



Timeline

22nd Confirmation Class Lesson

Supplies Needed: Notebooks; Handout; clothesline or rope strung across the room (about 15 to 20 feet long); 20 clothespins; printed out “events in history” from material resource .doc; you’ll have to update/change the “Our church was established” card (pg 8 in material resource .doc) and the answer that is in the lesson and handout; printed out sheets A,B,C,D, and E (at end of the lesson).

EXPLAIN OPENING Activity TIMELINE

- As you see, there is a clothesline stretched across the room with 20 or so clothespins on it.
- Your task is to take this stack of 20 papers that have words and events and sometimes pictures on them, and to the best of your ability put the 20 pieces of paper in order, chronologically (from earliest to latest).
- You have to agree as a group on the placement.
- We’ll give you 10 minutes to do this.
- Go!

DO TIMELINE Activity

ASK

- How well do you think you did?
- How many do you think we’ll have to move/fix?
- I’m going to tell you now, what order they actually happened in.
- I need a volunteer to put them in the correct order and another volunteer to count how many pieces need to be moved:

3100ish BC	Unification of Egypt under King Menes
2000ish BC	Abraham is born
1400ish BC	Moses is born
1006 BC	David becomes King David of Israel
957 BC	1 st Temple in Jerusalem is built (by King Solomon)
334 BC	Alexander the Great starts taking over the world by military force
44 BC	Julius Ceasar becomes sole ruler (Emperor) of Rome
6 AD	Jesus Christ is born
70 AD	Jerusalem is destroyed by Rome – the 2 nd Temple is leveled.
312 AD	Constantine legalizes Christianity in Rome
397 AD	The books of the New Testament are decided.
1054 AD	The Great Schism (The Church becomes Two Churches)
1492 AD	Columbus sets foot on America
1517 AD	Martin Luther posts his 95 Thesis and begins the Reformation

1620 AD	Pilgrims land at Plymouth Rock
???? AD	OUR CHURCH WAS ESTABLISHED
1776 AD	American Revolutionary War
1949 AD	Israel becomes a country again after WWII
1957 AD	Birth of the United Church of Christ
2009 AD	By this time, over 20,000 Christian denominations exist.

ASK

- Are there any events that happened at a different time than you thought they did?
- For what reasons, do you think, is it important to know events of the past and the order of them? (helps us learn both of the good to repeat and the bad to avoid; helps us understand cause and effect)

OPENING PRAYER

CHALLENGE OF THE WEEK REVIEW

The challenge was: So God doesn't stop us from doing stupid things, unfortunately. What are some things that people do that you wish God would stop us from doing for our own betterment?

REVIEW

- Themes and concepts of the stories we've talked about recently in class:
 - Jesus is crucified. We discussed two perspectives of why Jesus was crucified: 1. He died for our sins. 2. He died because of our sins.
 - Jesus is Resurrected. Jesus is resurrected because Jesus says yes to God's will, which includes surrendering to be crucified. Two perspectives we talked about regarding Resurrection: 1. Even in death, if we invite God in, then there is still hope and life. 2. Resurrection is a transition, a springboard for new things to come.
 - We talked about Jesus as a seed. That a seed must die in order to grow into the plant it's meant to be. We looked at the story of Pentecost where 3000 join the disciples. This is the start of the Church. The Church is the Jesus tree.
 - If you're God, what is a limitation that you have? No body! So who does God choose to be God's body? All of us! How do we become part of God's body? Follow Jesus. Another name for the Church is the Body of Christ.

TELL

- There is no Bible passage for today.
- We're going to do a history lesson, mostly putting Bible stories in the correct order and then looking a little bit at church history.
- I'm going to pass out the handouts, now, for today.

TELL: History Timeline PART I (The Israelites of the Bible)

In the beginning, God made everything and it was good. But humans were made with the ability to choose. Often they chose like Adam and Eve, to live as God, instead of living with God. Once this choice takes hold in a people, in a culture, then things fall apart, like leaving the garden of Eden, Cain killing Abel, the tower of Babel being built and not finished, the great flood with Noah floating above it. These are stories that just "happened" in the Bible. There is no real setting or time to the stories. And in

some ways, these are generic stories. There's no enduring, continuing legacy to these stories. So if God wants to reach out to the people and remind them that choosing to be with God is better than choosing to live as God, God's going to need to make a lasting, ongoing impression. He's going to need a culture, a spokesperson, who will represent the betterment that is his way.

So God starts with Abraham. Makes a covenant with him, tells Abraham that he's going to have more descendents than grains of sand at a beach, than all the stars in the sky. Tells Abraham that Abraham's family is going to be a light unto the nations.

But God takes his sweet, sweet time and in the meantime, Abraham gets anxious, stops trusting God and makes his own plans. He has a son named Ishmael with a concubine, named Hagar. A number of years later, Abraham has with his wife Sarah a son named Isaac. This causes family problems and **Abraham casts Hagar and Ishmael out of the family.** Many of the Arab nations today and as well as the world religion of Islam trace their lineage through Ishmael to Abraham.

Isaac then has two sons, Esau and Jacob. God told the family that Jacob, though the younger, would get the birthright, generally reserved for the oldest. Jacob and his mom do not trust this will happen and so they make it happen on their own. **Jacob fools his father, gets Esau's birthright, and then flees the family.**

Jacob is renamed by an angel to Israel (which means *wrestles with God*) and has twelve sons. 10 from one wife and 2 from another wife. Israel likes the 2 better than the 10 and this causes problems. **The 10 take Joseph, one of the 2, and sell him into Egyptian slavery** and tell Israel that Joseph was killed by a wild animal. Eventually from slavery Jacob becomes the second highest ranking person in Egypt and saves Egypt from famine and reunites his family. His family comes to live in Egypt.

400 years pass. During this time, the family of Israel has grown into 12 tribes. Each son of Israel has had many sons. Also during this time, the Egyptians have slowly but surely enslaved all of the Israelites. Enter Moses.

God calls Moses to free the Israelites. Moses does. They wander in the desert for 40 years, letting the enslaved generations die. Then they enter the "promised land" and make a space for themselves there. They become a country, with land, with cities, with rules. Rules that God has given them. God is creating a people that would live God's way. But Israel has other thoughts. They want to be like the other countries, they want a king. They get a king. King Saul. He's not so great because he doesn't obey God. But then King David is anointed (he's not the son of Saul, but the son of Jesse – remember Jesse's name) and David is an awesome king because he pays attention to God AND kills lots of enemies, takes over Jerusalem and makes it the capital. Under King David, Israel is the most militaristic and stable its ever been.

But King David marries lots of women and his offspring fight for the throne. Solomon, a son of David, eventually becomes the successor of David. Solomon asks God for wisdom and also builds the Temple. Solomon marries lots of women also, many of whom are foreigners. For his foreign wives, he built places of worship for their gods and religions in the land of Israel. Jeroboam (an upriser – anointed by a prophet) and Rehoboam (son of Solomon) fight for the land of Israel after Solomon's death, and the

nation of Israel splits into two countries: The Kingdom of Israel consisted of the Northern 10 tribes and the Kingdom of Judah which included Jerusalem was made up of 2 tribes. Sound familiar?

In 720 BC the Kingdom of Israel is overrun by Assyria and in 586 BC the Kingdom of Judah is overrun by Babylon. Just before and during these times of destruction and exile is when the major prophets of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel live and work, telling the people to pay attention to God instead of their own ways. For the most part, the people don't listen. Isaiah, though, talks about how all is not lost. He talks about how from the stump of Jesse (Jesse was the father of King David) a branch will shoot up and the people of Israel will again be a light to the world.

Over the years, Israelites come back from exile and rebuild the walls and temple of Jerusalem. In 163 BC, a small geographical area that includes Jerusalem is freed in the uprising of the Maccabees. For about 100 years that area is free from outside influence until in 63 BC, Rome conquers them. And for all the bad stuff that comes with oppression, Rome allowed the Israelites to continue worshiping their God, and brought a stability and peace to the region that the Israelites hadn't known since King David and Solomon.

So were the people of Israel a light to the world? Yes and no. No, because so often they just lived like everyone else, lived *as* God instead of *with* God. Separation, every time, was the result. However, yes, they were God's light to the world, because even in the few and brief times that they did, as a people, pay attention to God, pretty cool things happen. How many other nations were born of being slaves to Egypt, for example? And their stories, that they told each other through the generations, illustrated very clearly, like a light, how ignoring God led to separation and paying attention to God led to cohesion and the impossible.

It also, could be argued, that the Israelites created a culture that even when cut down, like a stump, could form and raise an individual who would even more clearly be God's light to world and show the world how living God's way is the better way to live. Lo and behold, Jesus is born.

SNACK

TELL: History Timeline PART II (The Church)

Jesus does his thing and does it well. The people of Israel do what they've always done: Say yes before saying no. Jesus is killed. He is resurrected. Only the disciples get to see the resurrected Jesus. The disciples graduate to apostles when they are "clothed" in the Holy Spirit. Pentecost happens, 3000 people from the crowd join the apostles, and the church is born. The church is the continuation of Jesus' ministry, whose ministry was a continuation of God's original plan for Israel: To live God's way and share that better way with others. In the beginning, the church is actually called "The Way." Also in the beginning, "The Way" is mostly exclusive to Israelites. Peter has a dream to include everyone, but it is mostly the apostle Paul (before his conversion, he persecuted members of the Church) who travels the known world (the Empire of Rome), and starts churches (usually in areas where refugee Israelites are gathered). This creates a tension because these refugee Israelites are not considered "real" Israelites. So the big question is, "Do you have to be a "real" Israelite before you can be part of the Way/Church." Jerusalem serves as the epicenter of the Way, and this is where the leadership (the 12 apostles) are

mostly housed. The exclusiveness of the question about who is in and who is out is therefore somewhat geographical, but is made pointless in 70 AD, when Rome gets fed up with the rebelling Israelites and levels Jerusalem, including the Temple. This scatters the apostles and disciples. This is also when the Gospels are being written, as a way to preserve memories, but also as a way to unify the scattered Church communities.

When Rome conquered a land, they would let the conquered people mostly live as they had been living including letting them worship as custom dictated. However, it was illegal in the Roman Empire to start new religions. And so, as The Way more and more began to resemble something other than Judaism and as it spread, the Romans began to persecute the people who claimed Jesus Christ was their king (instead of Caesar). The Romans started to call these followers of Christ, "Christians." For 300 hundred years after Jesus, it was a dangerous thing to be a Christian. Then in 313, the Edict of Milan, was instated by Constantine the Great. This edict protected Christians from religious persecution, (as well as all other religions) and allowed anyone to worship whichever deity they chose. Constantine considered himself a Christian, eventually, (it is said that his mother was a lifelong Christian), but the main reason for his decision was most likely political. Rome at that point was divided. Constantine wanted to rule all of Rome, and in making Christianity legal in his part of Rome, was telling the Christians in the other parts of Rome that the same could be true for them. It worked. The Christians led uprisings and sabotages weakened the other parts of Rome significantly, allowing Constantine to conquer and unite all of Rome once again (please note that this is very simplified). Constantine in his show of support of Christianity, built buildings for Christians to worship in. He also liked orthodoxy, which is the practice of observing established social customs, because he believed it created stability throughout the land. Christianity had no orthodoxy. Each town had its own hidden Christian community that had snippets of Jesus stories, misunderstandings about baptism and all sorts of other things. So in 325 AD, Constantine summoned the Council of Nicaea, the first attempt to centralize and agree upon the main tenets of the Christian faith. This started a fad of Councils and synods and meetings of Christians. In 397, the 3rd Synod of Carthage voted on what goes in and what doesn't go in the Bible.

But, just like Israel, the Church didn't always pay attention to God. Once the orthodox was set, then the faith wasn't so important so much as retaining the central power that comes with enforcing orthodoxy. And thus, separation eventually followed. In 1054 AD, The Church split into two churches: The Eastern Orthodox Church and what we now call the Roman Catholic Church. This is often called the "East-West Schism" or the "Great Schism." Then, in 1095, still feeling its oats as an enforcer, the Roman Catholic Church began a Crusade – a military operation to retake Jerusalem from Muslim Rule. Over the course of 200 years there were 9 official Crusades in all – some more successful than others.

In 1517, Martin Luther, a priest in the Roman Catholic Church, had some problems with Church. Mainly the selling of indulgences (buying dead people out of hell). Luther in protesting indulgences wrote a letter that eventually became known as "Luther's 95 Theses." The Roman Catholic Church did not listen to Luther and kicked him out. This is often considered the start of the "Protestant Reformation," a period of time that led to churches separating from the Roman Catholic Church, and wars between countries that identified themselves as one faith vs another (this was especially true between England and Spain). The Protestant Reformation concluded in 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia that included 16 European states. During this time, the Puritans tried to reform the Church of England, were rejected and eventually, they ended up here, in New England, on the Mayflower in 1620.

Even though the Reformation ends with a treaty in 1648, the idea of leaving the church to start your own church never ends. More and more Christian denominations are created, formed, split, and then split again.

In 1957 a small reversal of this trend takes place when the United Church of Christ is born (UCC). The UCC is birthed by the combining of 4 denominations. The four denominations that came together were The Congregational Churches of the English Reformation with Puritan New England roots in America, The Christian Church with American frontier beginnings, The Evangelical Synod of North America, a 19th-century German-American church of the frontier Mississippi Valley, and the Reformed Church in the United States, initially composed of early 18th-century churches in Pennsylvania and neighboring colonies, unified in 1793.

In 2009, just under 1000 years since the East-West Schism, there are now over 20,000 Christian denominations.

(If there's at least 20 minutes left in class, do the "foretelling" activity – otherwise skip to "SUMMARY OF PATTERNS"))

EXPLAIN the FORETELLING Activity

- I need a volunteer
- (Everyone raises their hands – choose one).
- Think about the number of the day of your birthday. Don't say it out loud.
- Now I'm going to leave the room and close the door and you need to tell the class when your birthday is. But be quiet so that I don't overhear you. I'm not supposed to know.
- [Leave the room – shepherd or a student comes to get you]
- [Come back in]
- I'm going to show you 5 sheets of paper (see below) with numbers on it. (Show them Sheet A)
- I want you to tell me if the day of your birthday is on this sheet.
 - [If the student says no, go to the next sheet and ask the same question.]
 - [If the student says yes, take note of and remember the FIRST number on that sheet, then go to the next sheet and ask the same question.]
 - [Once you've gone through all five sheets, add up the first number on all the sheets that the student said yes to – the sum of those numbers will be the students birth date]
 - Your birth date is: ____
- Do you think I can do it again? Let's do it again! (repeat process two, three or four times...)

TELL

- In this activity, the sheets of paper were set up in a way that meant that no matter what decision you made about what number to pick between 1 and 31, the sheets of paper could figure out what you had chosen due to the inherent patterns of the numbers.
- When we look at this long history of faith stories, we can also see some patterns that emerge.
- Do you notice any patterns?

SUMMARY OF PATTERNS

- Throughout the faith stories, there are individuals who trust God, and impressive things happen to them and those around them.
 - Like Joseph for example. Even though he's sold into slavery, he keeps paying attention to God and then both his family and the Egyptians prosper because of him.
- However, you'll also see that once things are going well, the people stop thinking they need God and then things start to separate,
 - Like the Kingdom of Israel for example – the sons of King Solomon do not first seek God, instead they seek their own kingdoms and in so doing, divide Israel.
- Then in the separation, sometimes, someone (a prophet) realizes that God is being ignored, reminds the people to pay attention and then the pattern starts over, where impressive things start happening again, only to fall apart,
 - Like Jesus and the disciples for example, only to be undone by the Romans that spread them out. But then the Councils came back together, only to be undone later by the schisms that eventually separates the Church into 20,000 denominations.

TELL

- Throughout the year, we've looked at the good things that happen when we follow Jesus.
- We've also see the results of what happens when the crowd and Pharisees choose to not follow Jesus and choose their own ways.
- And now we can see the same thing happening on a larger scale, happening throughout history.
- When individuals and groups of people pay attention to God, amazing things happen. But then, when we stop paying attention to God, things separate and fall apart.
- Next class, we're going to start talking about what it means to be a member of the church and what it means to be confirmed.
- It is our hope that in your choosing to be confirmed, this is part of your consideration: That your active, intentional participation in this faith community brings this faith community closer to the threshold where God's light can really start to shine, in the same ways that God's light shines through Jesus.

CLOSING PRAYER – ask for prayer requests and give time during prayer for students to pray.

Sheet A

1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13,

15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25,

27, 29, 31

Sheet B

2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14,

15, 18, 19, 22, 23, 26,

27, 30, 31

Sheet C

4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14,

15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 28,

29, 30, 31

Sheet D

8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14,

15, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28,

29, 30, 31

Sheet E

16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21,

22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27,

28, 29, 30, 31