



Youth

**GOD'S HEROES:
FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY!**

Day: Monday

Youth

Theme: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego remain faithful

Lesson 1: *God saves 3 faithful young men from the fire*

Bible reference: Daniel 3:1-12 (13-28)

Memory verse: Daniel 3:28

Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. Dan. 3:28ab (NRSV)

OBJECTIVE

Pupils will know the story of three men who trusted in God despite the threats to their lives decreed by a King.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE TEACHER:

- *Pray to God not only to get wisdom and understanding, but also suitable words in order to prepare and deliver your lesson. Pray also to have the Holy Spirit of God act upon the life and hearts of your pupils.*
- *Devote enough time to prepare your class;*
- *Read the Bible text bearing in mind the cultural and biblical context underlying the story (Daniel 1 y 2);*
- *Read the bible text as many times as needed in order to master the core of the story;*
- *Prepare and organize your teaching material in order to deliver your lecture as best as possible;*
- *The "memory verse" should be preached by example. Make sure you know it well.*

MATERIAL:

- *A candle and matches*

BIBLE CONTEXT

The people of Israel had been conquered by Babylon, and King Nebuchadnezzar sent for "young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for

every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace" (Daniel 1:4, NIV); "children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace" (Daniel 1:4 KJV).

It was the tradition of the conquerors at that time to impose the customs, religion and traditions on the conquered people.

The king's objective for bringing these young men to the palace was to make them faithful servants, not only to the king, but also to the gods of Babylon. It should be said that because of their good behavior, the king had made them administrators of the provinces of Babylon, and therefore their commitment to the king was greater.

INTRODUCTION

- *Welcome your pupils, helping them into feeling happy about learning more about God.*
- *Give pupils their name tags, ask them to introduce and say something about themselves (name, age and where they are from, for instance):*
- *Call for a volunteer to pray to God to open their minds and to understand what God prepared for them today.*
- *Share the name of the general subject of the week **HEROES OF GOD: i FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY!***
- *Introduce the title of the lesson of the day: **God saves from the fire 3 faithful young men***
- *Prepare a Puzzle for the "Memory Verse." Make several puzzles. Split the class into groups of 3 people each. Give each group the puzzle with instructions to put it together. Let them play until they can put the puzzle together on time.*
- *A word of advice: After the Puzzle activity, put the "Memory Verse" in a place where everyone can see it.*

STUDYING THE BIBLE PASSAGE OF THE DAY

- *Light the candle.*
- *Ask if anyone has been burned before.*
- *Ask the youth to very carefully and orderly come close to the fire (keep the candle in a place where it will not cause an accident). Ask them to get their hand*

close to the fire, without touching the flame. Ask how it felt to get close to the fire.

- *Ask pupils to share any burning experience they might have had in the past. Ask pupils to describe their pain, how close of the fire they were, how long were they exposed to fire, and what were the consequences. Or, ask them if they have been near or have seen things that produce heat, like an oven or an iron, etc. Have them share their experiences.*
- *To give an interesting perspective to the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, briefly share the story of "The three Musketeers". (It is a novel by Alexander Dumas. It describes the adventures of D'Artagnan a young man who left home in order to become a musketeer. The musketeers of the title are Athos, Porthos, and Aramis inseparable friends of D'Artagnan who live by the motto, "All for one and one for all")*
- *They had the same goal in common, and as people, they fought for their ideals, faced adversity and remained united to the end. Today's story in the book of Daniel has three young people that are a lot like the three musketeers.*
- *Invite the class to find the bible passage to begin the lesson*
- *Tell your students that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into the blazing furnace which was so hot (seven times the normal setting) that the Bible tells us that those who threw the young people in the oven were killed themselves because of the tremendous heat.*
- *Ask the students to imagine the story. Then move on to explain the reasons why they were thrown into the blazing furnace. Daniel 3:21.*
- *These youth knew the consequence of not obeying the decree given by the King (Daniel 3:4-6) that at the sound of the horn all should "fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace." (mention the details found in Daniel 3:1-2)*
- *Was there anyone in the land who would not worship the image of gold set up by the king? Yes, the 3 Jews Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.*
- *At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced them. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego trusted in God and defied the king's command and*

were willing to give up their lives rather than worship any God except their own God. Then the king summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and asked them "is it true Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego that, you do not worship the image of gold I have set up? They replied to the king "the God we serve is able to save us from the blazing furnace and will rescue us from your hand." (Daniel 3:17) Then the king was furious and ordered the furnace heated 7 times hotter than usual and commanded soldiers to throw them into the blazing furnace. These 3 men firmly tied, were thrown into the blazing furnace. The king was amazed because 3 men were tied up and thrown into the fire but he could now see 4 men walking around in the fire unbound and unharmed, and the fourth person looked like a son of the gods. The king approached the opening of the blazing furnace and called them to walk out. They came out of the fire and the crowd around them saw that the fire had not harmed them. These men trusted in their God and defied the kings command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God

THINKING OVER THE BIBLE PASSAGE OF TODAY.

- There was a time in the story when the king gives Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego an opportunity to live for he says "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".
- They could have stepped back and worship the image of gold but they did not. They were faithful to their God and replied to the king that the God they served was able to save them from the blazing furnace as well as to rescue them from the king's hand. They were convinced that their God would carry-out extraordinary signs upon them if appropriate.
- Was there any reason why these men should have worshiped the image of Gold ?

GRATITUDE	YES	NO
	Because they were chosen amongst slaves and set over the affairs of the province of Babylon. This at the service of the King.	Because of their knowledge that by the grace of their God they found favour in the eyes of the king to be set over the affaire of the province of Babylon.

FEAR FOR THEIR LIVES	YES	NO
	Because capital punishment was placed upon those who would not worship the image of gold	Because of their knowledge that the God they served was their benefactor and protector at all times.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego chose to remain loyal to their God even though the King threatened them with death if they wouldn't serve the god of the king and worship the image of gold set up by the king.

King Nebuchadnezzar was amazed with the extraordinary sign the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego offered. The king ended up praising the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego for he said "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any God except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way." Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon (Daniel 3:28-29).

PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

- Choose an adjective for Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Courage, faith, trust...)
- What is the first adjective that comes to your mind?
- What would you say the end of the story would had been if these 3 men would have asked the king not to put them inside the blazing furnace?

Frequently in our lives we face difficult situations. Perhaps not as challenging as the test Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego went through. Maybe a situation where speaking the truth is all it takes to overcome the test we are confronted with. We can learn from the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego that those who remain faithful to God are protected and favored by God beyond expectations. Any trial in our life will have the best ending when we trust God to lead our lives as best as possible. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were at a disadvantage under the decree of king Nebuchadnezzar, however they were protected and taken care of at all times.

Faith that God will work the best possible path for us to follow shall prove to be the best choice we can ever make.

Help the group discuss the way the passage touches their lives. Ask them to think of examples of situations they have been in when they felt pressure to abandon or deny their faith in God in order not to look bad in the eyes of friends or people in authority.

- What do you have in common with the dilemma Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced?
- How do you think it helped these biblical characters to have each other as support?
- In what way can the members of this class support one another when they face this or other types of dilemmas?

CONCLUSION

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were chosen amongst the royal family and the nobility of the Israelites (Daniel 1:3).

The God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego protected and took care of them when they were thrown into the blazing furnace in such extraordinary manner! (Daniel 3:25-27).

These men found favor in the eyes of the king after the extraordinary sign of salvation displayed by their God (Daniel 3:30).

To sum up, believers in the true God are protected and taken care of at all times and against all odds. They are exalted in front of all.

Prepare the youth whom God has chosen to accept Christ this week. Tell the class: God loves you so much! God wants to help and bless you. When you come to church you learn more and more about God's love. We hope that what you learn this week will help you feel that love, and will allow you to deepen your relationship with God. Let's ask God to fill us with gratitude for his love.

Conclude the class with a brief prayer.

God's Heroes: From Ordinary to Extraordinary...

Héroes de Dios: De Ordinario a Extraordinario...

Joseph Interprets Dreams

Day One **Youth**

THEME:	God makes us extraordinary when God gives us different gifts.
BIBLE PASSAGE:	Genesis 41:1-28 (29-37) 38-40.
MEMORY VERSE:	We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. Rom. 12:6a

Objective	Students will learn that when we serve God faithfully, we can accomplish extraordinary feats.
Learning Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will hear the story of how Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams (Genesis 41:1-40)• Students will understand that God put Joseph in the right place at the right time to accomplish God's goals.• Students will understand that God gave Joseph the ability to correctly interpret Pharaoh's dreams about the coming famine.• Students will understand that Joseph was willing to serve God even during difficult circumstances (being a prisoner, being in a foreign land).• Students will consider what gifts and abilities God has blessed them with and how they might use those gifts to serve Him.
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read Genesis 40 to know the background of how Joseph came to be recommended to Pharaoh as a dream interpreter.• Read Genesis 41 to familiarize yourself with today's story.• Pray that God will work through you to reach the children you teach; pray that He will give you patience, wisdom, and joy as you share His word. Pray for the students you will be working with, that the Holy Spirit will open their hearts and minds to today's lesson.• Read through the story strips to be sure you know the correct order for the "story scramble" relay later.
Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rehearse presenting the lesson to time the length of each section.• Illustrations (illustrated Bible, Bible storybook, Abeka cards, or other pictures) to show during the lesson. Pictures of wheat or barley would be helpful, as many of these students may never have seen wheat or barley sheaves. Pictures of Egyptian culture during Biblical times would be a nice addition, particularly pictures of a Pharaoh or an Egyptian palace.• Story strips for "Story Scramble" relay, one set of 10 strips for each team (prepare for at least 4 teams). You can use regular

paper, but durable card stock would be better.

- Small prizes (if desired) for relay game.
- Paper, pencils for gifts inventory
- Bibles
- Index cards, each with one word of the memory verse written on it.

Introduction

Greet the group. Let the young people know how happy you are to be there with them. Make them feel welcome and happy to be learning about God.

Meanwhile hand out nametags to the students and write their names on a list.

Introduce yourself and tell a little about yourself (be sure to introduce any classroom assistants as well, if they're not known to the students)

Open with a brief prayer (or invite one of the students to open with prayer)

Introduce today's memory verse: Rom. 12:6a: We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If possible write the verse on a white board or chalkboard and have students begin by reading it. Repeat several times, each time erasing two or three of the words until the students can recite the passage by memory. If no chalkboard is available, write each word on its own index card and display that way, removing a couple of the cards each time you read through the verse.

Studying the Bible passage

Ask:

- Who here has ever had a really interesting dream? *(everyone should be able to answer that they've had such a dream).*
- Who wants to tell just a little bit about a dream they've had? *(Allow a few students to answer as time permits).*
- Who has ever had a dream they can't understand at all?

Say:

Scientists tell us that dreams are the way our brains process the information we take in each day so that we can use that information in an organized way. Sometimes we dream about things we've just learned, sometimes we dream about things we're worried about, sometimes we dream about people in our lives, sometimes we dream about things we wish could happen, sometimes we dream about scary things we hope will never happen. Our mind stays really busy even when we sleep. The Bible tells us that God has granted some people the ability to know through their dreams what God intends to have happen. There are several times in the Bible when God used dreams to warn or inform people about future events:

- In *Genesis*, Jacob dreams of angels going up and down a ladder to Heaven, and dreams of God's voice promising him many descendants and much land in Israel.
- Also in *Genesis*, Joseph (Jacob's son) not only has prophetic dreams, but he is able to interpret the dreams of others.
- In the book of *Daniel*, Daniel has the God-given ability to interpret King Nebuchadnezzar's dreams.
- In the New Testament book of *Matthew*, the Magi (wise men) were warned in a dream not to go back to King Herod to tell about the Christ child they had seen, but to go back to their own lands by a different route altogether.

In each of these cases, God spoke to human beings while they slept about events of great significance that changed history.

Say:

Our lesson today is about how Joseph was able to use the special gifts and abilities God had given him to help many people. A powerful king (in this story, called "Pharaoh") had some strange and troubling dreams. He asked a man named Joseph to help him figure out what those dreams meant.

First, let's have a little background about Joseph from the book of *Genesis*:

Joseph lived in Canaan (part of Israel) with his father and brothers. He was his father's favorite child, which made his brothers angry. God had given Joseph the ability (even when he was very young) to interpret dreams, and one of his dreams told him that he would rule over his brothers. This made Joseph's brothers even angrier. They made a plan to kill Joseph, but decided instead to sell him as a slave. Joseph was taken as a slave to Egypt to work for a man named Potiphar. God watched over Joseph, and Joseph worked hard for Potiphar. Potiphar put Joseph in charge of his whole household. Potiphar's wife found Joseph very attractive and made wanted to have a romantic relationship with him. Joseph refused to have a romantic relationship with her because she was married and it would be sinful. Potiphar's wife became very angry and lied to Potiphar that Joseph had attacked her and she fought him off. This made Potiphar very angry, and Potiphar put Joseph in prison. God continued to watch over Joseph while he was in prison, and Joseph eventually was put in charge of all of the other prisoners. He continued to work hard and be patient. While Joseph was in prison, two of Pharaoh's servants, the royal cupbearer and the royal baker, were also put in prison. They each had strange dreams, and Joseph helped them to understand those dreams. When they were let out of prison, the cupbearer and the baker found that the things Joseph predicted from their dreams came true. The cupbearer had promised to mention Joseph to Pharaoh if Joseph's predictions came true, but once he was out of prison, the cupbearer forgot. So Joseph stayed in prison.

Now we come to today's story:

Let's read *Genesis 41: 1-40*. It's a long passage but lots of interesting things happen in it. (*Read the passage out loud, or ask if any of the students would like to take a turn reading part of the passage*).

Okay. Now let's talk about the story in our own words. (*As you go over the main story points, feel free to ask the students to help retell the story. Ask general questions like "who can remember what happens next?" or leading questions like "After Pharaoh had his dreams, what did he do?"*)

- After Joseph had been in prison two more years, Pharaoh had a dream.
- He dreamt that he was standing by the Nile River, and out of the river came seven fat cows. They grazed by the river. Then seven skinny cows came out of the river and ate the fat cows!
- Pharaoh had another dream. This time, there was a stalk with seven good, full heads of grain (probably barley) growing on it. Then seven bad, shriveled heads of grain grew on the same stalk and swallowed up the good, healthy heads of grain.

- Pharaoh was upset by these dreams and sent for all of his magicians and wise men, but none of them could tell him what the dreams meant.
- Finally, the cupbearer remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him. Pharaoh sent for Joseph.
- Pharaoh asked Joseph to interpret his dreams. Joseph said **"I can't do it, but God will give you the answer"**.
- Pharaoh told Joseph about his dreams, and Joseph told Pharaoh that the dreams were about the same thing: seven years of good harvests followed by seven years of famine (bad harvests where there isn't enough food and people starve).
- Joseph again gave God the credit, saying "God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is going to do" (Gen. 41:28, 41:32).
- Joseph suggested to Pharaoh that he make a system of saving up part of the grain from the seven years of good harvest so that it could be given to people during the seven years of famine.
- Pharaoh saw that the Spirit of God was in Joseph, and he liked Joseph's plan to save Egypt from famine. Pharaoh made Joseph his second-in-command, in charge of everyone in Egypt (except Pharaoh, of course!)

Reflecting on the Bible passage

Say:

Let's talk about the story a bit:

Emotion questions

- How did Pharaoh feel when no one could interpret his dream? (upset, worried, angry)
- How did Joseph feel when the baker forgot him for two years? (disappointed)
- How did Joseph feel when Pharaoh made him his Prime Minister? (excited, relieved)

Fact questions

- What two things did Pharaoh dream of? (7 skinny cows eating 7 fat cows. 7 withered ears of corn eating 7 full ones.)
- How many years of feast and famine were coming? (7 of each)
- Who benefited from God's warning? (Pharaoh, Joseph, all of Egypt, eventually Joseph's family.)

Review questions

- What did the dreams mean? (famine would follow plenty)
- What did Joseph advise that Pharaoh do? (appoint a man to store up food while they had it)
- Why did Pharaoh appoint Joseph? (he saw that he was wise and that God was with him)

Application questions

- Who should we give credit for our talents, abilities? (God)
- What should we do when we recognize God's work in someone else? (help them, praise God)
- What should we do when it seems God's plan isn't working? (be patient, pray)
- When we know times of trouble are coming, how should we prepare? (keep our hearts pure of bitterness, study and pray)

Applying the Bible passage to our life

The purpose of this game is to review the story and put the events of the story in the correct order. Divide students into teams of 10 (if you have a huge group, you may need to play the relay game more than once). Give each student on a team a story strip (in random order) and line them up (in teams) at one end of the room. In relay fashion, have each student run to the opposite end of the room and lay his/her strip on the floor in the correct order of the story. The first few runners will find it easy to put their strips in order, but as the game progresses, it becomes more difficult. After all the strips are down, if they are in order, that team is finished. If the strips are NOT in the correct order, the relay runners must run up again (one at a time, as they did the first time) and may each change ONE story strip to a different location until all of the story strips are in the right order. The first team to get all of the strips in the right order wins.

Story strips in order:

- Joseph was sent to prison.
- Joseph was put in charge of all the other prisoners
- Joseph interpreted the dreams of the cupbearer and baker
- Pharaoh had two disturbing dreams
- Pharaoh's cupbearer recommended Joseph to Pharaoh as someone who interpreted dreams
- Pharaoh told Joseph about his dreams
- Joseph told Pharaoh both dreams were about the same thing: seven years of good harvest followed by seven years of famine.
- Joseph recommended that grain be stored during each of the good years so it could be given away during the bad years.
- Pharaoh thought Joseph's idea to store grain was a good one.
- Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of everything in Egypt.

Say:

Let's talk about the special talents and abilities God gives.

Ask:

- What are some kinds of talents or special abilities you can think of? (If there's a chalkboard, write down the answers in a list)
- Do you think God still gives people these special abilities, or did He only do it during Biblical times?
- Why do you think God gives people these special abilities?
- Do you think everyone uses their abilities to serve God's purpose?
- Do you think they should?

Say:

I'm going to ask each of you to consider for a few minutes what kind of abilities God has given YOU. I'm going to give each of you a piece of paper and I want you to follow along.

(Teacher's note: Work on only one column at a time. After you give the instructions for the first column, give students several minutes to finish their lists before you give instructions for the second column. This will encourage more introspection and you won't end up with some students who race through and are finished with the entire activity in two minutes!)

- Divide your paper into three long columns.
- In the first column, write down some of the activities you most enjoy doing (sports, music, academics, art, mechanics, cooking, childcare, etc.)
- In the second column, write down what you think are the talents and abilities given to you by God. Consider the items in your first list while you're working on your second list. Often, the things we enjoy doing most are activities where we're using the abilities God gave to us.
- In the last column, write down some ways in which you could use those talents to serve God and/or other people.

Ask:

Would anyone like to share any of their thoughts about their talents or how they can use them?

If time allows, hand out worksheet and have them fill it out individually or in teams. If there is no time, hand out worksheet for them to fill out at home.

Conclusion

Review the memory verse: Romans 12:7. Have children try to recite it from memory.

Say:

This verse is taken from a longer passage about the various gifts God gives to each of us. *(Read Romans 5-8)*

Ask:

How do you think this memory verse fits with today's lesson? *(accept answers)*

Say:

We've learned about how God gave Joseph the gifts he needed to interpret Pharaoh's dreams and save many, many people from starvation. God gives EACH of us different gifts and talents that we can use to serve Him and each other.

God wants us to have faith that He will watch over us and guide us according to His plans for us, and that He will give us the abilities we need for the work He gives us. Just like Joseph, we need to be patient and have faith that God will guide us where He wants us to go. What are some things we can do to learn what God wants for us? *(Pray, read the Bible)*

God has special work for each one of us. God wants us to use the gifts that God gave us. God loves us a great deal. When you come to church you learn about the love of God, but you also learn that we human beings sin and that this becomes a barrier for our connection with God. This week, let's ask God to help us overcome that barrier through Jesus. In this way, we can use the gifts God has given us.

Let's close with a prayer: *(you can either pray yourself or ask for a volunteer. Pray for God's guidance, pray for patience and faithfulness, pray that God will bless the students with strength and the ability to do His work in the world.)*

JOSEPH INTERPRETS THE KING'S DREAMS (Genesis 41:1-36)

Unscramble the following words and use them to complete the sentences below.

GETPY

NISKNY

FICEH OKOC

SALONERP VANTERS

ILAJ

SMEARD

UPT OT HEDAT

SHOJEP

LINE VIRRE

NEEVS SAYER

WOSC

TYPLEN

ASRSG

GIVTRANS

1. Joseph was a slave in _____.
2. The _____ was thrown in jail with Joseph.
3. Joseph, the king's personal servant, and the chief cook were in _____ together.
4. The chief cook was _____.
5. The king dreamed he was standing on the bank of the _____.
6. The king dreamed about fat _____ eating the _____.
7. The king also dreamed about _____ cows eating the fat ones.
8. The king's _____ told the king about Joseph.
9. The king sent for Joseph because he wanted to know what his _____ meant.
10. God helped _____ to know what the dreams meant.
11. The king's dreams meant that there would be _____ of more than enough grain in Egypt, followed by not enough.
12. Joseph told the king there would be seven years of _____.
13. Joseph told the king that after that the Egyptian people would be _____.



GOD'S HEROES: FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY!

Day: Wednesday

Youth

Theme: Queen Esther Saves Her People.

Lesson 3: Esther the Brave Queen.

Bible reference: Esther 3:12-13, 4:1-17, 5:1-4, 7:1-6, 10

Memory verse: Esther 4:14

For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this? Est.4:14 (NIV) (use all or part of the verse).

OBJECTIVE

Students will know the story of Queen Esther. Students will identify Queen Esther's wisdom, love and desire for justice on behalf of her people.

PREPARATION

- *Pray to God not only to get wisdom, understanding as well as suitable words in order to prepare and deliver your lecture but also to get the holy spirit of God to act upon the life and hearts of your students.*
- *Devote enough time to prepare your lecture;*
- *Read the Bible text bearing in mind the cultural and biblical context underlying the story about Queen Esther;*
- *Read the bible text as many times as needed in order to master the core of the story;*
- *Prepare and organize your teaching material in order to deliver your lecture as best as possible;*
- *The "Memory verse" should be preached by example. Make sure you know it well.*
- *Carry your Bible with you when delivering your lecture.*

MATERIAL: (required for your lesson)

- *Cards or pieces of paper where student will write what they feel to be positive and negative aspects found in the story of Esther.*
- *Puzzle to help students remember the "line to memorize" of the day.*

BIBLICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

This happened during the time of King Ahasuerus who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush (Esther 1). Some Jews were dispersed and scattered among the people of the land ruled by King Ahasuerus (Esther 3:8).

At that time King Ahasuerus reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa (Esther 1:2). There was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin named Mordecai who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (Esther 2:5-6). Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, who was also known as Esther (Esther 2:7; 2:15). Even though both the parents of Esther passed away she was brought up by cousin Mordecai who had taken her as his own daughter (Esther 2:7).

Esther, descendant of the tribe of Benjamin, from the house of Israel, was beautiful, lovely in form and features. The book of Esther describes the time when all the Jews in the 127 provinces of kingdom of Ahasuerus got relief from their enemies with the help of Queen Esther.

The story revolves around king Ahasuerus. It was the third year of his reign when he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. One of those days King Ahasuerus was in high spirits, and he asked for Queen Vashti to be brought before him, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at. But Queen Vashti refused to come into the presence of the King.

As a consequence of the Queen's conduct King Ahasuerus consulted his experts in matters of Law and justice. He inquired about what must be done to Queen Vashti, for she had disobeyed a royal command. Foreseeing that the Queen's conduct would be known to all women in the Memucan kingdom, one of the wise advisors of the king predicted that women of the nobility would respond in the same way to all the nobles of the king.

Therefore, disrespect and discord amongst men and women would have no end in the kingdom. In this context, Memucan proposed that Vashti should never again enter the presence of king Ahasuerus, and that the King would

give her royal position to someone else who was more worthy than she. As a result, all women would respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest.

The King and his nobles were pleased with this advice, so the king did as Memucan proposed. Beautiful girls were selected in every province of the kingdom. The one who pleases the king would become Queen instead of Vashti. Once chosen, a girl had to complete 12 months of beauty treatment before she was taken to the presence of the King.

Esther was selected amongst the beautiful girls of the kingdom. She was put under care of Hegai, who was in charge of the women in the Harem at the citadel of Susa. Esther pleased him and won his favor. He took good care of her and moved her to the best place in the Harem. When the time came for Esther to go to the King she followed Hegai's advice. Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her. The King was attracted to Esther more than to any other woman, and she won his favor and approval. He set a royal crown on her head and made her Queen instead of Vashti.

In those days two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway conspired to assassinate King Ahasuerus. Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. And when the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows. At this time Mordecai would not receive honor or recognition for saving the life of the king.

After these events, King Ahasuerus honored Haman, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. The king commanded that all the royal officials at the king's gate should kneel down and honor Haman. This they did, except Mordecai, for he said he was a Jew. Haman was enraged because of the conduct of Mordecai and looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. To do so Haman spoke to the King. Haman told king Ahasuerus about the existence of people in the kingdom whose customs were different from those of all the other people and who wouldn't obey the laws of the king. He persuaded king Ahasuerus into issuing a decree to destroy them.

From this moment on, Esther would use her gifts and wisdom to save all the Jews in the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus from those enemies who sought to annihilate them- young and old, women and children- in a single day.

INTRODUCTION

- *Welcome your students, helping them into feeling happy about learning more about God.*
- *Give students their name tags, ask them to introduce and say something about themselves (name, age and where they are from, for instance);*
- *Call for a volunteer to pray to God to open their minds and to understand what God prepared for them today.*
- *Share the name of the general subject of the week **HEROES OF GOD: i FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY!***
- *Introduce the title of the lesson of the day: : **An extraordinary Queen***
- *Prepare a Puzzle for the "Memory Verse." Make several puzzles. Split the class into groups of 3 people each. Give each group the puzzle with instructions to put it together. Let them play until they can put the puzzle together on time.*
- *A word of advice: After the Puzzle activity put the "Memory Verse" in a place where everyone can see it.*

TEACHING THE CLASS

- *Carry out a brainstorm activity with the question: What would you be prepared to do if you were to know that some people will destroy all your countrymen - young and old, women and little children - on a single day?*
- *Write a summary of the answers and talk with your students about these answers.*
- *Then continue with the story of Esther. She was Queen of the kingdom of Ahasuerus.*

Customs of the Jews would not allow Mordecai, cousin and foster parent of Esther, to kneel down and pay homage to Haman, even though the latter was commanded by king Ahasuerus. As a consequence of the conduct of Mordecai Haman plotted to destroy all the Jews dwelling in the kingdom of Ahasuerus and he offered ten thousand talents of silver for the men who carry out this task.

Haman persuaded king Ahasuerus by saying that certain people in the kingdom did not obey the laws of the king and proposed a royal decree to destroy them in one day.

In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning amongst the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing.

When Mordecai learned of all that had been done he sent word to Queen Esther explaining about these events and urging her to go to the presence of the king to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

All of the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces knew that for anyone who approached the king in the inner court without having been summoned had to be put to death except those to whom the king would extend the gold scepter as a sign to spare their lives.

Esther reminded Mordecai about the law but Mordecai sent back this answer "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

Afterward love for her family and people moved Esther to approach the king without being summoned by him, therefore risking her life.

To do so she prepared herself with 3 days of fasting and sent word to all the Jews who were in Susa asking them to fast for her the same 3 days as she fasted.

On the 3rd day Esther stood in front of the king's hall. When King Ahasuerus saw her he was so pleased with her that not only he held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand but also, after Esther approached him and touched the tip of the scepter, asked her "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you."

Queen Esther invited king Ahasuerus and Haman to a Banquet she prepared for them. During that banquet she invited them again for another banquet the day after. That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the record of his reign to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there that Mordecai had exposed Bigthama and Teresh who had conspired to assassinate King Ahasuerus. Then the king found out that Mordecai received no honour nor recognition for helping the king. Therefore King Ahasuerus commanded Haman to honour Mordecai and it was done even through the city streets.

Afterward the king and Haman went to dine with Queen Esther. Over a cup of wine King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther about her petition for he loved her and was willing to give her half the kingdom if she would just but ask for it. Then Esther opened her heart and unveiled her thoughts to the king. She asked the king to grant her her life and to spare her people because herself and her people had been sold for annihilation. The king asked Queen Esther about the identity of the man who dared to do such a thing. Then Esther spoke unto the king "The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman". Haman was terrified before the king and Queen.

The king commanded to have Haman hanged.

Esther uncovered Mordecai to the king as her cousin and foster parent. King Ahasuerus presented Mordecai with the signet ring which would give him the place of honour which was Haman's once. In addition, Esther appointed Mordecai over Haman's state.

Then Esther made a call for justice by begging king Ahasuerus for a royal decree to overrule the dispatches that Haman devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the kingdom for she would not bear to see disaster fall on her people nor destruction of her family. King Ahasuerus authorized Esther and Mordecai to write such decree in the king's name on behalf of the Jews in the provinces of his kingdom.

For the sake of justice, this new edict granted the Jews in every city the right to assemble and protect themselves.

On the 13th and 14th days of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was carried out and the Jews struck down all their enemies.

As from those days all the Jews throughout the kingdom of Ahasuerus celebrate annually the 14th and 13th days of the month of Adar as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration. This became known as the celebration of Purim.

REFLECTING ON THE PASSAGE

Ask the following questions to help the children analyze and remember the lesson.

- What was Mordecai's concern?

- Why did he have word sent to Esther to inform her of what was happening?
- What was Esther's reaction?
- What did she do?
- What would you have done?
- Would you have had the same courage and conviction that Esther had?

This courage comes only from God, for He knows you-He knows your needs and worries.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY 1

Share the cards or pieces of paper. Ask students to write what they feel to be positive and negative aspects found in the story of Esther. What impacted you the most in the story? Tell them to be brief.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY 2

Act out the whole story or only the moment in which Esther speaks to the King while the people fasted. Choose a person to be Queen Esther and one to be King Ahasuerus. Bring some costumes, crowns, etc. Then ask the rest of the class to be the people of God, on their knees praying while Esther spoke with the King. Help the group take turns so that several or all the students get a chance to have the roles of Esther and Ahasuerus

APPLYING THE MESSAGE

What I want you to do is that through this lesson you look beyond your own desires. Look at what would be different if you had to offer support to your community, your country, or how things would be different if you looked at the needs of others before looking at your needs.

Esther acted with faith, along with her people, in prayer. Faith brings us to conviction, which brings us to action, which results in blessing. The result is up to God. Remember that God will not abandon us, and He always protects His people. Everything that happens is guided by Him and is for our good. God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things, just as in this story He

used Esther, who was just like you and me. She became queen and saved the lives of an entire people, and she accomplished all this by trusting in God.

Can you imagine what it must feel like to be orphaned with out parents to take care of you? Esther was an orphan but had a cousin who took care of her and taught her to trust in God. Esther completely trusted her cousin. When her cousin asked her to protect the Jewish people, she took a great risk to do so.

Have you ever obeyed your parents to do something that scared you, but since your parents were asking you to do it you did it anyway? Esther was not afraid to face the danger of speaking to the King without permission. The rule was that if the king did not extend his scepter to her, she ran the risk of being executed by order of the king.

Have you ever prayed for God to help you when you had a big problem? Have you seen your parents pray when they had a big decision to make? God listens to the prayers of God's people. The story tells us of a special way of praying. It's called Fasting. Do you remember what I told you fasting was? It is not eating in order to focus on praying to God. It is a very special way of praying and God listens to these prayers because they show how serious the people who are praying are. God heard the cry of his people praying, and God made the king to extend his scepter towards Esther and therefore sparing her life. Esther not only accomplished this, but also got the king to order the Jews to be able to defend themselves and be saved. As a result, the Jewish people had light, joy, happiness and honor in a foreign land.

CONCLUSION

Esther knew that she would accomplish more by praying and fasting along with Mordecai and their people than she could have accomplished alone. This doesn't mean that if we pray alone God doesn't listen to us, but He likes to hear the voice of all His people. Esther knew this because she was part of the people of God.

Do you want to be an extraordinary person? God makes ordinary people to become extraordinary, just like the lesson. God wants to be in your heart and make you a part of God's family.

I invite you to surrender your life to Christ, confess your sins, and ask God for forgiveness. *If you have a positive response from any children, ask them to stay for a moment and finish presenting the plan of salvation. If you can't do it yourself, ask another teacher for support in doing so. (If possible, get the full names and addresses of these children).*

Conclude the class with prayer, giving God thanks for Jesus and for the members of the class.

GOD'S HEROES: Mary Prepares to Serve God Youth

Memory Passage for Today

Luke 1:38 Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her. (NRSV)

Objective

Young people will:

- 1) **imagine themselves in Mary’s place,**
- 2) **discuss what characteristics made Mary a faithful servant of God, and**
- 3) **discover their own characteristics which make them able to serve God as well.**

Teacher instructions:

Devotional Time:

Read Luke 1:26-38 to yourself and picture the scene in your mind.
Read Luke 1:26- 38 again and reflect on Mary’s personality and feelings.
Read Luke 1:26- 38 a third time, and ask yourself what you would do in her place.

Preparations:

- 1) Write short people descriptions (see attached list) on each nametag (enough for one per youth) and put them in an envelope you can access easily;
- 2) Print and highlight the script for 3 readers;
- 3) for option a: Print characteristics and descriptions on tagboard strips
for option b: Make needed # copies of phrases or put onto newsprint for whole group
- 4) make one copy of the role play situations for each leader
- 5) make copies of the discussion questions for each small group

Materials Needed

- * Blank stick-on name tags to make description labels (need 1 per youth)
(or print descriptions onto sticky paper and cut for labels)
- * Large envelope to hold description labels (need 1 envelope per class)
- * 3 copies of the Scripture Luke 1:26-38, parts highlighted for Mary, Gabriel, Narrator.
(have a set for each class or have extras on hand)
- *tagboard strips or newsprint for “Mary’s Top 3”
- *masking tape
- *pen/pencil or marker for each group leader
- *copy of the role play situations for each leader
- *copies of the discussion questions for each small group

Lesson Introduction

Play “Who Am I?” adapted to be: “What Kind of Person Am I?”
As each youth enters, place a “description tag” on his or her back, without showing it to them. Each person tries to figure out “What Kind of Person Am I?” by asking other people yes

or no questions. (“Am I a man?” “Am I old?” “Am I a nice person?”...) If someone is having trouble, people could use hand motions to help describe any action taking place.

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DESCRIPTION TAGS for “What Kind of Person Am I?”
(adapt or make up your own as well)

Mother reading to child	Worker fixing a car
Frightened Child	Someone who thinks they “know it all”
Grumpy person	Person cheering up other people
Gentle grandmother	Nurse taking care of a patient
Child throwing a tantrum	Someone waiting in line
Impatient shopper	Bus driver waiting for a late passenger
Teenager with friends	Marathon runner finishing the race
Person asking for help	Man delivering toys to children’s hospital
Farmer harvesting crops	Unwed pregnant young girl
Construction worker	Boy who’s girlfriend is pregnant
Child learning to swim	Brother teaching sibling to tie his shoe
Teenager reading a Bible	Girl Scout/ Boy Scout helping someone
Famous Movie Star	Doctor calming someone
Someone who is lost	Child who does not want to share
Prince or Princess	The school “bully”

Follow up discussion: “There are many different people in the world. Name some qualities of the characters you just discovered.” (gentle, grumpy, impatient, kind...)

Name some of the actions of those characters. (reading, helping, teaching,...)

“In today’s Bible passage, we will learn about a young girl named Mary and an important responsibility God asked her to accept. While the scripture is being read, close

your eyes and see the events in your mind. Be ready to describe what kind of person Mary was.”

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Presentation of the Biblical passage

Ask for 3 volunteer readers, 1 male to be Gabriel, 1 female to be Mary and 1 person to be the narrator. Before reading, ask the rest of the youth to close their eyes as they listen and focus on the Scripture.

SCRIPTURE READING: LUKE 1:26-38 (NRSV)

with 3 readers: Mary, Gabriel, Narrator

Narrator: In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee in Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said,

Gabriel: “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

Narrator: But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her,

Gabriel: “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Narrator: Mary said to the Angel,

Mary: “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

Narrator: The angel said to her,

Gabriel: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Narrator: Then Mary said,

Mary: “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

Narrator: Then the angel departed from her.

Reflection on the Biblical passage**Mary's Top 3:**

Option a)

Print each of the following words on tagboard strips. Do the same for the descriptions. Mix them all up and tape them up on a wall or chalkboard. Have youth match each word with its description. Then, as a group, have them choose which 3 characteristics Mary showed most. There will be different opinions. Ask youth to give reasons to back up their thoughts.

Characteristic:

Loyalty
Strength
Courage
Trust
Sacrifice
Humility
Generous
Obedient

Description:

not giving up on someone
being determined to complete a task
taking action even when afraid
depend on someone or something
putting others' needs before your own
not proud or bragging
not selfish; freely giving to others
following instructions from an authority

Option b)

Ask youth to choose which 3 phrases best describe Mary. This can be done individually by printing the list on paper. Or it can be done as a small group or large group exercise, seeking consensus from the group. For small groups, print one copy for each group leader and provide a pen or pencil. If done in one large group, post the phrases on newsprint large enough to be seen. Then tally "votes" for each phrase until you narrow it down to the top 3. Ask youth to give reasons to back up their thoughts.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE MARY?

1. Mary believed in God.
2. Mary was a young girl.
3. Mary was the most beautiful girl in Nazareth.
4. Mary trusted the angel Gabriel.
5. Mary was an ordinary girl.
6. Mary was accustomed to working hard.
7. Mary learned the Scriptures from her parents.
8. Mary wanted to be famous.
9. Mary kept her promise to be faithful to Joseph.
10. Mary believed the Messiah would come some day.
11. Mary was chosen because her parents were rich.
12. Mary was chosen because she loved God.

Applying the Biblical passage to our life

Choose as many role play situations and/or discussion questions as you feel are appropriate for your group.

Role Play: Ask for volunteers to act out the characters in each situation. After each scene ask: “Could any of these characters be trying to deliver a message from God?” Why do you think so?

1. Mother asking her son to quit smoking;
2. Child asking a parent to stop doing crack;
3. Teenage boy telling his parents he joined the Army;
4. Young girl telling her father that she got married last weekend;
5. A group of friends telling a girl what she should do about “the baby”;
6. New teacher breaking up a fight in the cafeteria

Discussion Questions: Divide into groups of 6-8 young people. Have each group choose a leader, who will come get a list of questions to be discussed. If time is short, you might assign one or two questions to each group, rather than having all groups discuss all questions. Choose the questions below which are most appropriate for your group’s maturity level.

1. What do you think it means to be the “servant of the Lord”?
2. What do you think it means to be “favored” by God?
3. What might have prepared Mary to be able to answer God’s call?
4. Why do you think God chose someone who was so young for such a big responsibility?
5. Have you ever been told you were “too young” to do something, even though you thought you could do it? (like helping a parent fix something) How did you feel?
6. Have you ever been asked to do something you thought you were absolutely not ready to do? (cook dinner? Make a speech? Sing a solo?) What happened? How did you feel then?
7. How do you think God could use you to make this world a better place?
8. If God was sending a messenger to talk with you, what might the messenger be like?
(An angel? Teacher? Scout leader? Rock star?)
How would you be able to tell that the messenger was from God?
9. Girls, if you learned you were pregnant, (boys – if your girlfriend was pregnant), which of these would be the most difficult to deal with? –Your parents’ reactions? Your friends’ reactions? Your boyfriend/girlfriend’s reaction? Your church?
10. How much of what happened do you think Mary understood? Is it necessary to understand every detail in order to fulfill a purpose? Is it possible to say “yes” to God’s call, and yet not quite know how things will turn out?
11. What might have happened if Mary had said, “No.”?
12. What might happen if God was depending upon you to answer a call, and you:
a) didn’t answer? b) said “call back later”? c) said, “I’m not ready yet.”?
d) said, “ask someone else”?

Conclusion

Mary was an ordinary young woman who believed in God. She was engaged to a carpenter named Joseph. Mary's faith allowed her to recognize God's call, and she believed the Angel Gabriel when he said, "For nothing will be impossible with God." Mary's courage to accept God's call actually made her life more difficult. But Mary knew God's plan was bigger than anything she could understand.

Mary responded to God as a faithful servant, and so can you. Your faith will keep you open to God's will. Your trust in God will help you answer God's call. You are a part of God's big plan. In some way, God will choose you to reach out to other people in the world and let them know how much God loves them. Are you willing to follow God's plan?

HEROES OF GOD:
I FROM ORDINARY TO EXTRAORDINARY !

Day: Friday

YOUTH

Theme: Peter walks on water.

Lesson 5: Peter takes a risk

Bible passage: Matthew 14:22-33

Line to memorize: Matthew 14:28

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." Mt 14:28 (NIV)

OBJECTIVE

Students will know the story when Peter walked on water and will be encouraged to take decisions that help them grow in their faith in Jesus.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE TEACHER:

- *Pray to God not only to get wisdom, understanding and suitable words in order to prepare and deliver your lecture, but also to get God's Holy Spirit to act upon the life and hearts of your students.*
- *Devote enough time to prepare your lecture;*
- *Read the Bible text bearing in mind the cultural and biblical context underlying the story when Peter walked on water;*
- *Read the bible text as many times as needed in order to master the core of the story.*
- *Prepare and organize your teaching material in order to deliver your lecture as best as possible;*
- *The "Memory verse" should be preached by example. Make sure you know it well.*
- *Carry your Bible with you when delivering your lecture.*

MATERIAL: *(required for your lecture)*

Water, Flour, 1 black bag or recipient, 5 coins of different value, thumbtacks.

[Option: if you do not wish to use thumbtacks for fear of hurting the students, you can place the coins in enough mud so that the student has to dig his/her hand in the mud to get the coin]

BIBLE CONTEXT

Jesus Christ was walking beside the Sea of Galilee and asked Simon, also known as Peter, to follow him. From there he became one of the 12 disciples of Christ (Matthew 4:18-20; 16:16).

Peter was impulsive (Matthew 16:22, 17:4, 26:33, 35; John 18:10) and full of weaknesses (Matthew 14:28, 30; 19:27, 26:40; John 18:17, 25, 27)

Jesus Christ predicted that Simon Peter would become the building rock upon which the church of Christ would be built (Matthew 16:17-19)

Peter disciplined himself through years of trials. After the Ascension of Christ, Peter wrote some letters, which show a difference on the character of Peter.

First epistle of Peter

Peter had become what Christ predicted: a rock for his church. This letter is likely to have been written during the last years of his life

The epistle is addressed to God's elect, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia & Bithynia.

INTRODUCTION

- *Welcome your students. Then move on to carry out an icebreaker activity for your students to get to know each other better. Ask them to write down 3 activities they like on a piece of paper. Then each student will ask everybody else whether they like at least one activity named in the piece of paper. If they do then s/he will ask him/her to write down his/her name on the piece of paper.*
- *When the students finish this activity they will know people who have at least one interest in common.*
- *Teachers should write down the names of the students who are attending the lecture.*
- *Recall the name of the general subject of the week: "Heroes of God: From ordinary to extraordinary"*
- *Recall the names of the previous lessons you studied over the week.*
- *Ask for volunteers to tell a summary of the lessons*
- *Introduce the lesson of the day: Peter takes up the challenge.*

Activity to help students memorize the line of the day.

- *Split the class into small groups*
- *Give each group the bible verse to memorize*

- *Give all groups instructions to practice to speak it out loudly enough as a group and uniformly. That is to say, at the same time, but clear enough.*

STUDYING THE BIBLE PASSAGE OF THE DAY

Activity "the challenge of the day"

You should have prepared the black bag or recipient with the Water, Flour [or mud], 5 coins of different value and nails inside.

- Show students the black bag or recipient
- Explain students that 5 rewards are in the bag but there also are unpleasant things inside.
- Call for 5 volunteers who like challenges
- The challenge consists on sticking your hand into the black bag or recipient in order to retrieve one item. You could draw either your reward or an unpleasant object.

After the 5th volunteer ask each of them to tell the class about their experience.

- Why does S/He like challenges?
- Was S/He scared to an unexpected outcome?
- Did She consider to give up?

Now move on and ask them to find Matthew 14:22-33 in their Bibles.

Read the Bible passage.

In the story, Peter also took up a challenge as some of you did today. A challenge of Faith, for he said "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you on the water". After Christ called him "Come", Peter got down out the boat, walked on the water. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid because he doubted. As a result, he began to sink, but even then he called Christ for help and immediately Christ reached out his hand and caught him. Peter experience was Extraordinary.

When you read about the life of Peter then you will see that his life was like anybody else's. Then after the public life of Christ and after his death, Peter's life was transformed into an extraordinary life.

THINKING ABOUT THE BIBLE PASSAGE OF TODAY.

The Bible tells about many extraordinary signs carried out by God to show favor to the people of the living God.

To look at some examples,

- Moses raises his staff and stretched out his hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground (Exodus 14:16)
- Joshua followed God's commands in order to take the city of Jericho (Joshua 6:2-5, 20)
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego not only were saved by God from the blazing furnace but also rescued from the hands of king Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:27-28)
- Jesus Christ carried out extraordinary signs (Mark 1:32-34, 40-41; 6:39-44)
- The apostles of Jesus Christ healed many people (Acts 3:6-8, 5:12, 16; 9:34, 40)

In today's story Jesus Christ teaches Peter that all he needed was to strengthen his faith for he said to Peter "you of little faith" (Matthew 14:31)

FAITH in the living God is what Moses, Joshua, Jesus Christ, the apostles of Christ and many other believers spoken of in the Bible have in common.

Christ preached faith to all his disciples. For instance we can read in the Bible about the day Christ replied to his disciples "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also can you say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea', and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for **in prayer.**"

PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

There are times in our lives when you will have to make a decision like Peter's. Maybe you are in that moment right now! Peter made an uncommon decision and took a risk in trusting Jesus' words. He was not afraid of failure; the strong wind that was blowing did not intimidate him initially. He had Jesus in his heart; his eyes were on Jesus and even when he became afraid, he cried out to Jesus and Jesus saved him from his fears and the adversity he faced.

Now if you have Jesus in your heart, you can face anything life can throw your way. Success only comes from the right decisions and perseverance. The right decisions come from doing the will of God. Jesus said he was the way, the truth and the life, and that no one could come to the father but through him. If you wish to be successful in your endeavors remember that there is only one effective road. Jesus gives you the chance to grow. It is not the easiest or most comfortable road. Jesus warned that there would be difficulties we would face, but we need to trust him. He has won the battle for us.

Take the risk and believe in Jesus. Jesus has the best plan for your life, no matter what tests, storms or fear might come. Remember that it is not only about believing; we must do as God asks us and stay with God in order to become extraordinary people.

We have the option of taking a risk and do things that are impossible for human beings, things that defy the very rules of nature, as with Peter walking on water, for God is making all things possible. If we have Jesus in our heart, if we trust completely in him, he can help us not to be afraid. If one day you find yourself in a situation that offers you the chance to live out your faith life, place your trust in God and he will do what for you is impossible. *Have the students look up the definition of faith, Hebrews 11:1.*

CONCLUSION

When Peter took his eyes off Jesus and focused on what surrounded him in this story -the strong wind- he no longer showed complete trust in God. But Peter knew that despite not having trusted fully, Jesus would bring him across the water. He would never leave him -it was to Him that he turned when he was sinking because he knew that He was his Savior and that He would never abandon Him.

This shows us that we should have faith in God. Faith is having complete confidence in God, although often this is difficult for us. There are moments and situations when fear invades us. This is not a bad thing, on the contrary, it shows us that we always need God, and alone we cannot save ourselves.

We should always turn to Jesus; he alone can save us. It is part of our calling to share this joy from God with others. Tell your siblings, your parents, and your friends that having Jesus in your heart makes you feel his love.

Jesus wants to be in your heart. If you have not yet invited Jesus to enter into your heart, you can do it now. *If you have a positive response from any children, ask them to stay for a moment and finish presenting the plan of salvation. If you can't do it yourself, ask another teacher for support in doing so. (If possible, get the full names and addresses of these children).*

Conclude the class with prayer. Thank the students for coming all week. Tell them goodbye and invite them to keep coming to Sunday School