

Yesterday. Today. Forever.

Module: A Faith Learned

Lesson 1: What is Faith?

Objectives:

- Students will reflect on how they experience a relationship with God.
- Students will articulate what faith means and how it can be manifested.
- Students will examine Biblical stories of faith and compare them to their own experience.

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) **Leader's Note:** If you enjoy using this type of activity with your group, it would be worth laminating the images for future use in another context.
- ☐ 1 copy of Appendix 1 (Faith Stories) per group
- ☐ Bibles for each group
- ☐ optional: costumes for skits
- ☐ 2 pieces of chart paper and a marker

Minds On

Begin with your students sitting in a circle and ask the group to discuss what faith means to them. If your students don't have a church background, it may be helpful to share Hebrews 11:1 as a definition of faith and starting point for this discussion.

Prompt: How do you experience God? How is your relationship with God different from other relationships?

Leader's Note: Depending how your group responds, this opening discussion could take only a few minutes, or it could fill much more time, especially if more students are willing to share and if they comment on each other's answers. Use your judgment to either encourage a large group discussion or move more quickly into the smaller group activity below.

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:

"My faith in God is like this picture because _____"

"My faith in God is not like this picture because _____"

If students do not have a personal faith in God, they may complete the phrase as "Faith in God is like/not like..."

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

Prompt: Some people say Christianity isn't just a religion, it's a relationship. But it can be hard to describe how a relationship with God really works - we can't see him with our eyes or hear him with our ears or Facebook him when we need advice.

Leader's Note: At this point you can also relate any of the concepts students raised in the Minds On activity.

Prompt: Over the next few weeks we'll be learning about ways that we can know our relationship with God is real. These are ways that we experience God and ways that God changes us to be more like him – love, justice, hope and joy are all part of God's plan for us and for the world. The foundation for all of these things is faith, and that's what we will discuss tonight, exploring what it means, how it looks and sounds in our lives, and how we can share it with others.

Invite students to form groups of 4-8 depending on the size of your group. (There are three different passages to choose from – Daniel 3:8-18; Matthew 9:18-26; Luke 7:1-10. If you have a smaller group, you may choose to only use one or two passages; if your group is very large, then you may choose to have more than one group discuss the same passage.)

Using the questions in Appendix 1, distribute copies of the half page questions to each group. Assign one passage to each group. Each group will read one of the passages, put the story into their own words and discuss the questions in the handout. You may want to give out more than one copy of the questions to each group to help the discussion.

Leader's Note: If it suits your group, you could offer your students to create skits that act out the faith stories in each passage before they are discussed. Depending on time constraints and the size of your group, this may affect how many passages you use.

When all the groups have finished, gather everyone together and ask for volunteers to describe how their passage depicted faith. Write the answers on a big piece of chart paper to create a collection of words and actions that show faith.

Consolidate/Debrief

Ask students to think about times that they have shown or seen faith in their own lives.

Optional Prompt: Have you seen someone trust God for a situation? How did they act or what did they say? Have you seen someone act a certain way because of their faith?

Answers can be added to the same piece of chart paper. Ask your students to reflect on what words or actions they could use in their own life to grow their faith or to show their faith to others in the coming week.

Have students pair off and choose one idea to “live out” their faith in the coming week, then they can pray for each other. Depending on the maturity of your group or if you have newcomers, you may choose to close in prayer for the whole group or allow students to be dismissed whenever they finish in their pairs.

Leader’s Note: If possible, follow up during the week or at your next meeting to learn what opportunities students are finding to show their faith.

Appendix 1

Questions for Reflection:

Hebrews 11:1 says, *“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”*

As a group, put the story in your passage into your own words. Ask your leader/youth pastor to explain any words or ideas you don’t understand.

1. Who in the passage showed faith?
2. How did they show it – what did they do or say?
3. What would you do if you were in the same situation?
4. What is the unseen thing that person/those people had confidence in?
5. How could the story have ended differently?
6. What is the most important aspect of this story for someone who wants to learn more about faith?

Questions for Reflection:

Hebrews 11:1 says, *“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”*

As a group, put the story in your passage into your own words. Ask your leader/youth pastor to explain any words or ideas you don’t understand.

1. Who in the passage showed faith?
2. How did they show it – what did they do or say?
3. What would you do if you were in the same situation?
4. What is the unseen thing that person/those people had confidence in?
5. How could the story have ended differently?
6. What is the most important aspect of this story for someone who wants to learn more about faith?

Daniel 3:8-18

⁸ At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. ⁹ They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “May the king live forever! ¹⁰ Your Majesty has issued a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, ¹¹ and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. ¹² But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up.”

¹³ Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, ¹⁴ and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? ¹⁵ Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?”

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, “King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

Matthew 9:18-26

¹⁸ While Jesus was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, “My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.”

¹⁹ Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.

²⁰ Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. ²¹ She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.”

²² Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed at that moment.

²³ When Jesus entered the synagogue leader’s house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, ²⁴ he said, “Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him. ²⁵ After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. ²⁶ News of this spread through all that region.

Luke 7:1-10

¹When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. ²There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." ⁶So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

⁹When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."

¹⁰Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

Yesterday. Today. Forever.

Module: A Faith Learned

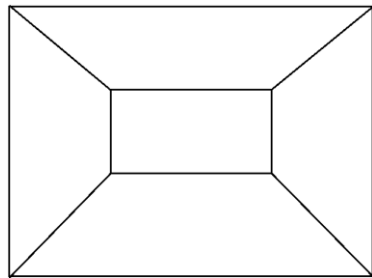
Lesson 2: Acting Justly

Objectives:

- Students will be introduced to Micah 6:8 as the framework for the next 3 lessons
- Students will learn that justice is a foundational value of God's Kingdom
- Students will identify opportunities to act justly in their everyday lives

Materials Needed

- ☐ 1 pen per student
- ☐ 1 blank place mat template per group of 3-4 students
 - You may also use the template below as an example and have students draw the shape on blank paper or chart paper

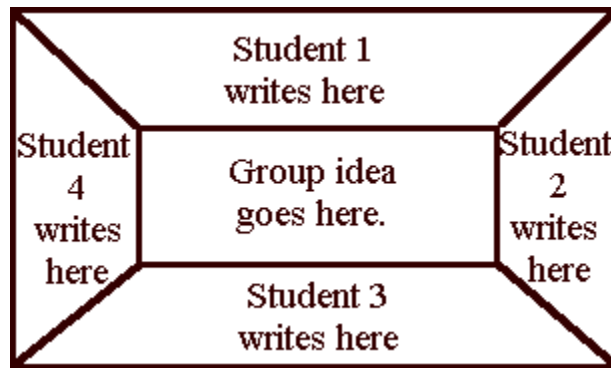


- ☐ 1 copy of Appendix 1 per student
- ☐ Pencil crayons or markers (min. 2 per student)
- ☐ 1 piece of chart paper
- ☐ 2-4 pieces of blank paper

Minds On

Have students form groups of 4. Distribute pens/markers to all the students and a copy of the place mat template per group.

Each student will write their ideas in one outer section of the place mat (see diagram below). After one minute, the group will rotate the paper to read what the person beside them wrote. They can add any ideas or thoughts they have. Have the group rotate the mat every minute until everyone has read each person's section. Then, as a group, they can discuss and boil down the main point/best idea and write it in the center rectangle on the page.



Have the students write their answer to the question: What does God want from us? (Leader's note: You may consider writing this question on a white board or piece of chart paper to help students remember the question and stay focused.)

Gather the groups together and have each group share what they wrote in the center of their page.

Action

Ask students if they found the activity easy or challenging? Are they generally confident in what God wants, or does pleasing God feel more like a guessing game?

Prompt: The Israelites had God’s law, but they still struggled to please God. The book of Micah has a message calling God’s people out of disobedience and apathy, and one verse in particular spells out what he wants from the people. (Have a volunteer read Micah 6:8.) We are going to focus on this verse for the next few weeks and break it down piece by piece to grow as a group in pleasing God. The first piece is “act justly” or “do what is right.” (translations vary)

Distribute a copy of Appendix 1 to each student and instruct them to choose two different coloured pencil crayons or markers. Ask your students to read the whole passage, then underline or circle the sentences that demonstrate justice with one colour, and to mark the sentences that show injustice with the other. If you have time, students can pair up and compare what they’ve coloured before you begin the group discussion.

Ask your students to suggest examples of what justice looks like and record their answers on a piece of chart paper. There are a number of ideas in the Matthew 25 passage, and some of the answers from the opening activity might also be appropriate.

Questions for Discussion:

- Who are the people being judged in this passage? [“All the nations” – all people]
- What is the basis for the judgment? [How people treated others/good deeds that they did]
- What do the righteous and unrighteous people have in common in this passage? [They do not realize they will be judged for their actions/treatment of others]
- Does this mean that we have to do good works for our salvation? [There is room for discussion here – we do not **earn** our salvation by doing good works, but James 2:17 does say that faith without works is dead]

The key concept for students to understand from this lesson is that **The foundation of justice is that all people have equal worth and value in God’s eyes.** Jesus says we

should treat others not just how we want to be treated, but how we would treat him if he appeared in front of us!

Prompt: Jesus is using this story as a teaching example for how people should live, and not to explain how the final judgment will literally happen (so no, it does not mean that we earn our salvation by acting justly). The point he is making is that many people who please God the most don't consider their actions to be special, it is just what happens when they treat all people fairly and with dignity. Other people may think that they are really pleasing God because they do good works and obey God's commandments, but if they are driven by selfishness or pride then they are missing the point.

Turning back to the chart paper with brainstormed ideas for justice, ask your students to think of who in their lives they can serve in these ways. Remind your students that they have individual spheres of influence with their friends and family, but as a group they can combine their efforts to expand that sphere of influence in the greater community.

Depending on your context, some suggestions are

- help your group organize a food drive
- write encouragement cards to members of the congregation
- research the corporate responsibility policies of businesses your students support.

Invite your group to investigate how their favourite clothing company or coffee shop treats its employees and whether their goods are produced fairly (if not, can they find an alternative business to support?). Tom's shoes is one brand that emphasizes corporate responsibility (www.toms.com). If you take this route, it would be appropriate to follow up and allow students to present their findings to each other or even the broader congregation.

Consolidate/Debrief

To close the lesson, have students return to the groups they were in for the place mat activity. In light of the lesson and discussion, allow your students to adapt the center statements if they wish. Ask each group to share their main ideas.

When the groups have finished, gather everyone together to close in prayer, and ask God to reveal any areas of injustice where students can make a change.

Appendix 1

Matthew 25:31-46 (NLT)

³¹ “But when the Son of Man ^[a] comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. ³² All the nations ^[b] will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. ³⁶ I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

³⁷ “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ³⁹ When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

⁴⁰ “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, ^[c] you were doing it to me!’

⁴¹ “Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. ^[d] ⁴² For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn’t give me a drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you didn’t invite me into your home. I was naked, and you didn’t give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn’t visit me.’

⁴⁴ “Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?’

⁴⁵ “And he will answer, ‘I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.’

⁴⁶ “And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.”

Yesterday. Today. Forever.

Module: A Faith Learned

Lesson 3: Loving Mercy

Objectives:

- Students will understand that love comes from God and should flow through us to others.
- Students will learn how God's mercy and justice go hand in hand – they are not opposites!
- Students will identify how God's mercy enhances their picture of God's love for them and motivates them to love others.

Materials Needed

- ☐ Lengths of half pipe, enough for each student (Leader's note: If you're not able to get half pipe, allow students to use other objects around to create that path.)
- ☐ 2 large buckets per team
- ☐ Golf/tennis/bouncy balls, one per team (optional if not using water)
- ☐ optional: prizes
- ☐ Chart paper with John 3:17-18 written out
- ☐ 1 copy of Appendix 1 per group
- ☐ Blank chart paper

Minds On

Depending on the size of your group, this activity can be done competitively with multiple teams or co-operatively. The object is to create a channel for water to be transferred from one bucket to another. The distance between buckets can vary according to the length of half pipe or gutter pieces that you have and the total number of students. This activity works best as an illustration if you use water, but challenging your students to transport a golf/tennis/bouncy ball from one point to another is an alternative that can be done indoors without making a mess.

Establish a starting point with a set amount of water to be transported and let your students know where the water needs to go. The challenge could be to fill a cup of water first or to see which team can spill the least amount of water and fill up their end bucket the most. If you are using a ball instead of water you can increase the challenge by lengthening the distance or imposing obstacles. If the ball falls, the team has to begin again from the start point. You can repeat and/or modify this activity as many times as you wish.

Action

Gather your group together, award prizes if you wish and ask students what they thought of the opening activity, what they found challenging or most fun.

Prompt: Last week we talked about acting justly, and today we are going to tackle the next instruction from Micah 6:8, to love mercy. Even though the pipeline game was a fun way to test your patience and teamwork, it was also an illustration for how we as Christians should behave in the world. God has shown us amazing mercy and love by allowing Jesus to pay the debt of our sin, and our role is to pass that mercy and love on to others. I think we all know Christians are supposed to be loving people, but sometimes we forget that love and mercy aren't just feelings we muster up, they are gifts that God

gives us and we just need to pass it on. Think back to the game – the only way to win was to pass on what you received from the person before you. (If you chose not to use water, invite your students to imagine completing the challenge with water instead of a ball – while a ball can be balanced and held by one person while teammates make adjustments to the pipeline, flowing water can't be paused.) One difference between our activity and God's mercy is that His mercy is limitless. If we mess up passing it on there is always more available. It would be like doing the water challenge using a hose instead of a bucket.

Questions for discussion:

- What does mercy mean to you?
 - Some definitions include “an act of kindness, compassion, or favour”
 - Also, “showing compassion, pity or forbearance (restraint) toward an offender or enemy”
 - Some might also say “not getting the punishment you deserve”
- Do you think Christians are generally perceived by the world as being merciful? Why or why not?

Bring your students' attention to the chart paper with John 3:17-18 written on it. Have a volunteer read the verse out loud and ask your students:

- Does this passage talk about justice or mercy? [Both. Justice is described because nonbelievers are condemned for not meeting God's standard. Mercy is described because believers are not condemned – they are saved by trusting Jesus.]
- **How is this passage different from the passage we read last week about the final judgment?** (Matthew 25:31-46) [in the Matthew passage, everyone is judged based on their actions; in this passage only those who do not believe in Jesus are judged/condemned]
- **How do you think the concept of God's mercy relates to the concept of God's justice?**

- God's justice requires that judgment take place; however, his mercy allows us to be judged based on Christ's merit instead of our own. Accepting this mercy is left up to our free will.
- An illustration that might help is, imagine being pulled over for driving twice the speed limit. The police officer writes you a ticket because you have broken the law – that is justice. However, he then offers to pay the ticket for you; that is mercy. Mercy does not mean not writing the ticket; it means paying the price for justice to be fulfilled.
- Isaiah 51:5 says, "My mercy and justice are coming soon. My salvation is on the way." Although it can be tempting to consider mercy and justice as opposites, Scripture shows that God uses them together for our salvation. Like a balance scale needs equal measurements on both sides, we need to recognize both sides of God's character or we will have a skewed understanding of what he wants from us.

Prompt: It might seem like God's mercy and justice are opposites, but the Bible shows us how they work together. It's worth wrestling with this tension so that we are able to honour the full aspect of God's character, not to be judgmental but also not to be wishy-washy about what we believe. A passage that can help us understand the balance is 1 John 3:16-24.

Divide your students into small groups and give each group a handout with instructions to read the passage and answer the questions as a group.

Consolidate/Debrief

When the groups have finished, ask your students how they filled in the blanks for the final question and write the two phrases on a piece of chart paper everyone can see:

Mercy: God's love inspires our obedience.

Justice: Our right actions give us the confidence to approach God and ask for what we need.

Under these two phrases, divide the chart paper into three columns. Ask your students to brainstorm ways that God shows his love for us (first column); ways we can obey him, especially by showing love to others (second column); and prayer requests (third column). Close in prayer and thank God for his loving mercy, pray that your students will be inspired to pass on that love to others, and ask God to meet the needs of the prayer requests that have been shared.

Appendix 1

1 John 3:16-24 (NLT)

¹⁶ We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister^[a] in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person?

¹⁸ Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

¹⁹ Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God. ²⁰ Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.

²¹ Dear friends, if we don’t feel guilty, we can come to God with bold confidence. ²² And we will receive from him whatever we ask because we obey him and do the things that please him.

²³ And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us. ²⁴ Those who obey God’s commandments remain in fellowship with him, and he with them. And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.

Questions for Discussion:

- How does Jesus show God’s love to us?
- How can we show God’s love to others?
- According to vs. 18-20, what is most important out of:
 - Words
 - Actions
 - Feelings
- Which of the above 3 items best demonstrates what is true?
- There is a two-part commandment in verse 23 explaining how we have fellowship with God. What are the two parts? Do you notice the relationship between this verse and verse 16?
- How do all these things relate? Fill in the blanks:
 - Mercy: God’s _____ inspires our _____.
 - Justice: Our right _____ give us _____ to approach God and ask for what we _____.

[actions] [confidence] [love] [need] [obedience]

Yesterday. Today. Forever.

Module: A Faith Learned

Lesson 4: Walking Humbly with God

Objectives:

- Students will learn what humility means
- Students will contrast humility with pride
- Students will reflect how to be less arrogant and more humble

Materials Needed

- ☐ 2 pieces of chart paper and at least two markers
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Pens for each student
- ☐ optional: props/costumes for skits
- ☐ optional: 1 copy of Appendix 1 per student

Minds On

Introduce the lesson by reminding your students of Micah 6:8 as the focal point for this module of learning our faith and introducing today's topic of humility.

Prompt: Micah 6:8 tells us that what God wants from us is to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. In the past weeks we have talked about justice and mercy, and today we will focus on humility. Can anyone tell me what humility means or give me an example? (Allow for students to answer.) And what would you say the opposite of humility is? (Arrogance or pride are the best answers.)

Divide your students into two groups and give each a blank piece of chart paper and at least one marker. Have one group write HUMILITY in the center of their page and the other group write ARROGANCE or PRIDE (depending on your students' answers above). Ask your students to brainstorm and write definitions or examples for their word and give 5-10 minutes to complete the task. If you have a very small group, all your students can collaborate on brainstorming for both words.

Bring both groups together to see each other's work and discuss the differences. Tape each piece of chart paper on opposite sides of the room and tell your students to stand on whichever side of the room represents their answer.

Ask:

- Do you think you are more of a humble person or a proud person?
- Do you like to be around people who are humble or arrogant? (students should change sides if their answer is different)
- Do you think it is easier to be humble or arrogant?

Ask your students to stay wherever they are standing and answer:

- What are the benefits to being humble or arrogant?
- What are the downsides of being humble or arrogant?

Prompt: The Bible has a great definition of humility in Philippians 2:3-4 (you can ask a student to read): Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. So humility boils down to putting others before ourselves. We do not forget that we have value, but we try to emphasize the value of others rather than focus on ourselves all the time. By the end of this lesson, I hope we'll agree that humility can be very freeing, and we'll talk about some practical steps to grow more humble and support humility in others.

Action

If you haven't already, gather your group together.

Ask a volunteer to read Proverbs 18:12

Before a downfall the heart is haughty,
but humility comes before honor.

Prompt: Solomon wrote this proverb during the 9th century B.C. That means over 800 years before Jesus was born! Even back in Solomon's time human nature had this struggle between pride and humility, and Solomon tried to warn people that haughtiness, or arrogance, has consequences – it can make us blind to our weaknesses and lead to our downfall! On the other hand, when we fly under the radar it leaves room for other people to recognize and celebrate our good qualities and accomplishments. Even if some things do get missed, God sees everything, and part of humility means trusting that he sees the good works and character development and integrity that goes unnoticed by others. Jesus told a parable that illustrates what Solomon talks about in Proverbs 18:12, so we are going to read what he said and create some skits to bring the parable to life. The passage is found in Luke 14:7-11. (Read the passage.)

Have students pair up with another person. (If you have an odd number of students, have a leader participate.) After each student has paired up, instruct them that you will give a

series of questions, one at a time. After each question, students will have a short time of silence to think, and then discuss their answer with their partner. Each person should be prepared to share their partner's answer. After each discussion segment, have 2-3 students share their partner's answer. Then move to the next question. (**Leader's note:** This is not a free-for-all of students shouting out answers, but a repetitive rhythm of reflection, sharing and listening.)

Questions for discussion:

- In the parable, people were seated at feasts according to how important they were. What are some ways that our culture shows who is most important? [Possible answers include awards, publicity, seating in some circumstances (especially weddings and funerals)]
- Do you agree with Jesus that those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted?
- Can you think of an example when this has happened to you or someone you know? [A great public example is when Kanye West interrupted Taylor Swift's VMA acceptance in 2009.]

Now divide your students into groups to create skits about the passage. Use your discretion based on the number of students you have and how enthusiastic they are for this type of activity. Students who are shy may prefer to play the role of "guests" at the dinner and simply react to what happens as the host rearranges the seating. If you have many students who want to participate, speaking roles could be created for the bride and groom, for relatives making toasts, etc.

Leader's note: If you have a very creative group, your students may prefer to create their own scenario demonstrating how "those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Instead of a wedding feast, they could act out humility/pride on a sports team or in the classroom. If this activity really suits your group, consider asking your pastor or board if a simple illustrative skit could be

incorporated into a worship service for the whole congregation – it could be a great way for your students to serve and to share what they are learning!

If you have groups creating different skits, and if time allows, let each group perform their skit.

Consolidate/Debrief

Distribute pens and Appendix 1 to your students. Ask them to complete the questions individually and then discuss some of their answers.

Prompt: It is important to remember when we talk about humility that we are not saying Christians should have low self-esteem. The point is to put others first because we are confident in our value before God. Jesus' parable shows that it is better to be humble than try to put ourselves first. God will never overlook us, even if the world sometimes does.

Close the lesson in prayer for any requests students share and by asking God to help students put these principles into their lives.

Appendix 1

Philippians 2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Think of a time when you acted arrogantly and briefly describe what happened.

Who did you affect?

Did any negative consequences happen to you?

What would have happened in the situation if you acted humble instead?

What would others think?

How would you feel?

What is one way you can show value for someone else or look out for someone else's interests this week?

Ask God to help you be aware when you act selfish or proud. Ask him to remind you about humility and show you ways you can put others before yourself.

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.

A Faith Learned

The purpose of this module is to lay a foundation for students to understand what makes a person's faith active and contagious. The focal point is Micah 6:8, broken down into three practical ways for students to put their faith into action: act justly, love mercy and walk humbly.

Lesson 1: **What is Faith?** Students will reflect on their relationship with God and compare their experience of faith with some Biblical examples of faith in action.

Lesson 2: **Acting Justly** introduces Micah 6:8 as the focal passage and jumps right in to exploring what justice means and why it matters for us. This is a great opportunity for your group to discuss why doing the right thing going beyond obeying the rules to actively pursuing fairness and dignity for all people.

Lesson 3: **Loving Mercy** zones in on the second piece of Micah 6:8. The lesson leads students to reflect how God's mercy and justice complement each other. This deeper understanding of God's mercy and love can fuel a richer motivation to love others, and your group will brainstorm ways to pass on the mercy they have received from God.

Lesson 4: **Walking Humbly** examines the final piece of Micah 6:8 with an exploration of the Biblical definition of humility. Students will create a skit demonstrating the value of humility and have the opportunity to incorporate experiences from their own life if they choose.

Lesson 5: **Living for God** ties the module together with a look at Israel's need to have faith in God on the journey to which he called them from Egypt to the Promised Land. Students will reflect on what they've learned throughout the module and how their faith will help them live for God in an active and contagious way. This final lesson concludes with students creating an encouraging keepsake as a reminder to trust God in difficult times.