

Old Testament

REVISED EDITION

Contents

Session 1: What Is the Bible?	2
Session 2: Our Beginning: Adam and Eve	5
Session 3: God's Covenant: Abraham and Sarah	8
Session 4: Forgiveness: Joseph	11
Session 5: Freedom: Moses	15
Session 6: The Ten Commandments	18
Session 7: Love: Ruth and Naomi	26
Session 8: Friendship: David and Jonathan	28
Session 9: Greatness: King David	31
Session 10: The Psalms	34

Name

Address

Telephone

E-Mail

PARTICIPANT

Old Testament

REVISED EDITION

Writers

Terri Martinson Elton
Bonnie Nash

Editors

Jeffrey S. Nelson
James Satter
Connie Sletto

Graphic Designer

Marti Naughton

Copyright © 2004 Augsburg
Fortress. All rights reserved. Except
for brief quotations in critical
articles or reviews, no part of this
book may be reproduced without
prior written permission from the
publisher. Write to: Permissions,
Augsburg Fortress, Box 1209,
Minneapolis, MN 55440.

The original edition of this
resource was published by
Changing Church, Inc., Prince
of Peace Lutheran Church,
Burnsville, Minnesota.

Scripture quotations are from
New Revised Standard Version
Bible, copyright © 1989 Division
of Christian Education of the
National Council of the Churches
of Christ in the United States of
America. Used by permission.

ISBN 978-0-8066-4907-8

Manufactured in U.S.A.



**To Know, To Live,
To Grow**

Augsburg Fortress
MINNEAPOLIS

Session 1

What Is the Bible?

Session Goal

To understand how the Bible is organized and become familiar with key events, people, and concepts of the Old Testament.

Open with prayer.

Opening Activity

On a separate sheet of paper, list the facts you already know about the Bible.

Starter Questions

- What is your favorite book or story? What do you like about it?
- What do you remember learning about the Bible when you were young?
- How often do you refer to the Bible in an average session or month?
- What are some ways that you use the Bible?

Bible Investigation

Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith, and the Bible witnesses to Jesus. We can learn from the Bible. We can develop a closer relationship with God through the Bible. The Bible can inspire us.

The Bible was originally written in two different languages. What are they?

_____ and _____

What are the two major parts or sections of the Bible?

_____ and _____

What does the word *testament* mean? _____

How many books are in the Bible? _____

Where can you find the story of creation in the Bible? _____

What are the five books of poetry in the Bible? _____

List one of the books of the prophets in the Bible: _____

What does the word *gospel* mean? _____

What are the names of the four Gospels? _____

Where can you find the story of the first Christmas in the Bible?

Name one of Paul's letters in the Bible: _____

Over the centuries the Bible has been translated into numerous languages with multiple translations. List some of these translations in the space below.

Activities

1. The leader should put the name of several books of the Bible on sheets of paper and place them into a bowl. Then the participants should break into groups of two or three and choose one of the books of the Bible from the bowl. Locate that book in the Bible, identify the main story or theme, and find out any key events. Share this information with the entire group.

2. The leader should give each participant a verse to look up in their Bibles.

• What is your verse? _____

• Is this verse located in the Old or New Testament? _____

• In what type of book did you find this verse? _____

• What is this verse about? _____

Discussion Questions

The Bible is divided into testaments, books, chapters, and verses.

- What reasons do you think God might have had for giving us the Bible?
- Why do you think the Bible is divided into two testaments?
- Why do you think the Bible is divided into books?
- Why do you think the Bible is divided into chapters?
- Why do you think the Bible is divided into verses?
- Why do you think there are so many different translations of the Bible?

Favorite Bible Verse

Begin looking through your Bible for verses that have significance to you personally. Make a promise to God to study the Bible and to memorize the verse you choose. Write your favorite verse in the space below:

Bible book, chapter, and verse: _____

Close with the Lord's Prayer from Luke 11:1-4.

*Father, hallowed be
your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day
our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive
everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us
to the time of trial.*

Session 2

Our Beginning: Adam and Eve

Open with prayer.

Opening Activity

The leader should pass out modeling play to each participant. With the clay, everyone should create something that represents themselves. After everyone has finished, talk about your sculptures.

Starter Questions

- Do you like creating things? Why or why not?
- Tell about something you are proud of doing.
- Name some creative people you admire.

Bible Background

At the beginning of time, God created the entire universe, including the world and all of us. From the beginning, God has loved us and all creation. The first story in the Bible tells us that God is our creator. The first three chapters of Genesis tell the story of the creation and the first two people, Adam and Eve.

Read Genesis 1:1-2. Based on these verses, what was the world like at first?

Read Genesis 1:3—2:3. Based on these verses, how did creation happen and in what order did it occur?

What characters appear in this story? What roles do they play?

Session Goal

To study the creation story and discuss the significance of separation from God through sin.

Some problems occurred soon after people were created. What were the consequences for those involved?

Based on this story, write your definition of sin.

Discussion Questions

- What new information did you find in this story?
- Put yourself in the place of one of the characters. Describe your feelings.
- Why did God give Adam and Eve a choice?
- How are you like God? How are you like Adam or Eve?
- What were the consequences of Adam and Eve's actions?
- You've probably learned about the scientific theories of the "big bang" and evolution. How does the creation story in Genesis mesh with your own beliefs about the creation of the universe? Which theory makes the most sense to you?
- What can you do when faced with the following problems?
alcohol/drug abuse homelessness pollution racism sexism

Activity Ideas

1. On your own, create a collage depicting the seven days of creation.
2. As a group, act out the story told in Genesis 3. This chapter of the Bible tells us we have the ability to disobey God. But through Baptism we were born again with a fresh start. This means that even though we are sinners, our greater ability is to be good and holy.
3. As a group, make a list of common sins. Next to each one, list the ways these sins can separate us from God.

Challenge Questions

- What tempts you? What is it that pulls you away from God's instructions? Why are you drawn to such things? See Romans 7:19-20.
- What do you think your special place is on earth? What gifts have you been given? What choices are you faced with in using your gifts to honor God?

Read chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation. These are the last two chapters of the Bible, and they describe John's dream about the end of time.

- What promises does God make to us? How do we know God will keep these promises?
- How is this similar to life before sin?

Assignment

Memorize the names of the first eight books of the Old Testament (Genesis through Ruth).

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Option

Take some time over the next few weeks to celebrate your special gifts by sharing them with others.

For example:

- **If you are a good soccer player, show some pointers to someone learning how to play.**
- **If you can play the piano, offer to play for the residents at a nursing home.**
- **Offer to clean up the kitchen or do some extra project around your home.**

Session 3

God's Covenant: Abraham and Sarah

Session Goal

To learn about the covenant God made with us in the Old Testament and understand God's desire to have a loving relationship with us.

Open with prayer.

Opening Activity

The leader should provide cards with names of famous people on them (as many cards as there are participants in your group). Pin a card on each person's back so he or she cannot see the name on the card. The object of the game is to figure out who you are by asking yes-or-no questions of others in the group. For example: "Am I a woman?" or "Do I have black hair?"

Starter Questions

- Name someone you know and respect. What do you admire about this person?
- Who are some real people (living or dead) that our culture regards as heroes? Why do we look up to these people?

Bible Background

Imagine what it was like for the people of the Old Testament to start their own nation. God spoke to the leaders, then they had to help all of the people work together to fulfill the plan. This session is about Abraham and Sarah, two faithful people who started a new nation—a new people who would put their trust in God. Abraham and Sarah left their own country and became the forebearers of the Jewish people, who would become the nation of Israel.

The Covenant with Abraham and Sarah

The Old Testament tells the story of Sarai (later called Sarah) and Abram (later called Abraham). They were not originally from Israel (or Canaan, as it was known then). They were from the city of Haran, which is northeast of Canaan.

God wants to be in a loving relationship with us. The story about Sarah and Abraham shows us how God established a loving relationship with us through promises of blessing. God's hope was that Abraham and Sarah would trust the promises. In other words, God made a covenant (or promise) with Abraham and Sarah.

What is a covenant? _____

God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah began when God came to them in Haran and told them to move to Canaan. Look at a map to find Haran. Then locate Canaan to see how far they had to travel.

Read Genesis 12:1-5.

Did Abraham and Sarah trust God and move as they were asked? _____

What three promises did God make to Abraham and Sarah?

- What if you went home tonight and God told you that tomorrow you would have to get up and move to Mexico without any guarantee of a home or money? How would you react?

God's promise of blessing to Abraham is also a promise of blessing for all people on earth today. So, if God has this covenant with us, what does God wish from us in response to the promise?

Sarah, Abraham, and Hagar

Read Genesis 16:1—18:15; 21:1-21. As you read these verses, remember it was considered important at this time for women to have children, especially sons. Women who could not have children were often scorned.

Who was Hagar? _____

When Hagar became pregnant, how did she respond to Sarah? _____

What was Sarah's response to her? _____

What was the name of Hagar and Abraham's son? _____

What covenant promise did God make to Abraham? _____

What covenant promise did God make to Sarah? _____

How did Sarah and Abraham respond to God's promise? Did they maintain their covenant of trust? _____

Sarah finally had a son. What was his name? _____

After Sarah had a child, what did she do to Hagar? _____

Why do you suppose Sarah was so cruel to Hagar? _____

How did God help Hagar and her son in the wilderness? _____

What did God promise Hagar? _____

Challenge Questions

- Remember that God is faithful to us and does not go back on promises nor abandon us. God asks us to trust those promises of love and blessing. What is the importance of Abraham and Sarah to us today? How are we affected by the covenant God made with Abraham and Sarah?
- What was it about Abraham that made him a good leader? What resources did Abraham have to start this new community? What can we learn from Abraham's example about being a leader?
- Did Abraham and Sarah stay faithful to their word? Did God stay faithful to the promises made to Abraham and Sarah? What consequences did Abraham and Sarah experience as a result of their actions? What consequences have you experienced when you have not followed God's plan?

Each of us has the opportunity to build our lives around something. Abraham and Sarah built their lives around God. As a result, countless others followed God's plan. Matthew 7:24-27 says hearing God's words and putting them into practice makes us wise. This study challenges us to answer this question: "What will you build your life on?" Maybe we cannot imagine what influence we will have in the world, but God has a plan for us too.

Assignment

Memorize the names of the next eight books of the Old Testament (through Nehemiah).

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Session 4

Forgiveness: Joseph

Open with prayer.

Opening Activity

As a group, clip newspaper articles about families. Then discuss what these articles say about families. How do family members treat one another?

Starter Questions

Share one of the following:

- What is the best thing about your family? What is the most frustrating part of being in your family?
- Do you and your family get along? What things do you have in common? What are your differences? What role does faith play in your family?
- Discuss a time when you had an argument with your brother, sister, or close friend.
- Tell about a time when you traveled a great distance from your home. What was your journey like?

Bible Background

As an adult, Isaac married a woman named Rebekah, and they had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. When Jacob (also called Israel) was ready to get married, he married his cousins, Leah and Rachel. Jacob had many children, but the most favored child was Joseph, the son of Rachel. Because of this, Joseph's 11 brothers were very jealous of him.

Read Genesis 35:23-26.

List the 12 sons of Jacob:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Session Goal

To understand the story of Joseph and the importance of family members.

Read Genesis 37:12-36 and see what happened to Joseph because of his brothers' jealousy.

What did Joseph's brothers do to him? _____

How did the brothers use Joseph to make money?

Where did the Ishmaelites take Joseph? _____

What lie did the brothers tell their father (Jacob) about Joseph?

Even though God loves us and wants us to love each other, sometimes, because of sin, we feel hate or jealousy like Joseph's brothers felt toward him.

- Have you ever disliked another person because of jealousy? As a group, talk about your experiences.

Joseph in Egypt

Locate Egypt on a map. Joseph lived in Egypt and became a governor there. Because there was a great famine in Israel, Joseph's brothers went to Egypt to ask for food. When they got to Egypt, they had to ask Joseph for food, but they did not recognize him as their brother. Joseph recognized them, however, and gave them food to take back to Israel. Eventually, he told his brothers who he was, he asked how his father was, and he told them to bring the entire family back down to Egypt to live so they would have plenty to eat.

Read Genesis 45:1—46:7, 26-27.

Was Joseph able to forgive his brothers? Explain. _____

Which brother did Joseph seem to care for the most? _____

What did Jacob do when he heard his favorite child was still alive? _____

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever forgiven anyone who has wronged you as Joseph forgave his brothers? If so, how did you feel?
- How did the other person respond?
- Why does God want us to forgive each other?
- Why do you think Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery?
- Describe Joseph before and after his slavery.
- What were the consequences of the brothers' actions for Jacob? For Joseph? For the brothers? For Pharaoh?
- Why did Joseph give food to his brothers? What would your response have been?
- What one thing could the brothers have done differently to change the outcome of the story?

"But he cut in front of me in the lunch line!"

"She started it!"

"It's not my fault; the teacher didn't give us enough time."

"I can't help it; I overslept."

We hear it every day in the halls at school, at home, on the bus, even at church. It's easier to blame others and to focus on others' problems than to look at our own behavior. Our first temptation is to point a finger at someone else, and only then to admit we have done wrong. Harder still is to offer forgiveness to someone else. Joseph did just that. God calls us to forgive ourselves and others. Part of accepting that forgiveness is to open ourselves to God and let the Spirit make us clean again.

Read Psalm 51. What does this chapter say about God? _____

Activity

Think of one person in your life today who needs your forgiveness, or think of one person you would like to give you forgiveness. Write that person a note forgiving him or her or requesting that person's forgiveness.

Challenge Questions

- Jacob's family was similar to a stepfamily. What problems do stepfamilies face? What caused problems in Jacob's family? What could they have done to work out their problems in a better way? What role does favoritism or jealousy have in a family?
- Think of a time when you held a grudge. What started it? How did it end? How did you feel in the midst of it? Did you ask for forgiveness? Read Matthew 6:14-15. What do these verses say to us about forgiveness? What does God want as our response once we are forgiven?

Assignment

Memorize the names of next eight books of the Old Testament (through Jeremiah).

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Session 5

Freedom: Moses

Open with prayer.

Opening Activity

- As a group, make a list of 10 high-risk activities that people spend money to do.
- As a group, recite the first 24 books of the Old Testament (Genesis through Jeremiah).

Starter Questions

Share the answer to one of the following questions:

- Tell about a dream you have had.
- What is one thing you would like to accomplish in your lifetime? This can be anything, no matter how off the wall.

Bible Background

After the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah and Rachel began to claim Canaan (Israel) as their land, a huge famine struck the land and there was not enough food or water. As discussed in the last study, many Israelites moved to Egypt to live.

At first the Israelites prospered in Egypt and had many children. This resulted in the Pharaoh (King of Egypt) becoming very nervous about being taken over by foreigners. So, eventually all of the Israelites in Egypt were put into slavery so they could be controlled and watched. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for about 400 years.

Then, around the year 1300 B.C. the Israelites began seeking freedom from the Egyptians. In this study we will learn that our God is also a God who liberates and frees us. We will learn this through the story of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (Israelites themselves) who helped bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt into the wilderness on their way to the promised land of Israel.

Session Goal

To study the story of Moses and the Israelite's freedom from slavery in Egypt.

Exodus Drama

Form two groups. Each group will read their part of the story from the Bible then write the script in their own words. Assign people in each group to the various roles. (You might have to double up on characters.) One group will present Act 1, and the other group will present Act 2.

Act 1

Characters	Narrator	Aaron
	God	Pharaoh
	Moses	taskmasters and slaves

Scene 1: God comes to Moses in a burning bush (Exodus 3:1-17; 4:10-17)

Scene 2: Moses and Aaron approach Pharaoh (Exodus 5:1—6:1)

Scene 3: God brings plagues to Egypt (Exodus 8:1-19; 9:22—10:20)

Act 2

Characters	Narrator	Aaron	Egyptians
	God	Pharaoh	Israelites
	Moses	Miriam	

Scene 1: The Passover (Exodus 11-12:14; 12:21-33)

Scene 2: Crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 13:17-18; 14:5-13; 14:21-31; 15:20-21)

Discussion Questions

- Why did God send the plagues?
- Why would God work through Pharaoh? Who was openly against God?
- Who might act like Pharaoh today?
- What are our false gods? What would the plagues be targeted at today?
- What would your biggest concern be if you were Moses? Why?

Passover

Talk about the Passover meal from Exodus 12.

Why is this event called Passover? _____

What did the Israelites do at Passover? _____

What did they eat? _____

Challenge Questions

- Have you ever experienced a form of slavery? Can you imagine what it must have been like to be in slavery for so many years? What might the people have hoped for during those years? What would they be looking forward to now that they were free?
- How does God work in the world today? What message would God want to say to people who are suffering now? What about to their leaders? What could you do to share God's love with those people who feel enslaved in our world?
- What rituals or traditions do you practice in your family to remember special things? Are they about happy or sad times? Do you have special food or music? Do you look forward to those times? Why or why not?

Assignment

Memorize the names of the next eight books of the Old Testament (through Jonah).

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Session 6

The Ten Commandments

Session Goal

To understand why God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments and discuss rules in our society.

Open with prayer.

Starter Questions

Share your answer to one of the following questions:

- Name three rules you follow in your home or at school.
- Name three authority figures in your life.

Bible Background

We have learned that our God is a Creator God who loves us, frees us, and wants to be in relationship with us. God makes covenants with (promises to) us. In return, God desires love and trust from us. After Moses and Aaron led their people out of Egypt, they found themselves wandering in the wilderness. They were on their way to the land God had promised them (Canaan), but the wilderness was hard on them and they began to complain. First the people complained about the lack of food.

Read Exodus 16.

How did God respond to these tired, angry people? _____

How did the people respond to God when their prayers were answered?

Are you sometimes like these people, refusing to listen to God? If so, how are you like them?

Read Exodus 17:1-3.

Even though God provided for them, the people still grumbled and disrespected God by making false idols. The Israelites often seemed like an aimless community with nothing to hold them together. It was because of this struggle that God gave them the Ten Commandments. These rules were intended to help people maintain their part of the covenant with God: to love God and to care for each other.

Read Exodus 19:16-24.

Why did God give the Israelites the Ten Commandments?

Do you think our society still requires the Ten Commandments?

What is the definition of a Commandment?

Read Exodus 20:1-17.

These are the Ten Commandments that God gave to the people so they could better love God and each other. Study the Ten Commandments. Discuss how each one helps us to live in a peaceful society.

Ten Commandments

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.
3. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not murder.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- 9 and 10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

1. You shall have no other gods before me.

What is the focus of this Commandment? _____

Why do you think God began with this Commandment? _____

List some types of false gods that keep us from focusing on God: _____

How do we know if other people or things are more important to us than God?

Look up this Commandment in Luther's Small Catechism. In your own words, what does this Commandment mean?

2. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.

Why should we use God's name respectfully? See Isaiah 42:8 for help.

Why do people misuse God's name? _____

How can we use God's name respectfully? _____

Name some of the disrespectful ways we use God's name: _____

Look up this Commandment in Luther's Small Catechism. In your own words, what does this Commandment mean?

3. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.

What is a sabbath time? Why do we need sabbath times? _____

Why do Christians choose to worship together on Sunday?

Look up this Commandment in Luther's Small Catechism. In your own words, what does this Commandment mean?

4. Honor your father and your mother.

Why should we honor our parents and other authorities?

What does this command require of us? _____

What promise does God give if we follow this Commandment?

Look up this Commandment in Luther's Small Catechism. In your own words, what does this Commandment mean?

5. You shall not murder.

Why do you think God asks Christians not to harm others? _____

List some of the ways we harm others: _____

List some of the ways we promote life by helping others: _____

Look up this Commandment in Luther's Small Catechism. In your own words, what does this Commandment mean?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

Define the word *adultery*: _____

What does this Commandment say about marriage?

As a community, why do we need this Commandment? _____

Look up this Commandment in Luther's Small Catechism. In your own words, what does this Commandment mean?

7. You shall not steal.

List some examples of stealing: _____

What do you think the world would be like without this Commandment?

Look up this Commandment in Luther's Small Catechism. In your own words, what does this Commandment mean?

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Define *bearing false witness*: _____

Read Luke 6:37. How does God want us to treat our neighbors? _____

How should we react when we hear others gossip about people? _____

Look up this Commandment in Luther's Small Catechism. In your own words, what does this Commandment mean?

9 and 10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Define the word *covet*: _____

What emotion is God telling us we should avoid? _____

What is the opposite of *covet*? _____

To whom should we compare ourselves? _____

Look up these Commandments in Luther's Small Catechism. In your own words, what do these Commandments mean?

Rules and Commandments

Rules are not always fun. For many people, setting up rules is like receiving a challenge to break them. Yet a group that is together for a period of time needs rules or guidelines to live by. Rules are necessary, but they can also keep people from having full lives. God knows that, so we have these Commandments for guidelines. For some people they are too confining.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us the intent of the Commandments is found in our hearts and in our attitudes. God hopes that we can live together, loving one another and loving God. The Commandments are a gift to help us do that.

Challenge Questions

- Name one rule or regulation in your school or community that you disagree with. Why do you feel that way? How would you change that rule if you could?
- God has made clear statements about how we should act, yet people often ignore God. Why do people choose not to follow God's word?
- Are actions important or are words enough? Which means more to you? Are you a Christian? What does it mean to live a Christian life? See James 2:14-18 and 3:13-18 for help.

Assignment

Memorize the Ten Commandments.

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Session 7

Love: Ruth and Naomi

Session Goal

To understand the value of family love through the stories of Ruth and Naomi.

Open with prayer.

Opening Activity

- As a group, share the Commandment that was most meaningful to you from the last session. Then, share one family memory with your group.
- As a group, recite the Ten Commandments from Exodus.

Bible Background

Part of God's love is shown to us through other people. Loving and being loved by others is a gift from God. This session looks at the story of Naomi and Ruth. See how this story is a reflection of love within a family system.

After the Israelites finally arrived in the promised land of Canaan, they took the land over (this happened about 1,200 years before Jesus was born). They divided themselves into 12 different tribes (similar to states within a nation). The story of Ruth and Naomi took place about this time. Find these 12 tribes on a map and write them in the space below:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Naomi and her husband, Elimelech, came from Bethlehem, which was located in the tribe of Judah. Because of a famine in the land, they moved to the land of Moab. (Find Judah and Moab on a map in the back of your Bible.) While they lived in the land of Moab, their two sons married Moabite women. One of these women was Ruth. Then, unfortunately, Naomi's husband and her two sons died. This left Naomi living in Moab with her two daughters-in-law. All three of them were widows, a very difficult position for women in those days. Being widowed meant they would be in poverty and would have little personal protection.

So Naomi decided to go back to her homeland, Judah. She was going to leave her daughters-in-law in Moab because it was their home, but Ruth would not leave her. Ruth loved Naomi so much she did not want to be separated from her. Ruth pleaded with her mother-in-law to take her along. (See Ruth 1:16.)

Naomi took Ruth back with her to Judah. Naomi was related to the rich man Boaz, who had many fields. Boaz let Ruth gather the leftover grain from the fields for food, which was enough to feed herself and her mother-in-law. Boaz later married Ruth, and they had a child whose name was Obed.

Obed was the father of Jesse, who was the father of King David. Many generations later, Jesus was born as one of their descendants. Ruth, a foreign woman, was one of Jesus' relatives. Read Ruth 1, 2, and 4.

Activity

Break into groups of two or three and think about your own families as you answer these questions about Naomi and Ruth. Each participant should pick a different question to answer. When someone is responding, listen carefully to the answer. Keep in mind, there are no right or wrong answers here.

- Do you think you could ever love someone so much you would leave your nation and religion for that person, like Ruth did for Naomi?
- Do you love anyone in your family as Ruth loved Naomi? Explain.
- What does the term *family love* mean to you?
- If you had a problem and you wanted to talk to someone, could you find someone to talk to in your family? Who and why?
- How do you feel your family is different from others?
- Have you ever wanted to live with another family? If so, why?
- Name some problems that families experience.
- Describe an ideal family.
- What are the biggest problems in your family? What are the greatest joys?
- What are some of the special responsibilities you have as a family member?
- Do you think your family loves you unconditionally? Why or why not?

Challenge Questions

- How often do you tell people in your family that you love them? How do you live that love out? In the week ahead, find a tangible way to express your love for someone in your family!
- Have you ever had a really big fight with someone in your family? What was that like? Did it get resolved? How? What words of wisdom would you give someone who is in a fight with a family member?

Assignment

Memorize the last seven books of the Old Testament (through Malachi).

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Session 8

Friendship: David and Jonathan

Session Goal

To learn about the friendship that developed between David, the second king of Israel, and Jonathan, the son of Israel's first king.

Open with prayer.

Opening Activity

The leader should hand out one adhesive note to each participant. Each participant should write one quality they look for in a friend, then place the notes on the wall. Then discuss what everyone wrote down.

- As a group, recite together all the books of the Old Testament.

Starter Questions

- Tell how you met your best friend.
- Tell about your favorite day with your best friend.
- Describe a time you forgave a friend.
- How does God show love to us through other people?

Bible Background

About 1,100 years before Jesus was born, the 12 tribes of Israel decided to unify as one kingdom with one king. Saul was the first king chosen. Read 1 Samuel 10:20-25.

Saul's mind became very troubled during his reign. He felt hopeless. His servants thought the only way to make Saul feel better was to have someone play harp music for him. The best musician in the land was David, the son of Jesse from Bethlehem. (Jesse was the grandson of Ruth.) When David played his harp, King Saul felt peaceful. Some of David's songs are included in the book of Psalms.

Read 1 Samuel 16:14-23.

How is David described in these verses? _____

What task did David perform for Saul? _____

The Philistines were a strong group that wanted to take over Saul's kingdom. They challenged the Israelites with their best warrior. The problem was that the man the Philistines sent to represent them was a huge man named Goliath. It was David who decided to fight against Goliath.

Read 1 Samuel 17:19-54.

What was David asked to do? Why? _____

What weapon did David use? _____

What happened during David's confrontation with Goliath? _____

How did the other Philistines respond? _____

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4.

Verse 3 says that Jonathan made a covenant with David. What promise do you think was made?

Over time, Saul became very jealous of David's popularity because Saul saw that God was with David. Saul tried many times to get rid of David by sending him repeatedly into battle. But each time, instead of being killed, David was successful, and he became even more popular.

Read 1 Samuel 19:1-18 and 1 Samuel 20.

What type of connection did David and Jonathan have with one another?

Jonathan's father, Saul, was trying to kill David. Yet David was Jonathan's best friend. To whom did Jonathan give his loyalty? Why do you think he chose this way?

Session 9

Greatness: King David

Open with prayer.

Opening Activity

On a separate sheet of paper, draw your own family tree. Begin with yourself and go backward as far as you can. Then list one characteristic of each person you have put in your family tree.

Review Activity

On a separate sheet of paper, create a biblical family tree, from Abraham and Sarah through King David. Include as many people as possible.

Starter Questions

Answer one of these questions:

- Who is your hero? Why?
- What is a memorable story about one of your grandparents?

Bible Background

What makes a good leader? What makes a good follower? Who you choose to follow can be risky business. How do you decide who to follow?

The people were asking some questions as they moved into this new time with kings as their leaders. David endured some stormy times while Saul was king. Twice he saved Saul's life, despite Saul's repeated attempts to take his life. Saul was not a great leader. (Read 1 Samuel 24 and 1 Samuel 26.) Even so, Saul was never at peace with David. (Read 1 Samuel 31:1-6.) After Saul's death, a new leader was needed to oversee the Israelites. David became king. He was a great king, chosen by God and well loved by the people of Israel.

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-29.

What was Nathan asking David to do? _____

How did David respond? _____

Session Goal:

To learn about David,
a great king chosen by God,
even though David also
was a sinner.

Even though David was a great king, he was also a sinner. On one occasion, David sent his great warrior Uriah into a hard battle, knowing Uriah would be killed. David did this so he could marry Uriah's wife, Bathsheba.

Read 2 Samuel 11:1-5, 14-27.

In the above verses, which of the Ten Commandments did David break?

If you were David's friend, what might you say to him about his actions?

Read 2 Samuel 22.

Throughout his reign, David cared for the Israelite people, and they continued to praise God. Name a few themes in this song of praise:

Read 1 Kings 1:28-31; 2:1-12.

When David grew old whom did he appoint as the new king? _____

Name the first three kings of Israel:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Read 1 Kings 4:29-34.

Describe Solomon: _____

Optional Activity

The participants should sit in a circle facing each other. The leader should give one person a ball and have him or her pass it to another person. As the ball is passed, each person should share one characteristic of a good leader and one characteristic of a good follower. Keep passing the ball around until you have a good list. Then rate the top three characteristics for leaders and followers.

Discussion Questions

- When has someone led you astray or told you a lie? What did it feel like to put your trust in someone and then be betrayed?
- Whom do you respect as a leader? What is it about him or her you respect?

Read 1 Kings 6:11-36; 8:1-14.

King Solomon was known for his wisdom and for the beautiful temple he had built for the Israelites. This temple is where the ark of the covenant would finally rest.

Describe the temple: _____

List some of the themes of Solomon's dedication: _____

Challenge Questions

- Have you ever visited a very beautiful church? Where was it? What made it so beautiful? How was God present to you in this space? Do you desire to go to such places to be with God? Why or why not?
- What makes God present for you in other spaces? Do you feel God's presence in your church's sanctuary? How? What would make God more present?
- Have you experienced the presence of God in any other place? Where? Where you alone or with others?

Assignment

Find a CD or cassette with a contemporary Christian song that you enjoy—along with the lyrics if they are available. Bring these items to Session 10.

Close with the Lord's Prayer.

Leader Qualities

List the top three qualities of a good leader.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Follower Qualities

List the top three qualities of a good follower.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Session 10

The Psalms

Session Goal

To understand the promise of the Risen Christ that God gave the Israelites during their exile and discover the songs in the book of Psalms.

Open with prayer.

Opening Activity

As a group, listen to a few contemporary Christian songs. Participants can bring these in from home if possible. After each song, discuss its meaning or theme as a group by answering the questions below.

- Why might you enjoy listening to this song?
- When would you enjoy listening to this song?
- What does this song mean to you?

Starter Questions

Share the answer to one of the following questions.

- What is your favorite song? Why do you like this song?
- How do you react when you are sad?
- How do you respond to feelings of sadness in others?

Bible Background

Israel was a strong nation until Babylon, a nation from the north, invaded the city of Jerusalem around the year 600 B.C. The Babylonians destroyed the temple that Solomon had built, took many of the people captive, and brought them back to Babylon to live.

- Find Babylon on a map.

The people of Israel experienced many losses because of this destruction and captivity. They lost their homes and their temple (the center of their religion). Read about their grief in Psalm 137:1-6.

- How would you feel if someone forced you to leave your homeland?
- Have you ever had to leave home for a period of time when you would have preferred to remain there? How did you feel?

The people were in exile in Babylon for about 50 years. Even though they were in exile in a foreign place, God did not forget them. Remember, God had made a promise to the people of Israel: they would never be abandoned by God's love.

God spoke words of comfort to the people through prophets. Many of these words of comfort are found in the book of Isaiah. Through Isaiah, the people learned that someday they would have a Savior who would be the Prince of Peace, a Savior who would establish justice in the world.

Read Isaiah 9:6 and answer the questions that follow.

What will this Savior be called? Who do Christians believe this Savior is?

Can you remember a time when you have heard these verses before?

Read Isaiah 11:1-5 and answer the questions that follow.

From where will this Savior come? _____

What gifts will this Savior have? _____

Read Isaiah 40:1-5, 10-11. What does God promise the exiled people?

Read Isaiah 42:1-9. What will the Savior bring forth in the world?

Read Isaiah 53:3-7. How will this Savior be treated? _____

Read Isaiah 55:12-13. God promises the people that someday they will return to their homeland again. According to this passage, what will the day be like when they leave Babylon and begin their journey back to Jerusalem?

The Psalms

When the Israelites were finally able to return to Jerusalem from Babylon, they had to rebuild everything. They had to rebuild their homes, their culture, their government, and their religion. They began by building a new temple. In this temple they would gather to worship and sing praises to God. They essentially put together a type of hymnbook that was used in worship.

Many of the psalms were part of their hymnbook. Some of the psalms were written by King David, some were written by the Israelites when they were in exile in Babylon, and some were written by the people upon their return from Babylon. All the psalms are songs of prayer.

Look up the following psalms and read them aloud. What themes appear in these psalms?

- Psalm 8 _____
- Psalm 22 _____
- Psalm 23 _____
- Psalm 46 _____
- Psalm 51 _____
- Psalm 67 _____
- Psalm 100 _____
- Psalm 121 _____
- Psalm 139 _____
- Psalm 150 _____

- How many psalms are in the Bible? _____

Once the Israelites were finally back home, they had much to be thankful for, so they praised God. Read Psalm 150. Think about things you have to be thankful for. Write your own psalm of praise.

Close with the Lord's Prayer.