

## A BRIEF review of the sessions and stories we read and talked about this year

### Session 1 Jacob – A Patriarch

- *Jacob the Deceiver* – Jacob with the help of his mother, lies to his father to steal the blessing meant for Esau – which splits the family and Jacob runs away from home because Esau wants to kill him.
- *Jacob's name change and reunion with Esau* – 20 years after running from home, God calls Jacob to return home and reunite with Esau. On the night of reunion, Jacob is stricken with fear and wrestles with God about it. In the wrestling, Jacob (whose name means “Grasper”) has his name changed to Israel (which means “one who wrestles with God”) – In other words, Jacob is finally learning to turn to God instead of managing the situation on his own.
- *Joseph is sold into slavery; Jacob is deceived* – Jacob's old ways have been passed onto his kids. 10 sons tire of Joseph and sell him into slavery. Then they lie and deceive Jacob/Israel in the same way Jacob lied/deceived his family.

### Session 2 Joseph and his Brothers

- *Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams* – Joseph is a slave and then thrown in jail in Egypt. His God-directed ability to interpret dreams eventually lands him in front of Pharaoh, though, and he gets himself a really important job re: food prep for famine.
- *Joseph's dreams come true; his brothers go to Egypt and bow before him* – Joseph's job reunites him with his brothers, only his brothers don't recognize him. Joseph deceives them to see if they've learned anything since selling him into slavery
- *Joseph tests his brothers and they pass* – The brothers “pass” Joseph's deceptive test and they are reunited. Jacob and his entire family moves to Egypt.

### Session 3 Moses & the Israelites exit Egypt

- *The 10 Plagues* – 400 years after Joseph helps Egypt, Egypt has enslaved Joseph's and Israel's family – the Israelites. God, through Moses, tells Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. Pharaoh says No. Plagues ensue. We talked about thinking of the plagues like pollution: “Cheap” sources of labor/energy usually have such results (aka plagues/pollution).
- *Passover* – the 10<sup>th</sup> plague is the Passover, where God's angel of death kills the firstborn in every household except for those marked with lamb's blood on the doorway. Those houses are “passed over.” Pharaoh finally lets the Israelites go.
- *The Red Sea* – After the Israelites leave Egypt, Pharaoh changes his mind and gives chase to bring back his cheap labor force. Moses and the people pray and God shows them a path through the chaotic situation (aka the Red Sea - a symbol of chaos). The Egyptians who are not praying, do not see God's path through the chaos and are therefore swallowed up by the Red Sea.

### Session 4 Jesus' Childhood

- *The wisemen find Jesus* – King Herod (an Israelite who is king under Roman rule) learns about a young child (from the foreigner wisemen) who is to be the next king. This frightens Herod so after failing to trick the wisemen, Herod then kills all Israelite baby boys under the age of two. But Joseph, Mary, and Jesus escape to Egypt.
- *Jesus is blessed* – In the Temple, Simeon and Anna bless baby Jesus. From this story was the line “the inner thoughts of many will be revealed” – meaning how people respond to Jesus would reveal their true thoughts and intentions.
- *When Jesus was 12 years old* – he ran away from home. Ok, not quite. But he did get separated from his family because he was so engaged in discussion with the teachers in the Temple. Certainly showed promise as a student.

### Session 5 Kingdom of God Parables

- *Why Jesus Tells Parables & Treasure* – The main thing that Jesus taught about during his ministry was the Kingdom of God – and the way he taught about it was with parables. The parables in this passage were about people who sold everything they had in order to gain a very valuable thing (a field with treasure in it and a pearl).
- *Parable of the Great Feast* – In this parable, Jesus tells of a great feast that people don't want to attend because they are busy with other things. We talked some more about the Kingdom of God (it is NOT heaven, but something that we can experience here and now) and some reasons why we might not accept the invitation to participate in it.
- *Parable of the Bridesmaids* – In this parable, there is a lack of preparation on the part of some bridesmaids (who SHOULD know better) and therefore miss out. Seems to be a story more pointed at the crowd than the Pharisees re: reasons why they might miss participating in the Kingdom of God.

### Session 6 Lent according to John

- *Lazarus is raised from the dead; Pharisees decide to kill Jesus* – Lazarus, a dear friend of Jesus, dies. Jesus arrives after Lazarus dies and is blamed by *everyone* for not healing Lazarus. Jesus cries and then raises Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus did NOT stinketh despite concerns to the contrary. When the Pharisees hear the news, they decide that they must kill Jesus (at this point, it is helpful to refer back to that blessing Jesus received as a baby).
- *Jesus washes feet* – The night before Jesus is killed, Jesus has a meal with his disciples. Before the meal, he washes their feet. We talked about how the word "blessed" means to "bend at the knee" as a way to be receptive to God and how being blessed, then, factors into "serving" – including how serving isn't about making people "happy."
- *Crucifixion of Jesus* – In this story, the fight or flight choices the Pharisees and Pilate make win because Jesus chooses neither. Jesus chooses God's way which means he allows himself to be arrested and does not argue with Pilate.

### Session 7 Effects of Resurrection

- *Following Resurrected Jesus* – We looked at how God's way has better results than fight or flight. And thus, why Resurrected Jesus invitation to the disciples on the seashore to follow him is an attractive invitation. We then looked at some of the things that can keep us from accepting this invitation (fear; lack of attention/commitment)
- *Pentecost* – The disciples stay focused and committed to following Jesus and his directions and thus Pentecost happens. The disciples receive God's Holy Spirit, and the cycle/pattern of Jesus' ministry starts over. The disciples receive God's spirit (like Jesus did), they talk to the people (like Jesus did), some of the people sign up as disciples, some of the people scoff at the disciples, and other people are threatened by the disciples (it's like Jesus never left).
- *Peter and John heal a man* – Just like Jesus healed people, we now see the disciples (post-Pentecost) do the same thing; Peter and John heal a lame man. They were then arrested for it and 5000 people signed up as disciples

### Session 8 No Fear

- *Paul and Silas sing in prison* – We are briefly introduced to Paul in this story. We see Paul do the same thing happen as Peter and John. They heal a girl and are then beaten/arrested for it. But they make the same 3<sup>rd</sup> choice. Instead of fight or flight, they choose God's way & because they do, the jail keeper doesn't kill himself after the earthquake.
- *Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego* – The three amigos say no to worshiping a gold statue of King Nebuchadnezzar knowing that they will be thrown into a fiery furnace. Another example of choosing God's way instead of fight or flight – and it works out for them in the end. News of who God is spreads because of their choice.
- *Daniel and the Lions' Den* – almost the exact same story as Shad, Mesh, and Abed but with different characters and a different type of capital punishment (the lions den!). The ending is the same though.

### Extra lesson

- *Jesus and his brothers* – We looked a little at the family dynamics of Jesus' family (similar themes to the story of Jesus in the Temple when he is 12 – the family is more concerned about family stuff than God stuff)