

“A PEOPLE OF ALL PEOPLES”

by Lyz Weaver

KEY VERSE:

“..., choose this day whom you will serve...”

FAITH STORY:

Joshua 24:1-28

FAITH FOCUS:

We have seen in previous stories that God had been reestablishing relationship with people by creating A People. In this story Joshua and the mixed group of people present themselves before God. Joshua shares with the people the story of what God has already done in order to create A People. Joshua recounts the salvation story and then invites these people to make a choice. They must choose between serving God or the gods of their ancestors. The people make their choice and at this place, called Shechem, he sets up a stone to bear witness to the covenant established there between God and the people.

SESSION GOAL:

To help students understand that they have a choice - to serve God or the “gods” that exist in our culture today. (Ex.- money, power, pleasure, etc....)

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson students will be able to name pressures to accept or reject God. They will also be given the opportunity to choose God for him/herself.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

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| 1 Donuts | 2 Note cards |
| 3 Bowl of raisins | 4 Envelopes |
| 5 Juice | 6 Pens |
| 7 Cups | 8 Snack direction copies |
| 9 Plates | 10 Bibles |
| 11 Napkins | 12 Chalk board or newsprint, marker |

- Begin the preparation for the lesson by praying for each of the youth individually this week, that they might be receptive to the call of God.
- Buy donuts, raisins, juice. Get bowl, cups, plates, napkins, note cards, envelopes, and pens.
- Photocopy snack directions and cut apart into individual cards—you should have the same number of raisins cards as donuts cards.
- Day of Lesson: Prepare a plate of donuts, a bowl of raisins, and glasses of juice.

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5 minutes)

As the students enter the room hand each one a snack card. Make sure you hand out an even number of each card. Say hello but don't explain why the cards are different. Save conversation about the issue until everyone has helped themselves and are seated.

CONNECT: (7 minutes)

Ask the students:

"Are those of you who are enjoying donuts this morning happy?"

"How about those of you with raisins?"

"How does it feel to be told what your snack will be instead of choosing it?"

As you pass around the snacks for everyone to choose what they want, transition with the following statement.

"None of us like having choices made for us. A choice made for us is not truly a choice at all—we know that and God knows that. Today we're going to look at an opportunity for a variety of people from a variety of backgrounds to choose whether or not to follow God."

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (15 minutes)

Review with the students that at this point in the Biblical story, the people (a mixed people) have been gathered together at Shechem. Describe what Joshua does in recapping the story of God creating a people. (Joshua 24:1-13) Joshua begins by reminding them of the way God led Abraham and made him a great nation. He retells the story of deliverance from Egypt and the crossing of the Jordan. He brings the Story into the time and situation of the people at Shechem.

Ask a student to read aloud Joshua 24:14-28.

Lead a discussion based on the following questions:

What do you think Joshua's purpose is in retelling the Story?

Do you think all that were there chose to follow God?

Why do you think they chose God?

Do you think they felt pressure to choose God?

APPLY: (10–15 minutes)

Continue your discussion as a large group, or divide into small groups of 2-3 if that will facilitate a better discussion.

When do you feel like you have to choose God or reject God? Give some examples.

Do you ever feel pressures from others to choose or reject God?

List these pressures on the chalk board or newsprint.

Discuss:

What do we do about these pressures? Are they good or bad? Is the choice ultimately ours? Do we make that choice by the way we live as much as by what we say?

Invite students to participate in a faith walk. If your setting and weather is okay, do this walk outdoors. If not, walk inside the church building. This is similar to the “walk a mile” game. Form two lines of students that will walk side by side. One line will move while the other one stays the same, allowing for students to be in new pairs every time you tell them to switch.

Ask students to talk about the following as they walk: *“A time when I had to choose God, and I did;” and/or “A time when I had to make a choice between God’s way versus the way of the ‘other gods, and I chose the ‘other gods.’”*

Optional: After the faith walk, encourage students to take a walk alone or find a quiet place to sit for a few minutes to contemplate their faith journey and the times they chose God and the times they chose “the other gods.”

RESPOND: (5–10 minutes)

Pass around note cards, envelopes, and pens. Ask the students to answer the following questions on their notes cards, seal them inside the envelope, and write their name on the front of the envelope.

- 1 Do I choose this story as my own? Who or what do I, this day, choose to serve? (Remind students that this is being written for THEM—there is no pressure for them to answer to meet others’ expectations, and that no one else will see what they write.)
- 2 Do my actions reflect my choice?
- 3 What do I want to do with this decision?

Encourage students to share their decision with someone IF THEY CHOOSE TO. If they made a choice for God, that is something to celebrate! The students need to be encouraged as well if they realize in this exercise that by conscious choice or actions they are not, at this time, choosing to follow God. As much as we as parents and teachers want to see our youth come to know God, we CANNOT make this decision for them.

Collect the sealed envelopes and plan to give them back at a later date. End with a prayer as you hold the envelopes in your hands.

INSIGHTS FROM THE SCRIPTURE:

In this lesson we focus on the biblical theme that God is working in the world to create A People. God is beginning the “sin solution” by reestablishing the relationship that was broken when humankind chose to separate from God, self, others, and all creation in the four Fall Stories. In this story, God is working to establish A People from all people. God has created a people in Abraham and delivered them at the Red Sea and again as they cross the Jordan. Many of the people at this point are unfamiliar with the stories of God’s deliverance as they were not present at the Exodus event. At Shechem, Joshua is calling the people to remember the works that God has done for God’s People in the past, and calling them to express a commitment to God now. The choice is given to the people—it is not made for them. Joshua reminds the people that they do need to choose between the Lord or the gods of their ancestors. He is calling the people to make the story of God’s grace and love their own.

Welcome!!! Please help
yourself to a glass of juice
and a donut!!! ENJOY!!!

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and some raisins!!! ENJOY!!!