

Break Through!

The **Bible** for Young Catholics

Old Testament Leader Guide

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Introduction

Thank you for picking up this exciting Bible and its *Old Testament Leader Guide*! All five resources—the Bible, the leader guides (*Old Testament Leader Guide* and *New Testament Leader Guide*), and their accompanying student activity booklets—work together to help familiarize younger adolescents with the people of salvation history in both the Old and the New Testament and to help younger adolescents see themselves as a vital part of the Church’s history.

The Bible, the leader guides, and the activity booklets do not depend on one another; they are interdependent, and the use of each strengthens the positive characteristics of the others. (The leader guides and the activity booklets do require the use of a Bible, however, even if it is not *Breakthrough!*)

The Revised *Breakthrough!* Ancillaries

The recently revised *Breakthrough!* is a Bible with four revised companions: two for the teacher’s use (*Old Testament Leader Guide* and *New Testament Leader Guide*) and two for the student’s use (*Old Testament Activity Booklet* and *New Testament Activity Booklet*). The leader guides and activity booklets of this revision are clearly separated into the two main divisions of the Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Bible

Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics will be your strongest resource for introducing young adolescents to Scripture. Every element of this Bible was carefully chosen or created to appeal to young people who are ten to thirteen years old. This starts with the choice of using the Catholic Edition of the *Good News Translation* for the Bible text. The *Good News Translation* was created with a vocabulary and reading level appropriate to the younger student. If you have been using translations with a more advanced reading level, you will notice an immediate difference in your student’s ability to read and understand the Bible text.

Additionally, *Breakthrough!* provides many other tools to help young people feel more comfortable and familiar with the Bible. Forty illustrated color inserts feature “interviews” with the biblical characters. These character interviews quickly identify the important events in the biblical character’s story and the role this person played in salvation history. A four-page salvation history time line at the beginning of the Bible shows how these biblical characters fit into God’s big picture of salvation history.

Another key feature is the inclusion of Pray It!, Study It!, Live It!, and Catholic Connection articles. These articles appear alongside the biblical text in forty biblical books. The forty books were chosen to provide the best overview of salvation history and a representative sampling of the different types of books found in the Bible. For these forty books, the articles provide a commentary to help young readers better understand and apply the biblical message to their life. Pray It! articles give the young reader ideas about applying the spirituality of the Bible. Study It! articles give them background so that they better understand the context of the passages they are reading. Live It! articles challenge the young people to live biblical values and teachings. Catholic Connection articles show where important Catholic teachings are found in the Bible.

These are some of the other features you will find in *Breakthrough!*:

- an index of Bible stories, including events, prayers, miracles, parables, and teachings
- a glossary with definitions of more than 180 important Bible words
- a list of important Catholic prayers
- a list of important Catholic beliefs
- nine color maps

Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics: Old Testament Leader Guide

Although the Bible and activity booklets are for the young people, this leader guide is for you! Six professionals from around the United States coauthored this manual to help Catholic middle school teachers, parish catechists, and youth ministers explore the Bible with young people.

This leader guide gives suggestions about ways you can introduce and explore key figures in salvation history. Studying the Bible by learning the stories of its main Old Testament figures interests young adolescents because they are very curious about people—themselves, their friends, their families, people they meet. People are endlessly fascinating. This holds true for Bible people as well.

Depending on their level of biblical literacy, your students will be continuing or beginning a life journey with figures from the Old Testament who will inspire, challenge, and puzzle them, yet ultimately be very important in their own spiritual lives. Given the significance of these Old Testament people for all Catholics, it is important to talk about them with young adolescents. As they grow older, they will encounter the familiar stories anew, bringing to the stories the issues and questions that are foremost on their minds and hearts at that time. Although few of the biblical characters that the students will encounter are their own age, the stories provide many opportunities for the young people to make connections to their own life experiences.

Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics: Old Testament Activity Booklet

You will notice that the activity booklet also includes an introduction to the New Testament, with activity pages familiarizing the students with the broad scope of salvation history and the links between God's Revelation in the Old Testament and his completion of Revelation, through Jesus Christ, in the New Testament. For ease of use, the leader guides and activity booklets are separated into Old and New Testament sections, but it is important for the students to know that the Old and New Testaments are intimately connected. God's Revelation in the Old Testament prepares us for his Revelation in the New Testament.

For students of this age, it seemed especially appropriate to provide some puzzles and worksheets to assist their reading and reflecting on the Bible. After presenting several pages of introductory exercises in biblical literacy, the activity booklet goes on to provide a puzzle, some background, suggested readings, suggested articles, and reflection questions for the same biblical people who are covered in the leader guide. The activity booklet provides independent study opportunities for the student that can complement the work that the teacher or catechist does in the classroom. It will also be helpful for parents who are homeschooling to use in conjunction with the Bible. We envision that some parents may want their child to have a copy of this activity booklet and will see its potential to provide some guidance to the young reader.

The puzzle about each character requires a familiarity with the character's story. Most young people will need to read or reread the passages about the figure. Up to six Scripture passages are provided per character. The article references can also help the young person get to know the character. The background in the workbook shows the reader where each Old Testament character "fits" in salvation history. Finally, the reflection questions invite the young person to consider how this biblical person's story sheds light on her or his own spiritual journey and life experience. After completing the activities presented for each biblical person, you might like to use the puzzle as a diagnostic, or check of understanding.

Even if you do not choose to purchase activity booklets for all your students, you may find the booklet appropriate for students who have a weaker background in Scripture or who need to spend more time with the Old Testament to understand the stories.

About the Term *Young Adolescent*

You will notice that the *Breakthrough!* materials use the term *young adolescent* throughout. This term describes young people of the ages that would normally put them in grades five through eight. We intentionally use a term that describes their age rather than their status in school, which is what happens when we use “junior high” or “middle school.” We all know that, depending on what part of the country, state, or county you find yourself, even these terms are fluid!

We also use the terms *young people* and *students* to refer to this same group. Even though some activities may lend themselves more readily to the classroom of a Catholic grade school, all the authors wrote with both school and parish needs in mind.

Looking More Closely at This Leader Guide

This leader guide has many features that will help you in your ministry with young adolescents. Neither the Bible nor the leader guide provides a comprehensive curriculum for study of the Old Testament, but you will find that this guide will supplement the curriculum you are currently using.

After this introduction, the text of this guide consists of thirty-five chapters covering biblical characters from the Old Testament as well as four appendixes. You can use these chapters in order or pick and choose as you need. In addition to inviting the students to learn the stories of the people in the Old Testament, the material in the chapter enables you to make connections between your young people and the biblical characters. The greatest hope of this guide is that these young men and women will get to know Sarah, Samson, Isaiah, and Amos as people—people who were chosen to play a special role in the development of our faith tradition, people through whom God spoke, people whom God called, and people who sometimes responded more completely than at other times to their own vocations. If our young people can come to see the connections between their own lives today and the lives of these Old Testament figures, they have a much greater chance of being able to recognize and meet God in ways that these characters do.

The next sections will explain the rationale behind the different parts of these chapters.

Preparing to Teach

Each chapter begins with a section called “Preparing to Teach.” There is quite a bit of “raw material” in the first half of the chapter, such as Scripture citations, lists of articles found in *Breakthrough! The Bible for*

Young Catholics, connections between biblical figures and young people, and Bible quotations about God’s presence. These tools are present to make it easier for you to reflect about your own students and their needs and questions and then to move quickly into a session plan that will bring the Bible and its people alive for your young people.

Instead of going through chapters sequentially, we hope that you will make the decisions about what and how to teach based on a combination of factors, such as what materials you have and what you think your own students need. The following parts of each chapter should help you to tailor your teaching to the needs of your students.

A Note on “Dark” Passages of the Bible

As you and your students become more familiar with the Bible, you will no doubt notice that some biblical accounts include what Pope Benedict XVI calls the “dark” passages of the Bible—the stories of cheating and trickery, sin, violence, murder, and war, which are so much a part of human history. In his apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini (The Word of the Lord)*, Pope Benedict reminds us that God’s teaching of morality and justice is progressive. Eventually, through the prophets, both justice and mercy are proclaimed as ideal human goals, and, in Jesus Christ, morality is elevated to love of God, neighbor, and even enemies. These biblical stories of human sin remind us that God knows us at our worst, loves us, and wishes to save us. Even if these kinds of stories are not included in an assignment, middle-school students may well read them and ask questions about them. In that case, an explanation of God’s progressive Revelation, and even God’s ability to bring about good despite human weakness and sin, is appropriate. In any case, it is important to read all unfamiliar passages of the Bible carefully before assigning them to the students.

Overview

The overview consists of several paragraphs that introduce the biblical character and highlight ways that this biblical character *uniquely* connects with young adolescents. Though several of the judges are skilled in battle, for example, the story of Gideon shows how God helps the people of Israel resist the bullying nature of their enemies. The prophets share similar messages, but it is Ezekiel who may appeal to more young people because his messages are so image-heavy and fantastic, more like the media the young people know.

This Chapter at a Glance

This short section gives you the names of the activities that are in the second half of the chapter. You will see here that each chapter provides at least one activity that helps the young people to learn the story of the

biblical character and one that helps them to probe more deeply into the character's personality.

Scripture Passages Related to the Biblical Character

This section lists no more than twelve key passages about the character under study. Asterisks identify those passages that are most important to read. This section should make it easier for you to find relevant stories and to assign reading to your group.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to the Biblical Character

This section lists up to twelve articles from *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics* that are relevant to your study. The first article is almost always a reference to the interview with the character that can be found in the Bible. The Bible also features Pray It!, Study It!, and Live It! articles so that the students can learn more about aspects of the Bible, develop their prayer life, and hear challenges to live differently. These three types of articles as well as the Catholic Connections can be springboards for conversation with your students. When you see the *Breakthrough!* icon in the margin, you will know that you will be directed to an aspect of *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics*.

The Biblical Character and Young Adolescents Today

This section suggests several connections between the biblical character and the young people with whom you are working. There may be more connections in a chapter than you can cover with your students. This section invites you to discern how you think God may want to speak through this biblical character to your specific group of young people today. Perhaps one or two of the connections will intuitively or obviously seem more suitable for your group now. But next year, with another group, another one or two may emerge as important.

Highlighting God's Presence

In this section, the authors have picked Bible quotations that describe God's action in the stories being studied about a specific person. It is our hope that students will begin to listen for and look for God in the same ways that God reveals himself in the Old Testament. Though a biblical character's story is interesting in and of itself, ultimately Scripture brings us to God. The hope is that the passages in the guide will provide you with an additional resource to bring your students to a new awareness of God.

Activities

The second half of each chapter is devoted to class or session activities. The activities section provides a choice of activities to present as you explore an Old Testament character with the young people. You will notice that the authors of this guide believe that it is possible to learn about Scripture and find God in Scripture while having an enjoyable, meaningful, and creative time as well!

The Appendixes: Making It Easier for You

Appendix 1: Additional Resources

This appendix lists other resources that could provide background for you or that could lead you to other materials for sharing Scripture with the students. This appendix also provides you with music and video ideas.

Appendix 2: Tools for Teaching

This appendix contains some of the best and most creative activities that our authors wrote for this manual. These activities can be used with different biblical people. Look in this appendix if the recommended activity does not seem appropriate for your group or if you have had success with one of the approaches before!

Appendix 3: Answer Key for *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics: Old Testament Activity Booklet* Puzzles

This appendix contains the answers for the puzzles that appear in the revised *Old Testament Activity Booklet*. This appendix does not directly connect with any materials in this leader guide. You may choose to use the activity booklet to give the students additional opportunities to learn about Old Testament biblical figures and their stories. This booklet is available from Saint Mary's Press, at www.smp.org.

Appendix 4: Index of Activities by Topic

Because this guide focuses on bringing Scripture and the lives of students together, many topics covered relate to the students' everyday lives, such as families, friendships, self-esteem, and so on. The activities are gathered and sorted under headings. In addition, activities that relate to various Sacraments, feast days, or themes are also listed accordingly.

Journeying with the Young People

The authors of this guide wrote the activities in this leader guide with the faces of young people in mind whom they have known and loved over the years. Some aspects of the activities in this leader guide will work for your group, while others may not. This guide is an invitation to trust your own ability to discern the needs of your group of young people. The activities in the guide are strong and workable because the authors used these very activities in the classroom and during parish gatherings.

May God give you the grace to see the everyday opportunities to teach young people about Scripture and the people of the Old Testament, who, in response to God's gracious love, lived the salvation history that we hope to continue in our own time and place.

Adam and Eve

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Reading the story of Adam and Eve is a wonderful way for the students to examine how sin affects our relationships with God and other people. Young adolescents are very conscious of their connections to others and painfully aware when relationships are broken. When we follow God's will, we become closer to him and to one another, but when we sin, we separate ourselves from God and those we love. God continues his relationship with Adam and Eve after their sin, which is reassuring when students feel that they have done something wrong.

The Adam and Eve story also offers young people an opportunity to examine the place of rules in their lives and to emphasize the importance of listening to God. On the verge of greater independence, students struggle with temptation, which often clothes itself as the suggestion to resist limits set by parents or school. Adam and Eve's story teaches us that limits exist for our well-being.

A good way to prepare for the study of Adam and Eve is by reading the article "Uncovering the Truth" (Genesis 2:5–25) in *Breakthrough!* The Catholic understanding of Scripture sometimes conflicts with the literal interpretations of some other Christian denominations, especially in regard to the Creation stories. Catholics see them as symbolic stories that convey spiritual and moral truths. Knowing that this story falls into this literary genre still allows us to see the figures of Adam and Eve as our predecessors who enjoyed a loving relationship with God before sin entered the world.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Who Is Guilty?
 - Hiding Who We Are
 - Who Hates Rules?
-
-

Scripture Passages Related to Adam and Eve

- Genesis 2:4–17 (God creates a man and a place for him to live)*
- Genesis 2:18–20 (God creates the animals)*
- Genesis 2:21–25 (God creates a woman)*
- Genesis 3:1–6 (Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit)*
- Genesis 3:7–13 (Adam and Eve hide from God)*
- Genesis 3:14–24 (God punishes and banishes Adam and Eve)*
- Genesis 4:1–2 (Adam and Eve have two sons, Cain and Abel)
- Genesis 4:25 (Adam and Eve have another son, Seth)
- Genesis 5:1–32 (Adam’s other descendants)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Adam and Eve

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Adam and Eve
- Uncovering the Truth (Genesis 2:5–25)
- Original Sin (Genesis 3:1–24)

Adam and Eve and Young Adolescents Today

- Companionship is extremely important to young adolescents. God desires the companionship of human beings because he created them to walk and talk with him.
- God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. For adolescents, companionship is so important that being left out is a difficult and feared experience.
- Young adolescents often struggle with the restrictions placed on them, as did Adam and Eve. As young adolescents struggle toward independence and responsibility, they still need rules and guidelines to assist them.
- The serpent is the master of temptation. Adam and Eve’s relationship with the serpent is a wonderful model for the perils of peer pressure.
- Like Adam and Eve who try to hide from God, young adolescents often attempt to cover up their wrongdoings instead of accepting responsibility. Like Adam, they often look for someone else to whom they can point and say, “She, or he, made me do it!”
- Women’s equality is still an issue in our society, and young adolescents are aware of this. In the past, this story has been used to justify the inferior status of women, so it becomes especially

important to counter this misguided notion. Many biblical scholars suggest that Eve's creation from Adam's rib (i.e., his side) is symbolic of Eve's equality with Adam. A man and a woman are destined to walk side-by-side as equal partners.

Highlighting God's Presence

Then the LORD God took some soil from the ground and formed a man out of it; he breathed life-giving breath into his nostrils and the man began to live. (Genesis 2:7)

That evening they heard the LORD God walking in the garden. (Genesis 3:8)

Activities

Who Is Guilty?

In this activity, the students hold a trial in which the prosecutor accuses the characters in the Genesis story of bringing about the fall of humanity.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
- 1. Read Genesis, chapters 2 and 3, aloud. Explain that the objective of this activity will be to come to a verdict, trial-style, regarding who is to blame for the fall of humanity.
- 2. Make sure that everyone is familiar with the roles that different people play in the court. Pick one student to be the prosecutor, and divide the rest of the class into four groups named "The Serpent," "Adam," "Eve," and "The Jury."
- 3. Tell the students to read carefully Genesis, chapters 2 and 3. Tell the first three groups to come up with a defense for their character. (Each defendant should also try to suggest to the jury that another character is the guilty party.) The jury and prosecutor review the "evidence" in Genesis, chapters 2 and 3.
- 4. Take a moment to direct the students to avoid offensive sexist remarks. Because this passage has been used to oppress women, it is important that they not misrepresent this message of the story. Emphasize the need to respect all of God's creation.

5. Instruct each group to choose one person to represent the group and to act as its character. The prosecutor will call the representatives and give them an opportunity to tell their side of the story. The prosecutor will then have a brief opportunity to cross-examine them. Repeat the process with the next two witnesses. The fourth group, the jury, will listen to each testimony and decide on a verdict.
6. Allow the jury a few minutes to deliberate and announce its verdict.
7. Discuss the process with the students. In this story, each character has the freedom to obey or disobey God's Law. No one is completely innocent. Below are some suggested discussion starters.
 - Do any of the characters ever lie to each other?
 - What are the motives for each character?
 - What are the immediate consequences for eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad?
 - How does each character have a responsibility to the others? How do they ignore their responsibilities?
 - Where do we see freedom misused in our everyday lives?

Hiding Who We Are

The students will examine how they hide their true selves in an attempt to be someone that they feel others will accept.

Preparation

- Have a copy of the handout "The Fig Leaves of My Life" (Document #: TX002876) for each student.
- Make sure each student has scissors and pens, pencils, or markers.
- Provide magazines for cutting out pictures (optional).

This activity is appropriate if you have already established a safe environment in which students are comfortable sharing difficult emotions and experiences, and if they have a clear understanding of how to respond appropriately (and how not to respond). If not, a more depersonalized and safe version could be done by focusing on what young adolescents in general do to hide themselves.

1. Read Genesis 3:1–10 aloud with the class. Make the following points, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ In this story, God makes humans who are completely happy. But the downfall comes when humans want to become something that they are not.

- ▶ Many of us are very much like Adam and Eve. Too often we are not happy with being who God made us to be. We think, “I’m too short,” or “I’m too fat,” or “I’m not a good basketball player,” and so on.
 - ▶ Like Adam and Eve, we are ashamed to be seen without protection, and we try to hide our true selves. We might try to hang out with the cool crowd, or perhaps we try to participate in activities that we don’t really like. Sometimes we avoid things that we really love in order to fit in. Like Adam and Eve’s fig leaves, we try to cover up.
2. Distribute the handout “The Fig Leaves of My Life” (Document #: TX002876). Have the students cut out their fig leaves and then draw or write the ways they hide who they really are. (If you brought magazines, the students could also go through them and cut out and paste images that express their “fig leaves.”) 
 3. Ask for volunteers to explain parts of their fig leaf. Below are some discussion starters.
 - Why do people choose “fig leaves” over letting others see who they really are?
 - Can you tell the difference when people are really being themselves versus covering up?
 - What gives people the strength to be themselves?
 - Are the temptations that Adam and Eve encounter similar to or different from the temptations we have today?

Who Hates Rules?

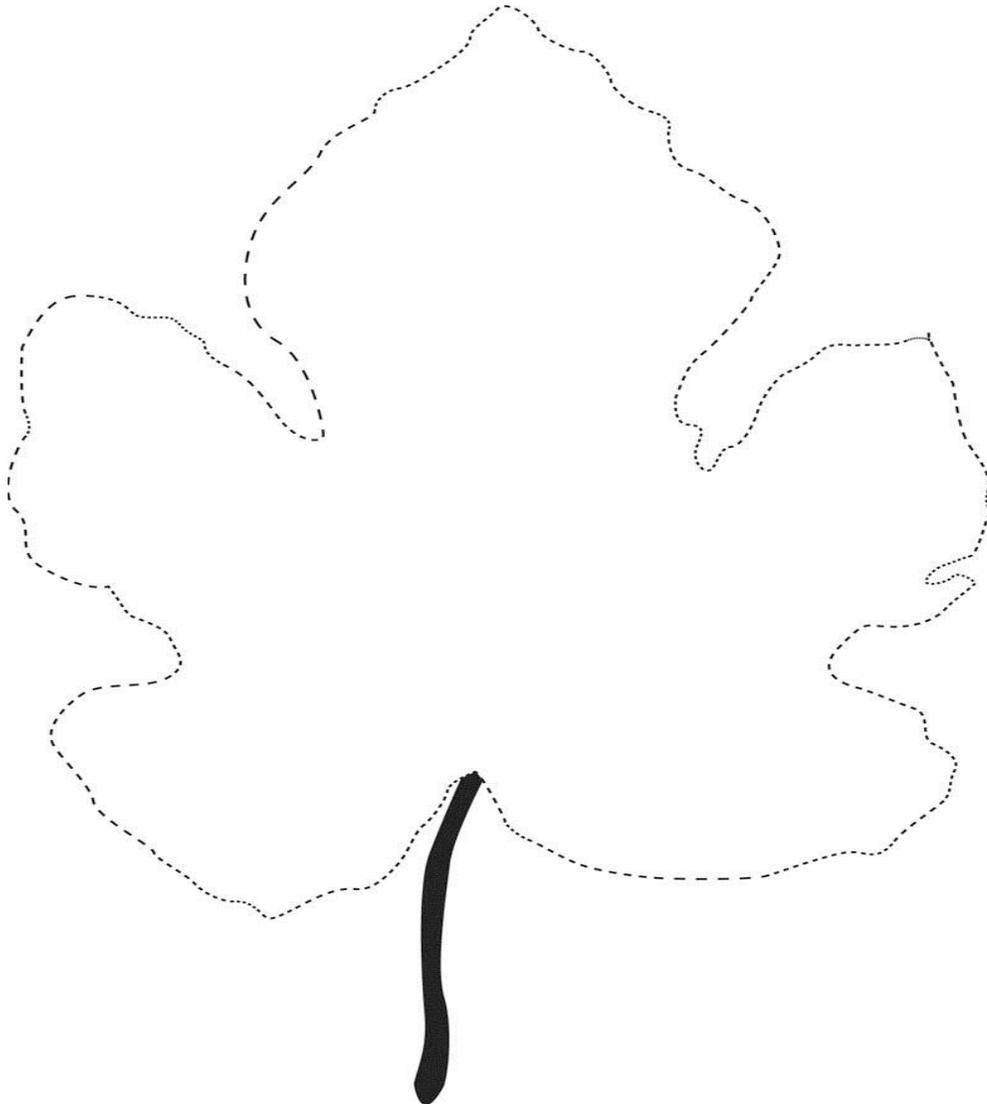
The students will engage in an activity without rules to learn their importance.

1. Have the students play a game of basketball, soccer, or some other team sport, except tell them that there are no rules. (Be sure to maintain a safe environment.) Another option would be to get a few volunteers to play checkers with you while the class looks on, but again, there are no rules!
2. After a short period of time, the students will surely start to become a little frustrated, angry, or bored. When this becomes obvious, call the game to an end.
3. Process the experience with the class. Use the following questions as discussion starters:
 - How did you feel when you first heard that the game would have no rules? (Probably, excited.) So what happened?

- Did you become frustrated or angry or bored? Why?
 - When you play a game, what do rules provide?
4. Read Genesis 2:15–17 aloud to the group. Present these thoughts, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ God gives human beings this rule because he cares for Adam, much as a parent gives a child the rule, “Look both ways before you cross the street.” This direction given or limitation imposed is done out of love and concern.
 5. Read Genesis 3:1–6. Ask:
 - ▶ What reason does the serpent give for God not allowing them to eat from that tree? (The serpent says that God doesn’t want them to be powerful like he is.)Continue with the following questions:
 - ▶ Why did Adam and Eve believe the serpent?
 - ▶ How can young people be like Adam and Eve in their decision making?
 6. Direct each student to write a list of rules they have been taught to follow and how the rules benefit people when they are followed. This could also be done in groups.

The Fig Leaves of My Life

Cut out this fig leaf and then draw or write the ways that you hide who you really are.



Noah

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The story of Noah and the Ark is a story rich in symbolism. In this story, we find the following themes: the struggle between good and evil; the ultimate triumph of goodness over evil; the promise of God to be faithful to his people, a promise symbolized by the rainbow (this promise is called the Noahic Covenant); and the goodness of all creation, a creation worth saving.

All of these themes are of concern to young adolescents. How will they face their choices between good and evil? Can they count on God to help them? What hopes, or rainbows, do they see in their lives that encourage them to keep to the right path, no matter how difficult? What is their attitude toward God's creation, including his creation of each one of them as unique and valued?

In addition to its relation to life issues, the story of Noah has been seen by the early Church Fathers and theologians as a symbol of Baptism. The Ark itself is seen as a symbol of the Church. Young adolescents can grasp these ideas if these symbols are explained:

- The story of Noah as a symbol of Baptism: Just as Noah and his family, faithful to God, were saved in the midst of the waters of the Flood, so we, followers of Jesus, the Son of God, are saved in the midst of the waters of Baptism (Peter 3:20–22).
- The symbolism of the rainbow: The rainbow as a sign of God's covenant, and of his ultimate goodness and love, is a beautiful symbol that can be readily understood.
- The dove: The dove in the story of Noah, carrying an olive branch as a sign that the waters had receded, is seen as a symbol of peace. It is also a sign of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Spirit of God hovered over the waters of the first creation (Genesis 1:2), so the Spirit of God is present at this "new creation."
- Noah's Ark: The Ark itself is a symbol of the Church, the vessel in which God gathers us so that we might weather life's storms together in Christ and be brought to safe harbor in him.

This Chapter at a Glance

Noah

Activities

- Building an Ark
- The Church Is Our Ark

Scripture Passages Related to Noah

- Genesis 6:5–8 (The Lord is pleased with Noah)
- Genesis 6:9–22 (God’s request and Noah’s obedience)*
- Genesis 7:1–5 (God’s request regarding animals)
- Genesis 7:6–16 (Noah’s family and the animals enter the Ark)*
- Genesis 7:17–24 (The Flood)
- Genesis 8:1–12 (The end of the Flood)
- Genesis 8:13–19 (Noah’s family and the animals leave the Ark)*
- Genesis 8:20–22 (Noah’s sacrifice to God)
- Genesis 9:1–17 (God’s Covenant with Noah)*
- Matthew 24:37 (Jesus compares his coming at the end of time to the days of Noah)
- 1 Peter 3:20–22 (The story of Noah is a prefiguring of Baptism)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.

Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Noah

- God’s Bright Spot (Genesis 6:1–12)
- Got Gratitude? (Genesis 8:20–22)
- A Promising Sign (Genesis 9:8–17)



Noah and Young Adolescents Today

- Young adolescents are concerned about fairness to others and about being treated fairly themselves. The story of Noah assures us that God is ultimately fair. The wicked will bear the consequences of their behavior, and those who are trying to follow the right path will be saved. We do not always see this played out in this world, but we can be certain that God has prepared wonderful things for those who love him. (See 1 Corinthians 2:9.)

- Young adolescents today are concerned for the environment, including the preservation of wild natural spaces and endangered animal species. The story of Noah provides an encouragement and confirmation that God cares about the world he created. Caring for God's world is not only a service to ourselves and to future generations but also an act of love for God.
- Young people today need support in living their faith. The story of Noah helps them to understand that they can go through the storms of life if they have this support not only among family and friends but also from others in the Church.

Highlighting God's Presence

God said to Noah and his sons: "I am now making my covenant with you and with your descendants, and with all living beings—all birds and all animals—everything that came out of the boat with you. With these words I make my covenant with you: I promise that never again will all living beings be destroyed by a flood; never again will a flood destroy the earth. As a sign of this everlasting covenant which I am making with you and with all living beings, I am putting my bow in the clouds. It will be the sign of my covenant with the world. Whenever I cover the sky with clouds and the rainbow appears, I will remember my promise to you and to all the animals that a flood will never again destroy all living beings. When the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between me and all living beings on earth. That is the sign of the promise which I am making to all living beings." (Genesis 9:8–17)

Activities

Building an Ark

In this activity, the students make a replica of Noah's Ark, including the animals.

Preparation

1. Provide each student with a pair of scissors. You may need a knife or box cutter to cut cardboard at the students' request. Gather materials such as cardboard boxes (shoeboxes as well as larger boxes) and clear packing tape. Have clay or another malleable material ready to use to form the animals. You may also want to supply various colors of poster paint, if the students will be painting their Arks and animals.

2. Arrange the students in groups of three or four. (If you prefer to have the students work individually, have them make their Arks with shoeboxes and their animals correspondingly smaller.) Explain to the students that they will make a replica of Noah's Ark. Assure them that they need not concern themselves with the measurements in the Bible. They may make the Ark of a size comfortable for them and large enough to accommodate the animals they will be making. You may want to download a few pictures of Noah's Ark from the Internet so that the students can see other portrayals of Noah's Ark.
3. Distribute the art supplies and have the students begin working.
4. Allow time at the end of the session for the students to "tour" the work of their classmates. You may want to arrange for the Arks to be displayed in the parish center or another appropriate place.

The Church Is Our Ark

In this activity, the students experience the difficulty of being "the lone Christian" and the grace and gift of gathering in the Church as our Ark.

Preparation

1. Divide the class into groups of five or six. Appoint one student in each group as "the lone Christian." Appoint the others in the group as "Commandment breakers." Explain that we are just "pretending" for this exercise, and that we are all, of course, followers of Christ and none of us wants to be a Commandment breaker!
2. Explain that, for about 10 minutes, the Commandment breakers are to try to convince the lone Christian that going against the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and Jesus' command to love God and others is the best way to live. In return, the lone Christian will refute those claims and defend the Christian way of life as a life of love and true happiness.
3. After about 10 minutes, call the entire group together and say:
 - ▶ Let us all gather together in the Ark. The Ark is a symbol of the Church, and we are called to gather together in the Church to support one another.

(You may want to designate a specific area of the room as "The Ark" and set it off with a sign or an arrangement of chairs.) When the entire group is gathered, call the lone Christians to the front as a group. Invite these students to share how they felt about being the only one in their group to defend the Christian way of life. Open up this discussion to the entire class, asking for instances of feeling "alone" in living the Catholic faith.

4. Explain again that the Church is our Ark. We are never alone in living our faith because we are one in the Body of Christ. We go through the storms of life together! Gathering on Sunday for the Eucharist is one way to be strengthened in our faith. But, as we have seen, living our faith is harder to do when others do not share our beliefs and values. At these times, we must be strong, remember our Catholic religious education, share our faith with others, and make sure that we choose friends who support us in our faith.

Abraham

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Young adolescents can learn much about God’s love for them and the power of faith through the study of Abraham. Like most young people, Abraham is an ordinary person whom God calls to extraordinary faith. First, God calls Abraham to move his family. This is the kind of transition that young people know from moving into middle school or junior high, or from family moves and transitions.

Then God calls Abraham into a covenant relationship that requires something of both God and Abraham. Young people are very interested in relationships and the give-and-take required for those relationships. From the stories of Abraham, they can see that a good relationship requires that each party keep its commitments. They also see that even if their friends or family let them down, their God never will.

Finally, God calls Abraham to wait. Young people wait for rides, for the end of the school day, for vacation, for a friend to call. The stories about Abraham teach us that there is waiting and then there is “waiting in faith.” But luckily for all of us, God gives us many chances to be faithful. The students can also see that God rewards Abraham’s faith—and our own.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Getting to the Promised Land
- Moving On in Faith
- Covenants and Promises: Keeping Our Word

Scripture Passages Related to Abraham

- Genesis 11:27–32 (Abram’s family of origin)
- Genesis 12:1–9 (God calls Abram to leave Ur)*
- Genesis 14:17–24 (Melchizedek meets Abram)
- Genesis 15:1–21 (God makes a Covenant with Abram)*

- Genesis 16:1–16 (Hagar gives birth to Ishmael)
- Genesis 17:1–8,15–16 (God changes Abram’s and Sarai’s names)*
- Genesis 17:9–13 (God asks for circumcision as a sign of the Covenant)*
- Genesis 18:1–15 (God promises to send Sarah and Abraham a son)
- Genesis 21:1–8 (The birth of Isaac)*
- Genesis 21:9–21 (Abraham sends Hagar out to the desert)
- Genesis 22:1–19 (God commands Abraham to sacrifice Isaac)*
- Genesis 23: 1–19 (The burial of Sarah)
- Genesis 25:7–11 (The burial of Abraham)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Abraham

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Abraham
- From Story to History (Genesis 11:10–32)
- An Act of Faith (Genesis 12:1–9)
- Priest of the Most High God (Genesis 14:17–20)
- Fear and Faith (Genesis 15:1–15)
- What’s in a Name? (Genesis 17:1–22)
- Surprises from God (Genesis 18:1–15)
- Don’t Look Back (Genesis 19:1–29)
- The Ultimate Sacrifice (Genesis 22:1–19)

Abraham and Young Adolescents Today

- God calls Abram and Sarai to move away from their familiar lives to a new territory so as to grow in their relationship with him; the young adolescent is in the midst of a transition from childhood to adolescence and can identify with the excitement and nervousness Abram and Sarai probably experienced in their move to Canaan.
- Several elements mark the faith Abram has in God: it involves personal trust, risk, an ongoing process, and times of darkness or doubt. Young people can be shown how to compare their own faith experience of God with these elements of Abram and Sarai’s faith.
- Abram shows hospitality to strangers as a normal part of his family life; the young adolescent can recognize the importance of hospitality in the family home.

Highlighting God’s Presence

The LORD said to Abram: “Leave your country, your relatives, and your father’s home, and go to a land that I am going to show you. I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation.” (Genesis 12:1–2)

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am the Almighty God. Obey me and always do what is right. I will make my covenant with you and give you many descendants. . . .

“I will keep my promise to you and to your descendants in future generations as an everlasting covenant. I will be your God and the God of your descendants. I will give to you and to your descendants this land in which you are now a foreigner.” (Genesis 17:1–2,7–8)

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time, “I make a vow by my own name—the LORD is speaking—that I will richly bless you. Because you did this and did not keep back your only son from me, I promise that I will give you as many descendants as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand along the seashore. Your descendants will conquer their enemies. All the nations will ask me to bless them as I have your descendants—all because you obeyed my command.” (Genesis 22:15–18)

Activities

Getting to the Promised Land

In this activity, the students review the stories about Abraham while playing a short game that helps them to review the geography of the region.

Preparation

- Make enough copies of the handout “Traveling with Abraham” (Document #: TX002877) so that you can give one to each small group of four.
- Have a penny, a nickel, a dime, and a quarter, ideally, and markers available for each game group.
- Provide each group with twenty-four index cards, four pens, and a copy of the readings from “Scripture Passages Related to Abraham.”
- Provide a Bible for each young person.
- Assemble prizes if desired. Suggestions are listed after step 4.

1. Divide the class into groups of four. Have each young person take turns reading aloud the Bible passages that pertain to Abram or Abraham.
2. Give each group a set of twenty-four index cards and four pens. Instruct the students to each take six cards and a pen and then to write a question about Abraham's story and its answer on the front of each card. (An example might be the following: *Question:* From what city do Abram and Sarai leave? *Answer:* Ur)
- 
 3. When all of the students have made their six cards, collect each group's set of cards. Distribute the handout "Traveling with Abraham" (Document #: TX002877), four coins, and markers to each group. Also give each group a set of index card questions that another group created.
4. Provide the students with these instructions:
 - ▶ Have the oldest person at the table start. The person to his or her left takes an index card and reads the question. (Play then proceeds to the left with the next player reading the next question.) If a player answers the question correctly, he or she flips the coin. "Heads" means that the student moves one space, and "tails" means that he or she moves two spaces. A missed answer leaves the student on the same space. Arriving on the Haran spot gives the player a two-space bonus move.

For prizes, consider offering some biblical food: grapes, figs, pita bread, olives, or honey as well as some contemporary refreshments.

Moving On in Faith

In this activity, the students explore through skits Abram and Sarai's decision to move away from home.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
1. Introduce this activity by suggesting that moving, whether to a new house, school, or soccer team, can be intense. The letting go of the known for the unknown can be exciting as well as unsettling. Discuss with the students their experiences of moving. Ask these questions:
 - ▶ What was exciting about moving and why?
 - ▶ What was difficult about moving and why?
 - ▶ How did you change as a person as a result of this move?



2. Ask a student to read Genesis 12:1–9 aloud to the group. Then read the article “An Act of Faith” (Genesis 12:1–9) from *Breakthrough!* Invite the students to respond to the following questions:
 - ▶ Abram and Sarai, being well-established in Ur with friends and family, must have found it difficult to leave for Canaan. So, why did they go? (Because God promised them many descendants and a homeland.)
 - ▶ What did having many descendants mean to them? (In the ancient world, people believed that they lived on through their descendants’ memory of them. Thus, when God promises Abram and Sarai many descendants, the promise implies a certain immortality for them.)
 - ▶ What does the promise of a homeland mean to Abram and Sarai? (The promise of a homeland means that this “new people” would be associated with a place in a distinct way.)
3. Divide the class into several small groups. Ask each group to create a skit that shows Abram and Sarai explaining to family and friends why they are moving. Suggest that they might want to include dialogue about what Abram’s God is like, what promises he has made to them, and how he promises to be faithful.
4. After enjoying the skits, highlight the similarities and differences between them. Have the students privately reflect on whether they have ever had to make changes in their lives that were hard for other people to understand. Ask them to consider what they might learn from Abram and Sarai’s move. Ask the students to reflect on ways they could invite God into the next move they make.

Covenants and Promises: Keeping Our Word

In this activity, the students explore the nature of covenants, using a beanbag toss as a symbolic tool.

Preparation

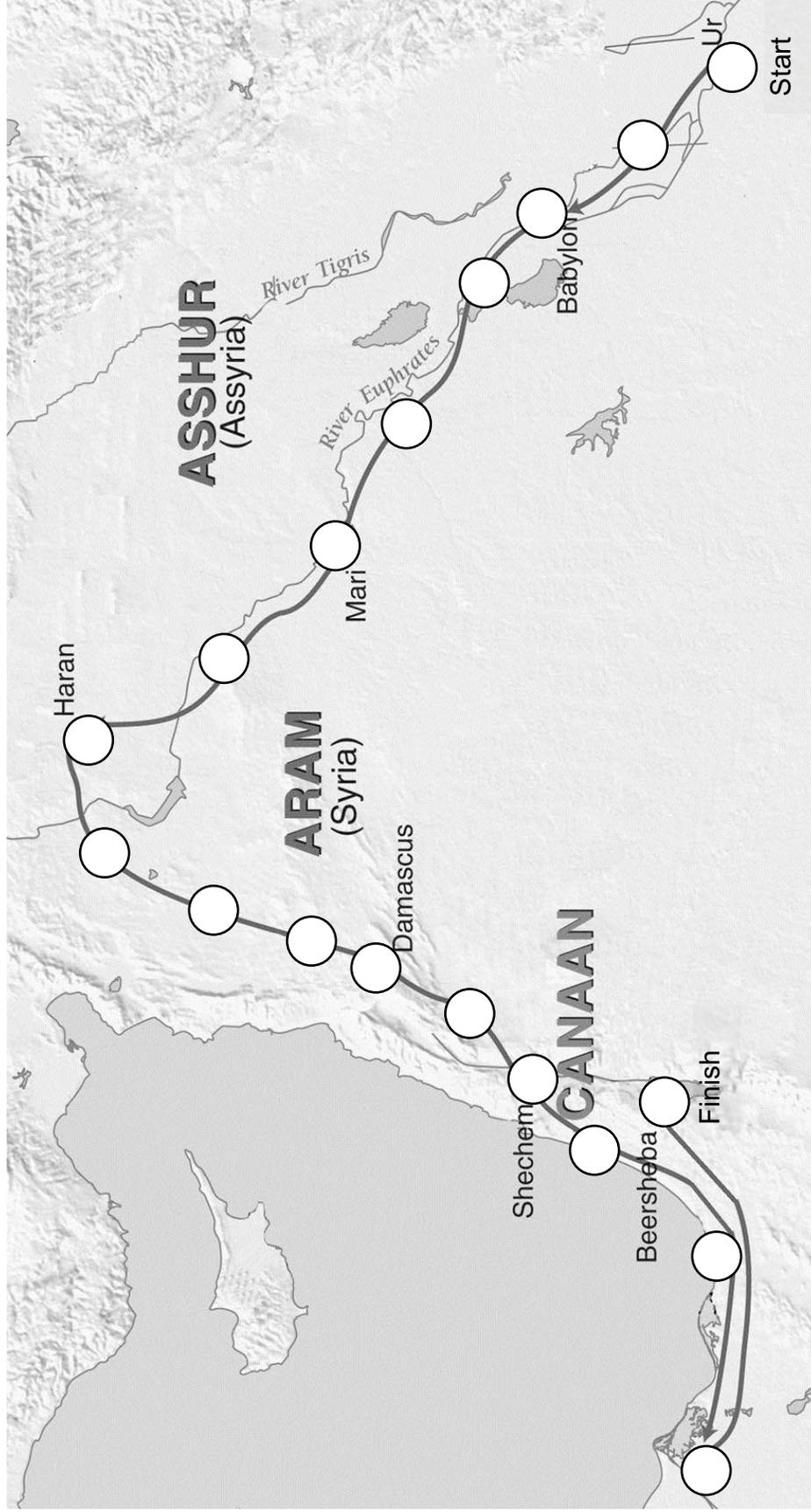
- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
 - ❑ Bring beanbags to class, one for every two students.
1. Introduce this activity by explaining that God’s concern for humanity reaches new heights through Abram and Sarai’s lives. God makes a covenant with them and their descendants. Read Genesis 15:7–21 aloud to the class. Ask the students to share what they know of covenants and how they are made. Provide them with the following information:

- ▶ A covenant is an unconditional promise of faithfulness. Covenants are made through rituals that are public in some way. The ritual that Abram and God performed was used by the people of the Middle East to signify complete fidelity, even if it meant giving up one's own life if it was broken.
2. Move the discussion of covenant into the present day. Ask the students where they see covenant-type relationships being forged today. (Possibilities include marriage, vowed religious life, swearing on a Bible in court, the oath of office the president takes, and so on) Ask, What symbols or gestures accompany these covenant events?
 Note that unfortunately our human experience of covenant relationships is mixed as we see many people unable to live completely faithful to their lifelong promises. But God can be completely faithful in a way that we cannot. (In addition, emphasize that with God's help, we can live covenant relationships with greater faithfulness.)
 3. Help the students to distinguish between a covenant and a contract. (A covenant is unconditional in its terms; a contract has conditional terms.) Ask the students to interpret the message that the ritual between God and Abram conveys. ("If either of us breaks the covenant, may we end up like the animals beside us!")
 4. Discuss with the students the importance of promises. Note that a mini-covenant experience is making a promise or "giving your word." Ask the young people these questions:
 - ▶ What does it mean to give your word? (or to follow through on a commitment?)
 - ▶ How important is it to keep our promises?
 - ▶ How do you feel when someone keeps their word to you? breaks their word to you?
 5. Take the students outside or to an inside open space. Divide the class in half, putting one half in a line and then putting the other half facing the line, about three feet apart. Each student should have a partner. Give each pair a beanbag. Ask them to toss the beanbag back and forth. If they do not drop the bag, have them go back a step and again throw it back and forth. The young people should do this until they are so far away that they cannot reach their partner.
 6. Have the students explain to you what makes for a successful beanbag partnership and what circumstances can get in the way. Using these or similar words, explain that throwing a beanbag back and forth can give us some insight into covenant relationships:
 - ▶ If you think of the beanbag as a symbol of a covenant, note that keeping the "covenant" afloat first requires two people. There are

no one-person covenants. In addition, both parties are responsible for keeping it “afloat” or going. If one person stops focusing on the “covenant,” they are more likely to drop it or throw it poorly to their partner. The farther apart the partners are also contributes to whether or not the beanbag covenant has a safe flight. Relationships that become distanced threaten any covenant that has been made.

- ▶ Both parties throwing the beanbag have hope that it will stay airborne. When one person “drops the ball,” the other can be frustrated or disappointed. A key element of covenant making is covenant remaking. How do we forgive others for dropping the ball? How do we pick up the ball and resume our relationship?
 - ▶ While everyday promises may not always seem earth-shattering, they form the type of person we will be when we enter into covenant relationships and the way we are in relationship with God.
 - ▶ God always invite us to resume the covenant, to pick up the ball, to move closer.
7. Conclude by praying the Lord’s Prayer slowly, emphasizing the importance of forgiveness we are called to share.

Traveling with Abraham



Sarah

Sarah

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The power and paradoxical promises of God are revealed in the biblical story of Abraham and Sarah. The first thing we learn about Sarai (Sarah) in Genesis, chapter 11, is that she cannot have children (v. 30). This small biographical detail is significant to the unfolding story of Abram and Sarai in partnership with God. In a culture where women were honored for their reproductive abilities, there was shame in being a woman unable to bear children. Young people also have secret or public shortcomings that make them vulnerable to feeling inferior or being made to feel lesser by their peers.

Luckily, the God of Abraham and Sarah brings honor to those whom society shames. This God is also one of loving surprises who can bring blessing out of challenge and difficulty. It is important for young people to consider that God does not see them with the critical eye of other people their age. In fact, God can strengthen and bless them if they experience being an outsider.

God's invitation to our first biblical patriarch and matriarch can be described as an invitation to trust and believe in what is possible in partnership with God—and they do, for the most part. God fulfills his promises to Abraham and Sarah, who cooperate with him. Abraham's promised son will be born only to Sarah. Sarah is significant to the fulfillment of God's promises and plan for all humankind.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- A Paradigm of Promise: Who Is Projecting the Picture?
- The “Eye-Popper” Activity
- Inside Out and Upside Down

Scripture Passages Related to Sarah

- Genesis 11:29–32 (Sarai enters the Scripture story)
- Genesis 12:1–9 (Call of Abram and Sarai)*
- Genesis 12:10–20; 20:1–18 (Sarai, Abram’s wife or sister?)
- Genesis 16:1–6 (Sarai tries to control the family plan)*
- Genesis 17:1–22 (God corrects the family plan)*
- Genesis 18:1–15 (God’s promise)*
- Genesis 21:1–8 (Birth of Isaac)*
- Genesis 23:1–20 (Death of Sarah)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Sarah

- Breakthrough! Interview with Sarah
- An Act of Faith (Genesis 12:1–9)
- What’s in a Name? (Genesis 17:1–22)
- Surprises from God (Genesis 18:1–15)
- Jealousy (Genesis 21:9–21)

Sarah and Young Adolescents Today

- Sarai adapts to Abram’s plans to travel with their household. Many students must adapt to new schools and neighborhoods for varied reasons—parental employment, separation, divorce, or family lifestyle changes.
- Sarah is influenced by the culture’s social pressures for women to have children, which were not in keeping with God’s initial plan for Sarah. Peer pressure can negatively influence young people today to conform to social expectations not in keeping with God’s plan for them.



- Sarah’s lack of patience with God’s promise prompted her to make choices that brought pain to others and to herself. The natural impatience of young adolescents can cause problems for others and themselves. (See the article “Jealousy” [Genesis 21:9–21] in *Breakthrough!* to discuss this topic further with your students.)
- Sarah was pleasantly surprised to become pregnant at an advanced age. Young people experience both positive and negative surprises in their lives.

Highlighting God's Presence

God said to Abraham, "You must no longer call your wife, Sarai; from now on her name will be Sarah. I will bless her, and I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she will become the mother of nations, and there will be kings among her descendants." (Genesis 17:15–16)

Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Can I really have a child when I am so old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? As I said, nine months from now I will return and Sarah will have a son." (Genesis 18:13–14)

The Lord blessed Sarah as he had promised, and she became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham when he was old. (Genesis 21:1–2)

Activities

A Paradigm of Promise: Who Is Projecting the Picture?

Sarah is the first barren woman we encounter in the Bible whom God blesses with offspring (Genesis 11:30, 21:1–2). Old Testament figures Rebecca (Genesis 25:21), Rachel (Genesis 29:31, 30:22–24), and Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1–7, 19–20) are also initially barren. In the New Testament, we hear the story of childless Elizabeth, Mary's cousin, and the miraculous birth of her son, John (Luke 1:26–37, 57–58).

This activity heightens the students' awareness of the kind of conditioning that society can give us, influencing the way that we see the world and God. Sarah's offering of Hagar to Abraham in Genesis, chapter 16 enables the students to explore these questions: Are their actions rooted in trust in God's promises, or are their decisions based on the promises of peers, the media, and other influencing aspects of their lives? Who "conditions" the way they see their lives?

Preparation

- ❑ Make a copy of the three resource sheets: "The Old Woman" (Document #: TX002878); "The Young Woman" (Document #: TX002879); and "The Woman" (Document #: TX002880). The images can be either held up for the class to observe or projected onto a screen. (The first two resource sheets are pictures that "condition" the student to see a particular image in the third resource sheet.)
1. Ask the students to take turns reading aloud the stories about Sarah from "Scripture Passages Related to Sarah."

2. Ask the students to answer this question, using a scale of one to ten one means not at all and ten signifies completely: “How much is the way you view the world influenced by the culture: media, politics, customs?” Discuss the students’ answers and explain that you will return to them.



3. Divide the class in half. One half of the class will spend 30 seconds viewing the resource sheet “The Old Woman” (Document #: TX002878) while the other half of the class closes their eyes. (The students closing their eyes can hum the theme to *Jeopardy* or another song two times to help pass the time.)



4. The students who viewed “The Old Woman” are to close their eyes (and hum), while the ones who previously had their eyes closed are to view the resource sheet “The Young Woman” (Document #: TX002879) for 30 seconds.



5. Show the resource sheet “The Woman” (Document #: TX002880) to all of the students and discuss what the image looks like. Ask: “Is the woman in the picture old or young? What are some of her physical characteristics?”

(If the students have never done this exercise, they should describe the woman as old or young according to the image that they viewed previously for 30 seconds. Those who looked at the first resource sheet will likely describe an old woman, and those who observed the second resource sheet will likely describe a young woman.)

6. Tell the students that you just “conditioned” them to see the picture in a particular way. Then show the first resource sheet, “The Old Woman,” to the group that viewed the second resource sheet, “The Young Woman,” and vice versa. Discuss what image they initially saw when they viewed the third resource sheet, “The Woman.” Highlight that this conditioning took only 30 seconds! Ask the students to react to this experience, especially in light of their response in step 2.

7. Ask the students to think about some of the things that condition them to see the world in a particular way. Television, film, magazines, advertising, and friends all influence the way young people see themselves and the world around them. Note that they spend much more time than 30 seconds with these influences! Discuss these questions with the students:

- ▶ Do people and things condition you to see the world in a certain way? Can you prevent this?
- ▶ Do people and things condition you to see God in your lives?
- ▶ What conditions you to have trust in God’s promises and plans for you?

8. Ask the students to consider the way that Sarai acts in Genesis 16:1–6. Ask these questions:
 - ▶ What kind of conditioning does Sarai seem to have received?
 - ▶ Did Sarai not trust God’s promise that she and Abram would have children, or was she conditioned by the culture around her when she offered her servant girl, Hagar, to Abram?
 - ▶ To what extent does social conditioning affect our own ability to listen to God?
9. Conclude with comments about the importance of giving God time to condition the way we see our relationships with God, self, others, and the world around us.

The “Eye Popper” Activity

In this activity, the students use the surprising nature of the party favor “eye poppers” as a way of talking about the surprising nature of God.

Preparation

- ❑ Purchase a bag of “eye poppers” party favors at a party supply store or from an online vendor. The theological idea in this activity can be communicated with just one eye popper, but the students enjoy the surprise of having a handful of poppers thrown into the air for them to catch! Tell the students to keep them as a reminder that God is full of surprises.
1. Introduce the students to the God of Abraham and Sarah, a God of surprises, by reading the stories listed under “Scripture Passages Related to Sarah,” highlighting Genesis 11:30 and Genesis 12:1–4. Explain that God’s promise to make Abram’s name great meant that God would bless him and his wife with children. Then ask the students why God would choose this particular couple in God’s mission to bless the world. With that introduction, throw a handful of eye poppers into the air for the students to catch, and let the students enjoy the chaos.
 2. Let the students play with these poppers for a couple minutes, turning them inside out and upside down on a flat surface and waiting for the surprise jump into the air. Settle the class and ask what theological lessons can be drawn from this exercise of inversion and surprise? Guide the conversation toward some of these themes:
 - ▶ God reverses our understanding of the way things should work, and this is sometimes called the “divine reversal.” (Several other biblical passages point to this reality: Hannah’s Prayer

[1 Samuel 2:1–10], the *Magnificat* [Luke 1:46–55], and the Beatitudes [Matthew 5:3–11].)

- ▶ “[I]n our weakness you perfect your power and on the feeble bestow strength to bear you witness, through Christ our Lord” (from “Preface I of Holy Martyrs,” *Roman Missal*). There are numerous biblical narratives and stories of the saints that support this paradoxical promise.
 - ▶ God’s love knows no bounds. The Spirit of God moves as the Spirit wills. We need to be ready and willing to encounter divine love, which is often revealed in unexpected and surprising ways.
3. Conclude by having a student read Genesis 22:17. Share the following insights, using these or similar words:
- ▶ Abraham is considered the father of faith for three world religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, so his spiritual descendants are today as numerous as the stars. God reveals in the story of Abraham and Sarah that nothing is impossible when you are willing to follow a God of surprises!

Inside Out and Upside Down

The students may be familiar with the song “Spinnin’ Around,” by Jump5 (on the album *The Very Best of Jump5*, by Jump5 [Sparrow/Emd, 2005]). This tune captures a sense of the paradoxes and surprises of God. Sarah and Abraham’s journey with God kept them “spinnin’ around,” and when they kept their eyes and heart on God, it was a joyful journey enriched by laughter!

You could either listen to the song in class and have the students make connections between the concepts of the biblical story and the lyrics of the music, or you could make the connections on your own and bring these ideas into discussion in class. You might suggest that the students interject God as a replacement for the “you” of the song.

The Old Woman

(Teacher Resource)



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The Young Woman

(Teacher Resource)



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The Woman

(Teacher Resource)



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Isaac

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Isaac's story connects with the lives of young adolescents in several areas. His life, with its ups and downs, can challenge the misconception that biblical characters' lives are so very different from ours. Just as God was present in the up-and-down moments of Isaac's life, God is also present in the ups and downs of our own lives.

Isaac is the promise that God made to his parents, Abraham and Sarah. In a culture today that often says you are important for what you do, what you wear, or how you look, Isaac's birth reminds us that each person is important because he or she is a promise of God. The word *promise* is used in different ways in our society so it is important to sort out what type of promise God's promise is.

Isaac was also tested. Young people experience various challenges, big and small. It is important that they realize that God is close in all the challenges they face.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Isaac's Ups and Downs
- Isaac Is a Promise
- Being Tested

Scripture Passages Related to Isaac

- Genesis 21:1–8 (Isaac's birth)*
- Genesis 21:9–13 (Isaac plays with Ishmael)
- Genesis 22:1–19 (Abraham leads Isaac to sacrifice)*
- Genesis 23:1–19 (Sarah dies)
- Genesis, chapter 24 (Isaac's servant brings Rebecca to Isaac)*
- Genesis 25:1–6 (Abraham remarries, has children, and leaves all to Isaac)

- Genesis 25:19–26 (Rebecca gives birth to their sons, Esau and Jacob)*
- Genesis 25:27–34 (Isaac’s family dynamics)*
- Genesis, chapter 26 (Isaac and Abimelech)
- Genesis 27:1–29 (Isaac gives Jacob, rather than Esau, a blessing)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.

Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Isaac



Isaac

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Isaac
- What’s in a Name? (Genesis 17:1–22)
- Surprises from God (Genesis 18:1–15)
- Jealousy (Genesis 21:9–21)
- The Ultimate Sacrifice (Genesis 22:1–19)
- A Match Made in Heaven (Genesis 24:57–67)
- Thanks for Siblings (Genesis 25:19–34)

Isaac and Young Adolescents Today

- Isaac came from ancestors and from parents. He has a lineage as do the students.
- Isaac’s name has a special meaning. Young people have been given names for particular reasons, and this makes up part of their identity.
- Isaac’s birth is a promise to Abraham. Each person’s birth is a promise and a gift.
- Isaac has a half brother, Ishmael, and experiences the joy and tension of a blended family. Some students are part of blended families. (See the article “Jealousy” [Genesis 21:9–21] in *Breakthrough!* for a discussion of this dynamic in Isaac’s family.)
- God’s request to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac was a test for Isaac. Young people face tests of various types in their lives.
- Isaac loses his mother and his father remarries. Some young adolescents have already lost loved ones.
- Isaac’s own sons are rivals and experience favoritism from their parents. Some young people experience these family dynamics at home.



Highlighting God's Presence

"Don't hurt the boy or do anything to him," he said. "Now I know that you honor and obey God, because you have not kept back your only son from him." (Genesis 22:12; the angel of the Lord)

Laban and Bethuel answered, "Since this matter comes from the LORD, it is not for us to make a decision." (Genesis 24:50)

Because Rebecca had no children, Isaac prayed to the LORD for her. The LORD answered his prayer, and Rebecca became pregnant. (Genesis 25:21)

Activities

Isaac's Ups and Downs

In this activity, the students review or learn about the story of Isaac and focus on the high and low points of his story.

Preparation

- ❑ Create a time line for the Isaac story on newsprint or on the blackboard prior to meeting as a class. You can subdivide the time line with the headings "birth," "youth," "adulthood," and "old age." The space above the time line should indicate a "high point" in life, the line itself an "average point," and below the line is a "low point."
 - ❑ If you would like to give the students the poem "Footprints," make enough copies of the handout "Footprints" (Document #: TX002881) on nice paper to hand out.
 - ❑ Make sure that each group of students has a Bible.
1. Divide the class into six groups, and assign each group one of the biblical stories that has an asterisk in "Scripture Passages." For each biblical story, tell the students to do the following tasks:
 - Write down the chapter and verse in Genesis that corresponds to the story.
 - Summarize the plot of the story.
 - Decide whether or not this story describes a low, average, or high point in Isaac's life and why. (If the story has more than one type of experience, ask the students to identify them all in terms of highs and lows.)
 - Look for God's presence in the story. If God is directly mentioned, what does God do or say, either himself or through a messenger?

(Note that God can be working whether he is mentioned by name or not.)

2. Go through the Isaac stories in order, asking each group to share the summary of the story. After each group shares the summary, instruct a representative to go up to the board and pick a spot to put the story on the time line, explaining the group's choice. Invite comment or discussion.
3. Ask the students whether they think that Isaac had a pretty typical life, or one that was characterized by many highs and lows.
4. Return to the stories, in order, and ask each group to share whether they saw God acting in the stories. Have a volunteer map God's presence on the time line while the groups share. (The volunteer might use an adjective to describe God's presence in a given situation such as "testing" or "reassuring," for example.)
5. Conclude by discussing that God is present in our lives all the time. The poem "Footprints" is a helpful illustration of God's presence whether visible or invisible. Distribute the copies of the handout "Footprints" (Document #: TX002881) to the young people and invite them to reflect on what it means.



Isaac Is a Promise

In this activity, the students contemplate the meaning of the word *promise* and then consider themselves as God's promise.

Preparation

- The students will each need a Bible, a paper, and a pen.
 - Make copies of the handout "Promises" (Document #: TX002882), one for each student.
 - Review Genesis, chapter 21.
1. Distribute the handout "Promises" (Document #: TX002882) to the young people and go over the directions with them. Give them 5 or more minutes to put several answers in each of the boxes on the handout.
 2. Write the headings from the handout chart on the board. Then ask the students to share their answers while a student volunteer records them.



3. Ask these questions about the different categories on the board:
 - ▶ What happens when these different types of promises are kept?
 - ▶ What happens when they are broken? (Play devil's advocate, if necessary, to encourage the students to explore the concept of promise more deeply.)
4. Ask a volunteer to read Genesis, chapter 21, aloud. Ask:
 - ▶ What type of promises does God make? What are God's promises like?
5. Conclude by asking the young people to consider this question:
 - ▶ What does it mean for you to be a promise of God or the fulfillment of God's promise, as was Isaac?

Being Tested

In this activity, the students look to see that God is present when life tests them, just as he was there when Isaac was tested.

1. Arrange the students into groups of three and have them read Genesis 22:1–19, with each person taking a role: Abraham, Isaac, or the angel of the Lord. Afterward, ask each group to prepare a short role-play of this reading. Encourage the students to reflect on the feelings that they imagine each of the figures had and to communicate those feelings not just in the tone of voice they use during the role-play but also in the gestures, speed of walking, and facial expressions that they use. You may want the students to write up a script first.

Another possibility would be to use the already-made skit for "Abraham and Isaac," from *Ready-to-Go Scripture Skits . . . That Teach Serious Stuff*, by Michael Theisen (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004).
2. Invite several groups to present their role-plays. Afterward, ask:
 - ▶ What is similar in these role-plays? What is different?

Ask each group to explain their own depiction. Note on the board the types of emotions that emerge in this story.
3. Give the students a few moments of silence, and ask them to think privately about times when they have felt the kinds of emotions noted on the board. Ask:
 - ▶ When have you been tested? What did you do?

Invite the students to share as they feel comfortable.

4. Conclude the discussion of Isaac's test with these thoughts, using these or similar words:
- ▶ All of us go through times that feel very much like the journey that Abraham and Isaac took. Even people who are following the will of God sometimes feel alone and scared. It is important to remember that God is with us and that God wants us to come through our test with feelings of hope and joy like Isaac and Abraham did.

Isaac

Variation

Have the students read the *Breakthrough!* article "The Ultimate Sacrifice" (Genesis 22:1–19) to discuss the parallels between Abraham, Isaac, and Jesus.



Footprints

One night a man had a dream about walking along the beach with the Lord. The sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: his and the Lord's.

After the last scene flashed before him, he looked at the footprints, noticing that at the most difficult times in his life there was only one set of footprints.

"Lord, you said you'd walk with me all the way if I followed you. But during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. Why did you leave me when I needed you most?"

The Lord replied, "I love you and would never leave you. In your times of trial and suffering when you only see one set of footprints, that was when I carried you."

Author Unknown

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Author Unknown



Promises

Describe the kind of promises that are made in the following areas, giving several examples for each one.

<p style="text-align: center;">Friends</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Family</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">School</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Government</p>

What are the characteristics of God's promises? Circle the promises above that most resemble God's promises.



Jacob

Preparing to Teach about Jacob

Overview

Jacob is a complex figure. His initial deceit in cooperation with Rebecca to obtain Isaac's blessing is a tough story for many young people. They ask, "How did he become such an important person in the Bible if he did that?" Clearly, God still blesses people even when they fail in living moral lives. This subtlety can help young people to see that not just "the really good kids" can be people through whom God works; everyone can!

Esau's forgiveness of Jacob is also a powerful witness to the way that people can overcome damage that has been done to them and grow because of it. Esau's example challenges the students to expect more from themselves (with God's help) and to be able to hope that reconciliation can occur in some of their own troubled relationships.

Jacob's love for Rachel is beautiful. Despite the way that Laban treats him, he is willing to stay on with him because of her. Young people search for models of what "true love" is. In addition, they can easily imagine the jealousy between the two young wives who both want to bear children and be seen as special in Jacob's eyes.

Do family patterns repeat themselves? Although this part of Jacob's story is usually covered in the study of Joseph, it is interesting that after suffering from parental favoritism, Jacob himself has a favorite son. This choice causes him much pain, but again God works through it all. If the young people could come away from Jacob's story saying, "God can work through it all," they would have learned an important and relevant lesson.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Comic Book Life of Jacob
 - Jacob's Extended Family and Our Own
 - Jacob and Reconciliation
-
-

Scripture Passages Related to Jacob

- Genesis 25:19–26 (The birth of Esau and Jacob to Isaac and Rebecca)
- Genesis 25:27–34 (Esau sells rights as firstborn son)*
- Genesis 27:1–45 (Rebecca and Jacob deceive Isaac, and Jacob receives blessing)*
- Genesis 28:10–22 (Jacob’s dream at Bethel)*
- Genesis 29:1–14 (Jacob arrives at Laban’s house)
- Genesis 29:15–30 (Jacob marries Leah and Rachel)*
- Genesis 29:31—30:24 (Birth of Jacob’s children)
- Genesis 31:1–55 (Jacob flees from Laban)
- Genesis 32:22–30 (Jacob receives the name Israel)*
- Genesis 33:1–20 (Jacob meets Esau)*
- Genesis 35:16–21 (Rachel’s death)
- Genesis 35:22–25 (A list of the sons of Jacob)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.

Jacob

Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Jacob

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Jacob
- Thanks for Siblings (Genesis 25:19–34)
- Esau’s Dilemma (Genesis 27:1–29)
- An Imperfect Believer (Genesis 30:25–43)
- Jacob’s Wrestling Match (Genesis 32:22–32)
- A Moment of Great Power (Genesis 33:1–11)
- The Tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:8–12)
- To Be Continued (Genesis, chapter 50)



Jacob and Young Adolescents Today

- The story of Jacob revolves around troubling family dynamics: each parent favors a different child over the other and the two children are rivals. Some young adolescents also experience difficult dynamics in their families.
- The story of Isaac’s blessing of Jacob demonstrates the power of the spoken word in ancient cultures. Young people also can see how the words they use build up or hurt people.

- The story of Jacob is about reconciliation, especially in families. Young people need and have experienced reconciliation within their families.
- The story of Jacob is about positive transformations that can happen in our lives through memorable events, even hard ones. Young people also carry the memories of significant experiences in their lives.
- The story of Jacob emphasizes the importance of our extended families. Many young people also have experiences of extended families.

Highlighting God’s Presence

And there was the LORD standing beside him [Jacob]. “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham and Isaac,” he said. “I will give to you and to your descendants this land on which you are lying. They will be as numerous as the specks of dust on the earth.” (Genesis 28:13–14)

“Your name will no longer be Jacob. You have struggled with God and with men, and you have won; so your name will be Israel.” (Genesis 32:28; the man wrestling with Jacob)

God said to Jacob, “Go to Bethel at once, and live there. Build an altar there to me, the God who appeared to you when you were running away from your brother Esau.” (Genesis 35:1)

Activities

Comic Book Life of Jacob

In this activity, the students use comic strips to familiarize themselves with the story of Jacob and to share the story with one another. For the first part of this activity, follow the four steps that can be found in appendix 2, “Tools for Teaching,” under the heading “The Comic Book Approach,” on pages 243–244. Use the readings for Jacob in the “Scripture Passages Related to Jacob” section.

1. After the students have created and shared their comics with each other, ask them to think about the whole Jacob story and then to reflect on one or more of these questions:
 - ▶ What is the moral of this story?
 - ▶ If this comic was made into a movie, what would its title be?
 - ▶ What does Jacob learn from his life?

These are other questions you may want to pose to your students:

- ▶ How is God’s promise to Abraham and Isaac continued in the life of Jacob?
- ▶ What does the saying “What goes around, comes around” mean?
- ▶ How is this saying true in the life of Jacob, and what about Jacob’s story challenges its truth?

Note to Teacher. To help you prepare for the following activities, it is strongly recommended that you read a book titled *Son of Laughter*, by Frederick Buechner (New York: HarperCollins, 1993). This book is a fictionalized account of the biblical character Jacob, the son of Isaac, whose name means “laughter.” These pages in particular bring the biblical story to life for the students.

- pages 73–75 (Rebecca discusses her plan with Jacob)
- pages 80–86 (Isaac blesses Jacob)
- pages 164–166 (Jacob and Esau meet again)

Jacob’s Extended Family and Our Own

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
 - ❑ Make copies of the handout “The Patriarch Family Tree” (Document #: TX002883), one for each student.
 - ❑ Have a visible map of the United States on a bulletin board, a globe, and thumbtacks.
 - ❑ If you are not familiar with family trees, look on the Internet; there are quite a few sites with information about them.
1. Invite young people to read aloud Genesis, chapters 29 through 31, the parts of Jacob’s story that relate to his Uncle Laban’s family.
 2. In pairs or individually, have the students fill in the handout “The Patriarch Family Tree” (Document #: TX002883).
 3. After reviewing the trees as a class, examine the part of the tree that includes Jacob, Leah and Rachel, and Laban. Discuss these questions with the students:
 - ▶ How well do Jacob and Laban relate?
 - ▶ How well does Jacob relate with Rachel and Leah?
 - ▶ What does Jacob learn about himself after twenty years with his extended family?



4. On a separate sheet of paper, have the students create their own family tree going back at least to their grandparents. (Get a reading from your group as to whether or not they need to go home and gather information or if they can complete the assignment during the same session.)
5. When the trees are complete, invite the students to share something about their family tree with the class. They might want to show the class where they fit on the tree, identify their favorite relatives, share family customs, and definitely talk about where their relatives live. Have a large map of the United States and of your own state on a bulletin board or a similar surface and have the students put thumbtacks in the areas of the state and country where their relatives live. (International family members can be listed on the board or found on a globe.)
6. After the students have shared their family trees, go back to the story of Jacob and Esau's reconciliation (Genesis 33:1–20). If time allows, invite the students to share a story of reconciliation from their own families if appropriate.

Jacob and Reconciliation

Preparation

- Each student needs a Bible, paper, a pen, and markers.
 - Provide cutout pictures of human faces from newspapers, magazines, and other sources (or simply the sources themselves).
1. Have the students read Genesis 33:1–20, and then ask these questions:
 - ▶ How is Jacob expecting to be received by Esau?
 - ▶ What does Jacob do to prepare for this meeting and why?
 - ▶ How does Esau receive him and why?
 2. After discussing these questions with the students, ask them to reflect on this question:
 - ▶ At the meeting with Esau, Jacob says, “To see your face is for me like seeing the face of God” (Genesis 33:10). Given what just happened to Jacob the previous night, what does this mean?
 3. Have the students consider how faces convey meaning. Distribute the newspapers and magazines you have brought. Have the students

find six different facial expressions in magazine pictures. (If some of the young people are artistic, allow them to draw the faces.) Ask them to share their images and talk about what feelings they associate with each face. Then ask them to make the parallel with the story in Genesis and to consider what Esau's face must have looked like for Jacob to associate it with God.

Jacob

Leah and Rachel

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Though Jacob steals the spotlight in chapters 29–31 of Genesis, Rachel and Leah play important roles in fulfilling God’s promise to Abraham: that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. As the students learn more about the story of Leah and Rachel, they will see how God is a part of Leah and Rachel’s lives.

Leah and Rachel share the vulnerability of women in their era. Their father makes decisions for them. Neither Leah nor Rachel has a say in the way that their relationship with Jacob takes shape. In some ways, their lack of power contributes to their jealousy as they try to stay “even” in childbearing, another area in which they have no control.

Young people can relate to feeling vulnerable because many of them do not have very much say in the direction that their own lives take right now. Perhaps the story of these sisters can show them that petty rivalries can stem from having little control. Leah can bear children but Rachel is beautiful. This type of comparison is the type of reality that they know in their families and among their peers. Noticing how God helps both Leah and Rachel in their struggles and resolving not to compare themselves to others will hopefully bring the students some peace during what can be turbulent years.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- The Diaries of Two Sisters
- Sibling Rivalry

Scripture Passages Related to Leah and Rachel

- Genesis 29:1–14 (Rachel meets Jacob for the first time)*
- Genesis 29:15–20 (Jacob works seven years to marry Rachel)*
- Genesis 29:21–30 (Jacob marries Leah; Jacob marries Rachel in exchange for another seven years of work)*

- Genesis 29:31–35 (Leah bears four sons)*
- Genesis 30:1–21 (Leah and Rachel’s maidservants bear more children in the wives’ names)*
- Genesis 30:22–24 (Rachel gives birth to Joseph)*
- Genesis 31:1–21 (Rachel and Leah flee with Jacob, family and flocks)*
- Genesis 31:22–42 (Laban chases Jacob, wives, and family)*
- Genesis 35:16–20 (Rachel dies in childbirth with Benjamin)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.

Leah and Rachel



Article from *Breakthrough!* Related to Leah and Rachel

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Leah and Rachel

Leah and Rachel and Young Adolescents Today

- Rachel tends the sheep for her father. Many young adolescents are responsible for specific household chores.
- Jacob greets Rachel with an unexpected kiss. Young people often have to deal with the occasional kiss or hug from parents, relatives, or strangers when they say hello, even if they are uncomfortable with the practice.
- Of the two sisters, Rachel is the beautiful one. Young adolescents may feel that teachers, parents, coaches, and friends compare them with their brothers and sisters.
- Jacob pays a lot of attention to Rachel, who is clearly his favorite. Young people may sometimes feel that their parents, teachers, or friends play favorites.
- Laban secretly marries Leah to Jacob instead of Rachel, his promised bride. Young adolescents may feel disappointed when they do not get what they expect or what was promised from someone.
- When Rachel finally becomes pregnant with her son Joseph, she praises God for helping her. When young people overcome a difficult task or a hard time in their lives, they can be encouraged to thank and praise God for his help.

Highlighting God’s Presence

When the LORD saw that Leah was loved less than Rachel, he made it possible for her to have children, but Rachel remained childless. (Genesis 29:31)

God answered Leah's prayer, and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. (Genesis 30:17)

Then God remembered Rachel; he answered her prayer and made it possible for her to have children. (Genesis 30:22)

"All this wealth which God has taken from our father belongs to us and to our children. Do whatever God has told you." (Genesis 31:16; Leah and Rachel)

Activities

The Diaries of Two Sisters

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs paper and a pen.
 - ❑ Have enough Bibles available for every two people.
 - ❑ Post three sheets of blank newsprint so that the students can see them. Label one sheet "Facts" and the others "Insights–Leah" and "Insights–Rachel." (Have some additional sheets of newsprint on hand.)
 - ❑ Provide four sheets of newsprint and a marker for each small group of four people.
1. Divide the class into four groups of no more than eight. For larger groups, divide them into eight groups of four or more. (The number of small groups must be a multiple of four.) Hand out Bibles, paper, and pens.
 2. Divide the characters and stories among the groups. Half of the groups represent Leah and half represent Rachel. In a four-group model, instruct one Rachel group and one Leah group to read the first five passages in "Scripture Passages Related to Leah and Rachel." Assign the other two groups to read the last four readings. Tell the students to write on the paper which character they are writing about and their assigned Scripture passages.
 3. Provide the small groups with the following instructions, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ Each of your groups is assigned the character of either Leah or Rachel. Read the passages aloud from the Bible that talk about them and their lives. Think about how your "sister" acted, felt, and talked, and what she did in the story. If your character is not in a particular story, imagine what she thought, felt, talked about, or did when she heard someone tell her that story.

Leah and Rachel

- ▶ After you have read each passage, quietly write a diary entry on your sheet of paper that goes with the Bible reading from the perspective of your character.
4. Distribute four sheets of newsprint and a marker to each small group. When the small groups are finished writing, ask them to share their diary entries with each other. Using one sheet of the newsprint per Bible passage, ask each small group to come up with a common diary entry for each Bible passage based on what each person wrote individually.
 5. Gather the small groups together into the large group. Beginning with Genesis 29:4–14, ask the students to list the facts about Leah and Rachel’s lives. Write down their responses on the newsprint labeled “Facts.” Make sure that they put the facts in the right order and that each listing is complete.
 6. After getting the facts straight, starting with the first Bible passage, invite the small groups that represent Leah and Rachel to share their diary entries with the rest of the group. With input from the whole group, fill the newsprint pages with insights about Leah or Rachel that come from the diary entries.
 7. Share the following information about women characters in Scripture:
 - ▶ The Bible often focuses on the motherhood of female characters. Like many other women in the Old Testament, Leah and Rachel are an important part of the realization of God’s promise to Abraham—that Abraham’s descendants will be as numerous as the stars. Leah and Rachel have twelve sons who become the leaders of the tribes of Israel and Judah. We hear about the tribes of Israel and Judah even in the Gospels.
 8. Ask the students the following questions:
 - ▶ Whom do you know who is like Leah? like Rachel? Give examples.
 - ▶ In what ways do you see God acting through these people?

Sibling Rivalry

Preparation

- Make sure each person has a Bible.
- Each student needs paper and a pen.
- Have masking tape on hand.
- Ahead of time, write down the two discussion questions from step 2 on newsprint, using a marker.

- ❑ Bring as many sheets of white card stock as there are members of your group. Print one of the nine statements below on a sheet of card stock. Repeat as needed so that there are cards for one half of the group.

- I'm beautiful.
- I'm smart.
- I'm athletic.
- I'm tall.
- I'm funny.
- I'm fun.
- I'm nice.
- I'm sensitive.
- I'm happy.

- ❑ Print one of the nine statements below on a sheet of card stock. Repeat the statements as necessary so that there are cards for the remaining half of the group.

- I'm the beautiful one's sister or brother.
- I'm the smart one's sister or brother.
- I'm the athletic one's sister or brother.
- I'm the tall one's sister or brother.
- I'm the funny one's sister or brother.
- I'm the fun one's sister or brother.
- I'm the nice one's sister or brother.
- I'm the sensitive one's sister or brother.
- I'm the happy one's sister or brother.

1. Tape the signs to the backs of the students, asking them to close their eyes while you do it. Give them the following instructions:
 - ▶ Everyone has a sign that says "who they are." The object of this game is to guess who you are. The signs say one of two things. Either they describe a characteristic that you have or they say that *you are the brother or sister of someone else in the room*. For example, someone might be wearing the sign that says, "I'm silly." Someone else might be wearing the sign that says, "I'm the silly one's brother or sister." More than one person may have the same sign.
 - ▶ As you encounter each person, say one or two sentences that indirectly point to the information that is on their back. For example, if a person is tall, you might say, "It was good to see you at basketball practice" or "Could you reach that book off the top

shelf?” Because the statements should be indirect, a number of different people will be helping you to figure out what the sign on your back says.

- ▶ Once you have guessed who you are, move the sign to the front of your shirt.

Give the young people 5 to 10 minutes to do this exercise.

2. When the exercise is complete, divide the class into two groups: those who wore signs saying “I’m . . .” and those who wore signs saying that they were a brother or sister. Show them the following questions on the newsprint and ask them to discuss them in their smaller groups.

- How did people treat you?
- Was one group treated better than the other? worse than the other? Why?

3. In the large group, ask the smaller groups to share some of their responses. Ask representatives from the “I’m . . .” group and the sibling group to share how they felt they were treated by those giving them hints about what their sign said. Ask these questions:

- ▶ In what ways did people treat you nicely because you had a certain trait?
- ▶ In what ways did people treat you nicely because you were someone else’s brother or sister?
- ▶ How were you treated differently than the other group?

4. Read Genesis 29:15–30 aloud. Highlight the text’s description of Leah and Rachel. Note that Rachel is Jacob’s favorite and explain what he does in order to marry her. Ask the group the following questions based on the reading:

- ▶ How do you think Rachel felt, under the circumstances, about her relationship with Jacob and Leah? Why?
- ▶ How do you think Leah felt, under the circumstances, about her relationship with Jacob and Rachel? Why?
- ▶ Which sister had it “easier”—Rachel or Leah? Why?

5. Lead a discussion on sibling rivalry using the following questions as needed. Highlight the responses that focus on siblings being different from each other.

- ▶ What is sibling rivalry?
- ▶ Why are sister and brothers sometimes rivals?

Leah and Rachel

- ▶ Why were Rachel and Leah rivals?
- ▶ Is being different from your brother or sister good? bad? Why or why not?
- ▶ Is there a polite way to share with someone else that you prefer not to be compared with your brother or sister? How?

Leah and Rachel

Joseph

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The story of Joseph is a biblical story about a family and God's action within it, as well as about two nations, Israel and Egypt.

Joseph's very birth is the result of Rachel's prayer to have a child. Interestingly, the fact that Joseph is Rachel's son is pivotal in his story. Jacob's love for Joseph because he is Rachel's son and Joseph's use of his own gifts lead his brothers to a jealousy that prompts them to sell Joseph into slavery. Young people can empathize with the brothers' jealousy but can be somewhat horrified by the brothers' decision. They too know the pain that can come from sibling rivalry, especially when the gifts of some family members are valued more than the gifts of others.

Despite Joseph's dire situation, God works through him during his time in Egypt. It is important for young people to understand that God is with them and can work through them in any situation to heal and touch others. This type of knowledge counters the phrase seen on T-shirts that "it is all about me."

The story of the brothers' visit to Egypt to get grain and then Joseph's complicated response is very human. Joseph's heart is touched when he sees that Judah regrets the pain that he caused Jacob and would substitute himself for Benjamin rather than put Jacob through this again. It is good for young people to hear such a powerful story of reconciliation because they know that family hurts can be very painful and seem impossible to overcome.

Joseph saves both the nation of Egypt through his stewardship of their resources and the nation of Israel by welcoming his family to share in Egypt's wealth and escape from famine.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Audiovisual Overviews of Joseph's Story
 - Joseph Book Covers
 - Dreams and Gifts
 - Good Luck, Bad Luck, Who Knows?
-
-

Scripture Passages Related to Joseph

- Genesis 37:1–11 (Joseph’s relationship with his brothers)*
- Genesis 37:12–36 (Joseph’s brothers sell him into slavery)*
- Genesis 39:1–6 (Joseph works for Potiphar)
- Genesis 39:7–19 (Potiphar’s wife falsely accuses Joseph)*
- Genesis 39:21–23 (Joseph in jail)
- Genesis 40:1–23 (Joseph interprets prisoners’ dreams)*
- Genesis 41:1–36 (Joseph interprets Pharaoh’s dreams)*
- Genesis 41:37–57 (Joseph becomes governor of Egypt)
- Genesis, chapters 42–45 (Joseph’s brothers journey to Egypt)
- Genesis, chapter 46 (Jacob and his family come to Egypt)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.

Joseph

Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Joseph

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Joseph
- Favored Sibling (Genesis, chapter 37)
- Joseph’s Tough Times (Genesis 39:1–6)
- Catching Dreams (Genesis 41:1–36)
- The Great River of Blessings (Genesis 42:1–11)
- The Way to Peace (Genesis, chapter 45)
- To Be Continued (Genesis, chapter 50)



Joseph and Young Adolescents Today

- Joseph is one of the two youngest brothers in the family. Young people have feelings about their place in the family, either as an older sibling with younger ones, in the middle, as a younger child with older siblings, or as an only child.
- Joseph has special gifts of dream interpretation. Young adolescents have gifts and may be encouraged (or discouraged) to use them.
- Although being a slave challenged Joseph’s trust in God, later experiences helped him to see how God used this to bring about a greater good for himself and his family. Young people can experience confusion about the meaning of family events but later may gain clarity about God’s role in their family.
- Joseph is placed in a position of responsibility. Young people gradually take on positions of responsibility at home and at school.

They need guidance in understanding themselves as role models for others.

- Joseph changes over fourteen years such that his brothers do not recognize him. Young adolescents are changing in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.
- Joseph must decide how to deal with those closest to him who have abandoned him and he must choose forgiveness or revenge. He chooses forgiveness. Young people experience similar instances of disappointment in or feeling let down by friends and family, especially because there is much turmoil in the lives of young adolescents. They struggle with feeling a need to “get back” at others and forgiveness as well.

Joseph

Highlighting God’s Presence

But the LORD was with Joseph and blessed him, so that the jailer was pleased with him. . . . The jailer did not have to look after anything for which Joseph was responsible, because the LORD was with Joseph and made him succeed in everything he did. (Genesis 39:21,23)

“It was really God who sent me ahead of you to save people’s lives. . . . God sent me ahead of you to rescue you in this amazing way and to make sure that you and your descendants survive. So it was not really you who sent me here, but God.” (Genesis 45:5,7–8; Joseph)

Activities

Audiovisual Overviews of Joseph’s Story

Joseph, the Musical

An engaging way to introduce the story of Joseph is to listen to parts or the entire CD of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, 1993 Los Angeles Cast* (Andrew Lloyd Webber, Decca, US, 1993). As they listen, ask the young people to reflect on these questions:

- How does the music portray Joseph?
- At the end of the musical, why does Joseph end up forgiving his brothers?

Joseph, King of Dreams

Show the movie *Joseph: King of Dreams* (Dreamworks, 2000; NR, 74 minutes) to the students in part or in full. Ask the students to notice if there are segments of the movie that do not appear in the biblical text

and to assess why pieces were added. The students should also look to see if the movie misses any of the key parts of the story and assess that too. (This movie is fairly close to the biblical account.)

Joseph Book Covers

Because of the length of the Joseph stories and the number of years the stories cover, the activity “Character Book Covers” from appendix 2, “Tools for Teaching,” pages 244–245, is well suited for this activity.

Dreams and Gifts

In this activity, the students recognize the gifts that God gave Joseph as a way of understanding what their own gifts are.

Joseph

Preparation

- ❑ Outline one jacket or trench coat on a sheet of newsprint about the size that would fit one of your students. (The group will use only one jacket outline.)
 - ❑ Provide scraps of cloth or paper in various colors and sizes, so that every student can have two or three scraps and a sufficient number to fill in the “coat.” Provide fabric markers, glue or tape, and markers for the students to use. (If using these materials is not feasible, create a handout with a rough outline of a coat on it, large enough for the young people to write in. Make a copy for each person.)
 - ❑ Have a CD of some reflective instrumental music on hand and a CD player.
 - ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
1. Ask the students to read Genesis 37:3–11. Pose these questions to the students:
 - ▶ Why does Jacob love Joseph best?
 - ▶ Why do his brothers not like him?
 - ▶ What are the gifts that Joseph receives in this passage?
 2. Note that while Joseph’s father gifts him with a coat, it is God who gives him a gift that cannot be taken away—that of interpreting dreams. Play some music for the students and give them some time to write down their own gifts, both the kinds that are visible and then those that are within them, on scratch paper.

3. Distribute the craft materials or the handout. Ask the students to write down one of their gifts on each sheet of paper or cloth (or within the image of the coat on the handout). When all have completed their scraps, ask them to attach them inside the outline of the coat on the newsprint.
4. When all of the scraps are on the coat, ask the students to share their impressions of the coat. Ask, "Do you see this coat as meant for one person in the class?" Suggest that this coat is powerful because unlike Joseph's, this one symbolizes the gifts of this class.
5. You may want to make the connection between the class's coat and the description that Paul gives of the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:12–31. The community loses when the gifts of every person are not appreciated and brought forth.
6. Conclude with a prayer of thanks for the gifts of the members of your youth group or class.

Joseph

Good Luck, Bad Luck, Who Knows?

Preparation

- Each student needs a Bible, a straightedge, paper, and a pen.
 - Read over the story for this activity and consider it in light of Joseph's story.
1. Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 39:1–22 aloud to the class. Then read the following story:

There is a Chinese story of an old farmer who had an old horse for tilling his fields. One day the horse escaped into the hills and when all the farmer's neighbors sympathized with the old man over his bad luck, the farmer replied, "Bad luck? Good luck? Who knows?" A week later the horse returned with a herd of wild horses from the hills and this time the neighbors congratulated the farmer on his good luck. His reply was, "Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?" Then, when the farmer's son was attempting to tame one of the wild horses, he fell off his horse and broke his leg. Everyone thought this very bad luck. Not the farmer, whose only reaction, was "Bad luck? Good luck? Who knows?" Some weeks later the army marched into the village and conscripted every able-bodied youth they found there. When they saw the farmer's son with his broken leg they let him off. Now was that good luck? Bad luck? Who knows? Everything that seems on the surface to be evil may be a good in disguise. And everything that seems good on the surface may really be an evil. So we are wise when we leave

it to God to decide what is good luck and what bad, and thank him that all things turn out for good with those who love him. (Anthony De Mello, *Sadhana: A Way to God*, p. 134)

2. Ask the students to consider these two stories side-by-side. They should share their observations about the story and its relationship to the Joseph story. Then ask them to reflect about whether they have seen the truth of this story in their own lives.
3. Give the young people the following directions about creating a personal time line:
 - ▶ Begin the time line at birth and have it extend to the present moment.
 - ▶ Break the time line into year units.
 - ▶ Above the line and corresponding to the years in which they happened, write down three positive aspects or times in life.
 - ▶ Below the line and corresponding to the years in which they happened, write down three negative aspects or times in life.
 - ▶ See whether or not there is any relationship between the positive times and the negative times and illustrate the connection on the time line by drawing a line. (Draw the line even if the positive event does not necessarily cancel out the negative one. For example, your parents have divorced, and while your real dream has been for them to remarry and reform your original family, you have baby brothers and sisters from your mother's remarriage whom you love.)
4. Give the young people a few minutes to reflect in writing on the answer to this question: "In your life experience so far, do you think that God can bring good out of situations that can be very negative? Why or why not?"
5. Conclude with observations such as these:
 - ▶ The meaning of suffering is a question that Christians and people from all religions have struggled with since the dawn of time. Because of Christ's life, suffering, death, and Resurrection, however, Christ has conquered death for all of us, which means that death is never the last answer.
 - ▶ God is present in all parts of life, good and bad, and brings good out of horrible tragedy. We need to be open to God when tough times come our way and try not to get caught up in "Why am I suffering?" but in "How, with God's help, will I get through this suffering? Where will God bring good here?"

Joseph

Moses

Preparing to Teach

Overview

There has never been a prophet in Israel like Moses; the LORD spoke with him face to face. No other prophet has ever done miracles and wonders like those that the LORD sent Moses to perform against the king of Egypt, his officials, and the entire country. No other prophet has been able to do the great and terrifying things that Moses did in the sight of all Israel. (Deuteronomy 34:10–12)

Moses is a central figure in the Bible yet he is also someone with whom the students can relate. The very fact that Moses has very human moments reminds us that it is truly God who is working through him in amazing events such as the ten plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and the receipt of the Ten Commandments.

Moses is born in the midst of nonviolent protest as the midwives refuse to kill baby Israelite boys. His background as an Israelite and his experience of growing up in the royal Egyptian household prepare him for his role as negotiator between these two peoples.

When God first reveals himself in the burning bush, Moses expresses only insecurities and hesitations about why he would take on such a role. Young people are very familiar with insecure thoughts and feelings. If they listen carefully to this passage, they will hear that God is one who expresses confidence in his people. Prayer is a very good place for them to take such fears.

It could very well be that Moses' own weaknesses enable him to cope with the fragile beliefs of the Israelites who seem to fall back into fear regularly during their escape and sojourn in the desert. When reading Exodus, it is easy to ask, "Why don't the people just trust in God?" Young people will easily relate to the kind of fear that makes it difficult to trust others and God. God, however, is constant throughout the journey despite the doubts and fears of the people, just as he is with Moses.

Because he doubts God, Moses does not enter the Promised Land, although God shows it to him. It is clear that Moses is a model to follow not because he is perfect but because he opens his life to God's work.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- The Life of Moses: A Chronology
- *The Prince of Egypt*
- Moses: A Calling
- The First Nine Plagues
- The Ten Commandments
- “Holy Ground”

Scripture Passages Related to Moses

- Exodus 2:1–10 (The birth of Moses)*
- Exodus 2:11–25 (Moses escapes to Midian)
- Exodus 3:1–22 (God calls Moses)*
- Exodus 4:1–17 (God gives Moses miraculous power)
- Exodus 4:18–31 (Moses returns to Egypt)
- Exodus 5:1–21 (Moses and Aaron before the King of Egypt)
- Exodus, chapters 7–11 (The plagues)
- Exodus 12:1–4 (The Passover)*
- Exodus 14:1–31 (Crossing the Red Sea)*
- Exodus 20:1–17 (The Ten Commandments)*
- Exodus 32:1–35 (The golden calf)*
- Deuteronomy 6:1–9 (The Great Commandment)
- Deuteronomy 34:1–12 (The death of Moses)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.

Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Moses

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Moses
- Standing Up for Right (Exodus 2:11–17)
- A God of Many Names (Exodus 3:14)
- Moses’ Problem (Exodus 4:1–17)
- *Now What?* (Exodus 5:1–22)
- Not Me, Lord! (Exodus 6:12–13)



Moses

- On Being Stubborn (Exodus 8:5–19)
- Promise Breakers and Promise Keepers? (Exodus 9:13–35)

Moses and Young Adolescents Today

- Moses experiences fear, doubt, and concern when he considers the enormity of God’s calling. Adolescents are often overwhelmed with the responsibilities of school, social life, and family obligations.
- Moses displays great courage when he approaches Pharaoh with a request to let the Israelites go free. Young people display courage as they move into the adult world.
- The Israelites have faith that is immature. Because of this they complain of the hardships that they experience after being freed from bondage. The faith of the young people is developing, and they will often question why God allows bad things to happen.
- God gives Moses the Ten Commandments. These Commandments are the framework by which we show love and justice to others.

Moses

Highlighting God’s Presence

God said, “Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground.” (Exodus 3:5)

God said, “I am who I am. You must tell them: ‘the one who is called I AM has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:14)

God spoke, and these were his words: “I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, where you were slaves.

Worship no god but me.” (Exodus 20:1–3)

The LORD said, “I will go with you, and I will give you victory.” (Exodus 33:14)

“I, the LORD, am a God who is full of compassion and pity, who is not easily angered and who shows great love and faithfulness.” (Exodus 34:6)

Activities

The Life of Moses: A Chronology

In this activity, the students read or review the story of Moses as they determine the correct chronology provided on a handout.

Preparation

- ❑ Reproduce enough copies of the handout “The Life of Moses: A Chronology” (Document #: TX002884) so that each student will have one.
- ❑ Make sure each student has a Bible.

1. Distribute a copy of the handout “The Life of Moses” (Document #: TX002884) to each student. Give the students quiet time to browse through the Book of Exodus so as to be able to put the events listed on the handout in the correct chronological order. Explain that the students should also write down the chapter and verse from Exodus that corresponds to each event. 
2. After the students have finished the activity, divide the class into groups. Assign each group one or two of the events from the handout to explore further. Have the groups summarize the event for a brief oral presentation for the class.
3. Conclude by reviewing the relationship God had with Moses and the Israelites for each event on the handout. Using a scale of one through five (in which one is a distanced relationship and five is a very close relationship), ask the students to rate how close Moses was to God during the major events of this story. (This can be done in the large group, in pairs, or individually.)

Share the following insights with the students, using these or similar words:

- ▶ Moses and the Israelites were closest to God when they were following the instructions that God gave them. It might seem that God’s instructions and the Ten Commandments limited what the Israelites could do. In reality, the rules helped the Israelites to live in freedom.

The Prince of Egypt

Preview and then show the students parts of or the entire film *The Prince of Egypt* (Dreamworks, 1998, 99 minutes, rated PG).

In this film, the screenwriter and producer make interesting choices about staying close to the story line. There is quite a bit of imagination given especially to the adolescent relationship between Moses and Pharaoh’s son. Ask the students to assess why the filmmakers added material or left it out. They may want to suggest some changes they would make if they were in the position to do so.

Moses: A Calling

In this activity, the students see that God responds with care to Moses' concerns about his own abilities, and to their own now.

Preparation

- Make sure each student has a Bible.
- 1. Share the story about the burning bush as told in Exodus, chapter 3. You may want to have three volunteers read the story aloud: a narrator, Moses, and God from the bush.
- 2. Ask the students to list the doubts, fears, and concerns that Moses had about his calling. Have the young people call out what is on their list and make a chart on the board listing these concerns. Next to each concern, ask the students to name what the Lord said and did to address Moses' concerns.
- 3. Give the students some quiet time to write about a time in their lives when they experienced doubts about their abilities and have felt inadequate. Did they go to God? How did they handle their fears? Does God promise to help us as he did Moses?
- 4. Conclude by sharing some of the verses from "Highlighting God's Presence," on page 72 of this guide, to emphasize that God is always with us in difficulty. (See the article "Moses' Problem" [Exodus 4:1–17] in *Breakthrough!* for an affirming presentation of God's love for us despite our shortcomings!)



(Adapted from "What If They Won't Believe Me?" in *Old Testament: Seminary Student Study Guide*, p. 43)

The First Nine Plagues

In this activity, the students use the genre of cave paintings to illustrate the first nine plagues.

Preparation

- Review chapters 7 through 11 in the Book of Exodus and write down the verses that correspond with each plague.
- If necessary, provide paper and markers for the students.
- Find pictures of cave drawings, if possible, to help the students create their own drawings. (An Internet search of "cave paintings" or "pictographs" yields quite a few examples.)

1. Tell the students to imagine that they are cave painters and that they are to draw symbols that represent the plagues sent upon the Egyptians. (In fact, this will be their only way to pass this important story on to future generations so the pictures need to be clear.)
2. Divide the class into nine groups, and assign each group a different plague, providing the corresponding verses. Have the students in each group read the passage of Exodus that describes their plague. Distribute paper and markers, and ask each group to draw a symbolic representation of their assigned plague in a way that resembles ancient cave drawings. Suggest that they portray a story from left to right, with the first event on the left.
3. When all groups are finished, have them make a display for the classroom, arranging the pictures in proper sequence as they happen in Scripture. (You may want to have groups exchange pictures to see if they can interpret the drawings. If not, you may want a representative from each group to interpret their cave drawings for the class.)
4. Ask the students to consider the way that God interacts with the Egyptians. What was God's approach? Conclude by highlighting God's mercy when dealing with the Egyptians. He could have immediately destroyed them but he kept giving them many opportunities to acknowledge him and his power. God wants all his children to be faithful and gives us all many chances.
5. After reviewing the first nine plagues, read over the tenth plague with the students, noting both its distinction from the other plagues and its ongoing significance in Judaism.

The Ten Commandments

In this activity, the students translate the words of the Scripture passage as found in Exodus, chapter 20, into a present-day interpretation of the Ten Commandments.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
 - ❑ You may want a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
1. After reading Exodus, chapter 20, with the class, have the students list God's commands to the Israelites, as found in verses 1 through 17, on a sheet of paper. Next to each verse, have each student write the Commandment in today's language, with a present-day interpretation.

2. Ask the students to share their different versions of each Commandment, making notes on the board about them. If you would like to, use the index in the *Catechism* or flip through the section called “Life in Christ” to show the students how that section of the *Catechism* thoroughly explores what each Commandment means personally and socially in a modern context. It is likely that some of their modern translations will be captured in the *Catechism*.
3. Conclude by sharing the following thought, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ God made us in his image and likeness; we each possess a free will. By giving us Commandments to live by, God is assisting us in making the right choices in life.

“Holy Ground”

Play the song “Holy Ground,” from the album *Prayer Warrior*, by Jeannie Pomanowski (Chesapeake Music Works, 2004, Be Attitude Music, BMI). By appreciating the awesome beauty of God’s creation and his presence among us, we can come to realize that like Moses we too are standing on holy ground.

Moses

The Life of Moses: A Chronology

Number the following events in the correct chronological order. After each event, note the chapter and verse from Exodus that describes the event.

The Israelites worship a golden calf.

God calls Moses from a burning bush.

The Passover occurs.

Pharaoh's daughter finds Moses in a basket.

The Israelites cross the Red Sea.

Moses receives the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai.

Moses kills an Egyptian and escapes to Midian.

God causes problems for Egypt by sending plagues.

The sacred tent is built and dedicated.

Moses begins a confrontational series with Pharaoh by asking for the release of the Israelites.



Aaron

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Aaron, the brother of Moses, is presented in Scripture as a true servant of God, second only to Moses in his obedience. When God calls on Moses to lead his people to freedom, Aaron shows his obedience to God and love for his brother by coming to Moses' aid as a spokesperson. Many of the students will identify with this act of sibling support.

Aaron later succumbs to peer pressure and leads the Israelites in idol worship. Because peer pressure exists in the lives of adolescents, it is important to stress the need to guard our relationship with God rather than succumb to temptation.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- All about Aaron
- Would You Like Aaron as Your Brother?
- Research on Priestly Clothing

Scripture Passages Related to Aaron

- Exodus 4:14–16,27–30 (God speaks to Moses and Aaron)*
- Exodus 5:1–4 (Moses and Aaron before the King of Egypt)*
- Exodus 7:1–13 (The Lord's command to Moses and Aaron)
- Exodus 29:1–17 (Priestly ordination of Aaron and his sons)*
- Exodus 32:1–35 (The golden calf)*
- Numbers 12:1–16 (Aaron and Miriam are jealous of Moses)
- Numbers 20:22–29 (The death of Aaron)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.

Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Aaron



- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Aaron and Miriam
- *Now What?* (Exodus 5:1–22)
- The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17)
- Vestments (Exodus, chapter 28)
- Sinful but Forgiven (Exodus, chapter 32)

Aaron and Young Adolescents Today

- Aaron was the elder brother of Moses and shared in the responsibilities of the Exodus. Young adolescents share responsibilities within their own families.
- Aaron displayed courage when addressing Pharaoh. God assures us of the same courage when we speak the truth in love.
- Aaron succumbs to peer pressure and erects a golden calf for worship. Peer pressure plays a significant role in the lives of young adolescents.
- God in his infinite mercy forgives Aaron for idol worship. Young people need to believe that God is always ready to forgive us our sins if we are sincere in our sorrow and are willing to repent.
- Aaron and his sister display jealousy toward Moses over his relationship with God and the Israelites. Sibling rivalry and jealousy exist in families.
- Aaron was rewarded for his faith and obedience by being anointed high priest. God rewards us for our faith and obedience with everlasting life.

Aaron

Highlighting God's Presence

The LORD said, "I am going to make you like God to the king, and your brother Aaron will speak to him as your prophet. Tell Aaron everything I command you, and he will tell the king to let the Israelites leave his country." (Exodus 7:1–4)

Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the leaders of Israel went up the mountain and they saw the God of Israel. Beneath his feet was what looked like a pavement of sapphire, as blue as the sky. (Exodus 24:9–10)

Activities

All about Aaron

In this activity, the students identify various terms relating to Aaron's life.

Preparation

- ❑ Make a copy of the handout "All about Aaron" (Document #: TX002885) for each student.
- ❑ Complete this handout yourself before meeting with the students.

1. Share the Scripture passages below with the students by asking the students to take turns reading aloud.

- Exodus 4:14–17,27–31
- Exodus 5:1–5, 7:1–7
- Exodus 15:19–20
- Exodus 16:5–7,29–34
- Exodus 28:1
- Exodus 29:38–40

 2. Distribute the handout "All about Aaron" (Document #: TX002885) to the students. Have them do a Scripture search of the passages using the handout. You can have the students do a Scripture search as a class activity, in small groups, or on their own.

3. Check the answers as a class.

Answers to handout: 1. D; 2. F; 3. E; 4. A; 5. B; 6. C; 7. H or I; 8. G; 9. H or I

Would You Like Aaron as Your Brother?

In this activity, the students assess Aaron's strengths and weaknesses as a brother. They then reflect on their own strengths in this area as siblings. (For those who do not have siblings, extend the conversation to include cousins or close friends.)

1. Discuss the relationship Aaron had with his brother, Moses. You may want to include the following questions to spark class discussion:
 - ▶ Aaron is older than Moses, yet Moses is the leader. Is that fair?
 - ▶ Moses reprimands Aaron for making an idol and leading the people in worshiping a false god. Was Moses justified in doing this? Why or why not?

- ▶ How would you rate Aaron as a brother? Why?
 - ▶ Which stories about Aaron support the statement, “Aaron is a great brother,” and which stories support the statement, “As a brother, Aaron let Moses down”?
2. Conclude by having the students discuss their sibling relationships. Are they in any way similar to the relationship Moses had with Aaron? Does God’s treatment of the brothers shed light on the way brothers and sisters should act today?

Research on Priestly Clothing

Have volunteers research the clothes that priests wore during Aaron’s time (Exodus, chapter 28) and those that are worn today by Roman Catholic priests during Mass. Explore these questions:

- ▶ Are there similarities or mainly differences between the priests’ clothing?
- ▶ What is similar? What is different?
- ▶ Why is it important for priests to wear special clothing when leading religious rituals?

Aaron

All about Aaron

Each of the following items has something to do with Aaron. For each of the numbered items in column A, select a matching lettered item from column B. Place the appropriate letter in the space next to the number.

Column A

1. _____ Temple sacrifices and worship
2. _____ Son who became high priest after Aaron's death
3. _____ Exit or departure
4. _____ Relative of Aaron
5. _____ Tribe of which Aaron was a member
6. _____ Used for the atonement of sin
7. _____ Book containing journey to Canaan
8. _____ Major Jewish holy day
9. _____ Book containing journey to Canaan

Column B

- A. Miriam (Exodus 15:19–20)
- B. Levi
- C. Burnt offering (Leviticus 16:5–7)
- D. Priestly duties (Exodus 29:38–46)
- E. Exodus
- F. Eleazar (Exodus 28:1)
- G. Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29–34)
- H. Deuteronomy
- I. Numbers



Miriam

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The Exodus is very much a family affair. Brother Aaron and sister Miriam are very important to Moses' success in leading the people out of Egypt. Moses is not the only leader, however. The prophet Micah quotes the Lord as saying, "I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to lead you" (Micah 6:4) to the people of Israel.

Miriam and Aaron can be kindred spirits to many young adolescents who may not be the class leader but who do play important roles in school, clubs, teams, and their families. The importance of being a team player is evident as Miriam helps to save her brother Moses from death.

In addition, as a prophet, Miriam leads the Israelites in their first joyful expression of worship with song and dance to celebrate that Israel was freed *from* slavery *for* worship. Song and dance were, and are today, characteristic expressions of praise and thanksgiving. Far from engaging in solitary worship, it is she who helps to unite the people in praise of God.

Miriam

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Choosing Life and Love
- Freedom *From* and Freedom *For*!

Scripture Passages Related to Miriam

- Exodus 2:1–10 (Miriam helps to save baby Moses)*
- Exodus 15:19–21 (The Song of Moses and Miriam) *
- Numbers 12:1–16 (God punishes Miriam for being jealous of Moses)*
- Micah 6:4 (God calls Miriam an Israelite leader)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Article from *Breakthrough!* Related to Miriam

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Aaron and Miriam

Miriam and Young Adolescents Today

- In the Exodus story, Miriam contributes to a rescue effort to save Moses from Pharaoh's decree of death for infant boys. Young people today can relate to the familial experience of doing the right thing for the good of the family.
- Miriam leads the liberated Israelites in expressing their joyful feelings of freedom. Adolescents have probably experienced feelings of freedom in moments of their lives—the first day of summer break, for example.

Highlighting God's Presence

Miriam sang for them:

“Sing to the LORD, because he has won a glorious victory;
he has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea.”

(Exodus 15:20)

They [Moses, Aaron, and Miriam] went, and the LORD came down in a pillar of cloud, stood at the entrance of the Tent, and called out, “Aaron! Miriam!” The two of them stepped forward, and the LORD said, “Now hear what I have to say!” (Numbers 12:4–6)

Activities

Choosing Life and Love

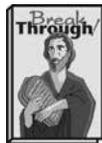
Miriam is a team player, and this activity depicts the efforts of five women working together to bring life to baby Moses, who grows up to save their people. This activity will explore the concept of fear and the actions of Miriam, Moses' mother, Pharaoh's daughter, and the midwives.

Preparation

- Write the following on the board:
 - “I am now giving you the choice between life and death, between God's blessing and God's curse, and I call heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Choose life.” (Deuteronomy 30:19)

1. Read Exodus 1:8—2:10 with the students. Discuss the actions of the midwives (1:15–22). Ask the young people these questions about the story:
 - ▶ Do you think that Pharaoh would punish the midwives if he found out what they were doing?
 - ▶ Might Pharaoh punish his own daughter for disobeying his command?
 - ▶ Could Miriam and her mother fear for their lives?
 - ▶ What empowers all of them to choose life for this child?

2. Explore the idea of being “God-fearing” with the students. Have them distinguish between a healthy and an unhealthy fear of God. (For example, respect and awe versus being scrupulous.) Note that options besides being God-fearing would be to be fearful of other human beings, the natural world, or the future. Ask the students to explain why Pharaoh was asking that the boys be killed.

3. Have a young person read aloud “Doing the Right Thing” (Exodus 1:15–22) in *Breakthrough!* Ask the students to think of situations that challenge them to rise above immediate fears and respond in brave, life-giving ways. Note that when one fears God in a healthy way, the fears of other things in life diminish and take their proper perspective. (For example, if we do not revere God and live by his values, it might be unthinkable to risk capture like the midwives do. But, because they value life and believe in God, they believe that the risk is well worth it.)
 

4. Explain that the passage written on the board was part of Moses’ farewell address to the people of Israel before they enter the Promised Land. Make these comments, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ The fear of God goes with life and blessing, while fears of other types go with death and curse. They fit together this way because a misunderstanding of what is really important (God and life) can lead us to excess fear of this world, to disguise what is true blessing, and to mistake what is true life. Moses is able to lead the people of Israel to freedom because there were women who conquered fear in order to do the right thing. In choosing life, they changed the world!

Miriam

Freedom *From* and Freedom *For!*

This activity emphasizes that God wants freedom for us as he does for the Israelites in Exodus. In addition, God does not simply want us to be free from enslavement but wants us to be free to be in joyful relationship with him.

1. Read Exodus 5:1–21. Emphasize that the Lord says, “Let my people go, so that they can hold a festival in the desert to honor me” (5:1). Paraphrase this request in these words: “*Free* my people from slavery so that they will be free *for* a festival.”
2. Discuss with the students some of the reasons why God would have wanted them freed for a celebration that honors God. Pose these types of questions:
 - ▶ Does God *need* the worship of the Israelites, or rather, do the *Israelites need* to worship God? Why?
 - ▶ Does God *need* our worship at Mass, or rather, do *we need* to worship God at Mass? Why?
3. Refer back to Genesis 2:1–3 and the concept of Sabbath rest. Engage the students in a discussion about the value of a period of rest. Ask the following questions:
 - ▶ How does rest enable us to experience the freedom of being unconditionally loved by God?
 - ▶ What about daily life can take away our freedom to be with God?

Miriam

Ask the students to mention elements of our society that have the potential to enslave us and list them on the board. Ask these follow-up questions:

- ▶ From the reading of Exodus, does God desire for us the enslavement that can happen in our busy weeks?
- ▶ Does God desire the freedom of rest on Sunday when Christians practice the Sabbath?
- ▶ What happens when we take the business of the week and do it on Sunday?

Paraphrase the following thoughts in closing:

- ▶ The Exodus story teaches us that not only does God want to free the Israelites and us from different forms of being enslaved, but God wants us to be free for a celebratory relationship with him. In fact, after the Israelites cross the Red Sea, Miriam is the one who takes out the tambourine to celebrate (Exodus 15:20–21).

4. Ask each student to choose a contemporary song (not necessarily a “church” song) that expresses for them a sense of joyful freedom and of rest; a sense of God’s unconditional, liberating love; a sense of goodness and grace in their lives—freedom that makes us want to celebrate!

5. On the board create a CD or playlist from the songs that the students chose. Using the student suggestions, give this class CD or playlist a name, for example, “Joy in God’s Freedom: Songs of Love and Liberation.” Invite the students to think of these songs when they feel burdened by stress or do not feel free in some way.

Miriam

Joshua

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Joshua is portrayed in Scripture as a thoroughly heroic character. He leads the successful military conquest of Canaan with a combination of shrewd tactical strategies, complete faith in God, and a charismatic personality. By the end of the Book of Joshua, it is evident that he is an inspiration to others to recommit themselves to God's covenant.

In some ways, young adolescents may regard Joshua as more legendary in character than in real life. He is portrayed as someone who is in tune with God, able to discern what God wants the people to do, and courageous enough to lead them. His motto might be for young people, "When going into new situations, take God with you or follow God in."

Young people may be more familiar with the story of Jericho than with Joshua's farewell address and his renewal of the covenant. But young people can take some of his statements to heart and apply them to their own lives.

"Any one of you can make a thousand men run away, because the LORD your God is fighting for you, just as he promised. Be careful, then, to love the LORD your God." (Joshua 23:10–11)

"Now then," Joshua continued, "honor the LORD and serve him sincerely and faithfully. . . . If you are not willing to serve him, decide today whom you will serve, the gods your ancestors worshiped in Mesopotamia or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are now living. As for my family and me, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:14–15)

In the first passage, Joshua reminds the Israelites how much God is on their side, working for them, wanting their success. Young people do not always remember that they can count on support from God in whatever they are doing. In the second passage, Joshua challenges the people of Israel to make a commitment, a commitment to serve God. While young people may want to serve God, they may not know what they even mean by that. All Christians need to stop and reflect on the direction they are going.

Joshua has many heroic qualities. Because of this, he carries some of the credibility of heroes in our own day and age. Young people need to get to know a hero who sees God as his strength and is single-minded in his devotion to him.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Pictures from the Road: Joshua
- Joshua, the Hero
- Permanent as a Rock
- *Josh and the Big Wall*

Scripture Passages Related to Joshua

- Joshua 1:1–9 (God commands Joshua to conquer Canaan)*
- Joshua 3:9–17 (Crossing the Jordan River)
- Joshua 6:1–27 (The fall of Jericho)
- Joshua 7:1–29 (The sin of Achan and the defeat at Ai)
- Joshua 8:1–29 (The capture of Ai)
- Joshua 11:16–23 (The extent of Joshua’s conquest)*
- Joshua 23:1–16 (Joshua gives his farewell address)
- Joshua 24:1–28 (Joshua leads the renewal of the covenant)*
- Joshua 24:29 (Joshua dies)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.

Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Joshua

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Joshua
- Introduction to the Book of Joshua
- Big Shoes to Fill (Joshua 1:1–9)
- Remember When . . . (Joshua 3:14–17)
- The Angel’s Promise (Joshua 5:13–15)
- Whose Power Won? (Joshua 6:1–20)
- Courage (Joshua 8:1–2)
- Conquering Canaan (Joshua, chapter 12)
- Older and Wiser (Joshua 13:1–7)
- Remembering God’s Goodness (Joshua 24:1–15)



Joshua

Joshua and Young Adolescents Today

- Moses picks Joshua to be his successor. Joshua is a leader in ways that are both similar to Moses but also different. The young adolescent needs to see a variety of models of heroic faith.
- Joshua's faith in God is shown clearly in his attitudes and actions, despite difficult circumstances and even resistance from others. From examining Joshua's story of faith, the young people will note the utter faithfulness of God in bringing about his promises.
- After the conquest of Canaan, Joshua is shown as an equitable leader in his fair distribution of the land to the different tribes. It reminds the reader that we have a responsibility to be fair in all of our dealings with others, especially when we are in positions of advantage over them.
- At the end of the book, Joshua convenes the whole people together at Shechem to review their history of salvation. He challenges them to recommit themselves to the covenant, seeing how faithful God has been in the conquest of Canaan. He says, "As for my family and me, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). The students can be challenged to ask: "What values does my family stand for? Who or what do we serve in our lives and why?"

Joshua

Highlighting God's Presence

After the death of the LORD's servant Moses, the LORD spoke to Moses' helper, Joshua son of Nun. He said, "My servant Moses is dead. Get ready now, you and all the people of Israel, and cross the Jordan River into the land that I am giving them. . . . Joshua, no one will be able to defeat you as long as you live. I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will always be with you; I will never abandon you." (Joshua 1:1–2,5)

While Joshua was near Jericho, he suddenly saw a man standing in front of him, holding a sword. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you one of our soldiers or an enemy?"

"Neither," the man answered. "I am here as the commander of the LORD's army."

Joshua threw himself on the ground in worship and said, "I am your servant, sir. What do you want me to do?"

And the commander of the LORD's army told him, "Take your sandals off; you are standing on holy ground." And Joshua did as he was told. (Joshua 5:13–15)

So the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he had solemnly promised their ancestors he would give them. When they had taken possession of it, they settled down there. The LORD gave them peace throughout

the land, just as he had promised their ancestors. Not one of all their enemies had been able to stand against them, because the LORD gave the Israelites the victory over all their enemies. The LORD kept every one of the promises that he had made to the people of Israel. (Joshua 21:43–45)

Activities

Pictures from the Road: Joshua

In this activity, small groups of students are “photographers” who represent the city or regional newspapers of the cities or regions that Joshua passes through. See “Pictures from the Road,” pages 242–243 in appendix 2, “Tools for Teaching,” for the necessary preparation and steps for this activity.

Divide the class into five small groups, and assign each group one of the following cities and the story that goes with it:

- The Negev, Wilderness of Zin (Numbers 13:16–31, 14:6–10)
- Mount Nebo, Moab (Deuteronomy 34:5–9)
- Jordan River near Gilgal (Joshua 3:9–17)
- Jericho (Joshua 6:1–27)
- Shechem (Joshua 24:1–28)

Joshua

Joshua, the Hero

In this activity, the students identify the qualities that make Joshua a hero and then compare them to other heroes they know.

Preparation

- Make sure each student has a Bible.
 - Prepare by looking for examples of heroes in the movies currently showing in theatres and by thinking back over movies that the students may have seen recently. Compare them to Joshua in order to draw a modern-day comparison and contrast to this hero. If you have access to the appropriate equipment, you may want to show clips of some of these heroes to liven the discussion.
1. Have the students review the major stories in the Book of Joshua and list on paper what heroic qualities he possesses. As a large group, create a list on the board.

2. Divide the class into groups of three, and ask the groups to come up with three to five people who are considered heroes (or heroines). They can be historical figures, currently living people, or heroes portrayed in film or literature. Direct the students to make a chart with at least four columns. In the left-hand column, list characteristics they or the class developed for Joshua. Joshua's name should top this list. At the top of three other columns, tell the students to place the other heroes that they chose. Have the students write a plus sign when their chosen hero has one of Joshua's qualities and a minus sign when he or she does not. (If the chosen heroes have positive qualities not demonstrated by Joshua, they can also make a note of those.)
3. Conduct a discussion around these questions:
 - ▶ How do these heroes resemble Joshua?
 - ▶ What could each of these heroes teach each other?
 - ▶ Are there people that are considered heroes but do not act like heroes?

Have the students select the "must have" hero qualities from their list, adding any qualities that students did not see in Joshua. Suggest that they give some modern-day heroes the "hero test" to see if they really qualify.

4. Close by asking a volunteer to read Hebrews 4:8–10, where Joshua's leadership is considered a foreshadowing of Christ's leadership. Ask the students how Joshua inspired his people to keep trusting God. How does Christ inspire us to keep trusting God today?

Permanent as a Rock

Preparation

- ❑ Find stones at least three inches in diameter, index cards, and markers. Provide twelve stones for every group of two students.
- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
- ❑ Search the Internet for images of monuments to use when talking about stone commemorations.

1. Ask a young person to read Joshua 4:1–24. Emphasize these verses:
 - And he said to the people of Israel, "In the future, when your children ask you what these stones mean, you will tell them about the time when Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground. Tell them that the LORD your God dried up the water of the Jordan for you until you had crossed, just as he dried up the Red Sea for us."

Because of this everyone on earth will know how great the LORD's power is, and you will honor the LORD your God forever."
(Joshua 4:21–24)

2. Have the students think of stone monuments that they have seen or know of. Many of the monuments may be local but others may be national or international monuments. Ask the students why the monuments were there and how they felt looking at the monument and reading any writing that goes with it.

There are many monuments in Washington, D.C., that commemorate people or events that happened before the young people were born: the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial Iwo Jima. If you have been to any of these monuments or are able to research them online, you can illustrate the value of monuments by telling the young people “what these stones mean” (Joshua 4:21). By this discussion it is possible to awaken the awe that people feel before a monument that commemorates an important event.

3. Arrange the students in pairs and distribute twelve rocks and an index card to each pair. Give the following instructions, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ We don't know what kind of memorial the Israelites made, but it was meant to help them remember God. Arrange your rocks into a pattern that stands for God that would help you to remember something important you know about God or that God does for us. Write an explanation of what these rocks mean on the card.
4. After the students have prepared and explained their rock patterns to the class, explore the following aspects of the symbolism of rock. Note that rock is powerful for commemorating something because it is so permanent. Rock is also used to refer to faith and God. (Consider reading Matthew 7:24–27, the story of the two house builders, to the students as a New Testament parallel.) Before they clean up the rocks, give the students time to say a quick private prayer asking for God to strengthen their faith.
5. Conclude by making the following observations:
 - ▶ In the Book of Joshua, the symbolism of rocks as permanent and solid objects challenge us to think of the way we commemorate important events and to remind us of God's constant presence.

Josh and the Big Wall

Preparation

- ❑ Obtain a copy of *Josh and the Big Wall* (Warner Home Video, 2003, NR, 30 minutes).
 - ❑ Have the appropriate equipment on hand.
1. Ask the students to read quietly the account of the fall of Jericho (Joshua 6:1–27).
 2. View the “Veggie Tales” version of the story, and then ask the young people these questions:
 - ▶ What is the moral of the biblical story?
 - ▶ What is the moral of the “Veggie Tales” version?
 - ▶ What can we learn from looking at them side by side?

Deborah

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Deborah, a woman of God, is a judge and the type of person to whom people come for advice. She has great faith in what God tells her to do and passes along the Lord's instructions to Barak, who leads his troops to victory just as God promises.

Deborah is very confident and is willing to accompany Barak even though she is just as happy to allow him to get all of the credit for the victory. Upon winning, both she and Barak immediately praise God together.

For young adolescents, especially young women, Deborah is a reminder that it is God who chooses to speak through people even when cultural norms usually assign these roles to men. Like Joshua, she is in tune with God, secure in what God says, and appreciative of what he does for her people. She is a good example of a wise, balanced, and faith-filled woman.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Extra, Extra! Read All about It!
- Getting to Know God

Scripture Passages Related to Deborah

- Judges 4:4–5 (Introduction to Deborah, the prophetess and judge)*
- Judges 4:6–9 (Deborah calls on Barak to lead the army)*
- Judges 4:10–16 (Deborah sends Barak to defeat Sisera's army)*
- Judges 4:17–24 (Jael kills Sisera)*
- Judges 5:1–31 (Deborah and Barak sing God's praises)*
- Judges 5:31 (Victory leads to peace in the land for forty years)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Deborah

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Deborah
- A Brave and Wise Woman (Judges 4:1–8)
- Sing a Song (Judges, chapter 5)

Deborah and Young Adolescents Today

- Deborah frequently sits under her favorite “quiet spot,” a palm tree where others come to talk to her. Many young people have a special place to go where they can think, pray, or relax.
- Deborah’s kin and others, including Barak, respect her insights and orders. Young people have relatives and friends—parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, a friend’s mom—whom they listen to because they value their perspective.
- Deborah praises and thanks God for the Israelites’ victory over the Canaanites. Young adolescents can be encouraged to thank God for the great and small “victories” in their lives, like passing a test or overcoming a fear.

Highlighting God’s Presence

“The LORD, the God of Israel, has given you this command: ‘Take ten thousand men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead them to Mount Tabor.’” (Judges 4:6; Deborah to Barak)

Then Deborah said to Barak, “Go! The LORD is leading you! Today he has given you victory over Sisera.” (Judges 4:14)

That day God gave the Israelites victory over Jabin, the Canaanite king. (Judges 4:23)

Activities

Extra, Extra! Read All about It!

Preparation

- Supply at least twelve sheets of newsprint.
- Provide seven markers, one for the leader and one for each small group.
- Make sure each small group has a Bible.

- ❑ Before the session, write each of the following headings on its own sheet of newsprint:
 - Headline and news story
 - Interview with Deborah
 - Question and answer interview with Barak
 - Question and answer interview with Jael
 - Summary of the battle with Sisera (in bullet form)
 - Analysis of Deborah’s canticle
 - ❑ After writing, tear off the six sheets of newsprint and set them aside.
1. Divide the class into six groups. Distribute one sheet of newsprint with a heading, one marker, and one Bible to each small group.
 2. Instruct the small groups to read the story of Deborah (Judges, chapters 4 and 5) aloud within their group.
 3. Tell the small groups that they are going to create a special section of a newspaper on the story of Deborah. Assign one topic to each small group and tell them to write it at the top of the sheet of newsprint they received. (There is a second sheet for each group if needed.) Instruct the young people to create and write their news story. Give them 5 to 10 minutes to complete this step.
 4. Gather the students back into the large group. Invite someone from each small group to come forward and present the group’s news story. Have them present the stories in the order found above under “Preparation.” Ask follow-up questions as necessary.
 5. Conclude by noting that Deborah was a wise person who was highly regarded by the Israelites. She was wise because she listened carefully to God to learn how the people were to act.

Deborah

Getting to Know God

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a pen, pencil, or thin-line marker.
 - ❑ Make a copy for each student of the handout “Getting to Know God” (Document #: TX002886).
1. Note that the Israelites come to Deborah’s palm tree when they want to talk to her. It is a special place where she goes to pray to, listen to, talk to, or wait for God. Distribute the handout “Getting to Know



God” (Document #: TX002886) and the pens, pencils, or markers to the students and review the directions with them.

2. Give the young people 5 to 10 minutes of quiet time to work on the handout. When they are done, have them gather with two or three people near them and share their answers, as they feel comfortable.
3. In the large group, ask the students to share some of their group’s responses. Then ask the entire group the following questions:
 - ▶ Which places do you think are the best for being with God? Why?
 - ▶ Why is it important to find a good place to pray to, listen to, talk to, or wait for God?
 - ▶ Does one place work well for relating to God or is it good to find several spots for this relationship?

Deborah

Getting to Know God

For each of the following four statements, list a different place (even if you can relate to God in more than one way in the places). Then, in the same box, write down your reasons for listing this particular place.

<p>“Pray to God”</p>
<p>“Listen to God”</p>
<p>“Talk to God”</p>
<p>“Wait for God”</p>



Gideon

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Scripture presents us with a picture of Gideon as someone who tests God's will. This behavior is quite bold considering God's omnipotence! Young adolescents can display this type of boldness with adults through attitude and appearance, and may relate to the character of Gideon.

As Gideon gets to know God and trust him, and as God allows Gideon to come to know him, Gideon grows in trust and acceptance of God's will. Through dialogue with God, Gideon eventually discovers God's plan for his life and then sets out to accomplish it, knowing that God will come to his aid. Through prayer the students will also come to know God's plan for their lives.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Gideon the Prayer Warrior
- Gideon and God: A Dialogue and Call
- Bullying

Scripture Passages Related to Gideon

- Judges 6:1–11 (The Israelites' relationship to the Midianites)*
- Judges, chapters 11–40 (Gideon asks God for proof)*
- Judges 7:1–25 (Gideon defeats the Midianites)
- Judges 8:1–28 (The final defeat of the Midianites)
- Judges 8:29–35 (The death of Gideon)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover

Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Gideon



- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Gideon
- But Lord . . . (Judges 6:11–16)
- Miracles (Judges 6:17–22,36–40)
- I Will Not Rule Over You (Judges 8:22–23)
- Prayer of a Humble Leader (Judges, chapter 9)

Gideon and Young Adolescents Today

- Gideon tests God’s will; young adolescents test their parents’ wills.
- The people of Israel are fearful of the bullying Midianites. Young people fear peers who bully.
- The Lord orders Gideon to rescue Israel, but Gideon doubts his ability. Some young adolescents experience doubt about their abilities.
- The Lord gives Gideon assurance that he will be able to conquer the Midianites. God empowers us to face the difficulties in life with certainty.

Highlighting God’s Presence

“The LORD is with you, brave and mighty man!” (Judges 6:12; the Lord’s angel speaking to Gideon)

Then the LORD ordered him, “Go with all your great strength and rescue Israel from the Midianites. I myself am sending you.” (Judges 6:14)

Gideon

Activities

Gideon the Prayer Warrior

In this activity, the students familiarize themselves with the story of Gideon and consider the role of prayer in Gideon’s military efforts.

Preparation

□ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.

1. Divide the class into three groups, and assign each group one of the chapters 6, 7, and 8. Give each group the task of writing a summary of the story of Gideon the warrior as found in their assigned chapter of the Book of Judges. Ask that each summary include a list of the

characteristics or qualities that Gideon displays when instructed by God to rescue Israel from the Midianites.

2. Compare and contrast each group's findings. Use these questions for discussion:
 - ▶ Do Gideon's reactions to God's commands change throughout the story or stay the same?
 - ▶ Does God influence Gideon's actions? If so, how?
3. Explain to the students that to pray is to talk with God, which makes Gideon's dialogue a prayer. Ask the students to discuss how we can be God's warriors. Invite them to identify what makes it possible to accomplish this. Suggest that prayer enables us to become God's warriors. As "prayer warriors" we can work to defeat sin and evil in the world.

Gideon and God: A Dialogue and Call

In this activity, the students explore the relationship God had with Gideon.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
- ❑ Make copies of the handout "Gideon and God: A Dialogue" (Document #: TX002887), one for each student.

Gideon



1. Distribute a copy of the handout "Gideon and God: A Dialogue," (Document #: TX002887) to every student. Have the students individually fill in Gideon's reply to God's statements by writing down verses from Judges 6:1–40 on the handout.
2. When the students are finished, call on them to read their answers aloud. Ask them to summarize Gideon's changing relationship with God. (At first Gideon tests God, and then he becomes obedient to God's will.)
3. Discuss the following questions with the students:
 - ▶ How do we respond to God's calling?
 - ▶ What types of work can we be called to do in order to carry out God's plan? (teacher, priest, nurse, doctor, mother, father)
 - ▶ How might a dialogue with God look today?
4. Conclude by arranging the students in pairs to create an e-mail dialogue with God. What are the similarities and differences between the e-mail dialogue and Gideon's conversation?

Variation

Have the students read the article “But Lord . . .” (Judges 6:11–16) in *Breakthrough!* to initiate discussion about what happens when we doubt our own abilities to do what God wants. Ask, “Do you think that saints ever feel that way?”



Bullying

In this activity, the students draw a comparison between Israel’s relationship with the Midianites and the practice of bullying today.

1. Summarize Israel’s relationship with the Midianites in Judges, chapter 6.
2. Ask the students to suggest words that would describe what is going on in that chapter. (The Midianites were bullying the Israelites.) Have the students define bullying, using their own words.
3. Discuss the following questions with the students:
 - ▶ How did the Midianites bully the Israelites?
 - ▶ What was the Israelites’ reaction to being bullied? Did they react the same way throughout Gideon’s story? (Judges, chapters 7 and 8)
 - ▶ Did the confrontation that took place between Gideon and the Midianites (Judges 7:19—8:17) come as a result of bullying?
 - ▶ From this story, what does God’s stand on bullying seem to be?
4. Talk with the students about bullying today, using these questions:
 - ▶ Does bullying exist among your peers?
 - ▶ Why do people choose to be bullies? Do they have to be or is it a choice?
 - ▶ Where can you look for God’s presence in a situation of bullying?
 - ▶ How can God help you if you have this experience?
5. Conclude the discussion, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ In the Gideon story, we can see that God defends the Israelites when they are bullied by the Midianites. In addition, God is actively helping Gideon and his men, because they certainly do not defeat the Midianites through numbers. In a similar way, God can give you courage to stand up for what is right and to speak out against injustices. When one speaks out against injustices, he or she becomes a hero.

Gideon

Gideon and God: A Dialogue

Read each Scripture passage as stated and then fill in Gideon's response from the passage.

1. Read Judges 6:14–15.

Gideon's reply:

2. Read Judges 6:16–17.

Gideon's reply:

3. Read Judges 6:25–27.

Gideon's action:

4. Read Judges 7:4–8.

Gideon's action:

5. Read Judges 7:9–18.

Gideon's action:

Fill in the blanks using the following citation: Judges 8:28.

So _____ was defeated by the _____ and was no longer a threat. The land was at _____ for _____ years, until Gideon died.



Samson

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The story of Samson is a rousing story of a one-man army taking on Israel's enemies, the Philistines. He is heroic but out of control at times as he tries to protect God's people. Young people may be equally horrified and impressed at the violence displayed by this man of God. Once again, the story of Samson is one of growth. It seems that he does not really "get it" until the last moments of his life.

While Samson carries out his spiritual authority to defeat the Philistines primarily through his astounding physical strength, it is not until he is on the verge of losing his life that he realizes that all of his strength comes from God alone and that to God alone he must submit his will. At this point, the powerful Samson asks God very sincerely and humbly for help.

Then Samson prayed, "Sovereign LORD, please remember me; please, God, give me my strength just this one time more, so that with this one blow I can get even with the Philistines." (Judges 16:28)

As young adolescents mature, the difference between them in size and strength becomes more apparent. Adolescent males, especially, hope to appear masculine and strong. Samson's final realization is a reminder to all of us that physical strength is secondary to the strength we find in faith.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Samson Posters
- Samson's Anger: Getting Even or Getting Over?
- Fashions for God's Ambassadors

Scripture Passages Related to Samson

- Judges 13:1–24 (An angel announces Samson's birth to his parents)*
- Judges 14:1–20 (Samson marries a Philistine woman who betrays him)

- Judges 15:1–8 (Samson burns down the Philistines’ orchards and fields)
- Judges 15:9–20 (Samson defeats the Philistines with a donkey’s jawbone)*
- Judges 16:4–22 (Delilah betrays Samson)*
- Judges 16:23–31 (The death of Samson and the defeat of the Philistines)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Samson

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Samson
- A Sneak Preview (Judges 13:2–24)
- Samson in Trouble (Judges 14:15—15:8)
- Be Careful Whom You Trust (Judges 16:4–22)
- Prayer in Despair (Judges 16:23–31)

Samson and Young Adolescents Today

- While it is an angel who tells Samson’s parents that their son will be a special person to the people of God, they are likely disconcerted at the way that this plays itself out. Young adolescents, despite the different phases they go through, want their own parents to have faith in them.
- Samson becomes aware that his strength comes from God. When he forgets the true source of his strength and begins to do things his own way, he gets into trouble. For the young adolescent, this is a cautionary tale of what can happen when one is too focused on one’s own strengths and not on God as the source of strength.
- Samson turns to God in his weakest moment and asks God to give him the strength to still serve God’s people despite his previous behavior. God’s response can be very reassuring for young people who will know that they can count on God even if they have not recently made the best choices.
- In many ways Samson behaves like an adolescent, because he is impetuous, strong-willed, swaggering, and sensual. In his relationships he likes teasing people with jokes and riddles. The young adolescent may easily identify with much of his personality. Young people should see what the cost of such a life can be if it is not eventually left behind.

Highlighting God’s Presence

The woman gave birth to a son and named him Samson. The child grew and the LORD blessed him. And the LORD’s power began to strengthen him while he was between Zorah and Eshtaol in the Camp of Dan. (Judges 13:24–25)

Suddenly, the power of the LORD made him strong, and he broke the ropes around his arms and hands as if they were burnt thread. (Judges 15:14)

Then Samson prayed, “Sovereign LORD, please remember me; please, God, give me my strength just this one time more, so that with this one blow I can get even with the Philistines.” (Judges 16:28)

Activities

Samson Posters

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible.
 - ❑ Copy the readings from “Scripture Passages Related to Samson” onto the board.
 - ❑ Provide the following items for each small group: a large sheet of newsprint, markers, glue, blank paper, construction paper, and, optionally, old magazines, scissors, and stickers.
1. Divide the class into groups of six, and assign each member of each group one of the reading sections on the board so that within each group, the entire story can be shared. (Adapt the group number, if necessary.)
 2. Instruct each student to write a brief summary of her or his section and then tell the other group members what happens in the story. (These summaries will be attached to the poster later.)
 3. Introduce this activity by sharing the following thoughts, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ The Book of Judges describes Samson in very dramatic terms. He is physically imposing and dominates all of his war adversaries! In some ways he sounds like a successful professional wrestler or boxer.

Samson

4. Distribute the supplies you have gathered. Using the general metaphor of a prize fighter, have the students design a poster presenting the star of the “Biblical Wrestling Association.” Each poster should have the following items:
 - The letters *BWA* need to appear at the top in some logo design.
 - Samson’s name and his “wrestling persona” and image need to be in the center of the newsprint.
 - Biblical citations that describe Samson and some other aspects of the story need to be in the background
 - A title needs to communicate something of his nature as a judge, such as “Judge Samson, the Wild and Woolly Man of God.” If you have provided magazines for the students, encourage them to use images or words or letters from magazines as well as drawing with markers.
 - The “Life of Samson” should be briefly summarized on blank paper with dark markers using a strong headline at the top of each section. (The individual summaries can be cut and pasted together, or rewritten or retyped as one.) If there is not room on the poster itself, these sheets can hang off the sides.
5. Ask a volunteer to summarize the life of Samson and then ask other students to fill in any gaps. Then have each group share its poster and explain the symbols contained within it. If any of the symbols raise questions or issues about the stories, pursue them with the young people.

Samson’s Anger: Getting Even or Getting Over?

Samson

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
1. Introduce the activity by noting that the results of Samson’s anger present an important lesson for us to learn: just because we feel deeply upset about something does not mean we must react furiously with our anger. Ask the young people these questions:
 - ▶ Does the Samson story teach us that reacting in anger is the way to solve problems?
 - ▶ Or does it suggest that striking against others who make us angry causes more problems than it solves?
 2. Have a volunteer read Judges 14:5—15:8 aloud to the group and discuss these questions:

- ▶ Why is Samson angry and does his angry response solve the problem at hand?
 - ▶ What in your experience suggests that the “getting even” approach solves problems? How?
 - ▶ What in your experience suggests that the “getting even” approach does not solve problems? How?
 - ▶ Can “getting even” create even more problems?
3. Ask the young people to imagine that they are newspaper advice columnists and that Samson has written in and basically said that he has no idea how to control his anger and to please give advice. Give each student half a page of blank paper. At the top of the page, the student is to finish the phrase “When I feel angry, . . .” It should be in large letters, leaving room in the middle for a picture or image. Below the picture, have the students write a short prayer about using this means of resolving their anger.
 4. Create a small book called “When I feel angry, I . . .” based on their responses. After all the students have finished the pages, collect them, photocopy them, and assemble them in a cover for each student. Distribute the prayer book to other grades if it seems appropriate.
 5. After the students have read over each other’s ideas, conduct a general discussion about ways to handle anger. Note that anger is often “a secondary emotion.” What this means is that we are often angry at something or someone because some deeper emotion has been stirred first: we feel angry because we feel hurt, discouraged, inadequate, betrayed, and so on. To resolve our anger often means resolving another level of feelings too.

Samson

Fashions for God’s Ambassadors

See the activity by this name on pages 122–124 of this guide. This activity invites the students to explore the impact on Samuel of being a nazirite and can be adapted for Samson.

Ruth

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The story of Ruth is a beautiful story of generosity and blessing. Ruth's decision to accompany Naomi back home starts a chain reaction of these blessings, culminating in Ruth's marriage to Boaz. Ruth is an ordinary woman, just like the young people who will be studying her, but her example invites all readers to strive for the harmony and kindness demonstrated in her story.

The Kingdom of God is often described as an “already, not-yet” reality. The Book of Ruth beautifully depicts the “already” Kingdom of God in its story of an inclusive, caring, and compassionate community—a people who live in the divine image. This community can be described by the Hebrew term *hesed*, which means “genuine love and kindness.” Divine *hesed* is revealed and made incarnate through the loving thoughts, words, and deeds of this human community.

The story can challenge young people to think about whether or not we can create such a wonderful “already” environment in our schools and communities. Could ordinary people doing extraordinary things transform people so completely?

Because Naomi's sons had married foreigners, Ruth is not Jewish. It is interesting that Ruth is one of the ancestors of King David even though she herself is not a descendant of Jacob. The story of Ruth depicts ethnic diversity in the family tree of Israel.

Because many young people are open to people of diverse backgrounds, it may not seem surprising to them to see Ruth's participation in David's heritage. Is her inclusion an invitation to make greater efforts to celebrate everyone's gifts?

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- The “Already” Kingdom of God
 - A Talking Tapestry
 - Inside Out and Upside Down
-
-

Scripture Passages Related to Ruth

- Ruth 1:1–5 (Introducing the people and the places)*
- Ruth 1:6–22 (Naomi’s sad situation and Ruth’s generous response)*
- Ruth 2:1–23 (Ruth gathers grain in Boaz’s field)*
- Ruth 3:1–16 (Ruth seeks to marry Boaz)*
- Ruth 4:1–12 (Ruth marries Boaz)*
- Ruth 4:13–22 (Boaz and Ruth’s descendants)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passage to cover.

Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Ruth

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Ruth
- Introduction to the Book of Ruth
- When Bad Things Happen (Ruth, chapter 1)
- Caring for Poor People (Ruth 2:1–3)
- A Good Reputation (Ruth 2:11–12)
- Marriage Then and Now (Ruth 4:1–12)



Ruth and Young Adolescents Today

- Ruth enters a new environment and the members of the community warmly welcome her. Young people may have experienced being a new member of a community or welcoming someone into their cluster of school or neighborhood friends.
- Ruth remains loyal to a family member in a difficult situation. It may be easier for Ruth to respond in a different way, but her character guides her decision making. Young people may have had situations in which defending a family member would have proved difficult. Their character guides their response to the situation. See “A Good Reputation” (Ruth 2:11–12) in *Breakthrough!*
- Naomi feels that God has “dealt harshly” with her because of the death of her husband and sons. Difficult situations can prompt similar feelings in the life of a young person. See “When Bad Things Happen” (Ruth, chapter 1) in *Breakthrough!*
- Ruth and Naomi are dependent on the compassion and care of a community when difficulties necessitate their move to Bethlehem. The face of poverty and homelessness is familiar to many young people through the news media or direct experience.



Ruth

Highlighting God's Presence

Some time later Boaz himself arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the workers. "The LORD be with you!" he said.

"The LORD bless you!" they answered. (Ruth 2:4)

The leaders and the others said, "Yes, we are witnesses. May the LORD make your wife become like Rachel and Leah, who bore many children to Jacob. May you become rich in the clan of Ephrath and famous in Bethlehem." (Ruth 4:11).

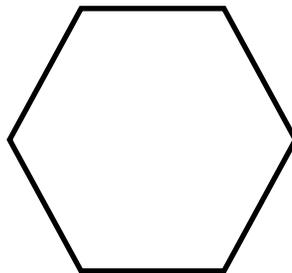
So Boaz took Ruth home as his wife. The LORD blessed her, and she became pregnant and had a son. (Ruth 4:13)

Activities

The "Already" Kingdom of God

Preparation

- ❑ The students need Bibles and pens or pencils.
- ❑ Write across the top of the board "Ordinary to Extraordinary."
- ❑ Draw on the board a large hexagon. Allow enough room so that you could add an outside triangle to each facet of your hexagon and not go off the board. Putting one outside triangle on each facet of the hexagon will create the Star of David. Do not reveal this but allow the students to discover it. Write in the center of this hexagon the name of your school, church, or civic community.



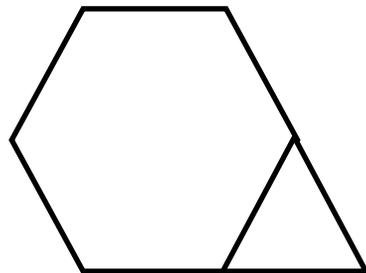
- ❑ Make each student a copy of the handout "Extraordinary Blessings" (Document #: TX002888).
1. Read the Book of Ruth aloud to the students. Note that Ruth, by going with her mother-in-law, exceeds what would have been culturally expected, and that her action initiates a biblical book about blessings.

- Distribute the handout “Extraordinary Blessings” (Document #: TX002888) to the students. Ask each of them to privately look up the passages on the top half of the handout and follow the directions provided. Check the students’ answers with them when they are finished.



The answers for the handout: Naomi blesses and looks out for Ruth (1:8–9). Ruth, in turn, blesses and attends to the needs of Naomi (1:16–18, 2:17–18). Boaz extends blessing and kindness to Ruth (2:5–16, 3:10–13). Ruth responds to Boaz (2:13, 3:9–10). Boaz provides for the needs of Naomi (3:17). Naomi blesses and plays “matchmaker” for Boaz and Ruth (2:19–20, 3:1–4). The people of Bethlehem extend blessings and kindness to one another (2:4, 4:11–17).

- Note that Ruth’s determination to be loyal and loving shines through the biblical pages as an example for ordinary people to respond in extraordinary ways. Engage the students in a discussion about community life and the everyday, ordinary activities that create a sense of goodness within us.
- Bring the students’ attention to the hexagon on the board and on their handouts. Solicit from the students six ways that a person can bless the community. Along the lines inside of this hexagon, write each of the six activities that bless a community. (An example of this would be to pick up one’s own litter and dispose of it properly.) Invite the students to copy the same activities onto their handouts.
- Choose one activity from the hexagon out of the six, such as “picking up one’s own litter,” and draw a triangular shape as shown below. Ask the students to take each of the six actions or characteristics, which ordinarily would be considered good, and go further with it to make it extraordinary. Some ideas for the litter example might be (1) picking up the garbage that others have left behind, (2) taking the time to place recyclables in assorted receptacles, or (3) working on a beautification project. Write your students’ ideas within the boundaries of the triangle.



- Repeat step 5, adding five additional triangles to your hexagon until you have created a shape that depicts the Star of David. Note to the students that this star began in the ordinary actions of a community. The beams of light that extend from the star are filled with extraordinary good deeds that reflect God’s love in the world today.

Note that the triangle is also a symbol of our Trinitarian God, in whose image we are created. Our understanding of God is that of three “persons” who dynamically give and receive love. God is a community of love. We “image” God when we give selflessly to others and receive their love in return.

7. Offer the image often used by theologians that the Kingdom of God is an “already, not-yet” reality. Close with these thoughts:
 - ▶ On the one hand, we are clearly “not yet” in Heaven, but there are times, such as when an ordinary person does extraordinary things, that we experience the Kingdom of God as “already” here.

A Talking Tapestry

Preparation

- ❑ Do an Internet search using “Ellis Island,” or go to the USCCB Web site to search for “the Catholic Church’s position on immigration.”
- ❑ Find the poem “The New Colossus,” by Emma Lazarus, which is easily found on the Internet. One place to look is the National Park Service Web site.
- ❑ **Something to Consider.** This activity talks about ancestors and their arrival in America. While many students of European descent and from other places arrived through Ellis Island, the topic of ancestors coming to America can be painful for those students whose forebearers were forced to come here because of slavery or persecution, or who perhaps are illegally here. If you sense that this conversation might affect these students quite differently, you might consider addressing that difference head on by focusing on the different ways that people are received in a new land, or you might want to spend your time emphasizing the diversity aspect of this activity.

1. The students should be familiar with the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, and the idea of the United States as a “melting pot” of cultures. Suggest that today we might more appropriately engage the metaphor of a “tapestry” that is richly woven with multihued cultural threads indicative of the diversity of American society. This tapestry can be imaginatively seen through the stories of human experience.
2. Read “The New Colossus,” by Emma Lazarus, to your students and focus on the line that states, “give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses.”
3. Engage the students in dialogue about the experience of being an immigrant to the United States. Ask the students the following types of questions:

- ▶ Do you have relatives, neighbors, or friends who have come to the United States from another country?
 - ▶ When did your family come to this country? How did they come?
 - ▶ Did these people experience a warm welcome and blessings as Ruth did in the biblical story? What kind of effect did that have on their experience?
 - ▶ What is the value of welcoming people of different ethnicities into our national story?
 - ▶ How is the United States enriched by people of other lands?
4. Ask the students to form small groups and to discuss ways that the United States can live out the biblical ideal of hospitality and welcome illustrated in the Book of Ruth. The biblical story says that the whole town became excited at Naomi's return with Ruth (Ruth 1:19) and that Boaz welcomed the foreigner, Ruth, with advice and a means of work (Ruth 2:5–17). After 5 to 10 minutes of small-group discussion, bring the larger group together and write their ideas on the board, using an assortment of colored markers or chalk.
 5. Conclude by discussing why God chose a foreign-born woman to play a significant role in the story of Israel, and by extension, the Christian story (Matthew 1:2–6). The Book of Ruth introduces a brilliant and blessed ethnic thread into the tapestry of Judeo-Christian history.

Inside Out and Upside Down

This activity from the chapter on Sarah (page 38 in this leader guide) can be revisited for the story of Ruth. Once again, God is revealed as a God of surprises who invites a foreign woman to play a significant role in the story of salvation. Ruth is the only book of the Bible that is named for a foreign (not Israelite) woman.

Ruth

Extraordinary Blessings

Look up the following passages in the Book of Ruth and briefly explain how one person blesses another in these verses. (There may be more than one blessing going on at one time!)

Ruth 1:8–9

Ruth 1:16–18, 2:17–18

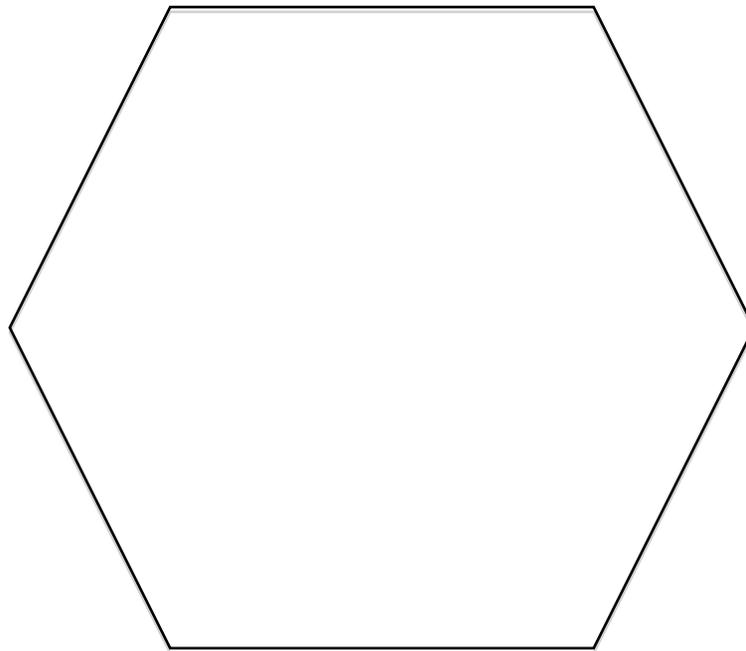
Ruth 2:5–16, 3:10–13

Ruth 2:13, 3:9–10

Ruth 3:17

Ruth 2:19–20, 3:1–4

Ruth 2:4, 4:11–17



Samuel

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Samuel is a wonderful biblical figure with a beautiful call from God and an important role in the transition from the era of the judges to the kingdom. His in-tune connection with God and courage to do God's will provides young adolescents with a figure who "really does it right."

His true commitment to God and to the people he serves is very impressive. He is fair, a quality that many young people value, especially in the adults with whom they come in contact. He is also upfront about who he is because he follows the nazirite rules of not cutting his hair and avoiding alcohol. Young people can admire Samuel because he "walks his talk," or stands up for what he believes.

Although God does not want Israel to have a king, God allows the people to make this decision, which eventually comes back to haunt them. Samuel must stand aside and watch this happen. (His own sons disappoint him, however, which is part of what leads Israel to ask for a king.) He must also communicate God's displeasure to Saul, whom he first anoints as king. The young people will be able to empathize with the disappointment Samuel must have felt after Saul proved not to be a good king.

Samuel's upright conduct, prayerful connection with God, and courage to rely on God as his strength brings much good during his lifetime. Young people need to be reminded that they can control only their own actions and attitudes. What goes on outside them is often out of their control.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- A Samuel Time Line Game
 - Dedicated to God
 - Fashions for God's Ambassadors
-
-

Scripture Passages Related to Samuel

- 1 Samuel 1:1–18 (Hannah prays for a son)*
- 1 Samuel 1:19–28 (Samuel is born and Hannah brings him to the house of the Lord)*
- 1 Samuel 2:18–21 (Hannah’s visits to Samuel)
- 1 Samuel 3:1–18 (The Lord appears to Samuel)*
- 1 Samuel 3:19–21 (Samuel becomes known as a prophet)
- 1 Samuel 7:2–14 (Samuel prays for victory over the Philistines)*
- 1 Samuel 7:15–17 (Samuel as judge)
- 1 Samuel 8:4–21 (The people ask Samuel for a king)*
- 1 Samuel 10:17–25 (Samuel announces Saul as king)
- 1 Samuel 12:1–25 (Samuel’s final address to the people)*
- 1 Samuel 15:10–11 (God rejects Saul as king)
- 1 Samuel 16:1–13 (Samuel anoints David as king)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Samuel

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Samuel
- Introduction to First Samuel
- I’m Praying, Really! (1 Samuel 1:12–18)
- Two Women at Prayer (1 Samuel 2:1–10)
- Speak, Lord (1 Samuel 3:1–10)
- Stealing Has Consequences (1 Samuel, chapter 5)
- Who’s the King? (1 Samuel, chapter 8)
- Being Anointed (1 Samuel 10:1)
- A Simple Choice (1 Samuel 12:13–15)
- Who Do You Think You Are? (1 Samuel 15:17–25)
- The Heart of the Matter (1 Samuel 16:1–13)

Samuel and Young Adolescents Today

- Samuel has a distinctive grooming pattern of long, uncut hair that marks him as one dedicated to God. Young adolescents are very fashion-conscious. In choosing their clothing, they are also at times experimenting with the effect that these clothes have on other people.

- Samuel’s sorrow over Saul’s departure from God’s path resembles the young adolescent’s experience of watching a friend take a wrong turn.
- Samuel was widely hailed in Israel for his fairness in settling disputes. Young people prize fairness and justice in others, though they may not be so consistent in being that way themselves.

Highlighting God’s Presence

In those days, when the boy Samuel was serving the LORD under the direction of Eli, there were very few messages from the LORD, and visions from him were quite rare. . . . Before dawn, while the lamp was still burning, the LORD called Samuel. He answered, “Yes, sir!” and ran to Eli and said, “You called me, and here I am.”

But Eli answered, “I didn’t call you; go back to bed.” So Samuel went back to bed.

The LORD called Samuel again . . .

The LORD called Samuel a third time . . .

Then Eli realized that it was the LORD who was calling the boy, so he said to him, “Go back to bed; and if he calls you again, say, ‘Speak, LORD, your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went back to bed.

The LORD came and stood there, and called as he had before, “Samuel! Samuel!”

Samuel answered, “Speak; your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:1–10)

Then he [Samuel] prayed to the LORD to help Israel, and the LORD answered his prayer. While Samuel was offering the sacrifice, the Philistines moved forward to attack; but just then the LORD thundered from heaven against them. They became completely confused and fled in panic. (1 Samuel 7:9–10)

But the LORD said to him [Samuel], “Pay no attention to how tall and handsome he is. I have rejected him, because I do not judge as people judge. They look at the outward appearance, but I look at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

Samuel

Activities

A Samuel Time Line Game

Preparation

- Write the twelve citations about Samuel from “Scripture Passages Related to Samuel” on the board or in a visible place.
- Each student needs a Bible and a pen.

- ❑ Provide enough index cards so that each group of three young people will have twelve cards.

1. Introduce Samuel by noting that the Scripture passages about him cover his childhood, parts of his adulthood, and parts of his old age. Explain that to help them learn something about all the parts of his life, the young people will make a card game based partly on the card game known as “Concentration” or “Memory.”
2. Divide the class into groups of three. Make sure there are twelve index cards per group. Ask the students to read each of the twelve Scripture passages written on the board. Instruct them to summarize each of the twelve readings on the cards provided. The other side of the cards should remain blank.
3. After each group has created their “deck” of the twelve events, have them shuffle the cards and then exchange decks (facedown) with another group so that each group has a new set of cards. Each group then lays out the twelve cards facedown in a 3-by-4-inch rectangle on their table.
4. Explain the object of the game, which is to find two pairs of matching cards that describe Samuel’s boyhood, one pair of matching cards that describes an event from his adulthood, and two pairs of matching cards that record events from when he is old. Players should take turns turning over pairs of cards to find ones that match the categories, but they must find the cards in chronological order from Samuel’s boyhood through his adulthood to his old age!

If a player guesses incorrectly, he or she replaces the card and gives the next player a chance. Players can turn over only one pair of cards each time, even if they get one match right. The winner, of course, is the first one to get the right number of matched cards from all three parts of Samuel’s life.

Note: The boyhood cards are the first four Scriptures listed (1 Samuel 1:1—3:18); the adult cards are the next three listed (1 Samuel 3:19—7:17); the old age cards are the final five (1 Samuel 8:4—16:13).

Samuel

Dedicated to God

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
1. Have the students read 1 Samuel 1:1–28. Review the reading with these questions:
 - ▶ What is Hannah praying for?
 - ▶ What is her promise if her prayer is answered?

- ▶ What does Samuel’s name mean?
- ▶ What does Hannah do with Samuel to fulfill her promise?

2. Make these observations, using these or similar words:

- ▶ Samuel’s early life is based on a promise that his mother makes before God. She tells God that if she conceives a child, she will “dedicate” or hand over the child to God’s service. Hannah is pretty amazing to say, “God, I really want to have a baby so I can give him to you!” This idea of dedicating or committing oneself to God is commendable but also daunting.

3. Ask the young people to discuss the following questions:

- ▶ What does it mean for Hannah to dedicate Samuel to the Lord?
- ▶ To what do people dedicate themselves today? Why?
- ▶ What are the signs that they are dedicating themselves?
- ▶ Are you dedicated to anything?
- ▶ How would someone know if you are?

4. Instruct the students to examine the contents of their wallets or purses. (If they do not have one of these with them, have them think of their backpack, pencil case, a drawer at home, or another location that holds valuables.) After they have done a thorough inventory of what these contain, ask the young people to consider these questions privately or to share depending on the environment of the group:

- ▶ What would be the hardest thing from your wallet or purse for you to willingly surrender to someone?
- ▶ Would it be easier to give it up if that someone promised you “something better in return” (even if they did not tell you what that would be)?
- ▶ Why would it be hard to dedicate that particular item to another person?
- ▶ Under what conditions would it be possible for you to surrender it?

5. Have the students briefly reflect in writing about what they hope to dedicate or commit their lives to in the future and why they might want to do this. After they have written the reflections, either invite them to share their reflections, or you, the teacher, can share your own sense of being dedicated to God or surrendered to his will. Share these types of thoughts, using these or similar words:

- ▶ At this time in your life, you are mainly on the receiving end of things as you depend on your parents and teachers to guide and support you as you grow up. As a family member, a team member, a participant in a dance troupe, or a part of a school, you are learning what it means to hand yourself over for the sake of others. Hannah is a wonderful model of someone who loves selflessly enough to share a baby she desires so much. She can be a model of the person we all want to become.
6. Conclude by reading parts of Hannah’s prayer of gratitude in 1 Samuel 2:1–10.

Fashions for God’s Ambassadors

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, lined paper, blank paper, markers, and a pen.
 - ❑ Bring in some fashion magazine ads or ask the young people to bring them in if they do not mind having them cut up.
1. Have the students read 1 Samuel 1:9–11, 2:24–28. Ask the young people the following questions to check their understanding of the passages:
 - ▶ What kind of son does Hannah want to raise? (A nazirite. Being a nazirite means having no haircuts and no alcohol. One completely dedicates oneself to God.)
 - ▶ How do you imagine nazirites were able to take care of their hair?
 - ▶ What else does Samuel wear to show he is a nazirite? (Samuel wears a sacred linen apron his mother makes for him.)
 2. Share some of the following thoughts, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ Samuel’s hair, apron, and lifestyle clearly identify him as one living a vowed life to God. One would observe by his hair and realize by his avoidance of alcohol that he is one specially set apart for God’s service.
 - ▶ A nazirite could not pretend that he was not one of God’s “ambassadors” in the world. People could expect you to live a faithful life because of how you looked. The expectation is probably similar to the one people have for a priest wearing a clerical collar or a sister wearing a habit.
 - ▶ We communicate something about our values in the way that we dress and groom ourselves. Our clothes and appearance can be seen by others as a sign that we respect or do not respect ourselves.

We must be careful, however, about stereotyping people based on how they look.

3. Ask the young people to write down their favorite piece of clothing that is not a T-shirt and to explain why it is their favorite in two to three sentences. Then ask them to do the same with their favorite T-shirt. Afterward, ask the students to answer this question: “When I wear this piece of clothing in public, do other people receive a message about what I value or who I am?”
4. Distribute the magazines that you have brought in so that the young people can look at them in twos and threes. (Make sure that there are sufficient examples of men’s fashions if you have both sexes in your group.) Have the young people pick three advertisements for clothing or hair products. On the lined paper, have them answer these questions for each advertisement:
 - ▶ What values are promoted by these hair and clothing choices?
 - ▶ How do these fashion choices affect how people look at those who use them?
5. Share some of the following ideas with the young people, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ Samuel’s appearance and alcohol avoidance clearly reveal his values as someone dedicated to God. Whether or not you believe that other people receive messages about you from what you wear, the fact is that they do.
 - ▶ God tells Samuel that he is not to judge solely by appearance, for God judges the heart rather than the outward appearance. Clothing should not determine your assessment of another person.
 - ▶ The clothing industry is not promoting Christian values in clothing but rather trying to make money through sales. Given that, you might need to make an extra effort to communicate your Christian values through your clothing purchases.
6. Ask the young people to suggest ways that they know another person is Christian from their clothing. (The answers might include Christian jewelry, T-shirts with Christian logos, and so on.)
7. Distribute the markers and blank paper to the students. In pairs, ask the young people to design a piece of Christian clothing or jewelry. (Challenge them to take their favorite piece of clothing and give it a Christian twist.) After designing their piece of clothing or jewelry, have the students explain their images to each other.

8. Conclude by asking the following questions:

- ▶ Can a follower of Jesus be fashion-conscious and faith-conscious?
- ▶ Might you make some wardrobe changes in order to fit both descriptions?

Saul

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The story of King Saul is somewhat difficult to read because it narrates the failure of a man called by God. Though Saul does not seem to be a bad person initially, as he moves away from God, he continues to slip into more unusual behavior and finally takes his own life.

Young adolescents are beginning to learn about the characteristics of a strong leader. Clearly, a good biblical leader such as Joshua keeps his eyes on God at all times and listens to prophets sent to him. By contrast, Saul allows his jealousy of David to take over. God's Spirit is with David, but it departs from Saul.

It appears that mental illness may contribute to Saul's failure rather than simply sinful choices. Because we do not know for sure what led Saul to suicide, his story becomes an opportunity to talk with young people about mental illness, its signs, and what people can do if they see such signs in themselves or others.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- The Rise and Fall of Saul
- From Nobody to King—The Perils of Fame
- Music and the Soul

Scripture Passages Related to Saul

- 1 Samuel 9:1–18; 10:1,17–24 (Samuel encounters Saul and anoints him as king)*
- 1 Samuel 13:1–14 (Saul's disobedience over the sacrifice)
- 1 Samuel 15:1–26 (Saul is rejected as king)*
- 1 Samuel 16:14–23 (David in Saul's court as harpist)*
- 1 Samuel, chapter 17 (David defeats Goliath)
- 1 Samuel 18:6–16 (Saul is jealous of David)*
- 1 Samuel 22:1–22 (The slaughters of the priests)

- 1 Samuel 24:1–23 (David spares Saul’s life)*
- 1 Samuel 26:1–25 (David spares Saul’s life again)
- 1 Samuel 28:3–19 (Saul consults a medium)
- 1 Samuel 31:1–11 (Saul commits suicide)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Saul

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Saul
- “Do Whatever You Think Best” (1 Samuel 14:36,40)
- Who Do You Think You Are? (1 Samuel 15:17–25)
- The Power of Music (1 Samuel 16:14–23)
- Taking a Big Risk (1 Samuel, chapter 17)
- The Jealousy Monster (1 Samuel, chapter 19)
- Innocent Blood (1 Samuel 21:1–6; 22:9–19)
- Respect (1 Samuel, chapter 24)
- Calling Up the Dead (1 Samuel 28:3–19)
- A Tragic End (1 Samuel, chapter 31)

Saul and Young Adolescents Today

- As king, Saul struggled to make the right leadership decisions. Some young adolescents may be in positions of responsibility and find themselves struggling to do the right thing. Through examining Saul, the young people observe qualities that make a good leader and a poor leader.
- Saul’s impatience gets him into much trouble. Many young people struggle with being patient as well.
- Saul is jealous of David’s success and fame among the people of Israel. He even tries to kill David! Some young adolescents struggle with feelings of inferiority, even when they initially have established themselves with some confidence within a certain group. Most young people need tools to deal effectively with feelings of inferiority and jealousy.
- Saul lets his temper get the best of him; he knows he should not be so obsessed over hunting down David, but he cannot help himself. The Bible says that “an evil spirit” comes upon him. Young people

know how wildly their own moods can swing. They need guidance so they don't feel powerless in the face of their intense feelings.

- Saul commits an act of unprovoked aggression against the priests of Nob and the innocent inhabitants. This may or may not surprise young adolescents who witness quite a bit of violence on television and in movies.
- Saul consults a witch about his fate. Saul discovers the occult to be a dangerous and despairing source of spiritual exploration. Young adolescents need to be made aware of the dangers of the occult, but in a matter-of-fact and low-key way.
- Saul's despair and suicide, unfortunately, may not be too far removed from the experience of some students. The topics of suicide and mental illness should be seen in the light of God's love and mercy.

Highlighting God's Presence

The LORD said to Samuel, "I am sorry that I made Saul king; he has turned away from me and disobeyed my commands." (1 Samuel 15:10)

The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you go on grieving over Saul? I have rejected him as king of Israel." (1 Samuel 16:1)

Saul was afraid of David because the LORD was with David but had abandoned him. (1 Samuel 18:12)

Activities

The Rise and Fall of Saul

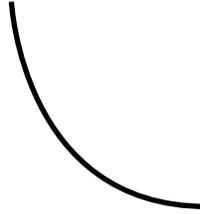
In this activity, the students create a living time line representing Saul's life and his downfall.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible; the list of readings from "Scripture Passages Related to Saul," which you may want to write on the board; paper; and a pen.
- ❑ Bring in enough index cards so that each young person can have eleven.

Saul

1. On a white board or sheet of newsprint, draw a long, downward curving line like this:



2. Ask the students to quietly read the eleven sections you have written on the board. After reading the eleven sections, the students should write a brief description of the action for each section. Indicate that, eventually, a group of students from the class will place one of the eleven cards describing the downfall of Saul on the correct chronological spot on the line, but first every student will organize his or her own time line individually. The students can also read *Breakthrough!* articles about Saul for more background.
3. After each student has determined the order in which they would place their cards on the time line, assign eleven students to a team and give each one the task of representing one of the eleven readings.

Ask the members of the team to line themselves up from Saul's high point to his low point without using any of the index cards or sneaking any peeks at their own materials. (If a student goes out of order, ask for a volunteer from those sitting to put the next event in!) Each representative should tell the part of the story that they represent.

Talk with the students about the ways that Saul's life, circumstances, and mental state go downhill.
4. Conclude by asking the students these questions:
 - ▶ What is a tragedy? One definition is "a medieval narrative poem or tale typically describing the downfall of a great man" (*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v. "tragedy").
 - ▶ What makes a character a "tragic figure"?
 - ▶ Does Saul's tragedy have to end as it does? Why or why not?
 - ▶ What are some modern-day tragedies?
 - ▶ Are there ways to recognize and then stop contributions that we make to tragedies, whether we do it for ourselves or others?

Variation

Review David's life, showing how David's life rises rather than declines. Use another line on the board, only make it start low and cross over Saul's life at a critical event: David's defeat of Goliath. See "Life on the

Road with David” on pages 133–134 of the next chapter for a similar journey approach to the life of Israel’s King David.

From Nobody to King—The Perils of Fame

In this activity, the students use Saul’s story in order to contemplate the potential perils of having celebrity status.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, a pen, scissors, and glue.
 - ❑ Provide the students with magazines such as *Teen People*, *People*, and other publications that feature movie celebrities. You could also ask the young people to bring in magazines if they do not mind having them cut up.
1. Ask the students to read 1 Samuel, chapters 9, 13, and 15, quietly to themselves. Then ask the students to reflect in writing on this question:
 - ▶ Why do you think Saul does what he does in these chapters?
 2. Ask the students to suggest characteristics of these different lifestyles and list their responses on the board.

Ordinary Life	Celebrity Life
---------------	----------------
 3. Encourage the students to reflect on these questions in a large-group discussion:
 - ▶ Which of these terms best describes Saul’s life? Why?
 - ▶ Does Saul use his fame well or not? Why?
 - ▶ The biblical concept of leadership involves listening to God and serving God’s people. Does Saul fit this description or not? How do you know?
 4. Distribute a magazine to each of your students. Have them find pictures that fit each of the characteristics on the board. Ask the students these questions:
 - ▶ What are the risks of celebrity life?
 - ▶ What does it cost to be famous?
 - ▶ How would this magazine be different if all the people in it were leaders according to God’s definition?

Saul

Music and the Soul

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
 - ❑ Bring in CDs with a variety of musical styles and a CD player, or use another convenient method to share a variety of music.
 - ❑ Invite the students to bring in instruments if they are musicians, or bring in your own.
1. Read 1 Samuel, chapter 16, aloud to the students. Note that David plays the harp to ease Saul's troubled mind. Suggest that music has a profound effect on us and that the effect differs depending on the type of music.
 2. Ask your students to number a sheet of scratch paper with the number of musical styles you have prepared, plus those of any students who have brought their instruments.
 3. Play selections of various musical styles in the order that the students wrote them down. As you present several different types of music, ask the students to write down next to the selection number on their scratch paper how they feel when they hear each piece of music.
 4. Return to the passage about Saul and David. Ask this question:
 - ▶ Of the selections that we heard today, which ones do you think would have eased Saul's mind and would have been the type of music David might have played for him. Why?Invite discussion from the students about the impact of music on the spirit, utilizing the expertise of the student musicians present.
 5. Have the students write down five to ten songs that bring them joy or hope. (Suggest that they include some of the Christian popular music that they may know or Catholic liturgical music.) Invite the students to keep such music close at hand, if possible at home, for days that are struggles.

David

Preparing to Teach

Overview

David is one of the Bible's most colorful and charismatic figures. He fights Goliath with God's strength, is a musician whose playing calms souls, is an accomplished soldier, and yet is a sinner like us.

When David dodges Saul's efforts to kill him, he tries to reconcile his respect for Saul as God's anointed one with his own safety. David has experienced Saul's instability.

In King David, young people can see a leader who is sinful despite his greatness but also one who repents of his sin and accepts its consequences. Though his crime against Bathsheba and Uriah is very wrong, he accepts that he will lose a loved one as a just consequence for his actions. It is this sincere remorse for the failures in his life that makes David so appealing to us.

During his reign as king, David needs to align his plans with God's plan. At one point David expresses a desire to build a temple. God's plans for David do not include the building of a temple. In a similar way, it is important for young people to pray and see if their own plans fit in with God's plan for them.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Life on the Road with David
- David and Goliath
- Psalms and Rap

Scripture Passages Related to David

- 1 Samuel 16:1–13 (Samuel anoints David as king)*
- 1 Samuel 17:41–54 (David defeats Goliath)*
- 1 Samuel 18:1–16 (Jonathan and David become friends; Saul is jealous of David)
- 1 Samuel 24:1–22 (David spares Saul's life)

- 2 Samuel 2:1–7 (David is made king of Judah)*
- 2 Samuel 5:1–16 (David becomes king of Israel and Judah)*
- 2 Samuel 7:1–17 (Nathan’s message to David about a temple)*
- 2 Samuel 11:1–27 (David seduces Bathsheba)*
- 2 Samuel 12:1–15 (Nathan’s message and David’s repentance)
- 1 Kings 2:10–12 (The death of David)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to David

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with David
- Torn Apart (2 Samuel 1:1–12)
- Jerusalem, the Holy City (2 Samuel 5:6–9)
- It’s a Party! (2 Samuel 6:12–23)
- An Eternal Kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12–29)
- Facing the Truth (2 Samuel, chapters 11–12)
- Fathers and Sons (2 Samuel, chapter 14)
- If Only (2 Samuel 18:33)
- The Man Whom God Made Great (2 Samuel 23:1)
- Good Advice (1 Kings 2:1–4)
- Grandparents’ Prayer (1 Chronicles 17:16–27)

David and Young Adolescents Today

- David is a musician. Many young adolescents may be musicians in their own right or find pleasure from listening to music.
- Saul and David are rivals due to Saul’s jealousy of David. Young people encounter rivalry and jealousy in their lives.
- David defeats Goliath because he looks to God for his source of strength. Young adolescents have their own “Goliaths” that they look to overcome.
- David has plans and aspirations for his life that at times do not mirror God’s plan for his life. Young people have plans and ambitions for their own lives that need prayerful consideration and proper discernment.
- David and Jonathan share a special friendship. Good and loyal friends are a blessing in the lives of young adolescents.
- David’s life is that of a repentant sinner. Young people can identify with the sinful David, who loves God enough to ask for mercy.

Highlighting God’s Presence

The LORD said to Samuel, “This is the one—anoint him!” Samuel took the olive oil and anointed David in front of his brothers. Immediately the spirit of the LORD took control of David and was with him from that day on. (1 Samuel 16:12–13)

David answered, “You are coming against me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the Israelite armies, which you have defied.” (1 Samuel 17:45)

David led his men in battle and was successful in all he did, because the LORD was with him. (1 Samuel 18:13–14)

And so David realized that the LORD had established him as king of Israel and was making his kingdom prosperous for the sake of his people. (2 Samuel 5:12)

“So tell my servant David that I, the LORD Almighty, say to him, ‘I took you from looking after sheep in the fields and made you the ruler of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have defeated all your enemies as you advanced. I will make you as famous as the greatest leaders in the world. I have chosen a place for my people Israel and have settled them there, where they will live without being oppressed any more. Ever since they entered this land, they have been attacked by violent people, but this will not happen again. I promise to keep you safe from all your enemies and to give you descendants. When you die and are buried with your ancestors, I will make one of your sons king and will keep his kingdom strong. He will be the one to build a temple for me, and I will make sure that his dynasty continues forever.’” (2 Samuel 7:8–13)

Activities

Life on the Road with David

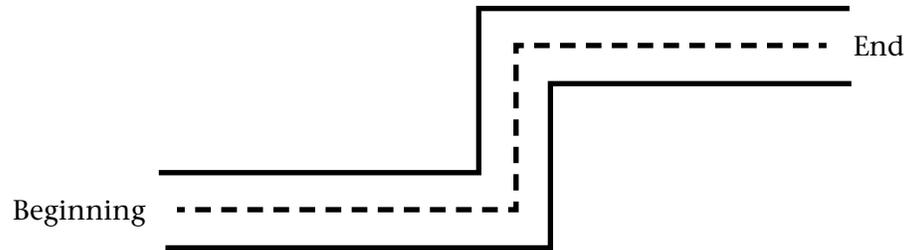
Using the image of a road, the students fill in a time line of David’s life, indicating the successes and rough spots in his journey. They then compare this journey to their own.

David

Preparation

- Refer to the readings listed in the “Scripture Passages Related to David” section.
- Provide a pack of index cards and a roll of tape for this activity.
- Each student needs a Bible.

1. Divide the class into ten groups, and assign each group a scriptural passage listed in “Scripture Passages Related to David” to read and summarize on the index card provided. (The students should include a title and citation in the summary.)
2. While the students are reading, draw a road on the chalkboard. The first section of the road should be straight. Somewhere at midpoint have the road make a sharp left turn and continue left. Then have another turn so that the road continues in a parallel to the beginning section. Label the road with a beginning and an end.



3. Have a discussion with the students about what they read. Include in the discussion how David at first displays traits of a model king and then, because of his sinful behavior, how his life went in a different direction.
4. Have each group read its summary aloud and place its index card on the road where the group thinks it belongs. Continue describing events in David’s life until his death. Events that show sinful ways can be marked with “bumps” in the road. After each group takes a turn, discuss the events in David’s life that caused him to sin. In each case, discuss what he should have done instead of what he did. (One event in particular is looked on by God with disdain—his relationship with Bathsheba.)
5. Conclude with the class doing a choral reading of David’s Psalm 51 (A Prayer for Forgiveness). Discuss the sincerity in David’s remorse. How can we show God we are truly sorry for our sins?

David and Goliath

In this activity, the students compare David and Goliath to gain insight into David’s victory.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible and a pen.
- ❑ Make copies of the handout “Measuring Up David and Goliath” (Document #: TX002889), one for each student, or put the chart from the handout on the board to complete the exercise as a class.

1. Have the students read 1 Samuel, chapter 17, individually and then do the following activity.
2. Distribute the handout “Measuring Up David and Goliath” (Document #: TX002889). Allow time for the students to complete the chart and then discuss their findings. Ask the following questions:
 - ▶ Based on the chart you have just filled in, which person would you side with? Why?
 - ▶ Who was most likely to win the battle?
 - ▶ Why do you think David won?
 - ▶ What are some “Goliaths” that we might need to overcome in our lives? (Explain that “Goliaths” are any situations in life that seem insurmountable.)
 - ▶ What is the faith message in the story of David and Goliath?
 - ▶ How can we apply this message to our own lives?
3. Conclude by saying that the story of David and Goliath testifies to the truth of the statement by the angel Gabriel, “For there is nothing God cannot do” (Luke 1:37).

Psalms and Rap

Preparation

- Each student needs a Bible and a pen.
 - Make copies of the handout “Choices” (Document #: TX002890), one for each student.
 - If possible, play the CD *Prayer Warrior*, by Jeannie Pomanowski (Chesapeake Music Works, 2004, Be Attitude Music, BMI).
1. To begin this activity, share the following thoughts with your students, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ The Book of Psalms is a book of both prayers and hymns. Many of the psalms were written by David, were used by Jesus, and continue to be a source of worship today. In this activity, we will analyze Psalm 23 for its lyrical content and use its inspiration to create a modern-day rap. Of all the psalms, this one is the best known.
 2. Have the class do a choral reading of Psalm 23. Then ask the students the following questions:
 - ▶ What do you think is the intent of the Psalmist (David)?

David

- ▶ Think of a time when you experienced anxiety, fear, or distress. Can you picture it in your mind?
3. Ask the students to each rewrite Psalm 23 in reference to the experience they pictured. Guide the students in the following ways. Have them use the same beginning (“The Lord is my shepherd . . .”). As they read through each line, they should write their own version next to the original so as to keep to the same form and intent. The following is an example:

The Lord is my shepherd	The Lord is my shepherd
I have everything I need	My life is complete
He lets me rest in fields of green grass	I rest in loving arms



At this time you may want to play the song “Choices” from the album *Prayer Warrior*. Distribute the handout “Choices” (Document #: TX002890). In the song “Choices” is a verse that raps lyrics describing God’s mercy when we fail to make good choices that ultimately lead to sin. Listening to the song will inspire the students to create their own rap when rewriting Psalm 23. Some students will be able to rap without any music if you do not have a recording.

4. When the students are finished with their compositions, call on volunteers to rap their prayer or hymn. (Some students may want to practice at home first before they present it to the class.)
5. Conclude with these comments:
- ▶ Psalms were written to be sung. By creating modern translations of the Psalms, the students will gain insight into the purpose of the Psalms, which is to interact with God in prayer asking for what one needs.
 - ▶ The project also emphasizes that all types of music can praise God

Measuring Up David and Goliath

Fill in this chart using the story of David and Goliath, 1 Samuel 17:41–54. Then answer the questions below. Use the back of this page for writing if necessary.

Tools	Goliath	David
armor		
weapons		
occupation		
relative age		
reward for winning battle		
past warrior experience		
source of strength		

Based on the chart you have just filled in, which person would you side with? Why?
Why was David victorious?

Can you think of any “battles” (injustice, temptation) you may have faced or may face in the future?

In what ways can David’s victory influence the outcome of your battles?



Choices

Verses 1 and 4

There isn't anything we do that God won't forgive
Making choices in life it's all relative
You've got to be a little more demonstrative and just pray

Verse 2

We all make mistakes that are indicative
Of situations in the past that make us sensitive
We've got to try not to be so negative and just pray

Chorus

Life is a series of choices we make
It doesn't matter to Him if we make a mistake
There's a prodigal son that wants to come home
It doesn't make any sense to continue to roam

Verse 3

I'd like to be a little more informative
About the healing of the heart 'cause it's imperative
You simply musn't be like a fugitive, just pray

Rap

I made a few mistakes in the past you see
I was feelin' pretty bad, it was getting to me
Nobody around me could understand
So with my back against the wall I turned to the Man
Jesus said the truth will set you free
So I poured out my heart to the almighty
I tell you this ditty 'cause I want you to know
The only way to live life is to let your guilt go

(Lyrics and music by Jeannie Pomanowski, in *Prayer Warrior*, Chesapeake Music Works,
2004, Be Attitude Music, BMI)



Solomon

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Solomon's story explains the nature of wisdom and how wisdom can be corrupted. The story is a study in contrasts between Solomon as a king who actively serves God through his commitment to the Temple and Solomon as a king who later foolishly turns to other gods. On the one hand, he is a model to young adolescents, and on the other hand, he also shows them that even model human beings can fall if they do not keep their focus on what is important.

In his early years, God asks Solomon what he would like God to give him and Solomon answers, "wisdom" (1 Kings 3:9). As young people grow up and realize that many of life's events are out of their control, they will likely value wisdom even more than they do now. It is a good gift to ask God for at any stage of life. Spending some time in the Book of Proverbs can help them to flesh out what wisdom means.

One of Solomon's huge accomplishments is the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem. If some of the students have been to Jerusalem or Europe and have seen some of the great cathedrals, ask them to share what these sacred spaces are like. Explore why human beings want to build beautiful and lofty monuments to God.

Human beings, no matter how wise, are still vulnerable to sin, as we see with Solomon, who turns to gods other than the Lord. By focusing on his wisdom and learning from his downfall, we can gather that it is important always to keep our focus on God.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- The King Is Dead! Long Live the King!
- The Wisdom of Solomon
- Temple Building, Building Faith
- Stuck on Proverbs

Scripture Passages Related to Solomon

- 1 Kings 2:1–4 (David gives final instructions to Solomon)
- 1 Kings 3:4–15 (Solomon prays for wisdom)*
- 1 Kings 3:16–28 (Solomon decides wisely for the mothers)*
- 1 Kings 6:1–38 (Solomon builds a temple)*
- 1 Kings 8:54–61 (Solomon prays)
- 1 Kings 10:1–13 (The Queen of Sheba visits)
- 1 Kings 11:1–13 (Solomon turns away from God)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Solomon

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with King Solomon
- Introduction to the First Book of Kings
- Good Advice (1 Kings 2:1–4)
- Not a Perfect Person (1 Kings 3:6–9)
- Three Thousand Proverbs! (1 Kings 4:20–34)
- A Place to Worship (1 Kings, chapters 5–6)
- God in a Box? (1 Kings 8:27)
- A Royal Visit (1 Kings 10:1–13)
- Too Many Gods . . . or Wives? (1 Kings 11:1–8)

Solomon and Young Adolescents Today

- In Solomon we see a modern image of success because he is very wealthy, a shrewd business man, and a skillful politician. What is the source of his success? Scripture portrays Solomon as one whose heart is completely turned toward God. Young adolescents have their own ideas of success that are shaped by family, culture, and Church.
- Solomon desires to honor God by building a beautiful temple to house the Ark of the Covenant. Young people have encountered sacred objects and sacred spaces.
- Solomon turns his heart from God and chooses idolatry. He loses his focus on God, the source of his wisdom and right behavior. This turn of heart destroys his kingdom. Young adolescents turn toward God and are also tempted to turn toward sin, trying to figure out which spirits to trust and follow.

- Solomon shows wisdom and foolishness regarding his possessions and power. Young people have ideas about the value of power and possessions that are shaped by family, culture, and Church.

Highlighting God’s Presence

The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this (wisdom), and so he said to him, “Because you have asked for the wisdom to rule justly, instead of long life for yourself or riches or the death of your enemies, I will do what you have asked.” (1 Kings 3:10–12)

The LORD said to Solomon, “If you obey all my laws and commands, I will do for you what I promised your father David. I will live among my people Israel in this Temple that you are building, and I will never abandon them.” (1 Kings 6:11–13)

Activities

The King Is Dead! Long Live the King!

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
 - ❑ If you have computer access, you can invite the students to find a newsletter template that would be useful for this exercise.
 - ❑ Before class write the list of readings from “Scripture Passages Related to Solomon” in a visible place.
 - ❑ If you have completed this or a similar activity in the past, you may want to provide the students with examples to jumpstart their thinking. Perhaps you could show copies of newspapers that carried special editions after Pope Saint John Paul II passed away (April 2005). These accounts not only give a sense of format but also show them how the death of a wise man might be celebrated in print.
1. Divide the class into groups of seven. Ask the members of each group to divide the assigned sections about Solomon among themselves and read them.
 2. Propose the following scenario to the students:
 - ▶ Imagine that as a group, you are publishing a front-page report on the life of Solomon on the occasion of his death. Each of you should prepare one column (headline and then article) based on your section of the reading.

3. Have the students first write out their column on paper, discussing how they would like to present their passage with the others in the group. (One might want to do a “here on the scene” while another may want to do a letter to the editor or a “spotlight on Solomon,” and so on.) Then have the students transfer their columns to the front page of a newspaper layout, complete with the name of the paper and assorted other newspaper items. (At this point, the students can further their creativity by “posting a list of events at the Temple,” creating an advertisement for “wisdom,” and so on.)
4. After each group has completed its newspaper, make copies and distribute them to each group to read. At the end, have each student write a letter to the editor explaining how successful they think Solomon was as king.

The Wisdom of Solomon

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
1. In a class discussion, have the students define the word *wise*. Ask: How is it different from being intelligent? How does one get wisdom?
 2. Have the students read 1 Kings 3:1–10 quietly to themselves. Ask these questions about the reading:
 - ▶ Why is Solomon’s request of God a wise one?
 - ▶ What would you have asked for? Why?
 3. Have the students read 1 Kings 3:16–28. Process this story with them by asking these types of questions:
 - ▶ How does Solomon demonstrate wisdom in this story?
 - ▶ Can you think of any situations in today’s world that might benefit from this type of wisdom?
 4. Divide the class into small groups, and invite each group to present a skit that would provide an updated version of this story. Each skit will need to feature two competing parties and one “King Solomon” figure. (Encourage the students to move beyond the roles of two mothers into characters from the business world, school, home, and so on.)
 5. After the students have presented their skits, ask them to look for common themes or insights that emerge. Have the students skim the Book of Proverbs and, as a class, phrase their own wisdom into a proverb-like formula.

Temple Building, Building Faith

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
 - ❑ Bring in material to build a replica of Solomon's Temple. Bring several different materials and the means to put them together: glue, tape, and so on. Wooden blocks, Legos, cardboard, and paper can be used.
 - ❑ Make copies of a picture of Solomon's Temple, one for each student.
 - ❑ A representation of Solomon's Temple can be found in *Saint Mary's Press® Essential Bible Dictionary* or on page 1263 of the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (see appendix 1). An Internet search also yields several possibilities.
1. Ask the students to read 1 Kings 6:1–14. Divide the class into small groups, and assign each group a type of building material.
 2. Using some building material, ask them to build a version of the Temple on this scale: 11 inches long by 5.5 inches high by 4 inches wide. (This is not to the actual scale of the Temple itself.)
 3. After building a model of the Temple, allow the young people to walk around and appreciate the work of the other groups. The students can then begin to compare and contrast the Temple to a church. Ask these questions:
 - ▶ Why does Solomon want a temple?
 - ▶ Does his desire for a temple resemble a Christian's desire for a church? How so? How not?
 4. See Solomon's prayer for his people. Ask the students to copy 1 Kings 8:22–30 and tape it to the model Temple. Ask these types of questions:
 - ▶ How strong is this building?
 - ▶ Is it building materials or people who strengthen the Temple or a parish community today?
 5. Ask the students to imagine a seesaw with the Temple model on one side. Read 1 Kings, chapter 11, aloud to the students and ask these questions:
 - ▶ What undoes Solomon's wisdom?
 - ▶ What would go on the other side of this seesaw that would counterbalance Solomon's faith in God (unfaithfulness, idols)?
 - ▶ How does a leader's downfall affect others?

Stuck on Proverbs

In this activity, the students take passages from the Book of Proverbs and create bumper stickers for them.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and markers.
1. Begin the activity by talking about the types of things we read in traffic on the bumpers of cars, like bumper stickers and those sayings that are put on license plate holders. Share some of your favorite bumper stickers and then ask the students to mention any appropriate bumper stickers they have liked.
 2. Ask:
 - ▶ What are the qualities of clever bumper stickers or license plate holders? (They often have a message that appeals to a number of people; they are succinct; they are catchy so that it is hard to forget them.)
 3. Explain that the Book of Proverbs is attributed to Solomon's wisdom. Have the students look through the Book of Proverbs and pick out a proverb they like. Instruct the students to design a bumper sticker from one of their favorite proverbs. Have them connect the proverb to the present day by the way they letter it and illustrate it.
 4. Share the bumper stickers.

Hezekiah

Preparing to Teach

Overview

King Hezekiah is a prophetic and courageous leader. When he comes to power, he immediately returns to the proper ways of worship and even invites people from Israel to come and share in a Passover celebration. Young adolescents can admire this type of “take charge” personality, especially when it is combined with integrity.

The proposed attack by the Assyrians forces Hezekiah to make an important decision on behalf of the city—rely on God, surrender, or fight. The Assyrians try to instill fear in the hearts of all residents of Jerusalem but God reassures the people through the prophet Isaiah. All young people have wrestled with fear—some with legitimate fear and others with fear that stems from self-doubt or insecurity.

The story of Hezekiah can inspire young people to turn to God when they are dealing with the fear of failure, instead of just succumbing to negative self-talk.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Drama at Court
- Letting God Conquer Fear

Scripture Passages Related to Hezekiah

- 2 Kings 18:1–8 (The nature of Hezekiah’s reign)*
- 2 Chronicles 29:3–36 (Hezekiah purifies and rededicates the Temple)*
- 2 Chronicles 30:1–22 (Hezekiah invites the Israelites to the Passover celebration)
- 2 Kings 18:13–27 (Assyrian officials try to discourage the people of Jerusalem from believing in their God)*
- 2 Kings 9:1–7 (Hezekiah consults with Isaiah about the Assyrian threat)*
- 2 Kings 19:35–37 (God conquers the Assyrians)*

- 2 Kings 20:1–11 (Hezekiah almost dies but recovers)
- 2 Kings 20:20 (Hezekiah dies)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Hezekiah

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Hezekiah
- One of the Good Guys (2 Kings 18:1–8)
- Pour Out Your Heart (2 Kings 19:14–19)

Hezekiah and Young Adolescents Today

- Hezekiah is such a successful ruler because he is focused on God. Young adolescents have experienced success from focusing on a task.
- Hezekiah turns around the religious climate of Jerusalem by taking the pagan gods out of the Temple, purifying it, rededicating it to God, and celebrating the Passover. Young people, by their example, also have power to lead their peers toward or away from God.
- It is difficult to frighten Hezekiah, but the Assyrians frightened him enough to ask for some reassurance from Isaiah. Young people struggle with anxiety when they face challenging tasks such as playing a difficult team, acting in public, or making an overture to a new friend. They also need encouragement.

Highlighting God’s Presence

He [Hezekiah] was faithful to the LORD and never disobeyed him, but carefully kept all the commands that the Lord had given Moses. So the LORD was with him, and he was successful in everything he did. (2 Kings 18:6–7)

“I, the LORD, the God of your ancestor David, have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and in three days you will go to the Temple.” (2 Kings 20:5)

He [Hezekiah] said to them, “Be determined and confident, and don’t be afraid of the Assyrian emperor or of the army he is leading. We have more power on our side than he has on his. He has human power, but we have the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.” (2 Chronicles 32:7–8)

Activities

Drama at Court

The story of Hezekiah is fairly dramatic, and because it has many characters, the story lends itself well to an oral reading.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible of the same translation.
- ❑ You may want to move furniture in the room to stage the dramatic reading of the story or bring in some props.
- ❑ Read the selection carefully so you can show the students what they will be saying when it is read aloud.
- ❑ Assign young people the following roles:
 - Narrator (more than one perhaps)
 - Hezekiah
 - Sennacherib
 - three Assyrian officials
 - Eliakim, Shebna, Joah
 - Isaiah the prophet
 - God

The rest of the group can be the people of Jerusalem.

Before you begin the reading, divide the speech by the Assyrian officials so that three young people can read it. The reading does not need to be acted out but the young people should be standing, and it would be good to assign a place for Isaiah to the side, a place for Jerusalem, and an area for the invading Assyrians. Begin the reading at 2 Kings 18:13 and continue through 2 Kings 19:37.

When the young people have finished the reading, review the important points from the story with them.

Letting God Conquer Fear

In this activity, the students examine the tactics used by the Assyrians to psyche out the Jews and to learn to look for God's voice instead.

Preparation

- ❑ Make copies of the handout "Negative Speak" (Document #: TX002892), one for each student.
- ❑ Each student needs a Bible and a pen.

Hezekiah

1. Begin this activity by asking the students to talk about sports psychology, using these questions:
 - ▶ What does it mean to get psyched for a game or to get psyched out?
 - ▶ Why do some coaches ask their players to visually imagine a victory prior to a game or race?
 - ▶ What is the effect of the cheering or jeering crowds on players' nerves?
 - ▶ What are some other techniques people use to either boost their own confidence or to diminish the opponents' confidence?
2. After some discussion of teams and sports, ask the young people to close their eyes for a few minutes and think about the ways that they privately try to psyche themselves up with internal talking or that they tear themselves down internally.
-  3. Distribute the handout “Negative Speak” (Document #: TX002892) to the young people and ask them to look it over and see if they could put words into this dialogue about their present-day life or a present-day situation. Allow them to shift some of the words from 2 Chronicles if that enables them to create better meaning.
4. Invite some of the students to share what they have written. Ask them if this kind of language resembles either their internal self-talking or what they might hear from people on another team or from their fans. Make some or all of the following points, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ The encounter between the Assyrians and the people of Jerusalem is an example of one side, the Assyrians, using psychology to psyche out their opponents, the people of Jerusalem. (Ask a volunteer to read 2 Chronicles 32:11–15 aloud from the Bible.)
 - ▶ In the face of this very successful army, Hezekiah needs more reassurance that God will be with them, even though he does not lose faith in God. The prophet Isaiah is able to help him.
 - ▶ Many of us can fall into the trap of talking negatively to ourselves. It might sound like this: “I am going to fail the test. I never have done well in history. Why would this be different?”
 - ▶ Hezekiah’s story shows us that God’s voice reassures one who is faithful to him. The enemy’s voice challenges and causes doubt. When we are going back and forth internally, we should stop when we recognize that we are psyching ourselves out. At that point, we can follow Hezekiah’s example and ask God for reassurance.

5. To close, consider teaching the young people some simple techniques to quiet themselves when they are in the heat of negative self-talk.

Ask:

- ▶ How can you allow God to take care of the fear? (Some examples include focusing on one's breath, saying a mantra like "Jesus" slowly, and so on.)

Negative Speak

Fill in these blanks to create sentences that could relate to a modern-day situation—either your own or someone else's.

“ _____ tells you that _____ will save you from our power but _____ is deceiving you and will let you _____. He is the one who _____ and then told (them) to _____. Don't you know what (we) have done to other _____ s? Did _____ ever save (them) from us? When did _____ ever save (them) from us? Then what makes you think that _____ can save you? Now don't let _____ deceive or mislead you like that. Don't believe him! No _____ has ever been able to save _____ from any _____. So certainly this _____ of yours cannot save you!” (2 Chronicles 32:11–15)



Josiah

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Josiah becomes king of the Israelites during a time when the people have turned away from God. Josiah faithfully follows God's law and tries to bring his people back to the ways of God by cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem and destroying everything that was used to worship other gods. Like Hezekiah, he is easy to admire for his reforms. One of the high points of Josiah's reign is the return to celebrating the ancient feast of Passover.

Josiah is also someone who does not mind consulting other wise people when he needs to make a decision. Young people need to know that it is not a sign of weakness to consult with other respected people when making a decision.

Though God recognizes Josiah's faithfulness, unfortunately God's anger toward his people does not go away.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- A Eulogy for Josiah
- Decisions, Decisions
- Life Is Fair—Sometimes

Scripture Passages Related to Josiah

- 2 Kings 21:23—22:2 (Josiah becomes King of Judah at the age of eight)
- 2 Kings 22:3–20 (Josiah consults with Huldah about a book found in the Temple)*
- 2 Kings 23:1–20 (Josiah cleanses the Temple and the land)*
- 2 Kings 23:21–23 (Josiah celebrates a great Passover feast)*
- 2 Kings 23:28–30 (Josiah dies)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Josiah

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Josiah
- An Amazing Woman (2 Kings, chapter 22)
- A Faith-Filled King (2 Kings 23:1–14)

Josiah and Young Adolescents Today

- Josiah becomes king at a young age. Young people are often asked to take on significant responsibilities.
- At his young age, Josiah turns away from the bad habits of his people and faithfully abides by God's laws. Without knowing it, young people often set a good example for adults as well as children.
- Josiah consults with the leading men and women of his region, and learns about the Books of the Law and the future of his people and himself. Young people seek out the advice of the adults who are important in their life as they move closer to making significant decisions.
- Unfortunately, all of Josiah's efforts to be faithful and live according to God's Law do not alter God's anger toward his people. Life can seem to be unfair to young people sometimes, even though they play by the rules.

Highlighting God's Presence

Josiah did what was pleasing to the LORD; he followed the example of his ancestor King David, strictly obeying all the laws of God. (2 Kings 22:2)

Activities

A Eulogy for Josiah

Preparation

- Each student needs paper and a pen.
- Have at least six Bibles available.

1. Divide the class into six small groups. Distribute the Bibles, one per group, and assign one of the following passages to each group:
 - 2 Kings 21:23—22:2
 - 2 Chronicles 33:25—34:2
 - 2 Kings 22:3–20
 - 2 Kings 23:1–30
 - 2 Chronicles 34:3–33
 - 2 Chronicles 35:1–24
2. Tell the students that each small group is going to write one part of a eulogy for Josiah based on what they read in the Bible. If they do not know what a eulogy is, explain that it is a short speech that looks back on the life of a person who has died and praises that person.
3. Distribute the paper and pens. Ask the small groups to read the Scripture passage aloud in their group. Encourage everyone to read some portion of the text. When they are finished reading, each person is to write three sentences about Josiah on the sheet of paper. Once they have finished completing their individual descriptions, the students in the small groups should regather, share their responses, and choose the most important points that they want to make during their part of the eulogy.
4. Bring the large group back together. Using the order of readings in step 1, invite each small group to come forward to present its part of the eulogy.
5. To conclude, invite the large group to answer these two questions:
 - ▶ Why is it important for the Israelites to remember King Josiah in the books of the Kings and Chronicles?
 - ▶ What do they want to remember about him after he died?

Decisions, Decisions

In this activity, the students reflect on the role that they ask adults to play when they have to make decisions. They use role-playing as a further basis for discussion.

Preparation

- ❑ Copy and cut out the four roles listed in the teacher resource “Dilemma Decisions” (Document #: TX002893). Fold them and put them in a bowl or hat. If you have a group of eight to twelve young people, one role per group will be sufficient. You may need to give the same role to more than one group if the class is larger.

❑ Every two or three students needs a quarter-sheet of blank or lined white paper.

❑ Each student needs a pen.

1. Explain what it means to play a role, if necessary. Note that two or three young people will be given a situation, and they will need to improvise the dialogue until they resolve the scene. Note that all the role-plays will involve someone their age who is approaching a challenging situation, and at least one adult.



2. To begin, ask four groups to present the role-plays from the teacher resource “Dilemma Decisions” (Document #: TX002893). Discuss the way that the role-plays unfolded with the group.

3. Have the students turn to one or two people near them to form a small group. Distribute the quarter-sheets of paper and pens or pencils to each group. Ask them to write about a decision they are facing or have faced and to name the adult they would go to for advice about what to do. (Let them know ahead of time that others will read about their decision and to keep in mind that the situations should not be embarrassing or too personal.) Direct the students to fold their slips of paper at least two times. Collect the slips in the bowl or hat. Mix up the folded slips.

4. Invite one person per group to pick a slip from the bowl or hat. Have that person read the situation and choose the other people from the group who will be in the role-play. Assist the young person if he or she is having trouble identifying other possible roles in the situation.

5. Have the students from the other groups act out their role-plays spontaneously. Repeat this step as time allows, encouraging all the young people to participate.

6. When the role-plays are completed, ask the students to share the types of situations for which they seek adult help and why that advice is important to them. From the role-plays, ask the students to see if there are common characteristics displayed by the student “adults” that could teach adults how they could be most helpful to the young people in decision making.

7. Read 2 Kings 22:10–20 aloud. Note that Josiah, at twenty-six years of age, gets advice and information from his priest, Hilkiah, and the prophetess Huldah. Ask:

▶ Why did Josiah seek advice from both of them?

▶ How did he think they could help him?

Life Is Fair—Sometimes

Preparation

- ❑ Provide six sheets of newsprint and six markers, one of each for each group.
 - ❑ Display additional sheets of newsprint around the room or on an easel.
 - ❑ Have one green and one red marker available.
1. Select five students to be “leaders,” identifying them as such to the rest of the group. Then divide the rest of the class into groups of five. Distribute one sheet of newsprint and one marker to each small group, including the group of leaders.
 2. Instruct each small group to write five rules for conduct during the class or session that everyone must obey. Each group’s rules may be serious or fanciful. It is up to them. Tell the leaders and only the leaders that they are in charge of the class. Their rules can be as kind or as harsh as they want them to be. They have one rule to start: They can overrule any rules that the others make. Let them know this in the next step.
 3. Ask the groups to share their rules one at a time. The leaders’ group goes last. List their rules on newsprint in green marker. At any time, the leaders group can overrule a rule. When one of the leaders dismisses a rule, strike it out in red. If the other young people question why the leaders can do this, tell them that they have this authority because they are the leaders. Finish with the leaders’ list of rules. If you find that any of the leaders’ rules contradict rules that have already been stated, ask them to decide which rule will be kept. (You can either ask the leaders to make decisions in consensus or leave it up to them. Given the nature of their power, they may easily argue, which is another insight you may want to discuss if it arises.)
 4. Review the completed list of rules. In the large group, discuss the following questions:
 - ▶ Which rules are the most fair? Why?
 - ▶ Which rules are the least fair? Why?
 - ▶ As we were creating this list of rules, was it a fair or unfair process? Why or why not?
 - ▶ As we were creating this list, what did someone say or do when they thought a rule or rule change was unfair?
 - ▶ What would you imagine life would be like with this particular group of leaders?

- ▶ What do you say or do when you feel like you are being treated unfairly?
 - ▶ What are the characteristics of good leadership?
5. Read 2 Kings 22:10–20 aloud. Note that the prophecy of Huldah says that the Israelites will not escape God’s anger, but Josiah will be spared because he has been faithful to God. What characteristics of good leadership does Josiah possess? Why is the prophecy fair to Josiah?

Dilemma Decisions

(Teacher Resource)

Dilemma 1: Your group of friends is splitting up. You and your best friend are trying to decide which group to stay friends with. Your favorite coach overhears you discussing this, and asks, “How can I help?”

Dilemma 2: The student who sits next to you in math class cheats but never gets caught. You saw this person cheating on the big math test, but the teacher caught the wrong person. You are trying to decide what you should do when your mom asks, “What’s wrong?”

Dilemma 3: Your mom and dad are pressuring you into going to the Catholic high school instead of the public school where all your friends are going. Your youth minister asks, “So, where are you going to high school?” and you decide to talk to him or her about it.

Dilemma 4: You go to a party with friends. When you get there, you see that your classmates are drinking and smoking. You are uncomfortable with this but aren’t sure you want to leave your friends. You call your mom or dad but aren’t sure what to say.



Elijah

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Elijah is one of the great prophets of the Old Testament. He is a bold, courageous spokesman for God whose words are often accompanied by miraculous events. Even his name declares his message, as *Elijah* literally means “Yahweh is God!” Despite his insistent call to the people of Israel to return to a faithful observance of the Covenant with God, his work is met with stiff resistance from the kings and queens of the northern kingdom of Israel. Young people can identify with the experience of meeting with resistance.

The Bible portrays Elijah as having great spiritual power to affect the lives of others, while at the same time suffering greatly at the hands of political leaders who wish to resist this spiritual power. Like many prophets, Elijah functions as the conscience to the king and the nation. Elijah sees the reality of Israel’s present situation (characterized by disregard for the poor, idolatry, and political intrigue) with the clarity of God’s eyes. He can thus predict that if things do not change, Israel will be destroyed! Only by a faithful return to God, Elijah predicts, can Israel save itself. Young people may have an easier time seeing the decadence of life in the northern kingdom than in modern society today.

Elijah is a complicated biblical figure. We see the tenderness of his relationship with the widow, his boldness in confronting the prophets of Baal, and his discouragement that leads him into the wilderness. This humanity makes it easier for us to see that Elijah, like the other prophets, is not a “superman” but rather a human being who is dedicated completely to God.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Elijah Action Figure Design Project
 - Calling Down the Fire
 - Going to the Cave: Listening for God
-
-

Scripture Passages Related to Elijah

- 1 Kings 17:1–7 (Call of Elijah)
- 1 Kings 17:8–24 (Elijah goes to see the widow of Zarephath)*
- 1 Kings 18:1–40 (Elijah, King Ahab, and the prophets of Baal)*
- 1 Kings 19:1–8 (Elijah encounters God in a cave on Mount Sinai)*
- 1 Kings 19:19–21 (Elijah calls Elisha)
- 1 Kings 21:1–28 (Elijah and Naboth’s vineyard)
- 2 Kings 2:1–15 (Elijah departs in a flaming chariot)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Elijah

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Elijah and Elisha
- Elijah (1 Kings, chapters 17–18)
- A Whisper (1 Kings, chapter 19)
- Elisha (1 Kings 19:19–21)
- No Shame (1 Kings, chapter 21)
- Saying Good-bye (2 Kings 2:1–15)

Elijah and Young Adolescents Today

- Elijah repeatedly stands up to opposition courageously, and his confidence in God gives him the strength and wit to do so. Young adolescents can likewise know that God gives them the strength needed to withstand peer pressure.
- Elijah is consistent in his message but adapts his delivery for different people. For instance, he relates differently to the widow of Zarephath than he does to Queen Jezebel. He is truthful yet tolerant of others. Young adolescents are at the same time judgmental and loathe to judge. They can learn from Elijah that tolerance does not mean acceptance of all behavior.
- Elijah often encounters God in natural settings such as forests, mountains, caves, and deserts. Young adolescents can also sense God in the natural world.
- Elijah has a close, enduring relationship with God. His prayer reflects a range of attitudes such as praise, thanksgiving, doubt, and confidence. Young people can see that a close relationship with God comes out of a prayer life that is honest and confident in God’s loving call to us.

Highlighting God’s Presence

“Don’t worry,” Elijah said to her [the widow]. “Go on and prepare your meal. But first make a small loaf from what you have and bring it to me, and then prepare the rest for you and your son. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The bowl will not run out of flour or the jar run out of oil before the day that I, the LORD, send rain.’” (1 Kings 17:13–14)

“Go out and stand before me on top of the mountain,” the LORD said to him. Then the LORD passed by and sent a furious wind that split the hills and shattered the rocks—but the LORD was not in the wind. The wind stopped blowing, and then there was an earthquake—but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire—but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the soft whisper of a voice.

“When Elijah heard it, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, “Elijah, what are you doing here?” (1 Kings 19:11–13).

They kept talking as they walked on; then suddenly a chariot of fire pulled by horses of fire came between them, and Elijah was taken up to heaven by a whirlwind. (2 Kings 2:11)

Activities

Elijah Action Figure Design Project

The story of Elijah shows us many heroic qualities in a biblical character. Some of these qualities can easily be translated into a product line for an action figure toy (with accessories).

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, the list of readings from “Scripture Passages Related to Elijah,” at least five sheets of blank paper, and some markers or colored pencils.
1. Divide the class into seven groups, and assign each of them one of the seven readings from “Scripture Passages Related to Elijah.”
 2. Ask the students to reminisce about the dolls or action figures they have or had. Ask them to remind the group what kind of figures came with themed sets or accessories.
 3. Instruct the students to draw a design proposal for their version of “Elijah, the Prophet and Hero.” From the Scripture passage they have

read, have the young people create several accessories for Elijah (items that would be included with the toy figure) that would be part of the “Elijah Biblical Action Figure” series. For each accessory, assign the students to write the biblical citation that inspired their idea.

4. After all the project designs are finished, have the students present their action figures and accessories and tell the story from the Bible that inspired them, beginning with the first reading. Note which accessories are most common. Ask if these common accessories tell us something about Elijah.

Calling Down the Fire

Preparation

- ❑ Gather candles, matches, and a metal container for extinguishing.
 - ❑ Each student will need a Bible.
 - ❑ Supply the classroom with a whiteboard, dry-erase markers, and eraser; a blackboard with chalk and eraser; or an easel with paper.
1. Have the students read 1 Kings 18:18–40. Ask the following questions:
 - ▶ Has anyone ever dared you to a contest or have you ever dared another person to do something?
 - ▶ What made you want to take up the challenge?
 - ▶ How does Elijah challenge the Baal priests? Why?
 - ▶ When Elijah wins the contest, what does that say? (God is active in the world and more powerful than any other god.)
 - ▶ Why is fire a symbol for God?
 2. Tell the students that in our world we are constantly dared by the world to give up on God, to believe that God is not active in the world, and that we should give our hearts to other gods, such as possessions and activities that promise to fulfill our lives. Ask:
 - ▶ Who in the world today “calls down the fire” to bring the light of God to our world?
 3. On the board, draw a long horizontal line to represent the different intensity of fire. At one end, put “a match” to represent the weakest kind of fire. At the other end, put “lightning” or a “volcano” to represent an intense form of heat. Along the line, put these other “fires”: a bonfire, a blow torch, fireworks, and a forest fire.

4. After you have charted these types of fires, ask the students to think of prophetic people that “bring down the fire” in today’s world. Depending on their strength and power, put their names along the chart.
5. If fire laws permit, distribute an unlit candle to each student. (Caution the students about following fire safety rules when using lighted candles. Remind them to hold the candles very still and to keep the candles away from faces and clothing—their own and others’.) For the closing prayer, light each candle and pray this prayer:
 - ▶ O God of fire and light, when we are fearful of being alone or fearful for those close to us, help us to turn to you and to know your warmth and strength. We pray for those people who are sources of your light and your life for us. (Have each student name someone aloud.) O God, as you did in Elijah’s time, let the fire fall on all your holy people again! Amen!

Have the students put the lit candles in a fireproof container. Make sure all the candles go out.

Going to the Cave: Listening for God

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.

1. Introduce the activity by sharing these thoughts:

- ▶ God speaks to people in all kinds of ways, but most people seem to struggle to hear God in their lives. Elijah encounters God in a most unexpected way in this account from 1 Kings.

Ask a volunteer to read 1 Kings 19:1–8 aloud to the class, and then ask the young people these questions:

- ▶ What mountain is Elijah on and why is he in a cave there?
- ▶ How does God come to him?
- ▶ What is Elijah’s reaction? Why do you think he reacts this way?

2. Focus on the cave in this story. First ask the students whether anyone has explored caves. Then ask these questions:

- ▶ What are the qualities of caves? (mysterious, quiet, dark, hidden)
- ▶ Why would a cave be a good place to listen for God? (It is quiet and forces us to listen in a deliberate way to our environment.)

3. Then focus on sounds with these questions:

- ▶ What are some things that need to be said in a loud voice?
- ▶ What are some things that need to be said in a quiet voice?

- ▶ What are some things God “says in a loud voice”?
 - ▶ What are some things God “says in a soft voice”?
4. Give the students some quiet time to pray by bringing them to a church or chapel or by creating some of the mystery of a cave in your own room with darkness, music, candles, and so on. Provide a half hour of time for the students to experience this quiet. Then give them time to journal privately about the experience. If any student wants to share thoughts about their prayer time, welcome them to do so.

Elisha

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Any young person who has followed one or more older siblings through school could think, “I have big shoes to fill.” Elisha must have felt that way about following Elijah at times. Elisha, however, also calls on Elijah’s strength to begin his ministry, so he “rides on his coattails” to some extent.

Elisha is a mighty prophet in his own right. He is able to keep a starving woman and her son going, raise that son from the dead, and otherwise do some of the same miracles as his predecessor. One of the charming stories about Elisha is his cure of Naaman, the Syrian commander. Naaman appears to almost prefer leprosy over bathing in the Jordan River, but he is persuaded to try it. The commander ends up taking home soil from Judah so that he can give offerings only to Elisha’s God.

Because several of Elisha’s stories reveal the personality and character of Elisha, young people will enjoy getting a sense of this powerful prophet.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activity

- Remembering Elisha on *Good Morning Israel*

Scripture Passages Related to Elisha

- 1 Kings 19:19–21 (Elijah calls Elisha)*
- 2 Kings 2:1–13 (Elijah is taken up into Heaven)
- 2 Kings 2:14 (Elisha does a miracle in Elijah’s name)
- 2 Kings 4:1–7 (Elisha helps a starving widow and her son)*
- 2 Kings 4:8–37 (Elisha and the rich woman of Shunem)*
- 2 Kings 5:1–27 (Elisha cures Naaman)*
- 2 Kings 13:14–21 (Death of Elisha)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Elisha

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Elijah and Elisha
- Elisha (1 Kings 19:19–21)
- Saying Good-bye (2 Kings 2:1–15)
- Elisha the Rescuer (2 Kings 4:1–7)
- Seek Healing (2 Kings 5:1–14)
- Mercy Not Revenge (2 Kings 6:8–23)
- Refugees (2 Kings 8:1–6)

Elisha and Young Adolescents Today

- Elisha is in farming before Elijah calls him to be his helper. God calls young people to listen for his call amid their ordinary activities.
- Elisha has a mentor in Elijah. Young people often have mentors or seek them out in relatives, coaches, and teachers.
- Elisha has a kind heart for the widow in trouble. Young people are very kindhearted when they hear of people in need.
- The rich woman whose son has died challenges Elisha to deal with the reality that her son has died and to fulfill his role as prophet. Young people are often challenged to be true to their own responsibilities.

Highlighting God's Presence

In grief, Elisha tore his cloak in two. Then he picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He struck the water with Elijah's cloak and said, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" Then he struck the water again, and it divided, and he walked over to the other side. (2 Kings 2:12–14)

He [Naaman] returned to Elisha with all his men and said, "Now I know that there is no god but the God of Israel." (2 Kings 5:15)

Activity

In this chapter, the activity below both familiarizes the young people with the story of Elisha and invites them to consider the spiritual meaning of his stories.

Remembering Elisha on *Good Morning Israel*

In this activity, the students use a talk show format to interview people who encountered Elisha throughout his life.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible.
- ❑ Make several copies of the teacher resource “Questions about Elisha” (Document #: TX002891), one for each talk show host, or make one copy and cut it up for the different hosts.

1. Divide the class into the following configurations, and give them the following passages from 2 Kings to read:



- Four talk show hosts, one per segment below. These hosts should use the questions on the teacher resource “Questions about Elisha” (Document #: TX002891) to prepare for the talk show. (Other questions may also be added.)
 - Segment 1: The widow and her two sons (Direct these three people to read 2 Kings 4:1–7.)
 - Segment 2: The rich woman; her husband, Gehazi; and the son before he takes ill (Instruct these three people to read 2 Kings 4:8–17.)
 - Segment 3: The rich woman; her husband, Gehazi; and the son (Have these three people read 2 Kings 4:28–37.)
 - Segment 4: Naaman, the Israelite girl servant, two servants of Naaman, the king of Israel, and Gehazi (Tell these six people to read 2 Kings 5:1–27.)
 - Other young people can serve as the live audience or as a second interviewer.
2. Allow the students time to read the passages and to prepare for the talk show segments. Allow them to perform their talk shows in order to expose all the students to some key parts of Elisha’s story.

3. To explore who Elisha is in greater depth, ask the young people these types of questions:
 - ▶ The widow in 2 Kings, chapter 4, is in a vulnerable position. How is her own faith connected to the success of Elisha's miracle?
 - ▶ How is the rich woman in the next story in almost the opposite position as the widow?
 - ▶ How do she and Elisha both gift each other?
 - ▶ How does the rich woman demand that Elisha live up to what he promised her?
 - ▶ How do the widow, the rich woman, and Naaman need to trust in order to be blessed by Elisha?
 - ▶ Does our own trust in God affect the way God is able to bless us? (Or help us to recognize a blessing as we receive it?)
4. Conclude with a prayer for trust.

Questions about Elisha

(Teacher Resource)

Notes to the talk show host: Elisha has recently died, and all week on your show, *Good Morning Israel*, you are hosting people who came in contact with him. These types of questions should get the conversation going:

Segment 1: The widow and her two sons (2 Kings 4:1–7)

Welcome to the show.

Introductions.

- Now if you don't mind my asking, how is it that your husband died? Is there a connection between your husband's death and his debts?
- Do you mind explaining to our audience exactly what was going to happen to your sons if you could not get the money?
- (To the sons) How were you feeling about that? How old are you?
- Did you really think that Elisha would be able to help you? or was this a last resort?
- People say that Elisha was a sensitive man. Was that your experience? (Address first the mother and then the sons.)

Summary and signing off.

Notes to the talk show host: Elisha has recently died, and all week on your show, *Good Morning Israel*, you are hosting people who came in contact with him. These types of questions should get the conversation going:

Segment 2: The rich woman; her husband, Gehazi; and the son before he takes ill (2 Kings 4:8–17)

Welcome to the show.

Introductions.

- (To the rich woman and her husband) What was your first impression of Elisha? How is it that you came to build a room for him on top of your house?
- Gehazi, can you tell our audience how Elisha was able to thank this woman for her kindness? What role did you play?
- (To the rich woman and then to her husband) What did you think when Elisha told you that you would have a son?

Summary and signing off.



Notes to the talk show host: Elisha has recently died, and all week on your show, *Good Morning Israel*, you are hosting people who came in contact with him. These types of questions should get the conversation going:

Segment 3: The rich woman; her husband, Gehazi; and the son (2 Kings 4:28–37)

Welcome to the show.

Introductions.

Thanks to the visitors for returning for a second show.

- (To the husband) How did you first know that your son was in trouble?
- (To the woman) What did you do immediately when you realized that your son was dead?
- Gehazi, what happened when this woman came to Elisha? Were you able to help?
- (To the woman) Was Elisha able to do something for your son? What was it?

Summary and signing off.

Notes to the talk show host: Elisha has recently died, and all week on your show, *Good Morning Israel*, you are hosting people who came in contact with him. These types of questions should get the conversation going:

Segment 4: Naaman, the Israelite girl servant, two servants of Naaman, the king of Israel, and Gehazi (2 Kings 5:1–27)

Welcome to the show.

Introductions.

- (To the Israelite serving girl) How is it that Commander Naaman came to know of Elisha in the first place?
- Commander Naaman, what role did the Syrian king play in your effort to be healed?
- King, what did you think when you received this letter from the king of Syria? Did you think you could help his commander?
- (To the servants) What happened when the commander arrived at the house of Elisha the prophet? What role did you play in the commander's healing?
- Naaman, what was your impression of Elisha's God? Did your experience of bathing in the river and being healed change your own beliefs?
- Gehazi, what made you turn away from your master, Elisha? What type of condition are you dealing with now?

Summary and signing off.



Amos

Preparing to Teach

Overview

God calls Amos, a native of Tekoa in Judah, to speak his prophetic word to the people of Israel. Amos is likely quite a sight in the affluent capital city of Bethel because he is a herdsman. Amos is a candid, blunt-speaking character who tries to shake the people out of their complacency by denouncing the injustice they are allowing to grow in their midst. People who are straightforward are attractive to young people because “what you see is what you get.”

Amos is very courageous to deliver his message, which is to say that the affluent inhabitants of Bethel are not paying attention to the poor or to God’s covenant. He is not well received and is told to go home. When young people stand up for values that conflict with those of their friends, they may feel somewhat like Amos—unwelcome and bothersome. They too need Amos’s courage that comes from God.

Amos’s unsubtle and often exaggerated means of expression are his desperate attempts to give “spiritual CPR” to God’s people in the northern kingdom. They have so much but they are about to lose it all.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Front-Page News: Amos’s Message to Bethel
- Continuing the Work of Amos Today

Scripture Passages Related to Amos

- Amos 2:4–5 (Amos predicts God’s judgment against Judah)
- Amos 2:6–8, 13–16 (Amos predicts God’s judgment on Israel)*
- Amos 5:1–7 (Amos calls people to turn away from false gods)
- Amos 5:10–15, 18–20 (Because of Israel’s sin, Amos describes a coming disaster, “the day of the Lord”)*
- Amos 6:3–8 (Amos’s special warning to complacent rich people)
- Amos 7:1–9 (Amos’s visions from God)

- Amos 7:10–17 (Amos and Amaziah the priest argue)
- Amos 8:4–14 (Amos condemns the unjust practices against the poor and predicts Israel’s doom)*
- Amos 9:11–15 (Amos predicts a future restoration of Israel)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.

Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Amos

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Amos
- Introduction to the Book of Amos



Amos and Young Adolescents Today

- Amos is direct and blunt in his message of “repent or die” to the people of the northern kingdom. The young adolescent can identify with the clear, no-nonsense way Amos communicates God’s disdain for hypocrisy and God’s commitment to justice. The vulnerability of this stage of life makes the young adolescent particularly sensitive to how honestly and justly people, including themselves, are being treated.
- Amos is a migrant worker, an outsider to the community to which he is sent. The young adolescent will identify with the feelings of being an outsider at times and not being welcomed into a group. At the same time, the young people can be encouraged to remember that inviting “the outsider” in, welcoming the stranger, is important to the life of our families and communities.

Highlighting God’s Presence

The LORD says, “The people of Israel have sinned again and again, and for this I will certainly punish them. They sell into slavery honest people who cannot pay their debts, the poor who cannot repay even the price of a pair of sandals. They trample down the weak and helpless and push the poor out of the way.” (Amos 2:6–7)

The LORD says, “A day is coming when I will restore the kingdom of David, which is like a house fallen into ruins. I will repair its walls and restore it. I will rebuild it and make it as it was long ago.” (Amos 9:11)

Activities

Front-Page News: Amos's Message to Bethel

In this activity, the students use the stories about Amos to create a newspaper front page.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, a copy of the list of readings from "Scripture Passages Related to Amos," paper, and a pen.
- ❑ If you can, provide computer access with a newsletter-publishing program that would allow the final product to be done in class.

1. Use the activity "A Newspaper Account" on pages 241–242 of appendix 2, "Tools for Teaching," to familiarize the students with the story of Amos.

Introduce the activity with the following comments:

- ▶ Amos certainly knew how to stir things up! He goes to the religious capital of the northern kingdom, Bethel, during the affluent reign of Jeroboam II to present his bold message of "Repent or else!" He is sure to get everyone's attention (whether they want to give it to him or not!). If there were newspapers (or "news-scrolls") then, Amos would certainly be front-page news.
 - ▶ Create a front page for the *Israel Times*, special edition about Amos. Headline: "'Day of the Lord Coming' Predicts Prophet!"
2. After completing this project, ask the students to compare their newspaper about Amos with a current daily newspaper. Ask:
 - ▶ Does the news of Amos's world resemble the news in our world? If so, how?

Continuing the Work of Amos Today

In this activity, the students will research contemporary groups active in social justice to connect the message of Amos to our own day.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
- ❑ Provide materials from the following groups: Bread for the World, Habitat for Humanity, Maryknoll, National Right to Life, and Catholic Relief Services.
- ❑ Bring in several copies of the daily newspaper.

1. Ask a volunteer to read Amos 3:7–8, 7:10–15 aloud to the class. Discuss the following questions:

- ▶ What is the mission of a prophet?
 - ▶ How does Amaziah see Amos, and what does he want him to do?
 - ▶ Why is Amos also a prophet for those of us who live today?
2. Make the following observations, using these or similar words:
- ▶ God speaks through the words of Amos still today. God’s call is still “comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable,” which means that God helps people to grow spiritually, depending on people’s situations in the world. For those who are suffering or are afflicted in some way, God comforts. When people are comfortable and unwilling to help others, God challenges them. Prophets bother those who are comfortable so that they can live God’s way, and so that God’s Kingdom may come.
 - ▶ Where in the world or in our own community do we comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable? (Use the newspaper as well as any other situations that the students are aware of.)
 - ▶ Who is defending the weak today? (List names or groups.) What struggles do they face to defend the weak?
3. Assign the students the task of learning about various organizations that today comfort the afflicted, afflict the comfortable, or both. (Provide the students with literature about these organizations, give a presentation about them yourself, or have the students go online to learn more about them.) These are some organizations you may consider. See appendix 1, “Additional Resources,” for more information about these organizations.
- Bread for the World
 - Catholic Relief Services
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - Maryknoll
 - National Right to Life
- (Speakers from any of these agencies would be worth your class time. Your diocese can help with other possibilities.)
4. After the young people have learned more about the organizations, ask what the similarities are between standing up for justice in Amos’s time and in our time?

Variation

In addition to these agencies, local experiences of food banks and clothing banks provide opportunities for direct service. Encourage your students to write letters to any of the agencies you decide to study and work with. It will help them to stay connected to solutions for faith, hope, and love in the world. And, for a more imaginative twist, have them write to “Amos,” telling him how they are keeping the prophetic spirit alive in the twenty-first century.

Hosea

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Warning! Had the Book of Hosea been a modern movie, it most likely would have received at least a PG-13 rating! Explaining this extremely interesting book will require some tact and possibly some patience, especially with young adolescents.

Hosea is from the southern kingdom, but during the eighth century BC, he becomes a prophet to the northern kingdom. His fellow Israelites are being overwhelmed by the Assyrian Empire and their pagan practices. Their religious rituals include sexual acts with prostitutes in the Canaanite temples where they worship the fertility god, Baal. Hosea wants the Israelites to realize how their involvement in these and other pagan rituals make them unfaithful to the Lord. The young people may know that Israel continuously falls into idolatry; they may not know just what that idolatry involves.

Following God's direction, Hosea marries a prostitute named Gomer and remains devoted to her despite her continued infidelity. Hosea uses his marriage as a metaphor for God's relationship with the Israelites. Hosea, like God, is a faithful spouse, while Gomer, like Israel in her worship of false gods, is unfaithful and adulterous. Young people can easily relate to the difference between having a friend who is constant and trustworthy and one who is hard to depend on.

This powerful and passionate book is fascinating to young adolescents, not only because of its somewhat lurid symbolism but also because of Hosea's single-minded devotion to God despite what the rest of the Israelites are doing.

This book is also refreshing because these readers will find God portrayed as one who wants to love and forgive his children, even when they go astray. At the same time, your students also may need to be challenged with the image of God as the loving parent who confronts his kids and allows them to suffer the consequences of their behavior. Hosea is a prophet of both justice and mercy.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Hosea's Complaints
- Hosea's Way of Knowing God

Scripture Passages Related to Hosea

- Hosea 1:1–9 (Hosea obeys God's request to get married and have children)*
- Hosea 1:10—3:5 (Consequences for an unfaithful wife)*
- Hosea, chapter 3 (Hosea and God are both faithful)
- Hosea, chapters 4–10 (Israel's condemnation and punishment)
- Hosea, chapter 11 (God's tender love for his children)*
- Hosea 12:1—14:3 (The consequences of Israel's infidelity)
- Hosea 14:4–9 (The Lord promises new life to those who return to him)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.

Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Hosea

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Hosea
- Introduction to the Book of Hosea



Hosea and Young Adolescents Today

- Like Hosea, young adolescents place a lot of importance on loyalty and fidelity.
- Hosea does something that most adolescents find very difficult: he goes against the crowd. Hosea makes a great role model as the lonely voice of virtue in a mass of immorality.
- Hosea complains about the insincerity of the Israelites. Young teenagers are very sensitive about hypocrisy. They do not like it when people's words say one thing, but their actions say something else—and especially when those people are adults!
- Many of today's youth ministers and teachers are finding that, despite their seemingly sincere expressions of faith in God, many adolescents are sexually active. Studying the Book of Hosea is an opportunity to explore the gap between their beliefs and their actions.

- Hosea's main complaint with the Israelites concerns idolatry. In today's world, teenagers can discover idolatry in many shapes and forms, including wealth, pleasure, popularity, power, and so on.

Highlighting God's Presence

Israel, I will make you my wife;
I will be true and faithful;
I will show you constant love and mercy
and make you mine forever.

(Hosea 2:19)

"Yet I was the one who taught Israel to walk.
I took my people up in my arms,
but they did not acknowledge that I took care of them.
I drew them to me with affection and love.
I picked them up and held them to my cheek;
I bent down to them and fed them."

(Hosea 11:3–4; the Lord speaking)

The LORD says,
"I will bring my people back to me.
I will love them with all my heart;
no longer am I angry with them."

(Hosea 14:4)

Activities

Hosea's Complaints

In this activity, the students explore Hosea's complaints to the Israelites and identify modern parallels in our society. Then they express both of these artistically.

Preparation

- Provide a set of markers and a sheet of newsprint for every four or five students.
- The students need to have Bibles.



1. Give the students some background information on Hosea using the information in the overview of this chapter and the introduction to Hosea in *Breakthrough!* Then read Hosea, chapters 1–3, aloud with the class.

2. Divide the class into groups of four or five. Tell them that their job is to read their assigned passage, decide what the Israelites are doing wrong, and come up with a similar problem in our culture. Listed here are some passages you can assign, as well as some suggested modern-day parallels you might offer the students who need some help making the modern connection.
 - Hosea 4:1–3 (Modern-day parallels: murder, adultery, theft, and so on)
 - Hosea 5:4–7 (Modern-day parallels: wealth, pleasure, popularity, power, and so on)
 - Hosea 7:3–16 (Modern-day parallels: selling out to save yourself, having no principles, lacking trust, disloyalty, and so on)
 - Hosea 8:1–14 (Modern-day parallels: corrupt politicians, decisions based on national self-interest or fear instead of doing what is right, building “palaces” instead of God’s Kingdom, and so on)
 - Hosea 12:7–11 (Modern-day parallels: dishonest businesses, exploitation of workers, and so on)
3. After their reading and discussion, have the students artistically display this modern-day parallel on their sheet of newsprint. On one half, they should portray the problems of the Israelites. On the other half, they should portray the similar problems in our society.
4. Have the students present their posters to the rest of the class. Direct them to explain both the complaints against the Israelites and the modern-day parallels.

Hosea’s Way of Knowing God

This activity provides the students the opportunity to prayerfully converse with God in a guided meditation.

Preparation

- Each student needs paper and a pen.

1. Read Hosea 6:4–6 aloud with the class. Make the following points, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ Hosea is upset with the Israelites because while they say they worship the Lord, their love tends to disappear “as quickly as morning mist” (Hosea 6:4). They are failing to live out this love. They do not practice what they preach.
 - ▶ In verse 6, Hosea says that their sacrifices and burnt offerings are meaningless unless they are backed up with love and knowledge of God.

- ▶ Just because you know a person's name doesn't mean you know *her* or *him*. For Hosea, "knowing God" also means more than believing that God exists. Hosea wants us to know God like we know the members of our family or our best friends. For when we truly know God, we will know what is good, and will live accordingly.
2. Prepare the students to listen and respond to the meditation you are about to read. The students should keep some distance between one another and keep distractions to a minimum. Establish silence in the room. (Turning the lights out can be helpful. Having the students put their heads down works too.) In order to avoid students' falling asleep, try not to do this activity immediately after a meal. The students should have paper and a pen available.
 3. After the students have quieted down, explain that they will be listening to a meditation that will include some questions for them to consider. Let them know that at any time, they are free to pick up their pens and write. They can write the entire experience, answer just the questions, or write nothing at all. Begin with the sign of the cross and about a minute of silence. Then read the meditation. Read slowly and allow 20 or more seconds of silent reflection when you see the ellipses (. . .)
 - ▶ I want you to imagine you are sitting on top of a mountain that is overlooking a vast city. Darkness is falling, the sun has just set, and you notice the lights coming on in the city. . . . Watch them come on until the whole city seems like a lake of lights. . . . You are sitting here all alone, gazing at this beautiful spectacle. . . . What are you feeling? . . .
 - ▶ After a while you hear footsteps behind you and you know they are the footsteps of a holy man who lives in these parts, a hermit. He comes up to you and stands by your side. He looks at you gently and says just one sentence to you: "If you go down to the city tonight, you will find God." Having said this, he turns around and walks away. No explanations. No time for questions. . . .
 - ▶ You believe that this man knows what he is talking about. What do you feel now? Do you feel like doing what he said and going into the city? Or would you rather stay where you are? . . .
 - ▶ Whatever you actually feel like doing, imagine that you go down to the city in search of God. . . . What do you feel as you go down? . . .
 - ▶ You have come to the outskirts of the city and you have to decide where to go to search for God and find him. . . . Where do you decide to go? Use your heart to choose the place. Don't be guided by where you think you "ought" to go. Just go where your heart tells you to go. . . .

- ▶ What happens to you when you arrive at this place? . . . What do you find there? . . . What do you do there? . . . What happens to you? . . . Do you find God? . . . How do you recognize God? . . . What is it like to find God there?
- ▶ Then you come to the realization that God has something to give you—a gift. It is a gift that is unique and it is given especially to you, but not only for you. It is a gift that is meant to be shared with everyone. Where do you go to find it? . . . Are there other people there or are you alone? . . . Does someone give you the gift or do you just find it? . . . How does it feel when you find the gift? . . .
- ▶ Now you realize that it is time to go. Thank God for your gift and take it as you leave the city. As you walk back up the mountain, you encounter the holy man again. What do you tell him about your journey? . . . The holy man tells you that many others have made the same journey into the city, and though their experiences were different, they too were given gifts to share. Then he tells you that God wants you to know something. He says, “When you were young, God loved you and called you his child. Even when you turned away from him, God still carried you in his arms. When you forgot about God, he picked you up and held you to his cheek. When you were needy, he bent down to care for you” . . . (adapted from Hosea 11:1–4).
- ▶ Then the holy man begins to walk away, but then stops and turns around. He tells you to take some time to get to know God and he reminds you that God is with you always. What else does the holy man do or say now? . . .
- ▶ You bid the holy man good-bye and you return to the top of the mountain to watch the lights of the city. . . .

(Adapted from Anthony de Mello, *Sadhana: A Way to God*, pp. 79–80)

Tell the students to take a moment or two, and when they are ready, they can open their eyes.

4. Afterward, ask for volunteers to share something about their experiences. Go through the different parts of the meditation and inquire about their particular reactions to the different situations. Be sure to respect their privacy and avoid pushing for responses.

Isaiah

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Isaiah is one of the major prophets in the Old Testament. It might be more accurate to say that when we are talking about the book of the prophet Isaiah, we are really talking about the “books” of the prophets Isaiah. This is because biblical scholars hear the voices of three distinct authors who, while writing over a course of two centuries, still maintained a certain continuity of style and message.

The first thirty-nine chapters of the Book of Isaiah deal with the impending fall of Judah to the Babylonians. The prophet catalogues the people’s failings (primarily idolatry and injustice to the poor) and describes how, as a result of these sins, their enemies will capture Judah and deport her citizens to exile in Babylonia. In addition, however, Isaiah offers two powerful images of hope. First, he announces the coming of a special chosen king, the “Anointed One” (Messiah), who will emerge from the lineage of David to restore Judah to her covenant relationship with God in a new and more fulfilled way. Second, despite the impending demise of the faithless people of God, who will be banished into exile, a remnant will remain faithful to God and will be the seed of a restored Judah when they return.

The “Second Isaiah,” whose writings are contained in chapters 40–55, describes the return of the exiles to Judah some seventy years after they were first taken to Babylon. These chapters are also called “The Book of Consolation,” so encouraging and hopeful are they for those about to return home. Christians see a foreshadowing of Jesus in this section’s “Servant of God” and of the role he would play in salvation history.

“Third Isaiah” makes up chapters 56–66 of the Book of Isaiah and describes the life of the Jerusalem community in the postexilic period. “Third Isaiah” expresses the same concern for the people’s misbehavior that First Isaiah does, for it seems that the people have learned nothing from their ancestors’ fickle treatment of the Covenant.

In the three different voices of Isaiah, young people can find a familiar pattern. They can see that God is not happy with the sins of the people and that he must punish them. Yet, though he needs to punish them, God also looks forward to the day when the punishment is over and he can relate with them in the loving way that he wants. Sometimes young adolescents misinterpret strict rules or consequences (such as grounding) as a sign that their parents or teachers do not love them. In fact, parents and teachers often inwardly cringe as they need to spell out

the consequences. They would much rather have peaceful and positive relationships with their young people.

Young adolescents will find many beautiful signs of hope in Isaiah. Encourage them to copy down passages that especially touch them.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Dear Holy One of Israel: Isaiah's Diary
- Playing on God's Team with "Coach Isaiah"
- "The People Who Walked in Darkness Have Seen a Great Light"

Scripture Passages Related to Isaiah

- Isaiah 2:1–5 (Isaiah predicts future peace to Jerusalem)
- Isaiah 6:1–8 (God calls Isaiah)*
- Isaiah 7:10–14 (Isaiah makes a prediction of Immanuel to Ahaz the king)*
- Isaiah 37:1–38 (Isaiah reassures Hezekiah the king)
- Isaiah 40:1–11 (God gives his people comfort)*
- Isaiah 42:1–4 (Isaiah introduces a special servant of God)*
- Isaiah 44:1–3 (God consoles Israel)
- Isaiah 49:1–6 (Israel is a light to the nations)*
- Isaiah 52:13—53:12 (The Suffering Servant)*
- Isaiah 58:6–12 (The type of fasting God wants)
- Isaiah 65:17–25 (Isaiah predicts a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Isaiah

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Isaiah
- Prophets and Prophecy (Isaiah, chapter 6)
- Advent (Isaiah 7:10–14)
- Names of God (Isaiah 9:6)
- Keeping God No. 1 (Isaiah 28:22–29)
- Holiness and Healthiness (Isaiah, chapter 35)

- Second Chance (Isaiah, chapter 38)
- A New Section (Isaiah, chapter 40)
- FEAR (Isaiah 41:10)
- For the Thirsty (Isaiah 44:3)
- The Suffering Servant (Isaiah 49:1–6)
- Beautiful Feet? (Isaiah, chapter 52)
- It Takes Two Feet (Isaiah 58:6–7)
- Oh Joy! (Isaiah, chapter 60)
- Names (Isaiah 62:4,12)
- Help from the Holy Trinity (Isaiah 65:17–25)

Isaiah and Young Adolescents Today

- Isaiah is sent to warn Israel about the consequences of her sins but also to give her reason to hope that she will emerge from this time more faithful to God. Young adolescents hear much about the possible negative consequences of their behavior, but they also need to hear hope about their future.
- Isaiah predicts the coming of a special anointed king, the Messiah, who will renew God’s people in their covenant identity. Young adolescents are looking for role models, women and men who embody the qualities a young person wishes to possess. Young people also seek to feel special, set apart, “anointed.”
- Isaiah describes a lowly faithful few, a “remnant” (literally, “the leftovers”) who will remain close to God despite the people’s despair in the beginning of the Exile period. Most young adolescents at times feel like a “leftover,” overlooked or not taken seriously by others. Through Isaiah’s words, young people can see how God has an important purpose for everyone even when it seems like they are disposable or don’t count.

Highlighting God’s Presence

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the LORD. He was sitting on his throne, high and exalted, and his robe filled the whole Temple. Around him flaming creatures were standing, each of which had six wings. Each creature covered its face with two wings, and its body with two, and used the other two for flying. They were calling out to each other:

“Holy, holy, holy!
The LORD Almighty is holy!
His glory fills the world.”

(Isaiah 6:1–3)

Then I heard the Lord say, “Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?”

I answered, “I will go! Send me!”

(Isaiah 6:8)

“Comfort my people,” says our God. “Comfort them!
Encourage the people of Jerusalem.

Tell them they have suffered long enough
and their sins are now forgiven.

I have punished them in full for all their sins.”

(Isaiah 40:1–2)

“Israel,” the LORD who created you says,

“Do not be afraid—I will save you.

I have called you by name—you are mine.

When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you;
your troubles will not overwhelm you.

When you pass through fire, you will not be burned;
the hard trials that come will not hurt you.

For I am the LORD your God,

the holy God of Israel, who saves you.”

(Isaiah 43:1–3)

The LORD says, “I am making a new earth and new heavens. The events of the past will be completely forgotten. Be glad and rejoice forever in what I create. The new Jerusalem I make will be full of joy, and her people will be happy. I myself will be filled with joy because of Jerusalem and her people.” (Isaiah 65:17–19)

Activities

Dear Holy One of Israel: Isaiah’s Diary

In this activity, the students “write” Isaiah’s diary, using passages from the prophet’s book for inspiration.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, two sheets of blank paper, and a pen.
Provide staplers and markers as necessary.
- ❑ List the following Scripture passages on the board or in another visible place:
 - Isaiah 6:1–8
 - Isaiah 7:3–14

- Isaiah 8:1–3
- Isaiah 8:11–21
- Isaiah 21:1–10
- Isaiah 30:8–14
- Isaiah 37:1–5

1. Introduce the activity by sharing this information, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ The Book of Isaiah contains primarily his prophetic messages. Still, there are some interesting sections that describe how the prophet lives and how he interacts with God and people. To better understand Isaiah, you will create a diary or journal recording and reflecting on some key events in the life of this prophet.
2. Distribute sheets of blank paper. Give the young people the following directions:
 - ▶ Fold two sheets of blank paper in half from the top down.
 - ▶ Staple them in the middle to make a booklet. Leave room on the front page for the cover illustrations.
 - ▶ Read the scriptural selections about Isaiah’s life. For each passage, put yourself in the shoes of Isaiah and journal about what you, as Isaiah, would have recorded, along with your feelings and your interpretations of it.
 - ▶ For each entry, give a date and year for the event (the events will have occurred around 740 BC, but remind your students that the people of that time would not have been using the calendar system we use today) and address each entry to God. Isaiah’s title for God is “Dear Holy One of Israel.”
3. After the students finish their versions of Isaiah’s journal, distribute markers so that they can design the covers. After you collect the journals, read some of the entries out loud. Use these entries to discuss the nature of prophets. Ask these questions:
 - ▶ What was the life of the prophet like?
 - ▶ Are there still prophets today? Why or why not?
 - ▶ If there are prophets today, who are they?
 - ▶ Do today’s prophets resemble Isaiah in any way?

Playing on God’s Team with “Coach Isaiah”

In this activity, the students look to the modern role of a coach to help them understand the work and approach of the prophets.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a sheet of newsprint, markers, scissors, and glue.
 - ❑ Bring in the sports pages of a local newspaper (several days’ worth) and copies of sports magazines.
1. Begin the activity by asking the students to describe the characteristics of a good coach, using the following questions. Have them brainstorm ideas and then list them on the board.
 - ▶ How do these qualities make a coach stand out?
 - ▶ How is winning and losing related to having a good coach?
 - ▶ How should a good coach react to a losing team or player? Why?
 - ▶ How should a good coach react to a winning team or player? Why?
 2. Share these thoughts with the students, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ The role of the prophet can be compared to the role of a sports coach. Both individuals try to motivate their charges to “play up to their ability” by using a combination of warnings and encouragement.
 - ▶ The language of sports and the language of faith overlap at times. Saint Paul uses the image of the runner and a race to talk about following Christ and finishing the race as salvation. A pinch hitter in baseball is like a “savior figure” for the team, football players sometimes make “Hail Mary passes,” and so on.
 3. Discuss these questions:
 - ▶ From what you know of good coaches, do you think Isaiah is a good coach in his role as prophet?
 - ▶ What lessons from coaching would you advise a modern-day prophet to take to heart when interacting with people?

4. Distribute the sports pages and sports magazines at random, and leave extras in a convenient location. Invite the students to clip headlines and letters and photos or other images from these materials. Distribute the newsprint and glue, and invite the students to use their clippings to make posters by illustrating five “coaching guidelines” that Isaiah could adapt to help the people of Judah be faithful to God.

“The People Who Walked in Darkness Have Seen a Great Light”

In this activity, the students explore the symbolism of light and darkness in Isaiah through a short prayer experience.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, a pen, and a taper or votive candle.
- ❑ Have matches or a lighter available.
- ❑ Provide readings for seven readers.
- ❑ Meet in a room that can be darkened.

1. Introduce this prayer experience by sharing this thought:
 - ▶ The images of light and darkness are used often in the Book of Isaiah. Examining this metaphor can remind us of the real power of the Spirit in a world struggling to be illuminated with God’s love.
2. Dim the lights. Gather the young people into a circle and, if fire laws permit, distribute a candle to each. (Again, remind the students about the safe use of candles.) Assign the following readings from Isaiah to seven of the young people present:
 - Isaiah 5:20,30
 - Isaiah 9:2
 - Isaiah 29:18–19
 - Isaiah 30:25–26
 - Isaiah 49:6,9
 - Isaiah 60:1–3
 - Isaiah 60:19–22

3. Call the students' attention to the fact that even one small match will illuminate the room and dispel the darkness. As each reader reads one of the Isaiah quotes aloud, light his or her candle. When the readings are complete, the readers should then light the candles of the remaining participants. Ask the students to prayerfully discuss these questions:
- What does it mean to be "in darkness"? to be "in light"?
 - What "light" does Isaiah say God promises people? What will its effect be on people?

Conclude the prayer time by asking the young people to share any prayers of petition in which they would like to call down God's light. You may want to ask the students to respond, "God of Light, hear our prayer."

Jeremiah

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Jeremiah is a fascinating biblical character who gives us an intimate view of the life of a prophet. The Book of Jeremiah contains the prophetic messages he delivers and describes the effects they have on the people of Judah. The book also reveals his own personal struggles to carry out his vocation in the face of both inner and outside turmoil.

Jeremiah is a passionate, challenging, and relentless prophet whose life reveals that God wants conversion of hearts. God desires to give us the spirit of conversion so that we can know him and relate to him in ways that would be impossible by ourselves. He wants us to see our future in the light of mercy.

The young adolescent will identify with Jeremiah's struggles to do the right thing in the face of peer pressure. Hearing Jeremiah's intense feelings and struggle in his prayer to do the right thing can be a great consolation to a young adolescent who wants to be close to God yet is aware of new feelings that seem "unspiritual."

Jeremiah's awareness of his ultimate dependency on God and of God's desire to deepen a relationship with him can be a helpful example to young adolescents. They often struggle to stand their ground when they feel misunderstood due to the many changes at work at this time in their lives. Jeremiah's prophecy reveals God as the Faithful One who is always available and is always calling us back to himself so that people can begin again with faith, hope, and love in God, others, and ourselves.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Jeremiah Book Covers
 - God's Call to Jeremiah and Our Call Today
 - God's Covenant Broken and Renewed
-
-

Scripture Passages Related to Jeremiah

- Jeremiah 1:1–10 (God calls Jeremiah)*
- Jeremiah 2:1—3:5, 4:1–31 (God’s problem with Israel)*
- Jeremiah 8:18—9:16 (Jeremiah’s Song of Sorrow)
- Jeremiah 13:1–11 (Jeremiah and the mysterious linen shorts)
- Jeremiah 15:10–21, 18:18–23, 20:7–18 (Jeremiah argues with God)*
- Jeremiah 18:1–12 (Jeremiah goes to a potter’s house)
- Jeremiah 31:1–14, 31–40 (God tells Jeremiah of the New Covenant)*
- Jeremiah 37:1—38:13 (Jeremiah is imprisoned)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Jeremiah

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Jeremiah
- Introduction to the Book of Jeremiah
- Who, Me? (Jeremiah 1:4–10)
- Help! Rescue Me! (Jeremiah 2:26–27)
- Why? (Jeremiah 12:1–4)
- Why Me, O Lord? (Jeremiah 15:10–21)
- Single for God (Jeremiah 16:1–4)
- My Place of Safety (Jeremiah 17:14–18)
- I’m Sick of It! (Jeremiah 20:7–18)
- Turning Point (Jeremiah 27:21–22)
- Putting Your Heart in It (Jeremiah 31:31–33)
- Down and Out (Jeremiah 38:1–13)
- Stories After the Fall (Jeremiah, chapter 40)
- Egypt (Jeremiah 43:1–6)

Jeremiah and Young Adolescents Today

- Jeremiah struggles with God’s call to be a prophet at a young age. Young people can find it difficult to believe that God calls them to serve him in a special way.
- Jeremiah’s desire to speak truthfully and lovingly about what he has seen happening to his people reminds young adolescents to speak to others with honesty and love.
- Jeremiah’s frustrated cry to God about being a prophet shows the young person how important honesty is in prayer.

- Jeremiah’s dramatic and symbolic presentation of his message shows young people that communication consists of more than words. Actions and gestures can be powerful ways to share God’s Word with others.
- Jeremiah’s life and martyrdom in Egypt shows young adolescents that speaking up for God can result in suffering and rejection. Young adolescents may find this reality difficult to accept.

Highlighting God’s Presence in Jeremiah’s Story

The LORD said to me, “I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you to be a prophet to the nations. (Jeremiah 1:4)

Listen, I am giving you the words you must speak . . . to build and to plant.” (Jeremiah 1:9–10)

The LORD says, . . . “I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you hope for.” (Jeremiah 29:10–11)

The LORD says, “The time is coming when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. . . . The new covenant that I will make with the people of Israel will be this: I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” (Jeremiah 31:31,33)

Activities

Jeremiah Book Covers

In this activity, the students work as designers who will design and illustrate a mock book series that follows the story of Jeremiah.

Follow the directions for “Character Book Covers” in appendix 2, “Tools for Teaching,” on pages 244–245. You may want to use the readings from “Scripture Passages Related to Jeremiah” to divide the class into groups of eight.

God’s Call to Jeremiah and Our Call Today

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
- ❑ Obtain a copy of the movie, from the Great Souls series, *Mother Teresa: Woman of Compassion*, by William Paul McKay and Tom Ivy (AIM International Television, 2002, 50 minutes NR). See appendix 1, “Additional Resources,” for more information.

- ❑ Bring a DVD player and a television.
 - ❑ Invite adults from the faith community to present their call or vocation to serve God’s people. (optional)
1. Ask the students to reflect on the idea of a calling from God, using the following questions:
 - ▶ Have you ever heard of someone receiving a calling from God? If so, how did they receive it?
 - ▶ What did God call them to do?
 - ▶ Do you think that God has a calling for everyone?
 - ▶ What is the word for having a calling? (a vocation)
 2. Have the students read God’s call to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:1–9. Ask them to reflect on these questions:
 - ▶ What is Jeremiah’s response? Why?
 - ▶ What is the sign that Jeremiah will be God’s spokesperson?
 - ▶ What will Jeremiah do as God’s prophet?
 - ▶ Does God still call people today to speak on his behalf? Do people respond like Jeremiah? Why or why not?
 3. Make this point with the students:
 - ▶ God calls all people to serve one another out of love, in their own way. We are most truly ourselves when we give ourselves to others.
 4. Show part of the movie *Mother Teresa: Woman of Compassion*, especially the part where she describes experiencing a “call within a call” to serve the poorest of the poor in Calcutta, India.

After showing parts of the film, ask the students these questions:

 - ▶ Who speaks for God today? (Examples: bishops, others who serve the poor)
 - ▶ What are they telling us? (to trust God with our hearts, to live simply, to take care of the poor, to not be afraid of loving like Christ, to forgive others)
 - ▶ What is the sign that they have been chosen to speak for God? (They are humble, prayerful, and respectful of the Church; they see the world through the eyes of the poor; and they are hopeful, creative, persistent, patient, kind.)
 5. Bring in some speakers who can talk about their own sense of call. In a subsequent class period, have the students compare and contrast the sense of call among the presenters.

God's Covenant Broken and Renewed

Preparation

- ❑ Each student need a Bible, paper, and a pen.
- ❑ Each student will need two wooden dowels (each ¾-inch in diameter by 12 inches long), an 8½-by-14-inch (legal-size) sheet of blank paper, some tape, and some markers. (optional)

1. Tell the students this old joke:

- ▶ Two elderly men, Bob and Jerry, who have been friends for years, were talking about their favorite topic: baseball. Bob says to Jerry, "I wonder if there is baseball in Heaven?" Jerry says, "Let's promise that whichever one of us dies first will come back and tell the other." Months go by, and Bob dies first. Jerry wonders if his friend will be able to keep his promise.

One day Jerry is sitting on a bench in a park and Bob appears to him. "Bob, is that you?" asks Jerry. "Yep, it sure is!" says Bob. "So," says Jerry, "is there baseball in Heaven?" "Well, Jerry, on that, I've got some bad news and I've got some good news." "What's the good news?" asks Jerry. "Yes, there is incredible baseball here. All the greats are here," says Bob. "Well, what's the bad news?" asks the bewildered Jerry. Bob answers, "You're starting pitcher tonight."

2. Make the connection between the joke and your study of Jeremiah with the following thoughts:

- ▶ Jeremiah's message is a combination of things that the people of Judah do not want to hear as well as things they are glad to hear: bad news and good news. From Jeremiah they will learn that because they are not faithful to God, they will be punished. They will be sent into exile. But, ultimately, God will bring them home and will make a new covenant with them. God will promise to be even more involved in their lives. Christians understand that this new covenant is God becoming human in Jesus.

3. Divide the class into small groups of three or four. Distribute the Bibles, paper, and pens, and have the students review the readings from Jeremiah (listed in "Scripture Passages Related to Jeremiah") and look for Jeremiah's "bad news, good news" approach to the situation in Judah at his time. Direct them to make a two-column chart on their paper, one column titled "Bad News" and one column titled "Good News." Challenge them to try and find three entries for each side.

4. Use these questions to discuss the “bad news, good news” dynamic:
 - ▶ How can something that is broken be made stronger after the break? (Have the students brainstorm examples like bones, tree limbs that are grafted and tightly bond, some epoxies or other glues that are stronger than the original material.)
 - ▶ How can covenant relationships be made stronger after they are broken? (For example, the stronger member, God, absorbs the break and renews the strength of the bond with the other. Friendships that go through tough periods are sometimes stronger afterward.)
 - ▶ What are some ways covenants are made and then recommitted in our culture? (Marriage vows are renewed, we celebrate special days with our families, we ask forgiveness, we share in the Sacraments.)
5. At the bottom of the columns, have the students write a reflection on the question, How is your life a combination of “bad news” and “good news” from God?
6. *Optional:* Have the students find Jeremiah 29:11–14. Then provide a sheet of paper, two dowels, and some tape for each student. Demonstrate for the students how to construct a biblical-type scroll with these items. Once the students have put together their scrolls, direct them to copy Jeremiah’s “Letter to the Captives” (Jeremiah 29:11–14) onto the scrolls, addressing it to someone they know (or to themselves) who needs to be reminded of God’s good plans for them.

Ezekiel

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Ezekiel is a complex prophetic character of the Exile for whom actions really do speak louder than words. He has two main messages for the people. The first is a call to repentance for their sinfulness lest they be destroyed by Babylon. The second is a message of hope for the Jews when they find themselves taken captive to Babylon after their defeat at the hands of their enemies. Like the people of Judah, young people need to be accountable for their actions yet not become too discouraged if they make some mistakes.

In addition to performing striking dramatic gestures as part of his ministry, Ezekiel is also given a series of fantastical prophetic visions that he conveys to the people of Judah about their future as God's people. Given such a wide range of prophetic inspiration, Ezekiel's message continues to echo down through the ages and to speak to people of faith today.

Though the symbolism of the Book of Ezekiel is baffling at times, the dramatic nature of his ministry and the intensity of his visions can appeal to the image-rich experience of many young adolescents. In some ways, Ezekiel's medium of prophetic message is more inviting to the young adolescent of today than other prophetic styles simply because it is so similar in presentation to the media-driven environment in which our students live.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- The Wild, Wild World of Ezekiel Comic Book
- These Bones: From Death to Life

Scripture Passages Relating to Ezekiel

- Ezekiel 1:1–28 (Ezekiel sees God's throne)*
- Ezekiel 2:1–10 (God calls Ezekiel)
- Ezekiel 3:1–15 (Ezekiel eats a scroll and receives the spirit)*

- Ezekiel 4:1–17 (Ezekiel acts out the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem)
- Ezekiel 5:1–3,11–12 (Ezekiel acts out another prophecy)*
- Ezekiel 12:1–16 (Ezekiel acts out the flight of those exiled)
- Ezekiel 16:59–63 (God will renew the covenant)
- Ezekiel 18:1–4,14–24 (Punishment for sins will not fall on children)*
- Ezekiel 24:15–27 (The death of the prophet’s wife)
- Ezekiel 34:11–31 (God as the good shepherd)*
- Ezekiel 36:22–36 (God will give the people a new heart and mind)*
- Ezekiel 37:1–14 (Vision of the dry bones)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Ezekiel

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Ezekiel
- Introduction to the Book of Ezekiel
- Only God Is God (Ezekiel, chapters 2–3)
- I.M.s from God? (Ezekiel 4:1—5:4)
- God Is . . . (Ezekiel 10:4)
- The Dreaded Ms. G (Ezekiel 20:33–44)
- Then and Now (Ezekiel 22:1–12)
- Losing Someone Special (Ezekiel 24:15–27)
- Wrong Secrets (Ezekiel 33:7–9)
- Praying with New Life (Ezekiel, chapter 37)
- God, the Builder (Ezekiel 41:15–21)

Ezekiel and Young Adolescents Today

- Ezekiel’s strong, strange prophetic experiences can fascinate the young adolescent. It can remind young adolescents of the mystery of God in the midst of their ordinary lives.
- Ezekiel’s twin messages of repentance for the present and hope for the future remind us that, while actions do have consequences, with God’s mercy there is always a second chance. This realization is especially important for young adolescents to hear as they are painfully aware of how incomplete they are and are quite sensitive to their failures.

Highlighting God’s Presence

While the voice was speaking, God’s spirit entered me and raised me to my feet, and I heard the voice continue, “Mortal man, I am sending you to the people of Israel. They have rebelled and turned against me and are still rebels, just as their ancestors were. They are stubborn and do not respect me, so I am sending you to tell them what I, the Sovereign LORD, am saying to them. Whether those rebels listen to you or not, they will know that a prophet has been among them.” (Ezekiel 2:2–5)

Ezekiel

“I will give you a new heart and a new mind. I will take away your stubborn heart of stone and give you an obedient heart. I will put my spirit in you and will see to it that you follow my laws and keep all the commands I have given you.” (Ezekiel 36:26–27)

He [the Lord and his spirit] said to me, “Mortal man, can these bones come back to life?”

I replied, “Sovereign LORD, only you can answer that!”

He said, “Prophesy to the bones. Tell these dry bones to listen to the word of the LORD. Tell them that I, the Sovereign LORD, am saying to them: . . . I am going to put breath into you and bring you back to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.” (Ezekiel 37:3–6)

Activities

The Wild, Wild World of Ezekiel Comic Book

In this activity, the students familiarize themselves with Ezekiel’s story by creating comic strips.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible and a pen.
- ❑ Make copies of the handout “The Comics” (Document #: TX002899) from appendix 2, “Tools for Teaching,” so that four frames or two copies are available for each student. Make some extra copies so that more frames are available if needed.
- ❑ Copy the readings from “Scripture Passages Related to Ezekiel” onto the board.



1. Divide the class into small groups of four or five to produce a comic book version of Ezekiel and his work. Distribute two copies of the handout “The Comics” (Document #: TX002899) to each student. Encourage the students to work together to combine their frames and ideas, and ask each student to contribute to the drawing so that this

creative effort does not fall to one person in the group who may have more natural talent at drawing. Emphasize that “perfect drawings” are not required! Have the students summarize the Scripture passages somewhere on their drawings.

2. Photocopy the finished products from different groups for everyone to read.
3. After the students have reviewed some of the Ezekiel comics in full, have them write their impressions of the prophet’s message on a separate sheet of paper. They should answer these questions:
 - What was most challenging about his message? Why?
 - What was most hopeful in his message? Why?

These Bones: From Death to Life

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
 - ❑ Obtain a copy of the film *The Lord of The Rings: The Return of the King* (2003, 682 minutes, rated A-III and PG-13) that you can play on your DVD player. (The extended version of the film works better because it has a strong image of bones. Cue the film to “Paths through the Dead” if the majority of your students have already watched the film. An earlier scene, “Aragorn Takes the Paths of the Dead,” helps to provide some context for the later one. Both scenes are close to the halfway point of the movie.)
1. Have the students read Ezekiel 37:1–14. Discuss the meaning of this biblical scene in the context of Ezekiel. (God will restore his people; he will give them his spirit.) Note that the image of the dry bones coming back to life is a powerful image of renewal.
 2. Show the scene “Paths through the Dead” from the film. In this scene, Aragorn, the eventual King of Middle-earth, goes to seek assistance from a ghostly army that has been cursed to a state between life and death because the soldiers broke a vow to a former king. Aragorn goes to seek their assistance and offers them a way to remove the curse.
 3. Discuss these questions with the students:
 - ▶ What are the similarities between the scene that Ezekiel encounters and the one found by Aragorn and his companions?
 - ▶ How do the bones take shape in each account?
 - ▶ How do Aragorn and Ezekiel offer new life to the bones? How does the new life differ?

4. Give the students this private in-class writing assignment that you will not collect or read. Their short essay should answer these questions:
 - What is one area in your life that is dry or dead?
 - What is God doing in your life to help you feel more alive in that part of your life?

Ezekiel

Ezra and Nehemiah

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah chronicle the restoration of Israel. In 587 BC, the Babylonians conquered Israel and held them in captivity until 538 BC, when the Babylonians were in turn defeated by Persia. The Persians allowed the Israelites to return to their land, but by then their home had been reduced nearly to rubble. Both Ezra and Nehemiah participated in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, both physically and religiously.

Many young adolescents will initially find Ezra and Nehemiah's views to be too harsh and outdated, especially considering their stance on mixed marriages and Israel's exclusivity. Be sure to point out that the Catholic Church does not maintain these beliefs. At the same time, we must ask our students to put themselves in the shoes of these leaders who were watching their people's faith and culture deteriorate before their eyes. Emphasize the significant role these two devout Jews play in saving Israel's way of life during a precarious time.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activity

- Down to the Essentials

Scripture Passages Related to Ezra and Nehemiah

- Ezra 1:1–10 (Ezra's time: Cyrus sends the Jews back to Jerusalem)
- Ezra 3:7–13 (Ezra's time: Jews begin to rebuild the Temple)
- Ezra 7:1–10 (Ezra's background)*
- Ezra 9:1—10:17 (Ezra leads people in denouncing mixed marriages)*
- Nehemiah, chapters 1–2 (Nehemiah returns to Judah to help rebuild Jerusalem)*
- Nehemiah 9:6–37 (The people recall God's works)
- Nehemiah 10:28–39 (The people of Jerusalem promise to reform)*
- Nehemiah, chapter 13 (Nehemiah reforms the people of Jerusalem)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Ezra and Nehemiah

Ezra and Nehemiah

- Introduction to the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah
- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Ezra and Nehemiah
- Persian Connection (Ezra, chapter 1)
- Keep Trying! (Ezra, chapters 4–5)
- Yippee! (Ezra 6:1–12)
- Answers to Prayer (Ezra 7:27–28)
- Mixed Marriages (Ezra, chapters 9–10)
- Big Deal, a Wall (Nehemiah, chapters 2–3)
- Stupid! (Nehemiah 4:1–5)
- Nehemiah Works for Justice (Nehemiah 5:1–13)
- Creator God (Nehemiah 9:6–37)
- The Dedication (Nehemiah 12:27–43)

Ezra and Nehemiah and Young Adolescents Today

- Ezra speaks out firmly against mixed marriages. Some young people may have parents who do not practice the same religion. It is important for them to see that the conditions the Jews were facing do not resemble those today.
- Being part of a particular crowd is important to young adolescents and they often use this to define each other's identity. Appealing to this tendency is a good way to help them understand why mixed marriages are so threatening to Ezra and Nehemiah.
- These stories can help to remind young people to be grateful for their gifts of home and freedom, which are sometimes taken for granted.

Highlighting God's Presence

In the first year that Cyrus of Persia was emperor, the LORD made what he had said through the prophet Jeremiah come true. (Ezra 1:1)

Our God was with us and protected us from enemy attacks and from ambush as we traveled. (Ezra 8:31)

Activity

Down to the Essentials

In this activity, the students collectively prioritize important elements of their life as a way of gaining insight into the efforts of Ezra and Nehemiah to reestablish the Jewish identity.

Preparation

- ❑ Make four to six copies of the handout “Defining the Boundaries” (Document #: TX002894), one for each group.
- ❑ Each group of students needs a pair of scissors and a pen.

1. Divide the class into groups of four or five. Read the following passages aloud:
 - Ezra 10:28–30
 - Nehemiah 2:17–18
 - Nehemiah 13:1–3
2. Then read the article “Mixed Marriages” (Ezra, chapters 9–10) in *Breakthrough!* Emphasize that Ezra and Nehemiah were protecting the Israelites’ faith and way of life.
3. Make the following comments, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ The Israelites are in a time of crisis and they need to remember and define who they are.
 - ▶ When people feel vulnerable, they tend to sort out those who threaten their way of life from those who support it. This sorting requires decisions about identity, beliefs, and commitment to those beliefs.



4. Give each group a copy of the handout “Defining the Boundaries” (Document #:TX002894). Read the directions and review each element with the young people. Remind them to argue constructively, respect one another’s opinions, and note that most likely none of them will be completely happy with the outcome. They will have to come to a consensus about the priorities of their group.

5. Allow 15 to 20 minutes for debate and decision making, and then announce that each group has entered a crisis and will lose the four lowest-placed elements. Give them 5 minutes to discuss how this will affect their lives. Afterward they will report their conclusions to the class.
6. Allow each group to briefly describe their experience to the class. Use the following questions to guide the conversation:
 - ▶ What were the most important elements in your group's life? Why?
 - ▶ Who was unhappy with the decision? Why?
 - ▶ How did the loss of the bottom four elements affect your life?
 - ▶ Does going through this process make you think differently about Ezra and Nehemiah's situation? Explain.
 - ▶ How do Catholics define who they are?

Ezra and Nehemiah

Defining the Boundaries

Cut out each section below. In the space provided next to each element, number them in order of the importance they have to the people in your group, with 1 being most important and 8 being least important. Next to each, write how this particular element plays a role in your lives and why you chose to give it its particular level of importance.

_____ Faith

_____ National Citizenship

_____ Wealth

_____ Education

_____ Romantic Interest

_____ Friendships

_____ Family

_____ Culture (music, arts, and so on)



Judith

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The story of Judith is a historical novel about the triumph of the Israelites over the great armies of King Nebuchadnezzar of the Assyrians. This defeat comes about through the actions of Judith, a Jewish woman. Judith is able to personally defeat the great military leader because she is a devout and faithful follower of God.

As a widow, she has experienced very difficult times but did not lose her faith. She is a very smart woman who puts herself in a dangerous position in order to save her people. She prays before, during, and after her act of courage.

Judith teaches us many lessons. She shows us that knowing, praising, and thanking God is the most important thing in life. No other god—not gold, jewels, or a mighty man like the king—can take his place.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Special Report: Judith Defeats the Assyrians
- Of Gods and God
- Prayer and Hard Times

Scripture Passages Related to Judith

- Judith, chapters 4–6 (Holofernes and Israel plan for battle)
- Judith 8:1–8 (Description of Judith, the widow)
- Judith 8:9–36 (Judith proposes her plan to defeat the Assyrians)*
- Judith, chapter 9 (Judith prays to God for assistance)*
- Judith 10:6–11:4 (Judith goes to the Assyrians and meets Holofernes)*
- Judith 11:5–23 (Judith tells Holofernes her plan to destroy the Israelites)*
- Judith 12:1–13:11 (Judith puts her plan into action)*

- Judith 14:1—15:7 (The Israelites defeat the Assyrians)*
- Judith 15:8–13 (The Israelites praise Judith)*
- Judith 16:1–17 (Judith praises and thanks God)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Judith

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Judith
- Introduction to the Book of Judith
- Peace, Not Violence (Judith 13:1–10)

Judith

Judith and Young Adolescents Today

- Holofernes and the Assyrians trust the strength and numbers of their army. Judith and her people trust in God. Young adolescents need to trust in themselves and their relationships with God and others rather than in physical power and possessions.
- Judith takes a stand against the ancient “bully” Nebuchadnezzar. Young people encounter bullies at school and in their neighborhoods regularly.
- Holofernes and the Assyrians believe that Nebuchadnezzar is their god and will lead them to victory. Young people are faced with many different gods in their world, especially consumerism and sports.
- Judith bravely stands up for her people. Young adolescents are called on to stand up for their friends and family members.
- Judith does not believe in testing or putting conditions on God’s friendship. Young people face similar circumstances among their groups of friends.
- Judith is loyal to God, following his laws even when she is away from her own people. Young people feel a strong sense of loyalty to their friends both when they are near and when they are apart.
- Judith prays to God for help before she faces the enemy. Young people often call on God’s assistance to aid them through tough times.
- The Assyrians judge Judith based on her beauty and overlook her intelligence. Young adolescents may feel that they are judged by others based on what they look like or can do rather than on who they are inside.
- Rather than creating a lie, Judith uses the truth to defeat the Assyrians. Young people need to avoid the temptation to lie in order to get what they want and instead trust in the truth.

- Judith defeats the Assyrians through smart thinking rather than violence. Young people can be encouraged to resolve conflict by thinking and talking through their problems rather than by fighting.

Highlighting God’s Presence

“If you follow my advice, God will do something great with you, and my Lord will not fail in his plan.” (Judith 11:6; Judith to Holofernes)

Everyone in the city was utterly amazed. They bowed down and worshiped God, praying together, “Our God, you are worthy of great praise. Today you have triumphed over the enemies of your people.” (Judith 13:17)

Judith

Activities

Special Report: Judith Defeats the Assyrians

Preparation

- Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
1. Divide the large group into ten pairs or groups of three. Ensure that each small group has Bibles, paper, and pens. Assign each group one of the readings under “Scripture Passages Related to Judith.” (If the class is very small, combine consecutive readings and group the students accordingly.)
 2. Inform the students that they are going to be creating a radio or TV news program. The program will follow the breaking news about Judith and the defeat of the Assyrians. Designate an adult leader or peer minister as the emcee for the show.
 3. Tell the students to read Scripture aloud in their small group, compose a headline for their story, and write the key elements of their story. Instruct each group to designate a reporter to represent it. Give the emcee all the headlines and the names of the reporters so that he or she can be prepared to introduce each story. Encourage the students to practice their presentations before the radio or TV show begins.
 4. Gather the students into the large group. Provide the emcee with a chair or stool at the front of the group. Begin the radio or TV show by introducing the emcee. The emcee will give a short introduction to the main story of the day and announce the first headline and the reporters. The reporters can stand at their place and give their report. Continue until all the reports are completed.

5. Conclude by asking the group to identify the key actions in Judith's story. Highlight the fact that she prayed before, during, and after she killed Holofernes. Ask the group to name five things they learned from the story of Judith.

Of Gods and God

Preparation

- ❑ Provide the following items:
 - construction paper, multiple sheets of various colors
 - scissors, one for every four or five students
 - clear tape
 - glue sticks
 - markers, various colors
 - a large (12-by-12-inch maximum) box, wrapped in gold paper
 - a small table (round preferred), set at the front of the room—it may be covered with a formal tablecloth
 - ❑ Using construction paper, make a “sculpture” of each of the following. Put these sculptures out of sight.
 - a popular piece of electronics used for games or music.
 - money
 - a mother and father
 - God (Use images that would be relevant for your students.)
1. Ask the students to think of something in their lives that is very, very important, for example, a particular friend, a sport, or a favorite game. This something should be more important to them than just about anything else.
 2. With that “something” in mind, have them create a “sculpture” of that thing using construction paper and the other items you have provided. Require that the sculpture be at least one foot high or wide (This is necessary so that in later steps, everyone in the group will be able to see what it is.)
 3. Asking for volunteers to go first, invite each person to come forward and put their sculpture on the table and to explain why and how it represents something so important to them. Affirm each student. At the conclusion of each presentation, tell the group that each sculpture is important. We want to find out which “somethings” are the most

important to the entire group. Ask the rest of the group to rate each sculpture from 1 to 10, with 1 being not important to them and 10 being very important to them. Have the students raise their hands for each sculpture for a range of numbers. Keep a record of the responses. To the side, line up the sculptures in order of importance based on their vote total.

4. After the last student sculpture is reviewed, put out the first of the four that were set aside and follow the same process as in step 3. Keep mother and father and God to present last.
5. Review the order of the sculptures based on importance. If the young people put God first, ask them why they have done so. If they do not put God first, request an explanation. Review the first several bullet points in “Judith and Young Adolescents Today” about Nebuchadnezzar being a god, and Judith and her relationship with God. Note that we sometimes place other things above God, like our desires for great toys or cool friends. Ask these questions:
 - ▶ What can happen to a person’s spiritual life if they put God at the end of their priority list?
 - ▶ Some Christians believe that they are putting God first but then do not act that way. Have you ever caught yourself doing the same thing?
 - ▶ Why is it hard to keep God as the most important thing in your life?
 - ▶ What are some ways that we can remind ourselves about God’s place in our lives?

Judith

Prayer and Hard Times

Preparation

- Each student needs paper and a pen.
 - Bring newsprint and markers.
1. Read Judith, chapter 9, her prayer to God for assistance before she goes out to meet the Assyrians. Highlight that the Israelites are having hard times and that the Assyrians are preparing to fight and slaughter them.
 2. Brainstorm examples with the students of tough times that a young adolescent might face. List them on the newsprint. Have them close their eyes, and as you name each one of the tough times, ask them to raise their hand if they have prayed to God when they were

experiencing that tough time. Using a different color, highlight all of the examples where they prayed. Hopefully most, if not all, of them will be highlighted. Note that like Judith, they also pray to God during tough times.

3. Distribute the paper and pens. Invite the students to choose one of the tough times that they have experienced and write a prayer to God about it, putting themselves back into the situation for the sake of the prayer.
4. Without asking the students to read their prayers, ask them to share what they asked God for. They may ask for patience, kindness, or protection. Ask, "Why is it that we sometimes ask God to just be there with us?" Note that like Judith, we do not try to tell God what to do, but let God work as he chooses and as we need in our life, especially during tough times.

Judith

Esther

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The Book of Esther has two parts. The first, the Hebrew version of Esther found in chapters one through ten, does not contain direct references to God. The expanded Greek version, found in chapters A through F, has a strong focus on God and prayer. The book explains the origins of the Jewish festival of Purim and explores the nature of God's presence in the world. The story of Esther teaches us that God is always present and is ultimately in control. The overarching hero of the Book of Esther is the God of Israel.

Esther and her cousin, Mordecai, can mentor us in learning to pray with confidence and trust. When these two people encounter a challenge, they pray and then act. This is a good lesson for young people, who like many adults, can simply react rather than reflect, pray, and act.

Esther is also a book about virtue and vice. Modern-day Jewish festivities for Purim honor the courageous deeds of Esther and Mordecai, and rebuke the treacherous acts of Haman. Young people can appreciate Esther's bravery in confronting her husband. Life choices cultivate heroism; chance circumstances create a hero. Esther and Mordecai are heroes both by choice and chance.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Divine Hide and Seek
- Alone, But Not Lonely
- Purim People: Heroes by Choice and Chance

Scripture Passages Related to Esther

- Esther, chapters A and 1 (Mordecai's rise; Queen Vashti's departure)
- Esther 2:1–18 (Esther becomes queen)
- Esther 2:19–23, chapters B and 3 (Haman and the king plot to kill the Jews)

- Esther, chapters 4 and C (Esther’s prayerful plea)
- Esther, chapters 5 through 7 and D (Esther’s banquet)
- Esther, chapters 8, E, and 9 (Esther and Mordecai save the Jews)
- Esther 9:20–32 (Commemorating the events)



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Esther

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Esther
- R-e-s-p-e-c-t! (Esther 1:10–22)
- Supporting Immigrants (Esther 2:10–11)
- The Final Solution (Esther, chapter 3)
- Let Nothing Disturb You (Esther C:23–25)
- The Courage of a Queen (Esther 4:9–17, D:1–16)
- Forgiving Our Enemies (Esther 5:9–14)
- Esther and Joseph (Esther 6:1–10)
- Saving the Jews (Esther 8:1–12)
- The Festival of Purim (Esther 9:20–31)

Esther

Esther and Young Adolescents Today



- Esther responds courageously to the needs of her people. Esther can inspire young people to step forward to help someone, despite the risks. See “The Courage of a Queen” (Esther 4:9–17; D:1–16) in *Breakthrough!*
- Hatred against Jewish people affects Esther’s life. Young people witness and experience various expressions of hatred in the world today.



- Difficult circumstances ultimately enable Esther to affect significant social change. Young people who are experiencing difficulties in their lives might ask themselves if God could be calling them to work toward changing things for the better. See “Esther and Joseph” (Esther 6:1–10) in *Breakthrough!*
- Esther prays diligently when she is faced with challenges. Young adolescents can take heart and know that God will also listen to them when they are in trouble, helping them know what to do.

Highlighting God’s Presence

Mordecai prayed to the Lord . . . : “O Lord, you are the Lord and King of all creation, and everything obeys your commands. If you wish to save Israel, no one can stop you.” (Esther C:1–4)

She [Queen Esther] prayed to the Lord God of Israel, “My Lord and King, only you are God. I am all alone, and I have no one to turn to but you. Help me!” (Esther C:14)

But God changed the king’s anger into tender concern. (Esther D:8)

God, who governs all things, has turned that day of destruction into a day of celebration for his chosen people. (Esther E:21)

Esther

Activities

Divine Hide and Seek

In this activity, the students focus on the Hebrew part of the Book of Esther and search for God’s presence in places where God’s name is not explicitly mentioned.

Preparation

- ❑ Familiarize yourself with the Hebrew and Greek versions of the Book of Esther as explained in “Overview.”
- ❑ Purim is celebrated today by wearing costumes, often to depict the players in this biblical drama. If you have a Sherlock Holmes hat, a magnifying glass, or some other detective costume, it might be fun to use such props for this activity of seeking out the hidden face of God in the Hebrew version of Esther.

1. Share the following background information with the students:
 - ▶ More than two authors wrote the Book of Esther: one in the Hebrew language and one in Greek. For this exercise, you will be reading the Hebrew version. In the Jewish canon, the Book of Esther is the only book that does not mention the name of God directly.
 - ▶ The name *Esther* comes from the Hebrew root *hester*, which means “hidden.” The Jewish Bible explores the hidden face of God, *hester panim*, through the coincidences, twists of fate, and reversal of fortunes that are in Esther’s story.

2. Give the students the following instructions:
 - ▶ Read the Hebrew version of Esther as detectives in search of God’s presence in the story. You can think of this search as a game of Hide and Seek, in which God wants you to find him but you need to search for him within the Book of Esther.
 - ▶ There is an expression, “A coincidence is a small miracle in which God chooses to remain anonymous.” (Remind the students of miracles from Old Testament stories, such as the parting of the Red Sea.) Look in the story of Esther for small miracles—coincidences that reveal God’s anonymous, hidden presence.
3. After the students have looked through Esther, ask them to pair off and talk about coincidences they find in their own lives. Ask them to discuss the question, “Could these coincidences have a connection to God?” Close by asking the students to think about the coincidences in their own lives, and invite them to act as detectives who try to discover God in these moments. Refer to Jesus’ exhortation, “Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you” (Luke 11:9).

Alone, But Not Lonely

In this activity, the students look at the Greek portion of the Book of Esther and consider the meaning of this truth: With God near us, we are never really alone.

Preparation

- ❑ Familiarize yourself with the Greek portions of the Book of Esther: chapters A–F.
1. If you have not already done so, share the information about the Greek and Hebrew text that can be found in step 1 of the previous activity. Emphasize that the expanded Greek text uses God’s name frequently, especially in prayer. The Greek part clearly identifies God in the orchestration of events in Esther’s story. God’s presence is just a prayer away!
 2. Read Mordecai and Esther’s prayer in chapter C aloud to the class. Ask: “What does it mean to trust God? How does praying make that trust stronger?” Refer to other prayers in the Bible in which people have trustingly affirmed God’s presence in their lives. (Note the prayer attributed to King David in Psalm 34:1–9.)

3. Ask, “What is the difference between simply being alone and being lonely?” Discuss that there will be times in our lives in which we will be alone, but that God’s ongoing presence can help us to not feel lonely, even in tough times. (If the students are familiar with the Andrew Lloyd Webber production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, they may also know a song from that production, “Close Every Door.” In the song, Joseph lyrically expresses from his prison cell that we will never be lonely when we have a relationship with God. See appendix 1 for information about this production.)



4. Ask the students to reflect on an experience in which they were alone but did not feel lonely, and to write a prayer that captures those feelings. Close the exercise with the words of Saint Teresa of Ávila from the article “Let Nothing Disturb You” (Esther C:23–25) in *Breakthrough!*

Esther

Purim People: Heroes by Choice and Chance

In this activity, the students use Esther and Mordecai as role models to assess the virtues of heroes.

Preparation

- ❑ Make copies of the handout “Purim People: Heroes by Choice and Chance” (Document #: TX002895), one for each student.



1. Distribute the handout “Purim People: Heroes by Choice and Chance” (Document #: TX002895). Review the handout and explain that Purim commemorates a time of grief turned into joy because of the heroism of Esther and Mordecai. Ask the students to name heroic people and actions today, and write their responses on the board.
2. As a large group, ask the students to suggest virtues that heroes have, and have them write these on their handouts. The letters of the word *Purim* are prompts to tie this activity to the biblical story. Start each line with a virtue that begins with that particular letter, but then fill the remaining space with many heroic virtues.
3. Conclude by discussing that our daily choices contribute to our character. Challenge the students with this question: “In an unpredicted or chance circumstance, can you be a hero?”

Purim People: Heroes by Choice and Chance

Purim is a yearly Jewish celebration that marks the day in which Esther and Mordecai heroically saved their people from death. The name of the celebration, *Purim*, means “lots.” Haman, the enemy of the Jews, drew “lots” (much like a game of chance using dice or a spinner) to decide the day of the death edict. Although Esther and Mordecai were somewhat surprised by their chance to be hero and heroine, they were good people who made that choice.

Today, we use the word *lot* in a similar way: “Each group leader was chosen by *lot*,” that is, at random, perhaps by drawing from a hat or picking a number. This word can also mean “fate,” as in, “It was my *lot* to be the oldest child.” We also use the word *lots* to say that there are many of one thing or another, such as: “There are lots of pages in a Bible!” “There are lots of virtues that make people heroes.” Facing unexpected difficulties with virtue creates heroes. Though the situation that creates a hero may be by *chance*, the characteristics that empower a hero are by *choice*.

What are the character traits that we find in heroes today? Think of all the qualities of a hero and begin your list by using the letters from the word *Purim*. Do not be limited to just those letters though. You should be able to list LOTS of virtuous qualities! Is there a hero in you?

P _____

U _____

R _____

I _____

M _____



The Maccabees

Preparing to Teach

Overview

Though these two biblical books are named after the Maccabees and do tell their story, they also describe a larger struggle between the Greeks who want to impose Hellenism on the Jews and the Jews who want to remain faithful to their God and practices.

The books are named for Judas Maccabeus, who, along with his brothers, leads a successful revolt against the Greek overlords. The brothers then become successive leaders of Israel. Because God is with them, they are often able to win battles against armies much larger and better prepared than they are. Judas and his brothers are even able to reclaim the Temple and rededicate it after the Greeks have horribly defiled it.

In the books, we also find additional stories of the bravery shown by the Jews during this period in their history. Many Jews choose horrible deaths rather than show disrespect for their faith or God.

For young adolescents in the United States, the thought of someone imposing religious beliefs on them is unthinkable, but this is not so throughout the world. It is easy for American Catholics to take religious freedom for granted and to see their faith tradition and Church as “extra” rather than “central” to their lives. The stories in First and Second Maccabees are an opportunity for young people to imagine what they would do if they were in an oppressive situation.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Flags and Banners for the Maccabees Era
- Resistance or Compromise in the Maccabees’ World

Scripture Passages Related to the Maccabees

- 1 Maccabees 1:1–9 (Background: History of Greek Dominance)
- 1 Maccabees 1:20–53 (Antiochus persecutes the Jews)*
- 1 Maccabees 2:15–25 (Mattathias refuses to submit to Greeks)*

- 1 Maccabees 3:1–9 (2 Maccabees 8:1–7) (Judas leads victories against enemies)*
- 1 Maccabees 4:36–59 (2 Maccabees 10:1–8) (Purification and rededication of the Temple)*
- 1 Maccabees 9:1–31 (Judas dies; his brother Jonathan takes over)
- 2 Maccabees 2:19–24 (An introduction to 2 Maccabees)
- 2 Maccabees 3:1–40 (God thwarts the raiding of the Temple treasury and converts a perpetrator)
- 2 Maccabees 4:1–31 (Eleazar remains faithful unto death)
- 2 Maccabees 7:1–42 (Mother and sons tortured and die for their faith)*
- 2 Maccabees 10:1–8 (Judas and followers rededicate the Temple)*
- 2 Maccabees 12:38–45 (Judas encourages soldiers to pray for their deceased comrades)*

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.

The Maccabees



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to the Maccabees

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with the Maccabees
- Introduction to the First Book of Maccabees
- Where are the Maccabees? (Beginning of 1 Maccabees)
- Introduction to the Second Book of Maccabees
- Please and Thanks, God! (2 Maccabees 1:24–29)
- Hanukkah (2 Maccabees 2:16–18)
- Praying for Enemies (2 Maccabees 3:29–40)
- Integrity (2 Maccabees 6:18–31)
- Eternal Life (2 Maccabees, chapter 7)
- God’s Mercy Returns (2 Maccabees 8:1–7)
- Prayer for Protection (2 Maccabees 10:25–26)
- Praying for the Dead (2 Maccabees 12:39–45)

The Maccabees and Young Adolescents Today

- The Maccabees are five brothers who, under their father’s leadership, take on the foreign occupants of Judea. This success story of the “underdog” is the stuff of movies, and young people can admire the brothers’ courage and heroism. A key difference is that the Maccabees succeed because they rely on God.

- The Maccabees and other faithful families grow closer together and stronger in faith for struggling together through terrible times. Young adolescents often draw closer to their families in times of crisis.
- The Jewish faith in this era shows evidence that there is belief in the resurrection of the dead and appreciation of the value of praying for the dead. Young adolescents face death directly and indirectly. An important way of dealing with death is through the hope of eternal life for ourselves and those we love.
- Under Greek domination, the Jews must either renounce their cultural and religious practices or accept the consequences, which may involve suffering. Young adolescents often feel alone in their struggle to resist peer pressure. The Jewish families who resist Greek domination are models of integrity for young adolescents.

Highlighting God's Presence

The Maccabees

When Judas' men saw the army coming against them, they asked, "How can our little group of men fight an army as big as that? Besides, we have not eaten all day, and we are tired!"

"It is not difficult," Judas answered, "for a small group to over-power a large one. It makes no difference to the Lord whether we are rescued by many people or by just a few. Victory in battle does not depend on who has the largest army; it is the Lord's power that determines the outcome. . . . When we attack, the Lord will crush our enemies, so don't be afraid of them." (1 Maccabees 3:17–19,22)

[The mother said to her son] "So I urge you, my child, to look at the sky and the earth. Consider everything you see there, and realize that God made it all from nothing, just as he made the human race. Don't be afraid of this butcher. Give up your life willingly and prove yourself worthy of your brothers, so that by God's mercy I may receive you back with them at the resurrection." (2 Maccabees 7:28–29)

If [Judas] had not believed that the dead would be raised, it would have been foolish and useless to pray for them. In his firm and devout conviction that all of God's faithful people would receive a wonderful reward, Judas made provision for a sin offering to set free from their sin those who had died. (2 Maccabees 12:44–45)

Activities

Flags and Banners for the Maccabees Era

In this activity, the students create twelve flags or banners that represent twelve readings from First and Second Maccabees.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, blank paper, markers, scissors, and a straightedge.
 - ❑ Provide the list of readings from “Scripture Passages Related to the Maccabees” in a visible place.
1. Introduce the activity by saying that the military themes of these books call to mind flags and banners used as ways to memorialize key moments in the life of a nation.
 2. Divide the class in half. The first half should read the first six selections from First Maccabees while the second half should read the second six from Second Maccabees. Give the students some quiet time to read through the chapters.
 3. Distribute the blank paper, markers, scissors, and straightedges.
 4. Give the following instructions to the groups:
 - ▶ The First Maccabees group is to make a rectangle flag for each of their readings. (It would be easiest to subdivide the group and assign each of the six readings.) They can ask themselves, “What images and what patterns would convey the events that are in this particular reading?” On the back of the paper the student should summarize the reading and cite the Scripture passage being described.
 - ▶ The Second Maccabees group is to make triangle flags for each of their readings with images that summarize what happens. (Subdivide the group into six smaller groups, one for each reading.)
 5. Ask representatives to explain the twelve groups’ flags and summarize the readings. Use these discussion questions:
 - ▶ What impresses you about these stories?
 - ▶ What disturbs you? Why?

Resistance or Compromise in the Maccabees' World

In this activity, the students debate and discuss the ways that people can respond to an oppressive situation. It would be good to know if any of your young people have, or have had, family members or friends in a combat zone. You may want to be careful in the debate and discussion not to create painful tension among your students about a topic that is very real for some of them.

Preparation

❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.

1. Introduce the activity, using these or similar words:
 - ▶ The story of the Maccabees raises a difficult issue for Christians. If people are in a situation where their religion is being suppressed, they have several choices:
 - Fight for one's faith against overwhelming odds
 - Quietly appear to go along with the oppressor but secretly practice the faith
 - Quit practicing the religion
2. Distribute the Bibles, paper, and pens. Divide the class into two groups. Assign one group to defend the "fight for one's faith" point of view and the other to defend the "quietly appearing to go along" point of view. Using the following readings, have each group develop two arguments to support its point of view:
 - 1 Maccabees 2:15–25 (Mattathias refuses to submit to Greeks)
 - 1 Maccabees 3:1–9 (2 Maccabees 8:1–7) (Judas leads victories against enemies)
 - 1 Maccabees 4:36–59 (Purification and rededication of the Temple)
 - 2 Maccabees 6:1–31 (Eleazar remains faithful unto death)
 - 2 Maccabees 7:1–42 (Mother and sons tortured and die for faith)
3. After each group has presented its position, have the students individually write a brief reflection describing how they would act in response to the Maccabean uprising if they were a Jew at that time. The reflection should be a first-person account. Each student should either support the Maccabees or reject their plan to attack the overwhelmingly superior Greek forces.

4. Invite the students to share some of what they have written. Ask these questions to further the discussion with them:
 - ▶ What is the relationship between believing in God and fighting a war?
 - ▶ In First and Second Maccabees, we see heroic families who suffer for their beliefs. What do you think motivates them to do this?
 - ▶ Is there something or someone you would be willing to die or suffer greatly for? Who or what? Why? Why not? (This could be a private reflection.)
 - ▶ Is there someone who has suffered for you or for someone you know? What motivated them to do so? (This could be a private reflection.)
5. Conclude by prayerfully giving thanks for those courageous men and women in our communities who put their lives on the line for others.

The Maccabees

Variations

- Invite a military chaplain and a conscientious objector to the class to answer questions about the way that they live out their faith in relationship to the military.
- Put together a care package or a prayer package for military personnel abroad.

Job

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The Book of Job is a classic tale addressing the universal question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” As young adolescents are reaching the developmental stage in which they acknowledge and struggle with injustices, they sooner or later tackle Job’s question in one form or another.

The story offers excellent opportunities to explore how one’s faith can be tested in troubling times. Though we are unsure when or by whom the Book of Job was written, many scholars suggest that much of it was recorded after the Israelites’ captivity in Babylon. This timing could explain why this story of unjust punishment of the innocent would have so much meaning to the Israelites.

Young people may have a difficult time understanding why the story depicts God making a bet with Satan that includes the destruction of an innocent man’s family and worldly goods. It is important to highlight the genre of this story, a folk tale. Also note that, though the story may have some distant roots in a historical event, the Israelites used it as a means to address the question of divine retribution, the idea that God punishes those who sin during their earthly lives, not as a historical record of actual events. You may want to point out that the first line in the Book of Job has a similar tone not unlike the fairy tale beginning, “Once upon a time . . .”

The Israelites understood God as one who carried out justice in this world. Good was rewarded and evil was punished. They also believed that God sometimes punishes a person for the sins of that person’s ancestors. Young adolescents are coming from a developmental stage that is not unlike this notion. They often perceive that those who follow the rules are rewarded and those who break the rules get punished. Though this may be true to some extent in grammar school, they’re slowly learning that not all things in life follow this principle.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- A Modern-Day Job
- Finding Ourselves in Job’s Shoes
- The Pillars of Our Lives

Scripture Passages Related to Job

- Job 1:1–5 (The goodness of Job)*
- Job 1:6–12 (God accepts Satan’s bet)*
- Job 1:13–22 (Job loses everything)*
- Job 2:1–10 (Satan gives Job sores but Job remains faithful)*
- Job, chapters 3–28 (Job’s friends debate the reasons for Job’s suffering)
- Job, chapters 29–31 (Job pleads his cause and maintains his innocence)*
- Job, chapters 32–37 (Elihu’s speech)
- Job, chapters 38–41 (The Lord answers Job)*
- Job, chapter 42 (Job answers the Lord and has his life restored)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Job

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Job
- Introduction to the Book of Job
- The Fall from a Good Life (Job, chapter 1)
- Being There Is Enough (Job 2:11–13)
- Let Me Feel Peace (Job, chapter 3)
- The (Really, Really) Long Debate (Job, chapter 4)
- Honestly, God! (Job 7:7–21)
- Reward and Punishment (Job, chapter 21)
- Integrity (Job 27:1–6)
- Keepin’ an Eye Out (Job 29:2–5)
- God’s Wisdom (Job 40:1–5)
- God’s Blessing for Job (Job, chapter 42)

Job and Young Adolescents Today

- Like Job, most young adolescents have experienced some kind of injustice, such as being accused of something that they did not do.
- As Job suffers the loss of his family and all his worldly goods, he has three friends who come and sit with him silently. Young people value the special friends who are there for them in times of great need.

- Like Job, some young adolescents may have already experienced a tragic event (such as the premature death of a family member) that has made them question God’s reasoning and justice.
- Unfortunately, in difficult times young adolescents may feel that God holds a grudge against them and that they are not loved by God. They may question what they have done to deserve God’s wrath.
- As many of your students become more aware of life’s tragedies, they may question why God would allow these things to occur. Awareness of events such as the Holocaust or even the nightly news stories may bring this question to light.

Highlighting God’s Presence

“Did you notice my servant, Job?” the Lord asked. “There is no one on earth as faithful and good as he is. He worships me and is careful not to do anything evil.” (Job 1:8; God to Satan)

“Who are you to question my wisdom
with your ignorant, empty words?
Now stand up straight
and answer the questions I ask you.
Were you there when I made the world?
If you know so much, tell me about it.
Who decided how large it would be?
Who stretched the measuring line over it?
Do you know all the answers?”
(Job 38:2–5; God to Job)

Activities

A Modern-Day Job

In this activity, the students prepare a skit to retell the story of Job in modern-day terms.

Preparation

- Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
 - Provide newspaper, markers, or other materials that could be used for props.
1. Have the students read the following abridged version of the Book of Job. If time is available, this highly emotional tale works well when read aloud. (Parts of it, especially those where Job laments his

predicament, could benefit from a somewhat melodramatic reading. Although it's important to maintain respect for subject matter, the use of comical melodrama can make it entertaining and engaging, while still respectful.)

Read the Book of Job aloud, using the following outline, while the students follow along in their Bibles:

- Job 1:1—3:10 (Job loses all)
 - Job 4:1–11, 8:1–10, 11:1–9 (Job's friends debate the reasons for Job's misfortune)
 - Job 13:1–4, 27:1–5 (Job replies to their arguments and maintains his innocence)
 - Job 38:1–11, 39:1–4 (The Lord responds and puts Job in his place)
 - Job 40:3–5, 42:1–6 (Job replies)
 - Job 42:7–17 (Job is restored)
2. Divide the class into groups of five or six, and assign each group a passage from Job. Distribute the Bibles, paper, pens, and materials for props. Direct the groups to create short skits that depict the story of a modern-day, junior high Job. Allow the students to ad lib a little with the story line, noting that this story addresses questions for people in a particular place and time, and that the students may have similar, but still different questions. Here is a list of possible passages and titles:
- ▶ Job 1:1–5 (The Junior High Job Who Has It All)
 - ▶ Job 1:6–22 (God and Satan Make a Bet and Job Loses Everything—Even the Xbox!)
 - ▶ Job 2:11–13 (Job's Friends Come by His House to Comfort Him)
 - ▶ Job, chapters 4, 8, and 11 (Job's Friends Argue about Why This Happened)
 - ▶ Job, chapters 29 and 38 (Job Replies and God Puts Him in His Place)
3. After the skits have been performed, allow the students to discuss the notion that God rewards the good and punishes the evil in this world. At some point, explain why this idea seems absurd to us now. Use the following questions as discussion starters:
- ▶ Are there events in life that can make you think that God blesses some but not others? Why or Why not?
 - ▶ Does God punish people for the bad things that their great-grandparents did? Will God punish your grandchildren for the things that you do?
 - ▶ If a baby is born with a disability or a serious illness, is God punishing that child? Explain your answer.

- ▶ Everybody has free will, the ability to freely choose to do right or wrong. How does this play a part in the suffering of other people?
- ▶ In 2011, a devastating tsunami hit Japan, killing nearly sixteen thousand people, destroying homes, and mandating evacuation due not only to destroyed homes but to meltdowns in three nuclear reactors. What role, if any, do you think God plays in events like this?

Finding Ourselves in Job’s Shoes

In this activity, the students reflect on the similarities between Job’s suffering and their own.

Preparation

- Make a copy of the handout “The Suffering of Job” (Document #: TX002896), one for each student.
- Each student needs a pen.

Job

1. Read Job 7:1–7 aloud with the students. Emphasize the final line.
2. Comment that when people suffer they often feel that they will never be happy again, and yet this is almost never the case. You might offer an example from your own life, if appropriate.
-  3. Distribute the handout “The Suffering of Job” (Document #: TX002896) and the pens. Read aloud the questions on the handout, and ask the students to reflect on their past experiences of suffering by answering the questions quietly in writing.
4. After the students have completed the handout questions, ask for volunteers to share their answers, as they are comfortable. Emphasize and praise their abilities to overcome adversity with perseverance and faith.

The Pillars of Our Lives

In this activity, the students reflect on the people to whom they turn in times of need.

Preparation

- Make copies of the handout “Shapes of Support” (Document #: TX002897), one for each student.



1. Read Job 2:11–13 aloud with the students. Also read the article “Being There Is Enough” (Job 2:11–13) from *Breakthrough!* Discuss the importance of friends and family members who help one another in times of pain and sadness.
2. Offer your own personal story of a time when you needed someone to support you or when you supported someone else in a time of trouble.



3. Distribute the handout “Shapes of Support” (Document #: TX002897) for the students to complete *in private* and preferably at home. (Though this process can be an extremely valuable experience for young adolescents, it can also be divisive and painful if their responses are expressed in public. By not appearing on a friend’s list, some students could be very hurt. It would also be wise to explain to the students why this activity should be done privately. They will understand what you are talking about!)

The Suffering of Job

Answer the following questions. Continue writing on the back if you need more room.

1. When the Book of Job was written, the Israelites believed that God rewarded the good and punished the evil in this world. But sometimes this did not make sense to them because they found that bad things sometimes happened to good people (like Job). Jesus is another example of an innocent person who suffered. Describe a time in your life when you thought that God was punishing you. Looking back, what do you think about that time now?
2. Some of Job's friends thought that he probably did something wrong but just was not admitting it. Describe a time when you were accused of something you did not do. How did you feel at the time? How did you react?
3. At one point Job complains to God, "I call to you, O God, but you never answer" (Job 30:20). Many people have expressed this frustration at some point in their lives, yet it isn't necessarily a sign of someone who is losing their faith. The following passage was found etched into the wall of a Nazi concentration camp:

I believe in the sun,
even when it is not shining.

I believe in love,
even when I cannot feel it.

I believe in God,
even when he is silent.

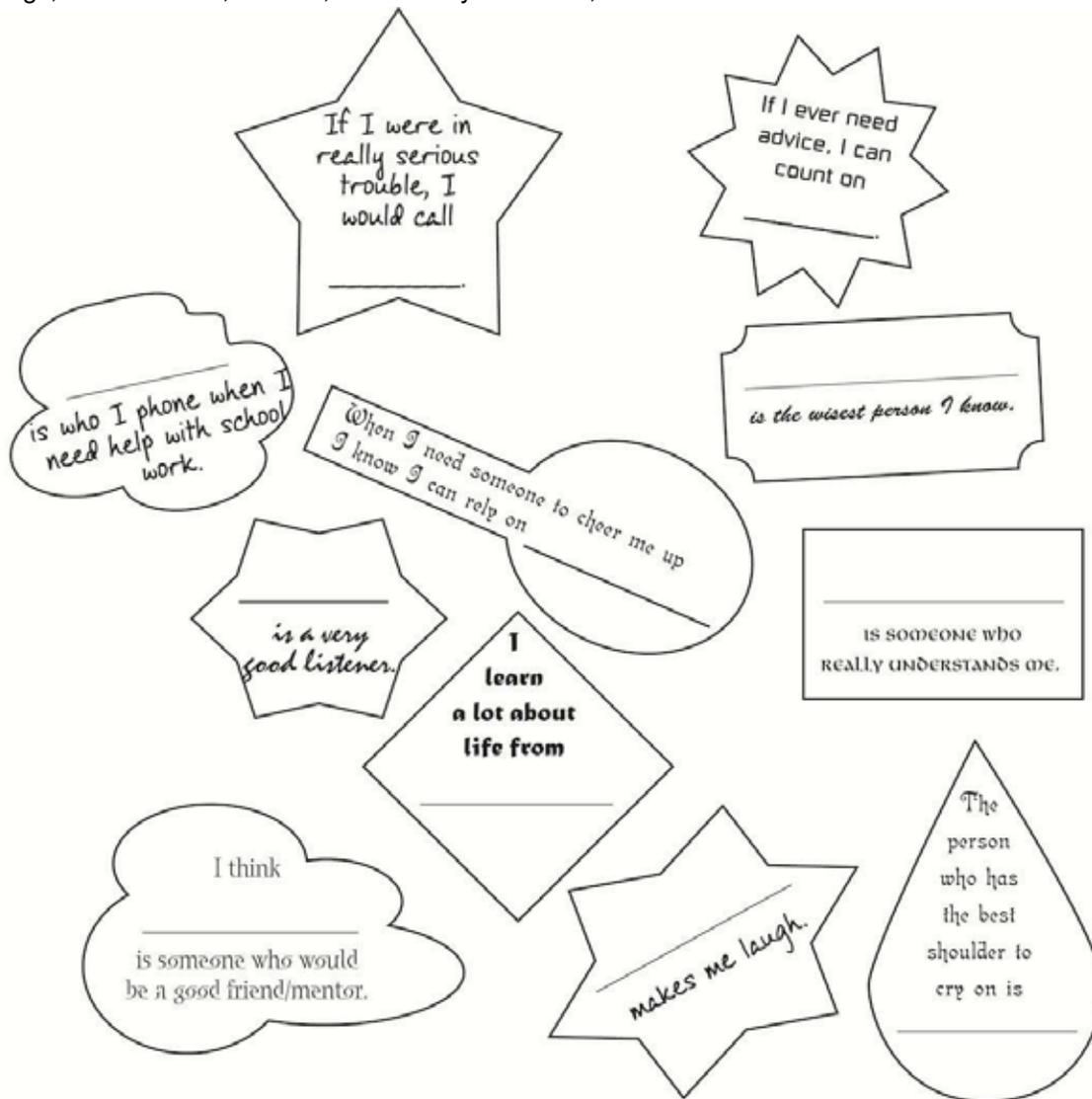
In your life, when has God been the most silent?

4. It is interesting how much Job cries out to God and complains! God certainly puts Job in his place, yet he doesn't seem to be bothered by Job's anger. When and why have you been angry with God? Did you feel as comfortable as Job in expressing it? Why or why not?



Shapes of Support

Like Job we all need friends and family members to whom we can turn in our times of pain and sorrow. Fortunately our support comes in all shapes and sizes! Use these fill-in-the-blank statements to think about the people to whom you turn in times of need. If you can think of more than one person to put in the blank, write them both down! Remember all the people in your support system: parents, friends, teachers, siblings, trusted adults, doctors, other family members, and so on. Who else?



Lady Wisdom

Preparing to Teach

Overview

The Wisdom books address everyday practical problems, virtuous living, and the deeper questions of life. These books include Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Sirach (Ben Sira), Song of Songs, and Wisdom of Solomon. Though Lady Wisdom is not an actual person, the biblical writers sometimes use this personification to characterize God's wisdom.

Lady Wisdom is an image the Old Testament writers sometimes use to portray the Spirit of God. Rather than presenting wisdom in the abstract, these sages occasionally depict Wisdom as a woman, maybe because they associate the creative nature of God's Spirit with a woman's role in birthing new life.

Though they might not be quick to admit it, young people are hungry for true wisdom. With the arrival of the Internet into our homes, young people of the early twenty-first century have access to more information than ever before in history. Unfortunately they probably also have less exposure to true wisdom than ever before. T. S. Eliot once posed the question, "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?" In our present age of information, access to wisdom is vital.

This Chapter at a Glance

Activities

- Proverbial Billboards
- Wisdom Wordplay
- The Masks of Lady Wisdom

Scripture Passages Related to Lady Wisdom

- Proverbs 1:20–33 (Wisdom reprimands those who ignore her)*
- Proverbs, chapter 8 (Wisdom calls people to herself)*
- Wisdom 6:12–21 (Wisdom is valuable)*
- Wisdom 8:2–20 (Solomon declares his love for Wisdom)
- Sirach 24:23–31 (Wisdom recounts her relationship to Israel)

Asterisk (*) signifies key passages to cover.



Articles from *Breakthrough!* Related to Lady Wisdom

- *Breakthrough!* Interview with Lady Wisdom
- God’s Wisdom (Job 40:1–5)
- Parental Wisdom (Proverbs 1:8–9)
- Two Ways (Proverbs 4:24–27)
- Wisdom in the World (Proverbs 8:15–16)
- Prudence (Proverbs 14:15–17)
- A Great Gift! (Song of Songs 6:1–9)
- The Gift of Wisdom (Wisdom 7:22—8:1)
- Don’t Judge a Book . . . (Sirach 11:2–6)

Lady Wisdom and Young Adolescents Today

- The Wisdom literature of the Old Testament is one way that a civilization passed on their wisdom to the young people of their culture. Many have suggested that in modern western civilization, we seem to have more or less abandoned rituals and methods of imparting wisdom and replaced them with furthering our understanding of science.
- The Wisdom literature defines and imparts wisdom. Young people might sometimes mistake the difference between wisdom and intelligence.
- Wisdom literature attempts to define the life of the wise person as opposed to the life of the foolish person. In an overwhelmingly consumer culture such as ours, true wisdom might often appear foolish to young people. Young people look not only to Scripture but also to adults to share wisdom with them and guide them.

Lady Wisdom

Highlighting God’s Presence

Then out of the storm the LORD spoke to Job.

“Who are you to question my wisdom
with your ignorant empty words?”

(Job 38:1)

It is the LORD who gives wisdom; from him come knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6)

All of us should eat and drink and enjoy what we have worked for. It is God's gift. (Ecclesiastes 3:13)

Wisdom once rescued an innocent and holy people from a nation of oppressors. (Wisdom 10:15)

The Lord himself created Wisdom;
he saw her and recognized her value,
and so he filled everything he made with Wisdom.
He gave some measure of Wisdom to everyone,
but poured her out on those who love him.
(Sirach 1:9–10)

Activities

Proverbial Billboards

In this activity, the students choose a proverb and then make a billboard to communicate it.

Preparation

- ❑ Each small group needs a Bible, a sheet of newsprint, pencils, and markers.
- 1. Define the word *wisdom*. A wise person (a person with the quality of wisdom) understands the right way to live a good life. Explain that the Bible has numerous parts specifically devoted to encouraging us to live a life pleasing to God. Explain that it is no coincidence that living a life pleasing to God would also make the world a peaceful and happy place to live.
- 2. Define the word *proverb*. A proverb is a short saying that expresses a type of truth or a grain of wisdom. Explain that proverbs are not confined to the Bible, but can be found in almost every religion and culture. You might want to remind the students about the proverbs found in fortune cookies, often attributed to Confucius; the wisdom found in the *Old Farmer's Almanac*; or the sayings of Benjamin Franklin.
- 3. Divide the class into small groups of four or five, and give each group their supplies. Assign each group one of the chapters between Proverbs, chapters 10 and 22. Their task is to read it and decide on one short passage that could best be applied to people their age.

4. Direct the students to make a “billboard” with their chosen passage written on it and a picture that portrays a current scene in which this wisdom is being applied by people their age.
5. Have each group present its billboard to the class and explain why they chose that particular passage and what it has to say to their peers today.

Wisdom Wordplay

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a copy of the handout “Proverbs from A to Z” (Document #: TX002898) and a pen.
1. Read Proverbs 31:10–31 aloud with the students.
 2. Share the following information:
 - ▶ This is not only a beautiful passage about a woman who is a wonderful wife but also an interesting piece of writing. If one were to read this in its original Hebrew, she or he would realize that each verse begins with the succeeding twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This literary device is called acrostic text.
 3.  Distribute the handout “Proverbs from A to Z” (Document #: TX002898) and a pen to each student. Read through the directions with the students and give them some examples to help them begin creating their own proverbs. Give them some time to work on them.
 4. When the students have completed their work, have them share some of their thoughts with their peers. If students feel comfortable with it, post their handouts around the classroom.

Lady Wisdom

The Masks of Lady Wisdom

In this activity, the students make a collage of modern people who impart wisdom.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student should have access to a sheet of newsprint, glue, and magazines they can cut pictures from at home.
 - ❑ Prepare an example of the project beforehand (optional).
1. Read Proverbs 8:1–4 to the students.
 2. Say the following:

- ▶ The Bible seems to say that Lady Wisdom is calling us all the time. But what does she look like today? With whose voice does she speak? What mask does Lady Wisdom wear today?
3. Assign the students a project in which they have to find the “masks” that Lady Wisdom uses today. Have the students cut out and glue on newsprint a collage of pictures of contemporary people they think offer great wisdom. These people could be famous or not, dead or alive, but have been around in the past one hundred years at least. These people could include their family members, religious leaders, teachers, musicians, politicians, and so on. Along with their pictures, instruct the students to print a short quotation from each person.
 4. When the young people bring their posters to class, have them display their work on their chair or desk so that everyone can walk around and look at them. Ask the group if any famous people appear several times on the posters.

Lady Wisdom

Proverbs from A to Z

Write proverbs, enough to fill twenty-six lines. The proverbs should address the problems and questions of people like you. Craft your proverbs carefully so that each line begins with the appropriate letter. (A longer proverb might take up several letters because it will have several lines, such as in the Book of Proverbs.)

A _____

B _____

C _____

D _____

E _____

F _____

G _____

H _____

I _____

J _____

K _____

L _____

M _____

N _____

O _____

P _____

Q _____

R _____

S _____

T _____

U _____

V _____

W _____

X _____

Y _____

Z _____



Appendix 1

Additional Resources

This appendix is divided into several sections. The first section contains books that can provide you with more information about Scripture. The second section contains books related to Scripture that you can use directly with young adolescents. The third section lists books about the Bible that young adolescents can use on their own. The books are followed by sections that list music, films, and organizations.

Background Reading and References about Scripture for You

Achtemeier, Paul J., ed. *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.

Benedict XVI, Pope. *Verbum Domini (The Word of the Lord)*. Pauline Books and Media, 2010.

Bergant, Dianne, ed. *The Collegeville Bible Commentary Based on the New American Bible: Old Testament*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992.

Brown, Raymond E. *Responses to 101 Questions on the Bible*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990.

Brown, Raymond E., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, eds. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (paperback reprint). Third edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000.

Brown, Robert McAfee. *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Bible Makes Sense*. Rev. ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2003.

Buechner, Frederick. *The Son of Laughter*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

Carvalho, Corrine L. *Encountering Ancient Voices: A Guide to Reading the Old Testament (2nd edition)*. Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2010.

Charpentier, Etienne. *How to Read the Old Testament*. New York: Crossroad, 1982.

Curtis, Adrian. *Oxford Bible Atlas*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Hollyday, Joyce. *Clothed with the Sun: Biblical Women, Social Justice, and Us*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994.

Libreria Editrice Vaticana. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Trans. United States Catholic Conference (USCC). Washington, DC: USCC, 1997.

McKenzie, John L. *Dictionary of the Bible*. Reprint edition. New York: Touchstone Books, 1995.

Newland, Mary Reed. *A Popular Guide Through the Old Testament*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000.

———. *Written on Our Hearts: The Old Testament Story of God's Love*. 3rd ed. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2009.

Ralph, Margaret Nutting. *"And God Said What?" An Introduction to Biblical Literary Forms for Bible Lovers, revised*. New York: Paulist Press, 2003.

———. *Discovering Old Testament Origins: The Books of Genesis, Exodus, and Samuel*. New York: Paulist Press, 2002.

Rohr, Richard, and Joseph Martos. *The Great Themes of Scripture: Old Testament*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1987.

Senior, Donald, ed. *The Catholic Study Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)*. Council document, November 18, 1965.

Witherup, Ronald D. *The Bible Companion: A Handbook for Beginners*. New York: Crossroad, 2009.

Scripture Resources to Use with Young Adolescents

Calderone-Stewart, Lisa-Marie. *Faith Works for Junior High: Scripture- and Tradition-Based Sessions for Faith Formation*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000.

Claussen, Janet. *Biblical Women: Exploring Their Stories with Girls*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2003.

Haas, David. *Prayers Before an Awesome God: The Psalms for Teenagers*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000.

Hakowski, Maryann. *Sharing the Sunday Scriptures with Youth*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press. Published in three separate volumes with the subtitles *Cycle A* (1998), *Cycle B* (1996), and *Cycle C* (1997).

Koch, Carl, ed. *You Give Me the Sun: Biblical Prayers by Teens*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000.

Marmouget, C. Rosemary. *Scripture Alive: Role-Plays for Youth*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000.

O'Connell-Roussell, Sheila. *Saint Mary's Press® Essential Bible Dictionary*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2005.

The ScriptureWalk series contains two books for young adolescents: *ScriptureWalk Junior High: Bible Themes* (Maryann Hakowski, 1999), and *ScriptureWalk Junior High: People of Promise* (Joseph Grant, 2002). Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press.

Singer-Towns, Brian, ed. *Biblical Literacy Made Easy*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2008.

Theisen, Michael. *Ready-to-Go Scripture Skits (That Teach Serious Stuff)*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004. This resource features skits about Abraham and Isaac, Samson, and those disciples present at Pentecost.

Scripture Resources for Young Adolescents Themselves

Haas, David. *Prayers Before an Awesome God: The Psalms for Teenagers*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2000.

Heisberger, Jean Marie, and Maureen Gallagher. *Take Ten: Daily Bible Reflections for Teens*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2004.

Jenkins, Simon. *The Bible from Scratch, Catholic Edition: A Lightning Tour from Genesis to Revelation*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2009.

O'Connell-Roussell, Sheila. *Saint Mary's Press® Essential Bible Dictionary*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2005.

Music

Jump5. "Spinnin' Around." *The Very Best of Jump5*. Sparrow/Emd, 2005.

Pomanowski, Jeannie. *Faith with an Attitude*. Chesapeake Music Works, 2001.

———. *Prayer Warrior*. Chesapeake Music Works, 2004.

Spirit and Song 1. Oregon Catholic Press, 1999. This music book has over 200 songs by different musicians and a nine-CD set to accompany it. The music is upbeat and attractive for young people.

Spirit and Song 2. Oregon Catholic Press, 2005. This music book has over 200 songs by different musicians and a ten-CD set to accompany it.

Webber, Andrew Lloyd. *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Universal Studios, 2000.

Films

Films on Old Testament people can be found at the Ignatius Press Web site. The Footprints of God series includes films entitled *Moses* and *David and Solomon*. This series also includes *Over Holy Ground*, a tour of the Holy Land as seen from the air.

The Story of Ruth is also available from Ignatius Press.

The Bible Collection. A twelve-DVD set (also available in smaller sets). The movies are *Genesis*, *Abraham*, *Moses*, *Jacob*, *Joseph*, *Jeremiah*, *Paul*, *Esther*, *David*, *Solomon*, *Samson and Delilah*, and *Paul*. These movies can be found on Amazon.com.

Jesus of Nazareth (1977): 6 hours, 11 minutes. DVD.

This is a classic feature-length film directed by Franco Zeffirelli, packaged in a three-video set.

Available for rental at video stores or for purchase from Gateway Films/Vision Video.

Joseph, King of Dreams (2000): 74 minutes. DVD.

This movie from Dreamworks is an engaging presentation of the story of Joseph and his brothers. The film does a good job of capturing Joseph's internal journey as well.

Available for rental at video stores or for purchase online.

Josh and the Big Wall (1997): 30 minutes. DVD.

In this movie, the Veggie Tale characters star in the story of Joshua. If your students like Veggie Tales, you might look into some of the other videos and DVDs.

Available for rental at video stores or for purchase online.

Mother Teresa, Woman of Compassion (2002): 56 minutes. DVD.

This film is the fourth in a series called Great Souls. This movie talks about Mother Teresa from the views of many people whose lives were touched by her.

Available from Gateway Films/Vision Video.

The Prince of Egypt (1999): 99 minutes. DVD.

This movie from Dreamworks presents the story of Moses. Interestingly, the movie does not stay as close to the biblical story as the film about Joseph, but this actually provides an opportunity to discuss with young people why a feature-length film might make certain changes in the story.

Available for rental at video stores or for purchase online.

Social Justice Organizations

The author suggests the organizations below for an activity about the prophet Amos. Basic contact information is provided for the organizations listed.

- Bread for the World, 425 3rd Street, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20024; phone 1-800-82-BREAD.
- Catholic Relief Services, 228 W. Lexington Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-3443; phone 877-435-7277.
- Habitat for Humanity International, 121 Habitat Street, Americus, GA 31709-3498; phone 800-HABITAT.
- Maryknoll, PO Box 304, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0304; phone 888-627-9566. This contact information is for finding out about videos, DVDs, and posters.
- National Right to Life Committee, 512 10th Street NW, Washington, DC 20004; phone 202-626-8800.

Distributors

- Gateway Films/Vision Video, PO Box 540, Worcester, PA 19490; phone 800-523-0226.
- Oregon Catholic Press (OCP), 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR, 97213-3638; phone 800-LITURGY (548-8749).
- Saint Mary's Press, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987; phone 800-533-8095.

Appendix 2

Tools for Teaching

Introducing the Story of Biblical Characters to Young People

Every chapter in this book has an initial activity that enables the young people to get to know the story of the biblical character. Some of the activities submitted by the authors of this book were so creative that it seemed like a good idea to put them together in case you never found one of them buried in Hezekiah or Nehemiah. These approaches work well with numerous biblical figures. Several of the activities use modern media to portray the story.

A Newspaper Account

In this activity, the students create part of a newspaper based on the Scripture passages related to the biblical figure.

Preparation

- ❑ Each student needs a Bible, paper, and a pen.
 - ❑ Prior to class, write the list of readings about the biblical character in a visible place. Base the size of the groups on the number of readings, because all the passages will be read by a group member.
 - ❑ If you have completed this or a similar activity in the past, you may want to provide students with examples to jump-start their thinking.
 - ❑ If you have computer access, you can invite the students to find a newsletter template that would be useful for this exercise.
1. Divide the class into small groups. Ask the members of the groups to divide the Bible passages from “Scripture Passages Related to the Biblical Character” among themselves and read them.
 2. Propose the following scenario to the students:
 - ▶ Imagine that as a group, you are publishing a front-page report on the life of this biblical figure. Each of you within your groups should prepare one column (headline and then article) based on your section of the reading.

3. Have the students first write their column on paper so that they can discuss how they would like to present their passage with the others in the group. One might want to do an “on the scene” report while another may want to do a letter to the editor or a spotlight on the biblical character, and so on. Then have the students transfer their columns to a front page of a newspaper layout complete with the name of the paper and assorted other newspaper items. At this point, the students can further their creativity by posting a list of events at the Temple, creating an advertisement for “wisdom,” announcing a support group for prophets, and so on.
4. After each group has completed its newspaper, make copies and distribute them to each group to read.

Pictures from the Road

This is an excellent activity for biblical figures who do quite a bit of traveling.

Preparation

- ❑ Each small group needs at least two Bibles.
- ❑ Cut out “city papers,” or square sheets of newsprint, and label each sheet with city names (and citations) that appear in the biblical character’s story.
- ❑ Provide enough markers, colored pencils, or crayons so that there are four or five for each small group.
- ❑ Using newsprint, draw a map of the region at the center of the paper, noting where the cities were located. Leave room so that the young people can tape, glue, or pin the city papers on the map at the end of the activity.

1. Divide the class into several groups, and distribute one city paper and the art materials to each group. Give the young people the following instructions:
 - ▶ You are photographers who are following a biblical character during his or her ministry. You have been asked to take pictures of this biblical figure while he or she is in your city.
 - ▶ In your small group, read aloud the chapters from the city paper (newsprint) that cover your city assignment. Discuss what pictures you want to take that will tell the story of the character’s trip to your city.

- ▶ As a group, decide which pictures you want to “take” (at least four) and who will “take” them. Draw all the photographs that you would take on your city paper.
2. When the young people are finished, invite them to present the story of the biblical character’s trip to the city using the “photographs.” Begin with the early part of the story and work through the cities in order. After each presentation, highlight the key points about the biblical figure that the group related. Tape, glue, or pin each group’s pictures near the name of the city on the map.

The Comic Book Approach

In this process, the students create comic strips of the assigned biblical story.

Preparation

- ❑ Make copies of the handout “The Comics” (Document #: TX002899) for the students. The number of copies you make will be determined by the number of frames that you would like the students to use.
 - ❑ Each student needs a Bible and markers or colored pencils.
 - ❑ Provide different comic strips as models for the students.
1. Assign the relevant passages of the narrative about the biblical character to the students.
 2. Explain that each student needs to read the assigned passages and then create a comic strip of between X and Y number of frames. (Four frames are often enough.) Encourage the students to be careful in their work, but let them know that stick figures can tell the story. Remind them that the figures need to be big enough and dark enough for other students to see. Have the students write the biblical citation below the drawing. (Decide ahead of time how much writing you want the students to have in the comics. Should the students summarize the story below their drawings or include dialogue in little balloons?)
 3. Have the students present their comic strips to the rest of the class in the order that their passages appear in the Bible. Consider taping all the comic strips together in a line so as to retain a visual version of the story.

4. After all various sections have been completed, consider photocopying the pages and stapling them together to create a comic book version of the biblical character's story for each student to read.

Character Book Covers

In this activity, the students work as graphic designers who create and illustrate a mock book series that follows the story of the biblical character.

Preparation

- ❑ Provide art supplies, such as 11-by-17-inch blank paper, markers, colored pencils, and straightedges.
- ❑ Divide the readings about this character in a way that works well for the size of the class and the number of readings that are available and relevant. Each group needs to have one person responsible for each of the readings because each group will produce a complete series of book covers.
- ❑ Each student needs a Bible and a hardcover book that can be covered with the 11-by-17-inch paper.
- ❑ Bring in copies of several book series in hardcover, like the Harry Potter books or the Chronicles of Narnia.

1. Begin the activity by showing the series of books you have brought in. Point out that for a sense of continuity, a book publisher will use a similar motif on the covers of the books for an entire series or may use similar sounding titles. Explain to the students that they will create a series of book covers that represent the major events in a biblical character's life, resulting in a collection.
2. Divide the class into the predetermined number of groups, and assign each student within the group her or his particular reading.
3. Give each student a sheet of 11-by-17-inch blank paper, some markers, a straightedge, and a hardcover book that they can use to make a book cover with the sheet of blank paper. (Students can share a single book for the sake of measuring their sheet of paper for the spine, two covers, and flaps with folds.)
4. Have the students individually read their assigned passages and then talk together as a group. They may want to talk about some common design elements for their series even though the students will design a book jacket based on their own reading selection of the biblical character. Each jacket must have the following elements:

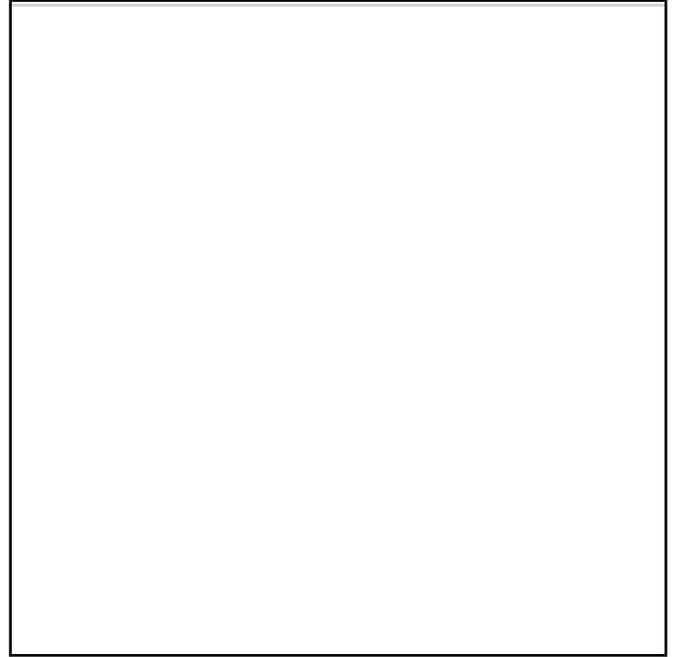
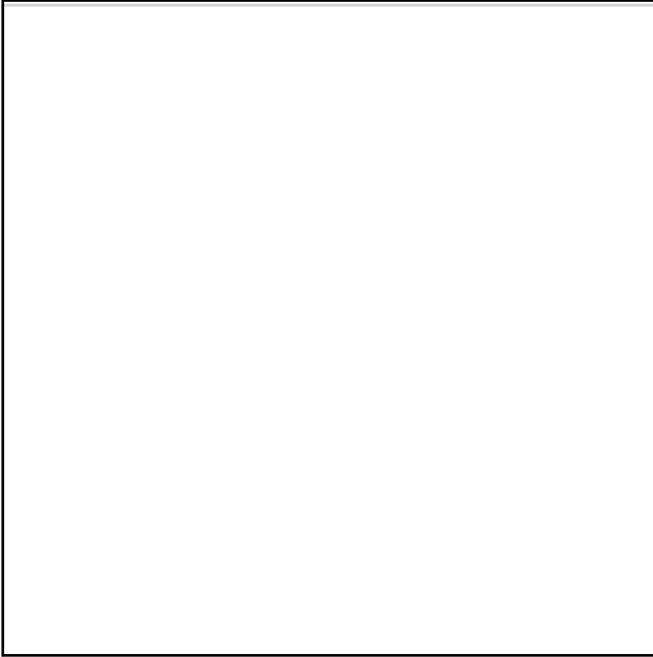
- The volume number in the Saga of [biblical character's name] on the cover and on the spine of the book.
 - The title of the “book” in the Saga of [biblical character's name] on the cover and on the spine of the book. The Scripture citation should also be on the spine and the cover.
 - Drawings and images that summarize the readings on the front and back covers.
 - On the front inside cover of the book jacket, a brief synopsis of the individually assigned reading, and on the back inside cover, a brief “bio” of the book cover's designer.
5. After the group has finished their series, have them explain their part of the story and their book cover from the series to the others in their group. Have the books “shelved” together for others to examine, or pass them around for other groups to peruse.

The Chronology of a Bible Character's Life

For the chapter about Moses, the handout on page 77, “The Life of Moses: A Chronology” (Document #: TX002884), lists major events in Moses' life. The students then need to look through the Book of Exodus and not only put the events in the proper order but also list the biblical citations that correspond to the events. After the students have finished the handout, they break into groups to read the Scripture events more thoroughly. The activity culminates when each group gives an in-depth retelling of the story, in chronological order of course.

This approach works especially well for any biblical character with a long story.

The Comics



Appendix 3

Answer Key for *Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics: Old Testament Activity Booklet* Puzzles

Bible Books

HIDDEN BOOKS OF THE BIBLE NAMES

1. Hosea
2. Job
3. Sirach
4. Daniel
5. Matthew
6. John
7. Romans
8. Numbers
9. Amos
10. James

Introduction to the Old Testament

ANSWERS TO OLD TESTAMENT QUESTIONS 1–10

1. 46
2. Genesis
3. Malachi
4. Obadiah
5. Psalms
6. Pentateuch, History, Wisdom, Prophets
7. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
8. Proverbs
9. History, Prophets, Wisdom, Prophets

COMPLETED SENTENCE: Israelites chosen people

Connections

OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES		
Isaiah 61:1–2 Luke 4:16–19 2	Malachi 3:1–3 John 2:13–17 9	Isaiah 9:1–2 Matthew 4:12–16 4
Micah 5:2 Luke 2:4–7 7	Isaiah 35:5–6 Matthew 11:3–6 5	Genesis 12:1–3 Matthew 1:1 3
Jeremiah 31:31–34 Luke 22:20 6	Isaiah 7:14 Matthew 1:23 1	Zechariah 9:9 Matthew 21:1–11 8

All numbers add to 15

Adam and Eve

WORDS HIDDEN IN WORD SEARCH

- | | | |
|-----------|------------|----------------|
| 1. RAIN | 6. MAN | 11. FIG LEAVES |
| 2. GROUND | 7. GOOD | 12. TREES |
| 3. EDEN | 8. ANIMALS | 13. MOTHER |
| 4. LIFE | 9. RIBS | 14. LORD GOD |
| 5. FOUR | 10. FRUIT | 15. SWORD |



FILL-IN ANSWER: ADAM AND EVE DISOBEYED GOD.

Noah

WORDS HIDDEN IN WORD SEARCH

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. JAPHETH | 5. FORTY, FORTY | 9. RETURN |
| 2. VIOLENT | 6. RAVEN | 10. COVENANT |
| 3. BOAT | 7. DOVE | 11. DESTROY |
| 4. WIFE, WIVES,
FEMALE | 8. OLIVE | 12. RAINBOW |



FILL-IN ANSWER: The ARK is a symbol of the CHURCH.

Abraham

EVENT ORDER WITH LETTERS TO BE INSERTED IN BLANK SPACES AT BOTTOM

- 7 b and e
- 10 e
- 3 r and i
- 8 s
- 9 i and d
- 13 r and a
- 1 b
- 14 h
- 6 i and m
- 4 e
- 12 A
- 2 u
- 5 d and h
- 11 s

FILL-IN ANSWER: BURIED HIM BESIDE SARAH

Sarah

- | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------------------|
| 1. RAIAS | = SARAI | S (11) and R (6) |
| 2. RNAHA | = HARAN | H (19) and R (17) |
| 3. EFMNIA | = FAMINE | A (18) and E (3) |
| 4. YETABU | = BEAUTY | B (8) and T (1) |
| 5. HULAGDE | = LAUGHED | L (9) and D (14) |
| 6. NOTECNVA | = COVENANT | O (5) and E (13) |
| 7. SIACA | = ISAAC | S (12) and A (16) |
| 8. EMHASLI | = ISHMAEL | S (15) H (2) and L (4) |
| 9. LIDEF | = FIELD | E (10) and D (7) |

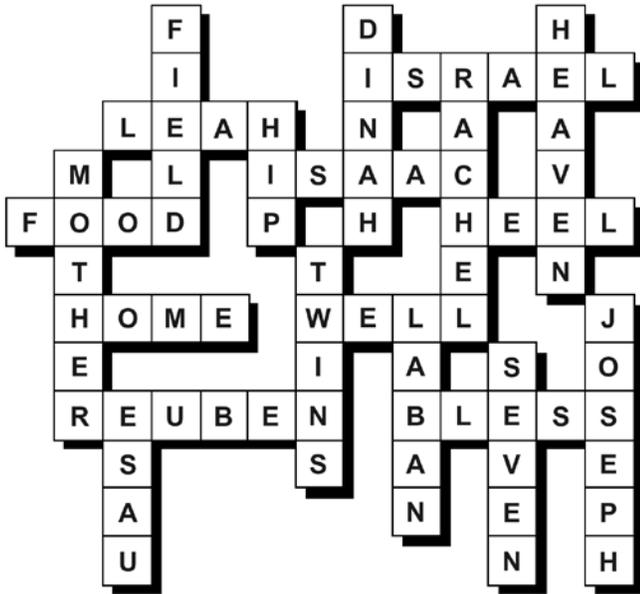
FILL-IN ANSWER: THE LORD BLESSED SARAH.

Isaac

STATEMENTS

- God promised to keep his Covenant with Isaac just as he had kept it with Abraham.
- Isaac had twin sons named Esau and Jacob.
- Isaac was tricked by his wife and son.

Jacob



Leah and Rachel

"IF" - "THEN" STATEMENTS WITH LETTERS TO BE USED IN BLANK SPACES AT BOTTOM

- 1 = I
- 2 = N
- 3 = B
- 4 = E
- 5 = T
- 6 = H
- 7 = L
- 8 = E
- 9 = H
- 10 = E
- 11 = M

FILL-IN ANSWER: IN BETHLEHEM

Joseph

PROBLEM REFERENCE

GENESIS 37:2	17 YEARS OLD
GENESIS 37:5-11	11 STARS
GENESIS 37:28	20 SILVER PIECES
GENESIS 40:5-8	2 PRISONERS' DREAMS
GENESIS 40:16-19	3 DAYS
GENESIS 41:17-19	7 COWS
GENESIS 41:25	2 DREAMS
GENESIS 41:45	30 YEARS OLD
GENESIS 41:50	2 SONS
GENESIS 42:17	3 DAYS IN PRISON
GENESIS 43:34	5 TIMES AS MUCH
GENESIS 46:27	70 OF JACOB'S FAMILY
GENESIS 47:1	5 BROTHERS

FILL-IN ANSWER: 110

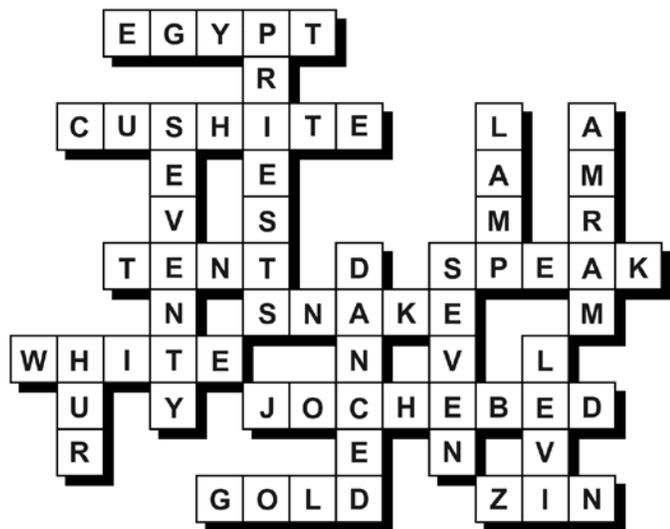
Moses

EVENT ORDER WITH LETTERS TO BE INSERTED IN BLANK SPACES AT BOTTOM

- 1. 9 a and f
- 2. 12 e
- 3. 13 n
- 4. 10 r
- 5. 7 c and e
- 6. 1 f
- 7. 2 a
- 8. 4 t
- 9. 14 d
- 10. 6 f and a
- 11. 11 i
- 12. 8 a and s
- 13. 3 c and e
- 14. 5 o

FILL-IN ANSWER: FACE TO FACE AS A FRIEND

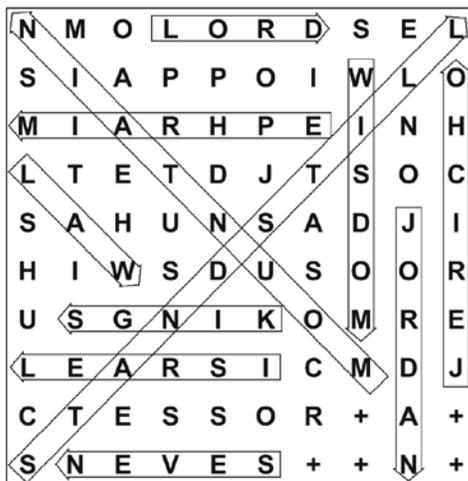
Aaron and Miriam



Joshua

WORDS HIDDEN IN WORD SEARCH

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1. MOUNTAIN | 7. STAND STILL |
| 2. WISDOM | 8. ISRAEL |
| 3. JERICHO | 9. KINGS |
| 4. JORDAN | 10. LORD |
| 5. SEVEN | 11. EPHRAIM |
| 6. LAW | |



FILL-IN ANSWER: MOSES APPOINTED JOSHUA HIS SUCCESSOR.

Deborah

STATEMENTS

1. Deborah was a prophet and a judge of Israel.
2. She and Barak defeated the army of Sisera.
3. Deborah sang a song of praise to the Lord.

Gideon

ANSWERS TO CLUES (KEY LETTERS IN BOLD)

1. Joash
2. Angel
3. Jars
4. Three Hundred
5. Abimilech
6. Oreb or Zeeb
7. Midianites
8. Ophrah
9. Altar

HIDDEN NAME: JERUBBAAL

WHAT DOES THIS NAME HAVE TO DO WITH

GIDEON? Gideon was called Jerubbaal because he destroyed the altars to Baal.

Samson

THE MOTHER OF SAMSON WAS NOT TO DRINK WINE

THE MOTHER OF SAMSON WAS
NOT TO DRINK WINE

SAMSON TORE APART A LION WITH HIS BARE HANDS

SAMSON TORE APART A LION
WITH HIS BARE HANDS

THE LORD MADE SAMSON STRONG ENOUGH TO
BREAK THE ROPES THAT HELD HIM

THE LORD MADE SAMSON STRONG
ENOUGH TO BREAK THE ROPES
THAT HELD HIM

SAMSON KNOCKED DOWN A BUILDING AND KILLED
THE PHILISTINES

SAMSON KNOCKED DOWN A BUILDING
AND KILLED THE PHILISTINES

Ruth

"IF" - "THEN" STATEMENTS WITH LETTERS TO BE
USED IN BLANK SPACES AT BOTTOM

- 1 = G
- 2 = R
- 3 = E
- 4 = A
- 5 = T
- 6 = G
- 7 = R
- 8 = A
- 9 = N
- 10 = D
- 11 = M
- 12 = O
- 13 = T
- 14 = H
- 15 = E
- 16 = R

FILL-IN ANSWER: GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

Samuel

S
TWO ISRAEL
SAUL PROPHE
H R N
KING HANNAH
L O B E Y
L O R D A D
H S R A M A H
T V
E L I
D

Saul

H A R P G I L B O A
R I
K I L L S I L
J E G O G
A S A B N E R B
B A T T L E
E S N S E V E N
K I S H A J A A
I H F A G A G H
N R M L
G D A V I D E T
I N S P E A R
D L
S A M U E L

David

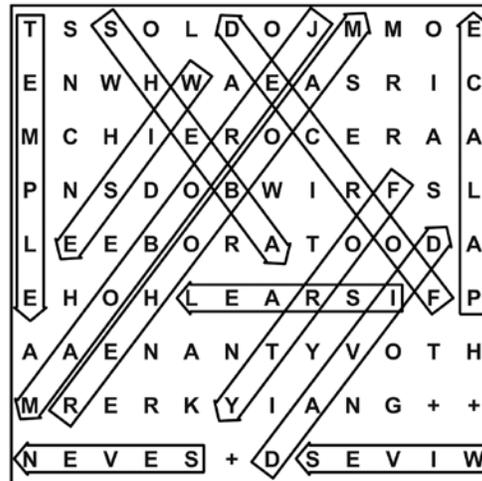
ANALOGIES

- Jonathan is to Saul as Amnon is to **DAVID**. (son to father)
- Kish is to Saul as **JESSE** is to David. (father to son)
- Samuel is to Saul as **SAMUEL** is to David. (one who anoints)
- Jonathan is to Michal as Absalom is to **TAMAR**. (brother to sister)
- Nabal is to Abigail as Uriah is to **BATHSHEBA**. (first husband to wife of David)
- Saul is to the Ammonites as David is to the **PHILISTINES**. (conqueror to conquered)
- Jerusalem is to Solomon as **BETHLEHEM** is to David. (hometown to person)
- Nathan is to a prophet as Joab is to a **GENERAL/ARMY COMMANDER**. (person to vocation)

Solomon

WORDS HIDDEN IN WORD SEARCH

- | | |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1. DAVID | 7. FORCED |
| 2. WISE | 8. SHEBA |
| 3. TEMPLE | 9. WIVES |
| 4. ISRAEL | 10. JEROBOAM |
| 5. SEVEN | 11. FORTY |
| 6. PALACE | 12. REHOBOAM |



FILL-IN ANSWER: SOLOMON WAS RICHER AND WISER THAN ANY OTHER KING.

Hezekiah

KEY LETTERS ARE IN BOLD (numbers, left to right, correspond to numbers in the fill-in answer)

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) Ahaz | (37 & 3) |
| (2) King | (5, 20 & 29) |
| (3) Nehushtan | (14 & 4) |
| (4) Philistines | (9 & 15) |
| (5) Judah | (10, 31 & 23) |
| (6) Rely | (16, 38 & 39) |
| (7) Isaiah | (6, 18, 13 & 1) |
| (8) Order | (26, 28 & 2) |
| (9) Nothing | (21, 32, 11, 12 & 34) |
| (10) Fourteenth | (33, 30, 17, 36, 22, 24, 19 & 8) |
| (11) Jerusalem | (27, 35, 7 & 25) |

FILL-IN ANSWER: HEZEKIAH PUT HIS TRUST IN THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL.

Josiah



Elijah

SCRAMBLED WORDS UNSCRAMBLED (KEY LETTERS IN BOLD)

- VSAREN = RAVENS
- DIWWO = WIDOW
- BAHA = AHAB
- MERCAL = CARMEL
- THERPOP = PROPHET
- VELWET = TWELVE
- CIVOE = VOICE
- DVRIANYE = VINEYARD

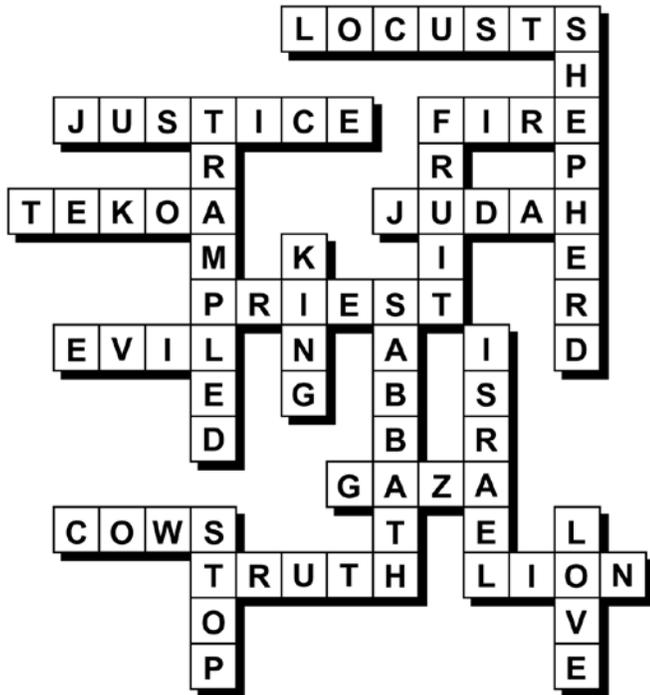
FILL-IN ANSWER: A FIERY CHARIOT CAME BETWEEN ELIJAH AND ELISHA, AND ELIJAH WENT TO HEAVEN IN A WHIRLWIND.

Elisha

ELISHA'S MIRACLES		
Elisha causes an ax head to float 6	Elisha purifies bad water 1	Elisha causes one jar, or jug, of oil to fill many jars, or vessels 8
Elisha revives someone who has died 7	Elisha cures a man of leprosy 5	Elisha makes poisoned stew good to eat 3
Elisha blesses a childless woman so that she may have a son 2	Elisha multiplies loaves and grain 9	Elisha divides the Jordan River 4

All numbers add to 15.

Amos



Hosea

HOSEA MARRIED A WOMAN NAMED GOMER WHO WAS UNFAITHFUL TO HIM

H O S E A M A R R I E D A W O M A N N A
M E D G O M E R W H O W A S U N F A I T
H F U L T O H I M

ISRAEL WAS UNFAITHFUL TO GOD AS GOMER WAS UNFAITHFUL TO HOSEA

I S R A E L W A S U N F A I T H F U L T O
G O D A S G O M E R W A S U N F A I T
H F U L T O H O S E A

THE LOVE OF HOSEA FOR HIS WIFE WAS AS CONSTANT AS THE LOVE OF GOD FOR ISRAEL

T H E L O V E O F H O S E A F O R H I
S W I F E W A S A S C O N S T A N T A
S T H E L O V E O F G O D F O R I S
R A E L

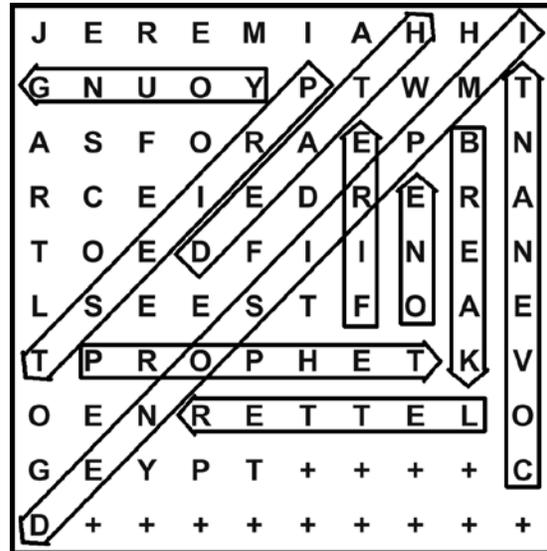
Isaiah



Jeremiah

WORDS HIDDEN IN WORD SEARCH

- | | |
|-----------|----------------|
| 1. YOUNG | 6. FIRE |
| 2. DEATH | 7. LETTER |
| 3. ONE | 8. COVENANT |
| 4. BREAK | 9. PROPHET |
| 5. PRIEST | 10. IMPRISONED |

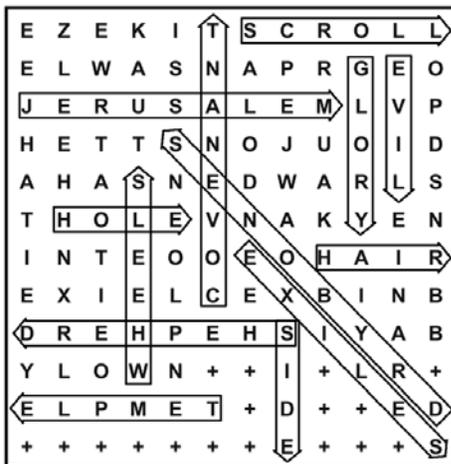


FILL-IN ANSWER: Jeremiah was forced to flee to Egypt.

Ezekiel

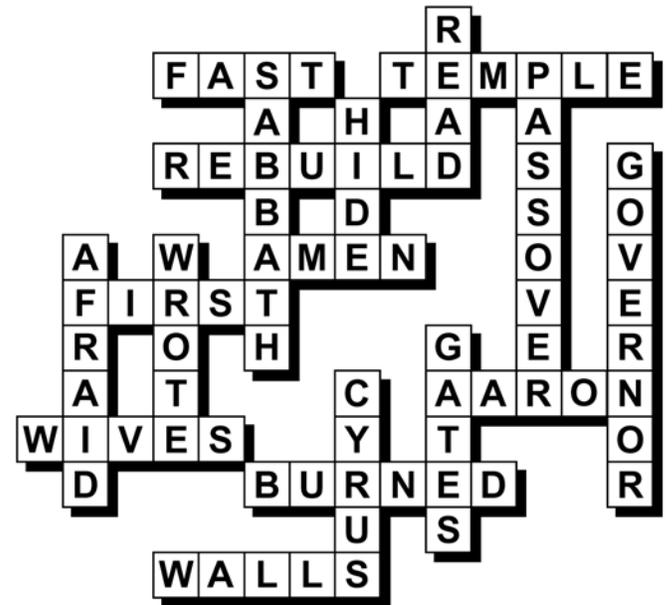
WORDS HIDDEN IN WORD SEARCH

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|
| 1. EXILES | 6. HOLE | 10. JERUSALEM |
| 2. WHEELS | 7. GLORY | 11. SHEPHERD |
| 3. SCROLL | 8. COVENANT | 12. DRY BONES |
| 4. SIDE | 9. EVIL | 13. TEMPLE |
| 5. HAIR | | |



FILL-IN ANSWER: Ezekiel was a prophet to Judah and was taken into exile in Babylon.

Ezra and Nehemiah



Judith

EVENT ORDER, WITH LETTERS TO BE INSERTED IN BLANK SPACES AT BOTTOM

1. 9 i
2. 7 j and u
3. 8 d
4. 6 e
5. 14 s and j
6. 10 t
7. 3 e
8. 15 e
9. 13 a and n
10. 12 m and e
11. 16 w
12. 18 s and s
13. 2 h
14. 17 e
15. 4 n
16. 5 a and m
17. 11 h
18. 1 t

FILL-IN ANSWER: The name Judith means Jewess.

Esther

EVENT ORDER, WITH LETTERS TO BE INSERTED IN BLANK SPACES AT BOTTOM

1. 8 t
2. 9 o
3. 3 e
4. 7 s
5. 10 f
6. 11 l
7. 4 f
8. 6 a
9. 1 t
10. 14 s
11. 13 t
12. 12 o
13. 5 e
14. 2 h

FILL-IN ANSWER: The feast of Purim is also called . . . the feast of Lots.

The Maccabees

ANSWERS TO STATEMENTS

1. Mattathias
2. Judas
3. Antiochus
4. Rededicated
5. Eleazar
6. Burn
7. Rome
8. Galilee
9. Simon

In what year did the Jews win their battle for freedom? 170

What year is that in the current calendar? 142 BC

Job

SCRAMBLED WORDS UNSCRAMBLED (KEY LETTERS IN BOLD)

NASTA	=	SATAN
MASNILA	=	ANIMALS
NELHIRCD	=	CHILDREN
DGO	=	GOD
ROTSEUBL	=	TROUBLES
NIENSD	=	SINNED
ERTAH	=	HEART
CONNEMD	=	CONDEMN
WIDKEC	=	WICKED
SJTU	=	JUST

FILL-IN ANSWER: human and cannot understand God.

Lady Wisdom

WISDOM BEGINS WHEN WE SINCERELY WANT
TO LEARN

WIS	DOM	BE	GIN	S	WHEN	WE	SI
NCE	REL	Y	WANT	TO	LE	ARN	

WISDOM IS SO PURE THAT SHE PENETRATES
EVERYTHING

WIS	DOM	IS	SO	PURE	THAT	S	
HE	PEN	ETR	ATE	S	EVER	YTH	ING

WHAT YOU GET FROM WISDOM IS BETTER
THAN GOLD OR SILVER

WHA	T	YOU	GET	FR	OM	WIS	DOM
IS	BE	TTE	R	THAN	GO	LD	OR
SIL	VER						

WISDOM RESCUES US FROM DANGER

WIS	DOM	RE	SCU	ES	US	FR	OM	D
ANG	ER							

Appendix 4

Index of Activities by Topic

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