

# A Brief Review Of The Season 4 Bible Stories And Lessons

## Session 1 Putting God First

- *King David the Dancer* – King David orders the Ark of the Covenant to be brought into Jerusalem – a symbolic gesture that says “God is at the center of our people.” King David is so excited that he dances with the people and has a great feast. One of his wives, though, is ashamed of David’s behavior. But David doesn’t care because David is paying attention to God.
- *Naaman’s Pride* – Naaman, a great warrior, has leprosy. When Elisha tells him to bathe in the Jordan river to be healed, Naaman is too prideful to listen. But his servants tell him to pay attention to what he’s been told. So he does what God told him to do (through Elisha) and is healed because of it.
- *Daniel’s Diet Competition* – Daniel is a captive in Babylon and he’s being told to eat the same food that the Babylonians are eating. But that diet isn’t what God has instructed him to eat. So Daniel proposes a competition to see who is healthier after 10 days. After 10 days of eating the food God instructed the Israelites to eat, Daniel is the healthiest.

## Session 2 Not Putting God First

- *Adam and Eve’s Choice* – Adam and Eve are offered a choice: Be like God by determining good and evil or be with God and let God determine what’s good for them. They go with the first choice and eat of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil – turns out they aren’t very good at being like God and it causes all sorts of problems
- *Cain and Abel* – Cain is jealous of Abel’s relationship with God, but instead of working on his own relationship with God, Cain plots to kill Abel despite warnings from God to not do so. Cain follows through with his plan and the first-born of the first people to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil commits the first murder.
- *10 Commandments and the Golden Calf* – The Israelites are free of the Egyptians and God wants to make an agreement with the Israelites, known as the 10 commandments. While Moses and God are hashing out the details, the Israelites decide to worship a different type of god – one that they make themselves with their own gold in the form of a calf and it breaks their agreement with God before it even really begins, but God does not give up on the Israelites.

## Session 3 Wandering the Wilderness

- *The Stress of Leadership* – The Israelites were freed from slavery by God through Moses, but now, in the wilderness, they do not trust Moses, God or where they are. So they complain. And so Moses complains to God. And God gives Moses directions that help Moses and the Israelites that includes inviting more of the people into prayer time and leadership positions.
- *Too Much Of A Good Thing* – Only a few months after leaving Egypt and on their way to the promised land, the Israelites are missing Egypt and want to go back. They complain about how the food was better in Egypt. So God sends quail for the Israelites to eat. A number of the Israelites eat so much quail, though, that they die from meat poisoning.
- *The Promised Land? Nope, not yet!* – After a year of wandering in the wilderness, God is ready to give the Israelites their own land. But the Israelites are still not ready to trust God’s direction and in their distrust they make a number of mistakes that eventually lead to the result of them wandering in the wilderness for 40 more years.

## Session 4 Advent and Jesus

- *Mary and Juno are pregnant* – A messenger tells Mary, an unwed teenager, that she is pregnant. Though this might sound like good news since the baby boy will be Jesus, the news is actually life-threatening to Mary. Her culture will

not approve of an unwed pregnancy and Joseph, who she is engaged to, may choose to not marry her, which means she won't have any money and would be an outcast from her community. But, as our activity reminded us (with the gum!), where there is a mess, God can make that mess into something really good and important, if we ask for God's help and then act on it.

- *Jesus is baptized* – Before Jesus starts his ministry, he gets baptized with water and then with God's Holy Spirit. In the lesson, we talked about the words of *sin* (meaning: separation from God) and *repentance* (meaning: to turn around / change direction)
- *Identity of Jesus* – “Who am I,” Jesus asks his disciples. Lots of answers get offered. Peter, then, says, “The messiah” (which is Hebrew for the Greek word of “Christ”) and Jesus then tells Peter that he will build his church with Peter's very important and essential help. Which might seem strange because Peter was a very normal, average sort of person. Not a world-changer.

### Session 5 Parables (The Big 3)

- *The Prodigal Son* – In this story told by Jesus, we see that the character who represents God is a very loving, kind, personable, forgiving, generous character. Yet, both his sons misunderstand him. However, the one who messes up more is the one who understands the God character the best by the end of the story. This is not meant to encourage messing up, but it is meant to remind those of us who think we should judge those who mess up that we are messing up when we do just that – when we judge instead of offer compassion and kindness and forgiveness like the God character did.
- *The Parable of the Talents* – This story helps reveal how our understanding of who God is determines how we then act in our own life and towards God. Those who trust God are not afraid to use what they've been given. If we do not trust God and think God is scary, unfair, and unjust, then we are more likely to not best use / trust what God has given us to use.
- *The Parable of the Good Samaritan* – The Samaritans are a people that the Israelites just do not like. So Jesus tells a story where a Samaritan treats an injured Israelite with compassion and love while two other Israelites do nothing for their fellow Israelite. Jesus' point is that blood and commonalities do not make a neighbor. Instead, there are no loopholes to “loving one's neighbor.” And since that can be a difficult thing, that is why Jesus says to “love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul and strength” before trying to love others. By paying attention to God we will receive what we need to love our neighbors.

### Session 6 Jesus and Outsiders

- *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman* – In the previous class, we saw Jesus suggest a Samaritan could act like a good neighbor and that there were no loopholes to loving one's neighbors – to love your neighbor was to love *everyone*. In this class, we read a story of Jesus walking the walk after talking the talk. He goes to a Samaritan town and shares the good news with a woman there and then to the rest of the town.
- *Jesus Calls Levi* – At the start of Jesus' ministry, he invites people to follow him, to be his student / disciple. One person he asks is Levi, who, it turns out, is a tax collector. Tax collectors are NOT well-liked among the Israelites. Tax collectors were considered traitors. But Jesus is being very clear that ANYONE can be a student of his.
- *Zacchaeus* – Zacchaeus is also a tax collector, but he's the CHIEF tax collector -- so he's disliked even worse than Levi probably was. Zacchaeus, though, really wants to see Jesus and because he makes the effort to see Jesus, Jesus goes to Zacchaeus' house and Zacchaeus is so moved that he starts giving away half his belongings. But what we see in the story is that by loving his neighbor, Jesus brings Zacchaeus back into the neighborhood; that Zacchaeus the outsider is re-introduced to his community by Jesus' visit.

## Session 7 Transformation

- *Transfiguration* – By following Jesus, by doing what Jesus did and taught – we will be changed. It even changed Jesus. In the Transfiguration story, we are offered a visual indicator of how paying attention to God enlightened Jesus, helped him see things that weren't easy to see (like Elijah and Moses) and hear things that are not easy to hear (like God's voice). Peter also has an important role in the story – Jesus' opposite: He falls asleep and then when he wakes up, he disrupts Jesus' transfiguration.
- *Peter's Vision* – In another story that highlights how paying attention to God and following Jesus changes us, Peter is praying on the roof when he has a vision that encourages him to eat anything, including food Peter and other Israelites would call "unclean." Peter replies, "Thanks, but no thanks" to which a voice says, "Do not call unclean what I call clean." Shortly after this vision, Gentiles (non-Israelites) arrive at Peter's home. Instead of pushing away the (unclean) outsiders, Peter does like Jesus did and welcomes the outsiders and goes to their home the next day.
- *Paul's Conversion* – Saul is a Pharisee and he's persecuting the members of the early church. He probably did this because he cared about God and thought he was somehow protecting God. But he was so wrong that once he understood how wrong he was, he was so stunned that he was knocked to the ground and couldn't see for days. It is then another person listening to God who joins Saul, who then helps Saul to trust and see that what first stunned him was indeed, actually correct

## Session 8 Peter

- *Peter Sinks* – In the middle of the night in the middle of a storm, Jesus walks on water to join the disciples who are afraid and cowering in a boat. Peter sees Jesus and asks to join him on the water (a symbol of chaos). A true disciple thing to do! Jesus says "Sure." And Peter does it! He walks on water! But then he gets scared, turns his attention away from Jesus and towards the waves and wind and therefore sinks. You have to appreciate Peter's enthusiasm, there, but at the same time, we are reminded that Peter is easily distracted and scared, just like so many of us.
- *Get behind me, Satan* – Jesus tells his disciples that the plan is to go to Jerusalem, get arrested, beaten and crucified and then resurrected. Peter seems to only hear the violent parts, gets scared and then tells Jesus to NOT do that. Jesus tells Peter that he has his mind on human things, not divine things – that basically, he's got his priorities out of line, which is why he says, "Get behind me, Satan." Jesus says this not to be mean, but to remind Peter that he is to focus on divine things, not human things. The "Get behind me" line is interesting because it's about priorities – about putting the divine first instead of about completely dismissing the human. But it's still a tough line to throw at Peter when the guy was just trying to express his well-intentioned concern about Jesus' well-being.
- *Pentecost* – Peter graduates from disciple to apostle and it is an amazing transformation! Peter the enthusiastic, but easily scared and distracted and error-prone disciple finally becomes this confident, well-spoken, focused individual who speaks to a huge crowd on Pentecost and convinces 3000 of the people to become disciples of his and the other apostles. Pretty amazing!