



The African Methodist Episcopal Church
WINTER 2024/25
The Teacher's Guide
QUARTERLY
DEC-JAN-FEB
SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION



**A KING FOREVER
AND EVER**

THE COMBINED TEACHER'S GUIDE

WINTER QUARTER 2024/25

DECEMBER • JANUARY • FEBRUARY

Christian Education Department
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AMEC Publishing House (Sunday School Union)
900 13th Avenue South • Nashville, TN 37212

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**The Teacher's Guide — LFS: Lesson 1 - December 1,
2024**

Liberating Faith Studies Lessons
Winter Quarter: December 2024 – February 2025
Prepared by Rev. Lionel Merritt

THE ANCESTRY OF KING DAVID

Lesson Scripture: Ruth 1–4; Luke 3:23-38

Focus Scripture: Ruth 4:9-17; Luke 3:23, 31b-32

Key Verse: The women...gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David. Ruth 4:17

Key Terms

- **Tapestry** – Handcrafted work of art especially in clothes or furnishings.
- **Prism** – The experiences and ideas that frame how we see issues.
- **Monarchical** – Relating to monarch or king and kingdom.
- **Ancestral** – Relating to ancestors or family tree.
- **Repugnant** – Offensive.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Examine the significance of David's family tree as it relates to the ancestry of Jesus.
2. Marvel at God's choice to live among us as a human being with a human family.
3. Trace the faith of your ancestors (either personally or as a congregation) by constructing a "spiritual" family tree.

Teaching Strategies

The strategies below will reinforce the key principles in the lesson.

1. Invite actors to portray Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi to act out key aspects of the Bible story. Emphasize those monologues that impacted the outcome of the story. The goal here is to place participants directly in the historical setting of the events.

2. In the story, issues of race and ethnicity are evident. Compare the setting of Ruth's story (during the Judges era) with its probable composition date (during the postexilic restoration of Judah). Summarize Ezra-Nehemiah's views of inter-religious marriage and the program to exclude foreign nonbelievers from the people of God. Consider how Ruth's story, a Moabite woman who became David's great-grandmother, provides an inclusive counter-perspective to Ezra-Nehemiah's protocols. Ezra-Nehemiah's protocols seem to agree with Deuteronomy 7:3. Also, compare Joshua 23:12 and 1 Kings 11:2.

3. Briefly discuss how Boaz's selflessness led to Ruth's redemption and, ultimately, the birth of King David. Using insights from that discussion, create family trees (congregational or personal) that highlight how the selflessness of spiritual ancestors (like Bishop Richard Allen) led to the good outcomes that benefit us today.

4. Review Jesus' genealogy for significant figures besides David, Boaz, Abraham, and Adam such as Zerubbabel, Jesse, Judah, Jacob, Isaac, Shem, Noah, and Enoch. Discuss the significance of Jesus representing his family members who walked carefully with God and others whose walk was uneven. How is this similar or different from our family trees?

Resources: For the average reader of the Bible, genealogies can be a tiresome read, which they do only when needed. People rush through them quickly, skimming much of the details. However, in the Bible narrative, genealogies are of immense importance. The posting, “What is the importance of genealogies in the Bible?” (<https://www.compellingtruth.org/>), gives useful guidance on how we should approach genealogies in the Bible text. Understanding this significance provides useful context to this and related lessons in this series.

LFS: Lesson 2 — December 8, 2024
GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID

Lesson Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:1-17

Focus Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:4-17

Key Verse: Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever. 2 Samuel 7:16

Key Terms

- **Ethiopia** – A country in eastern Africa with a population of 126 million.
- **Sacred** – Highly respected and/or feared (revered); be holy (dedicated to God).
- **Gratitude** – Feelings or expressions of being thankful/grateful.
- **Dynasty** – A line of rulers from the same family.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand the significance of God's promise to establish a royal family in David's lineage.
2. Appreciate God's covenant love that will never be taken away.
3. Demonstrate trust in the unconditional promises of God through a recommitment to baptismal promises.

Teaching Strategies

Use the strategies below to reinforce the key points in the lesson.

1. Discuss the play on words when God said that David was not to build him a house (temple); instead, God would build David a house (royal dynasty) that will last forever (v. 16). Note the wider implications and development of this promise. It set Israel's hope for a Messiah. What does this tell us about the attention we should pay to the words in the Bible text?
2. Discuss the tabernacle's role in God "tenting" with God's people, a temporary movable structure, versus a permanent standing structure (a temple). How do these concepts affect our understanding of God living or dwelling among his people, as noted in John 1:14?
3. Brainstorm ways that the church can be the church without a permanent structure. What are the dangers of assuming that people must go to a specific building to meet God?
4. Watch the video "Covenants in the Bible" at bibleproject.com to understand the covenants' significance for the Jewish and Christian faiths. Look for the common essential factors that run through all our relationships with God.

Resources: The lesson looks at God's specific promise of a dynasty to David. Today, we also have God's promises in the scriptures, which we claim from time to time. Yet often we ignore an important principle that shines through in the lesson text. God's promises are fulfilled according to God's timetable. A useful read on this issue is "Claiming God's Promises for Yourself" from the *Our Daily Bread* website (ourdailybread.org).

LFS: Lesson 3 — December 15, 2024
THE PROPHET WHO PREPARES THE WAY

Lesson Scripture: Luke 1:5-23, 57-80b

Focus Scripture: Luke 1:67-80

Key Verses: And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. Luke 1:76-77

Key Terms

- **Dynasty** – A line of leaders whose sole qualification for office is their blood relations in a particular family.
- **Tanzania** – A country in eastern Africa with a population of about 66 million.
- **Tanganyika** – The forerunner state to Tanzania (which merged with Zanzibar).

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand Luke's intent to ground the gospel in the covenant with David and in the Jerusalem temple.
2. Desire to be like John the Baptist for others, preparing the way for Christ.
3. Celebrate fearlessly the joy expressed in Zechariah's song poetically or musically.

Teaching Strategies

Reinforce key aspects of the lesson with these strategies.

1. Watch the “Gospel of Luke Ch. 1 and 2” at bibleproject.com for a summary of Zechariah’s experience. Consider why this detail on Zechariah’s experience is important in the story about Jesus’ birth. Answer the question, “What would we miss if this detail was missing?”
2. Identify the Holy Spirit’s work in Luke 1 and 2 and compare it to the Spirit’s work in Luke’s companion volume, Acts 1 and 2. What parallels do you see and how do any differences you note impact our approach to Christian living?
3. In Greek and Hebrew, the name Zechariah means “Yahweh remembers” or “God remembers.” Against this background, note that Zechariah and his wife were childless and were praying for a child. Do you see it as significant, that the birth of John the Baptist showed God had indeed remembered the prayers of this priest and his wife?
4. Read the lyrics of two versions (musical or poetic) of Zechariah’s song, “Benedictus.” Compare each version with the scripture text and evaluate how accurately each songwriter and/or poet reflected the scripture text. Did anything surprise you?
5. Identify the goal of salvation or freedom in the “Benedictus,” which is fearless, unhampered service, worship, and devotion to God (vs. 74, 75). Use this image as a background to discuss the face of fearless worship to God in this age. Who would you consider as the enemies that keep Christians from brave worship?

Resources: John the Baptist, as the person who introduced Jesus’

ministry, holds a significant place in the history of Christianity. One commentator wrote, "Apart from Jesus Christ, John the Baptist is probably the most theologically significant figure in the gospels." You can explore this significance in a posting "John the Baptist" on biblestudytools.com.

LFS: Lesson 4 — December 22, 2024
BORN IN THE CITY OF DAVID

Lesson Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Focus Scripture: Luke 2:1-16

Key Verse: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” Luke 2:15

Key Terms

- **Humility** – Having a modest or low view of one's own importance; not prideful or haughty.
- **Paradox** – An apparent contradiction; things that do not appear to go together.
- **African Socialism** – A theory of governance where leaders use the resources of a country for the collective good of all its citizens rather than for the benefit of a privileged few. Applying this concept in an African context is African Socialism.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Consider the significance of including shepherds in the news of the Messiah's birth.
2. Become shepherds or pastors for one another by proclaiming the good news.
3. Practice proclaiming the good news of God's peace and what it means to them.

Teaching Strategies

Use these exercises to reinforce key aspects of the lesson.

1. Be aware that in the history of the Roman Empire, Caesar Augustus was portrayed as a “savior” who brought peace to the empire (virtually the then-known world). Compare this claim with Luke’s profile that Jesus is the real “savior” (v. 11) who will announce the “good news” (v. 10) of “peace” (v. 14). Discuss the contrasts implied in the text between the secular and religious portraits of the “savior.” For example, note that Caesar lived in a palace, whereas Jesus was born in a lowly stable with animals.
2. It is useful to pull together the scripture passages that identified Jesus as the Messiah and showed his birth as fulfilling that great prophecy. These include Ruth 4, Matthew 1 and 2, Micah 5, Isaiah 11:1, Ezekiel 37:24, and Hosea 3:5. Such a study shows the beauty and accuracy of God’s identification of his savior.
3. Discuss how verse 2:8 is an example of Mary’s announcement that “he has brought down the powerful from their thrones,/and lifted up the lowly” (1:52). Investigate the reputation or social status of shepherds in ancient Near East culture. Who is in a parallel status to shepherds today? Who are today’s “shepherds” through whom God is speaking?
4. As a gesture of sharing the goodwill of Christmas, encourage the class to create several Christmas ornaments that feature the angel’s words and give them to homebound or ill church members.
5. Identify the three titles for Jesus in the text: Savior, Christ (Messiah), and Lord. Offer word studies of the names and connect their significance with the Old Testament prophecy. Ask participants

to select the name for Jesus with the most meaning for them, and why.

6. Compare the three responses to good news in the text: the shepherds, the people of Bethlehem, and Mary (v. 19). Discuss ways to honor each type of response. Let this remind us that different people and groups respond in diverse ways to the gospel message. Therefore, we must not do evangelism with rigid preset outcomes in mind.

Resources: Details of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem came from two gospels: Matthew and Luke. Because of the different target audiences, the two accounts have different highlights but complement each other. A useful comparison of the two accounts helps us to get the full picture. For quick reference you can use the posting, “Birth of Jesus: Gospels of Matthew and Luke Compared,” from the <https://letterpile.com>.

LFS: Lesson 5 — December 29, 2024

THE MERCIFUL SON OF DAVID

Lesson Scripture: Luke 18:31-43

Focus Scripture: Luke 18:35-43

Key Verse: Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Luke 18:39

Key Terms

- **Sacrificial Lamb** – In Judaism, Israel sacrificed lambs in rituals to gain forgiveness for sin. God chose Jesus as the (human) lamb who would die once for all our sins.
- **Contiguous** – The ability or tendency to spread from one person to another.
- **Catalyst** – A person or thing that starts a process or reaction.
- **Insignificant Person** – A person without a recognized name/title/status, or significant resources (money or property).

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Analyze the connection the blind man makes between Jesus and the “Son of David.”
2. Identify their own response to Jesus’ invitation, “What do you want me to do for you?”
3. Guide the church’s effort to hear and respond to the cries of the needy.

Teaching Strategies

1. The background text includes the seventh reference to Jesus' death in Luke. (The previous mentions of Christ's death are found in Luke 5:35; 9:22, 44-45; 12:49-50; 13:32-33; 17:25.) Each time Jesus mentioned his death it showed the disciples' inability to see the truth. Contrast the disciples' blindness about Jesus' identity to the blind man's insight about Jesus' true identity. Discuss the disciples' blind spot that led them to reject the difficult moments of Jesus' ministry.
2. See the story of the blind man's healing in its wider context showing the importance of determination in getting favors from God. Link this story to the stories of the persistent widow and the humbled tax collector. Together these stories show that persistence is a crucial part of faith. Invite the class to share this faith-persistence link. Does faith build persistence or is it persistence that develops faith?
3. Note the irony in the comparison between the rich man (Luke 18:23) who refused to follow Jesus and thus could not inherit eternal life (vs. 18-25) and the blind beggar who received healing because of his faith (v. 42) and follows Jesus (v. 43). The rich man lost the opportunity of a lifetime, while the poor beggar grasped the opportunity with both hands, physical healing and eternal life.
4. Do you have any personal stories of social outsiders coming forward in public to embrace the grace and mercy of God? Ask the class to share similar firsthand experiences. What do these experiences tell us about how we should be on the lookout for people seeking to reach Jesus in their own way?

Resources: There can be no doubt that faith in Christ produces amazing results. Yet, we must interpret with great care Jesus' teaching on the role of personal faith in healing. The article, "What Did Jesus Really Mean by 'Your Faith Has Made You Well'?" on Christianity.com (June 30, 2022) is useful when considering this matter.

LFS: Lesson 6 — January 5, 2025
THE LORD IS KING

Lesson Scripture: Psalms 9, 10

Focus Scripture: Psalm 10:12-18

Key Verse: O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear. Psalm 10:17

Key Terms

- **Injustice** – The absence or denial of justice, fairness, or equity to certain people in a society or a group of persons.
- **Vulnerable People** – People who may fall into the class of poor, needy, fatherless, handicapped, homeless; people who cannot help themselves in the normal course of life.
- **Acrostic Psalm** – A type of poetic song where each verse or line begins with a successive letter of the alphabet.
- **The Septuagint** – The ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.
- **Principality** – Territory or area ruled by a prince or secondary authority.

Lesson Goals: By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe the psalmist's confidence in God in times of trouble.
2. Earnestly desire to see the Lord establish justice in the world.
3. Cooperate with God's justice by seeking the good of the poor and the oppressed.

Teaching Strategies

1. Consider the similarities and common themes in Psalms 9 and 10: their acrostic structure, terror visited upon the weak, judgment for those who terrorize, and grace to terrorized people. Let the class give feedback on how well they can identify with these themes.
2. Whether we admit it or not, believers face times when God seems far or unresponsive to our cries for help. Brainstorm specific obstacles that can make God seem far away in times of trouble.
3. Invite participants to list persons or groups in our current society who are routinely victims of terror/injustice. Make a second list of persons or institutions who champion the causes of these victims. Consider how we can help these victims, directly or through the persons or organizations that fight their cause.
4. Compare the arrogant pride that marks the wicked in Psalm 10 with the sense of wonder and awe that marks the psalmist's encounter with the creator in Psalm 8. Bring these two psalms together to answer this question: Can Psalm 8 help us to appreciate the call in Psalm 10 for humility and a recognition of the limitations of humanity?
5. Psalms 9 and 10 call for people in positions of authority to use their power and influence to seek justice and equity, rather than seek opportunities for selfish personal enrichment. Against that premise, discuss ways that churches and other civic groups can reach across racial, economic, and social status barriers to promote racial, economic, and social justice for the usual victims of injustices in our society.

Resources: This lesson text forces us to face an issue that believers

struggled with for centuries: the injustice God permits in the world. For insights on this matter see, “How to Respond When Injustice Seems to Prevail” on the *Gospel Coalition* website, U.S edition, June 5, 2020. We do not suggest that you agree with all the ideas in the posting. Yet, it highlights the issues we must consider when assessing why injustice seems to prevail in this current world system.

LFS: Lesson 7 — January 12, 2025
THE LORD IS ROBED IN MAJESTY

Lesson Scripture: Psalms 47, 93

Focus Scripture: Psalm 93

Key Verse: The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed; he is girded with strength. Psalm 93:1

Key Terms

- **Holiness** – The idea of the reverence, awe, and purity which sets God apart from humans.
- **Yahweh** – Consider the personal name of God that emphasizes his holiness and recognize him as the creator.
- **Majesty/Majestic** – The splendor and dignity associated with being royal (a king).
- **Ontological** – Relating to the concept of something or someone's existence. The best scriptural example of this is in Exodus 3:14 where God referred to himself as "I AM" meaning the God with no beginning and no end; self-existing.
- **Astrologer** – A person who studies the stars and planets and their effects on human life.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Brainstorm possible situations of chaos and disorder expressed by the psalmist.
2. Trust God's sovereignty to set things right amidst chaos and confusion.
3. Be a witness to God's strength by standing up to the forces of chaos.

Teaching Strategies

Use the below exercises to reinforce the key points of the lesson.

1. To identify with the sentiments expressed in the set psalms, sing or recite the lyrics of the hymn “Rejoice, the Lord Is King” or similar one. Note the encouragement to rejoice (even in times of trouble) because eventually God/Jesus wins.
2. Invite the class to identify the various mental, social, physical, and economic challenges that threaten to destroy people in today’s world. Consider how the challenges identified are like the floods in Psalm 93.
3. Discuss Psalm 93’s conviction that even though the seas raise themselves high, Yahweh, and his power to protect the righteous, is already at a higher level. The key thought here is that the rebellious forces of chaos are small and insignificant compared to God’s mighty power. Ask the participants to identify other scripture passages that underscore the idea of God’s supremacy over disaster and chaos.
4. Read Psalm 93 (and 94–99) as a response to the problem presented in Psalm 89 where the Davidic dynasty is in shambles. Imagine the people doubting the certainty of God’s covenant promises. How would Psalm 93 answer the people’s doubts?
5. Lead the class in a discussion on the several ways reading and knowing scripture (“your decrees”) can generate strength in us in times of trouble. Explore how that inner strength can make the difference between physical life and death.

Resources: There is a little debate concerning the author of Psalm 93. This is not a simple matter of switching Moses’ name for King

David's or the reverse. Selecting the author has huge implications for how people interpret the psalm and its core message. You can read about this, and related interpretation notes, on the website posting "Introduction to Psalm 93" on the *Bible Study Tools* website.

LFS: Lesson 8 — January 19, 2025
THE LORD'S THRONE IS ESTABLISHED

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 103

Focus Scripture: Psalm 103:1-14

Key Verse: The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. Psalm 103:6

Key Terms

- **Vindication** – The act or process of clearing a person of blame for something.
- **Crescendo** – The climax, high point, or loudest part in a song, play, or argument.
- **Liberia** – A country in West Africa with a population of about 6 million; Africa's oldest republic.
- **Stimuli** – Something that induces or triggers a particular reaction.
- **Critical Thinkers** – People who analyze and evaluate information.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify the benefits they have received from God's steadfast love and righteousness.
2. Recognize themselves as forgiven and loved eternally by the Lord.
3. Understand *remembering* as a call to action to promote the agenda of God's kingdom.

Teaching Strategies

The following exercises will help you to achieve the lesson goals:

1. Scholars note in Psalm 103 an individual's thanksgiving to God that led the congregation to praise and worship. Invite the class to recall times when they saw this happen in their churches or another gathering of believers. Ask the participants to say what moved the group to follow the praise of the individual.
2. Psalm 103 pitches a tripartite ripple effect of praise: personal praise rolls into communal praise, and that generates universal praise. Ask the class to note this and how knowledge of this ripple effect might inform their prayer lives.
3. Lead the class in creating a unique psalm of praise. Provide a worksheet on which participants complete the phrase, "God, I bless you for . . ." Take the responses and combine them into a psalm of praise. You can take your psalm one step further by getting a composer to arrange and add music to the lyrics.
4. Skim the scriptural allusion index for hymns based on Psalm 103, such as "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow" and "Bless the Lord, O My Soul." Sing stanzas of hymns between reading verses of Psalm 103.
5. Discuss the notion that the opposite of praising God is forgetting God. Why is remembering God's past goodness to the person or nation a key factor in praise and worship? Can you identify when worship leaders use this "call to remember" as a prelude to the call to praise God?
6. Monday, January 20, 2025, is both Martin Luther King Day as well as Presidential Inauguration Day in the USA. How might these

special observances be seen in light of today's lesson?

Resources: One of the mega themes in Psalm 103 is the sovereignty of God. Wrapping your mind around this defining trait of God is essential to understanding spontaneous, enduring praise. "The Sovereignty of God in History" is a posting on Bible.org that can assist you in studying this matter.

LFS: Lesson 9 — January 26, 2025
MY GOD, THE KING

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 145

Focus Scripture: Psalm 145:1, 10-21

Key Verse: Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. Psalm 145:13

Key Terms

- **Exuberance** – A blend of energy and excitement.
- **Sovereignty** – Supreme power and authority, especially of a ruler.
- **Atheist** – A person who denies the existence of God.
- **Skeptic** – A person with doubts about God's existence and claims relating to God.
- **Proffer** – To offer or claim something for acceptance (subject to validation).

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify the stressors of today's changing times and circumstances.
2. Claim security in God's everlasting care and compassion regardless of circumstances.
3. Give honor and praise to God for God's unchanging concern for God's world.

Teaching Strategies

These exercises will help the class to reach the lesson goals stated above.

1. In Hebrew, Psalm 145 is an alphabetical acrostic psalm. That is an A-to-Z prayer of praise to God as king. Invite the class to try their hands at creating such a psalm of praise together that speaks in glowing terms about the attributes of God that the participants have experienced.
2. Reflect on verse 20. In a psalm that praises the goodness of God, why would the psalmist want to mention God's judgment? Ask the class to discuss that question, addressing in what way the destruction of wicked people can be a praiseworthy attribute of God.
3. Discuss the responsibility of religious and political leaders to care for the people in their charge. Prompt the class to share on how well the leaders they know are executing this responsibility.
4. Trace the development of the phrase "steadfast love" (Hebrew, *chesed*) from a term for covenant loyalty between YHWH and Israel to a universal characteristic of God's common grace to all creatures.
5. Have learners practice testifying to God's greatness and goodness with each other using terms and phrases from the psalm. Then ask the class how their level of excitement would change if the sharing were to strangers. Remind participants that authenticity is the key to effective sharing of personal testimonies. Also, emphasize the believers' obligation to tell strangers of the greatness and goodness of God.

Resources: In the lesson notes, we observe Psalm 145:18-19 as pivotal to appreciating the appeal of the psalm. One of the interesting features of this declaration about the nearness of God is that the onus is on us to initiate the nearness by calling on God in prayer. Christianity.com (March 29, 2022) shared a thoughtful post on this - "Why Are We Called to Draw Near to God?"

LFS: Lesson 10 — February 2, 2025
PRAYING FOR RELIEF

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Focus Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Key Verse: May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10

Key Terms

- **Plagued** – Tarnished to the point of corruption or destruction.
- **Hellenistic** – Relating to Greek culture that flourished before the Roman Empire.
- **Quid Pro Quo** – Bargaining; one thing offered for another thing.
- **Spurious** – Of face value only; false or fake.
- **Pound of Flesh** – A figure of speech for revenge or strict enforcement of a legal right.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand that the debt Jesus addresses is part of a system that overwhelms the poor with obligations to the ruling powers.
2. Focus on forgiving debt as a sign of God's coming kingdom.
3. Commit to fighting policies that preclude ordinary people from prospering today.

Teaching Strategies

Use the below exercises/strategies to reinforce the key points of the lesson.

1. Give a mini-lecture on the idea of material debt forgiveness in the Bible, including the Jubilee decree (Leviticus 25), Jesus' inaugural sermon (Luke 4), and the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:23-35).
2. Appreciate that in the Lord's Prayer, forgiving debtors is the only thing expected of us. Everything else is a gift, even God's forgiveness of our indebtedness to God. Invite the class to discuss why God demands forgiveness as a precondition to answering our prayers.
3. Contrast the kingdom of this world and its emphasis on debt and obligation with the kingdom of heaven based on forgiveness, grace, and mercy (see Luke 6:36). Is forgiveness the central act of the kingdom of God? Remember that the chief purpose for Jesus' earthly ministry was to restore humanity's relations with God, an act of forgiveness.
4. Lead the class in a discussion on when it would be appropriate to forgive the financial debts of the poor and persons in dire financial straits. Consider the situation we saw in the Depression years when the economy was in free-fall, unemployment was abnormally high, and debt default was crippling.
5. Usually, when Christians discuss forgiveness, they are talking about physical and moral offenses. Rarely does the discussion stretch to economic debt forgiveness. Prompt the class to address this and explore ways to make economic debt forgiveness an

integral part of the forgiveness discussion.

Resources: The practice of forgiveness is central to the Christian life. When we forgive, we imitate God's gesture of love toward humanity. However, uninformed people have a distorted idea of what biblical forgiveness is and its benefits to the parties involved. "Forgiveness: Letting Go of Grudges and Bitterness," a posting from the Mayo Clinic (mayoclinic.org), addresses key aspects of the issue.

LFS: Lesson 11 — February 9, 2025
RESISTANCE TO THE KINGDOM

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 11

Focus Scripture: Matthew 11:7-15, 20-24

Key Verse: Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done because they did not repent. Matthew 11:20

Key Terms

- **Affluent** – A lifestyle of wealth, fame, and social influence.
- **Refugee** – A person who flees home and country from violence and is homeless.
- **Mantle** – The covering (in religion, material or figurative) denoting spiritual authority.
- **Messiahship** – Having God's anointing as the Messiah (liberator).
- **Superfluous** – Unnecessary; excessive.
- **Enigmatic** – Mysterious; difficult to explain.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate the resistance Jesus and John the Baptist faced as an attack on the kingdom of heaven.
2. Identify sources of resistance in the world toward the kingdom of heaven.
3. Exercise Christian practices that produce righteousness in the face of opposition.

Teaching Strategies

The following exercises will help us to reach the goals stated above.

1. Matthew's slant to highlight the conflict between earthly kingdoms (Rome, social convention) and the kingdom of heaven inaugurated by Jesus is evident in the text. Lead the class in focusing on this conflict. Is this sharp division between worldliness and holiness evident among believers today?
2. Review the ministry of John the Baptist as reported in Matthew. Ask the class to examine the extent, if any, to which John's ministry is still relevant today. Why did Jesus need an earthly sponsor to introduce him to Israel?
3. Be prepared to deal with the alternative interpretations of verse 11:12. Some English translations of the Greek *biasati* have referenced "forceful believers," even though most translators favor the translation "violent opponents" (see NRSV, for example). Explore how the two interpretations affect the way people read the story. Try to identify current examples of forceful believers and violent opponents to God's reign.
4. In the text, Jesus lamented that his mighty miracles did not move the people to repentance and faith in him. What are the implications for people in the evangelism ministry today? Why may miracles and powerful preaching fail to draw people into the body of believers?
5. Should start 'Secular minded people are simply indifferent to the preaching of' the gospel and the work of the church. Other persons actively oppose Christianity whenever they get an opportunity. Which of these situations are worse? How does this assessment affect the strategies evangelists use to witness to the two groups?

6. Many in the AME Church will celebrate AME Founder's Day today. How might we think about the history of the AME Church in light of our lesson's learning objective: to exercise Christian practices that produce righteousness in the face of opposition?

Resources: When we think about attacks on the gospel and the kingdom of heaven, the normal image is about external attacks from skeptics and atheists. However, the gospel message often faces vicious assaults from within the body of Christ. A posting on Christianity.com (June 21, 2023) entitled "Two Big Reasons Why People Reject Christianity" looks at two of these internal assault weapons. A study of the article will show how what believers do in the name of Christianity can be more devastating to the Christian faith than hostile attacks from outside the body of Christ.

LFS: Lesson 12 — February 16, 2025
THE FIRST WILL BE LAST

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

Focus Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

Key Verse: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” Matthew 19:24

Key Terms

- **Asceticism** – Strict self-discipline and self-denial of worldly pleasures and conveniences.
- **Humility** – An acceptance that you have no special importance that makes you better than others; an absence of self-pride.
- **Philanthropist** – A person who donates freely to the welfare of others.
- **Premium** – Considered to have the highest value; above the usual importance.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Analyze the conflict the rich young man felt in weighing the cost and reward of following Jesus.
2. Affirm the grace of God who makes salvation possible.
3. Integrate understanding the cost of following Jesus into our discipleship.

Teaching Strategies

These exercises will assist your efforts in teaching the lesson effectively.

1. Create a game called “What Would You Sacrifice to Enter the Kingdom of Heaven?” List people, places, experiences, and possessions on separate index cards and have learners draw from the pile. Each person explains why they would or would not sacrifice the item. When this exercise is done properly, it helps participants to assess their value systems.
2. Review the meaning of the “kingdom of heaven” as God’s realm here on earth, inaugurated by Jesus, who is meek, compassionate, nonviolent, and in opposition to the kingdoms of this world. Lead a discussion on where the two kingdoms conflict and where they agree (if in any respects).
3. Review the meaning of *grace* and how grace plays a role in Jesus’ response to the young man. Ask the class to comment on Jesus’ “needle eye” comments and if it is reasonable to hear in those comments that rich people cannot get into the kingdom of God.
4. Ask the class to give examples of behaviors that show that a person’s devotion to money and wealth is greater than their devotion to God. Let participants suggest how people can change such behaviors to clear the way for people to enter the kingdom of God.
5. Based on Jesus’ comments, a poor person should have an easier time entering the kingdom of heaven. Can we use these comments as a good reason to ask believers to remain poor? Discuss this considering religious sects like monks that live ascetic lifestyles.

6. In response to Peter, Jesus describes an upside-down kingdom in which the first are last and the last first. Ask the class to identify instances where they see this principle at work. Take the discussion a step further and inquire from participants how they can incorporate the principle in their lifestyle.
7. If they did not observe it last Sunday, some will observe AME Church Founder's Day today. How might we think about the founding of the AME Church in light of one of our lesson's objectives: integrate understanding the cost of following Jesus into our discipleship?

Resources: The text and lesson open a study on the cost of following Jesus. This is a subject every believer must address repeatedly in his or her Christian walk. "Why Does Jesus Tell Us to Count the Cost of Following Him?" is a posting on *Bible Study Tools* online (May 22, 2024) that shares relevant points on the matter. Read the post and assess how closely the views expressed therein align with your own view on the subject.

LFS: Lesson 13 — February 23, 2025

KINGDOM LIFE

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 25

Focus Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Key Verses: “The king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food...’” Matthew 25:34-35

Key Terms

- **Superfluous** – Unnecessary details.
- **Mutuality** – A two-way relationship; each party caring for the other.
- **CUNY** – City University of New York.
- **Generosity** – A willingness to give freely to people in need or groups serving such people.

Lesson Goals: By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Investigate Jesus' criteria for responsible kingdom living in the parable of the sheep and the goats.
2. Identify where one's values align/fall short of Jesus' standards for kingdom dwellers.
3. Lead your church in ministries that serve the "least of these."

Teaching Strategies

The following exercises help to achieve the lesson goals.

1. Note that Matthew 25 is part of a section that begins with the disciples asking, “Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3b). Read the parable of sheep and goats as a response to the disciples’ question. In this context, Jesus’ response goes beyond the “when” in the question to the “who” will be in the kingdom and the criteria that get them there.

How believers live in this present world therefore serves two purposes. Believers’ lifestyles reflect God’s kingdom on the earth and qualifies them to enter the coming kingdom age. Hold this key thought throughout the lesson.

2. Here are two key facts that provide context for the parable. Palestinian sheep and goats looked similar from a distance and often grazed together. But they were separated at night because the goats required a warmer place to rest. Jesus’ audience thus understood the principle/need to separate sheep and goats.
3. Lead a discussion on the importance of the believers’ (disciples) mandate to care for the needy in society. In the conversation explore why this aspect of the Christian life becomes part of the kingdom entry criteria and whether the caring ministry should extend to indolent people.
4. In the text Jesus restricted the demanded caring to the basic needs of food, drink, shelter, and clothes. Ask participants if Christians should limit their charitable efforts to these basic items only. Recognize that in this age, services like access to the internet can

come under the heading of necessities.

5. Ask a leader of your church's ministry of compassion to speak about their efforts to offer pastoral care and encouragement to others as a mandate from Jesus.

Resources: Charitable giving features significantly in this lesson. The article mentioned in the **Case Study**, "The 4 Barriers That Keep Your Donors From Giving," can be a useful read. It is on *The Classy Blog* (<https://www.classy.org>). The question the posting helps us to answer is why even believers seem unwilling to give to charities despite the clear call in the scriptures to be charitable to persons in need.

The Teacher's Guide — SR: Lesson 1 - December 1, 2024

Senior Lessons

Winter Quarter: December 2024 – February 2025

Prepared by Rev. Faith Waters

THE ANCESTRY OF KING DAVID

(First Sunday of Advent)

Lesson Scripture: Ruth 1–4; Luke 3:23-38

Focus Scripture: Ruth 4:9-17; Luke 3:23, 31b-32

Key Verse: The women...gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David. Ruth 4:17

Words to Know

- **Inheritance** – Personal property or possessions inherited from a deceased person.
- **Kindred** – The family to which one belongs.
- **Renowned** – Known by many people; famous.
- **Elimelech** – Pronounced: ee – LIHM – eh – lehk.
- **Chilion** – Pronounced: KIHl – ee – ahn.
- **Mahlon** – Pronounced: MAH – luhn.
- **Ephrathah** – Pronounced: EHF – ruh – thuh.

- Lesson Goals:** By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
1. Explore the connection between Ruth and Boaz and the ancestral line of David and Jesus.
 2. Rejoice in knowing God's salvation came through a human living amongst us.
 3. Develop an understanding of your spiritual heritage through studying your family's faith story.

Teaching Strategies

1. The term Moabites is used to denote the people of Moab (Num. 22:3-14; Judg. 3:30; 2 Sam. 8:2; Jer. 48:11, 13). The land of Moab (Jer. 48:24), called also the “country of Moab” (Ruth 1:2, 6; 2:6), was located on the east of Jordan and the Dead Sea, and south of the Arnon (Num. 21:13, 26). In a wider sense it included the whole region that had been occupied by the Amorites. It bears the modern name of Kerak. In the Plains of Moab, opposite Jericho (Num. 22:1; 26:63; Josh. 13:32), the children of Israel had their last encampment before they entered the land of Canaan. It was at that time in the possession of the Amorites (Num. 21:22).
2. The trip to Bethlehem from Moab is 50 miles. It would take Naomi and Ruth seven (7) to ten (10) days to walk through this mountain region.
3. Explore the impact of Naomi ensuring Ruth had a kinsman-redeemer through Boaz (Ruth 3–4). As a result, Ruth was a part of God’s plan to prepare for the births of David and Jesus, the Messiah.
4. During Advent, every week a candle is lit representing a theme that is accompanied by scriptures and songs. The weekly themes are: 1) Hope; 2) Peace; 3) Joy; 4) Love; 5) Christ.
5. This week remind the class to pray and read scriptures on hope.
6. Reflect on the meaning of the name Ruth, “compassionate, sorrowful for the plight of another.” Who is a “Ruth” to you? Give thanks to God and that person.

Resources: Candles (battery operated), wreath

SR: Lesson 2 — December 8, 2024
GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID

(Second Sunday of Advent)

Lesson Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:1-17

Focus Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:4-17

Key Verse: Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever. 2 Samuel 7:16

Words to Know

- **Appoint** – To set in office or position.
- **Offspring** – A person's child or children.
- **Establish** – Set up a kingdom on a firm or permanent basis.
- **Throne** – A seat for the king, judge, or priest.
- **Iniquity** – Immoral or grossly unfair behavior; sin.
- **Steadfast** – Resolutely or dutifully firm and unwavering.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Analyze God's promise to David to establish a royal family through his lineage.
2. Feel in awe of God's desire for us to be a part of Christ's family.
3. Express thanks for God's trustworthiness and fulfilled promises.

Teaching Strategies

1. David's desire to build a "house" for God was prompted by gratitude (7:1-2); God's plan to build a "house" out of David was God's response to David's acknowledgment that God, not David, was the reason for David's success.
2. Be sensitive towards those who do not trust others due to being neglected by loved ones.
3. Be sensitive towards those who do not have a permanent place to call home.
4. Discuss all of God's covenants after viewing the video.
5. This covenant provided a Davidic house or family where the Messiah could be born (Matt.1:1, 16; Lk. 3:23); a perpetual kingdom, and a throne. The one condition is that those who break the covenant would be chastised for disobedience. The covenant would "endure forever."
6. The covenant was renewed to Mary by the angel Gabriel (Lk. 1:31-33; Acts 2:29-32; 15:14-17).
7. In 7:6, God says that he lived among his people "in a tent and indwelling" (see the Hebrew), language not only reminiscent of Exodus 26 but also of John 1: God's desire from the very beginning (Genesis 3:8) has been to be with his people.
8. God's covenants (Genesis 15; Deuteronomy 27-28; even Romans 5-6) are all gifts initiated by God, not as a reward for work but as a firm commitment to establishing a relationship that God has sought out. Men/women has responded: much like a marriage, it is the security and stability of commitment that allows trust and intimacy to grow.

9. Alternate opening or closure: Allow the class to plant vegetable or flower seeds in the soil of a small pot or cup. Say, "We are planting the seedlings as a reminder that God is the faithful gardener who cares for us with great attention and gentleness."

Resources: Candles (battery operated), wreath, journal, seeds, soil, small pots or cups

SR: Lesson 3 — December 15, 2024
THE PROPHET WHO PREPARES THE WAY

(Third Sunday of Advent)

Lesson Scripture: Luke 1:5-23, 57-80b

Focus Scripture: Luke 1:67-80

Key Verses: And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. Luke 1:76-77

Words to Know

- **Prophecy** – Message from God.
- **Redeemed** – To be freed from the bondage of sin.
- **Holiness** – A setting apart for God's use.
- **Righteousness** – The perfect holiness of Christ, which we can only receive through faith in him.
- **Mercy** – The compassion of God to not condemn us.
- **Zechariah** – Pronounced: zeh – kuh – RAI – uh.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand the meaning of Zechariah's prophecy concerning his son.
2. Discern what Jesus desires for your future by seeking his guidance.
3. Commit to praying and studying the Word daily.

Teaching Strategies

1. This is the Third Sunday of Advent and the theme is joy. “Joy to the World” (*AMEC Hymnal* #120) is a song option for the opening or closing.
2. Discuss the visit of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth’s home.
3. Compare Mary’s song, the Magnificat, with the Benedictus (Luke 1:46-55 and 1:67-79).
4. God kept God’s promise to Abraham to be merciful to his people forever (Gen. 22:16-18). Christ’s birth fulfilled the promise.
5. John lived in the wilderness. The wilderness was the place where the prophets went to isolate themselves and enhance their spiritual growth. John needed to focus his attention on the message God called him to proclaim to the people.
6. Discuss the sacrament of baptism and its meaning in the AMEC.
7. Before Acts 2, being filled with the Spirit was a divine empowerment to perform a specific, frequently limited-duration action. Or, in the case of the prophets, to speak God’s words, and was not the indwelling, permanent presence we are gifted with today (Exodus 31:3, 35:31-35; Numbers 11:25-26; 1 Samuel 10:10-11; Joshua 34:9).
8. Luke 1:76 echoes Isaiah 40:3-5; see the link to John’s message of actions-proved repentance in 3:3-14, where repentance is how God’s people clear away the obstacles and make a straight pathway for God to be present in/among them.

Resources: Candles (battery operated), wreath, journal

SR: Lesson 4 — December 22, 2024
BORN IN THE CITY OF DAVID

(Fourth Sunday of Advent)

Lesson Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Focus Scripture: Luke 2:1-16

Key Verse: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” Luke 2:15

Words to Know

- **Decree** – A law or statute publicly announced for all to know.
- **Shepherds** – Those who herd and care for a flock or flocks of sheep, as well as protect them from wild beasts.
- **Manger** – A trough where cattle are fed.
- **Glory** – A magnificent appearance that attracts admiration and attention.
- **Quirinius** – Pronounced: kwai – RIHN – ih – uhs.
- **Nazareth** – Pronounced: NAZ – uh – rehth.
- **Galilee** – Pronounced: GAL – ih – lee.
- **Judea** – Pronounced: dzhou – DEE – uh.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Seek an understanding of God's purpose for revealing the Messiah's birth to the shepherds.
2. Marvel at God's plan for our salvation through a newborn baby.
3. Retell the story of the birth of Jesus, our savior, in a modern way for the unsaved.

Teaching Strategies

1. This is the fourth Sunday of Advent and the theme is love.
2. If possible, bring small gifts to give to the class. (Oriental Trading has small gifts to buy.)
3. The reenactment of the Bible story may take up most of the class time. Encourage the class to snap a pic of the remaining parts of the lesson and complete them at home.
4. Be sensitive to youth who come from families who do not celebrate Christmas.
5. Usually, shepherds stayed out with their sheep only during the lambing season, which would be early spring (2:8).
6. God has a long history of using shepherds in significant roles, including Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and Amos; also, consider how frequently scripture compares God to a shepherd (see Zechariah 11, for example). Using them as witnesses here both underscores the connection to Israel's history with God and emphasizes that God chose to lift the lowly (Luke 1:52).
7. Luke gives undisputable evidence that Jesus is: 1) the Son of God and the true heir of the Davidic promise (1:32); 2) the anointed servant and promised savior (2:11); and 3) reminding us that God always keeps God's promises, and always keeps them in ways beyond what we can even ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).
8. Mary's response to her child's birth reminds us that God's work always has deeper levels and meanings that take time and pondering to soak in and understand (Psalm 119:15, 27, 148).

Resources: Candles (battery operated), wreath, journal, candy,

props for a reenactment of the story: clothes, cloths, shepherd's
hook, box for baby Jesus, safety pins

SR: Lesson 5 — December 29, 2024

THE MERCIFUL SON OF DAVID

Lesson Scripture: Luke 18:31-43

Focus Scripture: Luke 18:35-43

Key Verse: Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"
Luke 18:39

Words to Know

- **Mercy** – The compassion of God to not condemn us.
- **Sternly** – In a harsh, severe way.
- **Glorifying** – To honor or magnify.
- **Jericho** – Pronounced: JHEHR – ih – ko.
- **Nazareth** – Pronounced: NAZ – uh – rehth.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Discover how the blind man connected with Jesus as the Son of David.

2. Strive to worship the merciful Son of David, Jesus.

3. Demonstrate love and mercy while serving those in need.

Teaching Strategies

1. Be sensitive towards those who have eye deformities.
2. Have the class research the distance between Jericho and Jerusalem.
3. Review the previous four lessons and discuss how this week's scripture fits in.
4. Collaborate with the Missionary Department in your church to decide on community projects. Ask the congregation to volunteer or donate items.
5. Discuss: Who are the people who are silenced today? Where do we see this? How can we, through the Holy Spirit, follow Jesus' example?
6. Say to class, "As this year ends in a few days, think about what spiritual changes you can make to have a closer relationship with God. Write your responses in your journals."

SR: Lesson 6 — January 5, 2025

THE LORD IS KING

Lesson Scripture: Psalms 9, 10

Focus Scripture: Psalm 10:12-18

Key Verse: O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear. Psalm 10:17

Words to Know

- **Oppressed** – Unjust exercise of authority.
- **Renounce** – To formally declare one's abandonment of God.
- **Wicked** – Those who commit evil or morally wrong actions.
- **Meek** – The quiet, gentle, and easily imposed on.
- **Incline** – Feel willing or favorably disposed toward an action.
- **Justice** – The concept that individuals are to be treated in a manner that is equitable and fair.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Understand God's purposes for enacting justice.
2. Appreciate God's ways of enacting justice in the world.
3. Identify and act against injustice.

Teaching Strategies

1. Hebrew tradition handed down Psalms 9 and 10 as two poems, but they form one unit with an acrostic structure. Each section begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The Greek text also shows it is a single poem.
2. The Psalms records three successive experiences of God: Joyous recognition of benefits to the singer (9:3-4) and the nation (9:5-8); a cry for help during an attack (9:13-14); and a deeply felt desire for justice (10:1-18).
3. The psalmist complains about the effects of God's absence resulting in the persecution of the poor by the wealthy (10:2a).
4. The psalmist is questioning and arguing with God about the great power of the wicked.
5. Before David became king, he suffered for years under Saul's volatile temper (1 Samuel 18–19; 24; 26) and, later, his persecution. Both David and those he loved bore the brunt of Saul's jealousy and fear (1 Samuel 18:8-9, 12, 15; 29–30: David's family was vulnerable because of Saul's persecution).
6. Anger is a healthy response to injustice (Psalm 10:12, 15). It gives us motivation and energy to right wrongs; the trick is in learning the wisdom to know what could bring anger and how to direct it (1 Samuel 24:8-15; James 1:20). Here David focuses that intensity on trusting wholeheartedly in God (Psalm 10:14, 17-18).

SR: Lesson 7 — January 12, 2025
THE LORD IS ROBED IN MAJESTY

Lesson Scripture: Psalms 47, 93

Focus Scripture: Psalm 93

Key Verse: The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed; he is girded with strength. Psalm 93:1

Words to Know

- **Majesty** – Beauty, royal power.
- **Girded** – To be bound around.
- **Decrees** – Laws published for all to know.
- **Holiness** – The perfect moral character of God.
- **Befits** – Be appropriate for.

Lesson Goals: By the end of the lesson, students will be able to: 1.

Explore how God restores order and peace.

2. Appreciate God's almighty and creative power.

3. Demonstrate peacemaking amid our chaotic world.

Teaching Strategies

1. In preparation for class, read Genesis 1. Discuss how creation reminds us God is our powerful creator. If possible, take the class for a walk outside and encourage them to pay attention to nature (animals, insects, sun, moon, flowers, people, etc.).
2. Some in the class may question the power of God because of past abuse.
3. Give the class paper and colored markers to draw a picture depicting Psalm 93:1, 93:3, or 93:4.
4. Let the class share the names of modern-day peacemakers, as well as those they consider peacemakers in their lives.
5. Today is Baptism of the Lord Sunday.

Resources: Paper, colored markers

SR: Lesson 8 — January 19, 2025
THE LORD'S THRONE IS ESTABLISHED

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 103

Focus Scripture: Psalm 103:1-14

Key Verse: The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. Psalm 103:6

Words to Know

- **Bless** – To praise or give thanks to God for his goodness.
- **Iniquity** – Injustice, sins.
- **Vindication** – God's action of clearing someone of blame or suspicion.
- **Oppressed** – Unjust exercise of authority.
- **Grace** – The undeserved favor of God.
- **Compassion** – A feeling of pity or sorrow for another's suffering.

Lesson Goals: By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Explore God's love and righteousness towards us.
2. Worship and praise God for God's love, justice, and compassion.
3. Exhibit faith and love towards others.

Teaching Strategies

1. Be sensitive towards those who have been neglected or abused by a loved one.
2. Role-play two scenarios that present the opportunity for you to model the love and forgiveness of God.
3. Discuss the nonviolent stance that Martin Luther King, Jr. lived by and how it models God's love.
4. Remind the class, before they start complaining, to just read Psalm 103 and praise God for God's goodness.
5. Read Psalm 103 and list the adjectives attributed to God and another of the adjectives describing humans. How is God's kingdom characterized?
6. Research info on bald eagles and share interesting facts about them.

SR: Lesson 9 — January 26, 2025
MY GOD, THE KING

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 145

Focus Scripture: Psalm 145:1, 10-21

Key Verse: Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. Psalm 145:13

Words to Know

- **Bless** – To praise or give thanks to God for his goodness.
- **Extol** – To exalt.
- **Dominion** – Power, rule.
- **Gracious** – The undeserved favor of God.
- **Fear** – To have reverence.
- **Wicked** – Evil or morally wrong.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand the steadfast character of God.
2. Embrace the character of God and strive to embody it.
3. Plan an activity that opens opportunities to share God's mercy, goodness, and compassion.

Teaching Strategies

1. Be sensitive towards those who have experienced abuse and do not feel that God is good.
2. Discuss how all creation praises God, not just humans.
3. Be sensitive towards those who may be experiencing homelessness and poverty.
4. Discuss various ways people of different races and cultures worship and praise God.
5. David's critical foundation is his acknowledgment of God as sovereign (145:1) and in that, his submission to God's plans and direction. The rest of Psalm 145 is David's explanation of why he rejoices in God's sovereignty. God's goodness and faithfulness are constant, making trusting God the only option that makes sense in this world (145:3-7).
6. In David's time, most Israelites were subsistence farmers/herders, so sufficient food was a real cause for concern (145:14-16). While many of us may not face the real possibility of starvation, we should not lose sight of that reality around us and throughout the world, and experience God's generosity working through us as we share our resources (Acts 2:45, 2 Corinthians 8).

SR: Lesson 10 — February 2, 2025
PRAYING FOR RELIEF

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Focus Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Key Verse: May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10

Words to Know

- **Hypocrites** – False pretenders.
- **Hallowed** – Made holy; consecrated.
- **Forgive** – to excuse, pardon.
- **Trespases** – sins.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1.

Discover how God's kingdom will transform your life.

2. Discern the need for God to forgive us of our sins.

3. Create a prayer comparable to "The Lord's Prayer."

Teaching Strategies

1. This gospel is the connecting link between the Old and New Testaments because of its emphasis on the fulfillment of prophecy. Matthew is filled with messianic language and Old Testament references. There are 53 quotes and 76 other references. Its purpose is to present clear evidence that Jesus is the Messiah, the savior.
2. After Jesus gives the Beatitudes, he teaches about salt and light, the law, anger, lust, divorce, vows, retaliation, and loving enemies.
3. Be sensitive towards those who cannot yet forgive those who abused them.
4. Encourage the class to memorize “The Lord’s Prayer” and recite it daily.
5. Discuss how forgiveness promotes unity.

Resources: Sticky notes

SR: Lesson 11 — February 9, 2025

RESISTANCE TO THE KINGDOM

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 11

Focus Scripture: Matthew 11:7-15, 20-24

Key Verse: Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done because they did not repent.
Matthew 11:20

Words to Know

- **Reed** – A tall, broad-leaved plant found in the lowlands of the Jordan Valley and Egypt and symbolizing instability.
- **Prophet** – God’s spokesperson, the divinely called minister who announced the will of God to God’s people.
- **Reproach** – Dishonor, scorn.
- **Woe** – Great sorrow or distress.
- **Chorazin** – Pronounced: kor – AY – sihn.
- **Bethsaida** – Pronounced: behth – SAY – ih – duh.
- **Capernaum** – Pronounced: kuh – PERR – nay – uhm.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand that God’s kingdom faces resistance in the world.
2. Resolve to stand for right as guided by the Holy Spirit.
3. Pray and meditate on scriptures that can be instrumental when facing opposition for your faith.

Teaching Strategies

1. Reeds were used figuratively for what was weak and undependable in times of trouble (1 Kings 14:15, 2 Kings 18:21).
2. Those who listen will realize that the one who comes after Elijah, after the voice in the wilderness, is the Messiah, God's anointed servant (Isaiah 53).
3. As God's activity increases through God's people (John the Baptist, Jesus, and- today- God's church), so does opposition to God's work (Matthew 11:12).
4. Go to www.persecution.com for more info about the persecuted church.
5. Have the class search for a New Testament map on their electronic device or cell phone. Locate places mentioned in the lesson. Bring copies of a New Testament map to class for those who need it.

Resources: Map

SR: Lesson 12 — February 16, 2025

THE FIRST WILL BE LAST

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

Focus Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

Key Verse: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” Matthew 19:24

Words to Know

- **Deed** – An act or work.
- **Commandments** – God's laws.
- **Treasure** – That which is laid up, valuable.
- **Astounded** – Shocked or greatly surprised.
- **Renewal** – The re-creation of the earth which is restored at the second Advent.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Evaluate the sacrifices required to follow Jesus.

2. Discern the worldly influences that interfere with your relationship with Jesus.

3. Commit to a sacrificial relationship with Christ.

Teaching Strategies

1. Explore the societal differences in how we treat the poor and rich.
2. The camel is the largest animal in the region.
3. The new age on earth is also a time featuring the general resurrection.
4. “Do not covet” was the commandment that the rich man had a problem obeying.
5. Brainstorm: What does it mean for life to be complete? What relationships, objects, or attributes do we desire for a complete life?
6. In God’s kingdom, what can we expect regarding positions of favor (rich and poor)?

SR: Lesson 13 — February 23, 2025

KINGDOM LIFE

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 25

Focus Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Key Verses: “The king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, for I was hungry and you gave me food...’” Matthew 25:34-35

Words to Know

- **Glory** – A magnificent appearance that attracts admiration and attention.
- **Blessed** – To be or declare happy or fortunate.
- **Righteous** – A person who lives according to the laws of God.
- **Accursed** – Not respected or admired.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Explore the requirements of kingdom living and the treatment of others.
2. Rejoice in knowing Christ loves all people.
3. Collaborate with the congregation to minister to those in need.

Teaching Strategies

1. If the church desires to volunteer, contact the United Way. They have a list of open volunteer positions.
2. The concept of sheep vs. goats (Matthew 25:32) would have been familiar to first-century Jews. The Second Temple philosophy of the Two Ways used that type of imagery to describe those who lived wise, God-fearing lives vs. those who led evil, selfish lives.
3. Hospitality was (and continues to be) a core value in Palestine and its surrounding countries. For centuries, hospitality to strangers has been seen as a matter of personal honor (compare Genesis 18:1-8).
4. Generosity is merely sacrificing part of yourself – your time, resources, energy, even emotions – on behalf of someone else's needs. 1 John 3:16-18 tells us that real generosity flows out of gratitude for what we have been given and out of following God's generous example (1 John 2:5-6).

The Teacher's Guide — INT: Lesson 1 - December 1, 2024
Intermediate Lessons Winter Quarter: December 2024 –
February 2025

Prepared by Dr. Kabrina Bass The Ancestry of King David **First**
Sunday of Advent Lesson Scripture: Ruth 1–4; Luke 3:23-38

Focus Scripture: Ruth 4:9-17; Luke 3:23, 31b-32

Key Verse: The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David. Ruth 4:17

Vocabulary

- **Redeemer** – A person who has the responsibility to recover or retain family property.
- **Inheritance** – Property or land given by one person to the next generation.
- **Kindred** – A full male sibling with the same mother and father; a person of the same close family, uncle, aunt, or offspring of the same.
- **Elder** – Oldest in the house; legal competence in a community; a social class.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Learn the significant roles Ruth and Boaz shared in David and Jesus' ancestral line.

2. Rejoice in God's salvation that comes to us through ordinary, unlikely people.
3. Cultivate a sense of identity in God's family tree by journaling or

listening to music.

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name. Welcome everyone to the new *Winter Quarter, A King Forever and Ever*. Unit 1 focuses on “Jesus, the Heir of David,” which explores the broad sweep of biblical teaching about God’s reign and connects to Jesus as the earthly exhibition of the divine kingdom. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Ask:** Questions to help students understand their family history. What has been passed down through your family? **Discuss:** How families sometimes have a history of helping people through many different talents like teaching, giving, caring, and many others. **Share:** The unifying principle of today’s lesson, **What can we learn about ourselves by knowing our ancestral families?** Jesus’ and King David’s family tree features an unlikely marriage between Boaz and Ruth, a testimony to the greatness of God’s grace to affect divine purposes.

Teaching Strategies Introduction: Invite: Participants to share anything they know about a family tree. **Ask:** How far can you go back in your family tree? In our lesson’s introduction, we learn about Josh. Josh was related to a former great leader of the city.

Introduce: Today’s lesson focuses on the lineage of King David from a woman named Ruth.

Bible Story: Ask: For volunteers to read the scripture. Read Ruth first. **Explain:** God instituted laws to protect Israelites from losing their family’s inheritance (Numbers 27:1-11); Boaz’s actions show compassion (Ruth 4:10), giving Naomi’s family a future, and showing

his respect for God's laws. Boaz is a man of selfless character.

Discuss: What do we learn from the reading of Ruth 4:9-17?

Explain: A widow without sons and past the age of bearing children faced an uncertain and bleak future: without standing in the community, without legal representation, and a respectable source of income, she was utterly dependent on the kindness of others for her survival. Obed changed all of that for Naomi (Ruth 4:14). Ask for a volunteer to read Luke 3:23, 31b-32. **Explain:** Jesus' family tree (Luke 3:23-38) establishes that he was a descendant of David (Luke 1:27, 32, 69) through his relationship with Joseph. Luke traces Jesus' line to Adam to demonstrate that he was a member of humanity. Thus, Jesus' story is humanity's story, fully inclusive of Gentiles like Ruth (Matthew 1:5).

Activity: Break into groups to discuss Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi, respectively. In each group, discuss how each character felt at the beginning of the narrative, what actions they took in the middle, and how they felt at the end. What do we learn about God through the telling of this story? How does this affect our understanding of the rest of the Bible?

Discuss: Ways a family learns of its family history. Who teaches the family history in your family? When does the family take time to learn of the ancestors?

Explain: Today, the family lineage is still particularly important. Many people pay to find the history or story of their family.

Life Application: Discuss: Ruth's story includes migration, poverty, a mixed marriage, and redemptive love. **Discuss:** How these things were viewed during the time of Ruth. How are they considered today? What does their inclusion in both the Bible and the lineage of

Jesus say about God's perspective on them? **Invite** youth to discuss some of the discrimination experienced by people who are immigrants, live in poverty, or are in mixed marriages. *(Then, people moved because of circumstances; Naomi and Ruth had experienced death and famine in their land; now, people move because of circumstances including war, crisis, and other situations.)*

Alternative: Invite youth to begin creating their family tree from the activity page. **Ask:** Participants if anyone has created a family tree.

Ask: How far back the family has been able to trace their lineage.

Explain: The appendix is a guide to discuss the importance of trust, obedience, and God's promises. **Invite:** Participants to reflect through the handout and guide them through the questions. Allow time for individuals to reflect on each question.

APPENDICES 01 WORD SEARCH



Summary: Explain: Ruth's husband had died, and her mother-in-law Naomi could not provide for her. Ruth and Naomi were widows who depended on the compassion of others. **Discuss:** Who are people in your life who rely on the compassion of others? Students

should consider ways to serve people individually or corporately.

Alternative: Discuss what we learn about God through the telling of this story of Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi. How does their story affect the understanding of the rest of the Bible?

How can the lineage of David and Jesus help you enhance Advent and Christmas celebrations, considering current tensions regarding race and immigration?

Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths.

Invite: Participants to share one takeaway from today's lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway. Thank each participant for sharing their takeaway and their truth.

Encourage: Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the closing devotion.

Resources: Handout: Video: Book of Ruth – <https://youtu.be/0h1eoBeR4Jk&t=5s>

(7:32) Story of Ruth – <https://youtu.be/ZsRmp-FE6jM> (10 min.) **Review:** YouTube video before class

INT: Lesson 2 — December 8, 2024
GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID SECOND
SUNDAY OF ADVENT LESSON SCRIPTURE:
2 SAMUEL 7:1-17

Focus Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:4-17

Key Verse: “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.” 2 Samuel 7:16

Vocabulary

- **House** – Dwelling, palace, temple, family, dynasty.
- **Prophet Nathan** – Prophet in King David's time; delivers God's message to David.
- **Tabernacle** – A relatively large, portable dwelling, used as a central place of worship; made of cloth, leather, or animal hair, with poles and a superstructure for holding it up.
- **Kingdom** – Empire, the area or people ruled under a monarchy form of government.
- **Throne** – An ornate chair, the authority and rulership of a leader over a people; a place in a social arrangement marking a relatively high status.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Understand the significance of God's promise to establish a royal family in David's lineage.

2. Develop a sense of wonder for God's invitation to be included in the family of Christ.

3. Remember and give thanks for the ways God follows through on promises.

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Ask:** What has happened to you or your family where there was an expectation of one thing; however, something better occurred? **Discuss:** What's the best Christmas gift you have ever given someone? Consider, was it the physical gift that mattered most, or was it the thoughtfulness you showed? The same is true in our relationship with God. **Share:** The unifying principle of today's lesson, that people value permanence and seek to build structures that will outlast themselves. **In what ways can such plans be superseded?** When David wanted to build a house for God, conversely, God promised to build a "house" for David – a never-ending kingdom! **Explain:** The lesson explores God's promise to David to establish a kingdom in David's name forever.

Teaching Strategies Introduction: People often desire to build grandeur in buildings that all can see. King David had a desire to build a temple for the Lord; however, the Lord sent Nathan to share with David. God's desire for David was more than a temple. **Explain:** Today's lesson informs us of God's promise to David.

Bible Story: **Invite:** Volunteers to read the scriptures. Alternate between young men and women reading the scripture. **Explain:** David's desire to build a "house" for God was prompted by gratitude (7:1-2); however, David is not the one to build God a house, rather God will make a "house" for David. This was God's response to David's acknowledgment that God, not David, was the reason for

David's success. **Explain:** God made a promise to David that the destructive cycle of sin-judgment-rescue repeated throughout human history (compare 7:10-16 with Judges 2:11-19) would finally end through David (Matthew 1:1, 17).

Alternative: Invite youth to review other covenants God made in the Bible. See **APPENDICES 02 – BIBLICAL COVENANTS** in the student book. Read before class the three covenants and be prepared to discuss: Davidic Covenant, 2 Samuel 7:13-16; Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis 12:1-3; and Sinai Covenant, Exodus 19:3-8. **Discuss:** Which of God's promises capture your attention the most? Why?

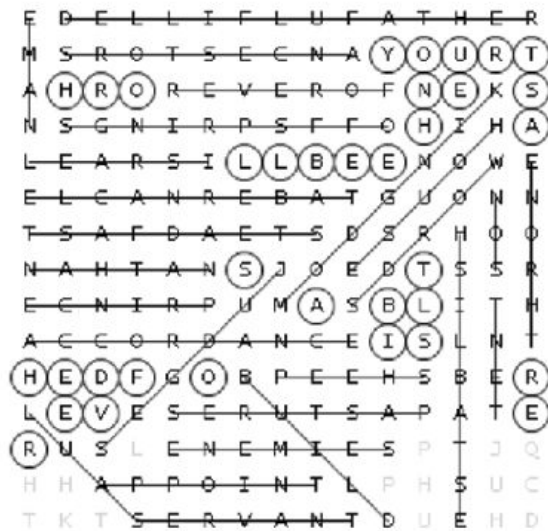
Life Application: God's promises are faithful. David received God's promise that his descendants would reign forever. **Discuss:** As we enter the season of giving and receiving, consider the promises you've made to others; have you been faithful to your promises? Can others trust you to keep your promises? Have you written a list of gifts you plan to give on Christmas? If you have, review your list, and consider if the recipient of your gift would see your gift as something you just gave without thought or will see your gift as personal and intentional.

Alternative: Explain: In the student handbook there is an activity to *Reflections and in Offering*. Review Review and allow participants, allow participants to complete the activity, and then discuss.

Summary: God promised David he would establish an everlasting family through David's lineage, which leads to Jesus Christ. **Invite:** Participants to consider the questions from the lesson. Allow time for students to reflect on the questions and consider their answers.

Alternative: Explain: Participants are invited to use vocabulary words listed in the word search to find a hidden message. The hidden message is the focus of the lesson.

Accordance, Ancestors, Appoint, Build, Enemies, Establish, Father, Forever, Fulfilled, House, Israel, Judges, Kingdom, Name, Nathan, Offsprings, Pastures, Prince, Saul, Servant, Sheep, Son, Steadfast, Tabernacle, Tent, Throne, Words



Your Throne Shall Be Established Forever

Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths.
Invite: Participants to share one takeaway from today’s lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway. Thank each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth.
Encourage: Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **Closing Devotion**.

Resources: Handout: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles **Video:** Davidic Covenant – https://youtu.be/3LL6_979GNE

Biblical Covenants – <https://youtu.be/xvvey71pfy0>

The Covenants – <https://youtu.be/6HjIGvl8ljM>

Review: YouTube video before class

INT: Lesson 3 — December 15, 2024
THE PROPHET WHO PREPARES THE WAY
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT LESSON
SCRIPTURE: LUKE 1:5-23, 57-80

Focus Scripture: Luke 1:67-80

Key Verses: And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. Luke 1:76-77

Vocabulary

- **Prophecy** – A message or revelation from God, often concerning future events.
- **Repentance** – A change of mind or heart, leading to a complete change in one's way of life; turning away from sin and turning towards God in obedience and devotion.
- **Salvation** – Deliverance from sin and its penalties, often associated with eternal life.
- **Oath** – A solemn promise, often invoking a divine witness, regarding one's future action or behavior.
- **Prepare** – To make ready or to put in a state of readiness.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Explore the meaning of Zechariah's prophecy concerning his son, John.

2. Turn to Jesus as they prepare for the future.

3. Commit to one spiritual discipline to help prepare the way for

God's plan of redemption.

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Share:** The unifying principle of today's lesson, in times of trouble, people require rescue. Zechariah prophesied that his son, John, would prepare the way for the coming savior who would redeem Israel.

Teaching Strategies Introduction: In many places there are elections; however, before the elections there are campaigns. In the campaign, different people tell others about the candidate and what they can do to make things better. **Discuss:** School elections have people talking about the candidates. What qualities in a person lead us to believe or trust their word(s)?

Bible Story: Ask: Participants if anyone likes music. If you have someone who has an interest in music, invite them to read vs. 67-75; if not, request two volunteers to read. The first volunteer will read vs. 67-75 and the second will read 76-80. **Explain:** Prophecy in the OT and Second Temple era that ended in AD 70, was a matter of being God's audible voice to God's people. These messages usually addressed the people's failure to follow God or encouraged them to follow despite difficult circumstances: giving them glimpses of a future (promises or consequences) was one way God motivated his people to continue being faithful. **Ask:** What is Zechariah saying about God in vs. 67-75? **Explain:** The phrase "horn of salvation" (1:69; "mighty savior," NRSV) was used in the OT to refer to strength, particularly military force (see Psalm 75:4-5; 10; 2 Samuel

22:3); in this case, Zechariah is describing an influential figure whose purpose is to rescue and defend, not attack, God's people. **Ask:** What is Zechariah saying about his son in vs. 76-79? **Explain:** Luke's gospel is an introduction that: God will come to rescue and restore so that all people may be restored (in right standing) in their relationship to God. Restoration means living in God's presence without fear and moving toward God in peace and trusting obedience.

Life Application: Zechariah's prophecy highlights John's role in preparing the way for Jesus and God's plan of redemption. As believers, we can apply this to our lives by recognizing our role, living with purpose, being the light, and sharing the *Good News*.

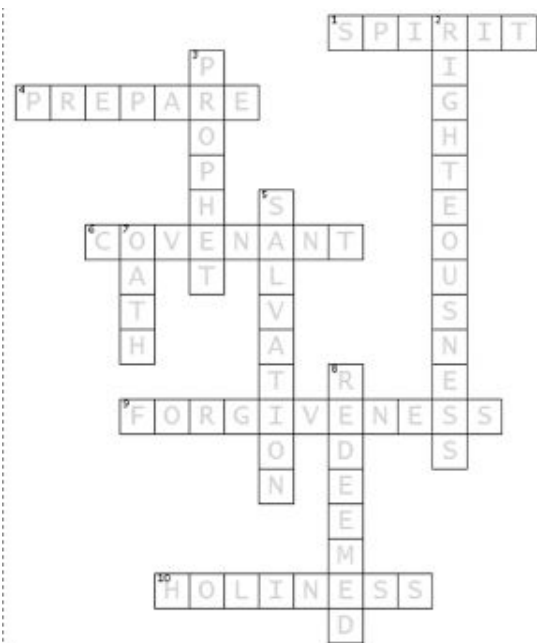
Ask: Participants to consider ways they share the news of Jesus with others. Pause and allow participants to ponder the question.

Invite: Participants to share ways they invite others to know God.

Alternative: Invite participants to complete the puzzle to use and learn vocabulary words.

Read the definitions and fill in the appropriate word based on the definitions. Words can go across or down. Letters are shared when the words intersect.

covenant, forgiveness, holiness, oath, prepare, prophet,
righteousness, redeemed, salvation, spirit



Or, allow participants time to reflect on **APPENDICES 03 – REFLECTION OF A PROPHECY**. Encourage participants to create at least three actions.

Summary: Invite: Participants to share their summary of today's lesson. Allow 1-2 volunteers to share how they would summarize today's lesson. **Discuss:** How does Zechariah's prophecy about John the Baptist highlight the importance of preparing the way for Jesus and God's plan of redemption? In what ways can we, as modern believers, actively prepare the way for God's work and share the message of Jesus in our daily lives?

Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths.

Invite: participants to share one takeaway from today's lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway. Thank each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth.

Encourage: Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **Closing**

Devotion.

Resources: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles Video: The Birth of Jesus: Luke 1-2 – <https://youtu.be/OLezoUvOEO>

Animated Zechariah's Song – <https://youtu.be/IZ6WCGsTprs>

Zechariah Speaks – <https://youtu.be/5h-M1vmWJkA>

Preparation – <https://youtu.be/dOKs4VthbwM>

Review: YouTube Video before class

INT: Lesson 4 — December 22, 2024
BORN IN THE CITY OF DAVID FOURTH
SUNDAY OF ADVENT LESSON SCRIPTURE:
LUKE 2:1-20

Focus Scripture: Luke 2:1-16

Key Verse: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” Luke 2:15

Vocabulary

- **Good News** – A message of hope, inspiration, and salvation (for this lesson, the birth of Jesus).
- **Savior** – One who delivers, rescues, or saves.
- **Christ** – The anointed one, specifically referring to Jesus as the Messiah.
- **Call** – Summon or invite; also used to refer to the calling or naming of Jesus.
- **Firstborn** – First in rank or preeminence, as well as first in birth order.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1.

Evaluate the significance of including shepherds in the news of Messiah’s birth.

2. Marvel at God’s love in coming to earth as a baby.

3. Interpret the birth of Jesus in words that might relate to their friends who do not go to church.

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name, and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them by name. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Share:** The unifying principle of today's lesson: "Everyone likes to hear good news." What good news can we expect in our day? God announced the *Good News* of Jesus' birth to shepherds, who were amazed at hearing it. **Explain:** We will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. In many cultures, the celebration includes the exchange of gifts, as Jesus was God's gift to the world. **Remind:** Participants that a gift has no strings attached. You do not earn a gift; you cannot trade nor negotiate a gift as these actions dissolve the exchange as a gift, and it becomes a payoff. Gifts, by nature, are unconditional and are the results of the giver and not the receiver. Never forget the reason for Christmas: God's love toward humanity created a gift we did not deserve, nor did we do anything to receive the gift.

Teaching Strategies Introduction: Welcome participants to the lesson and instruct participants that each will share for about 1-2 minutes. **Invite:** The participants to share something that has been passed down in their family; it can be an item, a family dish, or a tradition. **Explain:** Each of us was planned before our birth, not necessarily by our parents but by God. God created a path for our lives, yet we are not forced to follow the path, but guided by the Holy Spirit, if we yield. Just as families have created traditions, it only takes one generation to change or eliminate traditions. The same is true for us; it only takes one decision to alter our true path and destiny.

Bible Story: Invite: Participants to read the scriptures. **Inform:** The participant that each will read one verse and depending on the size of the class, some may read two or more verses. **Remind:** Participants that God's Word is a living word and to read with consideration of the writer. **Explain:** God has a long history of using shepherds in significant roles, including Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and Amos; also, consider how frequently scripture compares God to a shepherd (see Zechariah 11, for example). Using them as witnesses here both underscores the connection to Israel's history with God and emphasizes that God chose to lift the lowly (Luke 1:52). **Explain:** Throughout the OT and again here in the Nativity story (1:12, 29; 2:9), fear is the first response to God's angels, telling us that these are intimidating, obviously supernatural beings whose very presence reminds us of how finite and sinful we are, and how incompatible we are with even these extensions of God's holy presence. To assist in preparation, consider a huge theme for Luke is that of being a witness (2:17-18): it's the natural response to

seeing/experiencing God at work and is our commissioned task as his followers (Acts 1:8-9), naturally extending into making disciples who will also stand as witnesses (Matthew 28:18-19). Read these scriptures before class to prepare for discussion if needed.

Life Application: Ask: Participants to look closely at the role the shepherds played in the birth narrative. If possible, make a word map of all the words we would use to describe their role in this story.

Discuss: What purpose did the shepherds serve? **Explain:** The social position of shepherds in the New Testament (See **Resources**). **Discuss:** Who does society say matters today? Make a list of what people value about other people (money, connections, influence, etc.). Why did God choose shepherds to share the *good news*?

Alternative: Invite: Participants to use the activity sheet to create a storyboard about their future announcement. **Option:** As a class, create a churchwide future announcement.

Summary: Remind: Participants that many believe that Christmas has lost its meaning. Today's lesson reminds us of the excitement of the *Good News*. **Discuss:** What good news can we share with others about the true purpose of Christmas? Allow participants time to share (1-2 minutes per person). Pause to allow time to consider the question. **Discuss:** Imagine you're a shepherd in the field when the angel announces Jesus' birth. How would you feel being chosen for such an important message? Reflect on a time when you saw someone who felt left out or overlooked. How can you show the same kindness and inclusion to others in your daily life?

Alternative: Invite: Participants to review and complete **APPENDICES 04 – WE HAVE GOOD NEWS!!!** in the student guide.

Remind: Them to consider Mary, Joseph, the people of Bethlehem, and the shepherds, how they had firsthand experience of the *Good News*. How can we honor how each person responds to Christmas? Think of ways we can be present with others during this season.

Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths.

Invite: Participants to share one takeaway from today's lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth. **Encourage:** Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **Closing Devotion**.

Resources: Handout: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles

Animated Story – <https://youtu.be/zbOLxBHhvkA>

Shepherds –

<https://bibleresources.americanbible.org/resource/shepherds>

Review: YouTube Video before class Tool: MUST HAVE INTERNET ACCESS

– <https://www.mentimeter.com/> (Mentimeter) –

<https://edwordle.net/create.html> (Ed Wordle)

INT: Lesson 5 — December 29, 2024
THE MERCIFUL SON OF DAVID LESSON
SCRIPTURE: LUKE 18:31-43

Focus Scripture: Luke 18:35-43

Key Verse: Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Luke 18:39

Vocabulary

- **Accomplished** – Complete, fulfilled, come to an end.
- **Faith** – What can be believed, a state of certainty about belief; believe to a complete trust.
- **Flogged** – Beat with a whip, punished.
- **Mocked** – Ridicule, jeer.
- **Shout/Cry Out** – To scream, or call aloud.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Explain how Jesus was of the lineage of King David.

2. Desire to worship Jesus as the merciful Son of David's lineage.

3. Engage in compassionate service to others as merciful people of Christ.

Introduction Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name.

Introduce the new lesson unit and title to the participants.

Invite: Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Share:** The unifying principle of today's lesson, "People who ask for help are sometimes silenced." **How can we respond to those who call for help?** When the crowds tried to silence the cries of a

man who called out, "Son of David, have mercy on me!", Jesus stopped to ask the man what he could do for him.

Explain: The lesson notes the deliverance of Israel from Pharaoh at the Red Sea and the song Miriam led in response.

Teaching Strategies Introduction: Welcome participants to the

lesson and instruct participants that each will share for about 1-2 minutes. **Invite:** The participants to share one time when someone unexpected helped. **Explain:** Life brings challenges and there are times when we need help. We should not be fearful or prideful to seek out help. **Explain:** The lesson today invites each of us to consider, "How can we respond to those who call for help?"

Bible Story: Ask: For two volunteers to read the passage on Jesus and the beggar, and everyone else to read the in-between lines. **Inform:** Participants that the lesson is an encounter with Jesus. **Explain:** In the first century, blindness was considered a judgment from God for sins committed (for example, John 9:2), so the beggar receiving his sight would have been the equivalent of being rescued from God's judgment. If no one volunteers, read the scriptures together as a class. **Explain:** Luke's placement of this story is intentional and strategic: Luke 18:31-34 is a story about how the disciples knew Jesus best yet *were blind* to his real purpose on earth. Luke 18:35-43 isn't a story about healing a blind man as much as it is about *truly seeing* and how *we are saved* (18:26). Invite participants to reflect on what they read. **Ask:** What stands out from the scripture? What questions are you left with after reading the passage? How can the reading of an incident thousands of years ago be relevant today?

Alternative: Invite: Participants to compare the different responses between the disciples and the blind man. What does this say about Jesus? What does this say about how we tend to label people?

Life Application: Discuss: Who are the people who are silenced today? Where do we see this? How can we, through the Holy Spirit, follow Jesus' example? **Explain:** The man who was blind could have

heard Jesus' question (18:41) as a superficial query into his post as a beggar (see Acts 3:4-6), but instead let the question sink deeply into understanding how this exposed his true need, his helplessness, and his vulnerability. Even more important, Jesus answered him, and healed him, at the level he internalized Jesus' words **Discuss:** A time when you needed help and many around downplayed or muffled your request. **Explain:** We are called to offer kindness and support to those in need, regardless of their circumstances or how others may view them. Just as Jesus reached out to the blind man, we are encouraged to show compassion and actively serve those around us, reflecting the mercy of Christ in our everyday interactions.

Alternative: Using the activity sheet, invite participants to take the compassion challenge, **APPENDICES 05 – COMPASSION CHALLENGE.**

Alternative: Complete the puzzle.

The Blind Man Sees



T V E J
 A L A R O U D M S S I J S Y
 N A A E Y D T O L A P A E S C N S B O N F F
 C D H L I D T H H I H I M E R U S E O N S M O O H E

Summary: Invite participants to share their summary of the lesson. It is important to note that when Jesus says, "Your faith has saved you" (for example, Luke 8:48), he refers to someone's belief in Jesus' ability to rescue them, not their faith that Jesus will do as they ask (Mark 9:24): our faith is in God's strength and goodness to

rescue/save, while accepting God's sovereignty and what might seem the strangeness of God's plan. We know God can do it; we ask that God's will be done. **Discuss:** How do you think the blind man felt when Jesus responded to his plea? Reflect on a time when someone showed you unexpected kindness or mercy. How can you offer the same kind of compassion to others in your life? Allow participants to share their thoughts and thank them for their participation.

Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths.

Invite: Participants to share one takeaway from today's lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway. Thank each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth.

Encourage: Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **CLOSING DEVOTION.**

Resources: Handout: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles

Review: YouTube Video before class Teacher Tips –

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/10-creative-ways-to-explore-a-bible-passage>

INT: Lesson 6 — January 5, 2025
THE LORD IS KING LESSON SCRIPTURE:
PSALMS 9, 10

Focus Scripture: Psalm 10:12-18

Key Verse: O Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear. Psalm 10:17

Vocabulary

- **Help** – A shout of distress or plea for assistance.
- **Arise** – To get up or come to action.
- **Justice** – Judgment; a decision or law; fairness.
- **Dominion** – Rule; often referring to his sovereignty or authority.
- **Wicked** – Unjust or morally wrong.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Explore the Lord's purposes and definition of justice.
2. Value the Lord's path to establishing justice in the world.
3. Identify a place of inequity and implement a plan to restore justice.

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name. Introduce the new lesson unit and title to the participants. **Share:** Unit II, “Our God Reigns,” is a four-week study of Psalms that extols the reign of God. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Share:** The unifying principle of today’s lesson, “People are troubled by overwhelming violence, injustice, and oppression.” **How can we survive and overcome such abusive conditions?** The psalmist appeals to God to rise as king and ruler and restore justice to the defenseless who suffer under the attack of the wicked.

Teacher Note: *The lessons come from the Psalms this quarter; review the Bible Project on the Psalms to become familiar with the structure of the Psalms and their purposes.*

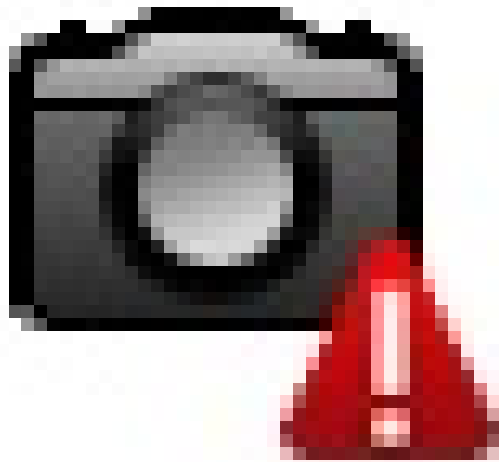
Teaching Strategies Introduction: Welcome participants to the lesson and instruct participants that each will share for about 1-2 minutes. **Invite:** The participants to share a time when they experienced or witnessed an injustice. **Encourage:** Participants to think about a time when they interrupted an injustice. **Explain:** Today’s lesson is about a Psalm of Lament. Lament psalms teach us that it’s never wrong to cry out to God. God hears us in our pain and welcomes us close.

Bible Story: Invite: Participants to read the scripture silently. **Explain:** David saw God bring justice and keep his promises (1 Samuel 31; 2 Samuel 2): he learned to trust God’s justice and God’s timing. **Invite:** Participants to read the scriptures together. **Discuss:**

What did you discover while reading the scriptures? **Explain:** The injustice David describes here is taking advantage of the vulnerable and powerless, those who cannot defend themselves (Psalm 10:14, 18); throughout the Old Testament, God appoints himself as their special protector (Psalms 68:5; 146:9) and calls his people to act with him in their defense. Anger is a healthy response to injustice (Psalm 10:12, 15). It gives us motivation and energy to right wrongs; the trick is in learning wisdom to know what should bring anger and how to direct it.

Life Application: Explain: Together, we will name some injustices that you see and experience in the world. (Review the “Human Rights Issues as Described by the Center for Justice and Accountability”) **Discuss:** What is your emotional and mental reaction to these injustices? **Invite:** Participants to look at their immediate circle – family, friends, classmates, and teachers. **Ask:** Where do you see injustice? How can you act against it?

Alternative: Using the activity sheet, invite participants to complete **APPENDICES 06 – INJUSTICE** to identify “Who are you?” using the social identity wheel as a guide. Fill in their social identity for each of the categories listed. In the inner circle, identify those identities which are most important to them. In the outer circle, identify those identities that are less important.



After you complete the wheel, identify: Which identities are visible? Which identities are not visible?

Which identity has been most beneficial to you?

Which identity has caused you the most harm?

Which of the identities has resulted in unjust actions by others?

Summary: Invite participants to share their summary of the lesson.

Explain: The biblical genre of lament psalms and their basic elements – address, lament proper, confession of trust, petition, motivation, exclamation of certainty, and vow of praise. The elements of lament are 1) turning to God in prayer, 2) bringing our complaints, 3) asking boldly, and 4) choosing to trust (or praise). **Discuss:** What is the purpose of having laments in the Bible? **Invite:** Participants to use the basic elements of a lament psalm and write a lament for the injustice(s) they feel are occurring most deeply in the world.

Alternative: Discuss:1) Does the local church provide charity or justice? 2) Should the local church focus on charity or justice? Invite

participants to explain.

Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths.

Invite: Participants to share one takeaway from today's lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway. Thank each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth.

Encourage: Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **Closing Devotion**.

Resources: Handout: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles Video: Bible Project: The Psalms –

<https://youtu.be/j9phNEaPrv8>

Creative Imagery of Psalm 10 – <https://youtu.be/QjryHUOP21E> (stop at 2 min.) Justice – <https://youtu.be/A14THPoc4-4>

Review: YouTube Video before class Learned Helplessness – <https://youtu.be/8-iW2tDqzhE>

Identity

Wheel

–

<https://www.girlscoutsww.org/content/dam/girlscoutsww-redesign/documents/members/volunteers/identity-wheel-instructions.pdf>

Human Rights – <https://cja.org/human-rights-issues/>

INT: Lesson 7 — January 12, 2025

THE LORD IS ROBED IN MAJESTY BAPTISM

OF THE LORD SUNDAY LESSON

SCRIPTURE: PSALMS 47, 93

Focus Scripture: Psalm 93

Key Verse: The Lord is king; he is robed in majesty; the Lord is robed; he is girded with strength. Psalm 93:1

Vocabulary

- **Reigns** – Become king or queen; to rule over.
- **Majesty** – Pride, excellence; elevation.
- **World** – The earth; fertile and inhabited earth, the habitable globe.
- **Firmly Established** – To set up, to make firm; to stand upright; to erect.
- **Throne** – Seat of honor or authority; lofty and covered with a canopy or hanging.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Consider how God's majesty restores peace.
2. Nurture awe for God's almighty and creative power.
3. Work to establish peace as praise to God.

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Share:** The unifying principle, “Throughout the world, we find chaos and disorder.” **Who can restore order and peace?** Psalm 93 proclaims God as the almighty and creative power whose reign stands firm amidst crisis and unrest. **Explain:** The lesson is a reminder that God restores peace as stated in Psalm 93.

Teaching Strategies Introduction: Welcome participants to the lesson and instruct participants that each will share for about 1-2 minutes. Invite the participants to share one landmark in the community which has symbolized something greater to the community. **Explain:** There are times when we look at things, buildings, trees, or monuments as symbols of peace. Today’s lesson will call us to consider the power of peace as a form of praise.

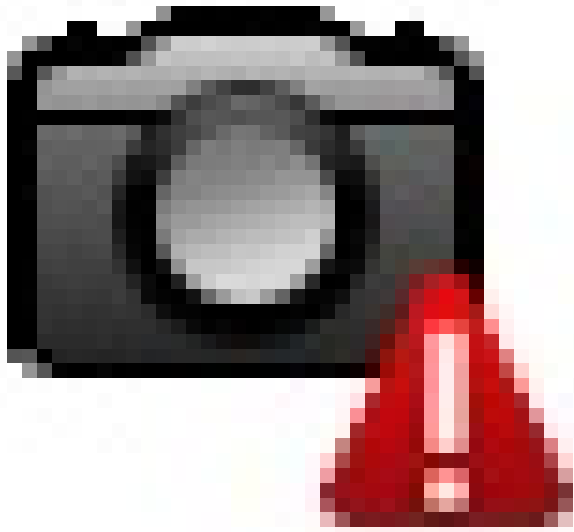
Bible Story: Invite: Participants to read the Psalm aloud in unison: what do you hear from the reading of the scripture? What emotions, feelings, or concerns do you experience? How does the writer see himself? How does the writer see God? Allow time for participants to ponder the questions. **Explain:** In the ancient Near East (ANE), the sea symbolized and was thought to be the dwelling place of uncontrollable destructive powers and chaos (93:3-4): a “medicine” on the Mediterranean is not rare and can reach a Category 1 hurricane-level with incredibly dangerous winds, rains, and flash floods. God’s rule is based on his control over the powers of chaos, symbolized by the waters of the sea. Also in David’s time, a king held

his throne by his strength and power. The stability of the kingdom directly depended on the king's security on his throne, so linking God's power with the earth's endurance is a statement of the unchangeable stability and endurance of God's reign and kingdom (93:1-2).

Life Application: Explain: Psalm 93 teaches us that God's unmatched majesty and power bring peace and stability to our lives.

Explain: The connection between the sea and chaos in the ancient Near East as well as a "medicine." What local natural phenomenon could you substitute for "chaos" – fires, flash floods, tornados, earthquakes, hurricanes, and others? **Discuss:** What words and phrases from this Psalm focus your attention on the greatness and goodness of God? Demonstrate ways we could use those words and phrases to praise God. **Invite:** Participants to listen to Hillsong's "King of Kings" (<https://youtu.be/dQl4izxPeNU>). Reflect on how singing can be a unique and powerful experience.

Alternative: Invite the participants to use the word puzzle to solve the crossword.



Summary: Explain: The lesson emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's power to restore peace amidst life's challenges. During challenging times, learn to look for signs of God's gracious protection against the "floods." Signs of God's grace and provision can come through scripture, people, places, events, animals, and work. **Discuss:** How have you experienced this? As these psalms demonstrate, God has an almighty and creative power. **Discuss:** How do you experience this power in your life? Think of your favorite place in the world, for instance; how does the goodness of this place reflect an almighty and powerful God?

Alternative: Invite: The participants to create an acrostic from the word PEACE.

Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths.

Invite: Participants to share one takeaway from today's lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway.

Thank: Each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth. **Encourage:** Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **Closing Devotion**.

Resources: Handout: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles Video: Peace of God – <https://youtu.be/OgkW2d50i0M>

Review: YouTube Video before class

INT: Lesson 8 — January 19, 2025
THE LORD'S THRONE IS ESTABLISHED
LESSON SCRIPTURE: PSALM 103

Focus Scripture: Psalm 103:1-14

Key Verse: The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. Psalm 103:6

Vocabulary

- **Soul** – The spirit embodied in human beings.
- **Bless** – To hallow or consecrate by religious rite or word.
- **Redeems** – To free from what distresses or harms; to act as kinsman-redeemer, to buy back.
- **Satisfies** – To fill, to be sated; to carry out the terms of (something, such as a contract); to make happy.
- **Transgressions** – Infringements or violations of a law, command, or duty.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Examine how the Lord rules with love and righteousness.

2. Worship and praise God for the demonstration of God's steadfast love and fair leadership.

3. Exercise disciplines of faith and love when given responsibility.

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Share:** The unifying principle, “Good and fair leadership engenders confidence and peace.” **How do we express our gratitude to leaders who embody these qualities?** Psalm 103 offers praise and thanksgiving to the Lord almighty who rules with steadfast love, justice, and compassion. **Explain:** The lesson reminds us of how blessed we are through the words of David found in Psalm 103.

Teaching Strategies Introduction: Welcome participants to the lesson and instruct participants that each will share for about 1-2 minutes. **Invite:** The participants to share one thing they would like to share with others about their blessings. **Explain:** Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a known civil rights leader in America. He gave a speech about a dream of equality. His life and legacy left a symbol for equality, as seen in the annual holiday, and the photos and the monuments created in his name. There are other leaders whose lives left a message for society. **Invite:** Participants to share the name and legacy of local community leaders.

Bible Story: Ask: For four volunteers to read Psalm 103. Ask the first reader to read Psalm 103:1-5; invite everyone to read v. 6. Discuss what David stated in the first six verses of the Psalm. What does David say about God? **Explain:** Psalm 103 is one of four psalms that complete the fourth division of the book of Psalms (Psalms 90 – 106). These four Psalms ascribe praise to the Lord.

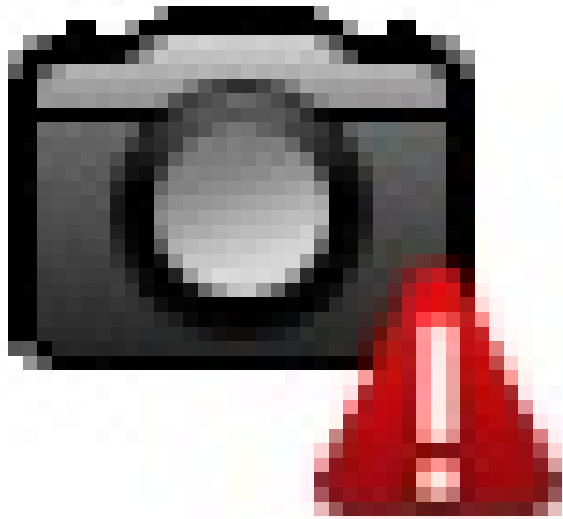
David wrote Psalm 103 which expresses his gratitude to the Lord for all his benefits. Ask the second reader to read Psalm 103:7-18.

Invite: Everyone to read v. 19. **Discuss:** What David says about God in vs. 7-19. What attributes of God are described? **Explain:**

David introduces his major theme at the beginning: God is unfailingly faithful in expressing love to his people. He answers our deepest fears and meets our deepest needs (103:1-6). Ask the third and last reader to read Psalm 103:20-22a. Invite everyone to read v 103:22b.

Explain: David envisions God on his throne in his court with warriors and trusted servants. Throughout his kingdom all are united not just in recognizing and celebrating God's wonderful ways, but also are unanimous in pursuing everything the king wills (103:19-22): praise leads to obedience just as experiencing God's working leads to trust.

Life Application: The key to David's praises is that his confidence in God's complete goodness (103:17-18) leads to his joy in God's complete sovereignty (103:19). Challenge youth when given responsibilities, they should strive to reflect God's qualities by showing kindness, making just decisions, and treating others with respect. **Discuss:** Look at your life and make a list of blessings. As children of God, the kingdom of God described in this psalm is our destiny. What are ways that we can reflect God's leadership when we are given opportunities to be responsible?



Summary: Share: Trusting God means letting go of our worries, knowing God has full control and has prepared each of us for our crisis. **Discuss:** A recent situation where you had a responsibility, whether at school, at home, or with friends. How did you handle it, and in what ways can you improve to reflect God's love and righteousness in similar situations in the future? **Alternative: Discuss:** What are some specific ways participants can incorporate prayer, Bible reading, or acts of kindness into their weekly routine to grow in faith and positively impact those around them? Share one practical step you can take this week. **Explain:** David sets God's consistent actions out as proof of God's unwavering character and as a rationale for our response to God. It raises the question of what our actions prove about our character, and how grateful we should be for God's grace. In any event, God doesn't use that as a rationale for actions toward us!

Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through

their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths.

Invite: Participants to share one takeaway from today's lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway. Thank each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth.

Encourage: Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **CLOSING DEVOTION**.

Resources: Handout: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles **Video: Teacher Only:** Teen Talk Forgiveness –

<https://youtu.be/UUG2aiwBydw>

Blessing – <https://youtu.be/5tRGOs8m7oc>

God Is Faithful – <https://youtu.be/WhZmcHsqC8s>

Review: YouTube video before class

INT: Lesson 9 — January 26, 2025
MY GOD, THE KING LESSON SCRIPTURE:
PSALM 145

Focus Scripture: Psalm 145:1, 10-21

Key Verse: Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. Psalm 145:13

Vocabulary

- **Steadfast Love** – Loving-kindness, mercy, loyalty, and unflinching love. It conveys a deep sense of compassion and commitment.
- **Everlasting** – Eternal, forever, without end.
- **Might** – Power, strength, and force.
- **Gracious** – Kind, merciful, and compassionate.
- **Upholds** – Supports, sustains, or holds up.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define steadfastness about the character of God.
2. Build students' character that reflects God's steadfast mercy, goodness, and compassion.
3. Offer practical ways to share God's steadfast mercy, goodness, and compassion with others.

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Share:** The unifying principle, “We live in an ever-changing world of turmoil and uncertainty.” **Where can we find a reason for relief and joy?** Psalm 145 invites us to find constancy in God’s everlasting kingdom of steadfast mercy, power, goodness, and compassion. **Explain:** That the lesson considers God as being steadfast in love and faithfulness.

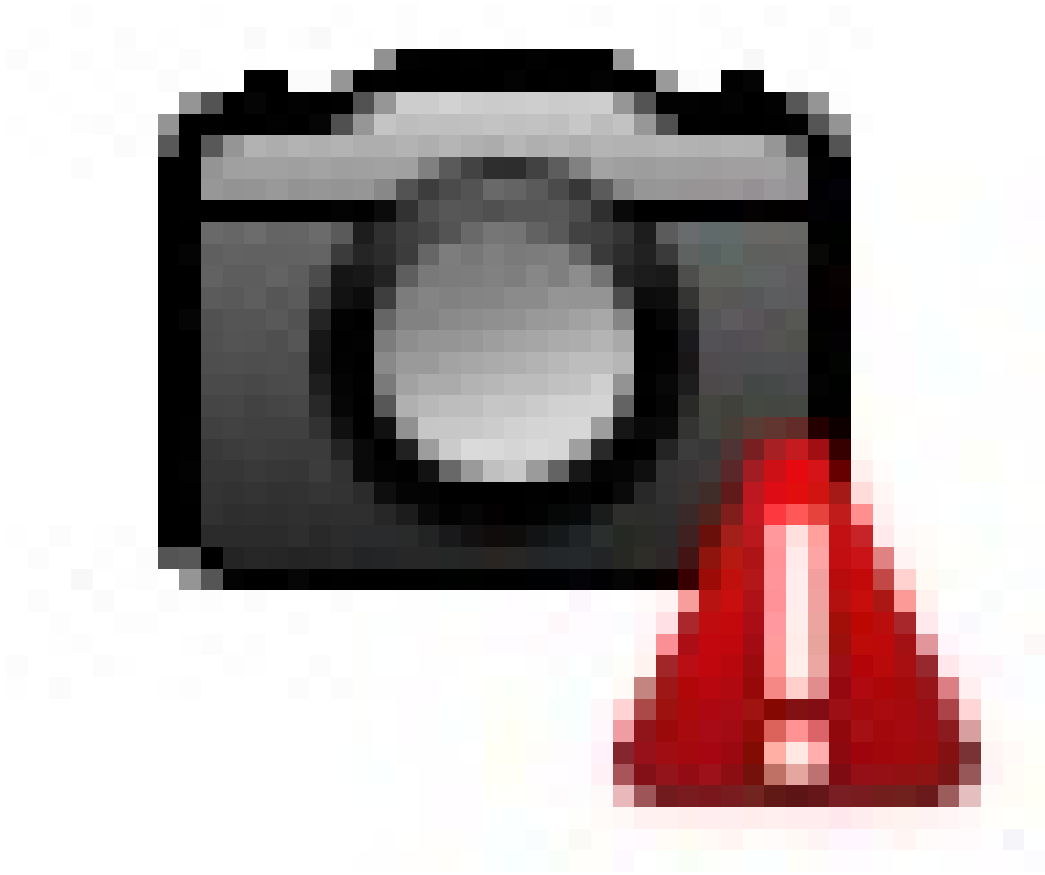
Teaching Strategies Introduction: Welcome participants to the lesson and inform them about love. **Explain:** There are times when the fast pace of life keeps us in a frenzy. Where can we find solitude and calm? In stillness and quiet, the psalmist finds God’s salvation, hope, refuge, and deliverance. Psalm 62 reminds us of God as our rock, a solid foundation in which we cannot be shaken. **Invite:** Participants to share for about 1-2 minutes the highs and lows of their week.

Bible Story: Invite participants to read all the verses. Each person will have two verses to read and if additional verses remain after everyone has read, then start from the first person until all verses are read. Instruct participants to pause for 2 seconds before the next person reads to reflect on the scripture previously read. **Explain:** Unlike many other psalms, Psalm 145 does not focus on specific historical actions by God but rather on general actions that consistently flow out of who God is: actions that God will always do because they are a natural outworking of who God is (145:8-9, 14-

20). **Discuss:** How does the imagery of God as a rock and fortress impact your understanding of God's reliability? **Explain:** King David is attributed to the Psalm, and it was written as an expression of his trust in God in times of uncertainty.

Life Application: Invite the participants to share what "steadfast" means to them. **Explain:** Steadfastness about God's character is recognizing God's unwavering and constant love, regardless of circumstances. Individuals are not required to act a specific way for God to love them. **Explain:** Psalm 145 beautifully illustrates God's steadfast character, highlighting his mercy, goodness, and compassion for us to read and reflect on. **Invite:** Participants to create a list of practical ways to share God's steadfast mercy, goodness, and compassion with others. Try to put these into action.

Alternative: Invite participants to use the puzzle to unscramble words and identify the hidden code.



Invite: Participants to join in a circle; have everyone share about one role model in their life or from a favorite show/movie/book. **Discuss:** What is it that you admire about them? How do human excellence and goodness relate to the ultimate goodness of God?

Summary: Psalm 145 beautifully illustrates God's steadfast character, highlighting his mercy, goodness, and compassion for us to read and reflect on. Think about someone in your life who might need extra support or kindness this week. **Discuss:** What specific actions can you take to show them steadfast love, similar to how God is always there for us? **Invite:** Participants to plan one act of

kindness each day of the coming week and to reflect on how it makes them feel and how it impacts other people.

Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths.

Invite: Participants to share one takeaway from today's lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway. Thank each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth.

Encourage: Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **CLOSING DEVOTION**.

Resources: Handout: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles **Video:** God Loves You –

https://youtu.be/UfbyFLgs_NM

Review: YouTube Video before class

INT: Lesson 10 — February 2, 2025
PRAYING FOR RELIEF LESSON SCRIPTURE:
MATTHEW 6:5-15

Focus Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Key Verse: May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10

Vocabulary

- **Alms** – Charitable giving or acts of kindness to the poor and needy.
- **Pray** – To speak to God or make a request, especially in worship or supplication.
- **Kingdom** – The domain or realm of a king; in a biblical sense, the reign of God.
- **Temptation** – An attempt to lead someone into sin; a trial or test of faith.
- **Deliver** – To rescue or save from danger or distress.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Explain how God's kingdom will change one's life and motives.
2. Cultivate a sense of the need for God's forgiveness.
3. Offer a prayer, in their own words, that reflects the pattern of prayer that Jesus taught his disciples.

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name. Unit 3, "Life in God's Kingdom," gives four lessons from Matthew in which Jesus explains the nature and obligations of kingdom life to his disciples. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Share:** The unifying principle, "Many people struggle to achieve sustainable lives in a world of debt and obligation." **How can we be released from the obligation to make ends meet?** Jesus teaches us to pray for the forgiveness of debts; that is a hallmark of God's reign. **Explain:** That the lesson invites us to seek relief in prayer.

Teaching Strategies Introduction: Welcome participants to the lesson; instruct participants that each will share for about 1-2 minutes. **Invite:** The participants to share why and when we should pray. **Explain:** Prayers were characterized by begging and attempts to bargain with the gods; many priests also specialized in voluble magical incantations that, if done properly, were believed to coerce the power into performing the desired action. Jesus' prayer is simple and casual compared to pagan prayers, but it is centered on one thing: submitting oneself to God's kingship and trusting that God knows what you truly need and is able and willing to meet it.

Bible Story: Invite: Participants to form three groups. You can have them count "1-2-3" until everyone has a number, 1, 2, or 3. Invite the groups to come together, all the "1"s, "2"s, and "3"s, and position the groups in the meeting space. Assign the "1"s to verses 5-6; and the "2"s to 6-8; everyone will read 9-13 in unison and group "3" reads 14-

15. **Discuss:** What did Jesus say about praying? What is relevant today that can help people in prayer? **Explain:** In the *Second Temple* era, traditional Jews kept fixed hours of prayer (Acts 3:1), so if they planned poorly they could be out in public when those times occurred (Matthew 6:5): Jesus is speaking about deliberate efforts to display piety and religiosity to others instead of focusing the attention of your faith on God. **Explain:** Jesus highlights that forgiveness is crucial; just as we seek God's forgiveness, we should also extend forgiveness to those who have wronged us.

Life Application: Explain: Everything about The Lord's Prayer announces that we are not in ultimate control of meeting our most basic needs – food (6:11), forgiveness (6:12), protection (6:13) – but that God is. Furthermore, we admit and accept our limitations and God's sovereignty when we acknowledge that trusting like a child (6:8-9) in God's unfailing goodness and rightness is exactly where he wants us to be. **Discuss:** Why should we pray? What makes it difficult to pray regularly? **Explain:** The focus of 6:6 is not keeping your faith or devotional practices secret but rather that your faith is focused, without distraction, only on God. The purpose of praying "in secret" is to avoid the temptation to put on a show of your devotion for others' "benefit." **Encourage:** Participants to rewrite the prayer in their own words.

Alternative: Use the **APPENDICES 10 – SCAVENGER HUNT** in the handout. **Invite:** Participants to seek different prayers. **Discuss:** What do we discover about other's prayers? What did you discover during the scavenger hunt? Did anything surprise you about the prayers? How can you incorporate some of these prayers into your life moving forward?

Summary: The background of public prayer in ancient Judaism involves a more formal, organized, and less personal approach compared to private prayer. It is typically shorter and involves a worshipful attitude from both the speaker and the listeners. The main purpose of prayer is to consciously lead people into the presence of the living God and provide corporate fellowship with God. **Discuss:** How might we change our prayers to be more sincere and focused on our relationship with God? **Invite:** Youth to write down one specific way they can enhance their prayer life this week.

Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths.

Invite: Participants to share one takeaway from today's lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway. Thank each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth.

Encourage: Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **Closing Devotion**.

Resources: Handout: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles Video: When You Pray –

<https://youtu.be/FAjLVVe4q5A>

The Meaning of the Lord's Prayer– <https://youtu.be/kKlusTOMe1o>

Explaining The Lord's Prayer – https://youtu.be/69JT4zsV_uY

Review: YouTube Video before class

INT: Lesson 11 — February 9, 2025
RESISTANCE TO THE KINGDOM LESSON
SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 11

Focus Scripture: Matthew 11:7-15, 20-24

Key Verse: Then he began to reproach the cities in which most of his deeds of power had been done because they did not repent.

Matthew 11:20

Vocabulary

- **Teach** – To instruct or impart knowledge; to provide education or guidance.
- **Prophet** – A person chosen by God to deliver messages or prophecies, often about future events or divine will.
- **Wilderness** – A desolate or uninhabited place; a barren or empty land.
- **Baptize** – To pour, sprinkle, or immerse in water or to ceremonially wash, often as a religious rite. It is one of the sacraments of the church.
- **Least** – The smallest in importance or rank.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Identify sources of resistance in the world toward the kingdom of heaven.

2. Desire the Holy Spirit's guidance in standing for what is right.

3. Identify and implement a Christian practice that affects changes that are favorable and right.

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction. Share:** The unifying principle, “People resist changes that affect them.” **What resistance might we expect when we stand up for changes that are favorable and right?** Matthew records Jesus’ pronouncement that there is violence against the kingdom of heaven, which is under constant attack. Today’s lesson presents a frank acknowledgment that the kingdom of heaven will meet resistance in this world.

Teaching Strategies Introduction: Welcome participants to the lesson and instruct participants that each will share for about 1-2 minutes. **Invite:** The participants to a time when they resisted something new or different, but it ended up being a good thing.

Discuss: Why is it human nature to resist change? **Explain:** Learning to be open to change or another way could be the path to greater things.

Bible Story: Invite: Participants to read the scriptures. **Explain:** John the Baptist was a pivotal figure in the Bible known for his role as a prophet and for preparing the way for Jesus’ ministry. Jesus’ question (Matthew 11:7-8) foreshadows the point of this passage: the people didn’t go out to see something common and unremarkable (a common reed), nor did they go to see a spectacle of human power or status, but instead went out to witness God intervening in history through John, the eschatological prophet (see also Isaiah 40:3-5, referencing the wilderness). Reeds were used

figuratively for what was weak and undependable in times of trouble (1 Kings 14:15; 2 Kings 18:21). **Explain:** Jesus is criticizing the mentality that claims to know God well enough to discern his work, yet, only accepts as God's work the actions and experiences that fit a preconceived mold. Instead, we live in a relationship with God, not a formula, and recognize his voice and actions and respond appropriately to God at work. **Discuss:** How did Jesus respond when the people of Israel rejected him and the kingdom of God?

Life Application: Explain: Jesus speaks about the resistance he and John the Baptist faced from those who did not embrace their message. This resistance can be seen in various forms today, where people and situations oppose or ignore the principles of God's kingdom. **Ask:** What hinders us from following the Holy Spirit or guidance from others?

Summary: Jesus reflects on the critical responses to John the Baptist and himself, highlighting how many people failed to recognize and embrace the transformative message of the kingdom of heaven. Despite his pivotal role as a prophet, John faced skepticism and rejection, just as Jesus did when performing miracles and preaching repentance. Jesus spoke about how cities that had witnessed his miracles still did not repent or change their ways. **Discuss:** What do you think this teaches us about the importance of being open and responsive to God's message? How can we make sure that we are not just passive observers but actively responding to the teachings of Christ in our own lives and community? **Explain:** Jesus condemned indifference as a response to his ministry. **Discuss:** What do you do to revive your spirits when you are feeling indifferent, bored, or apathetic? **Recap:** John the Baptist's life (refer

to lesson 3) – birth pronouncement, life in the desert, baptizing Jesus, imprisonment, and death. Place Matthew 11 within this timeline.

Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths.

Invite: Participants to share one takeaway from today’s lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway. Thank each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth.

Encourage: Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **CLOSING DEVOTION**.

Resources: Handout: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles Video: John the Baptist – <https://youtu.be/HA1tto99-xwm>

John the Baptist – <https://youtu.be/loIGaMIWpQE>

What Is the Kingdom of God? – <https://youtu.be/T4fxMsEYtPM>

Kingdom Suffers Violence – <https://youtu.be/M0A2RzCimjg>

Review: YouTube video before class

INT: Lesson 12 — February 16, 2025
THE FIRST WILL BE LAST LESSON
SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 19:16-30

Focus Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

Key Verse: It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. Matthew 19:24

Vocabulary

- **Eternal** – About eternity or everlasting; not subject to time or change.
- **Commandments** – Instructions or orders; in this context, they refer to the rules given by God, particularly those in the law.
- **Treasures** – Valuable items or wealth; in this context, it refers to material possessions and wealth.
- **Camel** – A large mammal with a hump, used here metaphorically to illustrate something large or difficult to pass through.
- **Disciples** – Students or followers of a teacher or leader; in this context, it refers to the followers of Jesus.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate the place of forgiveness and mercy in the kingdom of God.
2. Be honest about the things that interfere with the student's commitment to follow Jesus.
3. Extend mercy and forgiveness to others, and in turn, learn to receive forgiveness from others.

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Share:** The unifying principle, “People seek to acquire wealth and possessions. **How might the pursuit of wealth stand in the way of a purposeful life?** Jesus says rich or poor can’t enter God’s kingdom if they attempt to do so through their effort because it is only possible for those who put their trust in God.” **Explain:** The lesson explores the rich and the kingdom of God.

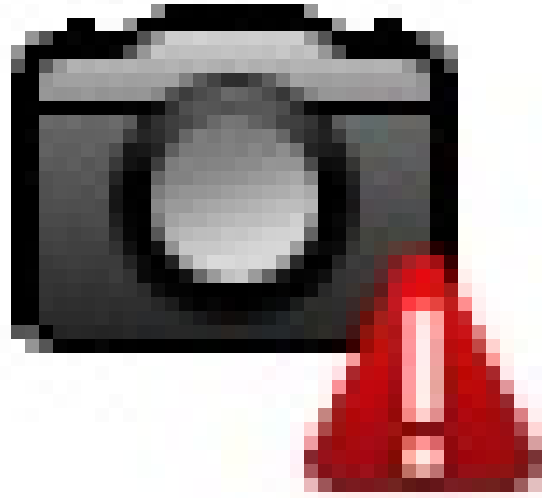
Teaching Strategies Introduction: Welcome participants to the lesson and instruct participants that each will share for about 1-2 minutes. **Invite:** The participants to share a time when they did their best but felt as if they fell short of others’ expectations. **Explain:** We learn from the **Introduction** that sometimes true victory isn’t about finishing first but about the impact you make and the character you display along the journey. **Explain:** Today’s lesson promises a reward in the kingdom for those who have given up much to follow Jesus.

Bible Story: Invite: Participants to read all the verses. Each person will have two verses to read and if additional verses remain after everyone has read, then start from the first person until all verses are read. **Instruct:** Participants to pause for two seconds before the next person reads to reflect on the scripture read. **Discuss:** What did you read, sing, or hear from the scripture that caught your attention? Was it a word or phrase that caught your attention? **Remind:** Participants that the man’s confusion about which commandments (19:18) is

reasonable: the entire Mosaic law has over 600 statutes. This doesn't even begin to address the oral traditions already strong in the first century. **Explain:** The "eye of a needle" (19:24) should be taken literally; the gate known as "The Needle's Eye" in Jerusalem wasn't built until the Middle Ages. It's a real "eye of the needle" as it refers to a small, narrow gate in the city walls of Jerusalem. This gate, known as "the needle's eye," was so narrow that it was impossible for a camel, which was heavily laden with goods, to pass through it without unloading its burden and kneeling.

Life Application: Explain: Jesus teaches that true fulfillment and eternal life come from prioritizing spiritual values over material wealth. The lesson encourages us to extend mercy and forgiveness to others, just as God extends these qualities to us. **Invite:** Participants to free-write and then brainstorm – What does it mean for life to be complete? What relationships, objects, or attributes do we desire for a complete life?

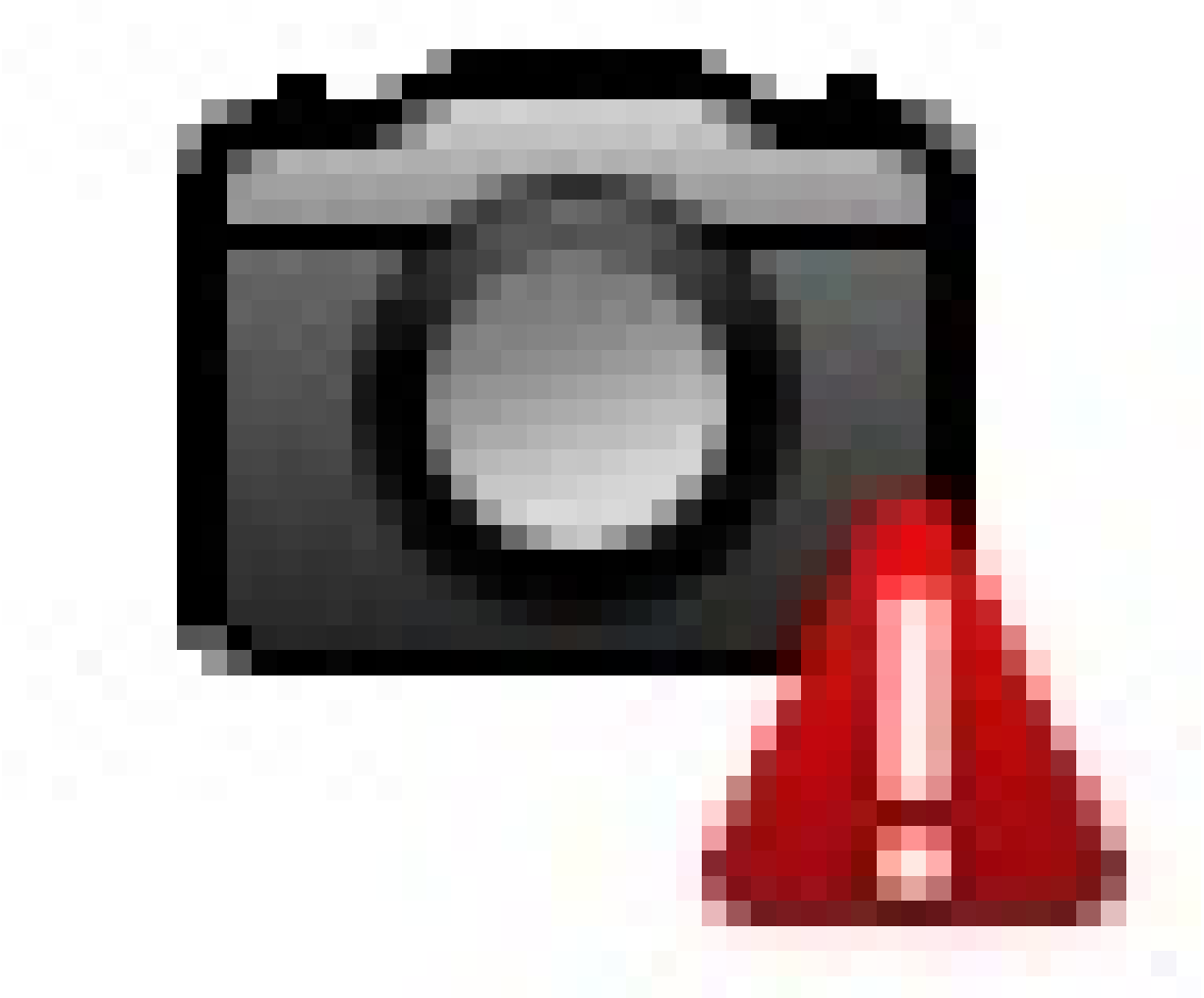
Alternative: Invite participants to complete the puzzle.



An Upside Down Kingdom

Summary: **Invite:** Participants to summarize the lesson in their own words. **Ask:** What are the key points in the lesson? **Explain:** Jesus teaches about the challenges and rewards of following him, using the example of a rich young man who struggles with the idea of giving up his wealth to gain eternal life. Jesus explains that it's difficult for the wealthy to enter the kingdom of heaven because material possessions can be a significant barrier to spiritual growth. **Discuss:** If you had to give up something you value to follow Jesus more closely, what would it be and why? How do you think giving up this item or activity could help you grow in your faith? **Explain:** Jesus asks the young man to focus on God alone as the good giver of eternal life, while the young man focuses on his deficiencies in obeying the law. **Discuss:** How is this true for you? How can you let go and trust in God's love and mercy?

Alternative: Invite participants to complete the puzzle and decode the hidden message.



Closing Devotion: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths. **Invite:** Participants to share one takeaway from today’s lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their takeaway. Thank each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth. **Encourage:** Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **CLOSING**

DEVOTION.

Resources: Handout: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles Video: The Rich Ruler – https://youtu.be/g36_A_io6sl
What Does Jesus Say About Heaven? – <https://youtu.be/pfy1liFOujU>
Animated Story: Following Jesus – <https://youtu.be/vsHTvUo8k0Q>
The First Last – <https://youtu.be/QFMJQI-Awxw>

Review: YouTube video before class

INT: Lesson 13 — February 23, 2025

The Kingdom Life Lesson Scripture: Matthew 25

Focus Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46

Key Verses: “The king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food...’” Matthew 25:34-35

Vocabulary

- **Son of Man** – A title Jesus uses for himself, emphasizing his role as the Messiah and human representative in the context of judgment.
- **Sheep** – A domesticated animal often used symbolically to represent the righteous or faithful.
- **Goat** – A domesticated animal symbolizing the unrighteous or those who have failed to live according to God’s will.
- **Thirsty** – Experiencing thirst; in need of a drink of water, etc.
- **Stranger** – A foreigner or traveler; someone outside one’s community.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Explore responsible kingdom living as it pertains to the treatment of others.

2. Celebrate the unconditional love of Christ for all humanity.

3. Participate in a ministry that serves “the least of these.”

Introduction

Welcome each person as they arrive at the study area. Greet each person by name and if you have a guest, ask for their name and welcome them as well by name. **Invite:** Youth to read the **Introduction**. **Share:** The unifying principle, “We are often judged based on known and unknown criteria.” **Whose (or what) standards should matter to us the most?** Matthew 25 tells us that the criterion for the Son of Man’s final judgment of responsible kingdom living will be based on service to the “least of these.” **Explain:** In today’s lesson, Jesus narrates a parable about the judgment to challenge his followers to faithfully serve the king of kings.

Teaching Strategies Introduction: Welcome participants to the lesson and instruct participants that each will share for about 1-2 minutes. **Invite:** The participants to share a time when they have helped someone in need. **Discuss:** Allow participants to share.

Bible Story: Invite: Participants to read Matthew 25:31-46. Invite individuals to read the scripture in parts for the narrator, the king, and the righteous. The narrator will read verses 31-34a, 37a, 40a, 41a, 44a, and 46; the king reads 34b-36, 40b, and 45b, and the participant for the righteous will read verses 37b-39, 41b, 44b. **Discuss:** What words from the scripture caught your attention? What questions do you have after reading the scriptures? **Explain:** The concept of sheep vs. goats (Matthew 25:32) would have been familiar to first-century Jews. *The Second Temple* philosophy of the *Two Ways* used that type of imagery to describe those who lived wise, God-fearing lives vs. those who led evil, selfish lives. **Discuss:** What are two ways we respond like the righteous?

Life Application: Explain: Christ provides an example of unconditional love for everyone and highlights the importance of treating others with kindness and compassion. To celebrate God's love, we should reflect on how our actions can mirror Christ's care for humanity. **Discuss:** Who are the "least of these" in your life? How can you serve them? Allow participants to share. **Explain:** Generosity is merely sacrificing part of yourself – your time, resources, energy, even emotions – on behalf of someone else's need; 1 John 3:16-18 tells us that real generosity flows out of gratitude for what we have been given and out of following God's generous example (1 John 2:5-6). **Discuss:** Have you neglected opportunities to show compassion to poor, sick, lonely, or alienated people? Describe ways to break patterns in your behavior that have stopped you from being more compassionate.

Alternative: Use **APPENDICES 13 – FAITH IN ACTION** to compare the difference between faith and work. **Discuss:** How do faith and works harmonize together?

Summary: Explain: Jesus is with and amongst the "least of these." There are communities where resources are scarce, and people are struggling to get necessities. **Discuss:** How would you prioritize helping different individuals based on their needs? Create a plan for how you would approach this situation and discuss how your decisions reflect the principles of kindness and compassion from Matthew 25:31-40

Closing Devotions: Invite: Participants to take deep breaths through their nostrils and out through their mouths. Take three deep breaths. **Invite:** Participants to share one takeaway from today's lesson. Use the round-robin method to ask each participant for their

takeaway. Thank each participant for their takeaway and for sharing their truth. **Encourage:** Participants to share the lesson with their family and friends this week. **Invite:** Participants to share in the **Closing Devotions.**

Resources: Handout: Puzzles: Fallen, Criss Cross, and Hidden Word Puzzles Video: Matthew Chapter 25:31-46 – <https://youtu.be/zkRxiAhn5sk>

Pencil's Tale – <https://youtu.be/HisYsqgyszq0>

Putting Yourself in Someone Else's Shoes – <https://youtu.be/cTOhzcSYMIM>

Review: YouTube video before class

The Teacher's Guide — JR: Lesson 1 - December 1, 2024

Junior Lessons

Winter Quarter: December 2024 – February 2025

Prepared by Monica C. Jones, Ph.D.

JESUS IS FROM KING DAVID'S FAMILY

Lesson Scripture: Ruth 1–4, Luke 3:23-38

Focus Scripture: Ruth 4:9-17; Luke 3:23, 31b-32

Key Verse: The women...gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David. Ruth 4:17 (NRSV UE) **Word Power!!!**

- **Boaz (bo'-as)** – The husband of Ruth.
- **Obed (o'-bed)** – The son of Ruth and grandson of Naomi, in the line of David.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Understand how to use ancestry technology to trace their family history.

2. See or visualize the connection between Ruth and themselves when considering how ordinary people are very special in God's eyes.

3. Learn something about gifts that they have and how they can use them to God's glory.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Examine the process of tracing ancestry by using technology with learners.
2. Draw parallels between our own ancestry and the ancestry of Jesus; point to biological and non-biological family connections.
3. Stress how ordinary people can be used in extraordinary ways.

Questions

1. What do you think about Ruth and her relationship with Naomi?
2. If you have used an ancestry app, what did you learn about your family?
3. Do you believe that you have a gift that you can use to make the world a better place? (See **Remix!!!**.)
4. Do you think you will try to use the Census Bureau as another resource to trace your ancestry?

Resources:

Bibles or Bible apps should be made available for each class, with the goal of fostering and interest in learning scripture.

Markers, colored pencils, crayons and construction paper should be kept as needed.

1. Ancestry research apps, such as Ancestry.com, would be very helpful for this class; if not available, then a description or sample report from the app would provide learners with a visual.
2. A whiteboard or other surface to draw a sample ancestry line for the chart to guide learners.
3. Devices to activate the Census Bureau QR code.

JR: Lesson 2 — December 8, 2024

A HOUSE FOR GOD

Lesson Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:1-17

Focus Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:4-17

Key Verse: The Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. 2 Samuel 7:11b (NRSV UE) **Word Power!!!**

- **Nathan** – The priest who guided King David and spoke to him about God’s plans about building the temple.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand the need to be selfless and the importance to give up things they may want for the benefit of someone else.
2. Visualize the parallels between King David’s story and Jamil’s.
3. Learn that God rewards sacrifice.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Stress how sacrificing and giving up something that you may want pleases God and builds character.
2. Compare David's story and how he may have felt about not being able to build the temple and Jamil's disappointment when he could not play first string in the game.

Questions

1. How do you think King David felt when he learned he would not live to build the temple?
2. What is the title of your picture?
3. If you were in a situation like Jamil's, what would be the answer you think you would give?

Resources: Coloring tools and pens

JR: Lesson 3 — December 15, 2024

ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY

Lesson Scripture: Luke 1:5-23, 57-80

Focus Scripture: Luke 1:67-80

Key Verses: And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. Luke 1:76-77 (NRSV UE) **Word Power!!!**

- **Zechariah (zeck-ah-rye'-ah)** – The father of John the Baptist, who was the cousin of Jesus the Christ.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Begin to see themselves in a responsible role of the family.

2. Understand that in some cases, fear can lead to jealousy which is not a godly reaction.
3. If they are an older sister or brother, identify ways to see that as a positive.
4. Realize that God loves them, the same as God loves their siblings.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Stress the importance of looking at themselves as God's children and being special, unique, and blessed.
2. Draw a parallel between the Bible story and the way John the Baptist was viewed by his parents and the way Amanda should view her new sibling.
3. Look at Amanda's song as a way to express thankfulness and gratitude, no matter their life circumstance.

Questions

1. What are some things that you can do to show love to your baby sister or brother or other family member who is younger than you are?
2. Do you understand why Amanda asked her aunt about whether her parents would have time for her?
3. Would you like to share your song for Amanda?

Resources: Perhaps sample words or examples of other songs may be helpful to learners as they attempt to write their own lyrics; pens, pencils *Provide Bibles or Bible apps each week*

JR: Lesson 4 — December 22, 2024

THE BIRTH OF JESUS ANNOUNCED

Lesson Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

Focus Scripture: Luke 2:1-16

Key Verse: When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” Luke 2:15 (NRSV UE) **Word Power!!!**

- **Shepherds** – Individuals who, during the time of the Messiah’s birth, were caring for sheep and followed the directions of angels to visit the Christ child.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Understand the importance of obedience and humility.

2. Learn about Advent and how it is different from Christmas.

3. Express in their own words the characteristics of a shepherd from a faith perspective.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

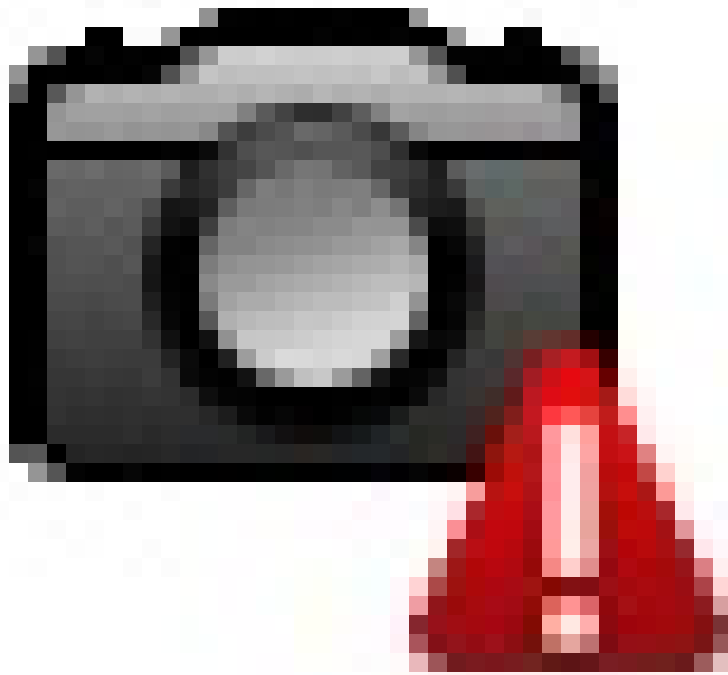
1. Lift the story of the shepherds and focus on their reaction to the angel's command.
2. Explain the importance of Advent and how it relates to Christmas in terms of our expectation of the Christ child.
3. Stress how the characteristics of the shepherds are very important for us to have in our own Christian walk.
4. See Jesus as the *Good Shepherd* and the one who sets the example for our behavior.

Questions

1. Now that you have learned about Advent, what do you think is one of the most important differences between Advent and Christmas?
2. What was one of the traits that you wrote about a shepherd?
3. Do you think one of these traits is something that you can learn or use in your own day-to-day life?

Resources: Pens, pencils, Christmas carols, and audio devices

*Provide Bibles or Bible apps each week **Shepherds Are Special** (answer key on following page)*



JR: Lesson 5 — December 29, 2024

JESUS HEALS A BLIND BEGGAR

Lesson Scripture: Luke 18:31-43

Focus Scripture: Luke 18:35-43

Key Verse: Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God, and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.
Luke 8:43 (NRSV UE) **Word Power!!!**

- **Optician** – A person who sells and provides eyeglasses and other eyewear.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Understand the concept of being grateful for God's blessings in our lives.

2. See a connection between Karen's reaction to wearing eyeglasses related to peer pressure and teasing and the biblical narrative where others discouraged the blind man.
3. Appreciate who they are despite challenges they may have.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Point to the different ways that people are challenged in their lives, including physical and other conditions.
2. Encourage learners to identify their strengths and positive character traits.
3. Stress the similarities between the crowd that discouraged and criticized the beggar and peer pressure from friends and others that can make us feel bad.
4. Make clear that just as Jesus responded to the beggar, Jesus responds to us and loves us, too.

Questions

1. Why do you think the crowd tried to keep the beggar away from Jesus?
2. What does it mean to you, that Jesus stopped and healed the beggar, despite what the crowd said?
3. For those of you who wear glasses, do you agree with how Karen felt?
4. For those of you who do not wear glasses, what do you think about what Karen's mother said?

Resources: As learners complete their exercise with the circles, it may be helpful to provide one or two examples of how to write expressions of gratitude.

JR: Lesson 6 — January 5, 2025

GOD IS OUR PROTECTOR

Lesson Scripture: Psalms 9 and 10

Focus Scripture: Psalm 10:12-18

Key Verse: Oh Lord, you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear. Psalm 10:17 (NRSV UE) **Word Power!!!**

- **Incline** – To lower or bow, to move close in order to listen.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Understand that violence against black people does exist, and there is a positive way to respond to it.

2. See a very real connection between the God who protected David and the God who protects us.
3. Introduce learners to how songs of the church are inspired by psalms from the Bible.
4. Learn ways to express their feelings and understanding of their faith.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Talk about the pastor in the story so that learners can understand righteous anger.
2. Draw parallels between David's prayer and the need to pray today for protection; mention the prayer in today's story.
3. Give examples of songs that are inspired by or come directly from the psalms.
4. Continue to encourage expressing feelings through creative written communication.

Questions

1. Do you remember how you felt when George Floyd was killed?
2. How do you think we can use the church to help change the things that are done against people in our community?
3. What is your favorite psalm in the Bible that inspired a song in our church?

Resources: Videos or audio devices of various hymns and church songs that come from the psalms; pictures of George Floyd and short reports that learners can view regarding our responses from the Black Church and various activists may be effective tools share.

JR: Lesson 7 — January 12, 2025
GOD'S REIGN IS MAJESTIC

Lesson Scripture: Psalms 47 and 93

Focus Scripture: Psalm 93

Key Verse: More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the Lord!

Psalm 93:4 (NRSV UE) **Word Power!!!**

- **Majestic** – Something that is glorious, beautiful, and wonderful; an attribute of God almighty.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Define the term “majestic” and understand its meaning as a descriptor of God.

2. Draw parallels between the characters of *The Lion King* and the concepts of courage and faith.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Stress all of the characteristics of Simba and others in the movie while relating them to how Christians should respond to everyday challenges.
2. Encourage originality and creativity as learners identify words and vocabulary regarding their description of God.

Questions

1. How did you like the movie and the characters? Who was your favorite and why?
2. What are some similarities that you see between what you wrote about God and Simba's father in the movie?
3. Do you understand what majestic means now? How would you explain it in your own words?

Resources: The movie *The Lion King*; if possible, allow learners who have already seen the movie to talk about it; a recording of the song, "God Is an Awesome God" (Michael Smith)

JR: Lesson 8 — January 19, 2025
PRAISE GOD FOR HIS GOODNESS!

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 103

Focus Scripture: Psalm 103:1-14

Key Verse: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Psalm 103:1 (NRSV UE) **Word Power!!!**

- **Oppressed** – People who are not given the same freedoms and rights as others; the condition of being mistreated or discriminated against.
- **Righteousness** – Being in a satisfactory or right relationship with God; being in sync with God.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Be familiar with the civil rights movement and the way songs were used as expressions of resistance.

2. Identify at least one or two songs that they enjoyed from the civil rights era 3. Reconstruct either in conversation, speeches, or through their singing how music played a role in the way Dr. King and others celebrated the fight for freedom.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Demonstrate how the story of the choir shows the way music in our lives today can be enriched by looking at the past.
2. Encourage each learner to identify a song that they enjoy.
3. Stress what the civil rights movement meant to past generations and how Dr. King's message is still relevant today.
4. Encourage creative expression and the use of the gifts of speech of those who can act.

Questions

1. What do you think about the songs you have learned, and how do you think they made the civil rights movement demonstrators feel?
2. Which song would you choose if you were a member of the choir in our story?
3. Are you willing to learn one of the songs and sing it later or at least tell your family about what you learned?
4. What are some ideas that you have for the skit?

Resources: Any historical representation of the civil rights movement, and in particular, scenes of demonstrations where the activists and protesters are singing the songs noted in our story. Use videos that have accompanying explanations or, if possible, documentaries that are relevant and include music. Be sure to have a space and time for the learners to practice their skit; you may need to schedule extra time during the week or possibly work together online. Encourage them to work toward presenting the skit later!

JR: Lesson 9 — January 26, 2025

PRAISE OUR GRACIOUS GOD

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 145

Focus Scripture: Psalm 145:8-13

Key Verse: The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made. Psalm 145:9 (NRSV UE) **Word Power!!!**

- **Compassion** – Having love for others; showing mercy and kindness.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: 1. Appreciate the parallels between the 23rd Psalm and other psalms of the Bible and how they can be translated into modern day language. 2. Write with a reasonable level of comfort their own biblically-inspired song.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Build on previous lessons and stress the joy of creating our own expressions of love and thanksgiving for God.
2. Review what the psalms meant to David and other writers, and use the 23rd Psalm as a way to encourage participation.
3. Encourage those learners with the appropriate talent to lead creative exercises.

Questions

1. What are some of your favorite words or expressions in the psalms you have read?
2. Can you think of events in your life or in your past that can help you write your own psalm?

Resources: Be sure each learner has a Bible or Bible app to use in the exercise. As they revise or write an original psalm, encourage them to recall lessons from the quarter and points they have learned previously.

JR: Lesson 10 — February 2, 2025
GOD'S WILL BE DONE

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Focus Scripture: Matthew 6:5-15

Key Verse: May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Matthew 6:10 (NRSV UE)

Word Power!!!

- **Kingdom** – God's place and creation in the world; the people who honor and worship God.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Learn or review "The Lord's Prayer" and be able to pray it independently.
2. Appreciate the meaning of kingdom in the prayer and in our lives.
3. creativity and interpersonal skills to achieve lesson goals.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Emphasize the importance of learning “The Lord’s Prayer” as a part of our everyday faith experience.
2. Encourage learners to work together in the exercise in order to learn or review “The Lord’s Prayer.”
3. Verify that everyone understands *kingdom* and what it means to each of us as a part of the family of Christ.

Questions

1. If this is your first time learning “The Lord’s Prayer” and memorizing it, what do you think of it?
2. What does the word kingdom mean to you now?
3. Do you understand why the character in our story said it was an honor to sing *The Lord’s Prayer*?

Resources: Copies of “The Lord’s Prayer” in writing and audios or videos; private space, where possible, for teams to practice

JR: Lesson 11 — February 9, 2025
STANDING UP FOR GOD'S KINGDOM

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 11

Focus Scripture: Matthew 11:1-15

Key Verse: “This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’” Matthew 11:10 (NRSV UE)

Word Power!!!

- **Prophecy (prah'-fi-si)** – To tell of the future or to give a message from God about a future event (verb).

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Appreciate the contributions of AME heroes and sheroes.
2. Understand the parallel characteristics of John the Baptist and Jarena Lee.
3. Identify how we, as members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, are unique in our role of fighting for justice.
4. Articulate the positives of being different or unique.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Stress the importance of validating persons who are different or who don't conform.
2. Make the connection between John the Baptist and Jarena Lee as forerunners and precursors in their perspective movements.
3. Introduce Women in Ministry and Lee's impact on the organization and African Methodism.

Questions

1. What do you think about the Jarena Lee's determination to preach even though it was against the rules?
2. Do you believe it is good for women to be bishops in the church? Why or why not?
3. Who was the first woman to serve as bishop in our church?

Resources: Information from the website for Women in Ministry and hard copies from a document about who they are; devices to activate the QR code; <https://amewim.org/>

JR: Lesson 12 — February 16, 2025
SEEK GOD'S KINGDOM FIRST

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

Focus Scripture: Matthew 19:16-30

Key Verse: Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but for God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26 (NRSV UE)

Word Power!!!

- **Mortals** – Human beings, the people on earth.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Understand the concept of miracles and achieving the unexpected through God's grace.
2. Identify ways to help others in need.
3. Develop a sense of empathy for persons who are less fortunate.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Explain the culture of shelters for families and how the sense of isolation and hopelessness can affect a person.
2. Look at the story of Mika from the perspective of loving others and connect her story with the Bible narrative; emphasize the declaration that for God nothing is impossible.

Questions

1. Do you understand what homelessness is and how shelters can be helpful? Do you see how those same shelters can be disappointing to persons living there?
2. What is a miracle?
3. What miracles do you think God can do through each of us for someone who is less fortunate than we are?

Resources: A list of agencies, organizations, and church groups who can help persons in need, examples of how the church's Women's Missionary Society, social action ministries, and others have helped marginalized populations in the community.

JR: Lesson 13 — February 23, 2025
BEING THE HANDS AND FEET OF JESUS

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 25

Focus Scripture: Matthew 25:31-40

Key Verse: “The king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.’” Matthew 25:40 (NRSV UE) **Word Power!!!**

- **Family** – Persons who are among the same group of people; individuals who are cared for and loved.

Lesson Goals: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. See the connection from last week’s lesson on being instruments of miracles through the power of God.
2. Review the concept of connectedness as introduced in the first lesson of the quarter on ancestry.
3. Broaden their understanding of family beyond that of biological definitions.

Teaching Strategies

Emphasis

1. Review prior lessons where appropriate to affirm the importance of loving one's neighbor and family beyond traditional norms.
2. Continue the lesson from last week on helping others and help learners complete any unfinished work or activities.
3. Encourage creativity in developing a beautiful collection of art focusing around the family theme.
4. Review prayers that were a part of each month's lesson.
5. Discuss the possibility of performing the skit from Lesson 8.
6. Reinforce the importance of using the Bible for their study by asking each one to maintain a Bible app on their devices or give them a personal Bible, if possible.

Questions

1. Now that you have completed your lessons, what is your own definition of family?
2. What do you think the best activity will be to help a family or person in need?
3. What is the most important lesson you have learned this quarter?
(See **Remix!!!**) **Resources:** In addition to providing the usual art supplies, be sure that all students have access to social media; if not, help them post before leaving. For this final class, allow students to discuss their plans for a service project, complete their art projects, and if possible, recite their prayers from each month.