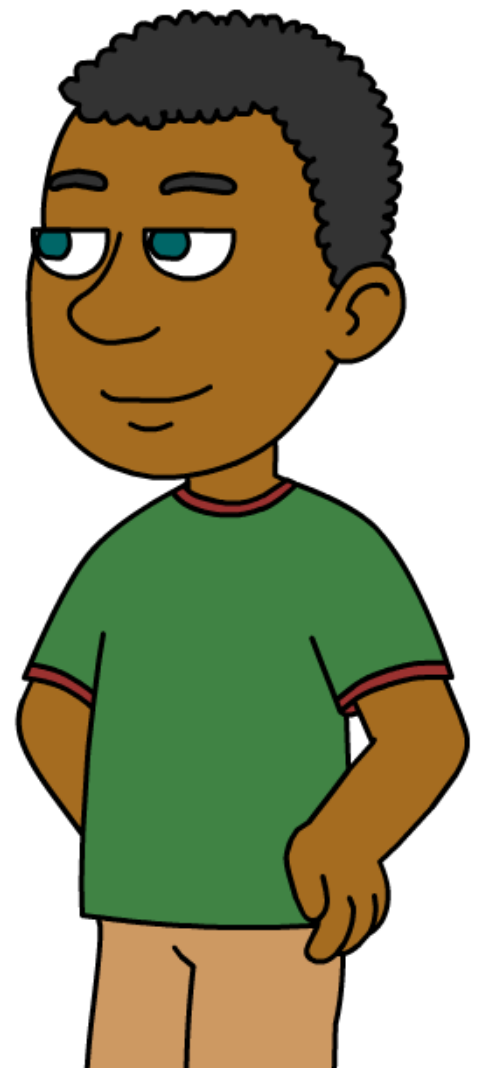


THEOCADEMY CONFIRMATION

Student
Guide



THEOCADEMY
A MINISTRY OF THE
SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA

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GET ACTIVE: AMOEBA RACE

Divide into two teams, and your teacher will tie you together at the waist. On your mark... get set... the first entire team to cross the finish line is the winner!

- How was this challenging?
- What did you need to do to be successful?
- An African proverb says, "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." What do you think that might mean for people who follow Jesus?

Lesson 1:
Brainwashing
(What is
Confirmation?)

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- When you hear the word *confirmation*, what comes to mind?
- How would you define the word church?

DURING THE VIDEO

- How is *confirmation* like brainwashing?
- As a Presbyterian, how do you become a member of the church?

GET CREATIVE: YOUR FAITH STORY

Your teacher will hand you a big piece of paper and some art supplies. Put your faith story into a picture. It's ok if you don't feel like you have enough to draw, and it's ok if you feel like you have too much to draw. It doesn't have to be perfect – you're still a work in progress!

- Describe your picture to a partner. What's one important part for you?
- Tell your partner about what you think this picture might look like in five years.
- Gather back together, and share with the group what your partner said about his/her picture.

FAITH LIVED OUT: JOSHUA AND CALEB

When we think about the key players in the Bible, we often tend to think about long-bearded men with decades of life behind them. But if we look deeper, we'll see that God is kind of partial to young folks, too. In each lesson, we'll talk about how God worked in and through people not much older than you are – hopefully to help you see that you're never too young to make a difference in God's kingdom.

In the video, Jessie told you about Joshua, who led the people of Israel into the Promised Land and encouraged them to choose to serve God. When he gave that speech, he was an old man – well into that long-bearded stage. However, he had an active faith from way back. Take a look at Numbers 13-14. This happened at the beginning of Israel's freedom, when Joshua was probably in his early twenties. He, his friend Caleb, and 10 other men had been sent to scope out the land God had promised them. 10 of the spies got scared– they came back and told Moses and the Israelites that the land was populated with fierce giants, and they shouldn't even bother trying to take the territory. Only Caleb and Joshua stuck to their trust in God's promise.

- What was the Israelites' response to the news? Why do you think they reacted this way?
- How tough do you think it would have been for Joshua and Caleb to stand up to the complaints of an entire nation? How did Joshua and Caleb respond? What does that tell you about their faith?
- What was God's response to their faithfulness?
- What can you learn from this story about trusting in God's promises?

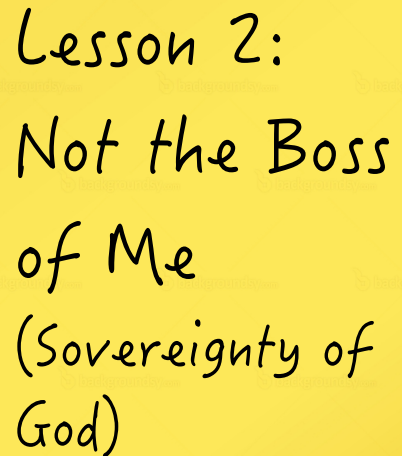
TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- How have you seen God working in your life?
- How have you seen God working in your church?
- In what ways do you think God might be calling you to go deeper in your faith and relationships with fellow Christians?

GET ACTIVE: SIMON SAYS

One person is "Simon," and s/he gets to call the shots. But be careful – if you follow an order without "Simon Says," you'll be out!

- For "Simon":
 - What did it feel like to be able to order people around?
 - Did you feel any responsibility for your followers? (For example, what would have happened if someone had gotten hurt because of an order you gave?)
- For the followers:
 - What did it feel like to be ordered around?
 - What made you want to keep playing the game?
 - Did you trust "Simon"? Why or why not?



Lesson 2:
Not the Boss
of Me
(Sovereignty of
God)

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- In your life, who do you trust? Why do you trust them?
- In your life, do you tend to want all the details planned out, or do you tend more to go with the flow? Why do you tend to operate that way?
- What makes you worry? Why?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What does sovereign mean?
- What is the Barmen Declaration? What were its writers trying to argue?
- Why is love important to sovereignty?

GET CREATIVE: GOD'S-EYE VIEW

With the paper and art supplies your teacher will hand out, either draw a picture or write a short story of one time you knew God was watching over you.

- Where were you?
- What happened?
- How did you see God taking care of you?
- What did it help you to learn about God? About yourself?

FAITH LIVED OUT: HEZEKIAH

Hezekiah was known as one of the few God-fearing kings to rule Judah (the kingdom of Israel's southern neighbor). Strangely enough, though, he was the son of one of Judah's wickedest kings (Ahaz). He was 25 when he became king, and made an enemy of Sennacherib (a warlord from the country of Assyria) when he refused to pay tribute (kind of like a bribe to keep a bully away). Infuriated, Sennacherib decided he would invade Judah and take Jerusalem (the capital city) by force. The prophet Isaiah, however, came to Hezekiah and assured him that God wouldn't let Sennacherib conquer Jerusalem – but that didn't stop the Assyrian king from taking down most of the other villages in his path. Faced with both the crisis and the prophecy, Hezekiah prayed to God. Read 2 Kings 19:14-19 to see what he said.

- If you were in Hezekiah's shoes, how would you have prayed?
- How does Hezekiah start his prayer? Why do you think he starts this way? (Bonus: Try to work the term "sovereign" into your answer!)
- What reason does Hezekiah give for wanting Jerusalem spared? Why do you think he asks this way?
- How might you adapt Hezekiah's prayer for situations you're facing?

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- What areas of your life is it tough to let God be sovereign over?
- How might you allow God to take control over those areas?

GET CREATIVE: HECTIC HEADLINES

Either by yourself or with a partner, take a look through the magazines and/or newspapers that your leader brought to today's session. Cut out any headlines (or pictures) that show people or groups fighting or disagreeing with each other, and make them into a collage using the paper your leader will provide.

- As you look over your collage, how does it make you feel?
- Do you see any common words or themes running across the headlines?
- How do you think Christians should respond to these sorts of situations?

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- Has there ever been a time when somebody's held a grudge against you? How did that make you feel?
- Think about a time that you've been forgiven or that you've forgiven somebody else. What did it do for your relationship with that person?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What is grace?
- What do we need to do to get God's grace?
- How should we respond to God's grace?

FAITH LIVED OUT: SIBLING RIVALRY

Genesis 25:19-34 tells the early story of Jacob and Esau, twin brothers who fought with each other even before they were born. Despite being twins, Esau was born first so he was entitled to a larger inheritance (birthright) than Jacob.

Lesson 3:
Get it and
Give it
(Grace and Gratitude)

- Imagine that you were Jacob. What would be going through your mind?
- If you were Esau, what do you think your attitude toward Jacob would have been?

Not long after, Jacob tricked his father Isaac into giving him Esau's blessing (Genesis 27). A blessing was an honor, and losing your blessing was basically seen as a curse. Obviously, Esau was MAD, so Jacob ran away. He lived for many years with a man named Laban, becoming his son-in-law and managing his flocks.

Years later, Jacob left Laban to return home. But he knew that Esau would be waiting. He sent servants ahead to ask Esau to be kind when they eventually met. Read Genesis 33:1-11 to see how he responded.

- How does Esau display the grace we've been talking about in this lesson?
- Are you surprised by how he responded? Why or why not?
- How would you have responded to Jacob?

GET ACTIVE: CHURCH TOUR

Take a walk (quietly, if other folks are in class, too) around the church building. Take a look at the things, people, and activities going on, and think about what you've seen and talked about during this lesson.

- How have you experienced God's grace at this church?
- How do you see God's grace at work in this church?
- How can you show God's grace at this church?

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- Of your family, friends, and people you know, who's in need of God's grace? How do they need it?
- How can you show grace in your community?

GET CREATIVE: NEW GADGET

You and your partner are inventors. Your leader will give you an everyday item or gadget, and it's your job to find a new way to use it. Feel free to get a little crazy – as long as the item can suit the purpose you've identified, the sky's the limit! (And the funnier, the better!) Once you and your partner have figured out what your new purpose for the item is, it will be your job to deliver a 30-second sales pitch to the rest of the group about your new item.

Lesson 4:
Keeping it
Real
(The Sacraments)

- How easy/difficult was it for you to come up with a new idea?
- Were there parts of the item that became more important now with its new use? (Were there parts that became less important?)
- In your opinion, is the new use you came up with for the object a valid one? Why or why not?

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- Think about the items you handle/use during a worship service. Are these normal items, or “special” ones? What's the purpose of each?
- Have you ever heard the word sacrament before? What do you think it means?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What two sacraments do Presbyterians celebrate?
- What biblical stories do the sacraments link to? Who's at the center of these stories?
- Why do we call sacraments the “signs” and “seals” of God's grace?

GET ACTIVE: ASK THE PASTOR

Today, your pastor will lead you on a tour of the places where the sacraments are administered, and will take you through the steps s/he goes through during each one. Talk through the following questions with him/her.

- Are there any parts you hadn't understood before?
- Are there any words you're not quite sure about?
- How often does your church use the sacraments in worship? Why do you think we do it as many times a year as we do?

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

Other than the resurrection, the story of the feeding of the 5,000 is the only one of Jesus' miracles to be included in all four gospels. We'll look at the way John tells it – turn to John 6:1-15 and read the story together.

Unless you have all four versions beside each other, you might not notice that John includes a key detail that the other writers don't. In the other three stories, it's just noted that there are five loaves and two fish available to feed the crowd. But John adds the fact that this food belongs to a young boy.

- Why do you think it's important that we know this detail?
- The text makes no indication that this kid is in any way unaware – he probably realized that his sack lunch wasn't going to stretch over 5,000 hungry men, plus women and children on top of that. Why, then, do you think he offered it to Jesus?
- What did Jesus do with it? Why do you think he used this boy's meal to do what he did?
- One of the sacraments we've been talking about is The Lord's Supper, and we believe God is present with us in a special way when we celebrate it. How is the way God uses our bread and wine (or juice) similar to the way Jesus used the boy's bread and fish? *(This is a pretty BIG question. It might take some pondering – that's ok. There's no one "right" answer here.)*

Lesson 4: Keeping it Real

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- What are you going to remember or think about the next time you, as a worshiper, get to participate in somebody's baptism?
- What are you going to remember/think about the next time you get to participate in the Lord's Supper?

GET ACTIVE: TRUST WALK

Find a partner and grab a blindfold. Put the blindfold over one partner's eyes, and the other partner will guide him/her around the room, building, etc. (Your teacher will let you know how far you can roam.) After about half the time is up, your teacher will signal you to switch roles.

- What was it like to be the follower?
- What was it like to be the leader?
- How hard was it for you to trust the other person to give you good directions?
- What was it like to be responsible for another person's safety?

Lesson 5:
#DFTBA
(God's Providence)

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- Think about a time when you were frightened or anxious. What got you through it?
- Think about a bad situation in your life that turned out good. What happened?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What is providence?
- In what way are God's children "too big to fail?"
- How should we respond to God's providence?

FAITH LIVED OUT/GET CREATIVE: JOSEPH

In the video, Jessie talked about Joseph, a young man whose life was anything but easy. He was his dad's favorite, but that only led to bigger problems. He was thrown into a well, sold into slavery, propositioned by his boss's wife, locked up in jail, and responsible for telling the king that the worst famine they'd ever seen was on its way. But, like Jessie also said, God used each of those situations to save Joseph, Joseph's family, the nation of Egypt, and the entire region.

Your teacher will give you a scripture passage that points to a specific part of Joseph's story, and you'll be responsible for creating a comic strip about it. Don't freak out if you feel like you can't draw – even stick figures work, if it's a compelling story! Use the template on the next page; if you'd like to turn the four panels into two (or even one), go for it!

As you draw your own panel, consider the following questions:

- What happened to Joseph?
- How could he have responded?
- How did he respond?

Once you've finished your panels, come back together as a group and discuss the following questions:

- What got Joseph through the tough times?
- How did Joseph's struggle prepare him for what God was calling him to do and be?
- What can you learn for your own life from Joseph's story?

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- What struggles in your life have prepared you to live the life God's calling you to?
- What difficulties are you going through right now that God might one day use for good?

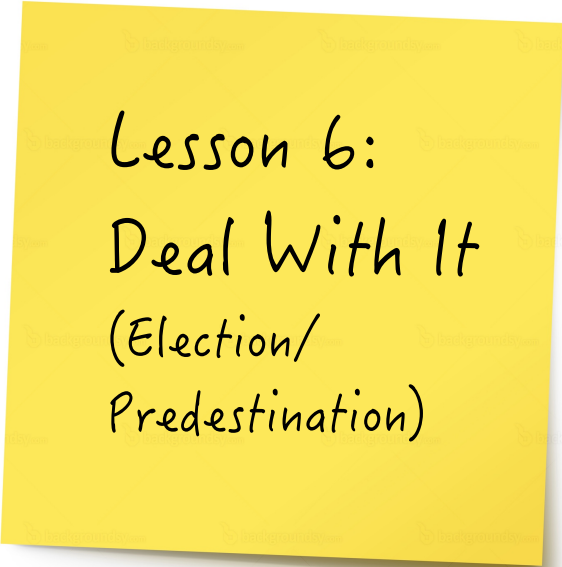
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GET ACTIVE: NUMBER NUMBNESS

Hidden around your space are colored pieces of paper with numbers on them. Find all that you can, and then bring them back for tabulation – but there’s a twist! The person with the highest final score wins.

- What was your strategy for this game?
- What happened when the “twist” was announced? What went through your mind then?
- Did anything about the cards themselves physically change when the twist was announced? Why, then, was the twist significant?



Lesson 6:
Deal With It
(Election/
Predestination)

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- In your life, do you like to be in control? Why or why not?
- Think about a time when you were chosen to be a part of something. What happened? How did you feel?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What is *predestination*?
- How did the idea of predestination give early Protestant Christians hope?
- What is *election*?
- How should we respond to God’s election?

GET CREATIVE: PUZZLE PIECES

Cut out the black box on the last page, and draw a picture inside it. (If you’d like it to be recognizable, that’s fine, or if you’d like it to be an abstract design, that’s great, too. Forget those gray lines are there for right now, though – make one continuous picture across the whole box.) Once you’re done, cut the picture into seven pieces along the gray lines and mix

them up. You've now made a puzzle! Trade puzzles with a classmate and see if you can put the pieces back together.

- When you got the pieces from your classmate, was it hard to think of it as still being a picture? Why or why not? When did the picture start to emerge for you?
- What strategies did you use to put the pieces together?
- Did it help to know that you had all the pieces you needed, and only the pieces you needed? What would have happened had there been an extra or a missing piece?
- Do you ever feel like you can't see the "picture" of your life, or that there are "extra" or "missing" pieces? How can faith in God's *predestination* help you make sense of that?

FAITH LIVED OUT: JEREMIAH

Jeremiah was a young man who lived during an extremely sad time in the history of God's chosen people. A couple of hundred years before this point, the ten northern tribes of Israel had split off from the two southern tribes over some pretty brutal leadership disputes. By the time God called Jeremiah to speak as a prophet to the southern kingdom, foreign empires had already come through and wiped out the northern kingdom. Now, that same fate was about to happen to the southern kingdom, and God gave Jeremiah instructions to let the people know about it. Read Jeremiah 1:1-10 and answer the following questions.

- What danger was Jeremiah facing as (literally) a prophet of doom?
- Why was Jeremiah concerned about his age? (Some scholars think he was about 17 at this point.)
- How did God show Jeremiah that his path was predestined?
- How did this give Jeremiah hope?

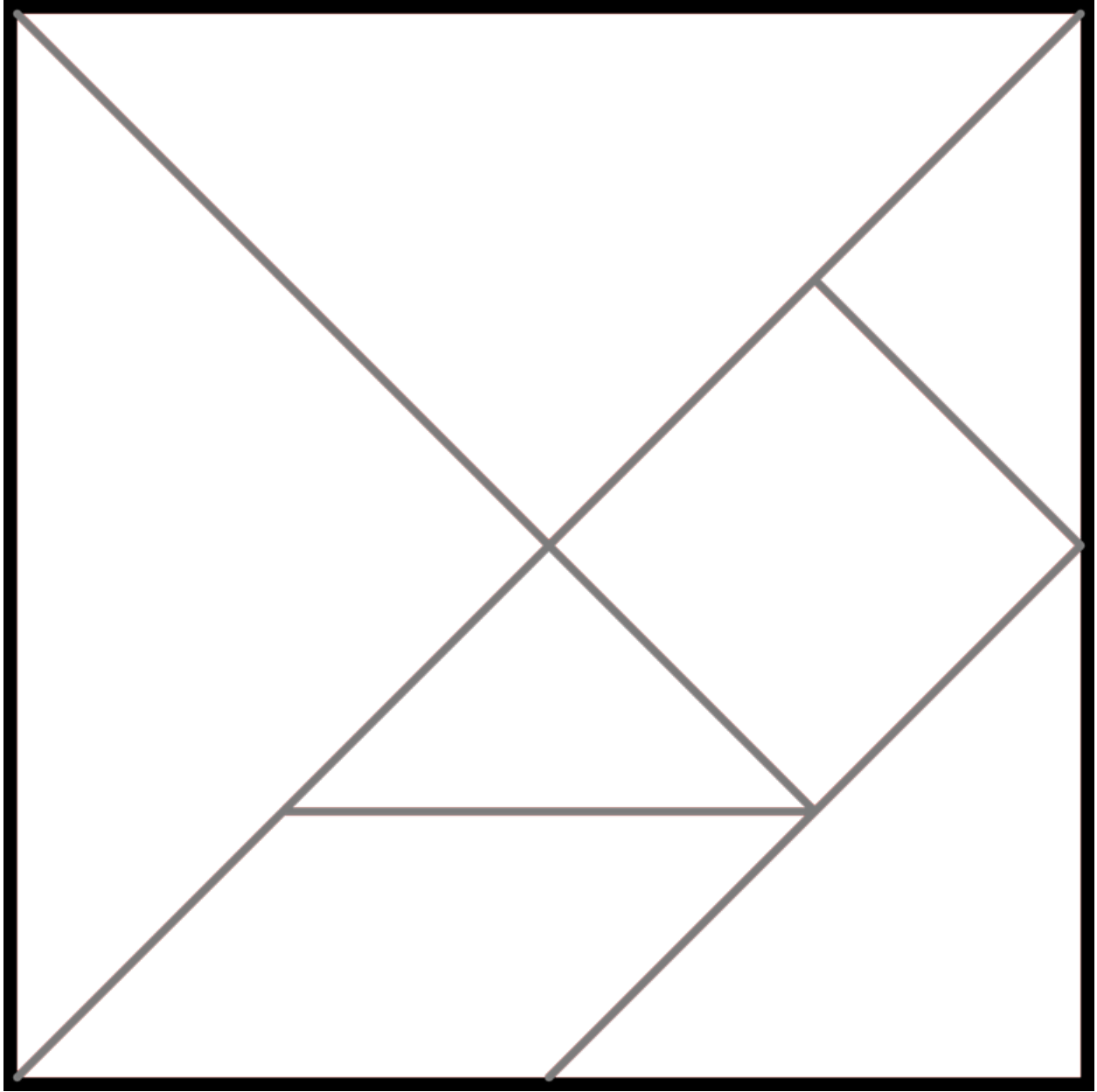
Now, read Jeremiah 38. By this point, Jeremiah's message of impending doom had spread far and wide, and people were getting angry. A group of Jeremiah's enemies threw him into a well – like Joseph's brothers did with Joseph – but this well was full of mud, unlike Joseph's dry one.

- Why were people so angry with Jeremiah?
- What would you have thought, said, or done if you were in Jeremiah's shoes?

- After the king heard what had happened to Jeremiah, he sent men to rescue him. Would you be able to tell the President of the United States – after s/he sent Special Forces to rescue you – that s/he would be the ruler during the time of the country’s defeat? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Jeremiah was able to do just that with the king of Judah?
- How, even at this, do you think that God’s calling of Jeremiah “before forming him in the womb” gave him hope?

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- How can knowing and trusting in God’s election give you hope and strength for the tough times you’ll face in life?
- How, where, or to what do you think God might be calling you?



GET ACTIVE: PASS ALONG

Your teacher will have a pile of items sitting in the room. Pick one up, and form one big circle with your fellow students. Pass the item in your hands to your right, and keep passing until your teacher gives you other directions.

- How hard was it to hold onto your items at first?
- How hard was it to hold onto them as the activity progressed?
- How can blessings turn into burdens if we hold onto them for too long?

Lesson 7:
Blessed to be
a Blessing
(Election of the
People to Service)

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- What do you love to do?
- What can you do well?
- What do you think you have to offer the world?

DURING THE VIDEO

- Why was God's request of Abraham such a big deal?
- What's God's purpose in creating and blessing us?

FAITH LIVED OUT: MARY

Probably one of the most recognizable women in the Bible is Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was just a young woman when she got the news that would change her life. Read through Luke 1:26-56.

- What was Mary's response to the angel's news? Does this surprise you? Why or why not?
- What risks did Mary face as a result of this calling – both at this point and down the road?

Often the things life throws our way are not things we are prepared for nor things we would have sought out. Mary likely didn't feel prepared for the journey she was about to take as the mother of Jesus. And who could have prepared for that task? Even still, she was able to respond with a "let it be with me according to your will" when God's messenger came calling. When God calls on you, it may not be what you're expecting it to be. In fact, it may be the exact opposite of what you want it to be.

- How can we cultivate our lives, our souls, and our faith so we, too, can respond with joy to a surprising call from God?
- How was what Mary was about to do with her life an act of service to God? To other people?
- In terms of the role of service God had called Mary to fulfill, what was she able to do at that point? What would she have to learn along the way?
- When Mary got the news she went to her Aunt Elizabeth, who celebrated with her. Where might you find a celebrating community when God calls you to do something extraordinary?

GET CREATIVE: HOW CAN WE HELP?

While you probably won't hear God calling you in the night, that doesn't mean that God isn't calling you into a life of service. And that life of service can start today. Get into groups of 3, and look through the newspaper your teacher will give you. Find one article that catches your interest, cut it out, and turn it into a poster using the paper your teacher will also give you. On that poster, answer the following questions:

- What do these people need?
- How can you serve them now?
- What skills and knowledge can you develop so you can continue to serve them better?
- How can you join with others in serving them?

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- Where might God be calling you to service?
- What can you learn as you continue to grow "in stature and in wisdom?"

GET ACTIVE: TIME OUT

Your teacher will divide you into two teams. Try to put as many members of the other team in “time out” (by tagging them) as you can. If your team members are put in time out, though, you can “rescue” them by tagging them. The first team to put all the opposing team’s members in time out (or the team with the most “free” team members at the end of the time period) wins!

- *For those put in time out:*
 - What was it like to get tagged? What did it mean for you as an individual player? What did it mean for other members of your team?
 - What was it like to get rescued?
- *For people who rescued team members:*
 - What risks did you take to get people out of time out? Why did you do it?
 - What was it like to free someone?

Lesson 8:
Reconciled
to God
(Election of the
People for Salvation)

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- Have there been any situations in your life that seemed impossible to fix? What happened?
- Have you ever said or done anything that you’re ashamed of?
- What do you think being a Christian is all about?

DURING THE VIDEO

- When it comes to you, what do you think is most important to God?
- What is reconciliation?
- What is God saving us from?

FAITH LIVED OUT: PAUL

When we think of “The Apostle Paul,” lots of us probably think of the tent-making missionary who took God’s message throughout the known world of the time. However, that’s only the middle and end of the story. If we look at the beginning of Paul’s life journey, we find a remarkably different person – who wanted nothing to do with those crazy Christ-followers. Read Acts 9:1-31 and discuss the following questions.

- What was Paul like before he headed off to Damascus?
- What did “salvation” look like for Paul? How was he changed?
- What other people do we meet in this story? What role did they play in Paul’s salvation?
- Knowing Paul’s history, why do you think God would choose him “for service as well as salvation?”
- In what ways did God make Paul a “new creation?”
- What does this story tell us about who God can choose and use?

GET CREATIVE: BRICOLAGE

Bricolage (pronounced “brih-coh-lahj”) is a French word that means “do-it-yourself.” It’s been used in the world of art and design to describe a project that’s made from the scraps and materials an artist has on hand. Your teacher has provided you with lots of left-over, random materials – now you get to make something beautiful and/or useful out of it!

- Where did you get your inspiration?
- What was it like for you to create something beautiful or useful out of scraps?
- How did God make something beautiful out of the scraps of Paul’s life?
- How can God make something beautiful out of the scraps of your life?
- How can God make something beautiful out of the scraps of this world?

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- In what ways do you feel called to be reconciled with God? With others?
- How will you live as God’s new creation:
- At home? At school? With your friends?

GET ACTIVE: INVERSION

As a class, stand side-by-side between the lines on the floor. Your mission is to reverse the order that you're standing in without stepping outside the lines.

- What did you have to do to successfully complete the task?
- What agreements did you have to make?
- In what ways did you have to trust each other?

Lesson 9:
Bound Together
(A Covenant Life)

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- Name one person you trust. What's your relationship with her/him? Why do you trust him/her?
- What kind of relationship do you think God wants with us?
- What kind of relationship do you think God wants us to have with each other?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What is a *covenant*?
- How is a covenant different than a contract?
- How should God's covenant with us affect how we live our lives?

FAITH LIVED OUT: DAVID

David played an important role in the story of God's people, even from a very young age. When he was a teenager, he beat the giant Goliath; a couple of years later, Samuel anointed him to be Israel's king. Even though he made his share of mistakes, David was still called "a man after God's own heart." One day, David looked out from the window of his palace and saw the Tabernacle, the tent the people of Israel had used for worship during their time in the desert, and decided he wanted to do something for God. Read 2 Samuel 7 and discuss the following questions.

- What kind of relationship does God have with David?
- When you look at the covenants that God makes with people in the Old Testament, they all take on the same general form. Identify the parts of the covenant that God makes with David:
 - *Prologue.* This part describes who God is, and what God has done in the past.
 - *Requirements.* This part describes what will be required of both God and the person/people God's making the covenant with.
 - *Blessings and Curses.* This part describes how God will bless those who keep the covenant (and the consequences for those who break it).
 - *Witnesses.* This part describes who (or what) will vouch for the authenticity of this agreement. (It's like when we have two people sign a marriage license.)
(*The covenant with David doesn't actually include this part. It's just described here so that you know it's a part of the formula.*)
- Who do you think God means by "David's son" in this covenant?
- What is David's response to God's covenant with him?
- What does this tell us about who God is?

GET CREATIVE: CREATE A CLASS COVENANT

Now that you're familiar with what a covenant looks like, and now that you're more familiar with what God has done in the past and is continuing to do today, it's your turn to create a class covenant. Follow the formula you learned about above.

- *Prologue.* Who is God? What has God done for you in the past?
- *Requirements.* What does God require of you as a group of students who have been "chosen for service as well as salvation"?
- *Blessings.* From what you know of God's providence, how will God bless those who keep the covenant? (Keep in mind, the "Big-C" Covenant has already been fulfilled by Jesus. God's blessings aren't contingent on our actions, but our obedience clears the way for God's blessings to be activated even more powerfully.)
- *Witnesses.* Who will keep an eye on you, to make sure that you hold up your end of the bargain? (You can think of this as the people around you who can hold you accountable and encourage you along the way.)

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- How do you know that you can trust God?
- How will you live out the covenant that God has made with you?

GET ACTIVE: A-MAZE-ING GRACE

Separate into groups of four and stand shoulder-to-shoulder, facing outward. Lock your elbows tightly. Follow the course marked out for you, but your group can't rotate. Every time the course turns, a different person takes the lead.

- How did you have to work together to complete the course?
- What was communication like in your group?
- Were some people better leaders than others? What did they do that was effective?
- How did everyone contribute to the whole team's success?

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- Think about a time when you've done group work. What was it like?
- Why do you think it's important for churches to know how to work together?
- Who are the leaders in your church? What do they do?

DURING THE VIDEO

- Why are order and decency so important for Presbyterians?
- What do Deacons do?
- What do Ruling Elders do?
- What do Teaching Elders do?

TALK ABOUT IT: ASK AN ELDER/DEACON

Today, Ruling Elders and Deacons from your church will be coming in to talk with you. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-13 together, and discuss the following questions.

Lesson 10:
Decent and In
Order
(Covenant: An
Ordered Life)

- What are Elders (“supervisors”) supposed to do? What are Deacons (“servants”) supposed to do?
- What characteristics should Elders and Deacons have?

Feel free to ask the Deacons and Elders any questions you’d like about their positions. Here are a few to get you started.

- What’s it like to be a Deacon/Elder?
- What’s the best part of being a Deacon/Elder?
- What’s the most challenging part of being a Deacon/Elder?
- What’s one lesson you’ve learned as a Deacon/Elder?

FAITH LIVED OUT: TIMOTHY

Timothy was a young man that Paul first met as he made his way through Lystra (in modern-day Turkey), possibly on his first missionary journey. Timothy’s father was Greek, and his mother and grandmother were Jewish-background Christians. Paul and Timothy seemed to get along right from the start, and so the next time Paul came through Lystra he decided to take Timothy with him on his travels. Their mentoring relationship continued to deepen, and Paul even called Timothy “my true son in the faith” on multiple occasions. Eventually, Timothy and Paul parted ways so that Timothy could help lead the church in Ephesus, but they kept in touch via letters and third-party messengers. As Paul faced imprisonment and persecution near the end of his life, he asked Timothy to visit him and help “lift his spirits” in Rome. 1 Timothy 4:1-5:2 gives you a feel for what their mentorship was probably like – read it now, and discuss the following questions.

- What might have been some problems Timothy had to deal with because of his age?
- How did Paul tell Timothy to handle the issue?
- Why were Timothy’s character and ability to lead so important?
- Why was it important that Timothy be a good leader?
- How can you be like Timothy in your own life and calling?

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- How do you see your church working together?
- What was new to you today as you learned about leadership in your church?
- How can you participate in the life of your church?

GET ACTIVE: FOLLOW THE LEADER

One student is your leader. Line up behind him/her, moving where s/he moves and doing what s/he does. A few weeks ago, you played "Simon Says." How was this similar? How was it different?

- What could you see from your place in line? How did that affect how you moved and what you did?
- Could you trust the person at the front of the line? How did that affect your actions in line?

Lesson 11:
The Word and
the word
(Covenant: Life According
to the Word of God)

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- When you hear the phrase Word of God, what comes to mind?
- What kind of experience have you had with the Bible before?
- How do you think Christians should use the Bible?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What are the two ways of understanding the phrase word of God?
- How does the Bible point us to Christ?
- How does the Book of Confessions help us as Presbyterians interpret the Bible?

FAITH LIVED OUT: JESUS

Every year, Jesus and his family would make their way from Nazareth to Jerusalem – a five-day journey by foot each way – to attend the Passover festival. However, when Jesus was 12, things turned out a little differently. Read Luke 2:41-52 and discuss the following questions.

- What do you think was going through Mary and Joseph's minds when they discovered Jesus was missing?

- What reaction did the religious leaders in the Temple have to Jesus?
- Was Jesus misbehaving? Why or why not?
- We believe that Jesus was (and is) fully God. What sense can you make of Luke’s description that Jesus “grew in stature and in wisdom?”
- How does knowing this story help you understand who Jesus is and what he came to do?

GET CREATIVE: BIBLE PROMO POSTERS

While we typically consider the Bible to be one book, it’s actually made up of 66 different pieces of writing. Many of these books can be grouped together into different genres – types of writing that have a central style or subject. Your group will be responsible for designing an advertisement poster, “promoting” one genre found in the Bible. Remember that this is a promotional poster – make people want to read the books in your section! Your leader will assign you one genre from the following list:

Old Testament:

History
Poetry & Wisdom
Prophecy

New Testament:

History
Epistles (Letters)
Apocalypse

Now it’s your chance to do some research! On your poster, include the following information:

- Books of the Bible in this genre
- Type/characteristics of writing in this genre
- Purpose of this genre within the Bible
- How it points to Jesus

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- What did you learn about Jesus that you hadn’t known/realized before?
- What more would you like to learn about Jesus?
- How will you make reading the Bible a regular part of your life?

GET ACTIVE: GIFT RACE

Open your “gift” and find those who need it! The first team with a complete picture is the winner.

- Did you understand what your “gift” was at first? Why or why not?
- How did you go about finding others who “needed” your gift?
- What new meaning did your gift take on once it combined with the gifts of others?

Lesson 12:
All Good Gifts
(A Faithful
Stewardship)

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- Think about a time when you’ve either received or given a really good gift. What happened? How did you feel? How did the other person feel?
- If you could do one thing for the rest of your life, what would it be? Why?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What is stewardship?
- How do people in churches often limit the idea of stewardship?
- Why does God give us gifts?

FAITH LIVED OUT: ESTHER

Esther was a Jewish young woman living in Persia during the time the nation of Israel was in exile. Through her beauty and gentle manners she had earned the favor of the king, and he made her one of his wives and moved her into the royal palace. However, Haman, one of the king’s top advisers, was so mad that Mordecai (Esther’s uncle) wouldn’t bow down before him that he decided to kill all the Jews in Persian-occupied territories. Up to this point, nobody knew that Esther was Jewish; however, Mordecai desperately needed her help. Read Esther 4 and discuss the following questions.

- Mordecai was dressed in sackcloth and ashes, which were the ritual signs of mourning. Why was he so desperate?
- What gifts had God given Esther (both in terms of abilities and the situation she found herself in)?
- Mordecai tells Esther, “Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.” What do you think he means by that?
- Scan over the next few chapters of the story. How does Esther use her gifts?
- How does the story turn out in the end? How was this a result of Esther using her gifts?
- How can you be faithful with the gifts you’ve been given, like Esther was with hers?

GET CREATIVE: GIFT LISTS

Your leader will hand you a piece of paper. Fold it in half lengthwise and unfold it again. Draw a line down the middle. On the left side, write “Gifts God has given [Your Name].” On the right side, write “Ways [Your Name] can steward these gifts.” Get a piece of tape from your leader and tape the piece of paper to your back (or, if your arms don’t bend that way, get a friend to tape it on for you). Spend the next few minutes going around the room, writing on people’s backs. What gifts do you see that God has given them? How can they use those gifts? After you’ve written on everybody’s backs, take your paper off and read through it.

- What were the gifts that people identified about you? Were there any that surprised you? Why/why not?
- How can you steward those gifts for God’s glory and others’ benefit?
- As your classmates talk about ways they can steward their gifts, can you think of any additional ideas?

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- A famous Christian thinker named Frederick Buechner once wrote, “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” As you reflect on what was discussed in class today, what do you think this statement means?
- Where do you think that place might be for you?
- Before the video, you were asked what you’d like to do for the rest of your life. How might that be stewarded for God’s glory and others’ service?

FAITH (NOT) LIVED OUT: THE RICH YOUNG MAN

Up to this point, we've looked at young people who have used God's blessings to glorify God and/or serve others. Today, however, we're going to look at somebody who doesn't quite get it. While Jesus is out teaching, he meets a wealthy young man. Read Matthew 19:16-30 to see what happens.

Lesson 13:
BLING!
(Shunning
Ostentation)

- Why do you think the young man asks Jesus how to have eternal life?
- Why do you think he asks what he “still lacks”?
- Why does he leave Jesus “sorrowful”? What does that tell you about where his heart is?
- Why do you think it's important for us to love God and other people more than we love stuff?

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- What is your favorite possession? Why do you like it so much?
- Who is your favorite person? Why do you like him/her so much?
- Do you know anybody who values possessions over people? What is s/he like?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What is *ostentation*?
- Why should we shun it?
- What should we do with what we have instead?

GET ACTIVE: SKITTLES SIMULATION

Let's take a look at what it's like for some folks to have a lot of resources while others don't. Your leader will hand you a bag of “personal wealth” (Skittles or a similar candy) and you'll

try to make them last. Each round you'll draw a card that will cause you either to gain or lose wealth to the bowl in the middle of your group. Support cards will help you out for a round, but if you run out of money and have no support cards left, you're out of the game. (Adapted from Seattle University School of Theology & Mission's Wealth Simulation, found at www.faithandfamilyhomelessness.com)

- How easy was it to hold on to your “wealth”? Did you end the game with lots of Skittles, or no Skittles? How did that make you feel?
- Why do you think people started off with different amounts of Skittles?
- Do you think this simulation is an appropriate description of what people go through in the United States today? Why or why not?
- What kinds of help might the support cards represent? How do other people (family, friends, church, etc.) help people get through tough times?
- What would have happened if the person with lots of Skittles had shared with the person who ran out? Do you see that happening in the United States today? Why or why not?

GET CREATIVE: MAKE AN ACTION PLAN

Armed with what you know about stewardship and “shunning ostentation,” as well as what you know about the way God has blessed your church and the needs of your broader community, come up with an action plan for your church to “be a blessing.” Write down your plan, so it can be shared with others.

- What need(s) will you be addressing?
- How has God uniquely blessed your church to meet this need?
- What steps will you have to take as a congregation to make this happen?
- What (hopefully) will happen as a result?

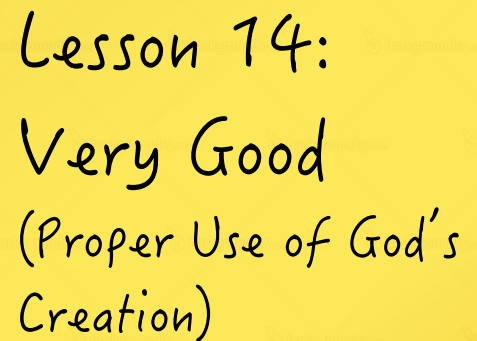
TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- How might God be calling you to “shun ostentation” in your own life?
- Where might you be able to help provide “support cards” to those who need it?

GET ACTIVE: NATURE WALK

Today you'll get the chance to take a close look at God's creation, either through a walk outside or through "sensory stations" set up in your meeting space.

- What do you observe? (Make sure you're using all your senses.)



Lesson 14:
Very Good
(Proper Use of God's
Creation)

- Psalm 19:1-4 says, *"The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."* If all nature proclaims God's glory, what does the little corner of creation you've experienced here reveal to you about God?

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- Think about an amazing present you've received. What was/is it? Why was/is it so special?
- How would you feel if it broke? How would the person who gave it to you feel if s/he knew you had broken it?
- Why was/is it important for you to take care of that present?

DURING THE VIDEO

- When God made humans, what special responsibility were we given?
- As Presbyterians, how are we to act in regard to God's creation?
- Who do we need to keep in mind as we're caring for God's creation?

FAITH LIVED OUT: ADAM & EVE

Okay, so we don't actually know how old Adam and Eve were. But we're going to claim that the fact that they were "newly created" by God qualifies them for the "young people of faith" category... at least as far as we're concerned. And from what we read in Genesis, we discover that they had the unique opportunity to experience and interact with creation as God intended it. Read Genesis 1-2 and discuss the following questions.

- Genesis 1:26-27 tells us that humankind is created in God's image. From what you've read in these two chapters, how did God expect these Image-bearers to act in regard to creation?
- God didn't create humans just to have them sit around. What job did God give Adam and Eve to do? Why do you think God had them do this?
- Did God give Adam and Eve total (ultimate) control over creation? Why or why not? How did this affect how they were supposed to treat it?
- How did Adam and Eve's care for and service of creation bring glory to God?

GET CREATIVE: HONORING GOD'S CREATION

As humans, we need four things to survive: air, water, food, and shelter. God calls us to be stewards over creation – and like Jessie says in the video, part of that stewardship means that there'll be plenty left for those who come after us. Separate into four groups; each group will take one of these necessities and come up with an action plan to steward that part of God's creation well. In your group, consider the following questions:

- Why do we need it? (What purpose does it serve? How do our bodies use it?)
- In what ways have we humans been irresponsible with it?
- How can we care for it in a way that's both responsible and honoring to God?
- What specifically can your church do to care for this part of God's creation?

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- How can you be a good steward of God's creation in your own life? What can you do?
- In what ways might you be able to use creation care as an act of worship to God?

GET ACTIVE: HUMAN KNOT

As a group, stand in a circle, facing inward, shoulder to shoulder. Put both hands into the center of the circle and grab two different people's hands. Now, try to get untangled!

- How easy was it to get in the knot?
- How easy was it to get out of the knot?
- Could any one person get out him/herself?
Why or why not?
- How is this kind of like what sin does in our lives?

Lesson 15:

No good, dirty
sinner

(Human Sinfulness)

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- What do you think of when you hear the word sin?
- Can you think of a time when you knew the right thing to do, but didn't? What happened? How did you feel?
- What do you think Christians are supposed to do about sin?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What all is included in sin?
- Why is sin tricky?
- How is sin like missing the mark?

FAITH (NOT) LIVED OUT: CAIN

Sin has been with humanity almost from the beginning. Genesis 4 tells the story of Cain exhibiting the same tendency as his parents, Adam and Eve. Jealous that God preferred Abel's sacrifice to his, Cain killed his brother Abel out of anger and resentment. Read Genesis 4:1-16 and discuss the questions on the next page.

- Why was Cain angry and resentful?
- Do you think Cain saw his anger as justified? Do *you* think his anger was justified?
- What do you think God was referring to when Cain was encouraged to “do the right thing”?
- How did Cain behave towards God after he killed his brother?
- What did God say was the consequence of Cain’s sin?
- The Bible says that Cain lived the rest of his life with a “mark” that not only protected him, but also reminded him of his sin. Do you think sin works the same way today?

GET PERSONAL: CONFESSION

This is your time to get real with God. You don’t have to share this information with anybody – but if we’re serious about getting out of the tangles that sin makes of our lives, we have to think strategically about the steps God is calling us to take. Take a hard look at your life and answer the following questions.

- Where is my life tangled up right now? What sin do I need to deal with?
- What got me tangled up? How have I gotten to the point I’m at now?
- Who else is tangled up with me?
- What forgiveness do I need to seek out? (From God? From others?)
- What forgiveness do I need to give?
- What does a healthy resolution to this situation look like? What else needs to happen so that can I get there?

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- How will you act on your plan?
- Once you’ve acted on your plan, how did it turn out?

FAITH LIVED OUT: SHADRACH, MESHACH, & ABEDNEGO

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (and their friend Daniel) were in the first round of what was called the “Babylonian captivity.” Nebuchadnezzar (the king of Babylon) had defeated Jerusalem, and so he decided to pick out the smartest, best looking, and most promising Israelites to cart off and force into service at his palace.

(He’d eventually sweep into Judah many more times, and by the end most of the Israelites had been taken out of their homeland and forced to live in Babylon.) Read Daniel 2:28-3:30 and discuss the following questions.

Lesson 16:
Idol Factories
and Tyrants
(Sinfulness: Idolatry
and Tyranny)

- Put yourself in their situation. You’ve been kidnapped from your home, and forced into service in the royal palace of an enemy ruler. How would you be feeling? What would be going through your mind?
- What do you think would make Nebuchadnezzar set up a 90-foot golden statue of himself for people to worship? Why do you think Nebuchadnezzar would have to make people worship it?
- What was Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s response to Nebuchadnezzar’s order? Knowing the consequences they were facing, why do you think they chose to respond this way?
- What do you think made Nebuchadnezzar reconsider “the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego”? Do you think it was a genuine change of heart? Why or why not?

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- Have you ever had to deal with a bully? What was that like?
- Why do you think we as humans often like to trust things and people more than we trust God?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What is idolatry?
- What is tyranny?
- What does it mean that we have a tendency toward idolatry and tyranny?
- How does grace work into this situation?

GET ACTIVE: MASTER OF THE CIRCLE

Stand inside the circle with the rest of your class. Using only your arms (no body slams!), try to get everybody else out of the circle while staying in yourself. The last person inside the circle wins!

- What went through your mind as you were playing the game?
- How did you view other people while you were trying to get them out of the circle?
- Other than being “the winner,” was there any benefit to being the last person in the circle? What does everybody else think about the person who won?
- Have you seen anyone who acts similarly to this in real life? Why do you think they try to control others? How might grace change their situation?

GET CREATIVE: IDOLATRY & TYRANNY IN OUR LIVES

As you look around these days, you’re probably not going to find many 90-foot-tall gold statues that we’re forced to bow down and worship. But that doesn’t mean that idolatry and tyranny aren’t just as much of a big deal for us today as they were for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

In the front of your meeting space, you’ll see a big outline of a person. Taking turns, write (or draw) inside the outline things, ideas, or people that we as a society “idolize.” Try to fill the whole shape.

- Why do we as a society worship these idols? What does chasing after them get for us?

- Why do we have to chase after them? Why aren't we satisfied with only some of whatever it is?
- What danger comes from making those things, ideas, or people the ultimate goal or the ultimate good in our lives?

Now, outside the shape, write or draw ways that we in our society (and in our world) try to "tyrannize" one another – or ways that we are tyrannized.

- Why is it so tempting to try and control other people?
- What's the danger for other people when we try to control them?
- What's the danger for us when we try to control other people?
- How does trying to control other people endanger our relationship with God?

This looks like a pretty bleak picture. But the good news is, idolatry and tyranny don't have the final word! God's grace in and through Jesus Christ is more than powerful enough to break these cycles in our lives, and to restore our lives and relationships to what God created them to be.

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- Where do I see idolatry and tyranny around me in my life?
- How can God's grace break through and restore these situations?

GET ACTIVE: BACK TO BACK

With a partner, sit back-to-back on the floor, and stand up without using any hands. Keep adding people to your group – see how many of you can stand up together at once!

- How did you accomplish this goal?
- Why (and how) did you have to trust your partner?
- When you brought more people together, what new challenges did you have to work through? How did you overcome them?
- What kinds of challenges does your church need to work through so that you can “stand” together? Your community? The country? Our world?

Lesson 17:
Ministry of
Reconciliation
(Called to work for
Transformation)

BEFORE THE VIDEO

- Think of a time when you made up with a friend after a fight. How did you feel? How did your friend feel?
- When have you seen God’s grace change somebody’s life? What happened?
- Think about the time when you got the most exciting news you’ve ever heard (so far). What did you do?

DURING THE VIDEO

- What is reconciliation?
- How do reconciliation and justice work together?
- What should we do with the message of God’s reconciliation?

FAITH LIVED OUT: PETER

By most accounts, Peter was probably Jesus’ best friend. He was one of the first disciples Jesus called, and he was a member of Jesus’ inner circle. But that didn’t mean Peter was necessarily always easy to be around. He also had a habit of speaking before he thought – which ended

him up with his foot in his mouth more often than he'd probably have cared to admit. Yet through all their ups and downs, Jesus and Peter stuck together... until the final night of Jesus' life. As Jesus was on trial in the house of the High Priest, Peter stood outside and denied having anything to do with him. Three different times. Jesus had told Peter earlier that evening that he was going to do this, and when Peter realized what he had done, he ran away, ashamed and heartbroken. But Jesus wasn't through with him yet. Read John 21:1-19 and discuss the following questions.

- This was the conversation Peter had with Jesus since denying him. What do you think was going through Peter's mind when he saw him again?
- Why do you think Peter felt hurt when Jesus asked him three times if he loved him? How did he respond?
- Jesus liked to refer to himself as "the good shepherd." What, then, do you think he was really saying to Peter when he told him to "feed my sheep"? What was he implying about Peter's identity and role?
- What were Jesus' final words to Peter in this story? Why are they significant?

Now, read Acts 2:14-42. Peter and the other disciples were in Jerusalem praying when the Holy Spirit descended upon them. They started speaking in all sorts of different languages, and people who heard them claimed that they were drunk. At that, Peter approached the crowd and delivered his first major sermon.

- What did Peter say?
- What was the result?
- Do you think this would have been possible if his seaside conversation with Jesus hadn't taken place? Why or why not?
- How important is reconciliation to the health of the Church and the healing of the world? How do you know?

GET CREATIVE: YOUR STORY – THE NEXT CHAPTER

All the way back in Lesson 1, you shared the story of your faith journey up to this point in your life. Over the past few months you've been challenged to think more deeply about who you are

as a Christian. You've met women and men from the Bible who God has used (warts and all), and you've gotten the chance to explore how God has called you. Now it's your chance to look forward, because God isn't done with you yet. On the paper that your leader gives you, either write or draw what you think the next chapter in your faith journey is going to look like.

- Where is God calling you?
- How has God gifted you (through abilities, interests, experiences, etc.) for this calling?
- Who is God calling to walk beside you on this leg of the journey?
- What challenges do you think you'll have to keep an eye out for?
- How can you help others fulfill God's calling in their lives?
- How will (your corner of) the world be blessed because of your faithfulness to God's calling?

TO THINK ABOUT ON YOUR OWN

- As you think over the past few months, what has made the biggest impression on you?
- How have you changed over the past few months?
- What do you want to make sure you remember as you step into the next chapter of your faith journey?