

EXPLORE
EXPLORE
EXPLORE



RESURRECTION
STUDENTS





[Mentor Curriculum Guide]

[DEAR MENTOR,]

Thank you for being a part of an Explore Discipleship Group for Middle School students! The purpose of Discipleship Groups is to engage students in an intentional faith community and encourage them in their spiritual journey. You play an instrumental role in this process. By your investment of time and compassion for students, you help provide a safe and welcoming space to dig deeper into faith. So, thank you!

The Explore curriculum is designed as a two-year track, to help students explore and apply Biblical stories to their everyday life. They will journey through the Bible beginning with creation, exploring who God created them to be and how they are chosen by God to do amazing things and how God knows, sees and hears us. Then we will explore God's covenants with us and how God's promises are fulfilled through Jesus, which is where we finish the year, exploring Jesus' early ministry, inclusion of all people and parables.

The discussion questions are a guide for discussion. You have the freedom as the mentor to dig deeper or omit certain elements you see fit for your group. The purpose of small groups is to create a safe and welcoming community where students can build community and explore their faith. Always be mindful of students' needs each week and how you (the mentor) can best encourage the group of students in their faith.

Thank you for mentoring students as they explore Scripture!



[The Purpose of Resurrection]

The Explore curriculum is fashioned around the church's purpose. Everything the church does points to some element of this statement.

Our Purpose is to build a Christian community where non-religious and nominally religious people are becoming deeply committed Christians.

The curriculum is meant to take student from Kids Ministry into Student Ministry where they will read familiar Biblical stories and explore them at a slightly deeper level. It is meant to be a safe place for non, nominal and developing Christians to learn the stories and apply their meaning to their lives.

[Student Ministry Statement]

Students developed a statement that describes how they intend to live into the Resurrection purpose. It says this:

Resurrection Students will create a safe, authentic and inclusive community where everyone belongs and has the opportunity to choose to grow and live out their faith.

Our goal as students, mentors and parents is to continue to work towards creating a place where "students belong so they can choose to grow and live out their faith." It isn't always easy and formulaic. But we believe if we keep the Resurrection purpose and the Student Ministry statement in mind when we are interacting with students, planning programs and lessons, then we will move closer to these ideals.

[Desired Outcomes]

When a student graduates from student ministry and moves out into the world, we want them to understand the complexities of their faith as differentiated from others. We want them to express their faith in meaningful and empathic ways, providing tangible leadership to others. And we want them to be in non-judgmental caring relationships with their peers and mentors. We break this down into specific objectives by age groupings. The Explore discipleship group, focused on middle school students, will have the following objectives.



[Specific Outcomes]

We see students potentially exploring their faith through their middle school experience in the following ways:

In their Expression

- Embrace the church as a safe and fun place where they can share the highs and lows of life.
- Learn how to be engaged in a small group discussion.
- Begin to appreciate inequities in how people are treated and how all people belong to God.
- Experience serving in meaningful ways.
- Experience worship in a way that connects them to God and others.

In their Faith

- Begin to discover who God made them to be.
- Know they are loved by God and others no matter what.
- Understand the Bible and be able to talk about the meaning of important stories or passages.
- Understand the impact of Jesus's life on people and the world.
- Rely on prayer as a way to connect with God.

In their Relationships

- Extend kindness to others without judgement.
- Establish friendships that are dependable where they feel safe in inviting school friends.
- Discern when to say "yes" when to say "no" when it comes to their relationships.
- How Does Curriculum Do These Things?

[How Does Curriculum Do These Things?]

It doesn't. Caring mentors do. The subject isn't math or history or reading or writing. The subject is the student. The curriculum will open doors that will reveal who students are and will allow them to explore who they are becoming. This doesn't mean we don't pay attention to God or Jesus's life, sacrifice and resurrection. In fact, we allow the student to view themselves through all of these lenses.

Explore is a two-year Discipleship Curriculum designed for students in middle school. Students will explore and apply Biblical stories in the Old and New Testament to their everyday life, focusing on how they were created, called and named by God. They will also explore the promises God makes to us and how Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise through Jesus' early ministry, inclusion of others and his teaching using parables.



[Discipleship Group: Weekly Session Overview]

Each session will have a similar flow and rhythm. There may be more content than you will need for your group time, and you might not cover it all. That is okay! Figure out what works best for your group and adapt. The first section will give you a brief overview of the session and the video transcript. Review this in enough time to prepare for the session. It will include the Big Idea, which is the main point of the session, a summary, the scripture focus and a supply list. These things are helpful to read ahead of time and immediately before the session. There are two other items in this section that may need more preparation.

Parent Connection: Following your session, you may want to communicate with parents so they can engage in a conversation with their middle school student about the topic. These prompts are simple and can be included on handwritten card or an email.

Video Transcript: There is companion video that you can access on YouTube. Begin your session with the video after brief introductions. You can also use the video transcript as a starting point to teach your own lesson in person without the video. Your choice! If you decide not to use the video, you may want to decide how you might teach the content. You can choose to integrate it throughout the session, rather than all at once at the beginning. Again, your choice!

>> SMALL GROUP TIME

This is where the session begins following the video or however you plan to integrate your own teaching based on the video transcript. Each session follows this basic outline.

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be themselves. If your group has new faces, share names and one fun fact that can be memorable. This will help everyone know them just a little bit better.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1

This is always an introductory activity that allows students to engage more of their senses.

>> OPENING QUESTION

This prompt will get students thinking and focused on the big idea of the session.



>> DISCUSSION

This is the central part of the session where students can share their reflection on Scripture and how it relates to their lives. This is where you will want to facilitate their connection to the big idea of the session.

>> ACTIVITY #2

This will often be an activity that summarizes and brings closure to the session.

>> CHALLENGE

This will be something active students can do or think about in the coming week so they can solidify what they learned in the session.

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER

Have students share their joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests). You may want to refer to the highs and lows they shared earlier. You can close in prayer or invite a specific student to pray for the group. You may want to model this prayer for weeks before asking a student to pray.

>> CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TIPS

- Call everyone by their name. Ask when you forget.
- Know something about everyone – their interests, sports, etc. Take notes if it helps you remember. Refer to what you know about them on occasion in group and personal conversation.
- Make eye contact. Never turn your back on your students.
- Sit in a circle, if possible. Make sure the adults are evenly distributed.
- Sit close (or next to) students that have the most difficult time behaving. Conversely, always sit across from the best behaved and engaged students.
- Affirm and amplify good behavior and engagement often. Deal with bad behavior and lack of engagement more quietly.
- Use the words of students to ask the next question or to introduce the next topic or activity.
- Keep your questions simple and to the point, attempting to draw on a student's own experience to frame the question.
- Only ask one question at a time.
- Use fidget tools to keep the brains of active students busy. This will help them focus on what you and others are saying.
- Be sure to keep the session moving by using various types of activities and discussion. Don't stay on any one activity or discussion for longer than 15-20 minutes.
- Always ask for help. Staff and other mentors may have strategies that may address exactly what you need.



YEAR 1 Curriculum Overview

UNIT 1: CREATED (3 SESSIONS)

1. Created in God's Image
2. Creation is Good
3. Created for Community

UNIT 2: CHOSEN (3 SESSIONS)

1. Chosen for an Amazing and Scary Journey
2. Chosen by God
3. Chosen for Relationship with God

UNIT 3: NAMED (3 SESSIONS)

1. God Knows Our Name
2. God Knows Your Story
3. God Gives Us a New Identity

UNIT 4: DELIVERED (2 SESSIONS)

1. God Sees and Hears Us
2. God Serves Us

UNIT 5: COVENANT (3 SESSIONS)

1. God Keeps Promises
2. The Ten Commandments
3. Covenant with Community

UNIT 6 DIFFICULT SCRIPTURE

1. Baptism and Temptation
2. First Sermon and Calling Disciples

UNIT 7: JESUS – MINISTRY TO OUTCASTS (3 SESSIONS)

1. Healing Lepers and Others
2. Including Women
3. Including Children

UNIT 8: JESUS – THE BANQUET (3 SESSIONS)

1. Good Samaritan
2. Sewer and Seeds
3. The Banquet



UNIT OVERVIEW

UNIT 1: Created

In the beginning...God created. Foundational truths for all of us are found in the Genesis story of creation. God created each of us uniquely in their image. What God created was good, very good – including us. God created us need each other, to grow in community, and to take care of creation. Our unique personalities, quirks, and point of view are necessary and valuable! Discover your role in all of creation in this series, CREATED.

>> SESSION SUMMARIES

1 - Created in God's Image

Everyone is created in God's image. We have the ability to be creative and imaginative like God. We can make decisions, think, use logic and reasoning. We use intellect, insight, and creativity every day to do amazing things! Being made in God's image also means that we belong to God and in community with one another.

2 - Creation is Good

When God said what He made was good, God was affirming all of creation's design and intent: to reflect and display the good character, power, love, and nature of our Creator. And even after brokenness came into the world, with its corrupting power and influence, the fundamental goodness of creation remained! Sin might distort the goodness of creation, but it can't make what God has said untrue. Creation is still good in the hands of God, and it still serves its purpose of declaring God's goodness and love in the world. If God made creation and saw it was good, and of the highest caliber and purpose, then WE are a part of that good purpose.

3 - Created for Community

Since the beginning of time, we were never meant to be alone. God created us in community and for community. Relationships encourage us, challenge us, and help us grow. We are stronger together!



Created in God's Image

>> **BIG IDEA:** Everyone is created in God's image.

>> **SUMMARY:** God created human beings in their image. We have the ability to be creative and imaginative like God. We can make decisions, think, use logic and reasoning. We use intellect, insight, and creativity every day to do amazing things! Being made in God's image also means that we belong to God and in community with one another.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:** Genesis 1:26-28

26 Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."

27 God created humanity in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground."

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, drawing paper, drawing supplies (markers, crayons, or pencils), Bible journaling worksheet, OPTIONAL – large sheet or blanket

>> **LEADER NOTES:** This session uses a lot of family/heritage heavy content to talk about how we are all made in the image of God - how we can see the characteristics of God reflected in us. Please be sensitive to those with unique family situations and even feel free to talk about how some traits are passed along through nurture rather than nature.



>> **SUPPLY LIST:** This week Explore students discussed how we are all created in God's image. We share God's characteristics of creativity, logic, and insight. Here are a few connection points to keep the conversation going at home:

- Share something from your ancestry or take time to look in the mirror together and find similar characteristics.
- Ask your student which of God's characteristics they feel best represents them and why (creative, logical, insightful, innovative, leadership, caretaking, community building, etc.).

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT**

Hello! I wondered if you've ever looked in the mirror and really looked at your image. If you know your biological parents, you may see parts of them reflected in your own image. For me, I have my mom's green eyes, my dad's thin lips, my grandma's curly hair. I'm descended from Scottish and Irish ancestors, so I have very pale and pinkish/reddish colored skin that tends to freckle and burn in the sun instead of getting tan. People say that I sound like my two older sisters when I sing or talk on the phone. This doesn't just stop with a physical image either. I love history like my dad, and I love reading like my mom. My parents are both teachers, and even though I said I never wanted to be a teacher growing up, I became a pastor, and one the things I spend most of my time doing is...teaching. Teaching students about God and the Bible. In a way, I became a teacher after all. All the people that came before me...their image is reflected in me. For people who are adopted, they may wonder: what do my parents look like? Do I take after my mom or my dad? Do I have any siblings? Do I look like them? And some people who don't know their biological parents may never know the answers to these questions, and that's really sad. We all have this desire to know whose image we were created in, and who we take after.

In the Bible, at the very, very beginning, in the first book, in the first chapter, in Genesis chapter 1, we are told that all human beings were actually created in GOD'S IMAGE. Here's what it says:

Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."

*God created humanity in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)*

But what does it actually mean to be created in God's image?

First, it means that we have a lot of the same qualities and characteristics of God. No, unfortunately that doesn't mean we are all powerful and can be at all places at once and can walk on water and see across all space and time. But having some of the qualities and characteristics of God means that we have the ability to be creative and



imaginative like God. God created the whole, entire universe. And anytime we create something, like art or music or poetry, we are living out the image of God in our lives.

A second way we are like God is that God gave us the ability to lead and take charge. That's what it means in verse 26, when it says, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they make take charge." As humans, we can make decisions and think and use logic and reasoning. God gave us intellect and insight, and we can do amazing things with our brains, like send giant telescopes into space that take amazing pictures of the universe or create life-saving vaccines and medicines for diseases! God created us with the ability to do all that! Another quality of God is our ability to be in deep community and relationship with one another. We are going to talk about that more in two weeks!

But the second big thing about what it means to be created in the image of God is that we BELONG to God. God created us, and God has laid a claim upon each of our lives. God says, "yep, that one is mine! And I love them SO MUCH. They are my precious and beloved child." Being created in God's image means that I belong to God, whether I realize it or not.

However, here's the catch: If I'm created in Gods image, and If I belong to God, and If I am deeply loved and valued by God.... that means you are too! And that means everyone is! It also means that the people I don't like...they are also created in God's image. And the people that annoy me.... yep, they are also created in the image of God.

God says, "You belong to me!" and that's awesome! That's great news! But God also says that the people who really get on my nerves, or the bully that picked on me in third grade or the people that hurt my friends...they belong to God too.

Sometimes people use the image of God in their life to do amazing, beautiful things: they create art, they write books, they lead churches and countries, they take a stand against injustice. But sometimes, people use the image of God in their life to tear down the image of God in others. They hurt people. They abuse people. They cause wars. They create pain. They create bombs and weapons instead of space shuttles and telescopes and medicines.

We have a choice. We have two choices really:

1. WE can use the image of God in our lives for Good: to create beauty and goodness and spread joy and love...or we can use our creativity to do harm and cause damage. That's the first choice.
2. Then, we can choose to welcome others and give them a place to belong, just as God has welcomed us and said, "you belong to me!" or we can choose to reject the image of God in others and forget to recognize that we are all created in the image of God.

What will it be? Create beauty or create pain? Choose belonging or choose rejection? I hope you will live out the image of God in your life, and you will see and identify the beautiful image of God in others' lives too. We'll see you next time in EXPLORE!



SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and how their best friend/close family member would describe them.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1: MIRROR NAME GAME

Go around and have everyone say their name. Split students into two groups. Divide the groups with a blanket/sheet and one chair on each side. Lift the blanket using as a "mirror" between the groups. Have one student from each side sit on a chair, on the count of three drop the blanket. The first student to say the others' name earns their team a point. Continue until a team gets to 10 points, or you have gone through all the students. Send students up multiple times to throw the other team off. This activity will help students learn each other's' names at the beginning of the year. For an extra challenge, use first and last names, or even include middle names (after going around and saying them first).

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- If you had a clone or an exact body double, what would you have them do?
- What is something you made in art class or for fun that you are really proud of?

>> DISCUSSION:

Each of us has distinctive characteristics and personalities, and sometimes we can trace some of those things from our family.

- Who in your family do you take after the most?
- Who are the people in your life you are most like? Do you get along with them?
- Who are the types of people that are the most different from you? Do you tend to get along with them?

Read Genesis 1:26-28 (CEB)

- What do you think it means that humanity is created in God's own image?
- Is it hard or easy for you to believe that you are created in God's image? What characteristics of God do you feel best represents you and why (creative, logical, insightful, innovative, leadership, caretaking, community building, etc.)?
- Why do we need to recognize that others are also created in God's image?
- In this passage, what does it mean to "take charge"? (take care of)



Being created in the image of God, we have 2 options:

- We can use the image of God in our lives for Good: to create beauty and goodness and spread joy and love OR we can use our creativity to do harm and cause damage.
- We can choose to welcome others and give them a place to belong, just as God has welcomed us and said, "you belong to me!" OR we can choose to reject the image of God in others and forget to recognize that we are all created in the image of God.
- What are examples of people using the image of God in their life to create good?
- What are examples of people using the image of God in their life to do harm and damage?
- When is a time that you felt like you belonged somewhere?
- What do you think it means to belong to God?
- How can we help those around us feel like they belong?

>> **ACTIVITY #2: SELF PORTRAIT**

Do you see yourself like God sees you? Draw a self-portrait as if you are being drawn by God. Even if you aren't a good artist, try to picture yourself through the eyes of your creator, God. If drawing isn't your thing, list words or phrases to capture your image or portrait. Remember, you are created in God's image, and God says, "You belong to me!" Leader – either use the Psalm 139 printout for students to read the scripture as they draw or simply use plain paper and read aloud Psalm 139:1-18.

>> **CHALLENGE:**

Choose to create beauty this week! Spend some time living out the image of God in your life by making art, writing poetry, singing a song, playing an instrument, writing a story, dancing, or some other form of creating beauty in the world.

>> **JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:**

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines. The page features a large, faint watermark in the background that reads "ORDER RE" in a stylized font.



>> PSALM 139

- 139 Lord, you have examined me.
You know me.
- 2 You know when I sit down and when I stand up.
Even from far away, you comprehend my plans.
- 3 You study my traveling and resting.
You are thoroughly familiar with all my ways.
- 4 There isn't a word on my tongue, Lord,
that you don't already know completely.
- 5 You surround me—front and back.
You put your hand on me.
- 6 That kind of knowledge is too much for me;
it's so high above me that I can't reach it.
- 7 Where could I go to get away from your spirit?
Where could I go to escape your presence?
- 8 If I went up to heaven, you would be there.
If I went down to the grave, you would be there too!
- 9 If I could fly on the wings of dawn,
stopping to rest only on the far side of the ocean—
- 10 even there your hand would guide me;
even there your strong hand would hold me tight!
- 11 If I said, "The darkness will definitely hide me;
the light will become night around me,"
- 12 even then the darkness isn't too dark for you!
Nighttime would shine bright as day,
because darkness is the same as light to you!
- 13 You are the one who created my innermost parts;
you knit me together while I was still in my mother's womb.
- 14 I give thanks to you that I was marvelously set apart.
Your works are wonderful—I know that very well.
- 15 My bones weren't hidden from you
when I was being put together in a secret place,
when I was being woven together in the deep parts of the earth.
- 16 Your eyes saw my embryo,
and on your scroll every day was written that was being formed for me,
before any one of them had yet happened.
- 17 God, your plans are incomprehensible to me!
Their total number is countless!
- 18 If I tried to count them—they outnumber grains of sand!
If I came to the very end—I'd still be with you.



LORE

LORE

LORE



Creation is Good

>> **BIG IDEA:** God created the world and called it good.

>> **SUMMARY:** When God said what He made was good, God was affirming all of creation's design and intent: to reflect and display the good character, power, love, and nature of our Creator. And even after brokenness came into the world, with its corrupting power and influence, the fundamental goodness of creation remained! Sin might distort the goodness of creation, but it can't make what God has said untrue. Creation is still good in the hands of God, and it still serves its purpose of declaring God's goodness and love in the world. If God made creation and saw it was good, and of the highest caliber and purpose, then WE are a part of that good purpose.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:** Genesis 1:24-31 (CEB)

24 God said, "Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife." And that's what happened. 25 God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. 26 Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."

27 God created humanity in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground." 29 Then God said, "I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. 30 To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food." And that's what happened. 31 God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good.

There was evening and there was morning: the sixth day.



>> **SUPPLY LIST:** large poster paper or banner, magazines, scissors, glue, markers/pens, pencils, small pieces of cardstock

>> **LEADER NOTES:** It's easy to get hung up on a few things when teaching the creation story: the order of creation, "be fertile and multiply," and "fill the earth and master it" -- just to name a few. The point of this teaching is that ALL of creation is good and reflects the character of God and that we have a responsibility to care for it (which might be a better translation of "master"). When ALL of creation reflects the character of God and should be cared for, we include ourselves. How are you doing? Are you taking care of God's creation? Spend a little time this week preparing by being kind to yourself and doing one thing you have been putting off that is just for you.

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** This week Explore students discussed how all of creation is created good, our responsibility to the earth and everything in it – including ourselves! Here are a few connection points to keep the conversation going at home:

- Share a nature walk or moments together that you have enjoyed God's creation.
- What is one thing we can do together to take care of the earth?

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT**

Hi Resurrection Students, I'm Leah, one of your student ministries directors and I'm excited to explore more of God's creation with you. We've been talking recently about being made in God's image and what that looks like. If you recall, Pastor Shannon previously talked about how EVERYONE is created in God's image and how that ultimately means we belong to God and to one another. And today we're going to explore a little further into God's creation and what God meant when God called creation Supremely Good

Let's jump into Genesis 1

God said, "Let the earth produce every kind of living thing: livestock, crawling things, and wildlife." And that's what happened. God made every kind of wildlife, every kind of livestock, and every kind of creature that crawls on the ground. God saw how good it was. Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."

God created humanity in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.



God blessed them and said to them, "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground." Then God said, "I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—I give all the green grasses for food." And that's what happened. God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good." - Genesis 1:24-31. CEB

I love how every time God creates something; Light, air, water, earth, plants, animals... Everything, God didn't just say that it was, or that it existed. God actually saw and said "it was good." And not just good, but very good.

In Hebrew this usually indicates that what is created or what is functioning is of the highest caliber. The Best of the Best. God sees everything including us and says it is SUPER GOOD, SUPREMEY GOOD, The highest of quality!

Have you ever been to the Rocky Mountains or the Grand Canyon? Perhaps the Ocean or a beautiful waterfall? Have you ever looked out on a massive natural wonder and thought wow, that is amazing, that is the best of the best?

- CUE PICTURE OF WATERFALL

I know I have. I've sat under a waterfall in Hawaii and thought, yes, this is very good, dare I say supremely good. God's creation is amazing. And not just here on earth.

There's been a lot of talk lately about the new James Webb Space telescope. Have you seen these pictures?

- CUE PICTURE OF OUTERSPACE

I mean, WOW! Here's a picture of a Cartwheel Galaxy that scientists say is 500 million light years away. This too is God's creation and when God set all of this in motion God designed it and us with a purpose. God saw His creation and said, "This is very good".

But what does that mean? Or maybe a better way to say it is, is it still true? After all, all we have to do is look outside the window to see that there are some pretty not good things about this world. And you know what? Not everything in God's creation seems good to me. I can see hurt and pain, suffering and brokenness in this world. I see Global warming, or racism, division and wars. And a lot of times I look in the mirror and doubt that there's good staring back at me in the reflection.

When God said what He made was good, God was affirming all of creations design and intent: to reflect and display the good character, power, love, and nature of our Creator.



And even after brokenness came into the world, with its corrupting power and influence, the fundamental goodness of creation remained! Sin might distort the goodness of creation, but it can't make what God has said untrue. Creation is still good in the hands of God, and it still serves its purpose of declaring God's goodness and love in the world.

If God made creation and saw it was good, and of the highest caliber and purpose, then WE are a part of that good purpose. In fact, we are in charge of restoring wholeness and wellness to God's good creation.

God says right there in Genesis,

fill the earth and master it. Take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, and everything crawling on the ground. I now give to you all the plants on the earth that yield seeds and all the trees whose fruit produces its seeds within it. These will be your food. To all wildlife, to all the birds in the sky, and to everything crawling on the ground—to everything that breathes—.”

God has entrusted us with this good creation. Humans have a responsibility to take care of the earth. Just as if you were taking care of a child. If they were sick, you would do something to nurture and care for that child. If the earth is suffering and sick, we can care for God's creation by being more aware of environmental needs and how we contribute to it.

And the earth isn't the only one we should attend to. We should do the same for ourselves and one another. God made us and saw that we are good. When I look in the mirror, when you look in the mirror the reflection coming back is God's creation, made with a supremely good purpose. You are not a mistake; you make a difference. You are God's good creation. Repeat that to yourself every time you look in the mirror.

What would happen if you dedicated time in each day to reflect on God's creation, see that it is good and do something to love the world around you. Whether you help grow a garden and learn about taking care of the environment, or you help recycle. Perhaps you serve in a food pantry, letting everyone know they too are God's Supremely GOOD creation too. What ways can you recognize God's good creation and continue to take good care of it. including yourself?



SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and one thing they really love to do in this season.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- If you could create any type of animal that doesn't already exist, what would it be?
- Where is one place that you have been that you considered good and beautiful?

>> ACTIVITY #1: CREATIVE CREATION

Say: I want you to show me God's amazing, creating powers by using pictures in magazines or even drawing your own pictures or words. I want you to 'wow' me and leave us all with a sense of just how incredible God's creation is – the earth, plants, animals, humans, discoveries, little known facts... you can even use your phones to find cool facts about animals or interesting info about the world that God created. Let your creative juices flow because today is all about creation!

Some students might need help getting started so be ready to give some ideas – such as making a collage of their favorite animals or suggest that they find a place in the world they'd love to visit.

Say: Let's take a couple of minutes and really check out what we've created.

As you do, imagine you are seeing all of these things for the first time. It can become so easy to get used to God's creation, and the world, and even focus on all that is wrong – but, right now, let yourself enjoy creation.

Imagine you are in these places or seeing these animals... for the first time.

Give the students plenty of time to experience this. Let them share what they are seeing.

>> DISCUSSION:

- What is your favorite thing in all of God's good creation?

Read our scripture passage for today: Genesis 1:24-31.

- Why do you think God called creation "good"?
- In what ways do you see creation as good? In what ways do you see creation as not good?



When we look at the world, we can sometimes be discouraged by all that we see around us. We can see hurt and pain, suffering and brokenness in this world. We see global warming, or racism, division and wars. And a lot of times we can look in the mirror and doubt that there's good staring back at us in the reflection.

- How do you feel about being a part of this good creation? What are some things that keep you from really believing that you are an important part of this good creation?

God made us and saw that we are good. When I look in the mirror, when you look in the mirror the reflection coming back is God's creation, made with a supremely good purpose. You are not a mistake; you make a difference. You are God's good creation.

- Why is it important for us to remember that God is the Creator of us as individuals? Of the entire world?

God has entrusted us with this good creation. Genesis 1:28-30 indicates that we have a large responsibility to the earth and everything in it. If the earth is suffering and sick, we can care for God's creation by being more aware of environmental needs and how we contribute to it.

- What is our role in helping creation? What is something you can do to help heal the world around you?
- What ways can you recognize God's good creation and continue to take good care of it? (grow a garden, learn about taking care of the environment, recycle, serve in a food pantry)
- What about you? What ways can you recognize God's good creation in you and take good care of yourself?

What would happen if you dedicated time in each day to reflect on God's creation, see that it is good and do something to love the world around you.

>> **ACTIVITY #2: CREATION WALK**

Give each student a small piece of cardstock and a pencil. Take students on a walk. As you walk with the students, have them point out/sketch/photograph the things they see that God created. Discuss how God was affirming all of creation's design and intent: to reflect and display the good character, power, love, and nature of our Creator. How does nature reflect God's goodness? God's power? God's love?

>> **CHALLENGE:**

Find at least one thing in creation that is GOOD! If you can, spend some time in nature and God's creation, and thank God for creating good things.

>> **JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:**

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines. The page features a large, faint watermark of the word 'ORDER' in the background.



Created for Community

>> **BIG IDEA:** We were not created to be alone; we were created for community and relationships.

>> **SUMMARY:** Since the beginning of time, we were never meant to be alone. God created us in community and for community. Relationships encourage us, challenge us, and help us grow. We are stronger together!

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Genesis 2:18-22

18 Then the Lord God said, "It's not good that the human is alone. I will make him a helper that is perfect for him." 19 So the Lord God formed from the fertile land all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky and brought them to the human to see what he would name them. The human gave each living being its name. 20 The human named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But a helper perfect for him was nowhere to be found.

21 So the Lord God put the human into a deep and heavy sleep, and took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh over it. 22 With the rib taken from the human, the Lord God fashioned a woman and brought her to the human being.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

9 Two are better than one because they have a good return for their hard work. 10 If either should fall, one can pick up the other. But how miserable are those who fall and don't have a companion to help them up! 11 Also, if two lie down together, they can stay warm. But how can anyone stay warm alone? 12 Also, one can be overpowered, but two together can put up resistance. A three-ply cord doesn't easily snap.

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** large sheet of paper, markers, optional: multiple colors of string/thread for making friendship bracelets



>> LEADER NOTES: In 2023, the US Surgeon General wrote, "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: An Advisory on the healing effects of social connection and community" (link here: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>). We don't just see the need for community, for shared experiences, in the Bible. It is statistically, empirically, scientifically true that we need each other. As we start out the year, this small group of students is just starting to grow together as a community. They will have another 6-7 years together (if we're lucky!). Take time in small groups to really encourage them to get to know one another. Begin to trust each other. And hopefully grow together. Also take some time this week to reach out to friend. You need community too!

>> PARENT CONNECTION: This week Explore students finished our CREATE series! We discussed how we are created for community and stronger together. Here are a few connection points to keep the conversation going at home:

- Ask your student about their friends. Share a silly friendship story from when you were their age.
- What do you think makes a relationship/friendship strong?

Their weekly challenge is to invite someone to youth group or small group – especially if they notice someone that seems lonely. Talk to them about who they are thinking about inviting. Help them contact the parent if transportation is needed. Help make it easy for them to invite someone that might need community!

>> VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:

Hello, it is so great to be with you. My name is Todd Davidson, and I am one of the Rezlife life student ministry directors. We are in week 3 of the book of Genesis. Week 1 Shannon spoke about- Everyone is created in God's image. Week 2 Leah talked about God created the world and called it good.

This week we are going to talk about being CREATED for community

Recently I was asked to help a friend move. It was a big job. We were moving them into a 3rd story apartment downtown. And there was only one elevator. With lots of us there, we were fired up, motivated, and getting things done in an efficient manner. One was moving stuff in the truck to get ready, two were moving stuff to the elevator. I was on elevator duty. First loading stuff in. Second riding the elevator up, then unloading on the third floor right outside the elevator. Next two guys were taking everything from there into the apartment. Finally, one person was in the apartment helping everything go into the correct. Spot. Not a bad system.

As the day went on helpers had to leave. And the whole system fell apart, and we became very discouraged. With only two of us left, we had to unload the truck, set things down and close the truck door. Set things down to open the garage door. Set things down to open the elevator. Then the elevator door would close on us. We would finally get into the apartment and not know where anything went. AAAAAHHHHHHH!



Needless we didn't last very long at this pace. Our bodies were tired, oh brains were frustrated. And we missed our team.

So, let's dig into what the bible says about being created for community.

We have been reading in Genesis, the first book in the bible.

In Genesis 2:18-22 it says

18 Then the Lord God said, "It's not good that the human. (ADAM) is alone. I will make him a helper that is perfect for him." 19 So the Lord God formed from the fertile land all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky and brought them to the human to see what he would name them. The human gave each living being its name. 20 The human named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But a helper perfect for him was nowhere to be found. 21 So the Lord God put the human into a deep and heavy sleep, and took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh over it. 22 With the rib taken from the human, the Lord God fashioned a woman and brought her to the human being.

Lots of times you will hear this passage at weddings. And that is beautiful. But it is bigger than that. We are better, more creative and stronger together as a community. We actually need others to survive.

Have you ever tried seeing how many pieces of paper it takes till you can rip them anymore? One is really easy. Two, no problem. Let's up the game: 10, 20, 30, 40

In Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 NIV is says this

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Two are better than one
Two can survive better than one
Three together are not quickly broken.
We are better together!

For a moment during the pandemic, the stay-at-home thing was kind of unique and fun. We got to stay in our comfy clothes, watch more Netflix. Participate in school or work from our couch. Not so bad. But what we know is that globally mental health suffered, education became less successful, and as we became more disconnected from humans..... care and respect dwindled.

I don't believe that is coincidence. As people have returned to in person church, I hear this statement all the time: "Oh, I didn't realize how much I missed this!" or "It feels so good to be back in person"



We all fall into rhythms, and sometimes they get us stuck and away from what fills us up. Community is how God made us. It is not good for us to do life alone and isolated. Sometimes it feels easier, but it is not how we are created. So may we be brave and courageous to step into community and allow God's creation to challenge us while we grow -- together.

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and one thing they enjoy doing with friends.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- What is your favorite team and why? (sports team, team from a movie/book -- The Avengers)
- What is your favorite group game?

>> ACTIVITY #1: NEVER HAVE I EVER

Found out more about your community! Play this game two ways: either using chairs in a circle, or by holding up fingers and putting them down one at a time. If using chairs in a circle, one person stands in the middle and says, "Never Have I Ever..." and then something they have never done. (Examples: "Never Have I Ever Gone Snowboarding" or "Never Have I Ever owned a pet rabbit.") Everyone that has done that thing has to scramble to find a new chair, including the person in the center, until there is a new person in the center. If using fingers, everyone starts with 10 fingers up, and then you go around and take turns sharing a "Never Have I Ever..." Everyone puts a finger down until there is only one person left. (Ask students ahead of time to keep their examples "youth group appropriate"!) Transition: It's so much fun getting to know you all better! And I have one more question, stand up if you think you would survive on your own on a deserted island? For how long?

>> OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: FRIENDSHIP BRACELETS

Hand out at least 3 colors to each person to braid or offer other friendship bracelet patterns. Here is great resource: <https://sarahmaker.com/easy-friendship-bracelet-patterns/>



>> DISCUSSION:

- (skip this if you did activity #1) Do you think you would survive on your own on a deserted island, like Castaway or Robinson Crusoe? For how long? Don't you think you would get lonely?
- Where do you find community or friends? (school, church, neighborhood, family)
How long can you go without talking to your friends?

Read our scripture passage for today, Genesis 2:18-22.

- Why do you think God said it was not good for humans to be alone?
- Who are the people that help you when you need it?

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

- When is a time that you needed help or community and relationships with others?
- The wonderful image of 3 cords tied together, is that each one is unique and that TOGETHER they are strongest. (If you are making friendship bracelets, look at them together. Note the differences between each one that makes each bracelet unique.)
- How do you contribute uniquely to your team, your class, or your friend group?
- Why do you think God created us with differences and diversity? Wouldn't it be easier to get along if we were all the same?
- How has our church or youth group been a place of community for you? How can our church be a more welcoming community for others? (If you made friendship bracelets, ask students to give their bracelet to someone this week that might be feeling alone.)

>> ACTIVITY #2: COMMUNITY VALUES

As a small group community, come up with a list of Community Values that you want to hold onto throughout this year. Treat it as a covenant or a promise to one another. Hold each other accountable when you don't hold up to your values. Ask each other, "What do we want to be known for as a community? What is important to us as a small group community?"

>> COMMUNITY VALUES EXAMPLES:

- As a Small Group Community, we will listen when others talk.
- We will pray together each week and pray for each other throughout the week.
- We will be welcoming and accepting of everyone.
- We will not make fun of each other.

Write your Community Values on a sheet of paper and hang it somewhere visible where everyone can see. Refer back to it regularly as needed.

>> CHALLENGE:

If you are not regularly a part of our student ministry community, we'd love to see you back! If you are already here most weeks, invite others! Who is someone that could really use community and friendship, but doesn't have it right now?



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UNIT OVERVIEW

UNIT 2: Chosen

Chosen is a 3-week series for middle school students addressing some of our basic needs and wants. We all want to be chosen. We all want a purpose. We all want meaningful relationships. Through Abraham's life, we see God's plan to meet those needs. Join us as we discuss God's invitation to relationship, adventure, and mission in this world.

>> SESSION SUMMARIES

1 - Chosen for an Amazing and Scary Journey

God chose Abram and invited him to do something hard. Just like Abram, we are chosen by God, and invited to do hard things too. Don't worry, you won't be asked to walk 400 hours without good car snacks. But maybe you are chosen to show love to someone in your class – maybe someone who is mean, or maybe someone people are mean to. Maybe you are chosen to invite someone to church with you, or listen to you parents even when they are driving you crazy. God chooses us all for great adventures and invites us to participate, but ultimately, he leaves the final choice to follow up to us. We can always say no, but saying yes will take us on a pretty amazing adventure. Will we answer God's call? Will we be a part of God's grand adventure?

2 - Chosen by God

God chooses each of us to carry out God's work and mission in the world. Sometimes we feel inadequate and like we are the unlikely choice, like Abram and Sarai. Yet we are each chosen to carry out our unique role in God's work in the world. Remember, God doesn't make mistakes, and God has an important role for each of us. Even when we seem like unlikely choices, God is choosing each of us to be a part of the great work God is doing in the world.

3 - Chosen for Relationship with God

God chose Abraham, and Abraham trusted God. Just as Abraham and his family were invited to be in relationship with God, we all now have the opportunity be chosen for a special and personal relationship with God through Jesus. We all now have the chance to be "friends of God" which was a phrase used to describe Abraham. God chooses all of us to do great things. Our response is to trust God!



Chosen for an Amazing and Scary Journey

>> **BIG IDEA:** When God chooses us, sometimes it means being called to amazing but scary adventures.

>> **SUMMARY:** God chose Abram and invited him to do something hard. Just like Abram, we are chosen by God, and invited to do hard things too. Don't worry, you won't be asked to walk 400 hours without good car snacks. But maybe you are chosen to show love to someone in your class – maybe someone who is mean, or maybe someone people are mean to. Maybe you are chosen to invite someone to church with you, or listen to you parents even when they are driving you crazy. God chooses us all for great adventures and invites us to participate, but ultimately, he leaves the final choice to follow up to us. We can always say no, but saying yes will take us on a pretty amazing adventure. Will we answer God's call? Will we be a part of God's grand adventure?

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Genesis 12:1-9 (CEB)

12-1 The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your land, your family, and your father's household for the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation and will bless you. I will make your name respected, and you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you,
those who curse you I will curse;
all the families of the earth
will be blessed because of you."

4 Abram left just as the Lord told him, and Lot went with him. Now Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. 5 Abram took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all of their possessions, and those who became members of their household in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, 6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the sacred place at Shechem, at the oak of Moreh. The Canaanites lived in the land at that time. 7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "I give this land to your descendants," so Abram built an altar there to the Lord who appeared to him.



8 From there he traveled toward the mountains east of Bethel, and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and worshipped in the Lord's name. 9 Then Abram set out toward the arid southern plain, making and breaking camp as he went.

Hebrews 11:8 (CEB)

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was going to receive as an inheritance. He went out without knowing where he was going.

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** 6-9 pieces of paper per small group, white board, expo markers

>> **LEADER NOTES:** This week take some time to think about what God is inviting you to do – mentor middle school kids! That is always a great adventure. Middle School students are quirky and trying to find their place in this world. You get to walk with them through the unanswerable questions and weird body odor. And most of all, you have an awesome opportunity to help them feel confident in their relationship with God. This journey is long, and difficult, but completely worth it!

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** We started a new series in EXPLORE this week, Chosen. We talked about Abram's call decision to say, "YES" to God even when it was scary. Here are few connection points to keep the conversation going at home:

- Share a time when you said, "YES" to God even when it was scary (could be making the decision to move, serving with people, etc)
- Ask your student if there is one thing they think God is asking of them that they can say, "YES" to this week and how you can help/encourage them.

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hello friends, my name is Megan DelGrosso and I am the rezlife Director for the Leawood Location, and I am so excited to be here with you this morning. Something you should know about me, is that I have a love/hate relationship with road trips. I was a professional road-tripper growing up. My grandparents lived 13 hours away, and we would travel to see them 3 times a year. I vowed that I would never live far away from my parents so I didn't have to make my kids travel 13 hours to see their grandparents. Jokes on me, because in 2021 we moved about 15 hours away. Oops!

But like I said, there are some things I love, and some things I don't love, about road trips.



Here are the things I love.

1. The snacks. I don't know what it is about road trip snacks, but they are better, and tastier, than when you eat them on the couch. I don't know why, but it's just a fact of life.
2. Book tapes. Most of my most favorite books, I listened to on road trips. Back in my day, our cell phones didn't have internet, and we didn't have a car with a tv, so our entertainment was hearing a story. We had some truly favorite books that we listened to over and over again. Harry Potter, Chronicles of Narnia, a book called My Side of the Mountain. I loved it.
3. Looking out the window. Okay, maybe this sounds lame, but there is something beautiful about being stuck somewhere, where all you can do is look out the window. I loved the time to look at the scenery, and just think about stuff.

But there is a lot of stuff I don't love too. Mostly, that involves sitting in the car. The temperature is never right, sometimes it smells funky, and sometimes it is just too long. The story I want to share with you today, also talks about a pretty lengthy road trip that a man named Abram took with his family. We find it in scripture in Genesis 12. Basically God tells Abram to leave his home, and go somewhere else. And there isn't a map included, or directions. This is what the Bible says about it:

The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your land, your family, and your father's household for the land that I will show you." Genesis 12:1.

For me, that feels like a big no. Leave everything you have ever known, and go somewhere else. I am not going to tell you where, but I will show you. That takes some big trust from Abram to believe God, especially since Abram isn't taking good road trip snacks or book tapes.

Let's actually take a second and take a look at where Abram traveled. Here is a map. <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/a9/cd/d3/a9cdd30c7a85ea5cf16ef05bea50d4a2.png>

He would have had to travel around the edge near the water, called the fertile crescent, because walking through the desert is probably not the smartest call. But walking near the water makes a long journey even longer. So I tried to google map it with today's equivalent.

(Side by side of the two maps)

If Abram drove a similar route, it would take 22 hours by car. BY CAR. Let's remember, that cars did not exist. He was on camel, or maybe just walking. I have never ridden a camel, but it doesn't seem like it would be as fast as a car.

Last map, I promise, but I love practical things.

(walking map)

I tried to map it with walking directions. 384 HOURS. What. The. Heck. To get there in 30 days, you would have to be walking more than 12 hours a day, ever day.

So, why would God ask all of this of Abram and his family? And honestly, why would Abram say yes? Because if I was invited to walk for almost 400 hours, I would not do that. Like ever.



Abram didn't say no though, and the key is in verse 3, where God went onto say that through Abram, God would bless "all the families of the earth." God made a promise to Abram that he would give him a family, that he would bless other people, and that really cool things were going to happen in the world, and lives would be changed, if he said yes. So, Abram said yes.

And honestly, when you put it like that, I might have said yes too. Because if someone told me, Megan, walk 400 miles and millions of people's lives will be changed for the better, you are going to be a part of a really cool movement, and you will bless so many people, I probably would walk 400 miles. And we know that God wasn't lying because here we are STILL talking about this thing! Our lives are being impacted by Abram's choice to say yes even today.

God chose Abram and invited him to do something hard. Just like Abram, we are chosen by God, and invited to do hard things too. Don't worry, you won't be asked to walk 400 hours without good car snacks. But maybe you are chosen to show love to someone in your class – maybe someone who is mean, or maybe someone people are mean to. Maybe you are chosen to invite someone to church with you, or listen to you parents even when they are driving you crazy. Maybe you are chosen to move your family from Pennsylvania to Kansas to work at a new church. Anyone? Right, that ones mine.

God chooses us all for great adventures and invites us to participate, but ultimately, he leaves the final choice to follow up to us. We can always say no, but saying yes will take us on a pretty amazing adventure. Will we answer God's call? Will we be a part of God's grand adventure?

As someone who has said yes, a couple of times, to God's grand adventure, I can tell you, the snacks are usually pretty good, but the stories, and the views, on God's grand adventures are pretty spectacular.



SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Have students share their name and someplace new they recently visited (restaurant, sports arena, city, friend's home, etc.)

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1: SLOW MOVERS

Supplies Needed: 3 pieces of paper for each team

Divide the group into 2 or 3 even teams. Give each team three pieces of printer or construction paper. When you say "go," each team should move from one side of the room to the other side and cross the finish line, but they can only go across the room or space by standing on their pieces of paper. (Think, "the floor is lava!") The first team to get their whole group across wins!

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- Where would you go on your "dream road trip"?
- Who has traveled the farthest?

>> DISCUSSION:

Read Genesis 12:1-3

- Would you be able to do what God called Abram to do: pack up and leave your home and your family, and go to a foreign place without knowing the way?
- What is the scariest thing you have ever done?
- What is the longest amount of time you have spent away from home or from your family?
- Why would God choose someone to go on journey like this?

Read Genesis 12:4-9

- What do you think would have happened if Abram had told God, "No"? Did Abram have a choice in the matter?
- How did God promise to help Abram on his journey?

Read Hebrews 11:8.

- Many, many years after Abram was chosen to go on this great journey, he was remembered and praised for it. Why do you think that was the case?
- What does it mean to do something "by faith"?
- How would you define trust?
- How did Abram demonstrate faith and trust in God?
- In what areas of your life do you need to have faith or trust in God?
- Do you think God might be calling you to step out of your comfort zone in any parts of your life?



>> **ACTIVITY #2: BLESSING OTHERS**

Supplies Needed: whiteboard, markers

Abram was chosen by God to be a blessing to others. But this meant Abram had to get uncomfortable and leave his homeland. Sometimes being a blessing means doing hard things and getting out of our comfort zones.

Brainstorm a list of ways you can be a blessing to those around you this week. Think outside the box—and outside of your comfort zones—as you seek to show God's kindness and love to those you encounter.

Some ideas to get you started:

- Inviting someone new to church or youth group
- Sharing your lunch with a friend who doesn't have one

>> **CHALLENGE:** Look for ways God might be choosing you to step out of your comfort zone! You might not have to travel to a faraway land, but God might be calling you to do something else hard and uncomfortable that will bless others. How will you respond?

>> **JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:**

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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X P L
X P L



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines. The page features a large, faint watermark of the word 'ORDER' in the background.



UNIT 2 | SESSION 2

Chosen by God

>> **BIG IDEA:** God chooses unexpected people to carry out God's work.

>> **SUMMARY:** God chooses each of us to carry out God's work and mission in the world. Sometimes we feel inadequate and like we are the unlikely choice, like Abram and Sarai. Yet we are each chosen to carry out our unique role in God's work in the world. Remember, God doesn't make mistakes, and God has an important role for each of us. Even when we seem like unlikely choices, God is choosing each of us to be a part of the great work God is doing in the world.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:** Genesis 17:1-8 (CEB)

17 – 1 When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am El Shaddai. Walk with me and be trustworthy. 2 I will make a covenant between us and I will give you many, many descendants.” 3 Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, 4 “But me, my covenant is with you; you will be the ancestor of many nations. 5 And because I have made you the ancestor of many nations, your name will no longer be Abram but Abraham. 6 I will make you very fertile. I will produce nations from you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will set up my covenant with you and your descendants after you in every generation as an enduring covenant. I will be your God and your descendants' God after you. 8 I will give you and your descendants the land in which you are immigrants, the whole land of Canaan, as an enduring possession. And I will be their God.”

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, pens, paper

>> **LEADER NOTES:** Think about a time when you stepped into a role that was an unlikely choice. This could be joining a serve trip when you don't feel physically the best, serving with teens when you feel old (no matter your age), or a job change that allowed you to be more generous with your money or time. Thank God for the invitation to more!



>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** In week 2 of CHOSEN, we talked about how God chooses unexpected people to carry out God's work. Here are few connection points to keep the conversation going at home:

- Ask your student how they feel about being chosen for a unique role in God's work in the world. What does this look like and mean to them?
- Share a time when you felt unlikely or uncomfortable in the role God invited you to fill.

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hey Resurrection Students! I'm Shannon Greene, one of your student ministries pastors. Here in EXPLORE, we've been...well...exploring the story of Abraham and his wife Sarah. They are kind of "big deals" in the Bible, and their whole story can be found Genesis, chapters 12-25. Last session, we learned that God chose them to go on a great adventure to a new land called Canaan. This land would eventually become Israel and the Promised Land for God's people. [Screen: The Land of Canaan would eventually become Israel, the Promised Land for God's people.] Now, they've finally made their way to Canaan (after a brief pit stop in Egypt), and they are settling down to make a life for themselves. Little did they know, this was just the beginning of their story!

I wonder, have you seen those Capital One Commercials where they talk about how choosing their credit card is the easiest decision you'll ever make, it's the easiest decision in the history of decisions! There's the one where Charles Barkley is picked first for the kids' basketball game. The narrator goes, "Now that was an easy decision." A no brainer decision. He would be the obvious choice to play on your pick-up basketball team. Or there's another one where the softball team needs a "clutch hit" in the bottom of the 9th inning. So who do they ask to be their pinch hitter? Derek Jeter. This is the easiest decision you'll have to make.

But God has this way of picking the unlikely people, the unobvious choices, the ones no one else would choose: Like Abraham and Sarah. Let's read from Genesis chapter 17 and find out why there were "unlikely choices" to carry out God's plan:

When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am El Shaddai. Walk with me and be trustworthy. I will make a covenant between us and I will give you many, many descendants." Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, "But me, my covenant is with you; you will be the ancestor of many nations. (Genesis 17:1-4)

So God appears to Abram and says, "I am going to make you the father of a huge nation! Your descendants are going to be so numerous, you won't even be able to count them. You will be the great-great-grandfather to kings and great leaders, and I will be there for all of your kids, grandkids, great-grandkids and so on." God chooses Abram and Sarai to be the ancestors of a group of people that God would continue to use to bless the world and others.



But there was only one problem: Abram and Sarai were old...like REALLY old! Far too old to have kids of their own. Abram was 99 years old, and Sarai was 89 years old, and they had never had children together. They were definitely “unlikely choices” to be the parents and grandparents of a great nation. Even Abram and Sarai didn’t understand God’s decision to choose them!

Here’s how Abram responded:

Abraham fell on his face and laughed. He said to himself, Can a 100-year-old man become a father, or Sarah, a 90-year-old woman, have a child? (Genesis 17:17)

But God once again made a promise to Abram, and assured him that he was the right choice:

But God said, “No, your wife Sarah will give birth to a son for you, and you will name him Isaac. I will set up my covenant with him and with his descendants after him as an enduring covenant. (Genesis 17:19)

God essentially said, “I am choosing you, Abram, and I don’t make mistakes!

God doesn’t make mistakes when God chooses people. While Abraham and Sarah seemed like “unlikely choices,” and there were probably better people to pick as the mother and father of a great nation, God chose them because they believed God and obeyed.

I want to pause for a moment and talk about the significance of names. Names were really important in the Bible, and God often changed the names of people after a big moment or a time when they encountered God.

God said to Abram, your name will now be Abraham. Abraham means “ancestor of a great multitude.” God was so sure of the promise made with Abraham, that God gives him a new name. Sarai’s name was changed to Sarah. The meaning of her name remained the same—“princess”—but the addition of the “ah” was a sign that she had encountered the Lord, or Yah-weh—another name for God. Finally, God promises that they will have a son, and his name will be Isaac. Isaac means “laughter.” Isaac’s name would be a constant reminder to his parents that they had laughed at God, but God ultimately had the last laugh.

A little spoiler alert: Abraham and Sarah do go on to be the parents of a great nation. Through their son Isaac, and their grandson Jacob, they went on to have many, many descendants—later known as the Israelites. Now it makes sense why God had Abraham move: he would eventually need this land, this space for all of his descendants, which were to be as numerous as the stars in the sky or the sand on the shore.

Here’s what this means for us: God chooses each of us to carry out God’s work and mission in the world. But like Abraham, sometimes we feel inadequate and like we are the unlikely choice. There are times when we may be tempted to laugh at God, and say, “You’ve got the wrong person! I mean why would you pick me when Charles Barkley is right over there.” Yet we are each chosen to carry out our unique role in God’s work in the world.



As you head into small groups for discussion, I want you to imagine and think about what it is that God might be choosing you to do. Remember, God doesn't make mistakes, and God has an important role for each of us. I hope you discover what that role might be. Even when we seem like unlikely choices, God is choosing each of us to be a part of the great work God is doing in the world.

We'll see you next time!

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Get to know each other a little better. As students introduce themselves, ask them to share 2 truths about themselves and 1 lie. The group has to decide which one is the lie. *Don't let siblings guess!

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1

Hard Choices

Have the group stand in a line, shoulder to shoulder. Ask them the following list of questions. If they would be willing to make that "hard choice," have them take one step forward.

- Would you: change your name to something else? (you don't get to know what it is ahead of time)
- Would you: transfer schools? (again, you don't get to pick the school)
- Would you: be homeschooled?
- Would you: give up watching tv for the rest of the year?
- Would you: give up watching tv for the rest of your life?
- Would you: never eat dessert again?
- Would you: only eat tacos for the rest of your life?
- Would you: move to a foreign country?
- Would you: listen to only one song for a year?
- Would you: go back one grade?

(Feel free to think of any other "hard choices" you'd like to include!)

If anyone gets too far back from the rest of the group/line, allow them the option to catch up to the rest of the group by doing one of the following challenges:

- Cluck and act like a chicken for 30 seconds
- Sing a Taylor Swift song
- Do a TikTok Dance
- Spin around for 15 seconds with their eyes closed
- Skip around the room



>> OPENING QUESTION:

- If you could choose anyone in the world (alive right now) to eat dinner with, who would it be?

>> DISCUSSION:

Say: We are in week 2 of Chosen. This idea of being chosen can sometimes bring up negative feelings or memories of when we weren't chosen for the team, class project, or show. This story of Abram and Sarai, Abraham and Sarai, shows us that God chooses unexpected people to carry out God's work.

- For you, what would be an example of a “no brainer” decision—like picking Derek Jeter to play on your baseball team or Taylor Swift to sing at your birthday party?
- What does it feel like to be chosen first for a team or a group project?
- Was there ever a time when you were an “unlikely choice” for something, but got chosen anyway?

Read: Genesis 17:6-8

Ask:

- What things did God promise Abram in Genesis 17:6-8?
- Do you believe God keeps the promises God makes?
- Why were Abram and Sarai unlikely choices to become parents to a great nation?
- How do you think Abram and Sarai felt, waiting their whole lives for God to fulfill the promise to make them parents?
- How did Abram respond to God, when God said, “I’m choosing you!”

Share a time in your life where you felt like God's invitation was too big or that you were an unlikely choice. This could be joining a serve trip when you don't feel physically the best, serving with teens when you feel old (no matter your age), or a job change that allowed you to be more generous with your money or time.

- In your view, why does God choose “unlikely people” to carry out God's work? Who are some other “unlikely people” God chose to work through?
- Do you ever feel like you are an “unlikely choice” or inadequate for God to choose you?
- What mission do you think God might be choosing you for?



>> **ACTIVITY #2 - UNLIKELY CHOICES**

Supplies Needed: Bibles, paper/pens (optional)

God is famous for choosing unlikely people to carry out important tasks and work. Let's look at a few more!

Split your larger group into 4 smaller groups and assign each group one of the following passages. Have them look up the passage, read it, write down their answers to these questions, and then report back their responses to the rest of the group.

Assign each group one of the following passages:

- Moses – Exodus 3:1-15
- Gideon – Judges 6:11-16
- David – 1 Samuel 16:1-13
- Esther – Esther 4:7-17
- Mary – Luke 1:26-38

Answer these questions about each passage:

- What made this person an “unlikely choice”?
- What was the task or mission that God was calling them to do?
- What was that person's response to God?
- Would you be able or willing to do what God asked this person to do?

>> **CHALLENGE:**

Learn to look at yourself (and others!) not as “unlikely choices,” but as important people who each have a unique role to play in God's great work. It doesn't matter if you are old, young, short, tall, or whatever! God looks at each of us and says, “I can use you! I choose you.”

>> **JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:**

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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X P L
X P L



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UNIT 2 | SESSION 3

Chosen for Relationship with God

>> **BIG IDEA:** We are all chosen to be in a relationship with God.

>> **SUMMARY:** God chose Abraham, and Abraham trusted God. Just as Abraham and his family were invited to be in relationship with God, we all now have the opportunity to be chosen for a special and personal relationship with God through Jesus. We all now have the chance to be “friends of God” which was a phrase used to describe Abraham. God chooses all of us to do great things. Our response is to trust God!

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Genesis 15:1-7 (CEB)

15-1 After these events, the Lord’s word came to Abram in a vision, “Don’t be afraid, Abram. I am your protector. Your reward will be very great.”

2 But Abram said, “Lord God, what can you possibly give me, since I still have no children? The head of my household is Eliezer, a man from Damascus.” 3 He continued, “Since you haven’t given me any children, the head of my household will be my heir.”

4 The Lord’s word came immediately to him, “This man will not be your heir. Your heir will definitely be your very own biological child.” 5 Then he brought Abram outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars if you think you can count them.” He continued, “This is how many children you will have.” 6 Abram trusted the Lord, and the Lord recognized Abram’s high moral character.

7 He said to Abram, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession.”

James 2:21-23

21 What about Abraham, our father? Wasn’t he shown to be righteous through his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 See, his faith was at work along with his actions. In fact, his faith was made complete by his faithful actions. 23 So the scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and God regarded him as righteous. What is more, Abraham was called God’s friend.



>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, sticky nametags with famous friends (activity 1), notecards, pens

>> **LEADER NOTES:** Invest in your relationship with God this week. What does it mean to you to be a friend of God? Take some time to ask God if there are any areas of your life that you are struggling to trust in him. Bring those areas of struggle to God in prayer and invite a trusted friend to help you build trust with God in this.

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** In our last week of CHOSEN, we discussed how we are all chosen to be in relationship with God. Relationships need trust, truth, and time. Here are few connection points to keep the conversation going at home:

- Ask your student and share how you choose to spend time with God.
- Ask how you can help them trust God more.

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Let me start with a truth today...all of us are someBODY, and all of us come from someWHERE. Have you ever thought about your heritage? Or, have you ever thought about your ancestors? Growing up my grandparents would tell me a lot of stories about my ancestors. For me, I'm German-Russian. My ancestors are originally from Germany but moved to Russia in the mid-late 1800's. In Russia, they were Christians in a time when being a Christian wasn't that popular or liked in the country. My Great-Grandparents and their family tried to still live out their faith. They actually helped publish a secret Christian newspaper they would distribute to other Christians in the community, that would have Bible passages and reflections. But the time they were living in the country was tough. Food was scarce, the government was harsh, and Christians were often killed for their beliefs. So they decided to try and come to the United States. But it got complicated and they couldn't enter the United States, so they went to Canada! Eventually, they settled in South Dakota. Here is a picture of some of my ancestors.

Now that is just ONE part of my ancestral heritage. I also have traits back to England and Wales! There are also parts of my ancestry my family hasn't been able to track, yet. If you've never asked about your family history, or ancestry, do it!

Now ancestry in the Bible was a big deal, too. Families staying together and doing life together generation after generation was important. Often in the Bible, people were given the opportunity to fulfill a task. In the Old Testament, we don't have Jesus walking around Earth yet. So God would communicate to people through visions, dreams, God would just talk directly, or communicate through miraculous things like a burning bush. And there is this story in Genesis about God choosing a man named Abraham to complete a task, and it is a task that impacts all the people in his family after him.



Hear these words from Genesis 15:1-7: After these events, the Lord's word came to Abram in a vision, "Don't be afraid, Abram. I am your protector.[a] Your reward will be very great."

2 But Abram said, "Lord God, what can you possibly give me, since I still have no children? The head of my household is Eliezer, a man from Damascus." [b] 3 He continued, "Since you haven't given me any children, the head of my household will be my heir." 4 The Lord's word came immediately to him, "This man will not be your heir. Your heir will definitely be your very own biological child." 5 Then he brought Abram outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars if you think you can count them." He continued, "This is how many children you will have." 6 Abram trusted the Lord, and the Lord recognized Abram's high moral character. 7 He said to Abram, "I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession."

Now what is going on in this story...Abraham is your average man and a follower of God and God shows up to him in a vision. He is pretty old, probably 90 or 100 and he has never had any children. God appears in a vision and they are having this conversation about who is going to be Abraham's heir...who is going to carry on Abraham's family line because he doesn't have any children. Abraham didn't have any children yet, and him and his wife were old! And God says, "your own child" is going to carry your family line, and in fact, there are going to be more people in your family line than you could even imagine!

Have you ever made a family tree, or been on ancestry.com or asked older people in your family, "where are we from?" I encourage you to do it! What you will find is that your family history goes back a long time. Some people can trace their family history back hundreds and hundreds of years...your family probably entered America as some point, unless you have indigenous heritage...they likely spoke a different language than what you speak now, they likely had a different job or career than what you are doing...Ask your family about your family history.

But in this story...Abraham was not considered someone who is going to progress his family line. He thought "it's going to end with me" because him and his wife were really old! But God decided to still choose Abraham to have children and the reason is because he knew Abraham had a strong faith in God. God chose Abraham and Abraham didn't say, "no thanks...go pick someone else." Abraham said, "alright God, we'll figure this out." 40 Generations later, we get Jesus from Abraham's family. I don't know if Abraham knew at the time that one of his great great great times 40 grandchildren was going to be Jesus...but what God did was exceed Abraham's expectations.

Students, this is what we should remember: God chose Abraham, and Abraham trusted God. Out of all the people on the earth, God chose Abraham to be in a relationship with. What is also important to remember, is that God chooses us, too. Although Abraham, his family, and descendants were God's original "Chosen People," through Jesus, we all now have the opportunity be chosen for a special and personal relationship with God. We all now have the chance to be "friends of God" which was a phrase used to describe Abraham. Just like any relationship, it is a mutual give and



take: we are called to trust and obey and follow God. God allows us to be used to bless others in the world.

Have you thought recently about HOW you are trusting God? I think about my ancestors again...they have to flee their country because they were scared. They left all their family and friends behind, and got in a boat. I think the whole time they were scared, but they said, "God, we trust you." When Plan A didn't work out, they tried Plan B, again...I think they were scared, but continued to trust God.

Some of the areas I feel like I can trust God is knowing that God will give me strength in moments that seem too tough for me to handle. I feel like I can also trust God in knowing that God's always going to love me no matter what I do, and that God has a plan for me...even when it doesn't quite make sense to me yet.

Students: God chooses all of us to do great things. What we have to do, though, is trust God! Remember that you are chosen and that you can trust God to guide you through anything.

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Have students introduce themselves. Remember there can be new students each week. Creating the habit of introducing themselves every week allows new students to feel welcome since regular attenders will know it is simply a thing we do every week.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1 - FAMOUS FRIENDS

Supplies Needed: sticky nametags of the following "famous friends" (one name per nametag):

- Batman / Robin
- Mario / Luigi
- Harry Potter / Hermione Granger / Ron Weasley
- Han Solo / Luke Skywalker / Princess Leia
- Timon / Pumbaa
- Shrek / Donkey
- Sherlock Holmes / Dr. John Watson
- Frodo Baggins / Samwise Gamgee
- Thor / Captain America / Iron Man
- Falcon / Winter Soldier
- Mickey Mouse / Minnie Mouse
- Kermit the Frog / Miss Piggy
- Barbie / Ken



Without seeing their own nametag, place a nametag on every student's back. Then, without talking, they must find their "missing partner" or "missing friends." (This might be just one other person, or a small group of three.) See if students help each other out or focus just on finding their own group of "famous friends"!

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- Who is your favorite famous friendship?

>> DISCUSSION:

Say: Friendship is one of our most important relationships.

Ask:

- What makes a good friend? What are some things you do with your friends to maintain a solid relationship with them?
- How can you know that you trust your friends?
- Have you ever thought about being God's friend?

Read: Genesis 15:1-7 (emphasis on verses 1 & 6)

Ask:

- What kind of friendship or relationship did God have with Abraham?
- Abraham was someone who actually talked with God and was called God's friend. What do you think it was like for Abraham to have actual conversations with God?
- How did God support and care for Abraham? In turn, how did Abraham obey and follow God?

Say: Friendship is a mutual give and take. With our friends at school or church, we all need trust, truth, and time. Our friendship with God is similar.

Read: James 2:21-23

Ask:

- How was Abraham "chosen" to be in relationship with God? How are we also "chosen" for relationship with God?
- In James 2:23, we are told that Abraham "believed God." What are some things you know and believe about God to be true?
- Would seeing God as your friend change the way you relate to God?
- How can you know that you trust God and that God can be believed in and counted on?
- What sort of actions could you take to become a closer friend of God?

>> ACTIVITY #2 - TEXT MESSAGE TO GOD

Supplies Needed: Notecards and pens for each student

How do you usually talk to your friends? If you are like most people, it's probably through text message! Take a few minutes and write up a "text message" to God. What would you like to tell God? What would you like God to know about your day or week? Do you have any questions you'd want to ask God? Try to "text" to God just like you would your best friend!



>> CHALLENGE:

Spend time this week working on your relationship with God. Set aside extra time to talk with God in prayer or through journaling. Talk to God like you would your best friend. God loves us and definitely wants to hear from us!

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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UNIT OVERVIEW

UNIT 3: Named

Discovering who we are is a life-long journey, and there are some things that never change. God knows our name, knows our story, and gives us a new identity through his grace. Join us in this 3-week series as we dig into who God says we are!

>> SESSION SUMMARIES

1 – God Knows Our Name

Throughout history, names have been important. Our names and stories of how we received our name carries weight. Even if we change our name or get a new name over time, God knows us and calls us by name. Through the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac we can share in the dread of waiting and feeling forgotten, the joy of being seen and known, and the promise that God is always with us.

2 - God Knows Your Story

We make mistakes, we mess up, we might even deceive others. None of that is news to God. But God still calls us by name—just like God called Jacob in his dreams—and cares for us. God loves us in spite of our messy pasts!

3 - God Gives Us a New Identity

Our identity can be in a lot of things, but the truest thing about us is who God says we are. He says that we are chosen, forgiven, named, and loved – no matter what! Jacob is an example of faith revealing that as we wrestle with the things of God, we can trust God to know us, see us, and name us. Our true identity can be found in God.



UNIT 3 | SESSION 1

God Knows Our Name

>> **BIG IDEA:** God has called us by name and does not forget us.

>> **SUMMARY:** Throughout history, names have been important. Our names and stories of how we received our name carries weight. Even if we change our name or get a new name over time, God knows us and calls us by name. Through the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac we can share in the dread of waiting and feeling forgotten, the joy of being seen and known, and the promise that God is always with us.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Genesis 21:1-7 (CEB)

21 – 1 The Lord was attentive to Sarah just as he had said, and the Lord carried out just what he had promised her. 2 She became pregnant and gave birth to a son for Abraham when he was old, at the very time God had told him. 3 Abraham named his son—the one Sarah bore him—Isaac. 4 Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old just as God had commanded him. 5 Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born. 6 Sarah said, “God has given me laughter. Everyone who hears about it will laugh with me.” 7 She said, “Who could have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse sons? But now I’ve given birth to a son when he was old!”

Isaiah 49:15-16 (CEB)

15 Can a woman forget her nursing child,
fail to pity the child of her womb?

Even these may forget,
but I won't forget you.

16 Look, on my palms I've inscribed you;
your walls are before me continually.



Isaiah 43:1-2 (CEB)

43 -1 But now, says the Lord—

the one who created you, Jacob,

the one who formed you, Israel:

Don't fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name; you are mine.

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

when through the rivers, they won't sweep over you.

When you walk through the fire, you won't be scorched

and flame won't burn you.

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, paper, pen

>> **LEADER NOTES:** The story of Isaac's birth – he had been long awaited and prayed for by his parents, Abraham and Sarah. Isaac's name means "laughter," because everyone would have laughed at his parents having a child even though they were so old, but God did not forget about Abraham and Sarah and delivered on the promise made to them.

Fun fact: Isaac is one of only a few people in the whole Bible who was given their name by God before they were even born! Another one is Jesus.

At one point, Abraham believed he had to sacrifice and kill Isaac as a sign of his obedience to God. Yet even then, God did not forget about Isaac and saved him, providing a ram for the sacrifice instead. (Genesis 22)

Even when we are going through tough times, God knows our name and does not forget about us (Isaiah passages). Our names are engraved on God's hands.

Isaac went on to live a full life, got married to Rebekah and have two sons, Jacob and Esau – we will learn more about them next week.

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** Explore students started a new series today, NAMED. We discussed the pain of being forgotten, the joy of being known, and promise that God is always with us. Continue the discussion at home:

- Ask your student if there are any nicknames they like or dislike to be called.
- Share the meaning behind your name, their name, and your family name. If you chose your name or your student is choosing their own name, discuss the significance of what they have chosen.

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hello all, My name is Todd Davidson. Today we will talk about names.

When I was born my dad really wanted to name me something short, and something that couldn't be easily made into a nickname. So they picked TODD



Now you all are creative. Can you think of some nicknames for Todd? I'll give you a second. Toad.....thats easy....Turd..... come on now. There are lots that come up. My favorite in college was Hot Toddy. Oh yeah. My current favorite is The Todd Father.

Now why did my dad want something without a nickname. I believe he had experienced some hurt growing up with people calling him names. And he wanted me to avoid that hurt in my life. But what we know is that some kid, trying to help themselves look good will make fun of you...no matter what name you are given.

I got made fun of a lot when I was young and just wished that I had a cool name to be known by. Something that carried weight and meaning like "Kobe". It was the name of a great basketball player and now gets used as verb for making great shots...KOBEB, KOBEB, KOBEB

But no. I get the name that is associated with middle age dudes wearing cargo shorts and ruining LIGHTSABER NIGHT. Light Saber night has been cancelled. Thanks a lot Todd

So names matter. Not the actual name, but usually the story behind that name. For instance, we gave our oldest son a middle name that matches both my wife and I's grandpas. And my youngest boy has my middle name that matches my grandpa and great grandpa. It shows that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

This happens in the bible as well. You might read phrases like this is Esau, son of Issac, grandson of Abraham. Those stories matter because it connected them back to the faith of Abraham and the promises God gave him.

Connection to God helps us feel known and that we belong. There is this bible passage in Isaiah that says this.

Isaiah 49:15

15 Can a woman forget her nursing child,
fail to pity the child of her womb?
Even these may forget,
but I won't forget you.

Wait a second...Does it say even your mom will forget you, but I won't? That sounds a little strange, but raise your hand if your family has called you the wrong name? I called my kids the dog name the other day. "Hey Ollie, can you help me carry this?" Come on, I'm not the only one.

So. What is God trying to say here? God know us so well. And never gives up on us. Even the things we can't share with our family. God knows. The things we are embarrassed to share with friends. God knows. And loves us forever.

My we accept Gods love and grace. And extend it to others. Unconditionally.



SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Have students introduce themselves and share if they know the meaning of their name or any stories with their name.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1 GOING ON VACATION

Have everyone sit or stand in a circle. The leader should start by saying their name, and "I'm going on a vacation and I'm taking..." then an object that begins with the same letter of their first name. For example: "I'm Jenny. I'm going on a vacation and I'm taking jeans." Here's the trick! Don't tell students that they can only bring an item that starts with the first letter of their name. See which kids can figure it out without telling others, and if someone says something different, the leader says, "I'm sorry, you cannot bring that item." For example, if a student says, "I'm Billy. I'm going on vacation and I'm bringing snacks," say that he unfortunately can't bring snacks, but he can take a Bible instead. For an added challenge, see if anyone can remember all the names and items at the end of the game (after everyone has had a turn).

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- If you were a superhero, what would be your Superhero Name?

>> DISCUSSION:

Say: Today, we are talking all about names! Sometimes it's hard for me to remember everyone's name, which is why nametags are so helpful. Even if I've known you for a LONG time, I may say the wrong name or my mind goes blank when someone is directly in front of me.

- Is it easy or hard for you to remember people's names?
- How does it feel when someone forgets your name?

Read: Genesis 21:1-7

Ask:

- Do you think Abraham and Sarah ever felt like God forgot them? How do you think they felt when they finally had their son Isaac after so many years of waiting?
- What did Isaac's name mean? (Hint: "laughter") Why was that his name?
- Sarah said, "God has given me laughter." When is a time that God gave you great joy or even laughter?



Say: Sarah was so ecstatic to finally have a child! Do you think they ever forgot their son's name or called him by the wrong name?

Read: Isaiah 49:15-16

Ask:

- Do you have any tricks to help you remember something important or someone's name? (Like writing it down or putting an alert in your phone?)
- When is a time that it felt like God had abandoned you or forgotten you?
- What does this passage say about God? What does God do to remember us? (It says that we are engraved "in the palms of God's hands.")
- How does it make you feel to know that your name is engraved upon God's hands?

Say: It's easy to forget God's promises in our everyday lives. Our challenge this week is to read, remember, and believe what God says in Isaiah 43.

Read: Isaiah 43:1-3

Say: Take a moment to listen to this promise and when I pause, add your own name in your head (or out-loud) - Leader read Isaiah 43 again with a pause not saying, "Jacob" or "Israel"

Ask:

- How can you remind yourself of the promise that God will not forget you and remembers your name?

>> ACTIVITY #2

Give everyone a piece of paper and a writing utensil. Have them trace or outline their hand on the paper. Then instruct them to write their own name in the middle of their drawn hand. They can decorate their drawing however they want. At the bottom, they can write, "My name is written on God's hand." They can put this drawing in place where they will be reminded that God knows their name.

>> CHALLENGE:

Remember this week that God knows your name and does not forget about you. God wants to bring you laughter and joy! Re-read Isaiah 43:1-3 if you need a reminder of this promise.

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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UNIT 3 | SESSION 2

God Knows Your Story

>> **BIG IDEA:** God knows all about our past and where we've been, and yet loves us anyway!

>> **SUMMARY:** We make mistakes, we mess up, we might even deceive others. None of that is news to God. But God still calls us by name—just like God called Jacob in his dreams—and cares for us. God loves us in spite of our messy pasts!

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:** Genesis 28:13-15 (CEB)

13 Suddenly the Lord was standing on it and saying, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will become like the dust of the earth; you will spread out to the west, east, north, and south. Every family of earth will be blessed because of you and your descendants. 15 I am with you now, I will protect you everywhere you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done everything that I have promised you."

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, air dry clay/dough, heart stickers or cut-outs, optional: paper, pens, simple drawings

>> **LEADER NOTES:** Isaac and his wife Rebekah had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob was named "deceiver" because he grabbed his brother's heel when they were born. When they grew up, even though Esau was the older son and was going to inherit Isaac's wealth and the blessing from God, Jacob "deceived" Isaac and tricked his father into giving him his brother Esau's blessing. Esau was so angry, he wanted to kill Jacob! So Jacob ran away, but God found Jacob anyway. Instead of punishing Jacob for his deceit, God promised to protect Jacob and keep him safe. What does all that mean for us? We make mistakes, we mess up, we might even deceive others. None of that is news to God. But God still calls us by name—just like God called Jacob in his dreams—and cares for us. God loves us in spite of our messy pasts!



>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** Explore students at in week 2 of "NAMED." We learned that God knows all about our past, our mistakes and mess-ups, and loves us anyway! Continue the conversation at home:

- This would be a great week for a bonfire! Have everyone in the family take a piece of paper and write down ways in which they think they have messed up. Everyone take their piece of paper and throw it in the fire as a reminder of God's forgiveness and love.
- Use this week to show your student that you love them even when they make mistakes. Provide a safe space for them to share with you their own insecurities or missteps.

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hello Resurrection Students, it's Leah Swank-Miller, one of your directors and I've got a question for you. How many of you have a big brother or sister that you feel completely different than? Maybe you're always fighting about who gets away with more things from your parents.

Well, do I have a doozie of a story for you today. If you think you and your siblings have drama, listen to this.

Genesis chapters 25-28 tell us all about two twins named Jacob and Esau. The Bible tells us they didn't get along, they even started fighting as early as in their mother's womb. And when they were born Esau came out with Jacob holding on to his twin brother's heel. Just so you know that's not normal. And since Esau was technically born first, he was called the "first born".

They even looked different. Esau's body was covered in hair while Jacob's skin was smooth. And as they got older they got even more different. Esau was all about the outdoors, he loved to hunt animals and bring home meat for the whole family. Which his dad LOVED!

Jacob, on the other hand, was quiet and more of an indoors guy. Interestingly, the bible tells us that their mom, Rebecca, liked Jacob the best. Now, while the Bible doesn't talk much about Jacob and Esau as kids, we do know that Esau was lucky to be the oldest because in the Hebrew tradition that meant Esau would be in charge of all the family stuff, including all their money and land. This was his birthright as the oldest son. It also meant that his younger brother Jacob would have to end up working for Esau. I am the youngest sibling, and while I do love my big brother, I'm not sure I'd want to work for him as my boss for the rest of my life. Being the oldest meant that Esau would get a blessing from his father Isaac. This means Isaac would ask God to take care of his oldest son Esau in an extra special way.

Now the Bible says that Esau wasn't too crazy about this whole birthright/getting the blessing thing. Not right at the beginning, that is. It tells us that at one point Esau had been out killing animals and hunting and didn't even have time to feed himself so



when he got back home he was really hungry. And I don't know if y'all have been to the point of being so hungry you were "Hangry" but that's where he was. Esau saw his brother Jacob making a tasty stew and said, hey give me some of that stew. So, Jacob, being sneaky and living into his given name (which means deceiver) said sure I'll give you this yummy, tasty food, all you gotta do is give me your birthright. And Esau, blinded by his hunger was like sure you got it just give me that food.

<picture of 1 million dollars and tomato soup>

Just to put it in context, this is like giving 1 million dollars for a bowl of tomato soup. Don't get me wrong, I love some tomato soup but it's not worth 1 million dollars.

Now, as their father, Isaac was nearing death he wanted to give his oldest son Esau a blessing and he said please go hunt and find me the perfect last meal. And that's what Esau did. Esau now wanted to receive that blessing of his birthright. So, he left to go hunting for his father.

Meanwhile, Rebecca, mother of Esau and Jacob heard what Isaac said to Esau, and loving her other son Jacob more, devised a plan to fool Isaac. She was going to help Jacob trick his dad into believing that Jacob was Esau and give Jacob the blessing. So, Rebekah created a costume and put sheep's wool over Jacob's arms and threw on Esau's smelly dirty hunting clothes so that his blind dad would believe it was Esau.

And you know what? It worked. Isaac prayed over Jacob in disguise as Esau and gave him the blessing. When Esau came home and found out what had happened, Rebecca had to help Jacob escape so his big brother wouldn't do something super dangerous. So there Jacob was, fleeing from his family having deceived his father to get the blessing from God and all the inheritance. Talk about a really low messy moment in Jacob's story. But, you know what's crazy even though Jacob did a really bad thing and God knew of Jacob's deception, God still blessed him and loved him. We read in Genesis 28 where God spoke to Jacob in a dream saying,

"I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you were lying. Your descendants will become like the dust of the earth and you will spread out to the west east north and south. Every family on earth will be blessed because of you and your descendants. I am with you now I will protect you everywhere you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I've done everything that I have promised you." Gen 28:13-15

God blessed Jacob, and reminded Jacob that He wasn't done with him yet. Jacob was about to go on to do something great. In fact, much later his big brother Esau even forgave Jacob for the terrible things Jacob did.

We don't know why God let all this happen, but the truth is we all mess up sometimes and God's still wants us to be a part of God's story. Just like He did with Jacob. Just because we mess up, that doesn't mean that's who we are. God sees all of us, even the



messy parts of our story, and God still sees all the good we can do and examples of light and love we can become.

Now I don't have a story quite like this with my big brother. I'm sure he could tell you all the many ways I may have convinced my parents it was his fault that something broke or why we stayed up too late. But I do have a significant story from my life where I wasn't completely honest with what I did, and it impacted me for a long time. You see I was supposed to graduate college in 2006. I know, I know y'all weren't even born yet. But I was one class away from completing my degree, and I just hadn't finished this one class.

I spoke to my advisers and my awesome professors, and they agreed to allow me to walk at graduation, with the understanding that I would finish that one class over the summer. So, there I was at graduation in full "costume" with my cap and gown walking across the stage as my name was called. I was ready to receive my inheritance, so to speak, my diploma. Now I didn't mean to deceive them. I truly did think that I would complete that class and finish my degree but that's not what happened.

Now, they didn't give me a diploma or a degree, but I still had all the pictures of me walking across the stage. And when people asked, I would tell him where I went to college and let them assume. Again, I wasn't trying to actively deceive anyone, but I knew in my heart that I had deceived others and myself. I told myself it would be OK if I just didn't complete that last class or get my degree. And that stuck with me for a long time. It was always something that I was ashamed of.

But you know what God doesn't give up on us and he didn't give up on me. God still chooses us to do great things and he'll help us finish what we've started. Even when we mess up. So, in 2020, 14 years later I finally went back to college and got my last few credits for a Bachelor of Fine Arts.

Here is my diploma, finally! And I have to tell you I'm so proud and grateful that God didn't give up on me and that I didn't give up on myself. And now I'm just one year away from getting my Master of Divinity. I feel like God's blessings abound.

OK, so maybe my descendants won't spread out to the west east north and south of all the earth like God promised Jacob's descendants but I have felt God's calling on my life that even when I mess up God can use me for good, to continue to spread God's love wherever I go.

Students, I know God has the same for each and every one of you. Even though we make mistakes we're still a part of God's story no matter what. Don't let your past, the names others tell you or you tell yourself, or the messy parts of your story hold you back. God forgives us of our past and we can do the same. Let's see all the awesome plans and blessings God has for our future.



SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

As students introduce themselves, have them share if they have any siblings, how many, and older or younger.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- Do you like practical jokes or pranks? What is the best prank someone has pulled on you or that you've pulled on someone else?

>> ACTIVITY #1

Give students some air-dry clay/dough. Let them make a pinch bowl during the teaching. Like this...

Jacob deceived his brother with a bowl of soup. We will finish with this activity at the end.

>> DISCUSSION:

Say: Let's open our bibles to Genesis 25. The story of Esau and Jacob is throughout Genesis 25-28.

Ask:

- If you have siblings, do you get along with them? What are some common ways that siblings irritate or annoy us?
- Did Jacob and Esau, the brothers in our story for today, get along? Why not?
- What did Jacob's name mean? (Gen 27: 35-36, Hint: "Deceiver") Was that a fitting name for him?
- In what way did Jacob trick or "deceive" his family? How did his brother respond?

Say: Sometimes we get labelled or named for something that we did or didn't do.

Jacob lived into the label/name of deceiver with his actions.

- What are some bad "names" we might give ourselves or allow others to give us? (Stupid, ugly, useless, etc.)
- How do those names affect you? Do you believe them and live into them, or do you reject them?
- How did God respond when Jacob tricked his brother and father and then ran away? (Genesis 28)

Read: Genesis 28:13-15.

Ask:

- What things did God promise Jacob?
- Seeing God's response to Jacob's deception, do you think God truly forgives our past?



- Are there small mistakes that you have made that you are letting define you today? How can you lean into God's forgiveness, grace, and love?
- How does it make you feel to know that our past doesn't define us or keep you from God's love?

>> **ACTIVITY #1 - CONTINUED**

Take a look at your bowl. It may have some imperfections, some mistakes. Just like Jacob messed up by deceiving his brother and father.

- Hand out the heart stickers or cut-outs.

Press your heart into your bowl. Inside or on the bottom or along the side. Take your bowl home, imperfections and all, to remind you that even when we make mistakes and mess up, God knows our story, cares for us, and loves us unconditionally.

>> **ACTIVITY #2: (OPTIONAL)**

Unlike the brothers, Esau and Jacob, we are going to be twinning for winning. Work together in pairs for the next two games.

Back to Back: Have students stand back to back with their arms hooked around each others elbows. Students need to sit down and then stand back up while connected (back to back, with elbows locked together) without using their hands on the floor.

Back to Back Drawing: Hand one person a pen and piece of paper and show the other person a picture of something that's fairly simple to draw (e.g., a car, a flower, a house). This person now has to describe the picture to their teammate without actually saying what the item is so they can draw it. They're allowed to describe shapes, sizes, and textures but can't say, "Draw a lily." Once the blind drawing is finished, compare it with the original to see how well you communicated.

>> **CHALLENGE:**

This week make time to bring your mistakes to God. God knows your story and loves you through it all! Letting go of our past can help you say, "YES" to the things God has for you today.

>> **JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:**

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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UNIT 3 | SESSION 3

God Gives us a New Identity

>> **BIG IDEA:** God gives us a new name and a new identity to live into.

>> **SUMMARY:** Our identity can be in a lot of things, but the truest thing about us is who God says we are. He says that we are chosen, forgiven, named, and loved – no matter what! Jacob is an example of faith revealing that as we wrestle with the things of God, we can trust God to know us, see us, and name us. Our true identity can be found in God.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Genesis 32:22-32

Scripture: Genesis 32:22-32 (CEB)

22 Jacob got up during the night, took his two wives, his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed the Jabbok River's shallow water. 23 He took them and everything that belonged to him, and he helped them cross the river. 24 But Jacob stayed apart by himself, and a man wrestled with him until dawn broke. 25 When the man saw that he couldn't defeat Jacob, he grabbed Jacob's thigh and tore a muscle in Jacob's thigh as he wrestled with him. 26 The man said, "Let me go because the dawn is breaking."

But Jacob said, "I won't let you go until you bless me."

27 He said to Jacob, "What's your name?" and he said, "Jacob." 28 Then he said, "Your name won't be Jacob any longer, but Israel, because you struggled with God and with men and won."

29 Jacob also asked and said, "Tell me your name."

But he said, "Why do you ask for my name?" and he blessed Jacob there. 30 Jacob named the place Peniel, "because I've seen God face-to-face, and my life has been saved." 31 The sun rose as Jacob passed Peniel, limping because of his thigh. 32 Therefore, Israelites don't eat the tendon attached to the thigh muscle to this day, because he grabbed Jacob's thigh muscle at the tendon.

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, blank nametags



>> **LEADER NOTES:** This week Jacob wrestles with God. It is believed to be angel that he wrestles. We may not have angels here that we need to wrestle to understand and live into our identity in God, but we do have our own mental blocks, emotional walls, and social static that can get in the way. What holds you back from fully knowing and believing who God says you are? How do you wrestle with God? What name would you want to fully live into at this very moment?

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** In the final week of NAMED, we discussed Jacob wrestling with God. After Jacob wrestles with God, he gets a new name, Israel. Keep the conversation going at home with this:

- Ask your student what they think it was like for Jacob to wrestle with God. Would they wrestle an angel, knowing they would be injured but would also get a cool new name from God?
- Share what finding your identity in God means to you. Ask your student what it means to them.

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hey Resurrection Students...it's Blake from rezlife West...

Question...do you know what your name means? All our names come from somewhere. The name "Blake" means "dark-haired" (Blake: Dark Haired) Now I kind of have dark hair, and it derives from English and Scottish heritage. I googled some other names and their meaning. Sarah means "princess" (Sarah: Princess) Nicholas means "people of victory" (Nicholas: people of victory.) Kathryn means "pure" (Kathryn: pure) and Trevor means "from the large village" (Trevor: from the large village). If you've never googled your name, look it up! Knowing our names and why we have those names, are important to know.

In our last EXPLORE session, Jacob and his brother Esau parted on not very good terms. Jacob tricked Esau, deceived their father Isaac, and stole the inheritance and blessing that was meant for Esau. Esau was so mad he wanted to kill Jacob! So Jacob ran away and went and lived with his uncle.

Now, it's been many many years. Jacob has gotten married, and he and his family want to return to his homeland—the Promised Land of Canaan. But he's worried about how Esau will receive him. So he sends all his family and their flocks ahead of him in advance, and he stayed by himself on the other side of the River (Genesis 32:1-7)

Check out these words from Genesis 32:22-30: Jacob got up during the night, took his two wives, his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed the Jabbok River's shallow water. 23 He took them and everything that belonged to him, and he helped them cross the river. 24 But Jacob stayed apart by himself, and a man wrestled with him until dawn broke. 25 When the man saw that he couldn't defeat Jacob, he



grabbed Jacob's thigh and tore a muscle in Jacob's thigh as he wrestled with him. 26 The man said, "Let me go because the dawn is breaking." But Jacob said, "I won't let you go until you bless me." 27 He said to Jacob, "What's your name?" and he said, "Jacob." 28 Then he said, "Your name won't be Jacob any longer, but Israel,[a] because you struggled with God and with men and won." 29 Jacob also asked and said, "Tell me your name." But he said, "Why do you ask for my name?" and he blessed Jacob there. 30 Jacob named the place Peniel,[b] "because I've seen God face-to-face, and my life has been saved."

Ok...let's recap this story...While Jacob is moving his family he is by a river. Jacob encounters someone while he is alone. And this person begins to wrestle him! It is believed to be an angel. And Jacob is winning the fight until this angel strikes his hip and injures Jacob. Can you imagine this scene? I never wrestled growing up... my 8-year-old niece wrestles (she's pretty good), but I'm pretty sure that if you start punching someone's hip that it is going to be a penalty and that it is NOT allowed.

So Jacob is persistent, but then becomes weakened by the blow. And the wrestling ends and we hear this dialogue of the two talking. The angel asks what his name is, and Jacob says, "It's Jacob" and the angel says that's no longer your name. Your new name is going to Israel. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. Previously his name had been considered "deceiver" to now being called "one who wrestles with God." Israel is also considered to mean "the one who strives with God." Jacob's identity changed.

You might be asking...why did Jacob need a new name? The name Jacob is a fine name! God gave Jacob a new name because Jacob showed that he can struggle with God and maintain his faith. The name Jacob represents his old self (sin in his life, the conflict with his brother), and Israel represents his new self (striving towards God, relying on God). Jacob is an example of faith and reveals to us that when we keep trusting and striving towards a relationship with God, God is going to provide and be with us.

Do you ever think about what gives you your identity? Now you likely have a name and that helps identify WHO you are. Like I mentioned...Google your name sometimes and see what your name means! But you have other traits and characteristics that make up your identity. Where you live, your heritage or ethnic background, the activities you participate in, all of this helps give you your identity.

But pause and think, do you have an identity in God? The angel could tell that Jacob was a follower of God because he was willing to wrestle his angel all day! Sometimes we can tell people have an identity as a Christian by whether or not they go to church, if they love people well, if they serve in their community, if they talk well of people in school, and if they do things like read the bible, prayer, and worship. Now Jacob did all those things too. He worshipped, he prayed, he knew scripture...but the thing the angel said made his identity know was the way he was going all out and seeking God.

Students: what would it look like for you to go all out and seek God in your faith? Would you be willing to wrestle with an angel if an angel appeared to you? Our identity



can be in a lot of things, but what matters most is that God loves us, know matter what and that our true identity can be centered in God. This week, may we remember that, and live into our identity given to us by God.

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Have students introduce themselves every week. This week simply have them share their name before sharing their High, Low, Buffalo.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1 STAGE NAMES

Many celebrities and actors choose to use "stage names," instead of their given names. Challenge your students and see if they can guess who these actors are:

- Thomas Vincent = Vin Diesel
- Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta = Lady Gaga
- Nicolas Coppola = Nicolas Cage
- Katheryn Hudson = Katy Perry
- Melissa Viviane Jefferson = Lizzo
- Onika Tanya Maraj = Nikki Minaj
- Aubrey Graham = Drake
- Peter Gene Hernandez = Bruno Mars
- Samuel Timothy Smith = Tim McGraw
- Brianne Sidonie Desaulniers = Brie Larson
- Dwayne Douglas Johnson = The Rock
- Adam Richard Wiles = Calvin Harris
- Christopher Edwin Breau = Frank Ocean

Ask: "Why do you think these celebrities changed their name or chose to go by a different name? Would you change your name if you were famous?"

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- If you could give yourself a "pen name" or a "stage name," what would it be?



>> SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION:

Say: Our names help identify who we are but our name doesn't make up the whole of our identity.

- Does changing your name change your identity? Why or why not?
- What are some "identities" that you put on? (Examples: football player, video gamer, theater kid, etc.)

Read: Genesis 32:22-32

Ask:

- Does anyone remember why Jacob was afraid to meet his brother Esau? (This was from last week.)
- What did Jacob's name mean before? What was the new name that God gave him?
- Do you think Jacob changed his attitude and identity before or after God changed his name to "Israel"?

Say: Jacob's new name, "Israel" means "to wrestle with God."

- What does it look like for us to "wrestle" with God or thoughts about God?
- What does it mean to shape your identity around God?
- What is a name or word that God might call you? (Examples: precious, loved, chosen, etc.)

>> ACTIVITY #2 NAMED BY GOD

Even when others try to label us or name us, God has given us a new name and a new identity. Like Jacob, we don't have to live into our pasts anymore. Take a few moments and reflect: what is a name that God has given you? It might be a word, a phrase, or even an image. Write this "new name" on your name tag and keep it as a reminder that God gives us a new name and a new identity.

>> CHALLENGE:

Place your nametag somewhere you can see it all week. Keep it as a reminder that your identity is in God!

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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UNIT OVERVIEW

UNIT 4: DELIVERED

Delivered teaches us about the nature of God's attentiveness and intervention. These two sessions affirm that God is ever aware of our struggles and is continuously working to bring about salvation and relief, often through the actions of others. They also challenge us to be proactive in responding to the needs of those around us, embodying God's compassion and aid in our own lives.

>> SESSION SUMMARIES

1 - God Sees and Hears Us

In the book of Exodus, the people of Israel were enslaved by the people of Egypt. They cried out to God, and it probably seemed to the Israelites like God wasn't listening. We read that God had already begun putting a plan in place to rescue the people of Israel, Moses was born, and God had been working through Moses to prepare him for his time in leadership. God saw the people of Israel. God heard their cries and was working on a plan to rescue them from Egypt. Just like God heard the Israelites, God hears and understands you too.

2 - God Saves Us

Last session in EXPLORE, we learned that God heard and saw the Israelites when they cried out. They were slaves in Egypt, but God saw their suffering and responded. Through Moses, God worked to deliver the people of Israel. God often uses other people to help us in our times of suffering. When are we called to help others in their times of suffering and need?



God Sees and Hears Us

>> **BIG IDEA:** God hears us when we call out to God for help.

>> **SUMMARY:** In the book of Exodus, the people of Israel were enslaved by the people of Egypt. They cried out to God and it probably seemed to the Israelites like God wasn't listening. We read that God had already begun putting a plan in place to rescue the people of Israel, Moses was born, and God had been working through Moses to prepare him for his time in leadership.. God saw the people of Israel. God heard their cries and was working on a plan to rescue them from Egypt. Just like God heard the Israelites, God hears and understands you too.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Exodus 1:8-14 (CEB)

8 Now a new king came to power in Egypt who didn't know Joseph. 9 He said to his people, "The Israelite people are now larger in number and stronger than we are. 10 Come on, let's be smart and deal with them. Otherwise, they will only grow in number. And if war breaks out, they will join our enemies, fight against us, and then escape from the land." 11 As a result, the Egyptians put foremen of forced work gangs over the Israelites to harass them with hard work. They had to build storage cities named Pithom and Rameses for Pharaoh.

12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they grew and spread, so much so that the Egyptians started to look at the Israelites with disgust and dread. 13 So the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites. 14 They made their lives miserable with hard labor, making mortar and bricks, doing field work, and by forcing them to do all kinds of other cruel work.

Exodus 2:23-25 (CEB)

23 A long time passed, and the Egyptian king died. The Israelites were still groaning because of their hard work. They cried out, and their cry to be rescued from the hard work rose up to God. 24 God heard their cry of grief, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25 God looked at the Israelites and God understood.



>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, earplugs or noise cancelling headphones, pens and paper

>> **LEADER NOTES:** In this teaching we try to use people first language. People first language places the importance of a person's identity on their humanity and not circumstances of conditions. This eliminates stigmas, stereotypes, and judgements certain words might create. This looks like "people enslaved" rather than "slaves." This change may not seem like a big deal but as we continue to use people first language in our ministry, it creates a foundation for an environment that supports ministry with one another. Other examples of people first language: people experiencing homelessness, person with an addiction, people experiencing food insecurity.

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** This week Explore students started the series, Delivered. We discussed how the enslaved people of Israel may have felt while waiting for God to save them. Continue the conversation at home with these questions:

- How can we encourage each other in our faith while waiting for God to answer our prayers?
- We want you to know that we love you, hear you, and are for you. How can we listen better when you are in need?

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Not too long ago, I found a mouse in our house. I was just minding my own business, watching tv, and I swear I saw something run along the wall. I tried to ignore it because my dog was sitting with me and surely he would have gotten something if it were there. So, I just kept watching my show. And then I saw it again. Something just out of the corner of my eye. I called to my husband Mike, "Mike! I think we have a mouse!". He didn't respond, so I took matters into my own hands. I started jumping on top of the couch that it was hiding underneath trying to scare it out. Nothing. I grabbed a pool noodle and scooted it behind. Nothing. And then all of a sudden I see a little scurry out of the front of the couch and I jump back on the couch screaming for help. Approximately 35 years later, Mike came in with some mouse catching supplies. And saw me literally frozen in fear of this tiny little creature. I was so annoyed with him for taking so long. It was probably only like 2-3 minutes. But it felt like 15 because I was in the midst of a tiny mouse freak out.

And I mean tiny, not much bigger than a ping pong ball. Actually, here is a picture of it. It was just a little field mouse. We named it squeaks.

In EXPLORE, we've been learning about the stories of Abraham and Sarah, their son Isaac, and their grandsons Jacob and Esau. Like God promised, Abraham's had many, many descendants. His grandson Jacob had 12 sons! Abraham's family is known as the Hebrew People or Israelites. However, famine came upon the land God had promised



the Israelites, and they had to seek refuge in Egypt. Now, about 400 years later, they are no longer living as honored guests in Egypt. Instead, they have been forced into slavery. The first time we read about the people of Israel being enslaved, and it isn't because the Israelites did anything wrong. It is just because the people of Egypt took advantage of them.

So the Israelites are pretty upset, which makes sense. They came to this land for protection from famine, and now they are enslaved. So they begin crying out to God for help.

In the Bible, we read this in the book of Exodus, "The Israelites were still groaning because of their hard work. They cried out, and their cry to be rescued from the hard work rose up to God. God heard their cry of grief, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God looked at the Israelites, and God understood." Exodus 2:23-25

You know, speaking as someone who hides on the couch waiting to be rescued from a field mouse, this is a hard thing for me to read. Because to me, when you just read those words, it is like saying, "I hear you, and I know you are afraid and hurting, I understand...oh and good luck with that"...and that's it. Like where is the exterminator rushing in to save me from the mouse. Who is going to save the Israelites from their enslavement? What is the plan here?

When Mike came and saved the day rescuing me from the field mouse, I was grateful at first, with immediate annoyance. I asked him questions like "what took you so long!". "didn't you hear me?" "why didn't you answer me?". And he said, I didn't at first, I had my headphones in, but then when I did, I was getting supplies so I could be ready when I came up.

I was so fixated on how long it was taking, that I didn't even think that he might have to be working on a plan to actually catch the mouse. Getting the supplies and tools he needed in place.

What the Israelites didn't know, but we do, is that God was working to put a plan in place. Right before this verse we learn about Moses. Moses was an Israelite born during a time that the Pharaoh had decreed all baby boys be thrown into the river. But Moses' mom hid him in a basket and sent him down the river. He was rescued by the Pharaoh's daughter and Moses would be instrumental in how God saves the people of Israel.

So why does all of that matter? Remember how I got really annoyed at Mike because he didn't come immediately, and he said it is because he was getting the supplies so he was ready to catch the mouse? He heard me, he understood I needed help, but to give me the right kind of help, it would just take some time.

I think that the same thing is true for God. The people of Israel were crying out to God, and what we read is that God heard, and understood. God had already begun putting



a plan in place to rescue the people of Israel, Moses was born, and God had been working through Moses to prepare him for his time in leadership.

Even though it probably seemed to the Israelites like God wasn't listening, God was working and moving in ways they couldn't see. God still saw them, God heard their cries, and was working on a plan to rescue them from Egypt.

And just like God heard the Israelites, God hears and understands you too.

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and how their best friend/close family member would describe them.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1

Divide students up into groups of two or three. In each group, allow 1-2 minutes to have one person tell a short story in a whisper, while the others plug their ears. The two "listeners" then have to guess what the story was about, even though they probably couldn't hear it. The "storyteller" can even ask questions about the story to see if they can answer correctly. Switch it around so everyone has a chance to be the "storyteller."

Then, in the same small groups, someone needs to act out an action without speaking or using sounds. (Think, charades.) The other person(s) in the small group needs to guess what that person is doing. Switch it around so everyone has a chance to be the "actor."

Ask these questions:

- Which was harder: guessing the story when you couldn't hear, or guessing the action?
- Was it more fun being the storyteller or story listener?
- Was it more fun acting out the action or guessing it?



>> OPENING QUESTION:

- Would you rather lose your sense of hearing or lose the ability to see? Explain your choice.

>> DISCUSSION:

Say: We all have times when we feel misunderstood or like people are not really listening or understanding what we are saying.

- Has there ever been a time when you were misunderstood, or it felt like no one was listening to you?
- How does it feel when it doesn't seem like someone is seeing you or listening to you?
- What do you do when you are going through problems or tough situations? Is there anyone you reach out to and talk to?
- How does it feel when you know someone is truly listening to you?

Say: As we read the story of the Israelites in the bible, think about why the Israelite people might think God didn't see or hear them?

Read: Exodus 1:8-14

Ask:

- So why do you think the Israelite people might think that God didn't see or hear them during this time?
- How did the Israelite people end up as slaves in Egypt?

Say: Next, we learn about Moses, his birth, his mother and sister's desire to save him by putting him in a basket on a river, and his acceptance into Pharaoh's home through his daughter. There is no reason for this to be a big deal except that he lived when he should have died. The enslaved Israelite people would not have known that God was preparing anything. So, we continue to read in Exodus chapter 2.

Read: Exodus 2:23

Ask:

- Why were the Israelites crying out to God?
- How do you feel when you think your prayers to God go unanswered?
- How do you think the Israelite people felt at this time?

Read: Exodus 2:23-25

Ask:

- How did God respond to the Israelite people cries for help? (Remember God was putting a plan into place – Moses. They just don't know it yet!)
- Do you believe that God hears you when you pray?
- When has God helped you out in the past?
- In Exodus 2:25, we are told that God saw and understood the Israelites. What do you think it means for God to hear us and understand us? How do you feel knowing that God sees and understands you?
- Where in your life do you currently need God to see you, hear you, and help you out?



>> ACTIVITY #2 GOD HEARS AND SEES US

In our lesson today, we read that God sees us, hears us, remembers us, and understand us. Pass out a piece of paper and pen to each student, and have them finish the following statements (write them on the board if needed):

God, one thing I want you to see about me is...

God, something I want to tell you is...

God, do you remember the time when...

God, one thing I want you to understand about me is...

>> CHALLENGE:

Remember this week that God hears us and sees us, even when it doesn't feel like it. Give your problems over to God and ask God to help you through your tough situations.

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



X P L
X P L
X P L



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines. The first two lines of each of the ten groups are solid black lines, and the middle line is a dashed black line. The background features a large, faint watermark of the word 'ORDER' repeated twice.



God Saves Us

>> **BIG IDEA:** God rescued and delivered the Israelites from slavery, and God continues to save us today.

>> **SUMMARY:** Last session in EXPLORE, we learned that God heard and saw the Israelites when they cried out. They were slaves in Egypt, but God saw their suffering and responded. Through Moses, God worked to deliver the people of Israel. God often uses other people to help us in our times of suffering. When are we called to help others in their times of suffering and need?

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Exodus 3:1-10 (CEB)

3-1 Moses was taking care of the flock for his father-in-law Jethro, Midian's priest. He led his flock out to the edge of the desert, and he came to God's mountain called Horeb. 2 The Lord's messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire in the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was in flames, but it didn't burn up. 3 Then Moses said to himself, Let me check out this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn't burning up.

4 When the Lord saw that he was coming to look, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

Moses said, "I'm here."

5 Then the Lord said, "Don't come any closer! Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground." 6 He continued, "I am the God of your father, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

7 Then the Lord said, "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. 8 I've come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that's full of milk and honey, a place where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites all live. 9 Now the Israelites' cries of injustice have reached me. I've seen



just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. 10 So get going. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

Exodus 14:13-18(CEB)

13 But Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. Stand your ground, and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never ever see again. 14 The Lord will fight for you. You just keep still."

15 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to get moving. 16 As for you, lift your shepherd's rod, stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it in two so that the Israelites can go into the sea on dry ground. 17 But me, I'll make the Egyptians stubborn so that they will go in after them, and I'll gain honor at the expense of Pharaoh, all his army, his chariots, and his cavalry. 18 The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, when I gain honor at the expense of Pharaoh, his chariots, and his cavalry."

Exodus 15:1-18 (MSG)

15 1-8 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to GOD, giving voice together, I'm singing my heart out to GOD—what a victory!

He pitched horse and rider into the sea.

GOD is my strength, GOD is my song,
and, yes! GOD is my salvation.

This is the kind of God I have
and I'm telling the world!

This is the God of my father—
I'm spreading the news far and wide!

GOD is a fighter,
pure GOD, through and through.

Pharaoh's chariots and army
he dumped in the sea,

The elite of his officers
he drowned in the Red Sea.

Wild ocean waters poured over them;
they sank like a rock in the deep blue sea.

Your strong right hand, GOD, shimmers with power;
your strong right hand shatters the enemy.

In your mighty majesty
you smash your upstart enemies,

You let loose your hot anger
and burn them to a crisp.

At a blast from your nostrils
the waters piled up;

Tumbling streams dammed up,
wild oceans curdled into a swamp.

9 The enemy spoke,
"I'll pursue, I'll hunt them down,
I'll divide up the plunder,



I'll glut myself on them;
I'll pull out my sword,
my fist will send them reeling."

10-11 You blew with all your might
and the sea covered them.

They sank like a lead weight
in the majestic waters.

Who compares with you
among gods, O GOD?

Who compares with you in power,
in holy majesty,

In awesome praises,
wonder-working God?

12-13 You stretched out your right hand
and the Earth swallowed them up.

But the people you redeemed,
you led in merciful love;

You guided them under your protection
to your holy pasture.

14-18 When people heard, they were scared;
Philistines writhed and trembled;

Yes, even the head men in Edom were shaken,
and the big bosses in Moab.

Everybody in Canaan
panicked and fell faint.

Dread and terror
sent them reeling.

Before your brandished right arm
they were struck dumb like a stone,

Until your people crossed over and entered, O GOD,
until the people you made crossed over and entered.

You brought them and planted them
on the mountain of your heritage,

The place where you live,
the place you made,

Your sanctuary, Master,
that you established with your own hands.

Let GOD rule
forever, for eternity!



>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, paper, pens

>> **LEADER NOTES:** God speaks to Moses through a burning bush to help save the Israelites from slavery. God may not speak through burning bushes today, but He communicates in various ways in our lives. What helps you connect with God? Spend some time this week connecting with God – through prayer, fellowship, worship, or serving. Are there injustices in this world that move you to prayer or action? What might God be inviting you to do to help serve those in need in your community?

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** This week in Explore students learned that God saved the Israelites from enslavement through Moses. Moses was a simple, regular guy that was able to fight great injustice with an extraordinary God! Continue the conversation at home with these questions:

- The Israelites had to wait a LONG time for God to send Moses to help them. How do you feel when you have to wait a LONG time for something to happen?
- What are some things in your life or in our world that you would like to help get better? Is there any way we can help you with this?

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hello all – Todd Davidson here, one of the Middle School directors. I am so excited to be with you today because we are going to talk about like one of the biggest celebrities in the Bible.

For instance, if you were on “The Voice” and you’re up there singing and this person turns their chair around, you would be in tears, like - “I’m so thankful.” Your parents would be in background jumping up and down screaming like, “please, please, please, pick them!” Do you know who it is?

It’s Moses, like of the most amazing prophets in the bible, the person that was closest to God. Did you know that Moses and God would actually have face to face – well not face to face more like voice to face – they would have conversations together. God would come as a cloud and sit with Moses and everybody would like to huddle around Moses’ tent so that they could see what God and Moses were talking about. This is how close God and Moses were.

So I’m gonna tell you about this story, it’s in the bible, in Exodus at the beginning of the bible. This is in Exodus 3. It talks about how Moses first encountered God. Now here we go, in Exodus 3, it says,

“Moses was taking care of the flock for his father-in-law Jethro, Midian’s priest. He led his flock out to the edge of the desert, and he came to God’s mountain called Horeb. The Lord’s messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire in the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was in flames, but it didn’t burn up. Then Moses said to himself, Let me check out this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn’t burning up.



When the Lord saw that he was coming to look, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

Moses said, "I'm here."

Let's just pause there for a second. Moses is out leading a flock. He goes to the mountain of God. On the mountain of God there's a bush that's burning. It's just like fire within the bush but it's not burning or making ash and Moses thinks, "I'm gonna walk closer. I'm gonna go check this out." And God calls him to the bush...so here we go at 5,

"Then the Lord said, "Don't come any closer! Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground." He continued, "I am the God of your father, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God." Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, "I've clearly seen my people oppressed in Egypt. I've heard their cry of injustice because of their slave masters. I know about their pain. I've come down to rescue them from the Egyptians in order to take them out of that land and bring them to a good and broad land, a land that's full of milk and honey, a place where the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites all live. Now the Israelites' cries of injustice have reached me. I've seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. So get going. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

This is truly amazing. God here is acknowledging that he knows Moses and that he wants Moses to lead God's people out of Exodus. This is really cool because then we go on to this story right. We've heard this story before about Moses splitting the Red Sea to lead God's people, but here's the deal Moses was just a normal person.

Your average person that was called by God to lead God's people. In fact, they talk about how Moses may have had a stutter! How are you going to have a stutter and lead all of these people? Here's how - when God chooses you we wonder and think about how do I hear God? How do I know God?

Quite often God is speaking through ordinary people into your life. Ya'll here I am leading youth and I'll be honest, I don't have the college degree it takes to require to do this job. I've not gone through seminary training or any of those things. I'm an ordinary normal dude that loves Jesus and likes students and has been called to do this. Now have I seen like this amazing burning bush experience? Have I seen God come to me in a pillar of flames and talk to me? No, I haven't but what I know is that God is for me. And God is for you.

When we come together to be God's people, amazing things happen. So as we go into the story of Moses, Moses does some really cool things. Like when they are in the wilderness, Moses can just like bang on a rock and water comes out to give refreshment to God's people. But the story we know the most is when Moses goes and splits and sea. Let's look at this in Exodus 14:13-18



But Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. Stand your ground, and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never ever see again. The Lord will fight for you. You just keep still."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to get moving. As for you, lift your shepherd's rod, stretch out your hand over the sea, and split it in two so that the Israelites can go into the sea on dry ground. But me, I'll make the Egyptians stubborn so that they will go in after them, and I'll gain honor at the expense of Pharaoh, all his army, his chariots, and his cavalry. The Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, when I gain honor at the expense of Pharaoh, his chariots, and his cavalry."

It's what happens here, right? God's people go into the Red Sea. They go across dry land and behind them as the Egyptians are following them, the water crashes down and destroys them. If you read farther in that story, people find Egyptians dead on the side of the water after this. God is truly flexing God's muscles and saying, "Hey, people of God! I've got you! I have heard your cries. I have heard your prayers. I know that you have been running in the wilderness for years upon years upon years upon years. BUT I am with you."

So what does this mean for us, friends? As we are going through trials and tribulations, as we are going through mental health struggles, with our family and our work and our school and all those things and we feel like we are alone...let us think about God's people. Let us think back to this time. Let us think back to Moses – this normal average person – that God called to lead God's people out of the darkness, out of the wilderness, through miraculous things.

Friends, when we are going through sickness, when we are going through trials, keep turning towards God. And I know it might be a long time. One of the things I do is I write things down of what's going on - things I've prayed for, things that are going on in my life - because what happens is God moves and I miss it because today, right now, God isn't spreading the Red Sea. God isn't like allowing me to use the staff to miraculously bring water out of stone. But God is doing amazing God things. Sometimes I miss it, so I write it down so I can go back and look at it.

Ya'll this journey of faith for us is long and hard. God's people in the wilderness experience this more than any of us. BUT God sent Moses through a conversation through prayer to save God's people from the Egyptians. And God is with us daily just like God was with the Israelites.

God hears us. God knows us. God uses us no matter what our gifts are to change the world. We can be Moses to somebody because God calls us there. So may our eyes be open. May our spirit be welcome to God's presence in our lives. May we continue to reach out to God knowing that God is listening and hearing us. In God's name we pray, amen.



SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and how their best friend/close family member would describe them.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1

Follow the Leader

God called Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Today, we are going to play "follow the leader" too!

Pick a student to be the Leader. Have everyone else line up in a single file line behind the leader. Whatever actions the Leader does, the group has to mimic. (Walking, dancing, flailing arms, kneeling, etc.) Any players that fail to follow the Leader or lag behind are "out." Keep playing until there is only one follower left, and they become the new leader. Play as many rounds as time allows.

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- What is your favorite superhero movie or character?

>> DISCUSSION:

Ask:

- From the teaching, what amazing things did God do in this story?
- When was the last time you saw something amazing?
- When you are suffering or going through a hard time, what do you do? Who do you talk to or ask for help?
- Recap from last week: What was happening to the Israelites? Why did they need to be rescued?

Read: Exodus 3:1-10

Ask:

- What were God's instructions to Moses?
- In the story, God spoke to Moses through a burning bush. How does God speak to us today?
- Imagine you are Moses. How would you feel if God called you to do a big task? How would you respond?



Say: God uses ordinary people like Moses for extraordinary purposes!

- God said he heard the Israelite's "cries of injustice" (Exodus 3:7 & 9). What is "injustice"? Where do we see injustice in our world today?
- Why does God often work through people to help rescue or save others?
- How has God worked through others to help you?
- How can God work through you to support others who are hurting?

>> ACTIVITY #2

Song of Victory to God

After God delivered the Israelites from the Egyptians, they broke out into a song of victory and praise. Read that song of victory out loud from Exodus 15:1-18.

Then, either as a group or individuals, write your own song of victory to God! Here are some questions to help guide your thinking:

- How has God helped you in the past?
- What are ways that we usually praise or thank God?
- What "awesome deeds" has God done in the world or in your life?
- Who is God to you?
- Who or what is your "enemy"? How can God help you overcome your "enemy" or tough situation?

>> CHALLENGE:

This week, if you are feeling down or discouraged, re-read the Israelite's Song of Victory to God in Exodus 15:1-18. Remember that God rescued others in the past, and God delivers us still today!

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



X P L
X P L
X P L



UNIT OVERVIEW

UNIT 5: Covenant

In the Covenant unit, students will explore the nature of covenants in the Bible and understand how they reflect God's promises and expectations. We will connect biblical covenants to our own faith practices, focusing on God's promises and the call to live out these promises in our relationships with others.

>> SESSION SUMMARIES

1 – God Keeps Promises

God creates covenants with his people all through-out the bible! In this session we are looking at the first covenant made in the Bible: The Covenant God made with Noah and Noah's family. God saw that the world was not how it was created to be, so God decided to recreate it. Now it came at a cost with loss and destruction, but what we have is new birth and another chance at getting it right. After the great flood, God made a covenant with humans: that no matter how bad things get or what terrible things we might do in the future, God flood the earth again. God assures us by this covenant with Noah that the world will not flood again, and we can live at peace knowing God will never give up on us.

2 - The Ten Commandments

As we look at the Ten Commandments, they may seem like just a strict set of arbitrary rules. Yet through these commands, God was calling the Israelites (and us today!) to follow God alone. We should not put anything else in the way of our relationship with God: not "idols," or the desire to steal, kill, or lie, not our material possessions or goods. God's covenant with us calls us to follow and obey God only.

3 - Covenant with Community

So far in EXPLORE, we've learned about the different covenants that God has made with humans: God made covenants with Noah, with Abraham and Sarai, with Isaac and Jacob, and then with all the people of Israel. But we are also called to be "in a covenant" with other followers of God: to love and support one another. Ruth is a great example of the type of covenant we are meant to have with other people. The covenant God makes with us, and asks us to make with other people, can be summarized in the two greatest commandments: Love God and Love others.



UNIT 5 | SESSION 1

God Keeps Promises

>> **BIG IDEA:** God promises never to give up on us.

>> **SUMMARY:** God creates covenants with his people all through-out the bible! In this session we are looking at the first covenant made in the Bible: The Covenant God made with Noah and Noah's family. God saw that the world was not how it was created to be, so God decided to recreate it. Now it came at a cost with loss and destruction, but what we have is new birth and another chance at getting it right. After the great flood, God made a covenant with humans: that no matter how bad things get or what terrible things we might do in the future, God flood the earth again. God assures us by this covenant with Noah that the world will not flood again, and we can live at peace knowing God will never give up on us.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Genesis 6:13-22 (CEB)

13 God said to Noah, "The end has come for all creatures, since they have filled the earth with violence. I am now about to destroy them along with the earth, 14 so make a wooden ark. Make the ark with nesting places and cover it inside and out with tar. 15 This is how you should make it: four hundred fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty-five feet high. 16 Make a roof for the ark and complete it one foot from the top. Put a door in its side. In the hold below, make the second and third decks.

17 "I am now bringing the floodwaters over the earth to destroy everything under the sky that breathes. Everything on earth is about to take its last breath. 18 But I will set up my covenant with you. You will go into the ark together with your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives. 19 From all living things—from all creatures—you are to bring a pair, male and female, into the ark with you to keep them alive. 20 From each kind of bird, from each kind of livestock, and from each kind of everything that crawls on the ground—a pair from each will go in with you to stay alive. 21 Take some from every kind of food and stow it as food for you and for the animals."

22 Noah did everything exactly as God commanded him.



Genesis 9:8-17 (CEB)

8 God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 9 “I am now setting up my covenant with you, with your descendants, 10 and with every living being with you—with the birds, with the large animals, and with all the animals of the earth, leaving the ark with you. 11 I will set up my covenant with you so that never again will all life be cut off by floodwaters. There will never again be a flood to destroy the earth.” 12 God said, “This is the symbol of the covenant that I am drawing up between me and you and every living thing with you, on behalf of every future generation. 13 I have placed my bow in the clouds; it will be the symbol of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, 15 I will remember the covenant between me and you and every living being among all the creatures. Floodwaters will never again destroy all creatures. 16 The bow will be in the clouds, and upon seeing it I will remember the enduring covenant between God and every living being of all the earth’s creatures.” 17 God said to Noah, “This is the symbol of the covenant that I have set up between me and all creatures on earth.”

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, paper, pens, pre-printed MadLib

(link: https://biblecraftsbyjenny.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/1/2/101295324/noahs_ark_madlib_pdf_3.pdf)

>> **LEADER NOTES:** In the biblical world, uncontrolled flood-waters were the primary symbol of chaos. God re-establishes order and recreates the world through covenant. A covenant establishes a committed relationship between God and human beings, between God and the world, or between one human and another human. For more in-depth and fun reading, check out “Making Sense of the Bible” by Adam Hamilton chapter 21.

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** This week Explore students started a new series, “Covenant.” We discussed how God promises never to give up on us. Through God’s covenant with Noah after the great flood, we can have peace knowing God keeps his promises. Keep the conversation going at home with these questions:

- What does the word covenant mean to you?
- How do you feel knowing that God keeps his promises?

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hey rezlife students! It's Blake from Resurrection West and we're back at in the New Year 2023 for Sunday School! Let's recap what we have been talking about so far up to this point. We've been looking at the stories of Abraham and his descendants, the Israelites. In our last EXPLORE session, we learned how God worked through Moses to deliver the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. If you remember back to Abraham's story, God made a Covenant with Abraham to always take care of and protect Abraham's descendants. And all throughout the Old Testament, God continues to fulfill this promise.



[A covenant is a promise or contract between people] A covenant is a type of promise or contract between two people or groups of people. It's not necessarily like a New Years Resolution...like to drink less soda or to travel more or to mow more lawns in the summer. A covenant is a promise between people. Can you think of other covenants do we make in life? A marriage covenant: where two people PROMISE to keep loving each other and being faithful to one another. Athletes sign a contract...which is like a covenant and promise to play for one team for however many years. We are GLAD Patrick Mahomes has a a 10-year contract-a promise that he will play in the Chiefs for 10 years. I, for one, am really happy about that!

But God make covenants and promises with people too, and that is what we are talking about today. You know that story about Noah's Ark? [INSERT Evan Almighty Pic PIC] Evan Almighty is a great movie that is a similar story! It's the one where God says God will flood the Earth so he picks a man and his family to build a giant boat and gather 2 animals of each type to be in it for 40 days and nights. Today, we're looking at the first covenant made in the Bible: The Covenant God made with Noah and Noah's family. Check out these words from Genesis 6:13-22:

God said to Noah, "The end has come for all creatures, since they have filled the earth with violence. I am now about to destroy them along with the earth, so make a wooden ark. Make the ark with nesting places and cover it inside and out with tar. This is how you should make it: four hundred fifty feet long, seventy-five feet wide, and forty-five feet high. Make a roof for the ark and complete it one foot from the top. Put a door in its side. In the hold below, make the second and third decks...

From all living things - from all creatures - you are to bring a pair, male and female, into the ark with you to keep them alive. From each kind of bird, from each kind of livestock, and from each kind of everything that crawls on the ground - a pair from each will go in with you to stay alive. Take some from every kind of food and stow it as food for you and for the animals. Noah did everything exactly as God commanded him.

So here we have God telling Noah that the world is not how God envisioned it to be. Remember when we talked about Adam and Eve and the sin that happened in the garden? That pattern of sin has continued throughout the Old Testament up to that point. And what God is saying to Noah is that there has to be un-creation for re-creation of the world to happen.

Have you ever thought about ways un-creation for re-creation has to happen? This summer I went hiking in Colorado and I was hiking on a trail that was full of dead trees that were intentionally set on fire. This is what they looked like. This was a natural disaster, but humans started this fire. The reason is because fires can actually held an ecosystem. One reason people will start a controlled fire is because it burns out dead organic material. Old trees, leaves, and other things that aren't living. This presents more nutrients for the soil and things to grow after burning and allows things to be more rich. Here is a pic of what a controlled burn looks like, and here is what a space can look like after a controlled burn. Now remember...leave controlled forest fires to the professions and practice fire safety [INSERT Smokey the bear pic].



The same thing is happening here with the flood. God saw that the world was not how it was created to be, so God decided to recreate it. Now it came at a cost with loss and destruction, but what we have is new birth and another chance at getting it right. Can you think of times in your life where you had to get rid of something...or turn from a sin or temptation in order to live a more full life? Maybe take a moment and think...How is God wanting me to live my best, and are there things I'm doing that are pulling me away from living my best. Just like this story, new creation and new opportunities are always available.

The story continues. Noah and his family are in the boat for 40 days and nights and eventually the waters dry up. After the great flood, God made a covenant with humans: that no matter how bad things get or what terrible things we might do in the future, God won't give up on us and flood the earth again. Hear these words on Genesis 9: 8-17:

God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "I am now setting up my covenant with you, with your descendants, and with every living being with you – with the birds, with the large animals, and with all the animals of the earth, leaving the ark with you. I will set up my covenant with you so that never again will all life be cut off by floodwaters. There will never again be a flood to destroy the earth."

God said, "This is the symbol of the covenant that I am drawing up between me and you and every living thing with you, on behalf of every future generation. I have placed my bow in the clouds, and upon seeing it I will remember the enduring covenant between God and every living being of all the earth's creatures."

Here is where God is making that covenant, that promise, that contract, to never again flood the earth. He is not only making that promise to humans, but to the animals and earth too! He also gave the sign of a bow, or rainbow, as a visible representation of this. And what we know is that God has kept that promise ever since and continues to keep it today.

Now let's remember something...God didn't have to make a promise. God could have just said, I don't have to promise anything and these people will just figure out. But God doesn't do that because God chooses to communicate with us. The reason is because God loves us. We follow a God that does things in scripture and then justifies why they were done. At least for me, I take comfort in knowing this. (SHARE ABOUT TEACHER EXAMPLE) Because God chooses to communicate with us through covenants in the Bible, we can know what God is wanting us to know that there are purposes and plans God is intending for us to live out. God assures us by this covenant with Noah that the world will not flood again, and we can live at peace knowing God will protect us.

There are other Covenants in scripture. Spend some time in your small groups looking at them and see what other promises God is making to us. Students: remember that God never promises to show up for us. God made a world for us to live in with people, animals, plants and so much more. Let's embrace our opportunity to live in this world, and remember that God is protect us.



SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and how their best friend/close family member would describe them.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1

Noah's Ark Madlib

Using the attached Noah's Ark Madlib pdf, work together with your group of students to fill in the blanks using the prompts provided. Be silly with your answers! Once you have filled in all the blank spots, read the story out loud.

Link: https://biblecraftsbyjenny.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/1/2/101295324/noahs_ark_madlib_pdf_3.pdf

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- If you had to kick one animal off the ark, which one would you remove?
- What's your favorite exotic animal? What animal would you most want to see in real life?

>> DISCUSSION:

Say: This morning, we start a new series, Covenant.

- What is a covenant?
- What types of covenants or promises do you make in your life?
- What are symbols or signs of the covenants we make with other people? (Examples: rings in marriage, a pinky promise, a handshake, etc.)
- Which promises are easy to keep? Which are harder to fulfill?
- How does it feel when someone breaks a promise?

Say: Let's open our bibles to Genesis chapter 6.

- Can you find anything in Genesis chapter 6 that tells us why God chose Noah to build the ark? (Hint: look at verses 8-9)

Read: Genesis 6:13-22

- Why did God want to send a flood on the earth?



Say: If the story ended there, it would be horrible! But let's continue reading in Genesis 9:8-17

- What was the covenant that God made with Noah and his family?
- Was this a "two-way" covenant, or a "one-sided" covenant?
- What did God create as a symbol of the covenant or promise to never again give up on humanity?
- When do we see rainbows in the sky today?
- What storms of your life are you going through and need God to help you with?
- How else can we know that God never gives up on us?

>> ACTIVITY #2

Promises of God

In Noah's story, we learn that God promised never to give up on humans. What other promises does God make? Look up these passages and write down other promises that God has made. You can do this as individuals or in smaller groups.

1. Exodus 14:13-14
2. Deuteronomy 31:8
3. Psalm 34:17
4. Psalm 50:15
5. Isaiah 41:10
6. Matthew 11:28
7. Romans 8:37-39
8. Revelation 21:3-4

>> CHALLENGE:

When you are facing "storms" in your life, look for the rainbow of God's promise! Write down one or two promises of God and put them in a place you see often as a reminder that God will never give up on you.

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



X P L
X P L
X P L



Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple horizontal lines for text entry.



The Ten Commandments

>> **BIG IDEA:** God's covenant calls us to follow God only.

>> **SUMMARY:** As we look at the Ten Commandments, they may seem like just a strict set of arbitrary rules. Yet through these commands, God was calling the Israelites (and us today!) to follow God alone. We should not put anything else in the way of our relationship with God: not “idols,” or the desire to steal, kill, or lie, not our material possessions or goods. God’s covenant with us calls us to follow and obey God only.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Exodus 19:1-6 (CEB)

19-1 On exactly the third-month anniversary of the Israelites' leaving the land of Egypt, they came into the Sinai desert. 2 They traveled from Rephidim, came into the Sinai desert, and set up camp there. Israel camped there in front of the mountain 3 while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him from the mountain, “This is what you should say to Jacob’s household and declare to the Israelites: 4 You saw what I did to the Egyptians, and how I lifted you up on eagles’ wings and brought you to me. 5 So now, if you faithfully obey me and stay true to my covenant, you will be my most precious possession out of all the peoples, since the whole earth belongs to me. 6 You will be a kingdom of priests for me and a holy nation. These are the words you should say to the Israelites.”

Exodus 20:1-17 (CEB)

20-1 Then God spoke all these words:

2 I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

3 You must have no other gods before me.

4 Do not make an idol for yourself—no form whatsoever—of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. 5 Do not bow down to them or worship them, because I, the Lord your God, am a passionate God. I punish children for their parents’ sins even to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me.

6 But I am loyal and gracious to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.



7 Do not use the Lord your God's name as if it were of no significance; the Lord won't forgive anyone who uses his name that way.

8 Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy. 9 Six days you may work and do all your tasks, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Do not do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your animals, or the immigrant who is living with you. 11 Because the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them in six days, but rested on the seventh day. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

12 Honor your father and your mother so that your life will be long on the fertile land that the Lord your God is giving you.

13 Do not kill.

14 Do not commit adultery.

15 Do not steal.

16 Do not testify falsely against your neighbor.

17 Do not desire and try to take your neighbor's house. Do not desire and try to take your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox, donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, phone or computer to play a song, lyric sheet

>> **LEADER NOTES:** God makes a covenant through Moses with the Israelites. A covenant is a committed relationship. These Ten Commandments are the most important of all the instruction that God gives at Mount Sinai. They are the first set of expectations that God gives there. These commandments are the only instruction that God speaks directly to the people. God gives all other instructions to Moses, and then Moses passes them on to the people.

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** In Explore this week, students discussed the covenant of The Ten Commandments. Help your student with their weekly challenge by working as a family to memorize The Ten Commandments. There are fun YouTube videos and hand motions to learn that might help.

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hey Resurrection Students! I'm Caitlyn, and I am the Student Ministries Director from Resurrection Blue Springs

We are jumping ahead in the story to return to Moses and the people of Israel, who had recently been delivered from slavery in Egypt. Through Moses, God leads the Israelites to the same mountain where Moses had first encountered God as a burning bush: Mount Sinai, also known as Mount Horeb. At that mountain, God re-established and reaffirmed the covenant originally made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.



We read in Exodus 19:1-6:

“On exactly the third-month anniversary of the Israelites’ leaving the land of Egypt, they came into the Sinai desert. They traveled from Rephidim, came into the Sinai desert, and set up camp there. Israel camped there in front of the mountain while Moses went up to God. The Lord called to him from the mountain, “This is what you should say to Jacob’s household and declare to the Israelites: You saw what I did to the Egyptians, and how I lifted you up on eagles’ wings and brought you to me.

So now, if you faithfully obey me and stay true to my covenant, you will be my most precious possession out of all the peoples, since the whole earth belongs to me. You will be a kingdom of priests for me and a holy nation. These are the words you should say to the Israelites.”

But God didn’t stop there. God’s covenant with the people of Israel was a two-way agreement, and God called them to follow certain commands. We know them today as the 10 Commandments.

We read in Exodus 20:1-17:

“Then God spoke all these words: ‘I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You must have no other gods before me.

Do not make an idol for yourself—no form whatsoever—of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. Do not bow down to them or worship them, because I, the Lord your God, am a passionate God.

I punish children for their parents’ sins even to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me. But I am loyal and gracious to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Do not use the Lord your God’s name as if it were of no significance; the Lord won’t forgive anyone who uses his name that way.

Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy. Six days you may work and do all your tasks, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

Do not do any work on it—not you, your children, your servants, your animals, or the immigrant who is living with you. Because the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them in six days, but rested on the seventh day. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

While this may seem like just a strict set of arbitrary rules, through these commands, God was calling the Israelites (and us today!) to follow God alone. We should not put



anything else in the way of our relationship with God: not “idols,” or the desire to steal, kill, or lie, not our material possessions or goods. God’s covenant with us calls us to follow and obey God only.

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and how their best friend/close family member would describe them.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1

Silly Laws

Throughout the United States, there are so many silly laws that are still on the books but cannot be enforced. Read each of these silly laws out loud, and have students guess which state that law came from.

Which State has this silly law?

- It is illegal to wake a sleeping bear to take a photo (Alaska)
- It is illegal to ride a horse while drunk (Colorado)
- Slippers are not to be worn after 10:00 pm (New York)
- It is illegal to send anyone a surprise pizza (Louisiana)
- It is illegal to drive with an uncaged bear (Missouri)
- It is illegal to wash your neighbor’s car without permission (California)
- It is illegal to share your Netflix password (Tennessee)
- Women must get permission from their husbands to wear false teeth (Vermont)
- Coins are not allowed to be placed in your ears (Hawaii)
- It is illegal to keep Christmas decorations up after January 14 (Maine)

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- If you could create a law that the whole world had to follow, what would it be and why?



>> DISCUSSION:

Say: We are in week 2 of our Covenant series. Let's just have a real quick recap...

- What is a covenant?
- In our EXPLORE sessions so far, what other covenants did God make with people? (If the students cannot remember, it's okay to simply move on to this week's covenant.)
- At first, God made covenants with individual people (Noah, Abraham, Isaac, etc.). In our story today, God made a covenant with ALL of the people of Israel. Why do you think God did this?
- Moses and the Israelites encountered God in a special way at Mount Sinai. Where are places that you find or encounter God?

Read: Exodus 20:1-17

- Do any of them seem strange or not make sense to you?
- Does this list of commandments seem fair or too strict?
- Which of the Ten Commandments is the easiest for you to follow. Which is the hardest to obey?
- Do you think there is anything missing from the Ten Commandments? Something else that should be included as a command?
- Which commandment seems the MOST important to you?
- What things do we tend to "idolize" or follow instead of God?
- How do these commandments help us stay in a covenant relationship with God? How do these commandments help us stay in a covenant relationship with other people?

>> ACTIVITY #2

Law of Love

Several years ago, the Church of the Resurrection's worship band—COR Worship Collective—wrote a song about the Ten Commandments called "Law of Love." (YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/fqv900dkYEK>) Pass out the lyric sheets to students and play the song or watch the video.

After playing the song, discuss the following questions:

1. Why are boundaries important in our lives?
2. What do you think "law of love" means?
3. Do you view God as a kind father or a cruel judge or something else entirely?
4. How do commandments help us know, love, and serve God better?

>> CHALLENGE:

Challenge yourself to memorize the Ten Commandments! Here's the list in a simplified version to help get you started:

1. Worship and follow God alone.
2. Don't put other things in place of God.
3. Respect God's name.
4. Remember to take time to rest.



5. Respect your parents.
6. Don't kill.
7. Married couples should stay faithful to each other.
8. Don't steal.
9. Don't lie.
10. Don't crave what doesn't belong to you.

>> LAW OF LOVE BY COR WORSHIP COLLECTIVE

VERSE 1

Lord reveal who you are to me
Lord reveal what you've done for me
Lord reveal who I am to you
And who you are in me

CHORUS

Your boundaries fall in pleasant places
To guard us all from broken spaces
In the goodness of the father, Not the cruelty of a judge
Write on my heart your law of love

VERSE 2

Lord instill a mind of self-control
Lord instill your joy that overflows
A faithful heart, one of peace and patience
And a love that overwhelms

CHORUS

BRIDGE (x 3)

To know you. To love you, To serve you Lord

CHORUS (x 2)

TAG

Write on my heart your law of love
Write on my heart your law of love
Write on my heart your law of love

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



X P L
X P L
X P L



Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of horizontal lines for text entry.



Covenant with Community

>> **BIG IDEA:** As followers of God, we are called into covenant with other people.

>> **SUMMARY:** So far in EXPLORE, we've learned about the different covenants that God has made with humans: God made covenants with Noah, with Abraham and Sarai, with Isaac and Jacob, and then with all the people of Israel. But we are also called to be "in a covenant" with other followers of God: to love and support one another. Ruth is a great example of the type of covenant we are meant to have with other people. The covenant God makes with us, and asks us to make with other people, can be summarized in the two greatest commandments: Love God and Love others.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Ruth 1:11-18 (CEB)

11 Naomi replied, "Turn back, my daughters. Why would you go with me? Will there again be sons in my womb, that they would be husbands for you? 12 Turn back, my daughters. Go. I am too old for a husband. If I were to say that I have hope, even if I had a husband tonight, and even more, if I were to bear sons— 13 would you wait until they grew up? Would you refrain from having a husband? No, my daughters. This is more bitter for me than for you, since the Lord's will has come out against me."

14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth stayed with her. 15 Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law is returning to her people and to her gods. Turn back after your sister-in-law."

16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to abandon you, to turn back from following after you. Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. 17 Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord do this to me and more so if even death separates me from you." 18 When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her about it.



Matthew 22:36-40 (CEB)

36 "Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

37 He replied, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: You must love your neighbor as you love yourself. 40 All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, index cards, pens/pencils, paper

>> **LEADER NOTES:** This week's covenant is really all about how we love others. We see Ruth refusing to leave Naomi in her time of grief. And we see Jesus summarize all the other laws and commandments and covenants into a very simple concept, Love God and Love Others. What does it look like to love others well? What sacrifices are we willing to make to live in covenant community with others?

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** In our final Covenant week with Explore students, we learned about Ruth's commitment and love for her mother-in-law Naomi. Jesus summarized this idea with the two greatest commandments, "Love God. Love Others." Continue the conversation at home with these questions:

- What does it look like to simply "Love God. Love Others." in your life?
- Have you ever had to give something up for a friend like Ruth?

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hey Resurrection students, Leah here – one of your student ministry directors and I've got to tell you, I've had a song stuck in my head all day. I bet you recognize it, "You've Got a Friend in Me."

"You've Got a Friend in Me" – you know this song. Yeah you know this song right? It's from the movie "Toy Story." This great promise between Andy and his beloved toy Woody. And then we'd see how Woody and Buzz Lightyear would make the promise to each other and all the other awesome toys. I love that movie and I love that song.

I've been thinking about our discussion today. About the covenants or promises we make with others and just to remind ourselves a covenant is essentially a powerful promise. It's a relationship between two people who make a binding promise to each other to reach a common goal. They're different from a contract because they're relational and personal. We find that type of powerful promise in the story of two amazing women in the Bible named Ruth and Naomi. As I'm reading their story, I keep hearing this song, "You've Got a Friend in Me." And specifically the part in the song that says, "You got troubles. I've got them too. There isn't anything I wouldn't do for you. We stick together and see it through, cause You've Got a Friend in Me."



We are like Ruth and Naomi, facing some real troubles and some real pain and hardship. You see Ruth was married to Naomi's son. Naomi was Ruth's mother-in-law and not only did Naomi's husband die, but also her sons including Ruth's husband. These women were left destitute and when we meet them in the story it says Naomi tried convincing Ruth to leave her all together and go back to her family, back to her homeland. But Ruth wasn't having it. She felt God's call to keep her promise to Naomi and her new family.

Let's read what happens between Naomi and her two daughter-in-laws, Ruth and Orpah after their husbands die.

Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth stayed with her. Naomi said, "Look, your sister-in-law is returning to her people and to her gods. Turn back after your sister-in-law."

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to abandon you, to turn back from following after you. Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord do this to me and more so if even death separates me from you." When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her about it.

Can you hear it? You've got a friend in me? I mean this last line says it all. In the song it says and as the years go by our friendship will never die. You're gonna see it's our destiny, oh, you've got a friend in me.

And Ruth did. She kept her promise. She and Naomi went through life together on this journey, ups and downs. They were blessed by God and by one another.

Now have you ever make a promise to someone that required a lot of you? Have you promised something to or with someone that took a lot of time and commitment to carry out? Maybe it was making a promise to your parents to help with a family event but it meant you couldn't do something else you wanted to do with your friends. Maybe you promised your friend you'd be there for them every day to study for a test or practice for an audition or tryouts. Maybe you have a friend right now who's going through a really low time in their life and you promise to call them every day to check in on them or hang out with them after school. You know when you make these promises how important they are and what a difference it makes when you keep that promise and see it through.

Jesus knew the importance of these two. The importance of letting others know that they have a friend in you. One that is willing to make a powerful promise, a covenant to go through all the ups and downs on the road trip of life and be there for one another in community. When Jesus was asked what's the greatest commandment, the greatest requirement in a covenant relationship with God. Jesus said, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like it. You must love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets depend on these two commands."



Making a promise to stand by someone in need is at the top of God's desire for us. When we make a promise to God to live and love like Jesus that means loving others in the same way by keeping promises and committing to not leaving friends when they need you the most. When I married by husband, I made this type of covenant. And when I came on staff with Resurrection students, I made a promise to love God with all of me and love you all as I love myself.

There are three promises in this command from Jesus. Did you catch them all?

- To love God
- Love your neighbor
- Love yourself

Those all go hand in hand. The promises we make to God, our neighbor, and ourselves are reliant on loving all three well. Let's encourage one another to keep making these covenants with one another, ourselves, and to God. This covenant to go on life's journey together because as Jesus shows us we need one another. And remember students, You've Got a Friend in Me.

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and how their best friend/close family member would describe them.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1

Partner Pictures

Each student is assigned a partner and sits back-to-back. One member is given a word or phrase from the Bible written on an index card (see list below for examples). They must describe the contents of the card to their partner without using any part of the word (like Catchphrase). You can give all groups the same phrase to guess or mix them up. Set a timer and once the time is up, share the answers.

Answer ideas:

- Jesus
- Mary, Mother of Jesus
- Cross
- 12 Disciples



- Moses
- Abraham and Sarah
- Ten Commandments
- Israelites
- Egypt
- Noah's Ark
- Resurrection

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- Which friend would you choose to go on a road trip with? Where would you go?

>> DISCUSSION:

Read: Ruth 1:11-18

- Why do you think Ruth stayed with Naomi instead of going back to her parent's home?
- What was the covenant that Ruth made with Naomi?
- How was Ruth faithful to God? How was she faithful to Naomi?
- How would you describe Ruth as a person?

Ask: I think we all have one friend in particular that comes to mind when we hear the song, "You've Got a Friend in Me."

- Who do you turn to in tough times? How do you support your friends when they are going through hard situations?
- What types of promises do we make to ourselves? (Example: New Year's Resolutions) What types of promises or covenants do we make with other people?
- What does it mean to be "faithful"? How can we be faithful to God? What does it look like to be faithful to other people?

Say: You know when you make these promises how important they are and what a difference it makes when you keep that promise and see it through.

Jesus knew the importance of these two. The importance of letting others know that they have a friend in you. One that is willing to make a powerful promise, a covenant to go through all the ups and downs on the road trip of life and be there for one another in community. When Jesus was asked what's the greatest commandment, the greatest requirement in a covenant relationship with God.

Read: In Matthew 22:36-40, Jesus said, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like it. You must love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets depend on these two commands."

- Which is easier: to love God or to love others?
- Why is it important to have a community? How does your community support and encourage you?
- What sacrifices might we need to make for others in our community?



>> ACTIVITY #2

Love God, Love Others

All of the covenants that we've talked about so far can be summed up in two basic agreements: We are called to Love God and Love Others. On your sheet of paper, draw a line down the middle. On one side, write "God" and on the other side write "Other people." Then, below each column, list out ways we can show love—to God and to others around us.

>> CHALLENGE:

Throughout this week, lift up each other! Send out a text, write a note, or say a prayer for someone else in your group. As a church and discipleship group, "covenant" together to love God and others.

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



A series of horizontal lines for writing, starting from the top of the teal bar and extending across the page.

X P L
X P L
X P L



UNIT OVERVIEW

UNIT 6: Jesus - Early Ministry

We love a good and relatable origin story! These two sessions covering Jesus' early ministry invites us to be a part of what God continues to do in our world today. We are invited to be baptized just as Jesus was baptized. We will face temptation just as Jesus was tempted. We can be filled with the Holy Spirit to share God's love just as Jesus taught others about God's love. Jesus invites us all to follow him.

>> SESSION SUMMARIES

1 - Baptism and Temptation

Jesus starts his ministry with his baptism where he celebrates joining the kingdom of God! After a time of celebration of being a part of the community of God, Jesus is isolated and tempted over and over again in the dessert. Jesus made a choice to follow God and not give into temptation. That's HARD. Just like Jesus, we have a choice to follow God. We are invited to get baptized, and confirmed, and make a commitment to follow God. There will be times we are tempted to do things we shouldn't, and times when the wrong thing, will seem like the right thing. We have a choice! No matter what choice we make, we are not alone.

2 - First Sermon and Calling Disciples

After Jesus comes out of the wilderness, he begins preaching and is well loved, until he says the prophecy from Isaiah has been fulfilled through him. People had been waiting years and year for the Messiah, and Jesus was saying that it was him! Not everyone was happy about that, and not everyone believed him. But Jesus continued his ministry, even though people didn't understand what he was doing. He began inviting people to follow him, who would be his disciples, his closest friends and followers. The cool thing about Jesus' disciples is that they were all so different from each other. They had different jobs, socio-economic classes, and backgrounds. Despite that, Jesus sought them out to follow him. Just like Jesus disciples, we are all different, and Jesus invites each one of us to follow him. It doesn't matter who we are, or where we come from. God can use us in big ways!



UNIT 6 | SESSION 1

Baptism and Temptation

>> **BIG IDEA:** You are never alone

>> **SUMMARY:** Jesus starts his ministry with his baptism where he celebrates joining the kingdom of God! After a time of celebration of being a part of the community of God, Jesus is isolated and tempted over and over again in the desert. Jesus made a choice to follow God and not give into temptation. That's HARD. Just like Jesus, we have a choice to follow God. We are invited to get baptized, and confirmed, and make a commitment to follow God. There will be times when we are tempted to do things we shouldn't, and times when the wrong thing will seem like the right thing. We have a choice! No matter what choice we make, we are not alone.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Matthew 3:13-17, CEB

1 At that time Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River so that John would baptize him. John tried to stop him and said, "I need to be baptized by you, yet you come to me?" Jesus answered, "Allow me to be baptized now. This is necessary to fulfill all righteousness." So John agreed to baptize Jesus. 16 When Jesus was baptized, he immediately came up out of the water. Heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and resting on him. 17 A voice from heaven said, "This is my Son whom I dearly love; I find happiness in him."

Matthew 4:1-11 CEB

Then the Spirit led Jesus up into the wilderness so that the devil might tempt him. After Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights, he was starving. The tempter came to him and said, "Since you are God's Son, command these stones to become bread." Jesus replied, "It's written, People won't live only by bread, but by every word spoken by God." After that the devil brought him into the holy city and stood him at the highest point of the temple. He said to him, "Since you are God's Son, throw yourself down; for it is written, I will command my angels concerning you, and they will take you up in their hands so that you won't hit your foot on a stone." Jesus replied, "Again



it's written, don't test the Lord your God. "Then the devil brought him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. He said, "I'll give you all these if you bow down and worship me." Jesus responded, "Go away, Satan, because it's written, You will worship the Lord your God and serve only him." The devil left him, and angels came and took care of him.

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, candy (or something hard to resist)

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** This week Explore students discussed Jesus' early ministry – his baptism and temptation. Continue the conversation at home with these questions:

- What is something that has tempted you in the past year?
- Remember that you are never alone! How can we help when you feel tempted?

* If your student has not been baptized yet, this is a good week to start that conversation.

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hello resurrection students, Leah here excited to chat with you this week about the baptism and temptation of Jesus.

On New Year's Day my family was able to go to the beach in one of my favorites places, St Augustine Florida. It was a balmy 74 degrees in Florida, all the locals were dressed in jackets and sweatpants. Meanwhile, our crazy family from Kansas is running full speed into the water like we're being chased. We were determined to jump in the ocean no matter the cold. Yet once our toes touched that freezing cold water we halted in our tracks. Some of us made it half way, my husband jumped all in and my son asked me to push him in because he just couldn't will himself to go all in by himself, it looked so cold. I had steadily waded into the cold waves up to my waste by this point, cautiously taking on the freezing temps. I laughed at the thought getting permission from my 13-year-old to actually push him into the waves. I mean, we love you teenagers but you have to know how satisfying this could be. So, I pushed and he went headfirst into the water. Down he went under the waves and when I reached down to pull him back out, he said, well that wasn't so bad.

I couldn't help thinking about how he'd be doing a different kind of all in with water in a few months when he finally gets baptized. You see he's a confirmation student and it's one of the steps in the process of confirmation if you haven't been baptized yet. I was 13 when I went back into the chlorine waters of the YMCA pool and was pulled up new in Christ. And while his baptism will be a gentle Methodist sprinkling of water that plunge into the invigorating waters of baptism is the same. Acknowledging our sin and where we've missed the mark, renouncing the deceiver, and walking forward into a new extraordinary life of hope and purpose.



John the Baptist stood in the waters of the Jordan River and shouted out, beckoning those to come take the plunge, some joined him, and others stood on the shore.

When Jesus climbed down the bank into the river, John was shocked. John was sensing of that Jesus should be the one doing the blessing, Jesus should be the one baptizing. – Matthew tells us in chapter 3 John says,

“I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:14-17

I imagine this to be an epic moment of “imposter syndrome”. You know those continual thoughts of doubting our skills, talents, or accomplishments and here is that moment of being exposed as a fraud. Perhaps John is thinking, ME? Who am I to baptize Jesus?

I'm not sure if any of you can relate to this feeling of imposter syndrome. I'll be honest, I feel it a little right now.

Un-detoured by John's doubt Jesus replied to him and all of us the same way...You are not an imposter, you are my beloved, and you are extraordinary. You are called, you are not a mistake, you belong here.

Jesus says, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness” (3:15). And while the text doesn't tell us exactly what this righteousness is that Jesus is trying to fulfill (surely Jesus is already righteous) His request for John to indeed baptize him not only signifies the importance of baptism but affirms John's calling to do so.

I think Jesus is showing us in this moment that his ministry, life, and witness is to be about becoming a part of the body, about joining up with the kingdom of God in community.

One of my favorite moments of baptism is when our pastors will take the one being baptized most often an infant and walk them down the center isle while asking the congregation, do you promise to love this child as your own, helping them grow in their faith and understanding of God's love for them through Jesus? If so, please respond ...we do! The resounding “We do” is a beautiful promise of communal love and commitment.

Our confirmation mentors choose to mentor our youth in large part based on that promise they make when our teenagers were very young. They like Jesus want to put into action what it looks like to be a part of the kingdom of God by following through with their promise.



John's hesitation in baptizing Jesus, I think many would say is, his understanding of baptism being one of repentance, of forgiveness of sins. And this man, Jesus, had no need to have sins forgiven. So, why would he consent to this baptism? Maybe Jesus' view of what was happening was larger. Maybe John, and most of us, think of repentance as turning away. When we repent, we turn away from our sins, our life of sin. We are sorry for what had gone on before; we are sorry for what we had done before, and we are pledging to not engage in those behaviors again. That is how we understand repentance.

But what if Jesus understood repentance to be primarily a turning toward? What if the gesture that Jesus was making was one of inclusion or acceptance or entrance? This was a beginning moment for the ministry that Jesus would perform. This was a sign that something new was about to be launched. And this new thing was nothing less than the kingdom of God, nothing less than a new way of living in community.

Righteousness refers to being faithful to relationships. You cannot be righteous all by yourself. You are righteous with God and righteous with one another. Righteousness implies a relationship. Baptism is a corporate act; it is almost always done as a part of worship. And when in extreme cases it is not a part of a regular worship service, then the community must be represented. Baptism is an entrance into the fellowship of believers; it is a joining up with the body. Once you have been baptized, you are never alone. There is always a family around you. You have joined something larger than yourself, which is sometimes startling, but always worthwhile. And it's necessary for when we those nudges, those pushes into the cold water. Because let us not forget just a few verses after being baptized, while the water is still wet Jesus is being led to in the desert by the great deceiver, by the evil one.

--Paraphrase Jesus being tempted

Jesus came from joining in community through baptism, feeling that love abound and surround him and then not long after becoming totally isolated with lies and temptations to do things contrary to who he is. But he stood firm because he knew the promises found in scripture and found in community through is baptismal promises.

And there are times when we come walk into that onslaught of lies about our ability, our calling, our purpose, our worth and it is vital to know we belong to one another. We are NEVER alone. Therefore, seeing Christ partake of that baptismal promise to be in community and hear God say "this is my Beloved" is so important. If Jesus needed the reminder surely don't, we all.

Students, God has called us into the extraordinary lives representing the kin-dom of God. We are the evidence that our faith is true, and God is at work in the world. We are called to be bridge builders, peace makers, justice seekers, truth tellers, and inclusive love havens.



We are invited to get baptized, and confirmed, and make a commitment to follow God. There will be times we are tempted to do things we shouldn't, and times when the wrong thing, will seem like the right thing. But how we deal with missing the mark is also a sign of God's love in us. And when those times come your way remember you are never alone, Jesus walked this path too.

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and how their best friend/close family member would describe them.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1

Would You Rather Bible Edition

Have students stand up. As you read each would you rather question assign each point to the left, or right, of the room. Have them go to the side that corresponds to their answer.

Would you rather...

- Be imprisoned for over 2 years or be swallowed by a whale?
- Have a plague of locusts or a plague of frogs?
- Have heard one of Jesus' sermons or seen one of his miracles?
- Name the animals or build the ark?
- Face Goliath with only a stone and a slingshot or wander in the desert for 40 years?
- See Jesus walk on water or see him heal a blind man?
- Turn water into wine or rule over all kingdoms?
- Turn stones into bread or have 5 loaves and two fishes feed thousands of people?

>> ACTIVITY #2 (BEGINNING)

At the beginning of the lesson offer each student a piece of candy. They have to open it, and set it in front of them. Any student who doesn't eat the candy during the class, gets three pieces at the end of class. Good luck!

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- If you were trapped in the wilderness, what is one thing you couldn't live without?



>> DISCUSSION:

Read: Matthew 3:13-17

- If you watched someone getting baptized and started to hear God talking, how would you react?
- Why do you think John wanted Jesus to baptize him? 3. Why do you think Jesus wanted John to baptize him?

Read: Matthew 4:1-11

- Option 1: Choose a mentor to read the scripture. As you read each temptation, pause before you get to Jesus' response. Have students guess what Jesus' response will be.
- Option 2: Choose a mentor to read the scripture. Give each student a piece of paper. On one side, have them write YES, and one side write NO. As you read each temptation, pause before you get to Jesus' response. Have students vote what Jesus' response will be before you read it.

Ask:

- Vote by a raise of hands. Would it be easy or difficult for you to have God's powers and not use it? Ask two or three students to share why they voted the way they did.
- Jesus was tempted three times. To make food. To jump off a cliff and show that he wouldn't die. And to be given all the kingdoms and powers to rule. Which would be the hardest for you to say no to?
- What are things that other middle schoolers are tempted by?

>> ACTIVITY #2

TEMPTATION

For students who made it through the whole class without eating or touching their candy, offer them three pieces as their reward.

Ask: How easy was it to resist the temptation to eat the candy? Would there be a candy that was harder for you to resist?

WHO WAS TEMPTED?

Jesus isn't the only person we read about in scripture who was tempted. Have students brainstorm together different people who were tempted. Take time together to find their stories in scripture and talk about what their temptation was, and what they did.

Some examples:

- Adam and Eve (Genesis 3)
- Jonah and the Whale (Jonah 1)
- David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11)

Questions:

- What were they tempted with?
- What was their response?
- What could they have done differently?



>> CHALLENGE:

What is one way this week you can expand your community of trusted people?
Examples: connecting with relatives, trying youth group, getting to know someone new, checking out a new-to-you club at school

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



Lined writing area for notes, featuring horizontal lines and a large, faint 'XPDL' watermark in the background.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines. The page features a large, faint watermark in the background that reads "OPRE" in a stylized, outlined font, repeated twice.



UNIT 6 | SESSION 2

First Sermon and Calling Disciples

>> **BIG IDEA:** Jesus invites all of us to follow him.

>> **SUMMARY:** After Jesus comes out of the wilderness, he begins preaching and is well loved, until he says the prophecy from Isaiah has been fulfilled through him. People had been waiting years and year for the Messiah, and Jesus was saying that it was him! Not everyone was happy about that, and not everyone believed him. But Jesus continued his ministry, even though people didn't understand what he was doing. He began inviting people to follow him, who would be his disciples, his closest friends and followers. The cool thing about Jesus' disciples is that they were all so different from each other. They had different jobs, socio-economic classes, and backgrounds. Despite that, Jesus sought them out to follow him. Just like Jesus disciples, we are all different, and Jesus invites each one of us to follow him. It doesn't matter who we are, or where we come from. God can use us in big ways!

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Luke 4:14-30 (CEB)

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.

He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed,

and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."



Everyone was raving about Jesus, so impressed were they by the gracious words flowing from his lips. They said, "This is Joseph's son, isn't it?"

Then Jesus said to them, "Undoubtedly, you will quote this saying to me: 'Doctor, heal yourself. Do here in your hometown what we've heard you did in Capernaum.'" He said, "I assure you that no prophet is welcome in the prophet's hometown. And I can assure you that there were many widows in Israel during Elijah's time, when it didn't rain for three and a half years and there was a great food shortage in the land. Yet Elijah was sent to none of them but only to a widow in the city of Zarephath in the region of Sidon. There were also many persons with skin diseases in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha, but none of them were cleansed. Instead, Naaman the Syrian was cleansed."

When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was filled with anger. They rose up and ran him out of town. They led him to the crest of the hill on which their town had been built so that they could throw him off the cliff. But he passed through the crowd and went on his way.

Luke 5:1-11(CEB)

One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Gennesaret when the crowd pressed in around him to hear God's word. Jesus saw two boats sitting by the lake. The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets. Jesus boarded one of the boats, the one that belonged to Simon, then asked him to row out a little distance from the shore. Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he finished speaking to the crowds, he said to Simon, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch."

Simon replied, "Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets."

So they dropped the nets and their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting. They signaled for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats so full that they were about to sink. When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!"

Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement because of the number of fish they caught. James and John, Zebedee's sons, were Simon's partners and they were amazed too.

Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people." As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus.

Supply List: Bible, paper, pens/pencils

>> PARENT CONNECTION: This week Explore students talked about Jesus' first sermon and calling his disciples. Even though all the disciples were very different, they were all equally called to follow Jesus. Continue the conversation at home with these questions:

- Why do you think it's important to have different types of people in a group together?
- What is different about following Jesus today rather than as one of the original disciples?



>> VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:

Right now we are talking about the stories of Jesus. Last week we talked about how Jesus started his ministry with baptism, but then right after that Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days. This is the reminder that we are invited to get baptized, and confirmed, and make a commitment to follow God. There will be times we are tempted to do things we shouldn't, and times when the wrong thing, will seem like the right thing.

We are talking about what happens next for Jesus and his ministry! Now the truth is... Jesus didn't do things on his own, he did his whole ministry with other people! Now there are things you can do on your own: eating, taking a math test. But there are also things that are easier to do with other people! Competing in a soccer game, playing an instrument in a band, carpooling with people to school, these are all things we do TOGETHER with people!

SHARE STORY:

Biking Story: Getting sick

Camping with Brent: Both bring different things to the adventure! Brent brought the map, I brought the supplies.

How do you think Jesus got people to do life and ministry with him? Let's check out these words from Luke 5:1-11:

One day Jesus was standing beside Lake Gennesaret when the crowd pressed in around him to hear God's word. 2 Jesus saw two boats sitting by the lake. The fishermen had gone ashore and were washing their nets. 3 Jesus boarded one of the boats, the one that belonged to Simon, then asked him to row out a little distance from the shore. Jesus sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. 4 When he finished speaking to the crowds, he said to Simon, "Row out farther, into the deep water, and drop your nets for a catch."

5 Simon replied, "Master, we've worked hard all night and caught nothing. But because you say so, I'll drop the nets."

6 So they dropped the nets and their catch was so huge that their nets were splitting.

7 They signaled for their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They filled both boats so full that they were about to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw the catch, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Leave me, Lord, for I'm a sinner!" 9 Peter and those with him were overcome with amazement because of the number of fish they caught. 10 James and John, Zebedee's sons, were Simon's partners and they were amazed too. Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be fishing for people." 11 As soon as they brought the boats to the shore, they left everything and followed Jesus.

RECAP WHATS GOING ON. SHARE PIC OF THE SEA OF GALILEE.



There are two important to remember: 1. Jesus is calling us to follow him. Jesus was a person that didn't go to one specific group of people and say, "you all look like the right people" to hangout with. Jesus went to all types of people (people that were great candidates for following him and people that were the most UNLIKELY to follow him). What we see is that Jesus included everyone in this invitation because Jesus believes in everyone, and gives grace and love to everyone.

2. Big things happen we follow Jesus. Peter was someone that was discouraged by his fishing that day, and Jesus completely flipped that around and produced this miracle! Instead, he gave Peter MORE FISH than his boat could handle. I've been a Christian my whole life, and what I have found is that Jesus still does big things when we follow him today. What I have found from following Jesus is that his plans can lead me to people to meeting some incredible people—people I probably wouldn't have met if I was going on my own path and direction. Follow Jesus has led me to see people healed of diseases and illness because they believed and prayed together, putting all their trust in believing that something BIG can happen. I've also seen it happen here at Church!

Jesus was someone who did life with his disciples. In return, Jesus calls all of us to do life with him. Friends, you're invited into this calling with Jesus. What would your life look like if you said yes to following Jesus? If you said yes, what BIG THINGS might happen in return?

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and how their best friend/close family member would describe them.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1

Copy Cat

Have students sit in a circle. Have half of the group cover their eyes. While the rest of the group has their eyes opened, a leader should quietly select a leader. This leader will do movements that the rest of the group will follow. Like touching their elbow, making a silly face, etc. All students should start to mimic their leader student. Once instructions are given and the leader is selected, have everyone open their eyes. The



remaining students have to figure out who is the leader, and is starting the movements.

QUESTIONS:

- Was it easy or difficult to identify who the leader was? Why or why not?
- Were there moments you didn't like what the leader was doing and didn't participate?
- How did it feel to be a part of the group trying to figure out who the leader was?

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- Who is one person you would go anywhere with, no questions asked?

>> DISCUSSION:

Read: Luke 4:14-30

- How would you react if someone random came into our church, got up on stage, and said "I am the one the Bible is talking about" and walked out?
- How would you react if someone you KNEW said that?
- How did the people react when Jesus did that?

Scripture Activity: Luke 5:1-11

- Option 1: Break students up into two groups of 6-10. Have them prepare a 'skit' based on the scripture. They can use the following roles. (Narrator, Jesus, Crowd, Simon Peter, James, John, extra fishermen help). Have each group perform their skit.
- Option 2: Select a few students to act the scripture out as you are reading using the following roles: Jesus, Crowd, Simon Peter, James, John, extra fishermen help. The 'audience' can be instructed to 'ooohhhh' 'ahhhh' and clap.

Ask:

- Fishermen typically weren't rich or famous, often they couldn't even read or write. Jesus still invited them to be disciples. Why would Jesus invite them to follow him?
- Jesus chose some pretty different kinds of people to be disciples. Why might Jesus have invited so many different kinds of people to follow him?
- Jesus invites all of us to follow him. What does that mean?

>> ACTIVITY #2

Who Are They

Option 1: Elijah and Elisha

Jesus references Elijah and Elisha. Who are they, and why does Jesus reference them. Take some time to learn about them by watching this video from the Gospel Project. Watch this video from The Gospel Project. The whole video is great, but it is long, consider watching it from 4:00-6:00 minutes.

>> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cY2s21Uq2T4> <<

Option 2: Disciples

Who were the people Jesus called disciples?



Questions:

- Can you name all 12 disciples?
- Do you know any facts about them?

*See attached page for some disciple facts to help students learn more!

Questions:

- What is one thing that surprised you about the disciples of Jesus?
- What is one question you have about the people who followed Jesus?
- Did you notice anyone missing from Jesus disciples?
- What are some characteristics of people who might be a disciple of Jesus TODAY, if Jesus were on Earth right now?

>> **ACTIVITY #2 (ALTERNATE) - THE DISCIPLES**

There are some disciples we know a lot about, and some disciples we don't know much about at all! Think about why that might be.

Simon Peter was a fisherman, and Simon means rock. He walked on water, was the father of the church, and very close to Jesus.

James the Elder was son of Zebedee and the brother of John. He was a fisherman.

John was also a son of Zebedee. The brother of James, banished to an island because of his ministry, called son of Thunder. He was a fisherman.

Andrew was the brother of Simon Peter. He was originally a disciple of John the Baptist, but began to follow Jesus.

Bartholomew/Nathanael was from noble birth/royal blood.

James the Younger was the brother of Jude,

Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus and was the treasurer of the disciples.

Thaddeus was brother of James the younger.

Matthew was a tax collector.

Philip was probably a fisherman.

Thomas is sometimes known as Doubting Thomas because he asked Jesus to see the nail holes in his hands after resurrection.

Simon the Zealot was Jewish Nationalist (a zealot is someone fanatical about their religion) who followed Jesus.

>> **CHALLENGE:**

What is one step you can take to follow Jesus this week? Ex: pray, read the Bible, talk to a trusted person in your life about faith, go to church or youth group.

>> **JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:**

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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UNIT OVERVIEW

UNIT 7: Jesus – Ministry to Outcasts

One of the things that made Jesus so unique is that he ministered to all kinds of people, but we see Jesus spend a lot of time with people who were considered to be outcasts. For this unit, we will talk about three sets of people that Jesus spent time with, or spent time talking about, even though culturally, it didn't make sense. Lepers were often sent away from the society and seen as unclean; however, Jesus went to them and healed them. Similarly, women were not seen as equal members of society; however, Jesus included them in his closest group of followers, and women are used to share the message of Christ with others. And Jesus makes a point to tell us that children have value, so much so that He even says that we should have childlike faith. Through this series we will learn stories that share the character of Jesus, and the love he had for others.

>> SESSION SUMMARIES

1 – Healing Lepers and Others

Today when we fall ill, we can go to the doctor, we can get medicine from the store, or we can take time to rest. In Biblical times, when you fell ill, it often meant losing your job, your home, and your family. Lepers were people who had leprosy, a highly contagious disease, and those individuals were often left alone and unable to be touched (remember COVID quarantine anyone?!). It was a very isolated place to be. People did not go near them because it would make them unclean. But Jesus did go near them. Not only did Jesus go near them, but he touched them. He healed them. He showed up for them. The lengths that Jesus would go to let them know he loved them was massive. Jesus' healing was a miracle in and of itself, but the other miracle was giving these people their lives back, after being sick and isolated from this disease. Not even illness can separate us from the love of Christ.

2 – Including Women

Women are an integral part of Jesus ministry, even though women were not considered equal during the time that Jesus was teaching on Earth. We see Jesus include women as disciples, we see him show compassion to women, and we see Jesus reveal himself as the Messiah to women first.

3 – Including Children

Often children are told they should be 'seen and not heard', but that isn't what Jesus said. As disciples pushed the children away from Jesus, Jesus told them to let the children come to Him. Jesus made time to be with the children and show them that His love was there for them, and they were just as valuable to him as the adults. Jesus even shared with the disciples that we should have faith like a child. What does that mean, exactly? When we think about children we often think about optimism, joy, and love. Children have absolute faith in their parents, total and complete trust. Can you imagine what our lives would look like if our faith modeled those things? That total trust in God, and a life filled with optimism, joy, and love? What are things that we can do each week to make our faith, more childlike? Our age doesn't limit our relationship with Jesus.



UNIT 7 | SESSION 1

Healing Lepers and Others

>> **BIG IDEA:** Illness cannot separate us from the love of Christ

>> **SUMMARY:** The lengths that Jesus would go to let people know He loved them was massive. Jesus healing was a miracle in and of itself, but the other miracle was giving these people their lives back, after being sick and isolated from this disease. Not even illness can separate us from the love of Christ.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:** Matthew 8:1-4, Luke 17:11-19, John 5:1-18

Scripture:

John 5:1-18 CEB

After this there was a Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.² In Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate in the north city wall is a pool with the Aramaic name Bethsaida. It had five covered porches, ³ and a crowd of people who were sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed sat there.^[a] ⁵ A certain man was there who had been sick for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing that he had already been there a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" ⁷ The sick man answered him, Sir,^[b] I don't have anyone who can put me in the water when it is stirred up. When I'm trying to get to it, someone else has gotten in ahead of me. ⁸ Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." ⁹ Immediately the man was well, and he picked up his mat and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. ¹⁰ The Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, "It's the Sabbath; you aren't allowed to carry your mat." ¹¹ He answered, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" ¹² They inquired, "Who is this man who said to you, 'Pick it up and walk?'" ¹³ The man who had been cured didn't know who it was, because Jesus had slipped away from the crowd gathered there. ¹⁴ Later Jesus found him in the temple and said, "See! You have been made well. Don't sin anymore in case something worse happens to you." ¹⁵ The man went and proclaimed to the Jewish leaders that Jesus was the man who had made him well. ¹⁶ As a result, the Jewish leaders were harassing Jesus, since he had done these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "My Father is still working, and I am working too." ¹⁸ For this reason the Jewish leaders wanted even more to kill him—not only because he was doing away with the Sabbath but also because he called God his own Father, thereby making himself equal with God.



Matthew 8:1-4 CEB

Now when Jesus had come down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. 2 A man with a skin disease came, kneeled before him, and said, "Lord, if you want, you can make me clean." 3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched him, saying, "I do want to. Become clean." Instantly his skin disease was cleansed. 4 Jesus said to him, "Don't say anything to anyone. Instead, go and show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded. This will be a testimony to them."

Luke 8:43-48 CEB

43 A woman was there who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had spent her entire livelihood on doctors, but no one could heal her. 44 She came up behind him and touched the hem of his clothes, and at once her bleeding stopped. 45 "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When everyone denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds are surrounding you and pressing in on you!" 46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched me. I know that power has gone out from me." 47 When the woman saw that she couldn't escape notice, she came trembling and fell before Jesus. In front of everyone, she explained why she had touched him and how she had been immediately healed. 48 "Daughter, your faith has healed you," Jesus said. "Go in peace."

Luke 17:11-19

Jesus heals a Samaritan

11 On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten men with skin diseases approached him. Keeping their distance from him, 13 they raised their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, show us mercy!"

14 When Jesus saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." As they left, they were cleansed. 15 One of them, when he saw that he had been healed, returned and praised God with a loud voice. 16 He fell on his face at Jesus' feet and thanked him. He was a Samaritan. 17 Jesus replied, "Weren't ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 No one returned to praise God except this foreigner?" 19 Then Jesus said to him, "Get up and go. Your faith has healed you."

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bible, Writing Utensils, Index Cards, Sharpies, Coloring Utensils

>> **LEADER NOTES:** This session talks about how Jesus heals people who were sick. Many of our students have, or have had, someone in their life who is sick and this could be difficult. Help them remember that just because someone wasn't healed, doesn't mean they aren't loved. And it doesn't mean that God doesn't hear our prayers.

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** This week Explore students discussed how Jesus ministered to lepers and outcasts. Here are a few connection points to keep the conversation going at home:



- Why can it be difficult to befriend someone who is different than you?
- How can we show love to someone else this week?

>> VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:

Today I want to talk about being sick. Have you ever been so sick that you had to keep your distance from other people? Or maybe you've had a loved one get sick with something, and you had to stay away from them for your own safety. I remember during the COVID 19 pandemic my brother caught COVID and he chose to stay at a friend's house so he wouldn't get his wife sick, she was sad and missed him, but she knew it was temporary and for her own good.

I also remember that the pandemic was super hard for me in particular, the place where I worked decided to move everything online so the staff could quarantine and try not to get sick or get other sick. So, I stayed home for all of spring and summer and worked from home--but I live alone, so that means I went for like six months without touching another human. It wasn't until my brother came to visit me in the Fall that I had my first hug! Thank goodness I had my puppy KiKi to keep me company or I might have lost it!

In the Bible there were a few people that similar experiences--except way worse waiting out a cold or quarantining for six months. There was a community of people who had developed a sickness called leprosy. Leprosy is what people in Bible days called a serious skin disease we know as Hansen's Disease. It can be very contagious, so people were very careful to try not to catch it. Scientists believe it gets passed from person to person by coughing or sneezing. Back in the day, Leprosy was also a catch-all name for other unknown skin diseases that the general public didn't want to catch.

People who had leprosy were instant outcasts. They got banished to the edges of town and had to live in a separate community of already sick people. No one talked to them. No one visited them. In fact, when these folks who were sick had to go into town, they were made to yell, "unclean, unclean" so that people could keep away from them. It was a terribly isolated life.

Until Jesus entered the scene.

See, where some people did things one way, Jesus constantly showed a different way to do things. As Jesus was traveling around teaching and sharing His message, He also stopped to heal people. One time, a man with leprosy came up to Jesus and knelt before Him and said this:

"Lord," the man said, "if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean."

This sick person had faith--not that Jesus WOULD heal him, but that Jesus COULD heal Him if it was in His will.



Jesus' response was to reach out and actually touch this sick person and say:

"I am willing, be healed!" and that's exactly what happened. The sick man was healed!

It's significant that Jesus reached out to touch this person. You can imagine that this person had been sick and isolated for so long. Dealing with shame, fear, and loneliness. It was the worst kind of quarantine possible. And yet, Jesus reached out to touch this person. And then He healed him. It wasn't just the healing in this instance, it was the recognition of that person's struggle and humanity that happened before the healing.

In another instance, Jesus was traveling and when he reached the edge of the city, he encountered a group of people with leprosy because like we mentioned earlier, these folks were forced to the edge of town because of their sickness.

A group of ten people who had leprosy began calling out to Jesus. Here's how it happened:

11 As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria.¹² As he entered a village there, ten men with leprosy stood at a distance, ¹³ crying out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

¹⁴ He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy.

There's a pattern here. Jesus repeatedly encountered some of the instant outcasts in society. The people who were forced to the side, ignored, and struggling because their health was failing—these are the people Jesus chose to look in the eye when no one else would—and He show up for them. Then He healed them.

That's the beauty of it all, Jesus didn't let sickness separate people from His love. And that's true even today--sickness doesn't separate us from the love of Christ.

So, whatever that thing is that makes you feel far away or isolated, Jesus wants to bridge that gap like He did by looking at those who were sick, seeing their humanity, and choosing to love, care, and show up for them.

Jesus sees YOU in your isolation, fear, confusion, or sickness, and He won't let that separate you from Him or His love.

So, be bold, be brave—share those things with Jesus and let Him comfort and care for you in the various beautiful ways that only Jesus can.



SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If you have new students, considering opening with an extra question like, 'what is your favorite candy?'

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> ACTIVITY #1: USING OUR HANDS

Activity One : Using Our Hands

Supplies : Paper or Index Cards, Writing Utensils, Coloring Utensils

Have students trace their hands and then color them in. Let them know that later they will need to write something on their hand.

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- If you could stay home with your family for two weeks with nowhere to go, what would you do?
- If you could create a cure to any illness, what illness would you cure?

>> DISCUSSION:

Sometimes people are treated differently because of their life choices, appearances, or because they are sick.

- When someone is sick, how do people respond? Why do you think they respond that way?
- When you are feeling sick, and alone, what are some things to help you feel better? (they might answer things like soup or ginger-ale, the doctor, but help them get to the place that having someone care about them might help)

Matthew 8:1-4, Luke 17:11-19

- What did Jesus do to show the lepers love? How was that different than how other people treated him?
- What do you think the lepers were thinking when Jesus told them to go get examined by the priests, but they hadn't even been healed yet?
- How did the lepers respond to Jesus after he showed them love?
- Jesus didn't heal every sick person in every city--what do you think it looks like to have faith in Jesus even if healing hasn't happened yet?
- How can you show love to people you know that are sick?
- The lepers asked and hoped for healing, what do you hope Jesus will do in your life?



>> ACTIVITY #2: HELPING HANDS

Supplies : Sharpies

In the scriptures we read today, Jesus reached his hands out to the lepers, and those who needed healed, when no one else would. Just like that, God uses us to be God's hands and feet in the world. There are people in our lives, every day, who are feeling left out,

and alone. How can we reach out to them, just like Jesus did? Help students to consider people in their world who might need someone to reach out to them as well as ways they can do that. Once you think of someone, write their name in the palm of the hand you decorated earlier.

>> CHALLENGE:

Do something kind for someone in your life. Make them cookies, send them a note that you are thinking about them, draw them a picture. Let them know that you care about them, and they are not alone.

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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Including Women

>> **BIG IDEA:** Our gender doesn't define how God can use us.

>> **SUMMARY:** Women are an integral part of Jesus ministry, even though women were not considered equal during the time that Jesus was teaching on Earth. We see Jesus include women as disciples, we see him show compassion to women, and we see Jesus reveal himself as the Messiah to women first.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Luke 10:38-42

Jesus visits Martha and Mary

38 While Jesus and his disciples were traveling, Jesus entered a village where a woman named Martha welcomed him as a guest. 39 She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his message. 40 By contrast, Martha was preoccupied with getting everything ready for their meal. So Martha came to him and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to prepare the table all by myself? Tell her to help me."

41 The Lord answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. 42 One thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part. It won't be taken away from her."

John 20:11-18

Jesus appears to Mary

11 Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. 12 She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. 13 The angels asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"



She replied, "They have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've put him."
14 As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't know it was Jesus.

15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabbouni" (which means Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, "Don't hold on to me, for I haven't yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, 'I'm going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, "I've seen the Lord." Then she told them what he said to her.

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Bibles, Index cards, Writing Utensils

>> **LEADER NOTES:** Gender equality is something that everyone has different opinions on. The important thing to remember is how different the culture was during the time of Jesus. Women were treated as second class citizens, and for Jesus to include them in roles of leadership was significant!

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** This week Explore students discussed how Jesus ministered to women, which was unexpected during this time in history. Here are a few connection points to keep the conversation going at home:

- Share about a woman you admire, and why you admire them.
- Ask your student what field they would like to go into, in the future. Together, research some women who are leaders and innovators in that field.

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

When I was a little girl, I always wondered. Are there any women disciples. I remember reading stories about Jesus saving women from death, stoning, or illness. I remember him praising a woman for giving all that she had, even though it was only a few pennies to her name, but I didn't remember ever talking about women as disciples. I wondered, if I was alive during Jesus's time would I have been able to be a disciple?



Now, as seminary student, my degree is in women's studies specifically in the church, Bible, and society, I can say with so much joy and confidence that yes there were women disciples! In fact, we read about them quite often, and we may not even know it. Jesus didn't allow gender to define how or who could be disciples, even in a society where there were many limitations on you for your gender. Today I want to highlight a few specific women who Jesus chose to be at the most poignant parts of his life, death, and resurrection.

So, here's what we often miss about the women disciples of Jesus.

They're everywhere.

First of all, the Bible, specifically the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John give us the names of several women who were following Jesus around spoiler alert, that's what it means to be a "disciple", it's a "follower"

Disciple = follower

Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna were three of Jesus's female disciples according to Luke 8:1-3:

"After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means."

Not only are we told about the Twelve, and then these 3 women by name, but we're also told that there were "many others" [meaning, many other women] who not only followed Jesus around, which is the very definition of a Disciple, but that they also supported Jesus and his ministry financially.

Translation: They were active members of the ministry with skin in the game who put their money and their time into the cause of Christ.

One of my favorite examples of a female disciple in the Scriptures, is another Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha.

You may remember this story of where Martha got upset at her sister for not helping her in the kitchen, but sometimes we can miss the entire point: Mary wasn't being lazy for not helping, she was behaving like one of the men – she was sitting at the feet of a Rabbi, Jesus. This is what someone did if they intended to become a teacher too.

For women, this just wasn't acceptable in that day and age [or culture].

Yet, the way Jesus responds to Martha's outrage is especially telling of how Jesus did not let gender define how God can use people. Notice what Jesus says about Mary's choice to adopt the posture of a disciple:

"But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." [Luke 10:41-42]

Boom.

Jesus emphatically states that Mary has not only made a wise choice, it's one that will never be taken away from her [or, presumably, from any other woman who makes a similar choice]. Like me...or you!

Of all the women mentioned in the gospel other than Jesus' own mother, the most significant is another Mary, Mary Magdalene.



Did you know that Mary Magdalene is mentioned by name 12 times in the Gospels – more than most of the apostles. She was a prominent woman and a leader. Every time her name is mentioned in a list of women, she is always first. Mary had a history of demon possession, but Jesus healed her. Jesus showed her that she wasn't broken or useless, she was needed, she was a follower of Christ and one of the first people to spread the good news, of Jesus's resurrection. You could say she was the very first evangelist.

Not only was Mary Magdalene right beside Jesus' mother at the Crucifixion. When all the other male disciples, except for John, had left for hiding while Jesus was dying. But Mary Magdalene stands out in a most special way following the death and burial of Jesus. The book of Mark describes Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, who "brought spices that they might anoint the body of Jesus" (16:1ff). These women were going to have to get past the temple guard to let them into the tomb. They seemed willing to take that risk. Because they loved Jesus so much. The power of love can cause people to perform the most wonderful acts of love. But Mary's role in the Resurrection story goes much further. It is she who sees the risen savior first. During that time, as a woman, she could not be a witness in any legal affairs. Yet it is to her that Jesus appears to first. And, finally, it is Mary Magdalene whom Jesus sends to the Apostles to announce the stunning news that HE has indeed risen from the dead. Mary Magdalene, who socially could not be a legal witness, is chosen by God to be the first to preach the news of the risen savior.

The lives of all these women and so many more who are not mentioned help us understand the great respect and affection Jesus had for women as disciples and followers. The ministry of women has never stopped in the Church, but only grown in each century. For example, in the United States, recent statistics revealed Over 12,000 women serve as United Methodist clergy at all levels, from bishops to local pastors. That's just in our united Methodist churches. And while this is great news there's still so much more growth for women in leadership to continue. But remember, you don't have to work in a church to be a follower of Jesus. And your gender doesn't define what you can do as a follower of Jesus. Jesus welcomes us all!

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If you have new students, considering opening with an extra question like, 'what is your favorite candy?'

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.



>> ACTIVITY #1: FAMOUS WOMEN

Supplies : Paper or Index Cards, Writing Utensils

Pre-make index cards or sticky notes with the names of famous women for students to hold up to their foreheads (they shouldn't look at what is written on the card!). Have students walk around asking yes/no questions about the name of the person they are holding up to try to guess who is on their card.

Examples of Famous Women

- Beyonce
- Taylor Swift
- Michelle Obama
- Hermoine Granger / Emma Watson
- Princess Leia
- Billie Eilish
- Margot Robbie
- Miley Cyrus
- Kate Middleton
- Meghan Markle

>> OPENING QUESTION:

- If someone were to write a book on important faithful figures today, which women would be included? Why?
- Who is a woman in your life who has made an impact? How or why?

>> DISCUSSION:

During the time that Jesus was alive, women weren't always treated with the same respect as men were.

- What is something new that you learned about women in scripture from the teaching time?
- Where have you seen women in roles of leadership or teaching within our church community? How might our church look different if there weren't any women in leadership?

Read Luke 10:38-42 and John 20:11-18

- If you had to choose between sitting and listening to you teacher, or preparing food in the kitchen and cleaning, what would you choose, and why?
- Mary sits at the feet of Jesus, just like the male disciples, while Martha was in the kitchen preparing. What was Jesus' response? Why do you think he responded this way?
- Who was it that saw the resurrected Jesus first? How do you think Mary felt when she saw Jesus alive again?
- Why might it be important that scripture tells us the name of the person that saw Jesus first?



>> ACTIVITY #2: BIBLE EXPLORE

Supplies : Bibles

Break students into groups and give each group a Bible. Challenge students to race to find how many books of the bible are named after a woman. (Hint, there are two! Ruth and Esther) Have students show you the open page number!

Although there are only two books in the Bible named after women, we see women woven into the story of God from the very beginning. There are 188-205 women named throughout scripture (depending on the Bible translation you're reading). Throughout the story of God, God uses all kinds of people to impact the world, and the people. God used people of all ages, gender, and ethnic backgrounds. God used people who were sick, well, and people who didn't always make the right choices. Gender doesn't define how God can use us!

- Why do you think there are only two books named after women?
- How many women from the Bible can you name?
- How can we be more intentional about lifting up everyone in our community?

>> CHALLENGE:

Send a note to a woman in your life that is important to you!

>> JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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Including Children

>> **BIG IDEA:** Age doesn't limit our relationship with Jesus

>> **SUMMARY:** Jesus shared with the disciples that we should have faith like a child. When we think about children we often think about optimism, joy, and love. Children have absolute faith in their parents, total and complete trust. Can you imagine what our lives would look like if our faith modeled those things? That total trust in God, and a life filled with optimism, joy, and love? What are things that we can do each week to make our faith, more childlike? Our age doesn't limit our relationship with Jesus.

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Matthew 19:13-14

Jesus blesses children

13 Some people brought children to Jesus so that he would place his hands on them and pray. But the disciples scolded them. 14 "Allow the children to come to me," Jesus said. "Don't forbid them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children."

Matthew 18:1-4

Greatest in the kingdom

18 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

2 Then he called a little child over to sit among the disciples, 3 and said, "I assure you that if you don't turn your lives around and become like this little child, you will definitely not enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Those who humble themselves like this little child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 18 Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, "I've seen the Lord." Then she told them what he said to her.



>> **SUPPLY LIST:** none

>> **LEADER NOTES:** Students mature at different rates. Some students might still act like children at home, play with toys, and have the same childlike faith they did when they were younger. Some students might reject things about childhood seeing them as 'baby-ish'. Help them to understand that having childlike faith isn't about being a child. It is about how we perceive and experience the world around us!

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** This week Explore students discussed how Jesus invites us to have a childlike faith and experience joy and love as fully as we did as a young child. Here are a few connection points to keep the conversation going at home:

- What brings you the most joy in your life?
- Share about a time where you had to trust God. What happened? How did you feel?
- Look at baby pictures together and share your favorite memories of your child as a baby.

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hello! If we haven't had the chance to meet yet, my name is Caitlyn Koebbe, and I serve as the Student Ministries Director at our Blue Springs Location!

Fun fact about me! I am the oldest of 9 kids in my crazy family. Now I don't know about y'all, (I love them to death...) but my younger siblings are the worst sometimes. They're always in the way at just the perfect moment. They're always the center of attention. They always know how to say that one thing that just really grinds your gears... but - ya love 'em anyways - right? They don't know any better.

Let's take a look into some scripture!

Today's passage comes from Matthew 19:13-14 -

"Some people brought children to Jesus so that he would place his hands on them and pray. But the disciples scolded them. 14 "Allow the children to come to me," Jesus said. "Don't forbid them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children."

Now - I'm thinking the disciples are feeling exactly how I do sometimes with my own siblings. They saw all these Children coming to try and get 'in the way' of the MIRACLE working JESUS... the disciples were like - uh-hh like hello - Jesus is a little BUSY right now...? We have an infant soothing room right over here --

No no no - we see in verse 14 "Allow the children to come to me," Jesus said. "Don't forbid them, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children."



Jesus said - actually DISCIPLES - these kids having the opportunity to experience ME matters just as much as you do. They're relationship with me is just as important as yours. They love me as much as you love me.

It can be really hard to feel like your relationship with Jesus is not as significant just because you are young. But Jesus said other.

Now another fun fact for you - I actually struggle with this a lot myself. I am one of the newest members to the student ministries team, and I happen to be one of the youngest employees at resurrection. Being young, and in a big kid Director role was pretty intimidating for me at first. I had to catch myself saying "I'm not old or experienced as the other directors" or "how could I possibly be enough"? But - that's what I love most about our student ministries team. We believe in this. Your age does not hinder you from a relationship with Jesus - and it matters.

Our next scripture passage comes from - Matthew 18:1-4

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

2 Then he called a little child over to sit among the disciples, 3 and said, "I assure you that if you don't turn your lives around and become like this little child, you will definitely not enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Those who humble themselves like this little child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Jesus even shared with the disciples that we should have faith like a child, but - What does that mean, exactly?

When we think about children we often think about optimism, joy, and love. Kids often "don't know any better", or they act without thinking about how others will perceive them first. Often times, Children also have the faith and trust in the consistent adults in their lives. The ones who took care of them and met their needs.

Can you imagine what our lives would look like if our faith modeled those things? That total trust in God, and a life filled with optimism, joy, and love? A life where we went to God for our needs, and not the world?

Your age doesn't limit our relationship with Jesus - and gives us a model for how to pursue our faith.

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever



way they care to share. If you have new students, considering opening with an extra question like, 'what was your favorite vacation?'

>> **HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS**

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> **ACTIVITY #1: BIRTHDAY LINE UP**

Have students, without talking, get in Birthday order. Once the students are all in order, have them go one by one to share their birthday to see if they are in order.

- Was it difficult to figure out what order to go in? Why or why not?
- Have you ever felt like, or been told, you couldn't do something because you were the youngest? How did that feel?
- If you could be any age, forever, what age would that be?

>> **OPENING QUESTION:**

- What is your favorite childhood memory?
- If you have siblings, what are the best and most challenging parts of having siblings? If you're an only child, what do you think might be the best and most challenging parts of having siblings?

>> **DISCUSSION:**

During the time that Jesus was alive, women weren't always treated with the same respect as men were.

- Who are some adults you know who have done incredible things to change the world?
- Can you name some children and teens who have done incredible things to impact the world?
- Was it easier to come up with names of adults who have impacted the world, or teens? Why?

Review the lists of teens who have impacted the world in the links below. Pick two or three to share that you think might resonate with your group.

Read about Teens who Make the World Better

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/meimeifox/2022/09/28/6-teens-who-make-the-world-a-better-place/?sh=1b659cb076f9>

Read about Teen Titans

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/meimeifox/2023/11/05/teen-titans-13-young-people-making-an-outsized-positive-impact/>



Read about Resurrection Student, Sammie Magee!

<https://www.kmbc.com/article/kansas-city-teen-donate-toys-children-ualde-texas/45826942>

Matthew 19:13-14, Matthew 18:1-4

- When you think about children, what are some things that you think about?
- When Jesus tells us to have faith like a child, what do you think he means? Think about the characteristics we just talked about.
- What did Jesus do in the story, to show the disciples that the children were valued? Why did that matter?
- What does the word 'humble' mean? What did Jesus mean when he said to humble himself like a child?

>> **ACTIVITY #2: TRUST FALL**

For this activity, we are going to do the trust fall. Partner students up. Have one student cross their arms and fall into the arms of the other student.

- Let's talk about the experience! Was it good? Bad? Easy? Difficult?
- Who is someone in your life you would trust without a doubt that they were there? How do you know you can rely on them?
- Make a list: What are some things that children trust parents to do when they are little? (When children are little, they rely a lot on their parents and guardians to take care of them. When that is done healthy, there is a deep level of trust between a parent and a child. We know that not all students will have a healthy level of trust with their families)
- Looking at the list of things we trust our parents with, is there anything that we could trust God with?
- Why might it be easier to trust our parents, or people in our lives, before we trust God?

>> **CHALLENGE:**

Think about ways that you can serve children in your faith community.

>> **JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:**

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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UNIT OVERVIEW

UNIT 8: Jesus – Famous Parables

Jesus told many parables that we continue to learn from. The three in this unit emphasize the concept: Go, Be, Go. The first, is about going and following Jesus' example, the second is about creating a specific state of mind, and the last is once again about living a life that matches Jesus' words. Go, Be, Go. We've got work to do!

>> SESSION SUMMARIES

1 - Good Samaritan

Many of us are familiar with the parable, but do we live like we're familiar with it? After Jesus shared this parable, He said to those listening, "Go and do likewise. "How is being a "Good Samaritan" a part of your daily lifestyle? In what ways do you need to incorporate more actions in your life that compel you to get up and "Go" as Jesus instructed us? What does "likewise" look like in your life?

2 - Sewer & Seeds

We've all got different learning styles, and listening can be tough, but we are called to "Be good soil" and that's the kind of soil that can take a seed and produce a good crop. That means we have to take the seeds of knowledge and wisdom that Jesus gives us, listen and absorb them, and then make something of them in our lives. "Being good soil" is a state of mind, it's something we become before we can do. What will "be"-ing look like for you?

3 - The Banquet

In the parable about the banquet, Jesus shares about a rich man who had to reevaluate his idea of a party when his friends didn't show up for the party. In the story, the host ends up saying, "Go out...and compel people to come in!" That's our job, to invite people into the wonderful party we live in as followers of Christ! What will it take for you to live an invitational life where it's part of your lifestyle to "go out and invite?"



Good Samaritan

>> **BIG IDEA:** Go and Do Likewise

>> **SUMMARY:** Many of us are familiar with the parable, but do we live like we're familiar with it? After Jesus shared this parable, He said to those listening, "Go and do likewise. "How is being a "Good Samaritan" a part of your daily lifestyle? In what ways do you need to incorporate more actions in your life that compel you to get up and "Go" as Jesus instructed us? What does "likewise" look like in your life?

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Luke 10:25-37 (CEB)

25 A legal expert stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to gain eternal life?"

26 Jesus replied, "What is written in the Law? How do you interpret it?"

27 He responded, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself."

28 Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live."

29 But the legal expert wanted to prove that he was right, so he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 Jesus replied, "A man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He encountered thieves, who stripped him naked, beat him up, and left him near death.³¹ Now it just so happened that a priest was also going down the same road. When he saw the injured man, he crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. ³² Likewise, a Levite came by that spot, saw the injured man, and crossed over to the other side of the road and went on his way. ³³ A Samaritan, who was on a journey, came to where the man was. But when he saw him, he was moved with compassion. ³⁴ The Samaritan went to him and bandaged his wounds, tending them with oil and wine. Then he placed the wounded man on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him.³⁵ The next day, he took two full days' worth of wages and gave them to the innkeeper. He said, 'Take care of him, and when I return, I will pay you back for



any additional costs.' 36 What do you think? Which one of these three was a neighbor to the man who encountered thieves?"

37 Then the legal expert said, "The one who demonstrated mercy toward him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Paper, pens, markers

>> **LEADER NOTES:** Parables are a very specific type of story that Jesus used often to communicate concepts. Who Jesus is telling the parable to, matters just as much as what Jesus is sharing within the parable. Be sure to spend time identifying why that specific parable would matter to the specific audience that would have been hearing it.

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** Encourage parents to read the parables from this unit so they know all of the key players. Have them identify modern examples of each to discuss with their students each week.

>> **VIDEO SCRIPT:**

Hey Resurrection students, it's Leah, great to be with you again today. I've been a little obsessed with one of my favorite shows recently. I was watching an episode and I was blown away by this scene. These two teammates were rivals on the same team. They didn't like each other at all! Friendship was not likely to happen ever, really. But there was one moment these two rival teammates had in the locker room. They were on opposite sides of the locker room and all of a sudden one of the rival's dad comes in and starts tearing him apart for his performance in the game. The dad berated him, made him feel small and even began physically abusing him before he was finally restrained and escorted out. The locker room was silent for a few seconds. Then suddenly the other rival who was on the far side of the room began to walk toward the one who had been torn down and abused...he wrapped him up in a hug and quite literally became a shoulder for him to cry on in his time of need.

This scene really moved me because there are so many different situations, we encounter in this world that can tear us down and beat us up. Bullying, Prejudice, Not feeling worthy, Isolation, Depression, Anxiety ...just to name a few. Perhaps you can relate. Perhaps you're thinking of a situation right now that is tearing you down or someone you love. You might have witnessed your friend deal with a difficult living situation. You might have seen a family deal with a chronic illness or pain. Maybe you have seen someone try something and give 100% only to be beatdown.

Even when you might be dealing with difficult situations yourself, it can be difficult to know how to handle seeing other people go through tough things. Jesus shared a story that shows us how to handle these moments. You may recognize it; it's called the parable or story of the good Samaritan. When Jesus was explaining the way to know



eternal life is to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves, he was questioned about the definition of 'neighbor'. He used this story to explain what being a neighbor means.

At the time, the Samaritans and Jewish people didn't associate with one another. They didn't like each other; you could say they were rivals. In the parable, a Jewish man was stripped, beaten, robbed, and left half-dead lying in the street. He was ignored by a passing priest and a Levite, both of whom should have been his friends. The least likely person to help him was the Samaritan, but he was the only one who stopped, thus being a true neighbor.

In Luke chapter 10, Jesus asks.

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." - Luke 10:36-37

GO, means "go out and live your life with an open mind and open heart for all who you might come across."

It means you can't walk around so focused on you that when you see someone in pain that you step over them or walk around them. It's going with the intention of seeing the humanity of people in your classroom, schools, families, academic clubs, and sports teams.

And to "Do likewise" means mimicking the goodness the Samaritan showed. It's taking the time to be inconvenienced by someone who needs your time, care, or your resources. It's doing what you can to help. The Samaritan man took time out of his day, was so kind and gentle, and even gave his own money. Whether you have money to give or not, you for sure can give your time. You can share your heart. We don't always have to feel overwhelmed or too scared to act when we see someone suffering. Sometimes the best thing we can do is walk across the room, close the distance between us and show love to someone else whether it's a hug, meeting a material need, or just being near someone in solidarity.

The story of the Good Samaritan teaches us to Go and Do Likewise... even if. Fill in the blank. We are called to help those in need even if the person doesn't look like us, speak our language, or believe in our God. We're called to help even if the person has snubbed us or hurt us. Even if they're not the cool kid or if they act a little different than we do. We are called to help those in need. Period. Because when we do that, lives are changed! The Samaritan man changed the life of the man who was bleeding, hurting, and rejected by others on the side of the road. You go and do likewise when you show up for someone, help them heal, and show them that they matter. When we do this with people on our path, we change their lives in both small, but mostly big ways. I realized that the reason the story of the two rivals in my favorite show I was watching hit me so deeply because I could relate. When I was in school someone I least expected was my "good Samaritan". When I was getting bullied for having



a speech impediment and talking a little differently. Someone came alongside me, helped me on the side of the road and instead of joining in on the teasing stood up for me, and became my friend. And yeah, it changed my life.

Who in your path needs your help? Go and do likewise. See ya next time students!

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and how their best friend/close family member would describe them.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Who is your favorite villain from TV, books, movies, or comics? Why?
2. Tell us about a time you saw two enemies work together...

>> ACTIVITY #1 (SCRIPTURE):

Turn your group into a troupe of storytellers! Assign all the roles (but make sure everyone commits and gives it their all): The expert, Jesus, the Narrator, Good Samaritan, The man who was attacked, the robbers, a priest, a Levite, the Inn Keeper, and of course, the audience.

Act Out: Luke 10:25-37 using your Narrator, actors, and audience (leaders, you're the directors and executive producers!).

>> DISCUSSION:

- What were the two things The Expert knew already? How should these two things fit into our lives?
- What do you think The Expert expected Jesus to say when he asked Him who his neighbor was?
- How does the story of the Good Samaritan do what's described in Luke 10:27?
- What is a priest and what is a Levite? Why is who those characters are and their jobs significant to this story?



- What do you think the Inn Keeper was thinking when the Samaritan brought in the man in need? How would you have reacted if you were the Inn Keeper?
- Jesus said that the Good Samaritan showed mercy, so what IS mercy (feel free to have the students use phones to look it up)?

>> **ACTIVITY #2: P. O. P. (PEOPLE ON PATH)**

Supplies: Paper/Pens/Markers

Each student should design a one-week calendar. Once students have designed their calendar, instruct them to write down their regular routine for each day—where they usually go, and what they usually do.

After they've filled in their individual details, have them highlight, start, or otherwise identify which items include opportunities for them to come across people in need or People on their Path (P. o. P.). Have them write "Go and do likewise" on their pages. If they struggle to identify those items, have them switch with someone else to use their eyes and perspective.

As they are working, discuss applicable ways they can engage with P.o.P.

Activity Questions:

- What do you think made the Good Samaritan stop in his tracks and help the person on his path who was hurting and in need?
- We might not always come across people on our paths who are physically hurting but what are some of the other needs people around us might have?
- What are the ways people have helped you or your friends in the past?
- What are some ways you can be a Good Samaritan in your life? Write them down on specific days on your calendar!

>> **EXTRA**

The next time you drink your favorite soda pop, keep the bottle or can, rinse it out and place it somewhere you can use it to remind yourself to keep People on your Path on your mind! Use a sharpie or a sticky note to add people's names on the can as you encounter them.

>> **CHALLENGE:**

Make a list in your phone or on a sticky note of people on your path you can be a "Good Samaritan" to.

>> **JOYS/CONCERNS AND PRAYER:**

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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UNIT 8 | SESSION 2

Sewer & Seeds

>> **BIG IDEA:** Be Good Soil

>> **SUMMARY:** We've all got different learning styles, and listening can be tough, but we are called to "Be good soil" and that's the kind of soil that can take a seed and produce a good crop. That means we have to take the seeds of knowledge and wisdom that Jesus gives us, listen and absorb them, and then make something of them in our lives. "Being good soil" is a state of mind, it's something we become before we can do. What will "be"-ing look like for you?

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Matthew 13:1-8 (CEB)

13-1 That day Jesus went out of the house and sat down beside the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he climbed into a boat and sat down. The whole crowd was standing on the shore.

3 He said many things to them in parables: "A farmer went out to scatter seed. 4 As he was scattering seed, some fell on the path, and birds came and ate it. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground where the soil was shallow. They sprouted immediately because the soil wasn't deep. 6 But when the sun came up, it scorched the plants, and they dried up because they had no roots. 7 Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorny plants grew and choked them. 8 Other seed fell on good soil and bore fruit, in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one.

Matthew 13: 22-23 (CEB)

22 As for the seed that was spread among thorny plants, this refers to those who hear the word, but the worries of this life and the false appeal of wealth choke the word, and it bears no fruit. 23 As for what was planted on good soil, this refers to those who hear and understand, and bear fruit and produce—in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one."



>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Check the weather to see if a walk outside is possible with the forecast. If not, use a phone to google famous gardens as imagery for your discussion.

>> **LEADER NOTES:** Look up a brief summary of learning styles. Identify which you feel is your learning style and brief examples of what it looks like for each learning style to actually absorb information.

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:** Encourage parents to share with their student a time when they struggled to thrive or understand a concept.

>> **VIDEO TRANSCRIPT:**

Hey Resurrection students...Blake from West...we are talking about the parables of Jesus.

It's Spring...and last Spring I did something for the first time...I started a garden. Let me tell you...gardening is tough! So much of gardening depends on what type of environment it is in. Last year, I planted tomatoes and arugula and some flowers...and the squirrels ate everything! But what I also noticed is that my plants were not growing as good as my neighbors! (describe difference) This year past year, I have been doing a LOT of research on how to garden better. I decided I will build a fence to protect. (INSERT Pic) I also got compost...and started my own compost bin (INSERT Pic) (Describe compost).

This is what I've noticed: The squirrels are gone! They aren't getting in my garden. However...now the birds are eating it! They ate my jalapeno peppers and one of my tomato plants! However, I am noticing that my kale, arugula, and strawberries are doing a lot better...I think it is because of the compost. If you have any ideas on how to keep birds out...let me know!

Gardening is tough and there are a lot of factors that impact how well a gardener will do. The environment, the soil, the seeds...all of this impacts the success of a garden. The same is true for our faith and how we hear the message of Jesus. If we have a good environment and participate in worship, reading the Bible, and prayer, our spiritual lives are going to feel pretty good. But if we don't do any of the work, if we just say "we're here for whatever", our faith might look a little different. When Jesus came to the Earth...he was constantly sharing with people the difference between those that had a solid foundation on him, and those that didn't have a solid foundation.

Check out this scripture from Matthew 13:1-9, 19-23:

He said many things to them in parables: "A farmer went out to scatter seed. 4 As he was scattering seed, some fell on the path, and birds came and ate it. 5 Other seed fell



on rocky ground where the soil was shallow. They sprouted immediately because the soil wasn't deep. 6 But when the sun came up, it scorched the plants, and they dried up because they had no roots.

7 Other seed fell among thorny plants. The thorny plants grew and choked them.

8 Other seed fell on good soil and bore fruit, in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one. 9 Everyone who has ears should pay attention." He goes on to explain what all this means...

"Consider then the parable of the farmer. 19 Whenever people hear the word about the kingdom and don't understand it, the evil one comes and carries off what was planted in their hearts. This is the seed that was sown on the path. 20 As for the seed that was spread on rocky ground, this refers to people who hear the word and immediately receive it joyfully. 21 Because they have no roots, they last for only a little while. When they experience distress or abuse because of the word, they immediately fall away.

22 As for the seed that was spread among thorny plants, this refers to those who hear the word, but the worries of this life and the false appeal of wealth choke the word, and it bears no fruit. 23 As for what was planted on good soil, this refers to those who hear and understand, and bear fruit and produce—in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one."

Let's recap what Jesus is saying. Jesus is comparing the person planting seeds to the way he experience the message of Jesus.

Jesus says there are people that scatter the seeds wherever...meaning, the purpose of something will come and go.

Jesus says there are people that scatter seeds on rocky ground...meaning,the purpose of something will be short lived.

Jesus says there are people that scatter seeds on thorny plants...meaning, the purpose of something will not be strong enough.

Jesus says there are people that scatter seeds on good soil...meaning, the purpose is understood and can be lived out.

CHART:

Scatter seeds wherever	Purpose will come and go
Rocky ground	Purpose will be short lived
Thorny plants	Purpose will not strong enough
Good soil	Purpose will be understood and lived out



Students, our goal is to main point: "be good soil" That means when it comes to God's Word, it's important to minimize distractions and focus on God's message to you. The reason is so that you can live in God's best for you, so that your life produces the fruit God wants it to. This can be tough because there are different things (grounds) we can put our focus on. Think about school: There are certain classes or topics you will pay attention to WAY MORE. For me...that was BAND. I LOVED BAND. I was all in. I understood the purpose, I paid attention, and I tried to get better! Math...COMPLETE opposite. I didn't try, I was pretty pouty, and everyting was going in one ear and out the other.

Band was like the "good soil" to me. I saw the purpose, it was my foundation, and I wanted to be rooted in it. Math was like scattering the seeds wherever...I didn't see the purpose...knew it was kind of essential...but didn't do anything about it. Because I didn't care...my math grades were terrible! I ended up needing to get a tutor and they helped me so much.

We can choose to live out our faith like math class or like band class. We get to choose how we want the purpose of Jesus to impact our hearts, and what type of foundation we want. Students hear this: the purpose of Jesus is good news, and our faith in Jesus should be something that comes and goes, or is overcome by stronger forces. Our purpose is to be good soil and to allow the good messages of Jesus to impact our hearts.

How do we do this? How do we allow ourselves to be this good soil and to think about the good message of Jesus?

- Remove Distractions. Put down your phone, put down the game controller, pause between activities and think on God's Word.
- Read the Bible. The Bible is full of wisdom and stories that tell us how we can live out this good message of Jesus. Open up the book of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John! See what it says!
- Connect with others. When we surround ourselves with others who are trying to do their best and know the good message of Jesus, we can see commonalties and support from one another. At Youth Group ask, "how is your relationship with Jesus going?" Talk to your Youth Director or leader if you feel like you don't know what type of foundation you have right now.

Students, we don't know what the future holds, but according to Jesus, when we choose to be good soil and soak up the important messages He has for us, our lives will have a by-product of goodness. What kind of good stuff do you hope your life produces? This week, I hope you look around you, and see all the good things God is doing around you, and that you can live your life on good soil.



SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and one thing they really love to do in this season.

>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. Anyone who has any gardening experience, share your best tips/tricks and what types of plants you've grown.
2. Share your favorite fruit and vegetable versus your least favorite fruits/veggies.

>> DISCUSSION:

What is something you learned from the teaching time, that was brand new, or you heard in a different way?

Read Matthew 13:1-7; 22-23

Select one or two students to open to these passages and read them (from a Bible if you have some in your group or have them find it on their phones).

1. What's the first place the seeds fell in the scripture and what happened to those seeds (Path/Birds)?
2. Where's the second place the seeds fell (Rocky/not enough soil)? What happens to seeds that don't have enough soil to grow? What happens to plants that grown in shallow soil when the sun comes up?
3. Where's the third place the seeds fell and what happened to the plants that did grow there?
4. Where's the last place the seeds finally grew?

>> ACTIVITY: TAKE A HIKE

If the weather is nice, head outside. Take a moment to discuss the ideas Jesus shared in the parable (Bonus points if you and the students can find areas that are similar to what Jesus described in scripture):

1. Why do plants grow best in gardens/grass and not gravel?
2. What do you think should be planted in the perfect garden?

(Feel free to experience the rest of your group outside or head back inside to keep the students in motion)



>> DISCUSSION:

Re-read Matthew 13:22

1. What are the “worries of this life” that can distract us from hearing and understanding God and God’s Word?
2. Why can having a lot of money be a distraction from our relationship with God? How can people use wealth for good?

Re-read Matthew 13:23

1. What does it mean to “be good soil?”
2. How can being good soil produce good things in your life and the lives of others?
3. What’s one thing you can do this week to “Be” good soil?

>> CHALLENGE:

Snap a picture of your favorite flower/plant out and about and save it as the home screen on your phone as reminder to Be Good Soil

>> JOYS/CONCERNS & PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



X P L
X P L
X P L



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The Banquet

>> **BIG IDEA:** Go out and invite

>> **SUMMARY:** In the parable about the banquet, Jesus shares about a rich man who had to reevaluate his idea of a party when his friends didn't show up for the party. In the story, the host ends up saying, "Go out...and compel people to come in!" That's our job, to invite people into the wonderful party we live in as followers of Christ! What will it take for you to live an invitational life where it's part of your lifestyle to "go out and invite?"

>> **SCRIPTURE FOCUS:**

Luke 14:15-24 (CEB)

15 When one of the dinner guests heard Jesus' remarks, he said to Jesus, "Happy are those who will feast in God's kingdom."

16 Jesus replied, "A certain man hosted a large dinner and invited many people. 17 When it was time for the dinner to begin, he sent his servant to tell the invited guests, 'Come! The dinner is now ready.' 18 One by one, they all began to make excuses. The first one told him, 'I bought a farm and must go and see it. Please excuse me.' 19 Another said, 'I bought five teams of oxen, and I'm going to check on them. Please excuse me.' 20 Another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' 21 When he returned, the servant reported these excuses to his master. The master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go quickly to the city's streets, the busy ones and the side streets, and bring the poor, crippled, blind, and lame.' 22 The servant said, 'Master, your instructions have been followed and there is still room.' 23 The master said to the servant, 'Go to the highways and back alleys and urge people to come in so that my house will be filled. 24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will taste my dinner.'"



>> **SUPPLY LIST:** Pens, markers, paper

>> **LEADER NOTES:** In this day and age, it can be difficult to balance being safe with being able to extend invitations to others. Before your group time, brainstorm some safe ways students can extend invitations in their context so you can help them brainstorm or share those ideas with them.

>> **PARENT CONNECTION:**

Encourage parents to think about how they might help facilitate their student

- Safely having an inviting spirit with others and
- How they might help their student bring a friend to church.

>> **VIDEO SCRIPT:**

Hi. I'm Steve and I'm the Lead Director for Student Ministries at Resurrection.

Have you ever not wanted to do something and you feel like you need to come up with an excuse to justify why you won't do it? Yeah. I think we all have. How about the other way around. Have you ever wanted people to join you in doing something, but you know that they just don't want to go with you to do the thing you want to do? Ouch.

This happened to me. I'm a KU Jayhawk and last year when they were on their way to a national basketball championship, I went looking for people to watch the game with me. Everybody I knew had other plans. I ended up at a Buffalo Wild Wings eating and watching the game between an Iowa fan and a couple from Michigan, not Jayhawk basketball fans.

Well, Jesus tells a similar story in Luke 14:15-23.

Why did he tell this story? Let me set this up for you. He was invited to a party by some hoity toity religious people on the Sabbath, their high holy day and several things happened that prompted the story. There was somebody there with special needs and Jesus healed them on the spot. Pretty amazing, huh? The religious people questioned whether it was appropriate for him to heal someone at dinner on the Sabbath. The guests also argued about where they were sitting. They wanted to sit near the host, which was a place of honor. As a result, Jesus told the host that he should not invite his friends and family to parties. He should invite the poor, crippled, lame and blind because they would feel honored to sit anywhere at the table.

So, already it feels like Jesus may not be making friends here. So, rather than telling the host or the guests what they should or should not be doing, Jesus tells this story.



He tells about a man who was throwing a party. I'm not sure if he disguised his story very well here. The party's host invited all his friends. They all made excuses. Some of them were pretty good excuses - like I'm getting married. Some of them, not so good - like I have to go take care of my pets. Nobody said yes. So, then he invited everyone in the town, even the people he didn't normally socialize with. The party still didn't fill up. Then he invited people that didn't even live in his town. He invited everyone. We never really know if the party fills up or not. But that's not the point.

The point is that he went out and invited everyone. Why does this matter? Well, think about the last time you weren't invited to something. How did you feel? Not good, I bet. Jesus is saying we all deserve to be invited and that we should do the inviting whether it is a party, youth group, or hanging with other friends. Invite Everyone. People feel valued by being invited to do stuff.

Here is the deeper meaning. If we think about this story representing something greater than this, then what if the person doing the inviting is God? Verse 23 says, "Go to the highways and back alleys and urge people to come in so that my house will be filled." That means that God is inviting everyone to the party and will go to great lengths to make sure you know you are invited. And, by the way, this party isn't just for you. It's for everyone. Notice the word "Go." God is making the invitation and God is telling you and telling me to "Go."

So, Go Out and Invite. Be the person who includes everyone.

The Jayhawks won the game that night when I was in Buffalo Wild Wings and went to the next round. Instead of just inviting my friends the next week. I made a social media invitation called "With Steve" for anyone who wanted to show up at Chicken 'n Pickle and watch the game with me. When I got there several hours before gametime, I invited a guy who was sitting by himself to join me as our group began to gather. I thought his name was Chip. I found out it was Jim weeks later. The Jayhawks won and Chip/Jim showed up two days later to watch the final with us. It was more fun for me to get to know someone new and more fun for him to gain new friends.

So, who are the people around you that would enjoy an invitation from you? Somebody in your lunchroom? Somebody in one of your classes? Somebody in a club you are in or a sports team you are on? I encourage you to see people differently. See them, like God sees them, as people worthy of an invitation from you. Go out and invite.

SMALL GROUP TIME:

>> INTRODUCTIONS

Even if your group knows each other, take the time to make some introductions. Have everyone say their name and a little bit about who they are. Students are growing and changing; make space for them to be different than they were last year in whatever way they care to share. If your group has new faces, share names and one thing they really love to do in this season.



>> HIGHS, LOWS, AND BUFFALOS

Take a few minutes to have students share a high, low, or buffalo (something wild and crazy) about their week.

>> OPENING QUESTIONS:

1. If you could throw the most incredible party ever, what would it look like? What musician would play—what activities would you do for fun?
2. What is the last event you had to bail on and what was your reason?

>> DISCUSSION:

Read or paraphrase the following to students:

There are two important parts to a parable, the audience and the story.

Here the audience is a group of hoity toity religious people who really focused on doing the right things to look and be religious more than doing it to have a better relationship with God. In your context, this would look like going to church/youth group, getting confirmed, being an acolyte, showing up for serve projects...but not using those opportunities to connect to God or know God better. Even though all of those things are great, and they help you grow in your faith, faith isn't just about doing a bunch of religious things. It's about accepting God's love, and then sharing it with others.

Ask:

- Why can it be tough to keep things real vs just being real religious? How can you tell the difference between the two?

That brings us to today's story—Jesus watched all of those religious folks attempt to be the most honorable and most honored person at a dinner table. They squabbled over whom should get the main seat of honor and then argued over who should sit next to that most honored person based on how honorable they were...and on...and on...so basically the person they determined deserved the least amount of respect was all the way at the end of the table.

Ask:

- What are some ways we determine who should be shown honor in our culture?

Jesus watched all that go down and then told a story about a guy preparing a great big feast. He invited all of the proper people that you'd expect him to invite to a feast, but when he started getting all the RSVPs back everyone made excuses.



Read: Luke 14:15-24 (Have a few students take turns reading the passage)

- What are the various excuses people made for not attending the party? Do you think those excuses were valid or flaky? Why or why not?
- What are ways that people can disappoint us, in this day and age, by not showing up?
- What are some ways people can deal with that kind of disappointment?

The host rethought what it means to have a party—because sometimes, it's better to show kindness to those who rarely experience it.

- If your life and faith all make up one big party, who can you invite to join in (Someone who hasn't gotten a chance to experience the kind of love God offers...)?
- What can you do in your life to make sure you are always welcoming and honoring others?

>> CHALLENGE:

Identify someone who you should invite to experience kindness this week and brainstorm three ways you can invite them in!

>> JOYS/CONCERNS & PRAYER:

Go around and share your joys and concerns (praises and prayer requests) and close your time in prayer.



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