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CALL IN
The
NEW TESTAMENT

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Roderick D. Belin, President/Publisher

Garland F. Pierce, Executive Director, Department of Christian Education

Andre' Wright, Chief of Operations

Orlando Dotson, Layout and Design

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The Order of Service

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary
as a signal for silence
 - II. Singing
 - III. The Apostles' Creed
 - IV. Prayer, closing with the
Lord's Prayer in concert
 - V. Singing
 - VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
 - VII. Responsive reading
of the lesson text by school
 - VIII. The Decalogue
-

The Lesson

- I. Organ interlude while
the classes are being arranged
 - II. Class study of the lesson
 - III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
 - IV. Closing bell — silence
-

The Closing

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application
of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

Editorial Staff

Publisher • Rev. Dr. Roderick D. Belin

Editor • Rev. Dr. Garland F. Pierce

— Lessons —

Rev. Dr. Linda E. Mouzon

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

The Church School Creed

I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

Called Through Heritage

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17; Hebrews 1

Focus Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-5, Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17

Key Verses: In these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. Hebrews 1:2 (NRSV)

HEBREWS 1:1-5; MATTHEW 1:1-6, 16-17 (NRSV)

Hebrews 1:1-5

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets,

2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.

3 He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

Matthew 1:1-6

1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram,

4 and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,

5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,

6 and Jesse the father of King David. And

HEBREWS 1:1-5; MATTHEW 1:1-6, 16-17 (KJV)

Hebrews 1:1-5

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:

4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

Matthew 1:1-6

1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David

David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,...

the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;...

16-17

16 ...and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

16-17

16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

KEY TERMS

- **Genealogy** – A record of ancestry of one person, a family tree of a particular group.
- **Eschatology** – A branch of study about the end times or last things; a study of the end of life, the world, or study of how the world ends including death, judgment, human destiny, the future.

“yes.” Others may question if they heard God’s voice. Some may wonder if God made a mistake. Some may ask God, “Did you mean to call me?” Still others may tell God, “No.” Sometimes, people rely on their family ancestry to determine if God called them to a particular vocation. Knowing one’s family tree can give information. God may call family

members to the same type of work. Family members may have similar traits. Every Christian can trace their family roots to Jesus. Jesus’ genealogy includes people who did good and people who did evil. God calls everyone in Jesus’ family. That includes you. You decide how

Every Christian can trace their family roots to Jesus.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, God called people. From the call of Adam and Eve to the present, God gives people assignments, but the way people respond to God’s call differs. People may answer God’s call by saying

you will respond to God’s call.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Hebrews 1:1-5

God created the earth, skies, animals, and people. Humans were expected to worship God, love one another, and care for the earth. When humans failed to do any of these, God called and sent prophets among them. Prophets warned about coming judgment. Prophets told people to repent and turn back to God. Prophets gave God's restoration promise to those who repented. Every prophet shared a specific message, to a specific people, over a specific period of time. From Moses to Malachi, God spoke through prophets. However, the prophetic voice did not stop patterns of obedience then disobedience, faith then doubt, worship then blasphemy. Therefore, the last days God chose to speak in a new way. Like the parable, God said, maybe if I send my son they will listen (Mt. 21:33-46). So, God sent Jesus who speaks the same eschatological message as the prophets. Jesus says that in the last days, death and judgment

will happen (Mt. 24). Most importantly, Jesus, who is a reflection of God and lives with God, tells us that each soul's final destiny will be revealed.

Why do you think people do not respond to prophetic warnings?

If God calls you to share a prophetic message now, what would you say?

...Jesus, who is
a reflection of God
and lives with God,
tells us that each
soul's final destiny
will be revealed

Matthew 1:1-17

Biblical genealogical records may prove hard to read. After all, reading "was the father of" or "begot" repeatedly may seem pointless. And in addition, many biblical names seem hard to pronounce. For God, genealogy has significance. Beginning with the first record in Genesis 4 to the one in today's lesson in Matthew 17, genealogy gives important information and insights. Persons listed in Jesus' ancestry have flaws; they all sinned. Because God loved them, God overlooked their sin. God chose them as Jesus' ancestors. Jesus' genealogy includes foreigners, sinners, old, young, and poor, and shows God's

love. Jacob tricked his father and stole his brother's blessing. Judah fathered his daughter-in-law's son, Perez. Some scholars believe Rahab was the prostitute who hid the spies (Joshua 2). David, the youngest of Jesse's sons, a warrior with blood on hands, ignored Tamar's rape (2 Sam. 13). David had forbidden sexual relations with Bathsheba and ordered Joab to orchestrate the killing of her (Bathsheba's) husband Uriah (one of the mighty men). Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, married several foreign women. These women convinced Solomon to erect idols to their gods. Even worse, Solomon turned from the true God and worshipped these idols (1 Kings 11:1-8). Mary lived in Nazareth, a small unimportant town.

God chose the least likely to show us that Jesus' family is made of ordinary people. From one generation to the next, God called imperfect people. From Abraham to Joseph, they answered God's call. They did not use their flaws as an excuse to tell God no. In considering

Jesus' ancestors, we can understand why God sent Jesus to earth. We needed a Savior and God called Jesus from an ancestral line of sinners. In turn, Jesus calls us as imperfect as we are to do God's will.

What do you know about your family history? Which family traits do you see in yourself? How can adopted children learn about their relatives?



“It’s not what you call me, but what I answer to that matters”; that defines a person.

SANKOFA

Chika Onyeani, a native Nigerian and former ambassador, self describes as “the N-word.” He wrote a book entitled, “Capitalist N-word.” Using the word *capitalist*, Onyeani believes that it allows others to know that he is rich. Onyeani says, “It’s

not what you call me, but what I answer to that matters”; that defines a person. He questions why people of African descent allow “the N-word” to cause anger and fear. According to Onyeani, overreaction to the word gives power to those who use it as a weapon. He hopes black people de-emphasize the N-word’s power. For

Onyeani, black people have greater concerns than being called the N-word. Instead, black people should decrease financial, educational, technological, and health disparities. Onyeani tells black people that “we are as capable, as naturally endowed, as any other group.” The “N-word” has a 500-year history. Before there was an “N-word,” God said we are beautifully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14 NIV). This is our heritage from the Lord.

CASE STUDY

We may find it difficult to trace our family tree. Records kept by ancestry companies have incomplete genealogy research. It's easy to start the process.

We usually know the relatives in our immediate family. These family members include parents, siblings, children, uncles, aunts, and cousins. You may know your grandparents. Going back through your family history often comes to a sudden stop. Census, birth, and death records may not go back far enough. Who were your first ancestors? When were they born? Where did they

live? What work did they do? Unable to answer these questions? Then unlike Jesus, we have a limited family history. But like Jesus, we have an inheritance. Putting together known family details can teach us about ourselves. Family history affects our likes, skills, beliefs, values, and much more. The good news: all of us were created by God.

LIFE APPLICATION

God said in Genesis, “Let us make humans in our image.” Though we are made in God's image, we still sin. Prophets may deliver God's word, begging us to repent and warning of judgment if we don't. Too often their words fall on deaf ears. If we look at our family history, we see victories and

“Onyeani tells black people that “we are as capable, as naturally endowed, as any other group.”

failures. For that reason, the message of Jesus' ancestors should encourage us. God had sinners included in Jesus' ancestors. God includes sinners like us in the record of Jesus' descendants. The only thing God requires is that we believe in Jesus, which will change us from sinners to saints.

QUESTIONS

1. What can you learn from reading about genealogies in the Bible? Which person(s) included as Jesus' ancestor most surprised you? Why?
2. How do you respond when someone calls you "the N-word?" Why?
3. What can we do to eliminate its use?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

1. Call the names of your ancestors and thank God for their lives.
2. Read the words of the hymn, *Amazing*

Grace: meditate on how those words apply to you (and your family).

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found
Was blind but now I see.

Prayer: Lord, we thank you that you call ordinary people to become a part of your family. We are grateful that Jesus, our brother, sits at your right hand praying for us. We thank you for our ancestors. We thank you for our calling and our place in history. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

November 30–December 6

Monday	Psalm 2	(God's Anointed Ruler of All Nations)
Tuesday	Ephesians 1:1-14	(Blessed and Chosen in Christ)
Wednesday	Ephesians 1:15-23	(Christ, Head Over All People/Things)
Thursday	Matthew 1:6b-15	(In the Family Line of David)
Friday	Hebrews 1:6-9	(God Anoints Jesus King)
Saturday	Hebrews 1:10-14	(Jesus, Creator and Eternal Ruler)
Sunday	Hebrews 1:1-5; Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17	(Expectations of Jesus Before His Birth)

CALLED BEFORE BIRTH

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Focus Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Key Verses: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:20b-21 (NRSV)

MATTHEW 1:18-25 (NRSV)

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife,

25 but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

MATTHEW 1:18-25 (KJV)

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.

KEY TERM

- **Consider** (Greek word *enthumeomai*, pronounced en-thü-me'-o-mi) – to ponder, to deliberate, to turn repeatedly in the mind.
- **Angel** – Hebrew word for angel, *mal'ach*, a messenger of God who delivers a word or gives direction to people, or performs a task.
- **Jesus** – Hebrew name *Yehoshua* (Joshua) meaning to deliver, to rescue.

INTRODUCTION

God knits us together in our mothers' wombs. From our head to our toes God makes us unique. Parents take and share pictures of their newborn babies. Family and friends wonder who the baby favors in their looks. Some say the father, others say the mother, still others say a grandparent, aunt, or uncle. However, the baby's soul we cannot see. We do not know their personality, thoughts, emotions, talents. God does. God sees

the invisible part of us. God uses that knowledge to call us to specific works. We were designed before birth to do God's will.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY**Matthew 1:18-19**

In the ancient Israelite society, a husband could demand that a woman provide proof of her virginity. Parents provided this proof publicly to the elders. The proof, a bloody cloth, was given to the parents by their daughter, as proof of her first sexual relationship with her husband. Wives who were unable to give this proof were stoned to death (Deut.

22:13-24). Joseph knew Mary's parents would not have a bloody rag. However, Joseph did not want to subject Mary to the ritual which could have resulted in her death. God had created Joseph to become a righteous and kind man – a man who would support Mary during her unusual

“ God sees the invisible part of us. God uses that knowledge to call us to specific works.

pregnancy.

Matthew 1:20-25


Joseph thought a long time about Mary's pregnancy. *Enthumeomai*, the Greek word for *consider*, means to revolve around in the mind. In other words, Joseph thought about Mary's situation from every angle. He probably wondered about her story of an angel visiting her and the Holy Spirit overshadowing her. What was

Joseph to make of what Mary said? And then, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream! The angel confirmed what Mary had said, that she would have a son and name him Jesus. Jews expected a Messiah. God had spoken through the prophets that a savior would come. Joseph

would know of this expectation. What he would not know, until the angel told him, was the role Joseph would have in the Messiah's life: Emmanuel, God with us, would become a part of his family. This dream caused Joseph to think differently. With his spiritual mind awakened, Joseph did what the angel said, and with his fear gone, Joseph went to get Mary. In ancient Israel an engaged woman remained with

her parents. Her husband would go to her parent's home and take her to live with him. The time of Joseph's arrival was unknown to the bride, therefore the bride needed to remain in a state of readiness. Joseph probably surprised Mary when he arrived to claim her as his wife. How marvelous! Joseph's love for Mary led him to move his pregnant wife from

her parent's home to his home. Joseph exercised great restraint and did not have sexual relations with Mary, now his wife, until after Jesus was born.


The angel confirmed what Mary had said, that she would have a son and name him Jesus.

SANKOFA

Phillis Wheatley, taken from Senegal/Gambia, West Africa,

was enslaved in John Wheatley's home. Though the law prohibited educating slaves, the Wheatleys taught Phillis to read and write. Highly educated, Phillis studied the Bible, astronomy, geography, history, and British, Latin, and Greek writings. By the age of eighteen, Wheatley had written a 28-poem collection. Many were published in the Boston newspaper. "On Being Brought from Africa to

America,” her best-known poem, stated that everyone including Africans were Christians.

Twas mercy brought me from
my *Pagan* land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there’s a God, that there’s
a *Saviour* too:

Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.

Some view our sable
race with scornful eye,
“Their colour is a diabolic
die.”

Remember,
Christians, Negros, black
as *Cain*,
May be refin’d, and join
th’ angelic train.

Unable to gain a publisher in America, Wheatley found one in London. In 1773, Wheatley’s *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, was the first volume published by an African American. Wheatley authored over 140 poems. If the family that enslaved her had not been willing to defy taboos, Phillis would have remained uneducated and unpublished.

CASE STUDY

Pre-natal visits help pregnant women and their babies. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that expectant women should have at least eight visits with a health care provider prior to giving birth. Unfortunately, most women worldwide do not have eight visits. Most, 65%, have four visits. Some

only have one prenatal health care visit. Limited visits result in miscarriage and high infant death rates. Adequate prenatal care helps mothers receive medical treatment and advice that can improve their health. If Joseph had divorced Mary, she would have become an outcast. Without Joseph’s support Mary would have been on her

own. Instead, Joseph took care of her. Mary had food, shelter, and protection. Mary had a successful childbirth because Joseph listened to the angel. Unfairness in health care systems negatively affects women of color. Even in countries rich in health resources, underweight and still born babies occur in higher numbers for


“
In 1773, Wheatley’s
*Poems on Various
Subjects, Religious
and Moral*, was the
first volume published
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American.”

women of the African diaspora.

What can your church do to help women around the world receive prenatal health care?

LIFE APPLICATION

No one chooses their parents. God places children in families. Because God knows the work each person should complete, the chosen family shapes and molds children for their future. Families may seem perfect or less than ideal. Jesus had a perfect father in heaven. Jesus' earthly family was not perfect. His mother pondered in her heart (Lk. 2:19) throughout his life about him. Jesus' brothers did not believe he was the son of God (John 7:5). Yet, this was the family God chose. Just as God chose Jesus' family, God chooses your family. That family, whether biological, adopted, or foster, will help you become the person God called and created you to be.



What can your church do to help women around the world receive prenatal health care?

QUESTIONS

1. Many women are raising children without male support (and vice versa). How can the church help?
2. How important are dreams? How do your dreams impact your life?
3. How could God use the WHO (World Health Organization) to compel the world to support the care of pregnant women?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Meditate on this Jewish Prayer for Boys (probably prayed on Jesus' behalf).

May you be like Ephraim and Menashe.

May God bless you and protect you.

May God show you favor and be gracious to you.

May God show you kindness and grant you peace.

or

Meditate on this psalm:

Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him.

*Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
are children born in one's youth.*

*Blessed is the man whose quiver is full
of them.*

Psalms 127:4-5 (NIV)

Sing one of the Christmas carols – think
of how Joseph, not mentioned by name

in the lyrics, played an important role.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the spirit of
righteousness. May we learn from the
life of Joseph how to be kind and to
do everything you ask, no matter how
difficult. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 7 – December 13

Monday	Isaiah 7:10-15	(Sign of God's Presence)
Tuesday	Isaiah 42:1-9	(Called as Light to the Nations)
Wednesday	Isaiah 49:1-7	(Called to Mission Before Birth)
Thursday	Luke 1:26-38	(Birth of Jesus Foretold to Mary)
Friday	Luke 2:34-38	(Simeon Foretells Jesus' Ministry)
Saturday	Ruth 4:9-17	(Mary, in the Lineage of Ruth)
Sunday	Matthew 1:18-25	(Miracle of the Holy Spirit Conception)

A REGAL RESPONSE TO HOLY LIGHT

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 2:7-15

Focus Scripture: Matthew 2:7-15

Key Verse: On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Matthew 2:11 (NRSV)

MATTHEW 2:7-15 (NRSV)

7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.

8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

9 When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was.

10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

13 Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."

14 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt,

15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

MATTHEW 2:7-15 (KJV)

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

13 And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

14 When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:

15 And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

KEY TERMS

- **Magi** – Distinguished foreigners, wise men, astronomers from the East.
- **Frankincense** – Olibanum, resin of the Boswellia tree; a woody, spicy smell, mixed with myrrh to make incense for God's temple.
- **Myrrh** – A natural gum resin, reddish-brown in color; it is dried sap from a thorny tree, mixed with frankincense to make incense for God's temple.

INTRODUCTION

Walking a mile can seem a long way for many. People in some countries walk three or more miles a day (one way) to get water. Think about a round trip of over six miles by foot to get water, a necessity for life. In today's lesson the, Magi traveled over a great distance for an even greater necessity. Some believe they travelled more than 9,000 (14,484K) miles over a 30-month period. The Magi's round trip was probably over 18,000 miles (28,968K). They wanted to find the king, the son of

God. After their visit, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus also travel a great distance. They left Bethlehem to go to Egypt, a 430-mile (690 K) trip. God served as guide and protector on both journeys.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY**Matthew 2:7-8**

No one knows where or when the Magi's trip began. These astronomers noted a star in the sky, and because they understood the meaning of the star, the wise men set out to follow the star. The Bible does not tell exactly how many wise men there were, nor record any discussion they had before beginning their journey. What the Bible does tell

us is where the star led them – to Jerusalem. Once in Jerusalem, the Magi asked Herod where they could find the king of the Jews. In Herod's mind *he* was ruler of the Jews. How dare the wise men look for someone else! So, Herod found out from the Jews all he could about the Messiah. Intent upon killing anyone seen as

ruler instead of him, Herod quizzed the



**What the Bible
does tell us is where
the star led them
(the wise men) – to
Jerusalem**

Magi about the star. He then told the Magi that Bethlehem was the place they should go.

Matthew 2:9-15

After leaving Herod's presence, the Magi again saw the star. It seems God disrupted the star's appearance for a moment so that scripture could be fulfilled. Herod, alerted to Messiah's birth, decided to murder Jewish males aged two or less. Jeremiah had foretold that mothers in Ramah would cry over their deceased children (Jer. 31:15). Twice God uses dreams to protect Jesus. The Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they took a different route home. An angel appeared to Joseph and instructed him to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus. God had rescued Israel from Egyptian bondage over 1500 years ago. The Israelites were freed from Egypt so that they would worship God. This time when God brought Jesus out of Egypt, everyone, including Jews and Gentiles, would be free to worship.

SANKOFA

Over 3,000 distinct ethnic groups claim the African continent as home. These groups share some common ceremonies. A baby-naming tradition is one. Naming rites across Africa take many different forms. Usually, newborn babies' first names begin as nicknames or false names. Or newborns may initially not receive a name.

Sometimes, children do not receive their names until after they complete a rite of passage. Elders have a primary role in choosing a child's name. The choices may represent a day of the week, an ancestral tie, or family circumstances. Some names have religious links. For example, the Nigerian Igbo and

This time when God brought Jesus out of Egypt, everyone, including Jews and Gentiles, would be free to worship.

Yoruba names that start or end with *Chi* or *Oluwa* refer to God. In Ethiopia, the name *Hailemariam* means "the power of Mary." While in Togo, Ghana, and Benin the name *Makafui* means, "I will praise God." The Magi did not know Jesus' name, but knew they were looking for the king. God named the king, Jesus.


CASE STUDY

Dr. Jarita C. Holbrook, Ph.D. in astronomy and astrophysics, teaches at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. Dr. Holbrook's expertise focuses on African indigenous astronomy. Her research involves the night sky. She notes that people's perspective of the sky depends upon social and environmental factors. Recognizing that people use information from the sky differently, Holbrook examines cultural variations. She reports that people's physical location determines which stars they see and use. God shone a star that brought the wise men to Jerusalem and on to Bethlehem. They travelled over 400 miles through several countries following a star. Dr. Holbrook's research results show how amazing the Magi's journey was. Their location kept changing but the star remained a steady guiding light.

LIFE APPLICATION

The heavens declare the glory of

God (Psalm 19:1). Too often we fail to see what the heavens are saying! Many of us do not look up at the night sky. Stars, moons, planets, asteroids, meteor showers go unnoticed. Enslaved peoples used the stars to lead them north as they fled from plantations. Abubakari II, emperor of 14th century Mali, reportedly used the night sky to navigate from West Africa to the Americas.



The heavens declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1). Too often we fail to see what the heavens are saying!

According to Jesus, we look at the sky and say it will rain or be sunny, but we "cannot interpret the signs of the time" (Mt. 16:3). Astronomers share when we can see sky events such as eclipses, night of the northern lights, pink moons, etc. Suppose we took the time to look up. Perhaps while looking at the sky God

would speak to us. The Magi gave us a peek at what the heavens can tell us.

SUMMARY

The Magi traveled great distances seeking a king. Once they found Jesus, they worshipped him. They gave him their best offering. Isn't it a blessing to

have Jesus always with us through the Holy Spirit?

QUESTIONS

1. How often do you look up at the night sky? When you do, what do you see and how do you connect with what you see?
2. Why do you think God uses the heavens to speak to us?
3. What are your thoughts about people who sometimes risk their lives to spread the gospel message?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Listen to "You Can't Beat God Giving": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqM5GJ-tg0>. Think about how

much you give to God and compare it with how much God gives you. Meditate on a portion of the song, "We Three Kings..." (although we know that the number may be inaccurate).

Bearing gifts we traverse afar

Field and fountain

Moor and mountain

Following yonder star

...Westward leading, still proceeding

Guide us to thy perfect light

Prayer: Lord, thank you for creating the heavens. When we look up, allow us to see with our spiritual eyes. We desire to hear your voice in unexpected ways. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 14-December 20

Monday	Exodus 1:15-22	(Midwives Frustrate Pharaoh's Decree)
Tuesday	1 Kings 3:5-14	(God Answers Solomon's Dream)
Wednesday	Daniel 1:8-17	(Insight Into the Meaning of Dreams)
Thursday	Galatians 3:25-29	(In Christ No Divisions Allowed)
Friday	Micah 5:1-5	(Gracious Ruler to Come from Bethlehem)
Saturday	Matthew 2:19-23	(Successful Return from Egypt)
Sunday	Matthew 2:7-15	(Safe in the Midst of Danger)

CALLED TO PREPARE THE WAY

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 3

Focus Scripture: Matthew 3:1-12

Key Verse: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Matthew 3:3 (NRSV)

MATTHEW 3:1-12 (NRSV)

1 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming,

2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

4 Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan,

6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance.

9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

MATTHEW 3:1-12 (KJV)

1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

KEY TERM

- **Essenes** – A Jewish religious sect who lived in Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls (ancient fragments of Jewish Bible) were discovered.
- **Nazarite** – An Israelite consecrated God’s service; could not drink anything made from grapes, or cut their hair (Num. 6).
- **Winnowing Fork** – A tool used to lift harvested wheat up into the wind that would blow away the lighter chaff allowing the edible grains to fall to the threshing floor.
- **Chaff** – Dry outer covering of wheat which protects the seeds

John knew that a changed mind would prepare people to receive Jesus’ message and ministry.

sea for the ritual washing (Appendix B). Israelites used water to cleanse war’s spoils (Num. 31:21-24), after exposure to a dead body (Num. 19), or when they were healed (Lev. 14). Sometime during Israel’s history ritual cleanings began to include immersion. John the Baptist followed the practice of immersion. John also preached repentance. John knew that a changed mind would prepare people to receive Jesus’ message and ministry.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Matthew 3:3-4

Following over 400 years of silence, God speaks through John the Baptist. Dressed in camel’s hair and eating locusts, John’s appearance and

INTRODUCTION

Israelite priests cleaned in a bronze laver (Appendix A) before they performed their temple duties. God gave instruction that Aaron and his sons should wash their hands and feet. They were instructed to do this when they were going to the tabernacle or the altar (Ex. 30:17-21). This washing made them ritually clean. Solomon’s temple included a molten

message differed from other religious leaders. John shared some traits with the Essenes. These similarities included his diet, emphasis on water rituals, and living in the desert. Probably a Nazarite, John foretold Jesus’ coming.

Matthew 3:5-10


John's message drew large crowds. Many Pharisees and Sadducees went to John to be baptized, and when he saw them he was able to see their true motive for coming had little to do with repentance. John reprimanded them. He knew Pharisees believed that Israelites should strictly follow the Mosaic law. The Sadducees' main goal was wealth accumulation. They were more concerned about their connection to Abraham and the promises God made to him than about a coming Messiah. Baptism for these two groups did not represent a commitment to change their beliefs. It probably represented a way to please Jewish peoples of their day. Pharisees and Sadducees wanted Israelites to recognize them as leaders and to remain loyal to the law and the Roman government.

How would you compare the Sadducees concern with wealth to the modern-day prosperity gospel?

Matthew 3:11-12

John makes a clear distinction

between his ministry and Jesus' ministry to come. Before birth, God gave John a special assignment. His ministry fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy (Is. 40:3). Living in the wilderness, John prepared Israel for the coming of the Messiah. John's prophetic word spoke not only of Jesus' power, but told of fire, the Holy Spirit's power. Water cleanses the outside, fire refines the inside. John using the winnowing



John's prophetic word spoke not only of Jesus' power, but told of fire, the Holy Spirit's power.

fork and threshing floor example to give the hearers a visual picture. Israel, being an agricultural community, could imagine grain thrown into the air to separate the wheat from the chaff, its outer covering. Picturing chaff in a fire that cannot be put out, Jews would understand that the one to come (Jesus)

could permanently destroy. On the other hand, visualizing gathered wheat let Israel know that a permanent *building* exists.

SANKOFA

When William J. Seymour moved from Mississippi to Los Angeles, California, he began a revival in 1906 in a former

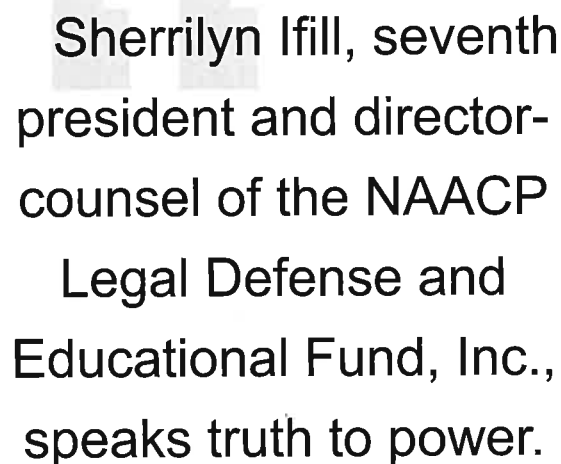
African Methodist Episcopal Church building located at 312 Azusa Street. The revival lasted two years, known as The Azusa Street Revival. The revival birthed the worldwide Pentecostal movement. Although segregation existed throughout the United States, black, white, and Hispanics worshipped together at this revival. Seymour's preaching, based upon the apostolic faith, emphasized baptism of the Holy Spirit including speaking in tongues. He believed that the Holy Spirit would be poured out just like on the day of Pentecost. During the revival, numerous physical healings occurred. From early preaching to a few people, Seymour's preaching transformed the church. Pentecostalism and charismatic worship continue to this day. The Azusa Street Revival marked a turning point in modern church services.

What is the advantage or disadvantage of tracing family roots to Christian ancestors? Do you think The Azusa Street Revival impacts worship at your church,

and if so, how? What if any miraculous healings have you seen take place? If none, why not?

CASE STUDY

Sherrilyn Ifill, seventh president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., speaks truth to power. A fighter for racial justice and equality, Ifill litigated several voting right cases. She strives to eliminate societal disparities. A member of Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, D.C., Ifill commits to Jesus' teaching to serve the least of these. Her book, *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the 21st Century*, shares her personal



Sherrilyn Ifill, seventh president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., speaks truth to power.

experiences and examines how race affects American life. In her current role, Ifill works to end racial injustice and defend the right of all to have equal treatment. Her voice cries out loudly, that the American promise should be open to everyone.

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus expects that the church’s role is to teach and baptize. John the Baptist provides a model that we can follow. Our job, to prepare people for Jesus’ return, should make our voice cry out to the world, *Repent, the Lord is coming back again*. Considering John the Baptist’s model for evangelism, what role do “street” evangelists like John play in modern society? Evangelism requires us to spread the word about salvation and Jesus’ life and ministry, and for us to be examples of his ministry.

QUESTION

1. What message would you give to others about Jesus’ return?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

1. Listen to the song, “Go Ye Therefore and Teach All Nations, and have the class reflect quietly on its lyrics for about 5 minutes.
2. Ask each student to share a way they will share the gospel this week.

Prayer: God, please give us a bold spirit like that of John the Baptist. Allow us to speak boldly to everyone, reminding them that Jesus will come back to judge each of us. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 21-December 27

Monday	Isaiah 40:1-5	(A Voice Cries, “Comfort My People”)
Tuesday	Matthew 11:2-15	(John the Baptist Is the Greatest)
Wednesday	John 1:19-34	(The Baptist’s Testimony of Faith)
Thursday	Matthew 17:1-8	(Jesus, the Father’s Beloved Son)
Friday	Matthew 17:9-13; Malachi 4:4-5	(In John, ‘Elijah Has Come) .
Saturday	Matthew 3:13-17	(John Baptizes Jesus in the Jordan)
Sunday	Matthew 3:1-12	(John Prepares the Way for Jesus)

CALLED TO PROCLAIM

Lesson Scripture: Luke 4

Focus Scripture: Luke 4:14-22 (end with "from his mouth")

Key Verses: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4:18-19 (NRSV)

LUKE 4:14-22 (END WITH "FROM HIS MOUTH") (NRSV)

14 Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country.

15 He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,

17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

LUKE 4:14-22 (END WITH "OUT OF HIS MOUTH") (KJV)

14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.

KEY TERMS

- **Anointed** – Set apart; result of pouring oil or water over one’s head for consecration.
- **Synagogue** – Hebrew: *bet kneset*, “house of assembly”; Greek: *synagogue* (sunagwghv) means “assembly” and refers to the gathering of people, or to the building
- **Messiah** – Jesus, the one anointed.
- **Septuaginte** – A third century B.C. translation of the Hebrew Bible by Jewish scribes who understood Hebrew and Greek.
- **Dead Sea Scrolls** – Portions of the Bible discovered in 1947 in the Qumran caves in Judean Desert.
- **Masoretic Text** – Known by Christians as the Old Testament, this Hebrew Bible is based on oral traditions and Hebrew writings.

“
Jesus was called
to serve and free the
oppressed, despised,
and needy.”

who people considered great leaders. Notable leaders include: Ahmed Sekou Toure, a Guinean politician instrumental in the African independence movement; Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who actively worked to achieve India’s independence from Britain; Nelson Mandela, who was imprisoned for anti-apartheid work and the first black South African president; and Martin Luther King, Jr., a key American civil rights leader. While each of these leaders made a

lasting mark on history, none equaled Jesus. Sadly, the world knows the name George Floyd, one of the recent victims of racially-charged murder in the U.S., which is bringing a worldwide call to end racism. Today’s lesson gives a clear picture of Jesus’ work and the power in Jesus’ name. Jesus was called to serve and free the oppressed, despised, and needy. Jesus’ life-changing work should continue today.

INTRODUCTION

History records various individuals

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Luke 4:14-17

The teaching and works of Jesus made Jesus well-known in Galilee. Galilee, a region of social and economic protest, was home to Jews viewed as outsiders by Jews living in other areas. Jewish synagogues probably began during Ezra's time. Synagogues were distinct from the temple. Sacrifice and ritual requirements given to Moses (Leviticus) occurred at the temple. Jews met at the synagogue to study the law (Torah) and worship. Located throughout the Roman Empire, synagogue services included prayer, scripture reading, and a sermon. A chief administrator and an executive officer oversaw the worship. Worship participants could include laity who could pray and read scriptures and wise men who could deliver sermons. Jesus had previously reasoned with teachers in the temple courts (Luke 2:46-50). This interaction probably qualified Jesus to deliver a sermon.

Jesus went to Nazareth, a small farming community and the town of his childhood, adolescence, and young adult

years. Scholars estimate the population was between 200 – 15,000. Located on the main Roman road to Jerusalem, Nazareth's residents came into contact with people from various cultures. While in Nazareth, Jesus entered the synagogue, took the scroll, and read from Isaiah 61:1-2. But what scroll did Jesus use? Three Hebrew Bible versions were available to Jesus. These available options

While in Nazareth, Jesus entered the synagogue, took the scroll, and read from Isaiah 61:1-2. But what scroll did Jesus use?

included the Masoretic Text (a traditional Hebrew translation), the Septuagint or LXX (a Greek translation), and/or the Dead Sea Scrolls (discovered in the Qumran caves in Judean Desert). Many Jews who lived when Jesus lived read the Septuagint. Jewish deportation to other countries and the

destruction of Israel resulted in the people becoming more fluent in other languages. Koine Greek served as the common language for Jewish people living in the Roman Empire. Jesus probably spoke and read in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.

Luke 4:18-19

Jesus read Isaiah 61 and said that

the passage referred to him. For those listening, they heard Jesus proclaim himself as the Messiah. Many Jews expected the Messiah to overthrow the Roman government. The picture Jesus painted of the Messiah did not match the image of a conquering king. Instead, Jesus saw that victory would come through preaching and prophesying. God's word had power! Good news, freedom, healing, and grace would come from Jesus' ministry. Jesus' ministry would change the lives of the poor, imprisoned, and blind because he was filled with God's Spirit.

Luke 4:20-21

People who heard Jesus declare himself as the Messiah found that declaration hard to believe. Yes, Jesus' words amazed, and yes, Jesus' words blessed; but, people remembered Jesus from childhood. The people wondered how Jesus could be the Messiah. They knew Jesus as Joseph's son. They probably remembered the history of Jesus' birth, with Mary being pregnant before she and Joseph married. Although Jesus found favor with people,

those in Nazareth did not believe Jesus.

SANKOFA

Kofi Atta Annan, a native Ghanaian, served as the seventh secretary-general of the United Nations (UN) from January 1997 to December 2006. Prior to becoming the secretary-general, Annan served in a number of capacities at the UN. These included working at the World

Health Organization (WHO) and as under secretary general for peacekeeping. Under his leadership, Annan and the UN co-received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001 for revitalizing the UN. During his tenure, Annan attempted to extend the organizations' influence by partnering with the private sector. After leaving the UN, Annan

Throughout his life (Kofi) Annan achieved remarkable accomplishments because of the doors God opened for him.

founded the Kofi Annan Foundation which was dedicated to establishing international peace. He also founded the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), an organization committed to promoting farming to ensure food availability in Africa. Throughout his life, Annan achieved remarkable accomplishments because of

the doors God opened for him.


CASE STUDY

People called to preach in the AME Church enter a multi-year training process. This training conducted by the Board of Examiners (BOE) prepares ministers to serve. Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne stressed the importance of ministry education. Bishop Payne believed ministers should study English grammar, theology, ancient history, geography, mathematics, and history. Ministry study became a requirement because of Bishop Payne's efforts. He believed an educated clergy could help "raise up the masses from ignorance." The AME Church continues to stress clergy education. In addition to training received through the BOE, people seeking itinerant deacon orders must have a Bachelor's degree. Itinerant elders need to have earned a Master's degree from an accredited seminary and participate in the BOE four-year curriculum administered by annual conferences. Local preachers need a high school level education and

must participate in a two to four-year curriculum administered by the BOE. What do you think the benefits of clergy education are?

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus gives a model that Christians called to preach should imitate. Jesus went out among the people, teaching, reading the scripture, and amazing hearers with his words. Jesus told people openly what he was called to do. Reading from the scripture, Jesus lets people know his calling is from God. The power of the Holy Spirit led Jesus to where he should go. Jesus does not tell everyone about his works – his fame spreads because Jesus does what God called him to do. Today, ministers should follow this model. Preachers must follow God's path for them – speak as directed – and do as God directs, even when it causes others to doubt their calling.



What do you think the benefits of clergy education are?

SUMMARY

The world needs people dedicated to God's call for ministry to the poor,

imprisoned, blind, and oppressed. This ministry should not focus on bringing fame to the one called. Every word and work should point to God. Spirit-led ministry will give power to change people’s lives.

QUESTIONS

1. What qualities do you think a person called to preach should have?
2. What do you expect current Christian leaders to do to show people God’s favor?
3. How do you handle rejection?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Meditate on the song, “Spirit of the Living God”

Spirit of the Living God
 Fall fresh on me
 Spirit of the Living God
 Fall fresh on me
 Melt me, mold me
 Fill me, use me
 Spirit of the Living God
 Fall fresh on me

Close your eyes and envision what God is calling you to do.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for calling Jesus as our Messiah. We desire to follow in his steps. Let our works demonstrate your power. Let my words bring hope. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you through your Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

December 28–January 3

Monday	Deuteronomy 8:1-11	(Live by God’s Word)
Tuesday	Leviticus 25:8-17	(Jubilee, Year of God’s Favor)
Wednesday	1 Kings 17:8-16	(Miracle of the Meal and Oil)
Thursday	2 Kings 5:1-14	(Naaman’s Leprosy Healed in Jordan River)
Friday	Luke 4:1-13	(Jesus Overcomes the Devil’s Temptations)
Saturday	Luke 4:23-30	(Jesus Driven Out of Nazareth)
Sunday	Luke 4:14-22	(Jesus’ Mandate for Ministry Announced)

CALLED TO SIGNIFICANCE

Lesson Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

Focus Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

Key Verse: Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." Luke 5:10b (NRSV)

LUKE 5:1-11(NRSV)

1 Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God,

2 he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.

3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."

5 Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets."

6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.

7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"

9 For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken;

10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

LUKE 5:1-11 (KJV)

1 And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2 And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3 And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

7 And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9 For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10 And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11 And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

KEY TERM

- **Gennesaret** – Also known as the Sea of Galilee; was a place for the fishing industry, where there could be violent storms without warning, which endangered boats.
- **Dag** – Hebrew word for a fish (pronounced *dawg*); had its origin in the Hebrew word *dagah* which means to multiply or increase.
- **Disciples** – Students who follow a teacher.
- **Apostle** – Messenger sent to do a particular job.
- **St. Peter's Fish** – Probably a type of tilapia named after Simon Peter, the disciple who caught a fish and took a shekel out its mouth to pay the temple tax.
- **Carp** – A species of freshwater fish.

“
They knew that Jesus called them to a greater work; they were to fish for souls.”

change jobs because their passion and job do not match. Sometimes people change jobs because the company closes. Sometimes people leave jobs to make more money. Sometimes people leave jobs because of family needs. How many people leave a job because God called them to do something else? We do not know this number, but we do know that God calls people to work

in God's kingdom. In today's lesson, Jesus calls some fisherman to follow him. These men immediately left their fishing jobs to go with Jesus. They knew that Jesus called them to a greater work; they were to fish for souls.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY**Luke 5:1-3**

John the Baptist's disciples saw great crowds go to hear John preach. While John had a great ministry, Jesus' ministry was far greater. The word spread about Jesus' ministry. Jesus cast out evil spirits and healed diseases. Jesus' preaching attracted extremely large crowds. Jesus needed a space where he could preach

INTRODUCTION

People need money, so they go to work. Jobs chosen depend on what people can do, their skills and experience, and what employers need. Sometimes people

without being crushed by the crowd! So, Jesus joins Simon (Peter) in his boat and teaches from the sea.

What do you think would make a large crowd gather to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Luke 5:4-7

After Jesus finished teaching, Jesus turned his attention to the fishermen. Jesus told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. Peter told Jesus they had worked all night without success. To better understand what Jesus' directive meant, consider all that 1st century fishermen did night and day.

Israel started as an agricultural nation. The people raised livestock and planted fields. The fishing industry, seldom mentioned in the Old Testament (Numbers 11:5-6), became a thriving business. By the time of Jesus' ministry, Lake Gennesaret was surrounded by fishing communities. Magdala, one of these communities,

had a sardine-pickling center. Herod and Philip, rulers of Israel, invested in the fishing industry. Only one Hebrew word for fish, *dag*, was used during this era. *Dag* referred to every size and kind of fish. Jewish fishermen would catch clean and unclean fish (Leviticus 14:9-10). Clean fish, St. Peter's fish and carp, they could eat and sell to Jews. Any catfish they caught they would sell to Gentiles.

“
After Jesus finished teaching, Jesus turned his attention to the fishermen.”

When they caught fish, fishermen had to pay taxes before marketing their catch. Josephus, a Jewish historian, reports over 230 fishing boats worked on Lake Gennesaret during Jesus' time.

New Testament fishermen had a difficult job. They worked throughout every season. These fishermen would work though heat and cold. Their job required long hours. At night they would cast their linen nets to catch fish. Cleaning the fish and mending their nets were tasks fishermen did during the day. Nets required daily cleaning and drying so they would not rot. Small stone pieces used as net weights fastened to

the bottom of the nets needed cleaning also. Cleaning the nets and stones took a long time.

Luke 5:8-11

The disciples could only do what Jesus asked, if they forgot their weariness and stopped cleaning their nets. Without clean nets, the disciples would not have equipment needed for their next night's work. Usually, the disciples fished at night when their nets were not easily seen by the fish. Peter says, "Only because you say so," will we let down our nets. Peter knows it's the wrong time and that they will have to stop cleaning the nets needed for that night's work. But, Peter calls the other fishermen to do what Jesus instructed. Jesus shows that he rules over the waters, as their catch is so large the nets almost break. All of the fishermen were shocked at the size of their catch. What happened made Peter worship Jesus! Peter admits he sins and asks Jesus to leave him. Jesus has a different point of view; Jesus sees

beyond Peter's sins to Peter's spiritual potential. The call to discipleship was not based upon Peter's works but on the grace of God.

Peter, James, and John had a good business. They owned their own boats and houses. They left everything they owned to follow Jesus. The words "do not be afraid" covered more than just their emotions and thoughts. To follow Jesus

they had to believe that God would supply everything they needed materially. These men gave up their means of supporting themselves and their families to take an uncharted journey.

“ Jesus shows that he rules over the waters, as their catch is so large the nets almost break.

SANKOFA

The Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.)

founded by Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr. encouraged black people to resettle in Africa. This movement, known as Garveyism, wanted to reunite African diaspora peoples to form their own country. Garvey founded several businesses to help him reach the goal of establishing a separate black nation.

Garvey's businesses included a shipping company, *Black Star Line*, a newspaper, *The Negro World*, and several factories. He hoped to establish trade between black people in America, the Caribbean, South and Central America, Canada, and Africa. Although unsuccessful in achieving his goal, Garvey's dedication to freedom and self-determination for black people inspired many. Garvey called people to follow him to a better life and many were willing to do so.

CASE STUDY

#MeToo, a well-known movement, has a less well-known founder. Tarana Burke, an activist for the unheard, works for social justice. Burke founded the *MeToo* movement in 2006

as a way to help women victimized by sexual violence. Her primary focus was black women and girls, especially those from lower income communities. As a survivor of sexual abuse, Burke saw the need for resources that would help those who had experienced abuse to heal. She has written curriculum discussing sexual violence, which was designed

specifically for the black community. Burke's efforts led to an international movement. Conversations about sexual violence and its impact occur throughout the world. Her small beginnings have caught the attention of millions, and has helped change the way sexual violence is viewed around the world.

LIFE APPLICATION

Her (Tarana Burke) small beginnings have caught the attention of millions, and has helped change the way sexual violence is viewed around the world.

A successful fisherman would need strength, good health, patience, determination, and skill. Jesus may have called fishermen as disciples because these traits would help when they became apostles. Your God-given personality, skills, and talents prepare you to answer God's call, and do the

work assigned to your hands. God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary works! The ministry call depends on faith in Jesus. Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection should take away fear and like Peter cause you to say, "Yes, although I have worked hard already, I'll do as you say."

SUMMARY

You have experiences that prepared you for kingdom work. The only thing that can stop you from doing all God asks you do, is saying “no!” When you tell God, “yes” new possibilities open!

QUESTIONS

1. How would you respond if Jesus asked you to leave everything you own to follow him?
2. When you really think about who Jesus is, what do you learn about yourself?
3. How would you use your job skills to invite people into the body of Christ?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Think about the words to this song. Ask each student to reflect on whether they have said “yes.”

I'll say yes, Lord, yes

To your will and to your way
I'll say yes, Lord, yes
I will trust you and obey
When your Spirit speaks to me
With my whole heart I'll agree
And my answer will be yes, Lord, yes.

https://www.allthelyrics.com/lyrics/shirley_ceasar/yes_lord_yes-lyrics-1117942.html

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

Prayer: Dear Jesus, teach us how to be fishers of people. Teach us how to follow your example. Let us learn how to love as you do. Help us so that we do not see people as sinners but individuals created by our Father. Give us a heart that loves you more than we love material things. Thank you, Lord, for calling us to work for you. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

January 4-January 10

Monday	Exodus 3:1-12	(Called to Lead Israelites from Egypt)
Tuesday	Judges 6:11-16	(Called to Deliver Israelites from Midianites)
Wednesday	Isaiah 6:1-8	(Called and Cleansed for Ministry)
Thursday	Luke 9:57-62	(Single Mindedness Required to Follow Jesus)
Friday	Romans 2:1-11	(Repentance, Goal of God's Kindness)
Saturday	John 21:15-19	(Jesus Calls Peter to Ministry)
Sunday	Luke 5:1-11	(Don't Be Afraid to Catch People)

CALLED TO HEAL

Lesson Scripture: Mark 2:1-12

Focus Scripture: Mark 2:1-12

Key Verse: "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'?" Mark 2:9 (NRSV)

MARK 2:1-12 (NRSV)

1 When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home.

2 So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them.

3 Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them.

4 And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,

7 "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

8 At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts?"

9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'?

10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—

11 "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home."

12 And he stood up, and immediately took the

MARK 2:1-12 (KJV)

1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there was certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the

mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

KEY TERMS

- **Capernaum** – Greek *Kapernaoum*, meaning *village of comfort*, located on the Sea of Galilee.
- **Scribes** – Hebrew *soferim*, people who knew how to write, beginning during the time of Ezra's interpretation of the law to the people. Scribes came to be known as wise men – they would record what happened each day.
- **Blasphemy** – Hebrew *birkat hashem*, cursing the name of God, evil speaking about God.

INTRODUCTION

We usually give little thought to having healthy bodies. But when sickness strikes, we often pay more attention to our bodies. We think about getting well. We may wonder what medicine we need to take. Will we be able to see the doctor? Does a cure exist? Do we have enough money to pay for health care? How long will the sickness last? When Jesus walked the earth, people knew that immediate healing was possible. Word spread throughout Israel that Jesus

performed miraculous cures. Crowds came hoping for a personal healing, or for a loved one to be cured. If scientists discovered a prescription medicine that guaranteed to cure every disease known to us, think about how many people would use that for healing. What do you think people would do to make sure they got the medicine? Four men in today's lesson show us how far people will go to help someone who wants to get well.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Mark 2:1-2

Jesus moved his base of operations from Nazareth to Capernaum (Matthew 4:13). After traveling to other places, Jesus would return to Capernaum. Jesus preached there and many of his miracles were performed there (Mark 1:23-27; Luke 4:33-36). Capernaum's climate and location made it well suited for Jesus' ministry. There were hot springs at the bottom of the Galilean hills. These springs made for comfortable seating year-round as they warmed the ground. People living in Capernaum expected Jesus to return there, and word would spread when Jesus did. Crowds would come to hear Jesus speak, deliver people from

demons, and heal the sick.

Mark 2:3-5a

A large crowd gathered at the house where Jesus was, one of the large homes which could hold about fifty people. These homes had one or two rooms. A large crowd pressed close together would stop anyone else from entering the house. An even larger crowd stood outside. Because the people were packed so close together, no one could get by them to see Jesus. Imagine: those who were tiptoeing could not see Jesus, crouching, peering over one another's shoulders trying to catch a glimpse. Four men determined to get their friend near Jesus thought of another way. Instead of pushing through the crowd, the men carried the man on the roof of the house where Jesus was. Many Capernaum homes had an outside staircase leading to the roof. Lifting a body up a flight of stairs required strength. These men probably were straining and sweating as they carried the man on his mat! Their efforts did not stop there; they

dug through the roof, which was made of either tile or clay. And then they carefully lowered the man where Jesus could see him.

Mark 2:5b-11a

Jesus, knowing what the man's friends did, recognized their faith. They would not have gone through the struggle of moving the man and his mat unless they

believed that Jesus would heal him. What they and the others there did not expect was for Jesus to forgive the man's sins. According to the Levitical law, forgiveness was obtained through a sin-offering. The ritual outlined in Leviticus 4 was performed with the priest at the Jerusalem temple. When Jesus said the man was

“
What they and the others there did not expect was for Jesus to forgive the man's sins..

forgiven, Jesus was not following the Mosaic law. According to the law, the man should not come near Jesus. Anyone who was sick was required to stay away from the community so that other Jews would not be in contact with them. The scribes who interpreted the law immediately questioned Jesus' authority. The miracle

did not lead them to believe in Jesus. Their questions and accusations were not spoken aloud. Instead, the scribes accused Jesus of blasphemy. Blasphemy carried a death sentence and this was carried out by stoning the person (Lev. 24:10-23). Jesus read their hearts and gave voice to what they were thinking! Because sin sometimes resulted in physical illness (and did, in this case), Jesus forgave the man's sin. Freed by Jesus of the sin that worked against this man's ability to walk, the man took his mat and walked away.

Mark 2:11b-12

The scribes, considered wise men, failed to see God's power. But many in the crowd who could not read or write saw what

Jesus did and praised God. The crowd saw the miracle and began to see Jesus through a different lens. What Jesus did amazed the crowd as people knew that Jesus was not an ordinary man. Only someone anointed by God could cure a person completely. The man's healing was spiritual and physical.


What do you think the relationship is between sin and sickness? How does what we think affect our faith in Jesus? Why do you think those who were less educated were more able to believe in Jesus?

SANKOFA

Born to a black Baptist preacher and raised in a poor neighborhood in Houston,

Texas, Barbara Jordan excelled in the political arena. After earning her law degree, Jordan served in the Texas Senate in 1967. In 1973, she was elected to the Congressional House of Delegates. She was the first African American woman from Texas to serve in both of these offices. Barbara Jordan's list of 'firsts'

continued as Jordan was the first black woman to deliver a keynote address at the Democratic National Convention. She was the voice of moral conscience during the impeachment trial of President Richard Nixon. Jordan's political career was moving her higher, until she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Her



The crowd saw the miracle and began to see Jesus through a different lens.

diagnosis did not stop her fight for civil and voting rights. Appointed to lead the Commission on Immigration Reform, and awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton in 1994, Jordan died two years later. Multiple sclerosis could not keep Barbara Jordan from doing the things that God wanted her to do.

was sentenced to prison. While in prison, Bulus experienced ill health. His declining health did not stop him from preaching. Many prisoners gave their lives to Christ after hearing Bulus' preaching. Jesus continued to work through Bulus even though guards decided when, where, and how Bulus could move around the prison.

CASE STUDY

Because of lower hygiene conditions, imprisonment can lead to health problems. In many countries, becoming a Christian can result in a person being sentenced to prison. Bulus, born in Nigeria, converted from Islam to Christianity. After his conversion,

family members attempted to have Bulus revert to Islam. Their efforts included death threats. To save his life, Bulus fled to Jos (a Nigerian city) where he received four years of Bible training. He became a pastor and forgave his family. Bulus' family, however, did not forgive him and instead accused Bulus of stealing goats. After being found guilty, Bulus



Because of their
commitment, Jesus
healed the man.

The story: <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/stories/suffering-grace-collide-prison>.

LIFE APPLICATION

Friends make a difference. They can encourage or discourage. Today's lesson provides an example of good friends.

These friends wanted the paralytic healed, and their determination made a difference. Because of their commitment, Jesus healed the man. Think about your friends. Hopefully you have chosen friends who will do everything they can to help you. We especially need their assistance when we are sick. Friends may not carry you physically, but they

can always prop us up through prayer and visitations.

SUMMARY

Having friends who believe in Jesus is important. Their faith can help when we face seemingly impossible situations. Sometimes, illness may be caused by sin. Jesus always forgives and that forgiveness changes us on the inside and the outside.

QUESTIONS

1. When you see a sick friend, how do you respond?
2. Why do you think some people remain paralytics even though they

and others have prayed?

3. How do the four friends' actions display their faith in Jesus?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

1. Call the names out loud of people who need healing, then pray together for healing.
2. Praise God for times you, family, church members, and friends were healed.

Prayer: God, who created us and wove us together in our mothers' wombs, we ask that you forgive us and cure us. Cleanse our hearts. Surround us with friends with faith in Jesus Christ. Remind us to praise and thank you, in Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

January 11-January 17

Monday	Isaiah 57:14-21	(Peace and Healing Will Come)
Tuesday	1 Peter 2:18-25	(Healed by Christ's Wounds)
Wednesday	Matthew 15:21-28	(Canaanite Daughter Healed by Mother's Faith)
Thursday	James 5:13-16	(Anoint Sick with Oil and Prayer)
Friday	Mark 5:21-34	(Woman Healed by Her Faith)
Saturday	Mark 2:13-17	(The Sick Need a Physician)
Sunday	Mark 2:1-12	(Jesus Heals and Forgives the Paralytic)

CALLED AS THE INTERCESSOR

Lesson Scripture: John 17:14-24

Focus Scripture: John 17:14-24

Key Verse: "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word." John 17:20 (NRSV)

JOHN 17:14-24 (NRSV)

14 "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

15 I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.

16 They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

18 As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

20 I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word,

21 that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

22 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one,

23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

24 Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world."

JOHN 17:14-24 (KJV)

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

KEY TERMS

- **Evil One** – The enemy of God who leads us into temptation; the spirit of darkness.
- **Sanctify** – Hebrew *qadash* (pronounced *kaw-dash*'), set apart, consecrate.
- **Shema** – God oneness, Deuteronomy 6:4.
- **Tephillah** – A hymn that includes a series of benedictions.
- **Glorify** – Greek *doxazo* (pronounced *dox-ad'-zo*), honor, praise, extol, magnify

INTRODUCTION

Jesus spent three years teaching his disciples. They witnessed Jesus' works, heard his sermons, observed his zeal for God, and shared with Jesus in worship. On a regular basis, Jesus prayed. At their request, Jesus taught the disciples how to pray. He gave instruction of the proper way to pray – in humility. Jesus declared that his Father's house was a house of prayer. Before Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus gathered all of the disciples except Judas Iscariot for one last time. Jesus has the disciples accompany him to the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed. As a group, the disciples' last memory of

Jesus, prior to his death, was Jesus interceding for them.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY**John 17:14-19**

Devout Jews prayed three times a day (morning, afternoon, and evening). Morning and evening prayers included the *Shema*:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD; and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

...and the *Tephillah*:

Blessed art thou, O Lord, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, Most high God, Lord of heaven and earth, Our shield and the shield of our fathers. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the shield of Abraham.

Jesus kept this daily prayer schedule. "Each day Jesus was teaching at the

temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives” (Luke 21:37 NIV). An olive orchard, also known as Gethsemane, served as the site of Jesus’ last recorded prayer prior to his crucifixion. Though Jesus prayed there every day, this time Jesus’ prayer was different. Instead of standing with his eyes open and hands lifted toward the sky, Jesus knelt. Jesus’ disciples followed him and Jesus withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down, and prayed (Luke 22:41 NIV).

Jesus first prayed for his disciples. Like their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the disciples were sojourners. Their time on earth was temporary. Jesus knew that while

in the world, the people would hate the disciples. This hatred would translate into their experiencing harm, death threats, and ultimately being killed. Knowing this, Jesus did not pray that they be moved into the heavenly realm. Jesus asked God to keep them from the “evil one.” The evil one, the spirit of darkness, could

make the disciples doubt the truth. Jesus prayed that they would be sanctified in the truth. The disciples were called and set apart to spread the truth of who Jesus is, of his death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus, the Messiah sent from heaven by God, sent the disciples out into the world. Before the disciples went to do that which they were called to do, Jesus consecrated himself. Jesus was set

apart to show the truth that death does not have the last word, and eternal life triumphs.

Jesus’ prayer travels through time. Jesus looks into future eras and sees new people who will believe that he is the Messiah, because of the disciples’ testimony. These people yet unborn were included in Jesus’

prayer. Jesus wants them to be one with him and with the Father. Love would be the difference. Love, unconditional desire for others’ goodness, is the foundation for relationship with God. God loved Jesus before the earth was formed. Before God spoke the earth into existence, God loved Jesus. Jesus wanted future believers to

Jesus’ prayer travels through time. Jesus looks into future eras and sees new people who will believe that he is the Messiah, because of the disciples’ testimony.

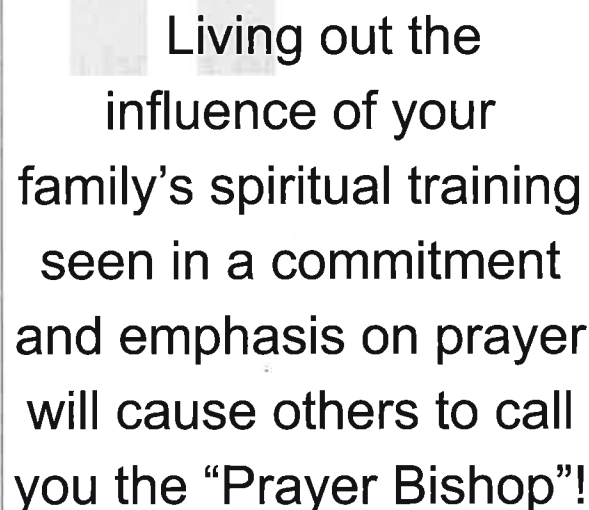
see Jesus' glory. To see who Jesus is requires light. When people see his glory, they see Jesus exposed fully in the light. Peter, James, and John got a preview of this light on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-8).

How do you think your prayers effect people not yet born? What effect do you think Jesus' prayer has on your life?

SANKOFA

How does a person become known as the "Prayer Bishop"? That distinction does not come because you were born an identical twin on February 4, 1948 to your parents, Cornelius and Thelma Taylor. Nor does it come because you, like the Right Reverend Sarah Frances Taylor Davis, were the 126th elected

and consecrated bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Married to Episcopal Supervisor Claytie Davis, Jr. and having two sons, Claytie III and Corey Barrington Davis, will not have people refer to you as the "Prayer Bishop." Living out the influence of your family's



Living out the influence of your family's spiritual training seen in a commitment and emphasis on prayer will cause others to call you the "Prayer Bishop"!

spiritual training seen in a commitment and emphasis on prayer will cause others to call you the "Prayer Bishop"! After being ordained an itinerant elder in 1992, Bishop Davis' faith was continually displayed. She served as the assistant director of Prayer for the Connectional Church (1994). In 1997, Bishop Davis was appointed the connectional director of Prayer. Under her leadership, AME

meetings opened early in the morning with prayers. The AME Church established its annual prayer observance after Bishop Davis held the first Connectional Day of Prayer in African Methodism on April 13, 2008. Bishop Davis died November 9, 2013. However, her prayer ministry remains.

CASE STUDY

AME Church liturgy found in the *Discipline 2016* includes prayer. An invocation during the beginning and an altar prayer near the end of the service allows worshipers to enter into God's throne room. The AME Church started

when Bishop Richard Allen's moments in prayer were abruptly and rudely disrupted. Bishop Allen was yanked up from his knees while praying. Afterwards, Bishop Allen and other African Americans left St. George's Church where this ungodly act occurred. Whenever modern day AME members respond to the altar call and kneel for prayer, they reconnect with the AME Church's historical roots. Altar call invites all members to kneel and pray in their own way to God without interruption. As a connectional church, AME members not only unite with the past, they also join in an international prayer group that circles the globe. Altar prayer gives AME members oneness with Jesus and the Church Universal.

LIFE APPLICATION

Christians are called to follow Jesus. Absolute submission to God's will is required and we cannot see ourselves as master of our lives. We must subordinate our will to God's – to follow wherever and whenever God directs. To have the mind

of Christ results in our emptying anything that stops us from doing God's will. If we do this when Jesus returns, we will rise with Jesus, God will give us a new name, and we will live eternally with God.

SUMMARY

Jesus prays for his current disciples and future generations. Jesus' prayer does not exclude anyone from having troubles and trials in life. What Jesus asks is that our Father take care of us while we are living on earth. Jesus gives a model for how we should pray when facing our own death.

QUESTIONS

1. How often do you pray each day? In what ways do you see the impact of your prayer on your life and the lives of others?
2. Why do you think your prayer life helps to grow your love for others?
3. What benefits about having a consistent prayer life can you share with others?

To have the mind of Christ results in our emptying anything that stops us from doing God's will.

Closing Devotions

1. Listen to Soweto choir singing "Ahuna Ye Tswanang Le Jesu" ("There's No One Like Jesus") – Think about Jesus praying for you at the Mount of Olives before you were born (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4htv0_wsLM).
2. Each person will pray at least a

one-sentence prayer for the next generation.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank you for praying for me before I even knew who you were. Thank you for your disciples who shared the good news of your death, burial, and resurrection. Please teach us how to be one with you, God, and with each other. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

January 18-January 24

Monday	Acts 12:5-11	(Prayer for Peter in Prison)
Tuesday	Romans 15:22-33	(Pray for a Successful Ministry)
Wednesday	Ephesians 3:14-21	(Pray for Inner Strength and Power)
Thursday	Matthew 6:7-13	(Pray the Prayer of Our Lord)
Friday	Luke 6:22-33	(Pray for Your Abusers)
Saturday	Luke 22:39-46	(Pray to Avoid Trials)
Sunday	John 17:13-24	(Jesus Prays for His Disciples)

PROPHESYING DAUGHTERS

Lesson Scripture: Luke 2:36-38; Acts 1:12-14; 2:16-21; 21:8-9

Focus Scripture: Luke 2:36-38; Acts 2:16-21; 21:8-9

Key Verse: "In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." Acts 2:17 (NRSV)

LUKE 2:36-38; ACTS 2:16-21; 21:8-9
(NRSV)

Luke 2:36-38

36 There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,

37 then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day.

38 At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Acts 2:16-21

16 "No, this is what was spoke through the prophet Joel:

17 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.

19 And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

20 The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

21:8-9

8 The next day we left and came to

LUKE 2:36-38; ACTS 2:16-21; 21:8-9
(KJV)

Luke 2:36-38

36 And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

37 And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

38 And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Acts 2:16-21

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke:

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come:

21 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

21:8-9

8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea:

Caesarea; and we went into the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven, and stayed with him.

9 He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy.

and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

INTRODUCTION

Women's role in the church, a source of great controversy, divides denominations and believers. Should women serve as pastors, preach from the pulpit or the floor, or teach men? Many scriptures quoted to justify one opinion or another exclude

Joel's prophecy and today's text from the book of Acts. Tradition may exclude women from certain roles; however, God does not. Unfortunately, many men and women hold biases against female clergy. In this unit, we will learn that God called women to vital roles. Imagine the Bible without Deborah, Esther, Ruth, Mary

the mother of Jesus, Mary the sister of Lazarus, or Mary Magdalene. Imagine the church without women. Now imagine a modern-day church with empowered women. Women called by God to rule

and save nations, support Jesus' ministry, and spread the gospel. How great would a church be if everyone, regardless of gender, was allowed to fulfill their calling?

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Luke 2:36-38

How great would a church be if everyone, regardless of gender, was allowed to fulfill their calling?

Mary and Joseph had Jesus circumcised eight days after Jesus' birth. Dating back to the time of Abraham, male babies were circumcised on the eighth day (Genesis 17:3). Circumcision, a ceremony known as *brit milah*, represented a covenantal relationship with God. Following the Mosaic law, after forty days Mary and

Joseph took Jesus to the temple for the purification ceremony. The purification ritual required two offerings – a sin offering and a burnt offering (Leviticus 12:8). The offerings presented indicated

a family's wealth. Mary brought two turtle doves because of her poverty. By law, Jesus, the firstborn son, was dedicated to the Lord (Exodus 13:2). Anna, a *nebiah* (that is, a prophetess), saw the baby Jesus and began praising God. Anna told those looking for a savior that Jesus was the one, the Messiah. God called an eighty-four-year-old widow to announce the Savior. Anna received the revelation of Jesus' identity, heard the Lord's voice, then shared God's message.

Acts 2:18-21

Women met in the upper room regularly (Acts 1:14). Women were present on Pentecost when the tongues of fire fell on all believers (Acts 2:1), who were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in tongues just like the men. This unusual supernatural occurrence required an explanation. How could these unlearned women and men speak in foreign languages? Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32; from this point on prophecy included males and females – sons and daughters.

In the Jewish understanding, "end of days" represents a change in history as people know it. According to information on Aish.com (a Jewish content website), two possible ends exist. In one possible end, the Messiah rules a world filled with peace and miracles. The second possibility includes a silent God where the world slowly and painfully deteriorates. This second scenario seems to match Jesus'

teaching (Matthew 24). Before the last days, Joel prophesizes that God's Spirit will be poured out on all flesh. On Pentecost, the day the church was born, Peter says the word God spoke through Joel is partially fulfilled. Women will speak for the Lord prior to the impending destruction and through their word,

“Women will speak for the Lord prior to the impending destruction and through their word, people will be saved.”

people will be saved.

Acts 21:8-9

Women served in various ministries at the Jerusalem Temple. They were present at David and Solomon's Ark of the Covenant celebrations (2 Sam. 6:1-17; 1 Kings 8:1-14, 65-66). Under Hezekiah's

reign, women were allowed to eat sacred food and participate in celebratory festival journeys up to the Jerusalem temple (2 Kings 18:1-6). Five women were given the title of prophetess in the Old Testament, include Miriam (Exod. 15:20), Deborah (Judg. 4:4), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chron. 34:22), Noadiah (Neh. 6:14), and Isaiah's wife (Isa. 8:3). Women also ministered at the temple, playing music (Psalm 68:25). However, this Acts account differs from Old Testament accounts of women's ministry. For the first time in the biblical record, four female prophets are presented simultaneously. Sometime before Jesus' ministry began, women's roles diminished. It seems Greek culture had an impact on the way Israel viewed women's roles. Under Greek culture, women did not have significant jobs outside the home. Jews living in Greek societies limited women's involvement in any type of work outside the home. Philip's daughters demonstrate the revival of women's

ministry. These four prophetesses provide evidence that at Pentecost, God poured out his spirit on all flesh. These women shared a call with their father – all were called to be a mouthpiece for God preaching the good news.

SANKOFA

How could a woman born in the 19th century respond to her call to preach?

Baker's popularity increased so much so that the AME Church's leadership authorized her to preach. Harriet Baker moved from unauthorized preacher to pastor.

Pastor Harriet Baker (1829–1913) answered her call to preach in 1872. From the time of her announcement, Baker faced opposition. As a member of the AME Church, Baker could not be licensed or ordained because the denomination did not accept female preachers. Her husband, William Baker, did not support

her call to preach. These obstacles did not stop Baker who became a sought-after preacher and evangelist. Baker's popularity increased so much so that the AME Church's leadership authorized her to preach. Harriet Baker moved from unauthorized preacher to pastor. Her commitment to church ministry may have

resulted in her being the first woman appointed as a pastor by a denomination.

prophecy, God's spirit poured out on all flesh, into the AME Church.

CASE STUDY

The Reverend Carrie Thomas Hooper ran for the episcopacy in the AME Church in 1964, 1968, 1972, 1976, and 1980. Rev. Hooper's decision to offer herself for service as a bishop came after the 1960 AME Church General Conference permitted ordination of women as itinerant elders. Efforts to ensure a woman would be elected as a bishop included a resolution to set aside one slot for a woman. That resolution presented at the 2000 General Conference was defeated by a vote of 667-716. However, that was not the end of the matter. At that General Conference, Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie was elected and consecrated as the 117th Bishop of AME Church. Since that historic event, three other women have been elected bishops in the AME Church: Bishop Carolyn Tyler-Guidry, Bishop Sarah Davis, and Bishop E. Anne Henning Byfield. These women anointed by God bring the reality of Joel's

LIFE APPLICATION

Female clergy often encounter people who try to restrict their ministry. While female clergy have more opportunities, inequities remain across denominations and religious institutions. Recent events, the COVID-19 pandemic, global warming,

and world-wide demonstrations against racism show we are living in a different era. This era necessitates *all* voices- including the women God called- to preach, teach, plant churches, prophesy, and grow churches.

**This era necessitates
all voices- including the
women God called- to
preach, teach, plant
churches, prophesy,
and grow churches.**

SUMMARY

Gender does not limit God's call to ministry. God gives each person a portion of faith to do their assigned tasks. God has no discriminatory practices in whom he chooses to serve his people. Though systems and traditions aim to stymie the roles of women in ministry, God calls all his people to serve using the gifts God himself has given them.

We are one body in Christ

*One faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
binding us together in one cause*

One hope in the one God

One father over all.

QUESTIONS

1. What role do you think women should have in the church universal?
2. How have women in ministry influenced your life, your church, the connectional church?
3. How has the role of female preachers changed over the last few years?

Have each student share one way they can help female clergy receive equal treatment in the church universal.

Prayer: Gracious God, we thank you that in you there is no male or female. You created all of us in your image and your call goes to those you predestined. Teach us to accept and respect the women you called to ministry. Allow us to hear you in their voices. This we ask in Jesus' name.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Pray this song's lyrics together:

Though we are many we are one body

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

January 25–January 31

Monday	Luke 10:38-42	(Jesus Supports Mary's Choice)
Tuesday	John 11:1-11	(Jesus Responds to Sisters' Call)
Wednesday	John 11:38-45	(Jesus Raises Lazarus; Mary Believes)
Thursday	Luke 24:5-10	(Women Carry Resurrection Message to Apostles)
Friday	Luke 24:44-53	(Jesus' Final Words and Ascension)
Saturday	Luke 2:28-35	(Simeon Sees Impact of Jesus' Ministry)
Sunday	Luke 2:36-38; Acts 2:16-21; 21:8-9	(The Spirit Empowers Daughters to Prophecy)

CALL TO EVANGELIZE

Lesson Scripture: John 1:37-51; 4:25-42

Focus Scripture: John 4:25-42

*Key Verse: Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony,
"He told me everything I have ever done." John 4:39 (NRSV)*

JOHN 4:25-42 (NRSV)

25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us."

26 Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

27 Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?"

28 Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people,

29 "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"

30 They left the city and were on their way to him.

31 Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something."

32 But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."

33 So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?"

34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work."

35 Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.

36 The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.

37 For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'

38 I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

JOHN 4:25-42 (KJV)

25 The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.

26 Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

27 And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?

28 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men,

29 Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

30 Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.

31 In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat.

32 But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.

33 Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?

34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

35 Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.

36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

37 And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.

38 I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and

39 Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done."

40 So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days.

41 And many more believed because of his word.

42 They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

ye are entered into their labours.

39 And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.

40 So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.

41 And many more believed because of his own word;

42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

KEY TERMS

- **Samaria** – Capital city of northern Israel (later, the region in Israel where exiled mixed-race Jews who viewed Jacob as their ancestor returned to live).
- **Sychar** – A city in Samaria.
- **Mount Gerizim** – Mountain south of Shechem (where God commanded Israel to engrave the Mosaic covenant blessings).

In today's lesson, Jesus gives an example of how to talk with our foes. Jesus gains trust, listens, teaches, and does not judge.

countries. Cultural norms vary and are reflected in lifestyles. When people listen to one another, they can learn to think and act differently.

Open minds enhance communication that can increase peace and build bridges. People can learn from their enemies if they engage in dialogue. These conversations can only take place when people willingly reach others. In today's lesson, Jesus gives an example of

how to talk with our foes. Jesus gains trust, listens, teaches, and does not judge.

Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Internet communications make it easier to speak with people from other

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

John 4:25-26

Jesus sits down at a Samaritan well. Jews avoided going through Samaria even though the shortest route from Galilee to Jerusalem was through Samaria. Samaritans and Jews did not associate with one another. During the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam, Israel split into two kingdoms: Israel the Northern Kingdom and the Judah the Southern Kingdom. Samaritans' ancestors were Jews from the Northern Kingdom. After the Assyrians destroyed the Northern Kingdom and exported the Jews living there, many Jews intermarried with foreigners. When the Northern Kingdom Jews returned to Israel, animosity arose between them and Southern Kingdom Jews who became known as

Samaritans. Southern Kingdom Jews did not allow Samaritans to help reconstruct the Jerusalem temple. In fact, the Samaritans threatened the workers and for a while had the reconstruction work stopped (Ezra 10:10-11; Nehemiah 13:23-25). Samaritans believed that worship should take place on Mount Gerizim.

They traced their ancestry back to Jacob and claimed the wells he dug as part of their inheritance. In the conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus dismisses these beliefs as unimportant. More important than places of worship is the spiritual drink that quenches the soul's thirst. Jesus had given the Samaritan woman a sample of this drink. Jesus knew all about her past. Jesus lets her

“More important than places of worship is the spiritual drink that quenches the soul's thirst. Jesus had given the Samaritan woman a sample of this drink.”

know it was not where she worshipped but *how* she worshipped. The woman's worship must be spiritual and not tied to earthly rules. The woman, wanting to know more, says that when the Messiah comes, he will explain everything about worship. For the first time, Jesus admits that he is the Messiah.

Jesus makes this revelation not to his disciples, but to an outcast, a woman at a well in the middle of the day (Matthew 16:13-20).

How do denominations interact with one another? How do these interactions affect the church (1 Corinthians 12 – the church is one body)? Where is the proper

place for worship (church building, home, outdoors)? Why?

John 4:27-38

In Ancient Israel, wells were social gathering places (Genesis 24:11; 29:2; Exodus 2:15). Customarily, travelers needing hospitality would sit at a well. When the disciples returned, they were not surprised Jesus sat at the well. They assumed Jesus sat there because he was hungry and wanted food. The disciples wondered why Jesus was speaking with a woman. After all, women and men did not talk to each other in public. Women tended to remain in their homes. This scene before the disciples was confusing to them, but no one asked Jesus why he spoke openly with a Samaritan woman. Seeing the disciple return, the woman left her water pot. The woman probably left other equipment needed to draw water, which included a portable leather bucket and rope used to draw water from the well. Assuming Jesus wanted something to

eat, the disciples offered Jesus food. Jesus used the unspoken question and the offer of food with its spoken question as a teaching moment.

Previously, Jesus spoke to the woman about spiritual water that quenches thirst. Jesus now teaches the disciples about spiritual food that satisfies more than material food. Doing God's work satisfies the soul's hunger. Jesus tells the disciples

As Jesus' ministry continued, many others, prepared in advance by the prophets and John the Baptist, were ready to receive his teaching.

to look around and see the ripened field (Israel and Samaria). Workers were needed to gather this harvest that they did not plant. The disciples may have failed to comprehend what Jesus was sharing with them. In this instance, the Samaritans were the ripened field, prepared in advance for harvest by the woman's

testimony, "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" As Jesus' ministry continued, many others, prepared in advance by the prophets and John the Baptist, were ready to receive his teaching.

John 4:39-42**SANKOFA**

One woman's testimony changes an entire city's life. A woman known for five marriages and current living situation summons everyone to come see a man who knows everything she had done. What made so many people listen to her and go out to see Jesus? They knew this woman's history, and if she found *this* man, the Messiah, who knew and accepted her, why not go to see him? An evangelist, this Samaritan woman called by God persuaded people to go and hear Jesus. She willingly would accept insults and mocking. It did not matter the cost; she wanted the people to see and know Jesus. Because of this woman's witness and Jesus' teaching, many people believed Jesus was "indeed the Savior of the world."

How do our beliefs about marriage and divorce influence the way we view people? What norms and/or customs determine how women and men talk to one another?

Setting a new path requires determination. Mrs. Jarena Lee, the first female preacher in the AME Church, refused to let bias against female clergy stop her ministry. With no formal schooling, Jarena Lee learned how to read and write in her fifties. In her own words, she wrote two journals giving an account of her ministry. Jarena Lee was

An evangelist, this Samaritan woman called by God persuaded people to go and hear Jesus.

converted in the AME Church. While most male clergy opposed her ministry, Bishop Richard Allen supported her and encouraged her to remain with the AME Church. Jarena Lee received preaching appointments from Bishop Allen, which included preaching at Baltimore and New York annual conferences.

The Rev. Jarena Lee gave herself to a fulltime preaching ministry during a time when women were not universally accepted. Like the woman at the well, Jarena Lee's preaching reached and changed the lives of many people.

CASE STUDY

Women called to preach in the AME

Church face fewer obstacles than they did earlier in the 20th century. Women clergy now serve as bishops, general officers, presiding elders, and pastors. Women made these inroads because the church recognized the need to address gender inequities. At the 1976 General Conference, the Rev. Dr. Jacquelyn Grant provided a position paper on women's status. During that same meeting, female ministers voiced concerns about their lack of representation in the church's governing bodies. An ad hoc committee on Women in Ministry was formed to address the concerns. Soon after that, bishops appointed Episcopal district coordinators to represent female ministers. In 1992 at the 44th Session of the General Conference, a resolution established by the Commission on Women in Ministry (WIM) as a Standing Committee of the General Board responsible for overseeing the Connectional AME/WIM was adopted. The Conference accepted the by-laws governing WIM and approved seating of the connectional president of WIM as an

ex-officio member of the General Board.

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus demonstrates that the best evangelism tool is conversation. Jesus engaged in discussion, listened, and made life changing offers. This approach can so inspire, that the hearer goes and spreads the gospel. Using this approach,

Jesus first revealed his identity to a woman considered an outcast. Jesus did not see past this woman's life, but saw this woman as a worker ready to harvest people.

“
Jesus first revealed
his identity to a woman
considered an outcast.”

SUMMARY

People become believers because God uses women whom society and some

churches may not accept to preach or have leading roles in the church.

QUESTIONS

1. How do you view the current status of women in ministry in the AME Church?
2. Do you believe that the church has done enough to include women in

- roles historically appointed to men? Why or why not?
3. What can you do to ensure equal treatment of women in ministry in the AME Church?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

1. Ask students to share the names of female clergy members. Pray for them.

2. Name places where people are ready to hear the Gospel. Pray to God to send workers there.

Prayer: God, thank you for using women to persuade others that Jesus is Lord. We thank you for using women to work the fields and bring in a harvest of believers. Open our hearts to your call that we may labor with them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

February 1-February 7

Monday	Revelation 21:1-7	(Receive the Water of Life)
Tuesday	John 8:21-30	(Jesus Declares, "I Am from Above")
Wednesday	Romans 8:12-17	(God's Children Led by the Spirit)
Thursday	John 1:37-42	(Simon and Andrew First Disciples)
Friday	John 1:43-51	(Galileans Philip and Nathanael Become Disciples)
Saturday	John 4:43-54	(Jesus Heals Son of Galilean Official)
Sunday	John 4:25-42	(Samaritans Come to Jesus)

MARY MAGDALENE: A FAITHFUL DISCIPLE

Lesson Scripture: Mark 15:40; 16:1-9; Luke 8:1-3; John 20:10-18

Focus Scripture: Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40; John 20:10-18

Key Verses: The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits. Luke 8:1-2 (NRSV)

LUKE 8:1-3; MARK 15:40; JOHN 20:10-18 (NRSV)
Luke 8:1-3

1 Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him,

2 as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,

3 and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.

Mark 15:40

40 There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.

John 20:10-18

10 Then the disciples returned to their homes.

11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb;

12 and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.

13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Suppos-

LUKE 8:1-3; MARK 15:40; JOHN 20:10-18 (KJV)
Luke 8:1-3

1 And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,

2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

Mark 15:40

40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;...

John 20:10-18

10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weep-

ing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

est thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.


16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

KEY TERM

- **Mary Magdalene** – Combines a traditional Jewish name Mariam, which means sorrow (Ruth 1:20) and a Hebrew root, Migdal, which means tower.
- **Magdala** – A large Galilean seaport that engaged in trade including export of salted fish.

 Mary Magdalene later became the first person commissioned by Jesus to share the good news of his resurrection.

women's personal income. The gospel writers do not give details about how Jesus called these women to ministry;

but, they had significant roles in spreading the Gospel. Mary Magdalene, mentioned by four gospel writers, witnessed Jesus' resurrection. Delivered from seven demons, Mary Magdalene later became the first person commissioned by Jesus to share the good news of his resurrection. Mary

INTRODUCTION

Jesus had female disciples. These women accompanied Jesus throughout his ministry, and needed financial support came from these

Magdalene did as Jesus asked – Mary told the disciples that Jesus had risen. However, they did not receive her message. Sometimes a person's past

may stop others from hearing what God speaks through that individual. People may have ignored a demon-possessed Mary Magdalene, but a Mary Magdalene who saw a resurrected Jesus had to be heard. Throughout the Bible, we continue to hear Mary Magdalene say, "I have seen the Lord."

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY


Luke 8:1-3

Jesus has traveling companions that include women and the disciples. Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene from Magdala, one of the women who accompanied Jesus. Her name, *Magdalene*, means *towering* and may indicate her personal strength

and her future impressive role. Mary's hometown, Magdala, was an important Galilean trade center approximately 6.2 miles (10 kilometers) from Jesus' home base, Capernaum. Mary was wealthy; however, this did not stop her being demon possessed, as seven demons possessed her. The number seven represents completion; and, the

biblical text seems to indicate that Mary Magdalene experienced great suffering. Scriptural references reveal that demons took over people's bodies and minds (Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39; Mark 9:14-29). However, demons recognized Jesus and obeyed Jesus' commands. Ultimate authority over the spirit world belongs to Jesus (not Satan the deceiver, accuser, and evil one). When Jesus met

Mary Magdalene, her mind and body were restored to health. After her deliverance, Mary Magdalene followed Jesus on his ministry journey. Many women were healed and delivered by Jesus – Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna gave their wealth freely to support his ministry.



After her deliverance,
Mary Magdalene
followed Jesus on his
ministry journey.

Reflect on this: how much of your personal wealth are you willing to use to support the Gospel?

Mark 15:40

The women could not do anything to change the horrifying scene. They stood there for approximately six hours. They

saw Jesus bloody, beaten, panting for breath, mocked, but still compassionate. All they could do was stand at a distance and watch the one who had changed their lives have his life blood drained out of him. Once Joseph placed Jesus' body in the tomb, they left.

John 20:10-15

Mary wanted to give Jesus a proper burial. Because of the Sabbath and the beginning of Passover, the burial ritual was not completed. Jesus' body needed to be covered with spices, aloe, and myrrh, and be bound in linen. Mary and the women had come earlier to complete the process, but Jesus' body was missing. Mary returned to the tomb and saw two angels, God's messengers. The angels asked why she is crying. Mary wanted to finish Jesus' burial ritual, as she had sufficient money to purchase another burial site if needed. Mary wanted Jesus' body. So, Mary Magdalene asks the man whom she thought was the gardener to either tell her where Jesus' body was, or give Jesus' body to her. How she intended

to transport the body is not clear. Mary Magdalene was so intent on caring for Jesus' body that she did not answer the angels or Jesus when they asked why she was weeping.

John 20:16-18

Mary Magdalene did not recognize Jesus' spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). Yet when Jesus spoke Mary's name,

Because of the Sabbath and the beginning of Passover, the burial ritual was not completed.

instantly she knew it was Jesus. Hearing Jesus' voice, Mary already had wrapped her arms around him (probably at his feet). She wanted to cling, hold tightly on to Jesus, to lay down and worship Jesus forever, even though it was not the time for this. Jesus lets


Mary know he had to go to the Father. Later, Jesus would return to gather his church. For now, Mary Magdalene had to release her grasp – she had to unglue her hold on Jesus. Jesus wanted her to go and tell the disciples that he must ascend to heaven. Jesus' earthly ministry was over and would continue after he returns. Mary Magdalene received this divine revelation and the call to tell the

good news directly from Jesus. And so Mary announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." What a great honor and privilege God gives to a woman delivered from seven demons!

SANKOFA

Usually women outnumber men in churches. Even with the larger number of women, they often have a difficult time becoming pastors, though this bias against female pastors is changing. Resistance to female pastors usually comes from church leadership and church members. Rev. Puleng Maboe of Mozambique says that congregations did not accept female pastors. Even though there was opposition to women entering the ministry, many women responded to the call to ministry. In 2018, at the African United Methodist Clergywomen Leadership Development Conference hosted by Africa University, women noted how their positions in the church have changed. After six years of ministry, Rev. Puleng Maboe was finally ordained. Now Maboe serves as superintendent

of Central District in the South Africa Conference. Bishop Joaquina F. Nhanala, the first female bishop in Africa, leads the Mozambique episcopal area. The Congo Central Conference has more than 60 female pastors. Many of these women had mothers who served the Methodist Church. Time continues to see women move forward in ministry. Jesus started women's ministry when he instructed women to tell the good news.

 A hard line by Southern Baptists prohibits women from preaching or pastoring churches.

CASE STUDY

A hard line by Southern Baptists prohibits women from preaching or pastoring churches. This position also shared by the Catholic Church limits women's ministry role.

Survey results from a study conducted by Harvard and Notre Dame shows that most Americans support women becoming pastors. When asked if women should have permission to serve as pastors or priests, 77.8% of Americans believed they should. Most Southern Baptists (64.7%) and Roman Catholics (68.9%) also agreed the church should let women become ministers. (<http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/>

[Descriptions/FTHMAT11.asp](#))

Denominational restrictions should not stop women from entering the ministry.

Also, history shows that women's testimony about Jesus cannot be stopped. Today's scripture verses show that women were called to preach.

LIFE APPLICATION

Debate continues about women's roles in the church. Today's lesson shows that women delivered and healed by Jesus made great financial contributions to Jesus' ministry. Without women's monetary support, many contemporary churches would experience financial difficulties. Mary Magdalene and other women witnessed the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their testimony contributes to the gospels' stories and verifies the truth about Jesus. These women knew Jesus: they saw him die on the cross – they watched as he was placed in the tomb – they saw the empty tomb – they saw the resurrected Christ. No other group of people saw everything that happened from Jesus

Denominational restrictions should not stop women from entering the ministry. Also, history shows that women's testimony about Jesus cannot be stopped.

dying to living again. Who better to deliver the gospel message? Gender does not determine the qualification to preach:

call and obedience do. Mary Magdalene did what Jesus sent her to do. She was a faithful disciple, which is what we are all called to be.

SUMMARY

Every Gospel writer references Mary Magdalene. Jesus called and chose her to take the news of the resurrection to the

disciples who were hiding because they feared the Jews. Mary Magdalene, the first gospel preacher, was a woman. She was faithful, modeling what discipleship should look like for all of us.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you think demon possession still occurs today? Why? Why not? If so, how would you know if a person is possessed by demons versus being physically sick?
2. Why do you think Jesus chose to reveal himself first to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection?

3. Why do you think demons immediately recognized Jesus? money God gives them.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Ask students to pray that they, like the women in the Bible story, will remain in Jesus' presence through good and bad situations.

Have each student offer a one-line prayer to be better stewards over the

Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for giving us the witness of faithful women. We thank you that their generosity teaches us lessons about giving. Let us, like them, have such grateful hearts for what you have done for us, that we place you in charge of our personal wealth, telling us how to spend it, in Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

February 8-February 14

Monday	1 Corinthians 15:1-11	(Jesus Appears to Paul)
Tuesday	John 19:25b-30	(Present with Jesus at the Cross)
Wednesday	Mark 16:1-8	(Spices Prepared to Anoint Jesus' Body)
Thursday	John 20:1-9	(Mary Magdalene Finds Tomb Empty)
Friday	Matthew 28:1-10	(Angel Confirms Jesus' Resurrection to Woman)
Saturday	John 20:19-23	(Jesus Appears, Disciples Sent Into Ministry)
Sunday	Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40, John 20:10-18	(Mary Magdalene, Faithful Female Disciple)

PRISCILLA: CALLED TO MINISTER

Lesson Scripture: Acts 18:1-26; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19

Focus Scripture: Acts 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; Romans 16:3-4

*Key Verses: Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.
Romans 16:3-4 (NRSV)*

ACTS 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; ROMANS 16:3-4 (NRSV) **Acts 18:1-3**

1 After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

2 There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them,

3 and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were tentmakers.

18-21

18 After staying there for a considerable time, Paul said farewell to the believers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had his hair cut, for he was under a vow.

19 When they reached Ephesus, he left them there, but first he himself went into the synagogue and had a discussion with the Jews.

20 When they asked him to stay longer, he declined;

21 but on taking leave of them, he said, "I will return to you, if God wills." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

24-26

24 Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures.

25 He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus,

ACTS 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; ROMANS 16:3-4 (KJV) **Acts 18:1-3**

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

18-21

18 And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

24-26

24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

though he knew only the baptism of John.

26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately.

Romans 16:3-4

3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus,

4 and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

Romans 16:3-4

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

4 Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

KEY TERMS

- **Tanakh** – The Hebrew Bible included the Torah (first five books of the Bible), and the historical, prophetic, and poetic writings known by Christians as the Old Testament.
- **Priscilla** – A Latin name meaning *ancient*.
- **Aquila** – A Latin name meaning *eagle*.
- **Corinth** – Large city in the Roman Empire with large shipping industry, and known for sexual immorality.
- **Apollo** – A Greek and Roman god whose worship includes temple prostitutes.
- **Sarcophagus** – A stone coffin.

INTRODUCTION

Ministry teams comprised of husbands and wives began during the first century. In today's lesson Priscilla and Aquila worked

together at secular and religious jobs. They made goat hair tents, which were commonly used for housing. Both studied the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible. Women were not usually given opportunity to teach the scriptures. However, Paul lived with Priscilla and Aquila. Paul's teachings would include both of them. Paul would show from the writing contained in the Tanakh, that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Priscilla and Aquila were attentive students who gained enough knowledge that they were able to teach others. Their joint ministry so impressed Paul that he left the Corinthian teaching in their hands. The eighteen months spent with Paul enabled Priscilla and Aquila to teach Apollos, who was a persuasive preacher and instrumental in developing new churches.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Acts 18:1-3

On his second missionary journey,

Paul traveled from Athens to Corinth. He met two tent makers, Priscilla and Aquila. Emperor Claudius attempted to limit Jewish immigration from Egypt and Syria and warned Jews not to seek any further privileges. Emperor Claudius also restricted Jewish activity in order to decrease political and religious uprisings. Conflicting views about Jesus and the newly formed churches may have contributed to some of this unrest. In 41 C.E., when these efforts failed, Claudius issued an expulsion order removing all Jews from Italy (Rome). Priscilla and Aquila moved 617 miles / 992.97 kilometers away to Corinth. Every Jewish boy learned a trade. Paul was taught how to make tents from

goat's hair. This teaching helped Paul earn money to pay his expenses, rather than depend upon offerings from the newly forming church. Paul worked with Priscilla and Aquila making tents during the day. In the evening, Paul would teach Corinthians, Jews, and Gentiles about Jesus. Many Corinthians worshipped Apollo, a Greek and Roman god. Paul

would use the Tanakh to convince the Jews that he knew about the Roman and Greek gods (Acts 17:18-34) and used their philosophical beliefs to convince Gentiles that Jesus was Lord.

Acts 18:18-21

Paul remained in Corinth, even after some Jews charged him with the crime of persuad(ing) men to worship God, contrary to the (Jewish) law. Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, refused to hear the charges so Paul's ministry continued at the synagogue. When Paul left Corinth for Ephesus, he took Priscilla and Aquila with him. In Ephesus, Paul performed many miracles and cast out demons. His spiritual

Paul worked with Priscilla and Aquila making tents during the day. In the evening, Paul would teach Corinthians, Jews, and Gentiles about Jesus.

power was so great that "handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out" (Acts 19:12). The book makers had stirred up the masses against Paul which resulted in a riot. When peace was restored, Paul went to Macedonia, leaving behind Priscilla and Aquila and his other disciples

in Ephesus. It is believed that Priscilla and Aquila had a church in their home.

Acts 18:24-26

Apollos, an eloquent speaker, arrived in Ephesus. It was evident that Apollos knew the scripture and was familiar with Greek philosophy. Priscilla and Aquila heard Paul preaching in the synagogue.

They noted that Paul was very familiar with John the Baptist's teaching. Apollos preached the baptism of repentance (Mark 1:4). But, Apollos did not teach baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11). Apollos believed that baptism of repentance would lead to new life. Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside, *proslamban*.

The Greek verb, *proslambanō*, means that either they took Apollos into their home, or took him apart/away from others. More than likely Apollos spent time in Priscilla and Aquila's home, that also served as a church. They probably used Paul's testimony about Christ to teach Apollos. Paul taught about his own conversion

experience on the road to Damascus. He taught about the resurrection, and the power of life over death. Paul taught about and demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit to heal and deliver. After learning more fully about Jesus, Apollos left for Achaea, a Roman province.

What is the difference between the baptism of repentance and the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Do you think the power Paul displayed in Ephesus is still seen today? Why? Why not?

Paul taught about his own conversion experience on the road to Damascus. He taught about the resurrection, and the power of life over death.

Romans 16:3-4

Priscilla and Aquila returned to Rome after Claudius' edict was cancelled. There they united with the Roman Church. Both Jews and Gentiles belonged to

the Roman Church. Paul's letter to the Romans, considered one of his clearest presentations of the gospel, contains a list of fellow workers. Paul asked the church to greet Priscilla and Aquila, who had risked their lives for Paul as they helped him spread the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul's life was threatened

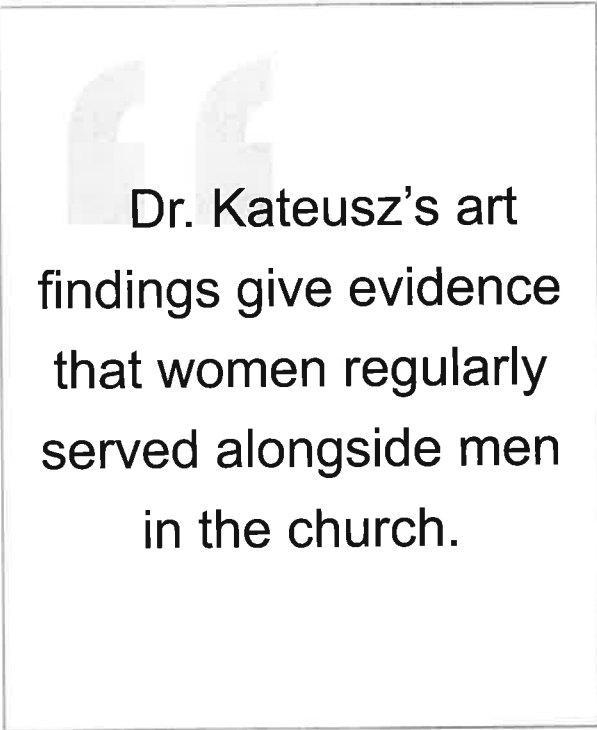
in Corinth and Ephesus and Priscilla and Aquila ministered with him in both places. These interactions with hostile Jews and Gentiles prepared Priscilla and Aquila to answer their call. They served as ministers in a multicultural church and Paul thanked God for their work.

SANKOFA

Historical records have little information about female preachers in the early church. Recent research seems to indicate that women who were deacons, priests, or bishops served at the altar in 430 A.D. Dr. Ally Kateusz, expert in ancient art, presented her findings to the International Society of Biblical Literature. According to Dr. Kateusz in her review of artwork (visual images and symbols), three of these images depict Christian women serving in official liturgical roles. Dr. Kateusz also shared that a stone sarcophagus in Constantinople, at the Istanbul Archaeological Museum, has a picture of a male and female standing on either side of the altar. Two things prevent people from knowing the full

story about female ministers in the early church. First, stories about female clergy roles in the early church were banned. Second, few records about clergy over the first seven centuries exist. However, Dr. Kateusz's art findings give evidence that women regularly served alongside men in the church.

CASE STUDY



Dr. Kateusz's art findings give evidence that women regularly served alongside men in the church.

Julita Bartolome served with her husband, Edgardo Bartolome, a Chicago-area pastor. She was deported to the Philippines after several appeals to federal immigration agents failed. Julita ministered to people in her church and the community. According to their son, Aaron

Bartolome, his parents visited the sick, taught Bible studies, and counseled people. With no criminal record and more than 30 years living in the United States, lawyers argued Julita should receive her green card. Her supporters included members of Congress, and the Moody Bible Institute. Like Priscilla, Julita was expelled from a country. Her husband

has expressed discouragement since Julita's deportation. Joint husband and wife ministry has an important function in the church. Full story available at: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/pastors-wife-who-helped-chicago-church-community-deported-after-30-years-in-us.html>.

LIFE APPLICATION

Some bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church have appointed husband and wife teams as co-pastors. Not specified in the current *Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal* (the *Discipline*), many of these teams have proven effective in growing some of the largest AME churches

spiritually, numerically, and missionally. God granted these teams complementary gifts that attracted female, male, young, old, rich, poor, believers, and unbelievers to Christianity. In today's lesson, Priscilla and Aquila learned and taught together. They did so without being competitive. When Priscilla's name was listed before his, Aquila did not object. The order of

their names probably showed that they were equal partners in ministry or that Priscilla was the better-versed teacher. They answered their call together and successfully did what God commanded them to do as a united team.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you think the AME Church should recognize co-pastors in the *Discipline*?

Why or why not?

2. How would you help someone learn about baptism of the Holy Spirit?
3. Should pastors be bi-vocational? Why or why not?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Pray for husband and wife ministry teams.

Call the names of missionaries who travel to other lands. Ask God to keep them safe from harm and to give courage and boldness.

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for sharing the value that women bring to ministry. We are grateful that when you commanded

In today's lesson, Priscilla and Aquila learned and taught together. They did so without being competitive.

that we teach and baptize, you also called husband and wife teams. Let us learn the lessons of Priscilla and Aquila

to work together fearlessly as we share the gospel. In your name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

February 15-February 21

Monday	2 Timothy 4:9-18	(Paul Reflects on His Ministry)
Tuesday	Colossians 4:7-15	(Greetings to Saints in Jesus Christ)
Wednesday	2 Corinthians 13:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28	(The Holy Kiss Strengthens Ministry Bond)
Thursday	Acts 18:4-11	(Ministry Shifts from Jews to Gentiles)
Friday	Acts 18:12-17	(Roman Official Refuses to Settle Dispute)
Saturday	Romans 16:1-2, 6-7, 12-13, 16	(Greetings to All Sisters in Ministry)
Sunday	Acts 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19	(Priscilla, Key Outreach Minister)

LYDIA: CALLED TO SERVE

Lesson Scripture: Acts 16:11-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30

Focus Scripture: Acts 16:11-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30

Key Verse: When (Lydia) and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.
Acts 16:15 (NRSV)

ACTS 16:11-15, 40; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-30 (NRSV) **Acts 16:11-15**

11 We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis,

12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days.

13 On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there.

14 A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul.

15 When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

40

40 After leaving the prison they went to Lydia's home; and when they had seen and encouraged the brothers and sisters there, they departed.

1 Corinthians 1:26-30

26 Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

ACTS 16:11-15, 40; 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-30 (KJV) **Acts 16:11-15**

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

40

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

1 Corinthians 1:26-30

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are,

29 so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

30 He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,...

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:...

KEY TERMS

- **TMacedonia** – Roman province located north of Greece.
- **Thyateira or Thyatira** – An ancient Greek shipping port city in Asia Minor famous for its dyed cloths. Now, it's the Turkish city Akhisar; a west Asia Minor province name taken from Shem's son.
- **Proselyte** – A person who converts from one religion to another; originates from *Koine*, Greek *proselytes* as translated from Hebrew phrase *ger toshav* which means a *stranger*, a *newcomer to Israel*.
- **Polytheism** – The belief and worship of many gods.
- **Mollusca** – Includes several types of animals with a shell protecting their body which does not have a spine (e.g. snails, clams, and mussels) used to make purple dye.
- **Madder Plant** – A continually

growing, climbing evergreen plant with yellow flowers; its roots are used to make red, blue, and purple dye.

INTRODUCTION

Paul usually began his quest to start churches in large city synagogues. This plan proved successful throughout Paul's second missionary journey in Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Thessalonica. Paul wanted to use this same method in Philippi. However, a woman named Lydia led a small group of Philippian believers. Paul depended on this group to establish a new Christian church. Many people use Paul's letter to argue that women should not lead churches. Today's lesson shows that because Paul used female leadership, a church was established in Philippi.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Acts 16:11-13

Paul, directed by the Holy Spirit, could not preach in the province of Asia and

when Paul and his companions arrived at the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia...the spirit of Jesus did not allow them to enter that region, either (Acts 16:6-7 NIV). Paul saw a vision of a man signaling him to “come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9 NIV). Immediately, Paul went to Macedonia. Led by the Holy Spirit, Paul went to Philippi, the major city in Macedonia. Philippians worshipped a number of idols and emperor worship seemed to be the dominant religion. Paul probably thought that because the spirit directed him to Macedonia, a large number of Jews lived there. In reality, very few Jews lived in Philippi. After spending a few days in Philippi, Paul wanted to share the gospel. Based upon his usual pattern, Paul set out to find the synagogue. However, there was no synagogue. Still desiring to teach people about Jesus, Paul looked for a prayer place by the riverside. This riverside prayer place served as a substitute synagogue. There, Paul met a group of women. Establishing a synagogue required at least ten men.

Philippi did not seem to have enough men to have a synagogue, but that did not stop the city from having Jewish believers. The women were proselytes, Roman citizens converted from polytheism to Judaism.


Acts 16:14-15

Lydia, a woman among the riverside worshipers, responded to Paul’s teaching. Lydia already worshipped Israel’s God, and was probably a leader of the believing community. The biblical record does not share where or how Lydia decided to reject polytheism and worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Those details are not as important as the fact that Lydia was the first Philippian convert to Christianity.

Philippi did not seem to have enough men to have a synagogue, but that did not stop the city from having Jewish believers.

Her conviction and strong faith enabled Paul to baptize Lydia and her entire household. What made Lydia an asset to this newly formed church was her wealth and influence. Lydia, a businesswoman from Thyatira, a city known for its dyed products, sold cloth that was dyed purple. Purple cloth made from luxurious textiles was purchased by wealthy people. To

dye cloth purple required the purchase of expensive marine mollusca or madder roots. Monies obtained from her business meant Lydia could purchase a home large enough to house her servants and a church in her home. The house had enough room that Paul and his companions (probably Silas, Luke, and Timothy) could stay there. With Paul as a house guest, Lydia had the benefit of Paul's daily teachings. After Paul left, the church in Lydia's home would flourish and was known for its generosity



After Paul left, the church in Lydia's home would flourish and was known for its generosity.

(2 Corinthians 11:8,9; Philippians 4:15).

1 Corinthians 1:26-30

God displayed wisdom beyond Paul's understanding when God sent Paul and Paul's companions to Philippi. The church they established there did not follow Paul's common practices. Because there were so few Philippian Jews, gentile believers comprised the membership. A woman, Lydia, became its leader and primary financial source. Normally, Jews frowned upon Greek and

Roman philosophy. God opened Lydia, a Roman, and other Roman women's ears to hear and receive the gospel. All of these things happened at a time when women had lesser status than men. God chose the despised, female Roman citizens. The Philippian church lets all people know that church planting brings glory to God, and that it is only through Jesus that the work can succeed.

SANKOFA

Sarah Breedlove, better known as Madame C.J. Walker,

became an orphan before she was seven years old. First working as a cook and laundress, Walker earned \$1.50 per day. She became a member of the St. Paul AME Church. While at St. Paul, Walker partnered with others and had mentors from the National Association of Colored Women. Lack of indoor running water made Walker and many women unable to have proper hair care. This led to baldness. Walker says a black man gave her a hair care formula in a dream that included African ingredients. After

obtaining the African ingredients, Walker created "Madam Walker's Wonderful Hair Grower." Producing this product laid the foundation for her company. Walker recruited about 40,000 agents to sell this and other products. Her other products included cold creams, shampoos, and hot combs. Her goal, employing hundreds of black women, led Madam Walker to Caribbean and Central American expansion. Walker gave financial support to the YMCA, NAACP, and black colleges. Walker had a role model for Christian businesswomen, Lydia, in today's scripture reading.

CASE STUDY

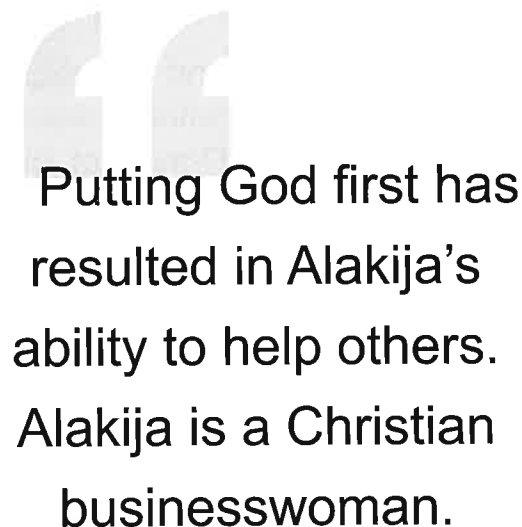
Jesus said, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus' disciples wanted to know if rich people cannot enter the kingdom, who could? Folorunsho Alakija, Nigerian businesswoman, may provide a model for rich Christians. One of the richest women in the world, worth **\$1.5 billion**, Alakija demonstrates how a

Christian entrepreneur can live out their faith. Alakija worked as an executive secretary at The First National Bank of Chicago. When interest in African fashion increased, Alakija traded her banking job for fashion. She left England, returned to Nigeria, and started a fashion company, Supreme Stitches. In 1993, Alakija's company received an oil processing license that will expire in 2024. Alakija says her success resulted from giving her life to Christ. In addition to her businesses, Alakija founded the Rose of Sharon Glorious

Ministry International. Widows and orphans receive scholarships through her foundation. Putting God first has resulted in Alakija's ability to help others. Alakija is a Christian businesswoman.

LIFE APPLICATION

God gives each person gifts and talents to use as we do God's work. We are also prepared to do the work God calls us to perform through our life experiences. In today's lesson, Lydia, a businesswoman,



Putting God first has resulted in Alakija's ability to help others. Alakija is a Christian businesswoman.

had the skills and training needed for a church in her home. She knew how to care for people, manage daily operations, develop and oversee a budget, and organize staff. Lydia was well connected to her community and could increase the number of participants through her community outreach efforts. She was a willing student and benefited from letting Paul stay in her home. As you reflect on today's lesson, consider how God has prepared you to do the work assigned to your hands.

QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think some people give more than others, regardless of their financial status?
2. What factors do you think make church plants succeed or fail?

3. What is the minimum number of people needed to start a new church? Why? What are the advantages and disadvantages of churches in homes?

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Pray for new churches – their pastors and members.

Pray that biases against female clergy will come to an end, especially those biases held by Christians

Prayer: Lord, thank you for turning people's hearts to you. We ask that you continue to call and send women and men to share the gospel. Teach us to know your voice and to follow the path you have chosen for us. Thank you for choosing us, the "foolish" and least important people, to share your gospel. In Jesus' name. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

February 22-February 28

Monday	1 Peter 4:7-11	(Don't Complain but Serve One Another)
Tuesday	Romans 12:9-19	(Everyday Expressions of Hospitality)
Wednesday	Acts 16:35-40	(Hospitality Practiced in Jail and Home)
Thursday	1 Timothy 5:9-10; 3:2	(Hospitality Practiced by Widow and Bishop)
Friday	1 Corinthians 1:18-25	(Christ, God's Power and Wisdom)
Saturday	1 Corinthians 2:1-5	(Know Jesus Christ Crucified)
Sunday	Acts 16:11-15, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30	(Lydia, Model of Hospitality Practice)

LESSON 3
Appendix A



Retrieved June 22, 2020: <https://www.slideshare.net/sanctitas/out-of-egypt-matthew-21315/14>

LESSON 4
Appendix A

Depiction of bronze laver priests used for cleansing at the Tabernacle:



Attribution: Distant Shores Media/Sweet Publishing

Appendix B

Depiction of molten sea or bronze laver priests used for cleansing at Solomon's Temple:



LESSON 5

Appendix A

Synagogue in Capernaum:



By Eddie Gerald - This file has been provided by UNESCO (unesco.org) as part of a GLAM-Wiki partnership., CC BY-SA 3.0-igo: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3738736>

Appendix B

Two scrolls from the Dead Sea Scrolls



<https://archive.org/details/scrollsfromdeser00habeuoft>

LESSON 6

Appendix A

Ancient Israelite fishing boat



The Sea of Galilee Boat or "Jesus Boat" on a metal frame in the Yigal Alon Museum in Kibbutz Ginosar, Tiberias, Israel. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:JesusBoat.jpg>

LESSON 7

Appendix A

The frames of Capernaum houses and buildings:



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Capernaum,_Israel_11.jpg

Appendix B

Stairs from a house in Capernaum:



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Basalt_stairs_from_a_Byzantine_house_at_Capernaum_\(5825977993\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Basalt_stairs_from_a_Byzantine_house_at_Capernaum_(5825977993).jpg)

LESSON 10

Appendix A



"Well" by synx508 is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.

<https://ccsearch.creativecommons.org/photos/3c82ba47-970b-40c7-93e2-c76a1634e2ab>

LESSON 11

Appendix A

Mary Magdalene at the tomb:



Mary and Early Christian Women eBook download free: <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-3-030-11111-3>

LESSON 12

Appendix A

Temple to Apollo in Corinth:

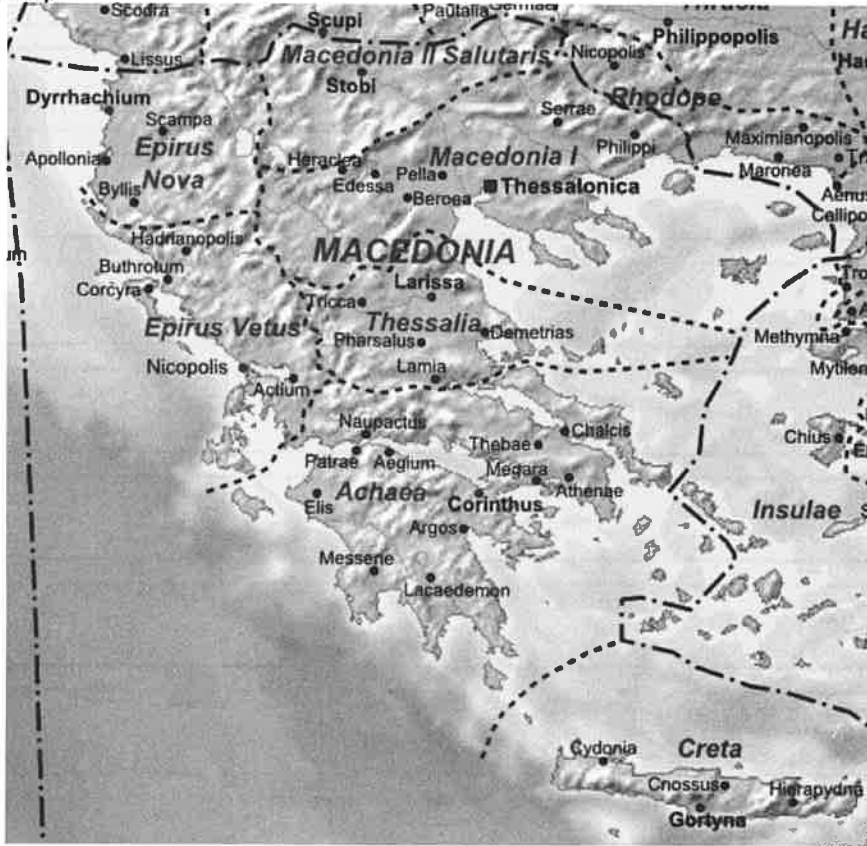


https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Corinth#/media/File:CorintoScaviTempioApollo.jpg

LESSON 13

Appendix A

Map of Macedonia



By The_Roman_Empire_ca_400_AD.png: Cplakidasderivative work: ChrisO (talk) - <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6398613>

Appendix B

Mollusca picture:



By Zachi Evenor - Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/zachievenor/9682551110/>, CC BY 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=28084521>

DECALOGUE

Superintendent—And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord hath made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

My soul be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise:
And hosts of sins are pressing hard
To draw thee from the skies.

Superintendent—Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not kill.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not commit adultery.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not steal.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Superintendent—Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

School—Lord, have mercy upon us, and write these laws upon our hearts.

Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to thee!
Nearer to thee!

Superintendent—Hear what Christ, our Savior, saith: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two Commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All—Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.