

Yesterday. Today. Forever.

Module: A Faith Learned

Lesson 5: Living for God

Objectives:

- Students will connect the concept of their spiritual journey with that of the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.
- Students will see that God helped the Israelites to persevere through many difficulties and reflect how God provides for us to obey his call.
- Students will create an encouraging keepsake to motivate them to keep trusting God.

Materials Needed

- ☐ 3-5 different images per group of students for visual synaptics (e.g. full page magazine ads, old wall calendar pages, or images from the internet could all work)
- ☐ 1 copy of Appendix 1 per student
- ☐ 1 card stock per student (giving choice for colours or patterns can help make the keepsake more personal)
- ☐ Pens or markers (at least one per student; a large variety is recommended)
- ☐ 1 Bible per student

Minds On

Prompt: We have been studying how to live as Christians, learning what God wants from us based on Micah 6:8. Does anyone remember the three basic commands in this verse for what God requires of us? (Allow students to answer, or prompt if necessary: act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God.) Has anyone had an opportunity to do one of those things or encourage someone else to over the past week? (Again, allow for students to share.) Today we are going to bring everything together and talk about how to make our faith a real lifestyle, not just a project that we work on from time to time. We'll start with some thinking about what it means to live for God.

Divide your students into groups of 3-6 (depending on overall group size), and give each group a selection of images to look at. Have each person choose one image and complete the following sentences within their group:

If you want, you may repeat the sentences from the first lesson of this module:

“(My) faith in God is like this picture because _____”

“(My) faith in God is not like this picture because _____”

Invite students to share their answers and whether their response has changed since the first lesson.

Have students change images and complete the following sentences.

“Living for God is like this picture because _____”

“Living for God is not like this picture because _____”

After students have had time to share in their groups, bring everyone back together in a circle and invite some students to share their analogies if they wish.

Action

Have your students remain in their groups. Ask your students what they find to be the hardest aspect of living for God and how they cope with these challenges. Encourage students to give feedback on each other's responses, and let them know that by the end of the lesson we will discuss ways to persevere and get through hard times.

The first Bible passage for this lesson contains some of the common challenges we still face today as Christians – fatigue, discouragement and frustration. The passage is Exodus 17:1-7.

(Leader's note: Depending on the Biblical literacy of your group, you may want to introduce the passage by explaining the context. For example,

The Bible story we are reading today takes place during the time when the Israelites had just been freed from slavery in Egypt. Moses was leading the people to the land God had promised to give them, but it was a long journey through the wilderness and the people were easily discouraged. Already, God had saved them from the Egyptian army, miraculously cured polluted water and caused bread to appear in the desert to sustain the people. However, the Israelites were still not ready to trust God when they faced their next challenge.)

Have your students turn to Exodus 17:1-7 and ask a volunteer to read the passage aloud.

Questions for discussion:

- Why were the people upset?
- Who did they blame for their problems?
- How did Moses respond?
 - How would you respond in his situation?
- Who provided a solution, and what was it?
- Do you think the people over-reacted when they ran out of water, or were they right to be so fearful?

Number your students by 1s and 2s to form pairs. Ask 1s to answer the following questions for the people of Israel; ask 2s to answer for Moses. It may be helpful for each pair to have a Bible and to have these questions written somewhere the students can see them for reference.

- Did [the people of Israel/Moses] act justly in this story?
- Did they love mercy?
- Were they humble?
- What would have been the ideal way for them to handle the situation?

Because there are so many questions, allow students a few minutes to think through their answers and at least 5 minutes to share with their partner.

Gather everyone back together and ask if they see the connection between this story and our own spiritual journey.

Prompt: The Israelites were so discouraged because they had to leave behind what was familiar and trust that the land God was taking them to would be worth the long, hard journey. It can be the same for us in our spiritual journey with God when we face unexpected delays or challenges, when the people around us are negative, or when we're not sure where we are going. Sometimes the past is more appealing in our memories than it was in reality. Micah 6:8 makes living for God sound easy, but even though the directions are clear, it can be hard putting them into practice in our real lives. We are going to take some time to reflect on Exodus 19:4-5. This is an amazing passage because in only two verses God reminds the Israelites what he has already done for them, he affirms that he is with them now and promises to keep them and provide for them. This passage emphasizes that even though the Israelites are still far from their destination, God is already with them.

Distribute pens and copies of Appendix 1 to your students for them to reflect on this passage individually. Encourage them that everyone might have different answers, which is fine, not to worry about being “right” because it is a personal reflection.

You may choose to offer students to share some of their answers if they wish, but it is not necessary and not everyone might be comfortable to do so. Use your judgment.

Consolidate/Debrief

Gather the group to sit in a circle or around a table. If you have a very large group it may work best to have several tables with 6-10 students each.

Prompt: Now that we have reflected on our own spiritual journey, we are going to spend some time encouraging each other. Part of the Israelites’ problem was when they got discouraged everyone started complaining instead of looking to God or asking for help. As a group, let’s support one another even when times get tough and know that God is always with us and will keep his promises to us.

Have each student write their name on a piece of card stock (optional: and three headings, Justice, Love Mercy, Humility). Next, have your students all stand up and move one space to the left, leaving their card stock behind. Ask everyone to write a short note of encouragement on the card stock in front of them (related to one of the three categories). This could be a quality they admire, an ability they recognize, or a prayer for joy and perseverance in spiritual growth. After a minute or so have the students rotate again and repeat the activity until each person returns to their original seat. Students can keep this as a reminder of the love and support of the body of Christ to encourage them and inspire them to encourage and serve others.

Leader’s Note: If you have many new students or a large group where people don’t know each other very well, you may suggest some generic value statements students can

write such as “you are a wonderful creation of God” or “God has a plan and purpose for your life!” Encourage students not to joke around but to push past the obvious and external to really build each other up. This is also a great opportunity for you as a leader to engage your students and help fill in the cards, especially if you have students who are not well known or well liked. Depending on your group, it may be helpful to give permission for students to skip over people they don’t know or aren’t comfortable writing for.

When the closing activity is done, close in prayer.

Appendix 1

Exodus 19:4-5 (NLT)

⁴ ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me.’

Questions for Reflection:

Read over the passage 2 or 3 times – what stands out to you?

Using your pen, draw lines to divide the passage into three parts – what relates to the past, present and future?

Think about your own journey with God. How has He helped you in the past?

What is happening between you and God in the present?

What do you hope for in the future?

How does all of this relate to Micah 6:8?

The LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.