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

Cyrus's diversity brought a lot of change. It is in this time period that the Jewish community was influenced by Zoroastrianism. This belief system included competing powers of good and evil. Until this time, most people attributed all events in life to God. Good and bad events were given meaning based on the assumption that God caused or allowed them to happen. If bad things happened, one must have been sinful or their family had been sinful. This theological shift allows for the dating of many biblical texts.

Unfortunately, Cyrus reign ends before the temple is finished. He is succeeded by Artaxerxes (art-uh-zerk-sees). Hearing the concerns from Jerusalem's neighbors, including stories of the trouble Jerusalem has caused for past kings, Artaxerxes puts an end to the building project.

Scriptures: Isaiah 45: 1 – 4
Ezra 1: 2 - 11
Ezra 4: 6 – 24

Supplies:

- Building supplies for "Design" project
- History of your church building or a person who knows the history

Preparation:

- Have supplies ready and clear space for class to work.
- Be able to talk about how your church was built, or have a guest who can talk about it.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Design	<p>Invite the youth to imagine they are sitting in the dusty ruins of where their church building used to be. Due to a massive storm, the building has been knocked down.</p> <p>Give the class paper and markers and instruct them to design a new church building. They can put whatever they want in their design. Tell them not to worry about a budget, just to put what they think is needed in the design. Encourage them to include details that will make the new church special.</p> <p>Provide some blocks, Legos, pop-cycle sticks, glue, and other supplies if they want to build a small model of their design. They can include more detail on the drawing but the model will allow them to show the shape.</p>	<i>12 min.</i>



You may want to divide the class into groups for this project. If you divide, give the class a chance to share their designs.

Build? As a class, ask them to make a list of all the things they would need to make their design happen. This should be money, tools, builders, building materials, etc. If the class doesn't mention permits and other requirements, make sure to share those for the list. *3 min.*

Extreme Temple Make-over **Read** Isaiah 45: 1 – 4 and Ezra 1: 2 - 11 *8 min.*
Ask:

- How was Cyrus different from past kings who conquered the land around Jerusalem?
- Do you think about Cyrus as a king / leader?
- Why would Cyrus want them to rebuild the temple?
- How do you feel about a “non believer” helping rebuild the temple?
- If Cyrus was helping other religions rebuild their sacred buildings, would it change your opinion of him?
- How do you feel about God using a “non believer” for such an important role in the history of God’s people?
- How does your government support your church’s work?
- How would a change in government change your church?

Our Building Share some history from your church’s current building with the class. This can be from a written history, notes, or a special guest who knows the history or was a part of the building process. This could also include any renovations or remodeling *8 min.*

Delays **Read** Ezra 4: 6 – 24 *8 min.*
Ask:

- Why was work on the temple stopped?
- How do you feel about Artaxerxes as a king leader?
- How do you think God’s people in Jerusalem felt when they were stopped from building?
- How could government hurt or hinder your church?
- Do you think either king should have been involved with rebuilding the temple? Why?
- How do you think these events changed how the people worshiped God?
- How do you think these events changed the community of God’s people?
- How important is the building where you worship?
- How important is feeling “safe” when you worship?
- How do you think feeling unsafe would change the way you worship?

Divisions & Decisions

Ask:

10 min.

- What complicated issues does our church and government struggle to find an answer for? (make a list of issues as the class lists them)
- How do government and church have conflict on modern issues?
- How does our government support all religions?
- How does our government favor some religions?
- How might it be easier to be a nation if everyone had the same religion?
- How would you feel about everyone having the same religion?
- How does diversity of beliefs help our nation?
- Which is more important: security or diversity? Why?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands.
Ask each person to give thanks for something about their church building that is special to them.

2 min.





Lesson 27 *Rebuilding Again: Ezra & Nehemiah*

Teacher's Notes:

Ezra and Nehemiah have overlapping stories. Ezra is a prophet and spiritual leader living in or around Jerusalem. Nehemiah, an exile in service to King Artaxerxes, eventually goes to Jerusalem and becomes governor there.

Nehemiah is saddened by Artaxerxes' reversal of King Cyrus' policy towards Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple. Artaxerxes sees the sadness in Nehemiah's face and questions him. Nehemiah explains, and asks for permission to go to Jerusalem and finish the rebuilding of the temple and its city walls. He also asks for papers for safe passage through the lands around Jerusalem. Artaxerxes grants Nehemiah's requests.

Along with rebuilding the city, Nehemiah struggles to rebuild the community, which is in conflict as returning exiles and those who remained in the land are reunited and try to make a life together after 100 years apart. Nehemiah tries to bring the people back to God by separating from other peoples. There is a focus on being faithful to the covenant event to the point that Nehemiah has the city gates closed on the Sabbath. Foreign wives are discouraged, as is the practice of marrying daughters off to other peoples. Although many of these practices do not translate well into modern culture, Nehemiah's work is profound and had a major influence on the identity and history of the Hebrew people.

Scriptures: Haggai 2: 6 - 9
 Nehemiah 2: 1 – 10
 Ezra 5: 6 – 17
 Ezra 6: 1 - 12
 Nehemiah 11: 1 – 2

Supplies: Whiteboard and markers or poster

Preparation: Review the Biblical story of Lesson 26

Activity	Instructions	Time
Complaining	Ask:	5 min.

- What kinds of things do you complain about?
(make a list on whiteboard or poster)
- What kinds of things do your friends complain about?
(add to the list)
- What kinds of things does your family complain about?
(add to the list)
- What do you think people complain about the most?
- What is the difference between complaining and gossip?
- What is the difference between complaining and "tattling?"
- When is complaining a good thing?
- When is complaining a bad thing?

Whining	Remind the class of the events of Lesson 26. It is important to remember that King Cyrus gave orders for the temple to be rebuilt, and that Artaxerxes was responding to a letter of complaint from Jerusalem's neighbors when he stopped the building.	10 min.
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Read Haggai 2: 6 - 9

Read Nehemiah 2: 1 – 10

Ask:

- How do you think Nehemiah came to serve Artaxerxes?
- How does this decision by Artaxerxes change your view of him?
- How do you think Jerusalem’s neighbors will respond to this decision?

Read Ezra 5: 6 – 17

Ask:

- Is this complaining or “tattling?”

Deciding

Explain:

It seems that Artaxerxes does not receive the neighbors’ letter. Darius is King when the letter is received. Darius does some research and finds King Cyrus’ decree for the temple to be rebuilt and respects that wish.

Read Ezra 6: 1 – 12

Ask:

- What do you think of Darius as a king / leader?

**Building
Community**

Explain:

With Ezra as a spiritual leader and Nehemiah as Governor over the region, the temple and the Jerusalem walls are rebuilt, which took efforts of a lot of people. Many returned from exile to help build. This was not an easy transition for God’s people.

8 min.

Read Nehemiah 11: 1 – 2

Ask:

- If you had been taken from your home, and finally set free, how would you feel about having to rely on a drawing to see if you got to live in your hometown?
- If you lived in a house for 20 years, how would you feel if you had to rely on a drawing to see if the people who used to live there could have the house back and make you move out?

**Returning
And
Remaining**

Divide the class into two groups. Designate one group as “returnees” and the other as “remnants.” Remind the class that those taken into exile never returned—it was their grandchildren and great-grandchildren that did, only having heard about Jerusalem in stories. So, as the exiles ‘came home,’ the ruins of Jerusalem were not much like the ‘home’ their ancestors had told them about. Meanwhile, those who had

20 min.



not been taken into exile--the remnant—had filled roles in the community that they were not familiar with and built a community, sometimes using neighboring peoples to fill in their gaps. The return of the exiles was difficult for everyone as they tried to figure out how to share “home.”

Tell each group to prepare an argument for why they deserve special consideration in assignment of where to live in Jerusalem. Give each group about 5 minutes to come up with their arguments. Tell each group not to elect a spokesperson but to make sure each group member can explain their reasoning.

When you bring the groups back together, pair up members of opposite teams and have them debate one another, one-on-one, based on their group’s position.

Bring the group back together and ask class members to explain the opposition’s perspective based on their debates.

Ask:

- Which do you think was harder:
Rebuilding the temple and walls, or rebuilding the community?
- What kind of things do you think you would have done to rebuild the faith community?
- What do you think would happen if we “un-promoted” all of you for one year? (ex. 9th graders go back to 8th)
What would be different? Any conflicts? Why?
- What types of things divide communities today?
- How do we rebuild broken or hurting communities today?
- Is the past helpful or harmful in settling conflicts?

**Still
Complaining**

Look back at the list of complaints from earlier.

8 min.

Ask:

- How many of our complaints are due to community hurts?
- How do our complaints compare to those in our story today?
- What can you do to help settle complaints on this list?
- What do you do when you can “fix” a complaint?
- Where do you think God is working in the issues we complain about?
- What do you complain about to God?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands.
Ask each person lift up one thing they complain about that they need to let go of.

2 min.

**Lesson 28****Psalms to Review****Teacher's Notes:**

Although all of Psalms is poetic, there are many different types of psalms there. Some are prayers of lament. Others are lyrics of joy and praise. Some share the heart of God's people and some cry out for help in times of crisis. Many of the psalms seem to have been used with music and as part of worship. Others seem like very personal and private poems written out of pain and fear. Throughout Psalms we can hear the expressions of faith, doubt, hope, and fear of God's people over time. Although David is sometimes credited with the writing of Psalms, it is clear that the book has influences from the exiles that came after David, so we know that words and thoughts passed along in the Psalms were developed over time. Through these verses, we can hear echoes of our own laments, doubts, joys, and celebrations.

Scriptures: Psalms

Supplies:

- CD player, or laptop CD player or MP3 with speakers
- Church hymnals

Preparation:

1. Pick several songs and have a way to play them for the class.
 - Explore how music kept the Hebrew people going.
 - Look at older hymns and songs and think about how they kept the people of that day going.
 - Do the same thing with hymns and secular music sung today.
 - Consider: what are these songs about? What makes a song catch on?
 - What sorrows, longings, joys and celebrations can we see in each?
 - How does music reach each of us today?
2. Choose 4 – 5 Psalms that each has a different focus.
 - Match a Psalm to a historic event we have talked about
 - Match a Psalm to the feelings of the people
 - Find a Psalm that lifts up the needs of the people in prayer
 - Find a Psalm that sounds like it might fit that right time today

Activity	Instructions	Time
The Right Tone for You	Play a little bit of a few different songs. Make sure they are very different in genre and pace. Suggestions: classical, Heavy Metal, folk, Hip-hop Have class look for fears, sorrows, longings, joys and celebrations Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How are these selections similar?• How are these selections different?• Which one would you want to dance to? Why?• Which one would be most relaxing to you? Why?• Which one would you listen to when you are sad? Why?• What types of music do you listen to at home? Why?• What songs do you play for special occasions? Why?	15 min.



- How important is music in your life?
- Why do songs like Country Roads (West Virginia), Rocky Top (Tennessee), and Sweet Home Alabama Continue to be popular and well known?
- What songs remind you of a specific event or person? Why?

**The Right
Tone for
the Time**

Review the time line from the past nine lessons. 7 min.

Ask:

- Which situation faced by God's people would have been the hardest for you? Why?
- If you lived through those events, what kind of music would you have wanted to listening to? Why?

**Matching
Game:
Part 1**

Split the class up into two groups. Give each a list of the Psalms listed below (see lesson's last page). Have them read the Psalms, and match the one that they think would be the most appropriate for each event or time period from these recent lessons. There is no right answer but an example of how they might match up is here: 15 min.

Lesson 19	Amos Brings Bad News	Psalm 1
Lesson 20	Down South with Hezekiah and Josiah	Psalm 63
Lesson 21	Micah's Three Things	Psalm 15
Lesson 22	Exiles and Remnants	Psalm 28
Lesson 23	Long Way From Home	Psalm 137
Lesson 24	Holy, Holy, Holy	Psalm 74
Lesson 25	Call for a Messiah	Psalm 23
Lesson 26	Cyrus and the Persians	Psalm 24
Lesson 27	Rebuilding Again: Ezra & Nehemiah	Psalm 147

**Matching
Game:
Part 2**

Work in the same two groups as in Part 1. Give each a copy of your church's hymnal. Have them look through the hymnal and pick they think would be the most appropriate for each event or time period from recent lessons. Examples: 15 min.

"Rebuilding Again" – *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*

"Exiles & Remnants" – *O God, Our Help In Ages Past*

Have the two groups share their selections. Again, there are no right or wrong answers but they should have a reason for the songs they choose.

Prayer

Invite the class to look through the hymnals again . 8 min.
Each person should pick out one line from a hymn to use as their offering in the closing prayer. They do not have to pray in any order and the lines do not have to match up with the person before or after them. When the class is ready, ask them to join hands in a circle and let each person share their line of the prayer. The last person can say "Amen" after their line.



MATCHING GAME:

Match the Lesson with the Psalm that you think would fit it best. Look up Psalms (use blanks for any notes you want to jot down about them), then match each to a lesson:

Psalm 1 _____

Psalm 15 _____

Psalm 23 _____

Psalm 24 _____

Psalm 28 _____

Psalm 63 _____

Psalm 74 _____

Psalm 137 _____

Psalm 147 _____

Psalm:	Lesson: Title	my notes about theme:
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_____	19: Amos Brings Bad News	_____
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_____	20: Down South with Hezekiah and Josiah	_____
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_____	21: Micah's Three Things	_____
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_____	22: Exiles & Remnants	_____
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_____	23: Long Way From Home	_____
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_____	24: Holy, Holy, Holy	_____
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_____	25: Call for a Messiah	_____
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_____	26: Cyrus & the Persians	_____
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_____	27: Rebuilding Again: Ezra & Nehemiah	_____
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Lesson 29

Ecclesiastes and Proverbs

Teacher's Notes:

Ecclesiastes and Proverbs are often categorized in Christian versions of the Bible as **wisdom literature**, joining Psalms, Job, and the Song of Solomon. The Jewish Tanakh categorizes these same books, along with Ruth, Lamentations, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther, and the Chronicles as, "Writings." Wisdom literature is found in many works outside of scripture and in many different cultures.

Ecclesiastes often causes great debate among scholars and church members alike. The book is often described as a basic explanation of ancient Jewish philosophy. The author of the book is referred to by the title, "Qoheleth" in the text. This title is often translated "leader of the assembly," although other translations of the name usually having similar meaning. Although the text suggests in its opening that King Solomon ("son of David, king in Jerusalem") is writer, not all of the text supports such a claim. Later in the book the author references the author's identity as a wise sage who works among the people.

Proverbs is easier to understand than Ecclesiastes. It has many short pieces of advice that may have been gathered together from various sources, many ancient, by Solomon and others, for guidance of the Hebrew people. Many of the proverbs seem to be addressed from a teacher to pupils. These pupils may have been princes and other youth from royal and elite households. Some of the proverbs seem to be folk wisdom using common sense advice applicable to anyone. Scripture from Proverbs show up frequently in the books of the New Testament, showing their Jewish authors' familiarity. When reading Proverbs, however, it is important to remember that the advice was written by and for a people, culture, and geography much different than any modern reader experiences today.

Scripture: Proverbs 2: 1 - 11
 Ecclesiastes 1: 1-11
 Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8
 Ecclesiastes 4: 9 – 16

Supplies: Whiteboard and markers

Preparation: Think back on your own teachers and those who you see as wise.

Activity	Instructions	Time
How Do	Work as a class to come up with a definition of "wisdom."	20 min.
You Know?	<p>Make sure everyone has a chance to give input. After you have that definition, give the group this list of words and ask them to come up with definitions for each of them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligence • Knowledge • Facts • 'Street smarts' • Common Sense • Understanding <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are these words alike or different from wisdom? • Has this definition list changed your definition of wisdom? • How is each of these terms "passed on" from one generation to the next? • Who passed on one of these to you? • What are the most important lessons others have passed down to you? • What lessons have you learned by <i>not</i> listening to others? • What lessons have you learned through scripture? 	



Secret Knowledge	Have the group sit in a circle so that everyone can see every other member of the group. Pick one volunteer to step out of the room. Those remaining should choose a leader. The volunteer is brought back into the room. The rest of the group must stay seated, but the group does everything the leader does. If the leader crosses his or her legs, the rest of the group follows. The volunteer must figure out who the leader is to end the game.	<i>10 min.</i>
Words of Wisdom	<p>Read Ecclesiastes 1: 1 – 11</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the writer’s point?• What lesson is the writer trying to teach?• How important do you think the teacher would say ‘work’ is?• If nothing changes, why should people work?• What wisdom do you take from this passage? <p>Read Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the writer’s point?• What lesson is the writer trying to teach?• How do we know when it is the right time for something?• Do you think there really is a time for everything? Why?• What wisdom do you take from this passage? <p>Read Ecclesiastes 4: 9 – 16</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the writer’s point?• What lesson is the writer trying to teach?• Would you rather be the lonely king, or poor and have friends?• Which of your friends do you think is wise? Why?• What wisdom do you take from this passage?	<i>10 min.</i>
Wise People	<p>Divide the class into pairs or groups of three. Invite each person to tell their partner(s) about a great teacher they have had (school, church, coach, family, etc.). Make sure everyone has a chance to share and listen.</p> <p>Once everyone has shared, have them make a list of common traits of their great teachers. When you bring the class back together, compile a list based on each group’s responses.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there a formula or model for a perfect teacher? Explain.• How do you think you would do as a teacher?• How is teaching different from sharing wisdom?	<i>8 min.</i>
Prayer	Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. Ask each person to give thanks for a lesson or item of wisdom they have received in their life.	<i>2 min.</i>



Lesson 30

Song of Solomon

Teacher's Notes:

Along with Esther, Song of Solomon (often called, “Song of Songs,” or greatest of songs), is the only book of scripture that does not specifically mention God or faith. Unlike Esther, Song of Solomon does not even talk about the covenant, prayer, rituals, or any other religious tradition. The book is filled with intimate words of love and descriptions of beauty. Many see the Song of Songs as love poetry between a male and female lover, perhaps in bonds of a marriage, such as a literal bride and bridegroom. Others take the back-and forth dialogue to be symbolic, such as the depth of God’s love for the people, or Christ for his bride, the church.

Although King Solomon is often given credit for writing the book, most experts think it was written after Solomon’s time and later had his name attached to give the text more credibility. Some have suggested a female author because the book has more passages written from a female perspective than male. The author does seem to be a person of privilege because they know about wedding traditions and life in the royal court that would not have been common knowledge to those in a lower social class.

Note: Modeling and respecting appropriate leader-youth healthy boundaries is important in this lesson. Older or more savvy youth may bring up the extremely intimate symbolism of Song of Solomon and want to discuss details in class. If this occurs, you may want to acknowledge the symbolism, but note that this topic of study for them will need to be later in a different setting. The purpose of this lesson and leader’s direction is not to translate the symbolism for those who don’t understand it. Such a conversation may be considered privileged conversation to be first addressed by parents within their own families.

Scripture: Song of Solomon 2: 8 - 13
 Song of Solomon 3: 1-5
 Song of Solomon 4: 1 - 7
 Song of Solomon 8: 6 – 7

Supplies: Lyrics to love songs (www.lyrics.com is a great resource)

Preparation:

- Look up the lyrics to a few different love songs and print them out for the class. If possible, choose songs from many different generations.
- You might want to use some classic love songs or find some lyrics from different styles of music.
- Obtain several different translations of the Old Testament, including the NRSV, and the RSV if you can find an older copy.

Activity	Instructions	Time
What is Love?	<p>Read Song of Solomon 3: 1 - 15</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think this book was chosen to be in the Bible? • Is this the type of love usually talked about in the Bible? <p>Pass out copies of love songs.</p> <p>Let members of the class take turns reading them like poetry.</p> <p>See if the class can sing the song after reading the lyrics.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is love? (yes, this is a loaded question) 	25 min.



	Read Song of Solomon 8: 6-7 Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does our culture treat love?• Do you think that love is as powerful or important as it used to be? Why?• How are love and faithfulness related?	
Perfect Love?	Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you believe in ‘love at first sight’? Why?• Do you believe that love can last forever?• How would you describe a “perfect love”?• What kind of love are you looking for?	8 min.
Christian Romance	Read Song of Solomon 4: 1 – 7 Song of Solomon 2: 8 - 13 <i>(You might have a different group member take each verse in Solomon 4:1-5 and consider how well it would ‘go over’ if spoken softly in trying to ‘romance’ a young woman of today.)</i> Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How well do you think the complements in Solomon 4: 1-5 would go over with most young woman you know today?• How would most young men take the complements in Solomon 2: 8-13?• What can clues in the writings tell you about the people and context which may have spoken or related to these words?• What is and what is not appropriate for a Christian to say when complementing someone they find attractive?• What is appropriate and inappropriate dating activity for Christians?• Is romance different for one who is a Christian?• What is the most romantic thing you have ever done (or seen done)?	15 min.
What Did She Really Say?	Read: Song of Solomon 1:5. Have class members compare as many different translations of the Bible as can be found. Include a NRSV, and an older RSV if you can, for comparison.) Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the bride describe herself in this passage?• Do you notice a difference in the different translations? If so, what? <p>(In recent years, scholars have pointed out that while early English translators chose the conjunction here as, “I am black <i>but</i> lovely,” the scholars believe the more accurate translation is, “I am black <i>and</i> lovely,” seen increasingly in newer translations such as the NRSV. This passage is sometimes used to illustrate how translators’ own context and bias can creep into their interpretation, and why careful scholarship is needed in interpreting the meaning of scripture.</p>	10 min
Prayer	Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. Ask each person to pray for someone they love, or offer a prayer for the kind of love they hope to find one day.	2 min.



Lesson 31 With Friends Like These... (Job)

Teacher's Notes:

Although Job (rhymes with “robe”) begins and ends with narratives that seem familiar in style to early stories from scripture, most of the book is written as dialogue. As a whole, the text is considered by most to be wisdom literature and probably was written as a teaching story about God and God’s purposes rather than a historical event.

Job is a difficult text to place in any timeline. Most scholars agree that Job shows signs of additions over time. Job also includes theological themes in the beginning that were not a part of Israel’s story until after the Persians came to power. The drama of the first two chapters sets the scene for Job but the rest of the book reads much differently. The bulk of the book is made up of conversation between Job and his friends. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar come, out of concern for their friend, and begin a theological conversation about why Job has met with such misfortune.

Elihu joins the conversation in chapters 32-37. This voice seems to be a later addition to the text and is not referenced anywhere in the chapters before or after. In chapter 42, God speaks to the “friends” and Elihu is never mentioned. Chapter 42 ends with Job being restored.

Another character of interest is “the adversary” (Hebrew – *ha satan*). This is often translates as “Satan,” or “the Devil,” but the Hebrew word means “adversary” or “accuser.” The word is used in other places in the Hebrew Scriptures (Zechariah 3:1-2 , Chronicles 21:1) to describe people who stood against another, often in a role of getting people to speak in defense of their position or actions.

(Note: In leading this lesson about friends, be careful not to assume that all members of your class see themselves blessed with friends--or even one friend. This may be especially true with youth who are very shy or young, have moved a lot, live remotely, or have behavioral or other disabilities. Some may think that because they have no friends, something is wrong with them or they are unlovable--which can sometimes generate self-fulfilling unpopular behaviors. Try to have a sense of this as you think about your individual class members and tailor your leadership and words to fit their needs).

Scripture: Job 1 – 2:9
Job 4: 1 – 8
Job 8: 1 – 7
Job 11: 1 – 8
Job 42: 1 – 6

Supplies: Each student needs a Bible, or at least one per pair

Preparation: Think about humility and self-righteousness, and of how friends care for each other appropriately and inappropriately in times of struggle. Consider your class members carefully and their needs and uses of friends.

Activity	Instructions	Time
A “Good” Person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a large stick figure on a poster or whiteboard. • Leave room around the edges for writing. • Invite the class to design a “good Christian.” They can write in information about their character around the edges. Allow them to argue about different characteristics to include. 	15 min.



Let them decide about clothing, and whether it matters.
The process is as important as the outcome of this activity.

Ask:

- How do you compare yourself with this character?
- How realistic is this character?
- How do most Christians compare to this character?
- How do expectations of people compare to God's?
- How do we do living up to our own expectations?
- How do we do living up to God's expectations?

The Best Person?

Read Job 1 – 2:9

7 min.

Ask:

- How does Job compare with your “Good Christian?”
- How do you feel about God's treatment of Job?
- How do you think you would respond if you were Job?

The Best Answer!

Read Job 42: 1 – 6

4 min.

Ask:

- How does Job seem different?
- Can a person be righteous without being humble?
- What keeps you humble?
- How does a person be proud of faithfulness without becoming self-righteous?

The Worst Friends!

Explain that everyone has or at sometime in life will have friends they share with in helpful as well as unhelpful ways. Some friends will deal with our problems better than others. Job had three friends who visited him when his world fell apart. Their “speeches” are long and sometimes hard to read, but we are going to try and break down their responses to Job's suffering. Remember, Job never condemns God for what happens to him, even though he does complain about his suffering.

Eliphaz – Read Job 4: 1 – 8

Ask:

- Why does Eliphaz think Job is suffering?
- What does Eliphaz think about God and punishment?
- What kind of protection does faith give us from bad things?
- What kind of friend do you think Eliphaz was to Job?

Bildad – Read Job 8: 1 - 7

Ask:

- Why does Bildad think Job is suffering?
- What does Bildad think about God and punishment?
- Do you think it would be fair for God to punish Job for what his children and their families did?
- What kind of friend do you think Bildad was to Job?



Zophar – Read Job 11: 1 – 8

- Why does Zophar think Job is suffering?
- What does Zophar say about wisdom?
- How can one person judge another’s relationship with God?
- Do you think it would be fair for God to punish Job for thinking he was a righteous person?
- What kind of friend do you think Zophar was to Job?

Elihu Who?

Explain that Elihu is a fourth “friend” that seems to have been added by a later editor of the Book of Job. Elihu suggests that Job should have been proclaiming God rather than defending himself. He calls Job out as self-righteous. Elihu also challenges the other three “older” friends for failing to have enough wisdom to find an explanation to Job’s suffering. This may be one person or generation’s criticism of an the generation that wrote Job, and the ways they understood God differently. Since neither the others nor Job responds to Elihu, we will also skip him and focus on the other three friends.

2 min.

Best Friend?

Ask:

7 min.

- How do friends you have had, and/or have known about in others’ situations, compare to Job’s friends?
- Can you think of examples of friends who have really helped or hurt in a time of need?
- How important is listening between friends?
- If you were a friend visiting Job, what would you have said to him?
- How does a judgmental friend make things harder?
- How does a self-righteous friend make things harder?
- How does a humble friend make things easier?
- What kind of friend do you think Job would have been to one of the other characters?
- Did any of Job’s friends just *listen* to him?
- Why do you think that people always seem to think they must say something to someone who is suffering?
- Is it better sometimes to just be with a friend and speak with silence?
- Where do you need to do better as a friend?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands.
Ask each person to give thanks for a friend who has been there for them in a time of need.

2 min.



Lesson 32 *It Was on My List to Do... (Jonah)*

Teacher's Notes:

Jonah is a unique book among the Prophetic writings. Instead of recording the works of a prophet, it tells the story of a prophet. Jonah is a narrative that reads more like a folktale than a prophetic text. No one is able to accurately date the text so there is no real context to go by when studying Jonah. It is a story that could have taken place in many times and places, an attribute important to a great story that transcends time.

There are some important things to consider while helping the class with their retelling of the story. Really emphasize how much Jonah *HATED* Nineveh. You could compare it to rival towns or rival schools (sports rivals may stand out for the youth). Also consider that Jonah never actually went into town. The gate would have been a long way from the heart of the city. Don't forget to emphasize the question at the end of the story. Most of all, have fun with the retelling.

Scripture: Jonah 1: 1 – 17
 Jonah 2: 10
 Jonah 3
 Jonah 4

Supplies: Whiteboard and markers or poster and markers
 CD player or MP3 and speakers

Preparation: Read the Jonah story a few times to make sure you remember the details while teaching.
 Have music ready to play for final section if desired.

Activity	Instructions	Time
The Story	Work as a class to make a time-line of the Jonah story from memory. Do not let anyone look the story up yet. Once you have a time-line of the story, divide the class into three groups. Give each group one of the following readings: Jonah 1: 1 – 17 and 2:10 Jonah 3 Jonah 4 Have the three groups come back together and fill in the details or correct the time-line.	<i>20 min.</i>

Ask:

- What parts of the story surprised you?
- What was Jonah's message from God?
- What is the message of the book of Jonah to us?
- How does Jonah differ from other prophetic writings?
(story format, focus on the prophet as a character, etc.)



Um.. Thanks? Invite the class to make a list of gifts or things done for them that they did not really appreciate. For example, maybe they got an ugly sweater that their grandma, or a picture made by a little brother/sister/cousin that made them look silly. *5 min.*

Ask:

- Why do you think that Jonah was not happy to get to talk directly to God?
- How did Jonah feel about the gift of the bush?
- How feelings in you does Jonah's attitude bring out?

Thanks, But No Thanks Invite the class to make a list of people outside of the classroom that they have a hard time liking. They don't have to mention names. They can make up a nickname if needed. Ask them to include groups of people too, not just individuals. *8 min.*

Ask:

- What do these groups or individuals have in common?
- How easy is it for people to "get on your list"?
- How hard is it for people to "get off of your list"?
- Why do you think Jonah had Nineveh on his list?
- What would it feel like for God to send you to help people on your list?
- Would you want to see them repent, or refuse and get punished?
- Do you think Jonah's task from God fair or unfair? Why?

Cover Story Invite the class to split up into pairs and share with each other a story of avoiding responsibility. After they have all had a chance to share, invite them to bring at least one of their stories back to the whole class. *8 min.*

Ask:

- How does Jonah's attempt to sail away from God compare with our class's best efforts to avoid things?
- What were the problems with Jonah's plan?
- Do you think Jonah has a choice in doing God's will?
- Do you think Jonah was treated fairly by God? Why?

Your Story **Explain:** I am going to ask you some questions to think about. Do not answer out loud. We will take some quiet time for you to reflect on your answers in private. (You may spread out if you would like, to get some private space.) *7 min.*

Ask:

- Have you ever avoided things God calls you to do?
- Have you ever avoided caring for or helping someone?
- What excuses do you give God?

Silence:

If you want to play some music to help set a mood, that is fine, but silence has a power of its own. Give them 2 to 4 minutes depending on your class's need and ability. When time is up, invite them to come back together as a class.

Ask:

- Does anyone have anything they would like to share?
(do not push if no one speaks up)

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands. Ask each person to share a silent prayer, asking God to forgive them for a time they ran away from responsibility. They may also ask God to help them face responsibility in the future. All of these prayers are to be done in silence. They can squeeze the hand of the person next to them to pass the prayer when done. When it comes back to the leader, they can say, "Amen."

2 min.





Lesson 33

Esther's Risk and Reward

Teacher's Notes:

Esther is a strange book in that God is never directly mentioned in it. However, Esther is important to Jewish history and identity, as the book gives the story of how the Feast of Purim began. Each year, Jewish families read the story of Esther together to begin this special time of celebration. The book also gives more information of life for the Jewish exiles. For these and other reasons, Esther is an important story to Hebrew scriptures. The themes of family, courage, and faith against human authority are important themes to Judaism and Christianity alike.

An interesting theme to those teaching Esther is that the king dismisses Queen Vashti for failing to show obedience to the King's command, a similar reason that Ha'man is angered by the behavior of Mordecai (MORE-de-kie). Ironically, Vashti is stripped of her title of Queen because she does not come when the King commands, but Esther risks a fatal error by coming to the King for help when he does not command. These ironies give another layer of interest to the text and highlight the complexities in which most ethical issues must be examined.

Scripture: Esther 2: 15 – 18
 Esther 3: 1 – 6
 Esther 4: 6 – 17
 Esther 7

Supplies:

- Whiteboard and markers or poster
- Bibles
- M&Ms, Skittles, or other similar treats
- Snacks (worth winning)

Preparation: Read the book of Esther. It isn't that long and reading through the story will bring out other ironies that you may want to point out while teaching.

Activity	Instructions	Time
Risk Game	<p>Give each member of the class ten M&M's or other similar treats on a napkin, but no one can touch the treats until the leader gives notice at the end of the game. Invite each person to play, "Rock, Paper, Scissors" with other members of the class. (<i>Directions for playing Rock-Paper-Scissors can be found online, such as on Wikipedia</i>). Before each round, both players put forth one or more M&Ms (each the same number). Each round's winner gets all of the M&Ms put forth before that game. (<i>To avoid handling the M&Ms, push them with a napkin</i>). Players must have at least one M&M to play. No one is forced to play at all; they can 'sit on' their M&Ms if they choose. Once everyone has had a chance to play several rounds, stop the game, count to see who has the most M&Ms (the grand winner (could get the rest of the bag of treats).</p>	10 min.

Ask:

- How did the reward compare to the risks you took?
- What risks do you take in other games?
- Do you ever 'play games' that risk your health?
- Do you participate in any activities that risk your health?
- What are the biggest risks you take?

**Risk
Taking**

Invite the class to make a list of things, causes, people or issues for which people will risk their lives. *15 min.*
Write down their answers on a poster or on a whiteboard.

Once you have a list, go back over the list and have the class explain why someone would risk their life for each.

Go back over the list a third time and have them label each item as an issue of rush, conscience, helplessness, time, trouble, or other.

a 'Rush' = things people do for the rush, or adrenaline high.

Conscience = taking a stand for an ethical reason.

Helpless = not to try or to take a stand, just as dangerous.

Time = risking life while in a hurry to get somewhere, 'running late'

Trouble = not wanting to face the hassle/stigma of preventing the risk.

Ask:

- Which of these reasons for risking your life on putting it on the line do you think is worth the risk?
- Which cause on your list is the most noble? Why?
- Which cause is the least worthy? Why?
- Are there any issues on the list where people on both sides are risking their lives over an issue of conscience?
(Who is right and who is wrong?)
(How do you stop such a conflict?)
- What responsibility do people of faith have as participants in such conflicts?
- What responsibility do people of faith have in helping end such conflicts?
- Which cause on your list (or other) would be most willing to risk your life for? Why?

**Risk
Takers**

Read Esther 2: 15 – 18

30 min.

Ask:

- What qualifications do you think a person should have to be a leader?
- What attributes should keep someone *from* being a leader?
- Should leaders be held to a higher standard of behavior?
- How should a person's ethnicity be factored into selecting leaders?



Read Esther 3: 1 – 6

Ask:

- What are Mordecai's issues with Ha'man?
- Why do you think Mordecai refused to bow to Ha'man?
- How do Mordecai's issues compare with those on your list?
- What would you do in Mordecai's situation (is your choice influenced by the outcome?)
- How does Ha'man's plan to destroy the Jews compare to other issues on your list?
- What would you do if you knew about a plot to attack an ethnic minority?
- What would you do if you knew about a plot to attack (based on ethnicity) one person who was a minority ?
- What would you do if you knew about a plot to spread untrue rumors about an ethnic minority?
- What would you do if you heard jokes told about an ethnic minority?
- Why do you think Ha'man want to lash out at all of the Jews?
- Where do modern ethnic prejudices get formed?
- How is prejudice different for people who look alike, compared to those with features that make their differences obvious, such as skin or eye color?

Read Esther 7

Ask:

- How do you feel about the outcome of Ha'man's plan?
- What would have been the most just outcome?
- How do you feel about Esther in this story?

Read Esther 4: 6 – 17

Ask:

- How does this change your view of Esther?
- How does Esther's cause compare with those on your list?
- How do you think you would have responded if you were Esther?

Prayer

Invite the class to form a circle and join hands.
Ask each person to lift up a prayer for an issue
or cause where people's lives are at risk.

2 min.