

# THEOCADEMY CONFIRMATION

Leader's  
Guide



**THEOCADEMY**  
A MINISTRY OF THE  
SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA

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Session	Big Ideas	Faith Lived Out	Get Active	Get Creative
1. Brainwashing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirming your faith is <i>your</i> choice.</li> <li>You're part of a family of faith.</li> <li>Membership in God's family means responsibility.</li> </ul>	Joshua & Caleb (Numbers 14)	Amoeba Race	Your Faith Story
2. Not the Boss of Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God's in control.</li> <li>God takes care of us.</li> <li>We can trust God.</li> </ul>	Hezekiah (2 Kings 19)	Simon Says	God's-Eye View
3. Get It and Give It	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We owe God more than we could ever repay.</li> <li>Grace is an undeserved gift.</li> <li>Grace compels us to "pay it forward" to others.</li> </ul>	Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25)	Church Tour	Hectic Headlines
4. Keeping It Real	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the sacraments, God makes ordinary items extraordinary.</li> <li>Sacraments make God's grace real and concrete to us.</li> </ul>	The Boy with Bread & Fish (John 6)	Ask the Pastor	New Gadget
5. #DFTBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God is working everything out – even the bad stuff.</li> <li>Since God's working everything out, we can live without fear.</li> <li>Evil doesn't have the final word.</li> </ul>	Joseph (Genesis 37-49)	Trust Walk	Joseph Comic Book
6. Deal with It	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God has chosen us, not for anything that we've done or anything we can offer – God just wants <i>us</i>.</li> <li>God's election gives us hope.</li> <li>Trusting in God's predestination gives us hope and courage to face whatever comes our way.</li> </ul>	Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1)	Number Numbness	Puzzle Pieces
7. Blessed to Be a Blessing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God created us to serve.</li> <li>God blesses us with a purpose.</li> <li>It's not just about "me."</li> </ul>	Mary (Luke 1)	Pass Along	How Can We Help?
8. Reconciled to God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God sees us for who and what we are, and loves us anyway.</li> <li>"But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8 NRSV)</li> <li>Through salvation, God transforms and reconciles us.</li> </ul>	Paul (Acts 9)	Time Out	Bricolage
9. Bound Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God covenants with us.</li> <li>God walks with and among us.</li> <li>God's covenant with us influences our relationships with others.</li> </ul>	David (2 Samuel 7)	Inversion	Class Covenant
10. Decent and in Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone in the church is called to ministry.</li> <li>Presbyterians like to work together "decently and in order," so that (hopefully) nobody gets left out or walked over.</li> <li>Elders and Deacons have specialized leadership roles within the church.</li> </ul>	Timothy (1 Timothy 3-4)	A-Maze-ing Grace	Ask a Deacon/Elder

Session	Big Ideas	Faith Lived Out	Get Active	Get Creative
11. The Word and the word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As Presbyterians, we use the Book of Confessions to help us understand the Bible, and we read the Bible to help us get to know Christ.</li> <li>Scripture helps us to order our lives around Christ.</li> <li>As Christians, we're part of a great tradition that spans thousands of years.</li> <li>Although we hold the Bible as the authoritative word of God, we know that God still speaks to us today.</li> </ul>	Jesus (Luke 2)	Follow the Leader	Promo Posters
12. All Good Gifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our gifts are unique – nobody else has quite the same combination of gifts that God has given each of us.</li> <li>God gives us gifts for a purpose.</li> <li>As Christians, we're called to use our gifts in glorifying God and serving others.</li> </ul>	Esther (Esther 4)	Gift Race	Gift Lists
13. BLING!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greed makes us fools.</li> <li>God calls us to share our blessings – both spiritual <i>and</i> physical.</li> <li>“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)</li> </ul>	The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19)	Skittles Simulation	Make an Action Plan
14. Very Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God calls us to be good stewards of creation.</li> <li>We love and honor the Giver by taking care of the gift (i.e., creation).</li> </ul>	Adam & Eve (Genesis 1-2)	Nature Walk	Honoring God's Creation
15. No Good, Dirty Sinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We're all sinners.</li> <li>Sin is anything that's contrary to God's will.</li> <li>Sin is messy, and tricky, and impossible to get out of without God's help.</li> </ul>	Cain (Genesis 4)	Human Knot	Confession
16. Idol Factories & Tyrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sin makes us like to worship things and people other than God.</li> <li>Sin makes us like to take control out of God's hands.</li> <li>God's grace can cut through our false worship and desire for control and can restore us.</li> </ul>	Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego (Daniel 2-3)	Master of the Circle	Idolatry & Tyranny in Our Lives
17. Ministry of Reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>God has reconciled the world.</li> <li>God calls us to be agents of reconciliation in the world.</li> </ul>	Peter (John 21)	Back-to-Back	Your Story – The Next Chapter

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- 2 long ropes (a clothesline cut in half will work perfectly)
- A large piece of paper for each student (newsprint, legal paper, construction paper, etc.)
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.

Lesson 1  
Leader's Guide:  
Brainwashing

## BIG IDEAS

- Confirming your faith is your choice.
- You're part of a family of faith.
- Membership in God's family means responsibility.

## GET ACTIVE: AMOEBA RACE

- Steps:
  - Have predetermined "start" and "finish" lines for your race course. (If your space is too small, you may opt for a hallway or larger room for this activity.)
  - Divide the class evenly into two groups, and then tie each group together around the waist. (This is most easily done by bunching the students together and having them all lift their hands above their heads while you sling the rope around them.)
  - Each group needs to work together to get to the finish line. The first entire team to cross is the winner.
- This activity is meant to get the students working together, and to push past the initial awkwardness of being in a new class together. (Obviously, if these kids have been tracking together for years, this won't be a problem.)
- Make sure you debrief this (and every) activity with the students – it will help to put feet on your main points of the day. Questions have been provided in the lesson guide.

## **VIDEO: “WE SERVE THE LORD”**

- It’s up to you whether you want to discuss the pre-questions or merely to have students think about them on their own; in either case, they’ll help to get their wheels turning for what they’re about to see..
- Encourage active viewing and listening by having the students answer the questions in the lesson guide as they watch the video.

## **GET CREATIVE: YOUR FAITH STORY**

- This will allow students to consider the broad sweep of their life up to this point.
- However students want to depict their faith stories is fine – some may want to draw a life map, others may want to make one static picture. Since this is about helping students to connect with their own story, it’s more about the process than the product.
- Having students share what their partner said encourages active listening and engagement. Make sure you remind the students of this before they start discussing with one another.

## **FAITH LIVED OUT: JOSHUA AND CALEB**

- Each lesson, we’ll focus on different “young people of the faith.” (Granted, some will be younger than others, but we’re trying to get away from the idea that God only works through adults.)
- The purpose of this section is for the students to start putting themselves into the Bible stories, and to realize that God can work through them just as much as the people they’re reading about.
- As the students read through Numbers 13-14, be ready for potential questions about how God could be so angry at the people of Israel, and how God could lay down a judgment that harsh. A potential response (please don’t feel like we’re putting words in your mouth) might be that God knows what the desires of our hearts are – and these first-generation ex-slaves may not have been truly invested in living into their freedom. (In other words, they still had a lot to learn.) Rather than compound their problems by giving them more than they could handle, God brought them through a time of training in the wilderness.

- As you know, teenagers aren't always the quickest to open up and answer questions. Thus, the questions here have been crafted to be open-ended – they require more than a “yes” or “no” answer. If you're still having problems getting responses, it might be helpful to have the students jot down quick responses to the questions and then share what's in front of them.

## **TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN**

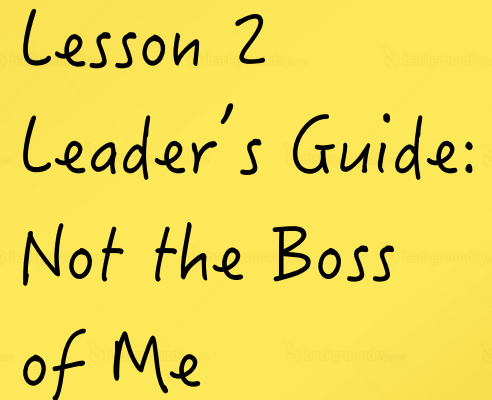
- These questions are to extend the students' thinking into their own lives.
- Draw students' attention to these questions, but allow them to respond on their own time.

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- A large piece of paper for each student (newsprint, legal paper, construction paper, etc.)
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.

## BIG IDEAS

- God's in control.
- God takes care of us.
- We can trust God.



Lesson 2  
Leader's Guide:  
Not the Boss  
of Me

## GET ACTIVE: SIMON SAYS

- Steps:
  - Choose one student to be "Simon." S/he will be responsible for issuing commands for the other students to follow (the goofier, the better!).
  - Students must follow directions prefaced by "Simon Says." If students either do something that Simon didn't "say," or didn't do something that Simon did "say," they're out of the game.
  - The last student remaining wins the game (and, if time permits, gets to be the next Simon).
- This activity is meant to get the students to explore dimensions of leadership and control – what is it like to "call the shots"? What is it like to get ordered around? What trust issues are involved?

## GET CREATIVE: GOD'S-EYE VIEW

- Last time, the students considered the broad sweep of their faith journey; now, they get to zero in on one specific incident.
- Some students will be more naturally drawn to words than pictures – that's fine. (They drew in the last session, so they don't have to this time if they don't want to.)



- This may be intensely personal for some students, so use your best judgment when debriefing this exercise.

## **FAITH LIVED OUT: HEZEKIAH**

- This story is unique, in that it's corroborated by extra-biblical evidence. Sennacherib himself documented his campaign across Judah; you can find pictures and a description of [Sennacherib's Annals](#) on Wikipedia if you'd like to learn more.
- Although it seems like a "happily ever after" story, it really isn't – after Sennacherib's defeat, Judah was left in ruins, and Jerusalem was destitute (due to Hezekiah's attempted bribes and Sennacherib's siege on the city). Introducing these ideas might bring more depth to the discussion – especially as it concerns God's sovereignty. God's promises were fulfilled, but at what cost? And does that still mean that God is a good God? (We'd suggest only introducing these ideas if you know your students can handle them.)

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Lots of magazines and/or newspapers (if you don't subscribe yourself, either ask folks around the church or see if your local library has any old copies to spare)
- A piece of copy or construction paper for each student/pair of students
- Scissors (enough for each student/pair)
- Glue (enough to share among the students/pairs)

Lesson 3  
Leader's Guide:  
Get it and  
Give it

## BIG IDEAS

- We owe God more than we could ever repay.
- Grace is an undeserved gift.
- Grace compels us to "pay it forward" to others.

## GET CREATIVE: HECTIC HEADLINES

- Steps:
  - Give each student/pair (whichever your preference) a piece of paper and a pair of scissors. Distribute glue among the groups.
  - Place the magazines/newspapers in a central location that all students can access.
  - Students will look through the periodicals for examples of people who aren't getting along. They'll turn these headlines (and pictures, if they find them) into collages.
- This will probably be a jarring activity for some students. And that's ok – as long as you help them understand the point of the activity. This isn't meant to glorify conflict; it's meant to show them what happens when people don't act in grace.
- If you're a visual/metaphorical thinker, think of it this way: diamond rings come in dark-colored boxes. The brilliance of the jewel would get lost in a lighter-colored background. So, too, God's grace is most powerfully understood when we first realize what a mess we've made of situations in our lives and societies.

- Debriefing this activity is crucial. A project this intense can potentially do damage to students' emotions if it's not handled carefully.

## **FAITH LIVED OUT: JACOB AND ESAU**

- While grace *can* come to someone even when its impact is unknown to another person, more often grace is the result of *forgiveness after conflict*.
- Help the students understand the context of Jacob and Esau's relationship. These two brothers were fighting even in their mother's womb. They were born with Jacob holding onto Esau's heel. Each of their parents favored one over the other because of their drastically different personalities. In the context of the story, Esau's skills were vital for the survival of the tribe. Jacob *may* have been seen as severely lacking. This was not an environment that would naturally lend itself to a strong, deep relationship between siblings.
- Encourage students to put themselves into the situation. The more that they can empathize with both Jacob *and* Esau, the more they will understand the importance of the grace played out in the story.

## **GET ACTIVE: CHURCH TOUR**

- Having students take themselves physically around the church will help them to re-activate experiential memories of events and interactions. It helps them to remember specific times, rather than abstract ideas.
- Keep in mind that these are young teenagers. If there are other folks trying to have classes or meetings during this time, encourage your students to show grace by keeping their experience distraction-free.

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Enough common, everyday items (plungers, brooms, pillows, books, keys – the sky's the limit, and the goofier the better) for every two students to get one
- A pastor (if that's not you!)

Lesson 4  
Leader's Guide:  
Keeping it Real

## BIG IDEAS

- In the sacraments, God makes ordinary items extraordinary.
- Sacraments make God's grace real and concrete to us.

## GET CREATIVE: NEW GADGET

- Steps:
  - Divide the group into pairs. Give each team one item that you've brought and tell them to find some new way of using it.
  - Give them a few minutes to repurpose their items.
  - Pair by pair, let the students "sell" their new items to the rest of the class.
- Encourage creativity with this activity – the goofier the new purpose is, the more fun they'll have.
- Help them understand through the debrief time that while items may have a conventional, traditional purpose, repurposing them helps us to understand them in a new way. It also helps us to get a better view of all of its dimensions. The video will stress using everyday objects to achieve extraordinary results – and that's the seed we're trying to plant in students' minds with this activity.

## GET ACTIVE: ASK THE PASTOR

- If you're not the pastor yourself, you'll need to coordinate with the pastor in advance, to make sure that s/he is free to help out with this lesson.
- While you could handle this part of the lesson, at this point it may be a nice change of pace for the students to hear other voices chiming in on these issues. Plus, a

pastor has the experiential knowledge that most other folks in the church lack about administering the sacraments.

- Ask the pastor to walk the students step-by-step through each of the sacraments, describing both what is said and done, and why we do what we do during those rituals.
- Encourage students to engage with the pastor about the process of each sacrament. This is their opportunity to ask those “stupid” questions they’ve always wanted to ask.

## **FAITH LIVED OUT: THE BOY WITH THE BREAD AND FISH**

- Interestingly enough, John does not include a retelling of the Last Supper in his gospel. Many biblical scholars believe that the feeding of the multitudes is his narrative equivalent of that episode. And, if you look, there are some remarkably similar elements – using everyday food for extraordinary purposes, the fact that Jesus “takes the bread, blesses it, and breaks it,” and that people share a meal together as one body.
- John is also the only one to mention the boy’s role. Help the students understand that this meager gift from one who would have been assumed to have nothing worth offering, in the hands of Jesus, was enough to sustain thousands of people. Just like this young man, they may have something that they think isn’t even worth bothering about – but in God’s hands, can make a huge difference.
- Jesus also tells the people to sit down. This isn’t just the first-century equivalent of a “food-truck lunch,” where they shove food in their face and keep going. This is a meal, where people were expected to share table fellowship with one another. How is what we as a church do when we celebrate this sacrament table fellowship? (Do we really consider this sharing a meal, or is it merely a scrap of bread and a few drops of juice?)
- In the video, Jessie compares baptism to the mikvah, the ritual cleansing Jews would undergo before entering into the Temple. In much the same way these students would bathe and groom themselves before going to a party, baptism gets us ready to enter the fellowship of believers. Even though the John passage bears

more striking parallels to the Lord's Supper, you can bring in the significance of baptism here, as well.

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Half as many blindfolds as you have students
- Coloring supplies (markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.)

## BIG IDEAS

- God is working everything out – even the bad stuff.
- Since God's working everything out, we can live our lives without fear.
- Evil doesn't have the final word.

## GET ACTIVE: TRUST WALK

- Steps:
  - Demonstrate/describe for students the outer perimeter for this activity. (Will they have to stay in the room? Can they go out into the hall? Are there any places where they shouldn't go?) (Note: If students go out into the hall, it would probably be a good idea to remind them that other classes are in session, and to stay as quiet as they can.)
  - Divide the group into pairs. Give each team one blindfold to put over one student's eyes.
  - Tell the student without the blindfold to guide the blindfolded student around, being sure to keep him/her safe along the way.
  - When about half the allotted time is up, have the students switch roles.
- As you're preparing students, remind them that they have another person's safety in their hands. It's a pretty big responsibility.
- During the debrief time, help students to understand that in life, we don't always know what's coming next – we have to trust our Guide to help us navigate the tricky areas.

Lesson 5  
Leader's Guide:  
#DFTBA

# FAITH LIVED OUT/GET CREATIVE: JOSEPH

- Depending on how many students you have, you may need to divide the class into pairs for this activity. Make sure you have enough different panels to cover at least the high points of Joseph's life.
- Suggested passages:
  - Genesis 37:1-11 – Joseph's Dreams
  - Genesis 37:12-36 – Joseph is Sold into Slavery
  - Genesis 39:1-23 – Joseph and Potiphar's Wife
  - Genesis 40:1-23 – The Cupbearer and the Baker
  - Genesis 41:1-40 – Pharaoh's Dreams
  - Genesis 41:41-57 – Joseph Is Put in Charge of Egypt
  - Genesis 42:1-38 – Joseph Meets His Brothers
  - Genesis 43:1-34 – Joseph Invites His Brothers into His House
  - Genesis 44:1-34 – The Silver Cup
  - Genesis 45:1-28 – Joseph Makes His Identity Known
  - Genesis 46:26-47:11 – Joseph Meets His Father Again
  - Genesis 47:13-31 – The Famine
  - Genesis 49:29-50:21 – Joseph's Father Dies
- Obviously, students are not going to be able to capture the entire story in a few panels – encourage them simply to hit the high points.
- Remind the students that Joseph was only 2-3 years older than they were when he was sold off into slavery. Would they have been able to respond the way that Joseph did? Why/why not?



## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Colored pieces of paper (or Post-It notes) with numbers written on them
- Tape (unless you use Post-It notes for the numbers)
- Coloring supplies (markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.)
- Scissors (enough for one pair per 1-2 students)

Lesson 6  
Leader's Guide:  
Deal With It

## BIG IDEAS

- God has chosen us, not for anything that we've done or anything we can offer – God just wants us.
- God's election gives us hope.
- Trusting in God's predestination gives us hope and courage to face whatever comes our way.

## GET ACTIVE: NUMBER NUMBNESS

- Steps:
  - Before class starts, write numbers on squares of paper in 4 different colors and hide them around the room (or building, if space permits).
  - Have students search the space to retrieve the squares.
  - *Here's the twist.* When it comes time to tabulate scores, use the following rules:
    - Color #1: These numbers are **added** to your final score.
    - Color #2: These numbers are **deducted** from your final score.
    - Color #3: Your final score is **multiplied** by this number. *(If students have multiple squares of this color, the final score is multiplied by each number successively.)*
    - Color #4: Your final score is **divided** by this number. *(Like the multiplication, the final score is divided by each number successively.)*
  - The student with the highest *overall* score (after the tabulations) is the winner.

- It doesn't matter which colors you choose, just as long as you remember what each color stands for.
- When it comes to numbering the squares, we'd suggest using 1-9 for colors 1-2, and 1-5 for colors 3-4. This will keep the tabulations from getting completely outrageous. (Even so, you may need to pull out some calculators before all is said and done.)
- Make enough that each student will be able to find multiple squares. Keep rough track of how many you make and how many the students find, so that you're not left with a bunch of random pieces of paper around your space at the end of the game.
- Order of operations in this game is a little different than what students learn in math class: add and subtract *first*, then multiply and divide.
- Some students may end up with negative numbers, and that's ok. Because you're both dividing and multiplying, there will probably be a pretty wide range of scores.
- During the debrief, help the students understand that the squares were always worth the amount that they ended up being worth, even though the students might not have understood all the rules when they started the game. It's only their perceptions of the numbers that changed once they heard the "twist." *(Note: This is a big concept for kids to wrap their minds around. Some may have a rough time with it, but that's ok. The whole topic today is a pretty complicated one – lots of adults have a rough time understanding it, too.)*

## GET CREATIVE: PUZZLE PIECES

- Steps:
  - Have students cut out the black square of the tangram shape and draw a picture or design in it. *(Note: the picture doesn't have to be oriented in the direction it comes in their book. In fact, you can encourage them to twist it around if they'd like. It will make for more challenging puzzles later.)*
  - Once they've finished drawing, have them cut along the gray lines in order to make a puzzle. (They should have seven pieces when they're done.)
  - Students will then trade puzzles with one another and try to put the pieces back together.

- During the debrief, discuss with students how the artist's intended picture was in the puzzle the whole time, but we couldn't see it because we didn't know how all the pieces lined up yet.
- Allow students to consider this activity as a metaphor for their lives. They're unfinished puzzles, and especially at the stage they're going through it may seem that a lot of pieces don't fit. Help them consider how God's election and plan might give them hope through this time.

## **FAITH LIVED OUT: JEREMIAH**

- Jeremiah is the longest book in the Bible, and records God's final "shape up or ship out" to Judah right before the Babylonian captivity.
- Jeremiah's message is by no means an easy one – he has to preach doom and gloom, even against false prophets who tell the people that things will be fine in a year or two, and in the face of torture and imprisonment. If ever there were a time to have to lean hard into God's ordained plan, this was it. Yet Jeremiah never backed down. He followed God's calling – both in terms of announcing exile and promising eventual restoration.
- During this discussion, help students to understand the fact that (counter much 21st-century popular theology) God's calling on us isn't only about what we get here and now. Our calling is about entering into a faithful relationship with God.
- Likewise, just like with John Calvin and the prophet Jeremiah, God's election of us may very well take us into some scary territory. That's when trusting in God's call and God's plan will be most valuable.

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Random items of various sizes (large enough to be handled and sturdy enough to be dropped) – enough for approximately 2 per student
- Large paper (8½x14 or 11x17) – approximately 1 piece per 3 students
- Today's newspapers – approximately 1 per 5 students
- Scissors
- Glue
- Coloring supplies (markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.)

Lesson 7  
Leader's Guide:  
Blessed to be a  
Blessing

## BIG IDEAS

- God created us to serve.
- God blesses us with a purpose.
- It's not just about "me."

## GET ACTIVE: PASS ALONG

- Steps:
  - Before the session begins, gather together a wide variety of random items (some of these may be the same items you used for the "New Gadget" activity in Lesson 4). Make sure that at least some of them are cumbersome to hold/carry. Place them in a pile toward the side of the room.
  - Have each student pick up one item (it doesn't matter what they choose) and bring it to the circle.
  - On your signal, they'll start passing their items to the right. (It shouldn't be too difficult at this point.)
  - Once they're fairly comfortable with the rhythm of passing and receiving, put a "hold" on a few of the students – let a couple of items pile up in their arms without passing on. (All the other students continue passing, though; that means that a couple of students will be left without anything to pass.) Once the

student has full hands, let the passing-on continue. All of those items must now be passed as a single unit.

- Once you have a few “bunches” in the line, start adding more items, both to students who don’t have items and students who already do. By now, things should be getting fairly precarious. (*This is why the items need to be droppable.*)
- When the students have had all they can take and/or when you think they’ve gotten the point of the exercise, allow them to put their items back in the pile and head back to their seats.
- When you’re debriefing this exercise, help students to understand how good things and abilities – what we often call “blessings” – can turn into burdens if we only keep them for ourselves.

## **FAITH LIVED OUT: MARY**

- When many people think about Mary, they merely think of the manger in Bethlehem. However, what they fail to think about is that she was Jesus’ mother for his entire life. So, when God called Mary to be Jesus’ mother, this entailed a lifelong act of service.
- Be prepared for a discussion of Mary’s age to crop up. She was most likely 13-14 when the Angel visited her, and if she were alive today, she could easily have been your students’ classmate. Kids are intelligent, and since we have been focusing on various “young people of the faith” throughout these lessons they might very well have already put two and two together.
- Addressing Mary’s age is certainly a topic worth engaging, especially since it lines up with God’s practice of choosing people no one else thought worthy to do amazing things. But overly emphasizing her age *could* distract the class from attending to the topic at hand.
- That said, you know your students. If you feel they are mature enough to stay on point and that a discussion would strengthen the overall idea, don’t hesitate.

## **GET CREATIVE: HOW CAN WE HELP?**

- Steps:
  - Separate students into groups of 3 (or allow them to get into groups themselves).

- Give each group a few sections of today's newspaper. (Make sure they're the news sections – classified ads probably won't work, and comics will distract.)
- Have students find an article that somehow speaks to them, and have them turn the articles into "service posters," answering the questions in their student guides.
- Once the students are finished with their posters, allow them to share their ideas with the larger group.
- Help the students to understand that service isn't just something adults do – they can make a real, lasting impact in the world now.
- Also talk with the students about how these acts of service reflect the love of Christ.
- Hang these posters up in a place where adults can see and read them – who knows? These "youngsters" may start a movement!

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Pieces of ribbon to tie around the wrists of half the students
- As many random scraps of art/craft supplies as you can find (if your church has a CE closet, now's a great time to use up the stuff that nobody else wants)

## BIG IDEAS

- God sees us for who and what we are, and loves us anyway.
- “But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8 NRSV)
- Through salvation, God transforms and reconciles us.

## GET ACTIVE: TIME OUT

- Steps:
  - Before the session begins, clear the space of anything students might trip over.
  - Separate the students into two teams and tie ribbons around the wrists of one team.
  - The object of this game is to send as many of the members of the opposite team to “time out” as possible by tagging them.
  - Designate two walls of the room “time out walls.” Players sent to time out must maintain physical contact with the wall until they are “freed” (i.e., are tagged by a member of their own team).
  - The first team to send all opposing team members to time out (or the team with the fewest members in time out after a certain amount of time) wins.
- Encourage students to think strategically as a team during this game. It will be much more enjoyable (and meaningful) than if they just run around willy-nilly.
- During the debrief, encourage students to think about the (relative) helplessness of being in “time out,” and the risks their teammates made to free them.
- Tie this into the idea of salvation – in what ways has Christ “rescued” us? What has he rescued us from? What can we do now as a result of that freedom?

Lesson 8  
Leader's Guide:  
Reconciled to  
God

# FAITH LIVED OUT: PAUL

- Paul's story is a compelling one. Even though he was a young man, he had a remarkable amount of influence – it's argued by some that he was even in charge of Stephen's stoning (Acts 7:58).
- Paul, as he admitted later on in his life (Philippians 3:5), was a "Pharisee of Pharisees" – his zeal for theological and religious purity was nearly unparalleled. This passion, though, was terribly misdirected; it led him to hunt down, persecute, and kill followers of Christ. If students have a rough time comprehending this, you might draw a comparison to news stories these days about groups who have been systematically persecuting and killing Christians in Northern Africa and the Middle East.
- In order for students to recognize what a big transformation God brought about, they have to have an unvarnished picture of what Paul was like before he started down Damascus Road.

# GET CREATIVE: BRICOLAGE

- Steps:
  - Raid the church's CE closet (or the closets of friends/church members who are crafters) for scraps, odd supplies, etc. The more random you make the art supplies, the better!
  - Allow students to unfurl their creativity. These projects can be two- or three-dimensional, and can represent any real or abstract idea they'd like. The purpose here isn't as much the product as it is the process.
  - Once the students have finished, allow them the opportunity to share their creations with one another.
- As you discuss the project, be sure to highlight the point that they were making these projects out of scraps – and tie it into the fact that when God saves us, God takes the scraps and "junk" of our lives and makes it beautiful and useful.
- Tie this idea back into Paul's story – and then tie it into the students' own lives and the world at large. You can also tie into the ideas you've talked about in Lessons 5 and 6.



## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Masking tape (or some other way of marking lines on the floor of your meeting space)
- Large paper/chalkboard/whiteboard for recording the class covenant

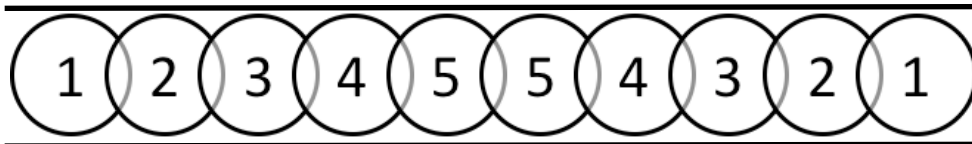
Lesson 9  
Leader's Guide:  
Bound Together

## BIG IDEAS

- God covenants with us.
- God walks with and among us.
- God's covenant with us influences our relationships with others.

## GET ACTIVE: INVERSION

- Steps:
  - Before the students arrive, put down two lines of tape 18 inches apart and as long as you think will span the size of your entire group.
  - Line up students shoulder-to-shoulder along the line, and tell them that they have to completely reverse their order:



So, in this case, if you had 10 students, the 5s would switch places, the 4s would switch, and so on. (If you have an odd number of students, the person in the middle stays put.)

- During your debrief, focus on the teamwork necessary for success in this exercise.
- You may also want to explain the awkwardness of being that physically close with other people (especially for teenagers). What other dimensions did that proximity introduce into the exercise?

## FAITH LIVED OUT: DAVID

- The covenant with David happens when he is no longer a “youngster,” but it does hold continuity with the faith, love, and obedience David showed even from a young age.
- The covenant form that’s mentioned here comes from the Hittites, a culture in the same region that was roughly contemporary with Israel. You can kind of think of it like us using a Microsoft Office template to design a document these days. They would use this particular covenantal format for agreements made between a *suzerain* (a lord or master) and a *vassal* (someone under the master’s authority).
- This is the last big covenant God makes in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 31, however, talks about a “new covenant” that will be written on people’s hearts, when the Lord will be their God and they will be God’s people. Jesus talks about this new covenant during the Last Supper (Luke 22), sealing it with his own blood.

## GET CREATIVE: CLASS COVENANT

- Allow the students to come up with the substance on this activity – you are there to facilitate and take notes (preferably where students can see them).
- Record these in such a way that you can distribute copies to the students next week. (If you’re recording them on a chalk/whiteboard, you may want to take a few pictures so that you can transcribe what they’ve put down.)
- When you come to the covenant stipulations and blessings, remind the students that God creates and calls us for us, not for our abilities or what we have to offer. The Reformed tradition starts with grace for a reason. God’s love isn’t contingent on what we do – but God loves us too much to allow us to stay where we are. As we mature in faith and knowledge, we need to demonstrate that in our character and actions. (We need to “be blessings,” like we talked about in Lesson 7.)

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Masking tape
- Ruling Elders and Deacons

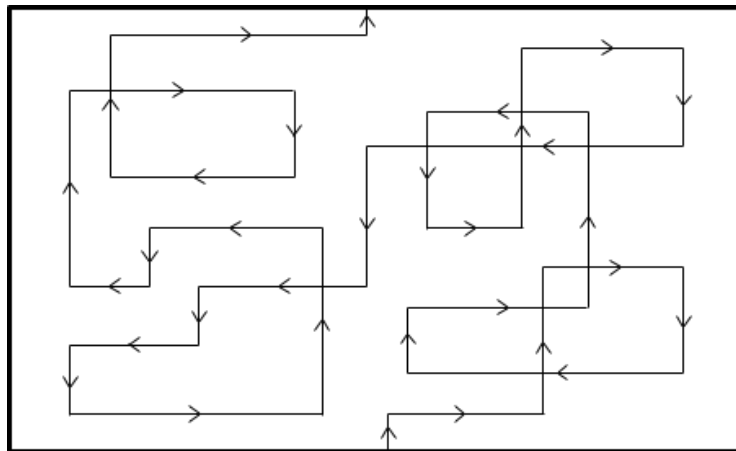
## BIG IDEAS

- Everyone in the church is called to ministry.
- Presbyterians like to work together “decently and in order,” so that (hopefully) nobody gets left out or walked over.
- Elders and Deacons have specialized leadership roles within the church.

Lesson 10  
Leader's Guide:  
Decent and In  
Order

## GET ACTIVE: A-MAZE-ING GRACE

- Steps:
  - Before the students arrive, clear off a large space of floor (if you have a free fellowship hall or parking lot, it would be even better) and mark out a squared-off (no curves or diagonals) race course. Make sure your tape line goes in all four directions. Here's a potential idea for a course; obviously, you may increase or decrease the challenge level as you see fit.



- Have students get into groups of four, shoulder-to-shoulder, facing outward, with elbows linked. They'll navigate the course together, but without rotating the group when they come to a turn. That means that at any given point, one person will be walking forward, two people will be walking sideways, and one

person will be walking backwards – and that will shift from person to person depending on what direction they’re walking. (That’s why you can’t have any curves or diagonals.)

- As you debrief with the students, help them reflect on the ideas of leadership and group cohesiveness. Only when everybody trusts the person who can see what’s ahead enough to move in the same direction (even if that means some people may have to walk backwards) can they all make progress together.

## TALK ABOUT IT: ASK AN ELDER/DEACON

- *Note: You’ll need to schedule this well in advance, to ensure they’ll be free.*
- If multiple Elders/Deacons are available, you’ll be able to separate the students into groups and have more intimate discussions. If you can only get one of each, hold the discussion as a class.
- As with a lot of the Bible, 1 Timothy 3 reveals an understanding of society much different than we have today, specifically Verse 11 which implies women are inherently gossipy (BOOOOOO! 🗨️ ). Be prepared to acknowledge and address this difference.

## FAITH LIVED OUT: TIMOTHY

- Underscore the fact that Timothy was most likely a teenager when he met Paul. It’s also worth noting that, only a couple of decades after Pentecost, Timothy already had two generations of women above him in his family to whom he could look for spiritual guidance and support. (While there’s no direct evidence to this, some scholars believe that Timothy’s father never became a Christian.)
- Timothy probably would have had problems being recognized as an authority figure in the Ephesian church. He was young and relatively inexperienced in a culture that prized age and tenure. Moreover, Timothy had a mild (to the point of being timid) personality in a society that valued boldness and strength. Had it not been for Paul’s endorsement, it’s possible that Timothy may not have been accepted as a leader at all.
- Help students understand that effective leadership and ministry in the church aren’t contingent on age or experience – they’re contingent on God’s call and equipping.

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Poster board – 1 per group
- Coloring supplies (markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.)
- Resources to help students learn about the Bible itself

## BIG IDEAS

- As Presbyterians, we use the Book of Confessions to help us understand the Bible, and we read the Bible to help us get to know Christ.
- Scripture helps us to order our lives around Christ.
- As Christians, we're part of a great tradition that spans thousands of years.
- Even though we have the Bible, we know that God still speaks to us today.

## GET ACTIVE: FOLLOW THE LEADER

- Steps:
  - Appoint one student as the leader. Everyone else lines up behind him/her and mimics his/her movements and actions.
  - Change the leader a few times, so students get a variety.
- During the debrief, talk with students about the difference between leaders giving orders (Simon Says) and leaders doing the same thing they expect their followers to do.
- Help students understand that this is kind of like how Jesus went about being a leader. He was a part of the group, and did the same things he expected his followers to do. He also expected his followers to lead one another, both by action and example.

Lesson 11  
Leader's Guide:  
The Word and  
the word

# FAITH LIVED OUT: JESUS

- Jewish law dictated that all men should be in attendance at the Temple for the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. However, it would be logistically impossible for those living in remote areas (like Nazareth), so they tried to make it to Jerusalem for Passover every year.
- If the students ask how Jesus could have possibly gotten left behind, help them understand that the trip to Jerusalem didn't just include Jesus and his parents. Extended family, friends, and neighbors would all join a huge caravan down to Jerusalem for the biggest festival of the year. Besides, the men would travel separately from the women and children; since Jesus was 12, he could have gone with either group. (It was a classic case of, "I thought he was with you!" "No, I thought he was with you!")
- Jesus wound up sticking around the temple for an extra three days – one day of his parents' travel back toward Nazareth, a second for the return trip to Jerusalem, and a third spent looking for him. By this point, Joseph and Mary were undoubtedly at their wits' end.
- The description that those gathered in the Temple were "astonished" at Jesus' words shouldn't go overlooked. Those who gathered in the Temple to preach and teach were the "Who's Who" of Jewish scholarship, and Jesus was just a kid (It would be kind of like a 12-year-old going into MIT and giving an impromptu lecture on astrophysics.)
- 2:52 is perhaps one of the most compelling (and perplexing) verses in Luke's gospel account. Press into this idea with the students: Jesus was fully God – he had been part of the Trinity from the beginning – but here he is, "growing in wisdom and stature." It means that Jesus was also fully human. He grew up, just like other kids; he got smarter, just like other kids. (Incidentally, this verse echoes 1 Samuel 2:26, where the same phrase is used to describe young Samuel's development.)

# GET CREATIVE: PROMO POSTERS

- Assign students the following genres:
  - Old Testament:
    - History: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
    - Poetry & Wisdom: Psalms, Song of Songs; Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
    - Prophecy: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah,, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
  - New Testament:
    - History: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts
    - Epistles: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude
    - Apocalyptic: Revelation
- If your church has a library, this may be a good time to raid the Bible references. If not, you can do some digging on your own online before the session, or allow students during this part of the lesson to use their phones, etc. to do online research of their own. Likewise, Study Bibles (if your church and/or students have them) are helpful.
- Allow students to share their promo posters once they're done. Help them understand that even though these are very different styles of writing, and that even though they were written over the course of a few thousand years, they all come together as one cohesive unit to help us understand God better and live lives as God's children.

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Pictures cut into thirds and put into in some sort of wrapping – 1/3 of a picture per student
- Pieces of paper (copy or construction) – 1 per student
- Masking tape
- Pens, pencils, markers, etc.

Lesson 12  
Leader's Guide:  
All Good Gifts

## BIG IDEAS

- Our gifts are unique – nobody else has quite the same combination of gifts that God has given each of us.
- God gives us gifts for a purpose.
- As Christians, we're called to use our gifts in glorifying God and serving others.

## GET ACTIVE: GIFT RACE

- Steps:
  - Before the students arrive, cut pictures (from magazines, cards, etc.) into thirds and either put them into envelopes or (if you're feeling really ambitious and want to carry over the lesson's theme) gift wrap them.
  - Present each student with one "gift" when they come in.
  - On your signal, they'll open their gifts and find those who have the same picture they do. The first team to complete their picture is the winner.
- During the debrief, talk with students about the nature of gifts. They may not understand its significance at first; they may only see part of the whole picture; they need others in order to get the full value of what they've been given.

## FAITH LIVED OUT: ESTHER

- Esther's story is the source material for the Jewish festival of Purim. Every year in the springtime, celebrants will gather together and read the book of Esther



interactively (cheering when Mordecai's name is mentioned, booing at Haman's name, etc.).

- Curiously, Esther is one of two books in the Bible not to mention God directly. (The other is Song of Solomon.) However, many scholars see God in the story as the “silent actor” who orchestrates events and encounters from the background.
- The book of Esther is a remarkable description of a person who “leans into” her personal and positional gifts. In the first half of the book, almost all the verbs used concerning Esther are in the passive form; after chapter 4, however, they're almost all active. While originally reluctant to make waves or “out” herself as a member of a minority race, she eventually develops a fuller, deeper sense of what it means to be who (and what) she was made to be, and as a result saves her people from annihilation.
- Help students understand through this story that stewardship isn't just about giving out money. (Haman did that, and look where it got him.) Instead, stewardship is about making the most of the abilities and opportunities that we've been blessed with in order to glorify God and serve others.

## **GET CREATIVE: GIFT LISTS**

- If you're using markers, make sure they don't bleed through the paper you're using. Ruined clothing will kind of negate the impact of this exercise.
- Encourage students to write on as many of their classmates' backs as possible, and to write something different than what's already there. Likewise, help them to think broadly – gifts aren't just internal abilities; they're also opportunities, experiences, and knowledge that the student has gained over her/his life.
- Hopefully, this should be a very affirming exercise for the students – they'll realize they have more to offer than they originally thought. Encourage students to hold on to these papers, both for encouragement and accountability.
- During the debrief, encourage students to think creatively about how they can steward their gifts – both inside and outside the church.

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- A big bag of Skittles/small candy
- Paper lunch bags – 1 per student
- Paper bowls – 1 per group
- Sets of activity cards/support cards – 1 set per group
- Pieces of paper – 1 per group
- Pens/pencils

Lesson 13  
Leader's Guide:  
BLING!

## BIG IDEAS

- Greed makes us fools.
- God calls us to share our blessings – both spiritual and physical.
- “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)

## FAITH (NOT) LIVED OUT: THE RICH YOUNG MAN

- This story shows up in all three of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). In each, we learn a little different information about him. In Matthew, we learn that he's young. In Mark, we learn that he ran up to Jesus and knelt before him (this wasn't just a casual conversation). In Luke (and Mark), we learn that he's some sort of authority figure. That's why he's often referred to as “the rich young ruler.”
- By listing off the commandments, Jesus was most likely testing the young man to see where his heart was – did he handle eternal life the way he handled money, ever trying to “earn” more? Or did he actually get that his faith should be built on something much deeper than his own accomplishments?
- With the students, press into the idea that this young man was presented with the key to eternal life – loving God and others more than he loved stuff – and he just couldn't handle it. Encourage students to think of contemporary parallels to this situation, and why unbridled materialism is so dangerous for our spiritual (and physical) health.

# GET ACTIVE: SKITTLES SIMULATION

(Use cards at the back of the Leader's Guide. Adapted from Seattle University School of Theology & Mission's Wealth Simulation, found at [www.faithandfamilyhomelessness.com](http://www.faithandfamilyhomelessness.com))

- Steps:
  - Before students arrive, distribute Skittles (or a similar candy) into opaque paper bags with the following proportions:
    - Lots of candies (10% of bags)
    - 5 candies with a support card (50% of bags)
    - 5 candies with no support card (20% of bags)
    - 2 candies with a support card (10% of bags)
    - 2 candies with no support card (10% of bags)
  - Hand a bag to each student and let them see how many candies they have.
  - Separate students into groups of 6-10, depending on the size of your class.
  - In the middle of each group, place a bowl full of candies and a stack of activity cards.
  - Students will take turns choosing a card, reading aloud the scenario, and taking/giving back the appropriate number of candies from/to the pile in the center. If a student pulls a support card, s/he skips the turn and can hold the card for later. (If a student runs out of candy, s/he can use a support card in its place for that turn.)
  - If a student runs out of candy and support cards, s/he is out of the game and may only watch during the rest of the time.
  - After an appropriate amount of time has lapsed, end the simulation and debrief.
- During the debrief, be sensitive to the variety of ways students will likely process through this activity. Background, lifestyle, education, and experience will be key factors in how students will make sense of what happened.
- Talk about the ways that churches have functioned as “support cards” through Christian history. (You can even tie it into the role of Deacons they learned about in Lesson 10.)

# GET CREATIVE: MAKE AN ACTION PLAN

- This activity is all about empowering students to “shun ostentation” and bless others. Help students to realize they can make a real change where they are, right now.
- Share what students come up with around the church – if what these students are thinking and doing makes an impact in their church and community, they’re much more likely to keep up the effort and energy. (However, if their enthusiasm is patronized or ignored outright, it’ll be even harder to convince them that God is calling them to be Christ’s hands and feet in the world.) Steward this opportunity well.

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Sensory materials (if you opt for the “sensory stations” option of the opening activity)
- Paper to make posters – 4 total
- Coloring supplies (markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.)

## BIG IDEAS

- God calls us to be good stewards of creation.
- We love and honor the Giver by taking care of the gift (i.e., creation).

## GET ACTIVE: NATURE WALK

- Option A: Go Outside
  - If the weather is conducive, take the students out for a walk outside. Have them bring along their study guides and something to write with.
  - Invite them to find one natural object (a plant, an animal, a stone, etc.) and really look at it. Tell them they’re responsible for writing down 20 observations about this object.
  - After appropriate time has elapsed, call the students back together and discuss your findings.
- Option B: Sensory Stations
  - If you’re not able to go outside, set up “sensory stations” around the room where students can interact with parts of the natural world that you bring in. Here are some suggestions to get you started thinking about what you can use:
    - *Sight*: brightly colored flowers; a brightly colored animal (in a carrier/ container)
    - *Smell*: fragrant flowers; pungent herbs
    - *Hearing*: recordings of animal sounds (whale song, bird calls, etc.); recordings of environmental sounds (rain, waves, wind, etc.)
    - *Taste*: fruit/vegetables for students to sample

Lesson 14  
Leader's Guide:  
Very Good

- *Touch*: plants/rocks with interesting textures; animals to pet/handle (who will then go back into carriers)
- Invite students to write down their observations at each station. Obviously, you won't have time for them to write down 20 observations each time; aiming for 5-6 per item will give some depth and will keep things moving.
- It sounds a little silly, but the more students observe, the more they'll notice. Additional details and characteristics will emerge as students maintain focus on the item. Encourage them to push past merely casual observation.
- Help students understand that there are two ways that we can understand God better – *special* revelation (the Bible and the Holy Spirit's work in and through us) and *natural* revelation (what we experience in creation).

## FAITH LIVED OUT: ADAM & EVE

- There are just about as many ways to interpret the creation story as there are Christians. What's important for the purposes of this lesson is not so much *how* God created as *why* God gave us stewardship of that creation.
- A major thrust of these two chapters is the fact that humankind is the pinnacle of God's creative work. Of everything God made, women and men bear God's own image. Help students understand that part of that Image-bearing is the responsibility to treat the rest of creation the way that God intended it to be treated. (Note: In the Hebrew text, the verbs used in Genesis 2:15 mean "to watch over" and "to act as a servant to.")
- Likewise, part of our Image-bearing role is to engage ourselves in "fruitful" labor. A lot of Christians read Genesis 3 and think that work is part of sin's curse – but chapters 1 and 2 demonstrate that it simply isn't the case. God gave Adam and Eve jobs to do even before they screwed up – which means that part of God's good order is for us to actively engage in the stewardship of creation.
- Also help students understand the idea that, just like with presents we receive, we honor the giver by taking good care of the gift.

# GET CREATIVE: HONORING GOD'S CREATION

- An added level of creativity for this exercise might be to “recycle” paper grocery bags for groups to write their ideas on. Remove the bottom, cut along one corner, and you have a paper almost the size of a poster.
- Again, encourage students to come up with practical solutions and initiatives that can be implemented and incorporated within the life of the church.

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Pens/pencils

## BIG IDEAS

- We're all sinners.
- Sin is anything that's contrary to God's will.
- Sin is messy, and tricky, and impossible to get out of with out God's help.

Lesson 15  
Leader's Guide:  
No good, dirty  
sinner

## GET ACTIVE: HUMAN KNOT

- Steps:
  - Students stand shoulder-to-shoulder in one large circle.
  - They put both hands in and grab two different people's hands. (Make sure that they're different – otherwise you'll end up with a separate loop.)
  - Have them try and untangle themselves. It will most likely take a while, and will require some students stepping over, under, and/or through other students.
- During the debrief, talk with the students about how easy it was to get into the knot, but how difficult it was to get back out. Compare it to the role sin plays in our lives.
- During the activity, certain students may have taken the lead and helped others untangle themselves. If so, you can highlight the fact that we need help to get out of the knots (i.e., sin) in our life. Likewise, you can draw parallels between how the leader was in the knot with the rest of the students and how Jesus came to “untangle our knot” from the inside (i.e., as a fellow human being).

## FAITH (NOT) LIVED OUT: CAIN

- The story of Cain and Able is like much early biblical literature: There is point trying to be made, and no amount of logic is going to interfere with it. 😊
- In reading this text, your students may ask questions about *how* Cain and Able were supposed to know what kind of sacrifice to bring. They may ask questions



about *where* all the other people on Earth came from that Cain fears will kill him. The student may also ask *what* the “mark” God gave Cain was. The truth is no one knows if it was a literal mark or not. These questions are fun, but beside the point (from the Bible’s point of view). Again, the text is only concerned to make a point about human beings turning from God.

- One of the questions in the Student Guide asks the class to reflect on what God meant by telling Cain to “do the right thing.” It is important that this not be interpreted to apply to the brothers’ offerings. Cain was a farmer. He brought what he had. God did not unfairly set him up to fail. Emphasize that God’s question comes in response to Cain growing angry. It is Cain’s response to anger and resentment that should take the focus here.

## **GET PERSONAL: CONFESSION**

- This will be a tender moment for the students. You’re asking them to enter into a very vulnerable place, where they confess that they’ve sinned against God and one another. If students feel led to share their responses with you, willingly and actively listen – but do not force them.
- If students wish to move away from the group space to do this activity, allow them to do so (but it would probably be a good idea to keep them within sight).
- While not pressing them to share what they’ve written, encourage them to make good on their plan – to ask and offer forgiveness, and to make steps toward reconciliation.
- Most of all, pray for them during this time. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead them on the right paths, and to empower them to come to a closer knowledge and relationship with the Lord through confession and reconciliation.

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Masking tape
- Poster-sized outline
- Markers

## BIG IDEAS

- Sin makes us like to worship things and people other than God.
- Sin makes us like to take control out of God's hands.
- God's grace can cut through our false worship and desire for control and can restore us.

Lesson 16  
Leader's Guide:  
Idol Factories  
and Tyrants

## FAITH LIVED OUT: SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO

- The Babylonian Captivity was a devastating period for the psyche of the children of Israel. Not only had they been forcibly removed from the land God has promised to them, but they were also cut off from their cultural and spiritual heritage. They were brought to a foreign land against their will, and forced to adapt to cultural practices that were confusing and, in some cases, sinful. This first wave would have been especially hard – a critical mass of Israelites hadn't built up in Babylon yet, so people like Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel would have been an extreme minority in this system.
- Be sure to emphasize the fact that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego weren't trying to force God's hand in terms of a miraculous rescue. While we know the end of the story, they didn't, and they were taking a very real risk with their faithful act of "civil disobedience."
- While Nebuchadnezzar may have sounded repentant at the end of chapter 3, chapter 4 tells a different story – God (through Daniel) tried to warn him that his unbridled ego was going to get him in trouble, but he didn't listen. Seven years of

eating grass later, he finally came to his senses and realized that God really was in control.

## **GET ACTIVE: MASTER OF THE CIRCLE**

- Steps:
  - Before students arrive, tape out a large circle (big enough that all the students can fit inside) on the floor of your space.
  - After all the students are inside the circle, tell them that the object of the game is to be the last one standing inside the circle. As soon as any part of a student's body touches outside the circle, they're out of the game.
  - For safety reasons – the more force they can put behind their moves, the more potential there is for injury – only let them use their arms to move one another around. (Like the student guide says, no body slams!)
- While exerting control over others may feel good for the moment, it has adverse consequences. The “winner” of the game is left alone, alienated from everyone else in the group (depending on how the game was played, potentially emotionally as well as physically).
- Talk with students about the reasons behind bullying. Why do some people think it's an effective way to interact? How does that reveal the sin in our lives?

## **GET CREATIVE: IDOLATRY & TYRANNY IN OUR LIVES**

- If you're feeling artistic, get a piece of poster board and draw out the outline of a person. If you're not feeling artistic, you can take the outline on the next page to a copy center and get them to blow it up to poster-size. Either way, make sure there's plenty of white space around the figure.
- The figure is meant to do double-duty symbolically here: it represents both an idol (hence why it looks like a bodybuilder) and us as human beings. If you think about it, when we're putting anything other than God in the highest place of our lives, we're really worshiping ourselves.

- When students have finished filling up the “idol,” a powerful image would be to take a black marker and draw shackles on the figure. Then talk with the students about how that misplaced worship has the potential to enslave and destroy us.
- At the end, after you’ve talked about the fix idolatry and tyranny gets us into, another powerful image would be to rip the paper in half, and then talk with students about how God’s grace breaks these cycles in our lives.

## MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

- Large pieces of paper – 1 per student
- Coloring supplies (markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.)

## BIG IDEAS

- God has reconciled the world.
- God calls us to be agents of reconciliation in the world.

Lesson 17  
Leader's Guide:  
Ministry of  
Reconciliation

## GET ACTIVE: BACK TO BACK

- Steps:
  - Have students pair up and sit back-to-back on the floor. Instruct them to stand up together without using their arms. (This will most likely require them to link elbows – but let them figure that out for themselves.)
  - After students master the pair stand, rearrange the students so that 3, 4, 5, and so on have to work together to stand up. (A cursory sweep of YouTube shows that the current record is 32 students, so it's possible to get the whole class into one big group stand.)
- Compare this week's game to last week's game (pushing each other out of the circle). Which was more enjoyable for the students? Why?
- While it was probably relatively easy for students to accomplish the task in pairs, it is progressively more difficult – and thus requires more strategy – with additional students in the mix. Discuss with the students how this compares to trying to get an entire church (community, nation, etc.) to work together. What strategy must be implemented in order to foster collaboration?

## FAITH LIVED OUT: PETER

- Peter's entire life is a wonderful case study in reconciliation. The stories the students will encounter in this lesson describe only a small portion of Peter's


journey from being a hot-tempered, loudmouthed Jewish Zealot to becoming an advocate of Gentile Christians – all within the span of about a decade.

- Help the students understand, though, that reconciliation is impossible without restoration. Peter was in disgrace from his denial of Jesus a few days prior – he all but gave up on his call as a disciple and went back to fishing. But through their conversation, Jesus restored Peter to a relationship of brotherhood and a role of apostleship.
- Jesus echoes his first words to Peter in his last – he calls him to “Follow me.” But this time it’s not merely curiosity or anticipation that draws Peter in; it’s a sense of dedication that has counted the cost and willingly commits to face the challenges ahead. And it’s this sense of dedication (along with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit) that allows him to boldly proclaim the good news of the Risen Savior on Pentecost.


## **GET CREATIVE: YOUR STORY - THE NEXT CHAPTER**

- If you can, use the same size of paper that you used for the students’ initial faith maps. It will provide (even if implicitly) visual continuity between the two tasks.
- Encourage the students to be as concrete as they can in their descriptions – it will give them real goals and aspirations that they can hold themselves (and he held) accountable to.
- Remind and empower them to consider how the world will be blessed as a result of God’s calling – they have indeed been blessed to be a blessing.

Your spouse / partner got a raise!  
Life looks great.

**GAIN 2** 


Your great-grandmother just  
passed away and left you \$15,000  
in her will.

**GAIN 2** 


You finished the Certified Nursing  
Assistant program at the  
community college, and now can  
get a better job.

**GAIN 1** 

You played around during high  
school, but your dad went to Yale  
and gives big bucks. You're in!

**GAIN 2** 


You played around during high  
school, but your dad went to Yale  
and gives big bucks. You're in!

**GAIN 2** 

You received food stamps, so now  
you can afford to buy fresh  
vegetables and fruits at the  
supermarket.

**GAIN 1** 

Your family is able to pay your  
college expenses, so you don't  
have to work and can concentrate  
on your classes.

**GAIN 1** 

Your uncle owns a business and  
sets you up with a great job.

**GAIN 1** 

You came back from Iraq alive, but now you can't sleep or concentrate. You had planned to go to school, but life just seems so pointless.

**LOSE 1**



Your neighbor used to take care of your children during your evening shift. She just moved away, and now there's nobody to watch your kids while you're at work.

**LOSE 1**



Your hours and days at work just got cut. Other workers who complained have been fired.

**LOSE 1**



You had a house fire and no insurance to cover the cost of everything lost in the fire.

**LOSE 2**



Your computer job was moved to India. You can't find a new job and now you are about to get evicted.

**LOSE 2**



You finally left your abusive boyfriend /girlfriend. Now you and your two small children are staying in a shelter.

**LOSE 1**



You interviewed for a great job, but it's not on the bus line and you can't afford a car.

**LOSE 1**



You move to a cheaper apartment. Now the car needs new brakes, and you just paid the rent deposit. You have to take out a loan from Payday Loans at 150% interest.

**LOSE 2**





You just found out you need surgery, and you don't have health insurance.

**LOSE 1**



Your son just got out of jail. He's looking for work, but employers don't want to hire people with a criminal record. Meanwhile, you have another mouth to feed.

**LOSE 1**



Child-care costs half of what you earn, but if you don't work you can't pay the rent.

**LOSE 1**



You got sick and missed 3 days of work the week before rent was due— now you don't have money to pay the rent, and the landlord charges \$50 for late payment.

**LOSE 1**



You didn't have good dental care as a kid, and now you have lots of damage and are in terrible pain. A trip to the dentist means a full day of lost pay.

**LOSE 1**



You know you have a drug problem and need to get clean, but there are always waiting lists when you feel ready to go into treatment.

**LOSE 1**



You interviewed for a great job, but it's not on the bus line and you can't afford a car.

**LOSE 1**



Your elderly mother fell and needed to go to the hospital. She's okay now, but the hospital bills are over \$6,000 and the collections office is calling you.



**LOSE 1**





Your car breaks down again, this time for good. There's no grocery store near you. The corner Quik-Mart is very expensive and the milk is often spoiled.

**LOSE 1** 



You lost your job! Luckily, your spouse / partner is still working and can support you for a while.

 **LOSE 1** and **GAIN 1** 

You graduated— congratulations! Now you have \$30,000 in student loans to pay off.

 **GAIN 1** and **LOSE 1** 

You had a bad drinking problem, but a private treatment center and a year with a great counselor helped you beat it.

 **LOSE 2** and **GAIN 1** 

## **SUPPORT CARD**

(family, friends, neighbors,  
community)



## **SUPPORT CARD**

(family, friends, neighbors,  
community)



You got a raise! Unfortunately, your higher income level now means you lose your daycare subsidy. You now pay more out-of-pocket for you childcare.

**GAIN 1, LOSE 2**



You found a new apartment, well within your budget! It is right on a bus line, and within walking distance of a grocery store and your kids' schools. This means you don't have to depend on your old car anymore.

**GAIN 1**



The Ride Free Area in downtown has been discontinued. You now have to pay \$12 extra per week to get between your two part time jobs downtown.

**LOSE 1**



Your daughter is filling out college applications. They cost about \$50 each, and she's applying to six schools.

**LOSE 1**



Your family's food stamps benefits are being cut. You now have to pay more out-of-pocket to feed your family.

**LOSE 1**



The food bank where you volunteer has an opening for a part-time paid position. They ask you to fill it because they know you're an excellent worker.

**GAIN 1**



Your son gets accepted into a selective after-school music program on a scholarship. Now you don't have to pay for after-school care, AND he's learning!

**GAIN 2**



Your aunt's house is foreclosed on, and she needs a place to stay. She promises she'll help out with the grocery and utility bills once she finds a job locally.


**LOSE 1**



Your divorce is finalized, but your ex hasn't started paying their monthly child support yet. You have attorney fees to deal with, and are the sole provider for your kids.

LOSE 1 

You've been recruited to a higher-paying job in a city nearby. You decide to move once your lease is up, but in the meantime, you have to drive 50 miles round-trip every day. The commute is hard on you and your family.

GAIN 2, LOSE 1 

**SUPPORT  
CARD**



(family, friends,  
neighbors, community)

**SUPPORT  
CARD**



(family, friends,  
neighbors, community)

**SUPPORT  
CARD**



(family, friends,  
neighbors, community)

**SUPPORT  
CARD**



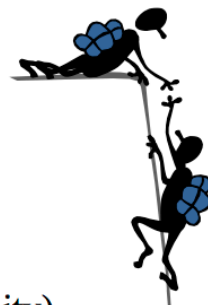
(family, friends,  
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**SUPPORT  
CARD**



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**SUPPORT  
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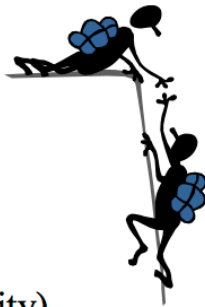
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