

# Encountering Scripture



## Workshop: Art

### About this Rotation

Christian scripture includes books from the Hebrew tradition as well as New Testament stories of Jesus and the early church. Some Christian traditions also include the Apocrypha. Through a divine and human process, scripture is gathered in the Bible. As Christians, we believe that scripture is the living word of God. It is central to our faith as individuals and as a community. In our encounter with scripture, God meets us and we meet God. Scripture is our family story, holding us together in Christian community. These sacred texts help us to listen in our diversity and to find common language amid controversy. We actively engage with the Bible—sometimes we challenge and struggle with scripture and sometimes scripture challenges and unsettles us. Because the Bible has been used to judge, condemn, or hurt, we have a responsibility and a calling as God’s people to remove fear, distrust, and disempowerment and to move toward confidence, empowerment, and love.

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This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner’s work on multiple intelligences. Intelligences are different ways of learning: visual/spatial, logical/mathematical, verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. All of us learn through all of the intelligences but most people have different abilities and preferences in these areas. For example, some learn best through moving their bodies while others learn best verbally or through experiencing visual media.

For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.
- *Workshop*: the primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: the one who uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherds*: leaders who stay with and support a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week.

## About this Workshop

From the earliest days, humans have sought God through art. This art workshop is not only about creating art and thereby expressing one's own spiritual truth and understanding. It is also about appreciating art and drawing forth meaning from someone else's offering. Children and youth of all ages express themselves through art. As children get older, they lose some of the spontaneity of their earlier artistic practices and may get more preoccupied with judging their efforts. Encourage older children to playfully interact with art materials and to create feelings and impressions rather than literal or exact representations. With younger children, avoid evaluating or praising artwork. Comments such as "Very good" or "That's beautiful" leave learners with the impression that their art is being judged by some external standard. Instead, encourage conversation by inviting learners to tell you about their process. (For example, "I wonder why you chose those colors," or "I notice that you have used a lot of small, detailed brush strokes here.") Share your reactions, without assuming everyone will react the same way. (You might say, "I feel very calm when I look at this; how does it feel to you?")

The focus story for this rotation is John 1:1–14. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures to help children learn the practice of faith Encountering Scripture.

**FOCUS STORY:**  
*John 1:1–14*  
**SUPPLEMENTAL STORY:**  
*Mark 4:26–34*

## Leader Preparation

Art is a direct and emotionally evocative way of encountering scripture. The encounter happens both when we look at art and when we create our own artistic responses. This workshop contains a variety of activities—some involving seeing and noticing, others involving creating and doing. When choosing your activities, strike a balance between these two modes of en-

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 Set the Scene (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed to help learners encounter scripture visually. Read Mark 4:26–34 a few times and picture the various scenes in your imagination. See how many pictures you can draw in your mind's eye to illustrate this scripture. When you read the scripture to the children, go slowly and quietly, leaving time for the pictures to build in their minds, as if you were telling them a story.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (a children's Bible or a contemporary English version such as the The Living Bible or *The Message*)
- paper and crayons or markers
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Gather the learners and explain that you are going to read some scripture, and you want them to listen carefully and try to see it happening in their minds. Read Mark 4:26–34 once, and ask the children what pictures they saw. For younger learners, now is the time to give them paper and markers and ask them to draw that picture. For older learners, read the scripture again, asking participants to



gaging art. Have you experienced times when an artistic endeavor was praised or judged? How did that feel? In art there are no absolutes and no mistakes! Use this workshop activity to uncover the playful and spontaneous child-artist within you. Be creative and have fun!

*Prayer: Creator God, thank you for sharing your creativity with us. Help me to spark creativity in these young ones so that they might encounter your creative word and your generous love. Amen.*

### Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging Activities,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding Activities,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving Activities.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

notice how many pictures they see in their minds. Invite them to tell you what images they saw in their imaginations. Record their ideas on newsprint or whiteboard. Ask participants to use paper and markers to draw one of the pictures they saw. Encourage them to use a drawing mode that is comfortable for them. They do not have to be “artists” to enjoy art. If some children say that they “can’t draw” or that their drawing is “no good,” suggest a cartoon format with stick figures and thought or speech balloons, or suggest they create simple shapes and colors to suggest a “feeling” or impression of the scene rather than a literal depiction. Invite learners to share their art with one another and to talk about what they created, if they wish to do so.



### 2 Active Viewing

**Leader preparation:** The painting “Baptism of Jesus” is a powerful work of art. Spend time looking at the art, noticing your impressions and feelings. Children may not immediately be able to identify the story if their congregation typically envisions Jesus as being Middle Eastern or even, as is still the case in some churches, as being of northern European origin. Therefore, this is an opportunity to let art disturb our assumptions about scripture. Affirm your learners’ responses to this picture and be open to learning from them.

#### Supplies:

- artwork: “Baptism of Jesus” by Pheoris West, [https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1282230595?VIEW\\_PRODUCT=true&product\\_id=17101&store\\_id=1401](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1282230595?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=17101&store_id=1401)
- (optional) copy of Picasso’s drawing “Dove of Peace” <http://www.squidoo.com/Pablo-Picasso-Framed-Art-Prints#module113796201>
- Bible (a children’s Bible or a contemporary English version)

Gather your learners in front of the artwork. Ask them to describe what they see. Encourage them to look closely. What else do they notice? When everyone who wants to contribute has had a chance, ask them to think about what they would title the picture. Appreciate all the titles you receive. Then tell them the title the artist gave the picture: “Baptism of Jesus.” *Does this surprise anyone? Why?* Read John 1:6–14. Discuss who John was (John the Baptist) and who the Word is (Jesus). *Does knowing the title of this artwork make you see it differently? Why do you think the artist chose to make Jesus black?* Remind them that no one knows what Jesus really looked like. Also, art is not an exact representation of something. Art gives an impression or feeling or idea, but doesn’t always try to copy exactly. If you have obtained a copy of Picasso’s “Dove of Peace,” show it to the children. Notice how a drawing that doesn’t look like an exact picture of real dove expresses a very big idea. Invite children to think about what ideas Pheoris West is saying in this painting of Jesus.

### 3 See the Seeds

**Leader preparation:** Seeds can teach us a lot about diversity and beauty. This activity is designed to help learners encounter scripture through the experience of the beauty of seeds and their diversity. Obtain photos from the Internet of full-grown mustard plants and of their tiny seeds. Also, locate photos or video of the largest trees on earth, the giant sequoia, and their tiny seeds. Bookmark or save the images you find so that you can show them to the children.

- For videos see <http://www.arkive.org/giant-sequoia/sequoiadendron-giganteum/video-09c.html>.

- For images see [http://www.monumentaltrees.com/en/trees/giantsequoia/biggest\\_tree\\_in\\_the\\_world/](http://www.monumentaltrees.com/en/trees/giantsequoia/biggest_tree_in_the_world/) and <http://www.monumentaltrees.com/en/trees/giantsequoia/giantsequoia/>.
- For images of mustard seed and plants, see [http://www.flowersinisrael.com/Salvadorapersica\\_page.htm](http://www.flowersinisrael.com/Salvadorapersica_page.htm).

**Supplies:**

- many different kinds and shapes of seeds, especially mustard seeds
- pictures to go with the seeds (perhaps labels from the seed packages) showing the mature plant
- pictures of mustard plants
- pictures or videos of a giant sequoia tree and seeds
- (optional) magnifying glass

Examine the seeds together, and ask: *Which one is the largest? How big would you expect a plant from that seed to grow? What does it look like when it is grown up? Which one is the smallest? How big would you expect the plant to be when it is all grown up? What does it look like grown up?* Take time to examine seeds under the magnifying glass, if you have one, asking how these seeds are alike and how they are different. Ask learners to choose a seed that they like best, and tell why. Show images or video of the giant sequoia and its seeds. Take time to enjoy the splendor of this awesome tree. Ask: *What might it feel like to stand close to this tree? Have you ever seen a really big tree? Does it surprise you that such a huge tree can grow from such a tiny seed?* Read aloud Mark 4:30–32. Discuss why the learners think Jesus used a tree and a seed as an example of God’s reign.

**Discerning & Deciding Activities**



**4 Hidden Depths (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader preparation:** This activity uses a very different image, that of an iceberg, to engage the parable of the sower in Mark 4:26–34. Look at the artwork “Hidden Depths.” Ponder what this image has in common with Jesus’ parable about a mustard seed and a large tree.

**Supplies:**

- artwork: “Hidden Depths,” <http://affiliates.allposters.com/link/redirect.asp?item=416482&AID=1413628417&PSTID=1&LTID=1&lang=1>
- Bible (a children’s Bible or a contemporary English version)

Have learners gather in front of the artwork. Ask the children to describe the picture to you. How do they feel about the picture? If they haven’t already heard the Mark scripture, read Mark 4:26–27. Ask how they think these verses might connect in some way to the artwork. God’s kingdom, or realm, is what it is like when things are as God dreams them to be. *What would God’s realm be like?* (For example, people love and care for one another and the earth, there is peace, no one is hurt or sad.) Jesus said a tiny seed growing into a big tree is like God’s kingdom. Ask how an iceberg is like God’s kingdom. Read verses 30–32, and ask how they think these verses might be seen in this picture. For older children, ask if Jesus is trying to make the same point in both these parables (stories) or trying to make different points. After some discussion, read verses 33 and 34. What questions would the children ask Jesus if they were there when he explained things to the disciples?



## 5 Collage: Jesus in My Neighborhood

**Leader preparation:** This activity based on John 1:1–14. It is designed to help learners see how artists have imagined Jesus in different times and cultures, and in different neighborhoods. Learners will then have the opportunity to locate or imagine Jesus in their own time and neighborhood.

### Supplies:

- artwork: “Christ Among the Children” by [Emil Nolde](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1282230595?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=17101&store_id=1401), [https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1282230595?VIEW\\_PRODUCT=true&product\\_id=17101&store\\_id=1401](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1282230595?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=17101&store_id=1401)
- artwork: “Two Women and a Child” by Diego Rivera, <http://shop.famsf.org/do/product/PostersAndPrintsDeYoungPosters/RIVERA--TWO-WOMEN-AND-A-CHILD-POSTER-R1200>
- pictures of people (all ages, nationalities, ethnic and racial backgrounds, and so forth), places, and objects cut out of magazines
- paper and glue sticks

Have the group look at the artwork “Christ Among the Children.” Ask: *What is happening in this picture? Can you guess what part of the world these people live in? How do they feel? Are they happy, sad, excited? Look at the artwork “Two Women and a Child.” We don’t know who these people are because the artist never told us, but we can imagine. Who do you think these people are? What do you think they may be doing?* Invite the children to come up with a story about them. If anyone suggests the baby is Jesus, open a Bible and turn to John 1:1–14. Read verses 1 and 14 or a paraphrase such as the following:

“In the beginning there was only the Word. The Word was with God. The Word was God. The Word came alive, a person living as one of us. How wonderful! How special! How full of blessing and truth!”

Repeat the sentence “The Word becoming a person and living among us.” We might think of Jesus like the Mexican baby in Rivera’s painting or like one of the children or adults in Nolde’s painting. *What do you imagine Jesus might look like if he lived in your neighborhood?*

Have the children imagine a picture of their neighborhood, and then add Jesus to the image, based on what they think he’d look like. *What kind of a house would he live in? What kind of things would he do?* Now, have them picture Jesus in a neighborhood in another country such as India, Brazil, Russia, or China. *What kind of house would he live in? What kind of things would he do?* Distribute paper and glue sticks and have the children make a collage of their answers.



## 6 Make Your Own Parable

**Leader preparation:** Jesus used many similar stories and illustrations to teach the people as much as they could understand (Mark 4:33). This activity is designed to help learners encounter the scripture by creating their own story about what God's realm is like. Display the artworks around the learning area.

### Supplies:

- artwork: "Hidden Depths" <http://affiliates.allposters.com/link/redirect.asp?item=416482&AID=1413628417&PSTID=1&LTID=1&lang=1>
- artwork: "Christ Among the Children" by Emil Nolde [https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1282230595?VIEW\\_PRODUCT=true&product\\_id=17101&store\\_id=1401](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1282230595?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=17101&store_id=1401)
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- artwork: "No-Traveller's Borne" by Jess, [https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1282230595?VIEW\\_PRODUCT=true&product\\_id=17101&store\\_id=1401](https://secure3.convio.net/ucc/site/Ecommerce/1282230595?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=17101&store_id=1401)
- Bible (a children's Bible or a contemporary English version)

Explain that in the scripture from Mark, Jesus is telling stories to try to explain what the kingdom, or realm, of God is like. Read Mark 4:26–34 or tell the passage in your own words. Point out the artwork. Each of these pictures can also tell us something about God's realm, which is a time of peace and love on Earth, a time when people live in peace and love with one another and with all the earth. Give participants a few minutes to move around and think about which picture they think is most like the realm of God. Make sure to emphasize that there is no one right answer. Just as Jesus told many different stories about what the God's realm is like, each of these different pictures is like God's realm in their own way. After children have had some time to make their choices, have them go to that picture. When they get there, ask them to talk with others who have chosen this picture about why it is like God's realm. Have each group explain how the realm of God is like the picture they have chosen.

## Sending & Serving Activities



## 7 What Does It Take? Mural (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** It takes water, soil, warmth from the sun, and God's call toward life for the tiny mustard seed to grow into a huge bush. What does it take for a person to grow into the kind of person God wants us to be? This activity is designed to help learners make these connections.

### Supplies:

- mural paper hung on a wall or spread across a table
- markers or crayons
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Ask learners: *What does it take for a seed to grow into a plant?* Write answers in one column on the newsprint or white board. Ask: *What does it take for us to grow into*

*being adults?* Write answers in another column. Ask: *What does it take for us to grow into being people of God?* Write these answers in a third column. Explain that we are going to make a mural to show what it takes to grow into people of God. Ask: *How does the Bible help us grow into people of God?* Encourage many possible answers. If learners do not suggest it, point out that the Bible is not just a rulebook. It offers hope and comfort and joy. It also gives us ideas about what God is like, how much God loves us, and how we are to love others. Encourage each learner to take a spot on the mural and draw an example of one of the items in the third column. If you have a place to display the children's work for the congregation, this would be a good thing to hang there.

### 8 Paper Flowers

**Leader preparation:** This is a simple and fun craft that even the youngest children can do, but that the older ones will also enjoy. The idea is to make something beautiful that they can give to those who have helped them understand more about the Bible. The tissue paper can be cut into squares of any size, but all squares should be the same size. It is not mandatory to cut the notches in the center where the pipe cleaner wraps around, but it does make a prettier flower.

**Supplies:**

- multicolored tissue paper cut into 6-inch squares
- green chenille pipe cleaners
- scissors

Take four or five layers of tissue paper squares and lay them on top of each other. Use different colors if you want multicolored flowers. Fold paper like an accordion at about half-inch lengths. In the middle of the rectangle, cut small v's into each side, then wrap the end of a pipe cleaner around the notch. With the stem pointing straight down, gently pull up one layer of tissue into the center. Continue pulling up tissue layers one at a time. Repeat for the other side of the flower, then fluff in place to look natural. Ask learners to think of people in the congregation who have helped them learn about the Bible, for example, people who lead music or tell stories, a church librarian, leaders of children's groups, people who read the Bible in church. Ask them to give their flowers to these people and make sure to tell them why!

*Alternative:* Instead of giving away the flowers, use them to decorate a worship table in your learning area. Be sure to add the Bible to the worship table. Recall or visit your church sanctuary, and remind the group that in worship time in church, the Bible is in a special place, and often flowers are used to decorate the worship space. Ask: *Where is the Bible located in the church sanctuary? Why does the Bible have a special place there?* Encourage a variety of responses.

### 9 Seed Art

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed for learners to create a mosaic that will remind them of the diversity of God's realm and how unified it is in God's love. Have plenty of seeds of various shapes and colors. It is also useful to have pictures of the plants these seeds grow into for the discussion during the art project. Have enough coloring pages and brushes for each learner, but they can easily share tins of glue. Depending on the size of your group, you may want to have a duplicate set of seeds for each six to eight children. For the younger learners you might want to enlarge the picture. You can do this on a copy machine.

### Supplies:

- printout of coloring pages from <http://www.childrenstory.info/biblestoryforchild/cb251.html>
- seeds of many different types and colors
- glue (white liquid glue will probably work best)
- small paintbrushes

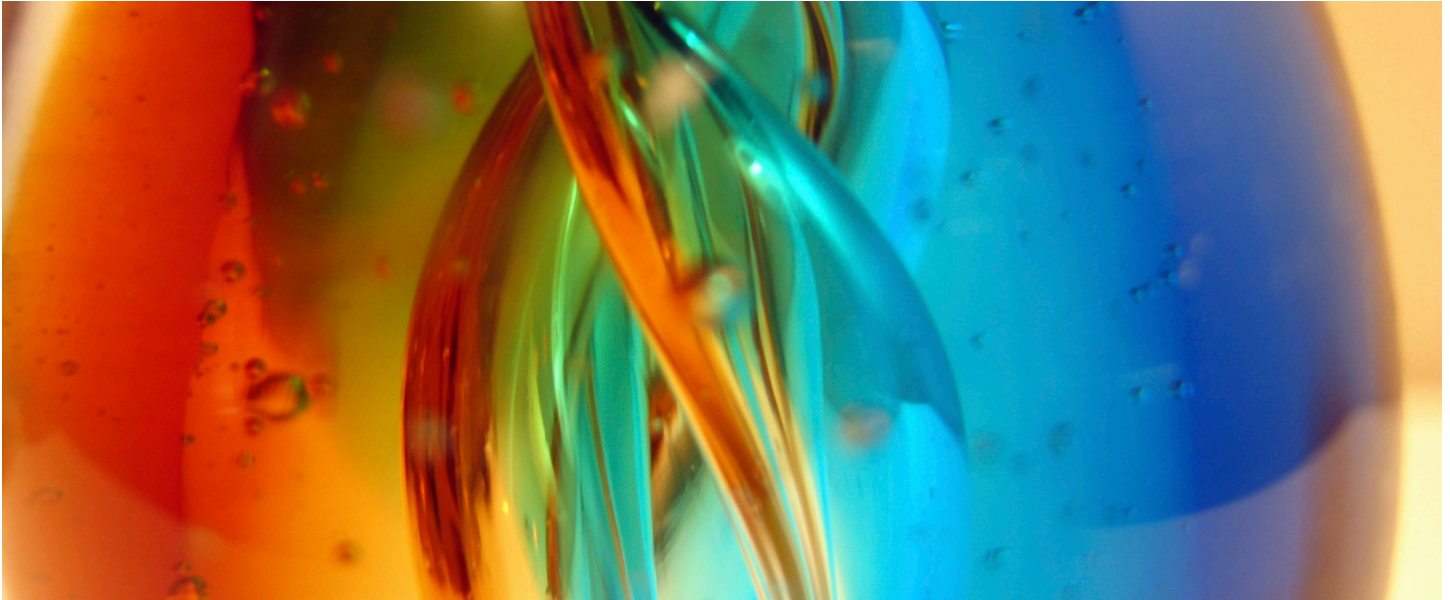
Pass out the coloring pages and explain that we are going to make a mosaic using seeds to remind us of the story from Mark. This will work best if you brush glue on each section of the picture and apply the seeds before moving to the next section. As learners work on their pictures, discuss seeds: they look different, they grow in different places, and they grow up into very different plants. But their purpose is the same: they all grow and eventually provide food and life to another part of the ecosystem. Recall or tell the story of scattering the seed from Mark 2:26–29. Ask what God wants to grow in our world. Have learners imagine being farmers, growing good things like love and kindness and happiness—the kind of things God wants to grow in our world. Ask: *How can we help grow the realm of God?* Encourage children to think of one tangible thing they can do this week to help grow God’s realm.

### Reflect

What surprised you during this workshop? What was your favorite moment? What would you do differently? What did you learn from your learners? What was your particular favorite work of art today, and why? What will you do with your group to build on or enhance this experience?



# Encountering Scripture



## Workshop: Computer

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Computers are a great tool to use in encountering scripture. You can find a dozen translations for the same passage at the click of a mouse. You can find classic art images to illustrate passages and compare them over the years of changing culture and interpretations. There are numerous blogs and websites dedicated to theology, religion, and spirituality. Some focus on interfaith dialogue, others on explaining a faith to the rest of the world, still others on keeping adherents to a faith informed about the ideas and actions within that community. The fact that so much information is available so quickly can be overwhelming. The danger is that all this information could be weighted equally. As you lead this workshop, you may want to highlight the fact that just because something is on the computer doesn't make it accurate and that learners should always consider the reliability of the source. This is especially important for older learners.

Make sure that when you are using search engines such as Google or Yahoo you have the settings set to exclude inappropriate content. On Google, you do this by clicking the tab "settings" at the top right corner of the page. Select "search settings," then "SafeSearch Filtering," then "Use strict filtering." On Yahoo, click the tab "More" above the search box and select "preferences," then "Filter out adult Web, video, and image search results." If you are using other search engines look for a tab called "settings," "options," or "preferences" and/or for options such as "family settings," "safe search," or "adult content."

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### FOCUS STORY:

**John 1:1-14**

### SUPPLEMENTAL STORY

**2 Kings 2:1-14**

## Leader Preparation

Many children love working and playing on computers. This modern tool can be a great asset in encountering scripture. Please take time to familiarize yourself with the computers your church has available and the sites you

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 Blog It (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** If you are not familiar with blogs, spend time on the computer learning what they are and how to set up one. Blogs are personal accounts of events. On a blog, persons or groups share their experiences and their thoughts, feelings, and photographs of their experiences. Other people can view the blog and add comments. The following are sites you can use to create blogs: <http://www.blogger.com> (requires a Google account), <http://www.livejournal.com/>, or <http://www.blog.ca/>. This video gives simple instructions to create a blog using Blogger: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bU4gXHkejMo>. Here are some sample blogs: [http://www.ringsurf.com/tv/1643419-picking\\_grapes.html](http://www.ringsurf.com/tv/1643419-picking_grapes.html) and [http://www.ringsurf.com/tv/1676208-don\\_t\\_eal\\_alone.html](http://www.ringsurf.com/tv/1676208-don_t_eal_alone.html). Make sure you are familiar with how to upload pictures to the blog.

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will be accessing. The more comfortable you are with the technology, the more you can keep the focus on the scripture. If you are not absolutely comfortable using computer technology, consider having a technical assistant available for this workshop. On each computer, set the safe search setting (this is a blue tab to the right of the search bar at Google.com) to “strict” so no sites inappropriate for younger learners will pop up. You might enjoy going to <http://www.biblegateway.com> to see many different translations of the scriptures we are using in this workshop. You can draw a number of concepts out of the story of Elisha and Elijah. Read 2 Kings 2:1–14. What is it this story saying to you, right here and now?

*Prayer: God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, thank you for the many paths by which we can encounter your word. Help me to be a conduit for the learners you entrust to me. Help us to learn from each other. Amen.*

## Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging Activities,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding Activities,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving Activities.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.

### Supplies:

- computers with Internet access
- *The Children’s Illustrated Bible, The Message, the Living Bible, or Bible story book*
- (optional) camera with cable to link to computer, or cell phone with camera

Read the story of Elijah’s Final Journey (2 Kings 2:1–14) from *The Children’s Illustrated Bible*, p. 146, or *The Message* or the Living Bible. Explain to the group that they are going to pretend that they were there with Elijah and Elisha on Elijah’s final journey, and they’re going to tell everyone about it by writing a blog on the computer. If your learners are not familiar with blogs, you might want to show them an example. Younger learners should be paired with older volunteers who can read and type. Allocate time so that everyone’s blog can be shared at the end of the activity.

*Option:* Work as a group to create one blog. Children can work in pairs or individually to (1) Dress up in Bible costumes and take pictures for the blog; (2) Write short descriptions of an event during the prophets’ journey; (3) Draw pictures in a computer paint program to upload to the blog; (4) Search for pictures online to upload to the blog (picture of a chariot, picture of the desert, and so forth).

## 2 Word Search Wizard

**Leader preparation:** Children love to turn the tables on their elders, so they will enjoy making a “homework” assignment for adults. At the same time, they will be absorbing the story more fully and will probably be called upon to retell the story when they present their family with the assignment. Take time to become familiar with the Discovery Education site <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/WordSearchSetupForm.asp> and bookmark it on the computers before you begin the workshop.

### Supplies:

- computers with Internet connection
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Explain that the learners are going to create a puzzle to take home so the adults at home can do some homework. Ask if any have heard of Elijah, or know what a prophet is. Explain that in the Hebrew Scriptures, which we sometimes call the Old Testament, God chose people to speak for God. These were the prophets, and they often told the people how God wanted them to treat one another. Elijah is one of the most respected of the prophets. He taught Elisha to be God’s prophet. Read the story of Elijah’s Final Journey (2 Kings 2:1–14) from *The Children’s Illustrated Bible* (p. 146) or another children’s Bible. Ask the children to tell the story back to you, writing the significant words (such as prophet, Elijah, Elisha, chariot, and so forth) on a whiteboard or newsprint. Send the learners to the computers to create a word search using the words you’ve written. You will find the program to create a word search at <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/WordSearchSetupForm.asp>. Print the word searches and write the learners’ names on them so they can take them home for their parents/caregivers to complete.

- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

### 3 See It

**Leader preparation:** Children, even younger children, are increasingly comfortable with computers. They will likely need little guidance to search for images and select their favorites. Do make sure you have set each computer's "safe search" tab to "strict" or "high security" so there will be no surprises or unwanted content appearing during the workshop. Bookmark the site [http://www.google.com/images?um=1&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en&tbs=isch:1&q=elijah+elisha+chariot&aq=f&aqi=&oq=&gs\\_rfai=&start=0&uss=1](http://www.google.com/images?um=1&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en&tbs=isch:1&q=elijah+elisha+chariot&aq=f&aqi=&oq=&gs_rfai=&start=0&uss=1) on the computers, or open them to this page before the workshop starts.

#### Supplies:

- computers with Internet connection
- (optional) printer

Ask if any have heard of Elijah, or know what a prophet is. Explain that in the Hebrew Scriptures, which we sometimes call the Old Testament, God chose people to speak for God. These were the prophets, and they often told the people how God wanted them to treat each other. Elijah was one of the most respected of the prophets, and when he grew old he taught Elisha to be God's prophet. Read the story of Elijah's final journey (2 Kings 2:1–14) from *The Children's Illustrated Bible* (p. 146) or another children's Bible. What do they think the fiery chariot looked like? Send learners to the computers. For younger learners, have computers already set to [http://www.google.com/images?um=1&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en&tbs=isch:1&q=elijah+elisha+chariot&aq=f&aqi=&oq=&gs\\_rfai=&start=0&uss=1](http://www.google.com/images?um=1&hl=en&client=safari&rls=en&tbs=isch:1&q=elijah+elisha+chariot&aq=f&aqi=&oq=&gs_rfai=&start=0&uss=1) where there are images of a chariot. Older learners will enjoy entering "Elijah, Elisha, chariot" in the search engine and requesting images, to call up the page themselves. (Be certain you have set the "safe search" tab to "strict" before sending the children to the computers.) Ask learners to look at the images and choose one they like. Go around the group, giving each child time to say why he or she chose that image. Explain that we each visualize a story differently—in our own unique way—just like these artists did. Every Bible story is like that, and a story may mean different things to us. If you have the capability, print out the images for learners to take home and show their families.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### 4 Search for It (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This activity will work better with older learners. If you have a group of mixed ages, divide them into groups where older learners can read to the younger ones.

#### Supplies:

- computers with Internet connection

Divide learners into three groups and direct each group to one of the following sites:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elisha>

<http://www.xenos.org/teachings/ot/otfigures/elijah5.htm>

Direct the learners to read the first few paragraphs of each page and find something they didn't know about Elijah or Elisha. Depending on the ages of your learners, you may have to help define some of the terms in these articles. Limit the time they have for reading so you have plenty of time to discuss. Gather the group back together and let them share what they learned.

### 5 Love and Loyalty

**Leader preparation:** Elisha remained with Elijah wherever he went. He was loyal to the very end. A dog's loyalty to his family and reunion with them can help children understand Elisha's determination to stay with Elijah. Preview the YouTube clip from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDuBBN-VrLsand> and bookmark it so you can bring it up easily during the workshop.

#### Supplies:

- computer with Internet connection
- Bible

Read or review the scripture, 2 Kings 2:1–14. *Why would Elisha stay with Elijah? Explain you found a YouTube clip about someone else who would not leave her friends no matter what. Show the clip. Discuss what most impressed the children about the video. The dog was loyal. So was Elisha. The Bible tells us that God is also loyal and will be with us no matter what. What other stories do you know about loyalty? What Bible stories do you know about God's love and care for us?*

### 6 Saw It with My Own Eyes

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed to help children understand that even though our eyes sometimes deceive us, the miracle stories in the Bible are trying to tell us a truth that goes deeper than our personal experiences. In this case, one thing the miracle tells us is that Elisha did indeed inherit Elijah's spirit and would carry on his work for God. Preview the YouTube videos <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvVfcyVCdNA&feature=related> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBfi8OEt0rA> and bookmark the videos for showing to the group.

#### Supplies:

- computer with Internet connection

Start by wondering with the learners why Elijah's cloak was able to separate the waters. Ponder aloud: *Was it the cloak? Was it Elijah? Why didn't they just take a boat across the Jordan River? When he returned across the river, Elisha was able to perform the same miracle. I wonder if miracles really happen.* (Be open to a diversity of opinion here and keep open all possibilities.) Some people say miracles are things that we don't understand yet. Others say miracle stories have important things to teach us whether or not the events actually happened. *Let's look at the computer to see some tricks our eyes play on our minds.* Show the YouTube videos. Ask: *Do you always believe what you see? Why or why not? What does the story of Elijah and Elisha tell us about the two prophets?* Some stories in the Bible are about things that really happened, and some stories are made up ones to teach us something. For example, Jesus often told stories to people to teach them about God and about how to love one another. He told a story about a Good Samaritan, a shepherd who lost a sheep, and a rich man who wouldn't share with the poor. *What other Bible stories do you know?*

## Sending & Serving Activities

### 7 I'm With Them! (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Friends and heroes are important influences in children's lives. This activity is designed to help learners use the relationship between Elisha and Elijah to empower them in choosing their circle of friends.

**Supplies:**

- computers with Internet connectivity
- (optional) printers and paper
- Bible

Read or review the scripture, 2 Kings 2:1–14. Discuss why Elisha insisted on following Elijah. There may have been many reasons, but one was certainly respect and a long-term friendship. Ask the learners what people they would have as friends if they could choose anyone in the whole world. Older learners can search the names of their heroes and, if printers are available, print out pictures of them. They can read about them and report back to the group about the good qualities of those they admire. Younger learners can find pictures of their heroes on the web with the help of adult volunteers and can tell the group why they admire a particular person or character. Discuss what qualities we look for in friends and why. Pray with the children: *Loving God, I'm so glad you are always our friend. Please be present in all our friendships. Amen.*

### 8 The Word Became Flesh

**Leader preparation:** John 1:1–14 tells us the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. It doesn't tell us what Jesus looked like. We all form our own images of Jesus from what we see, hear, read, and experience as we live. This activity is designed to help learners understand that there is no one correct image of Jesus and that we all see and experience Jesus in our own way. Before the workshop, be certain that all computers have their safe search filters set to "strict" or "secure." For younger learners, you may want to pull up a page of images for them all to choose among. Older learners will enjoy looking through the search results themselves.

**Supplies:**

- computers with Internet connection
- Bibles

Read John 1:1–14 and spend time talking about it. Affirm that this is a difficult scripture and that many adults struggle to understand it. Ask: *Who was the man named John?* (John the Baptist) *What is the name we know for the Word that became flesh?* (Jesus) *Does it tell us what John or Jesus looked like? Have you seen pictures of Jesus? Is that what Jesus looked like? How do you know?* Explain that many artists have portrayed Jesus—and many don't even try to make Jesus look like a Jewish man who lived in the Middle East and was born two thousand years ago. *Why do you think that is?* Send them to the computers to find images of Jesus from many cultures, such as Asian, African, Middle Eastern, South American. *Which of these images speaks to you?*

*For younger learners:* Ask them to choose the image that comes closest to how they think Jesus looked. Go around the group and talk about why they chose the image they chose. If there are marked differences or similarities, point those out and discuss why. Affirm each child's choice. Ask if they see Jesus still today—maybe in the way people act. Ask them to give examples.

For older learners: Ask them to choose two very different images of Jesus. Limit the time they can browse to two minutes or so, then go around the group and ask why they made the choices they did. *Which one is closer to your own idea of how Jesus looks? Why?* Ask if they see Jesus still today—maybe in the way people act. Ask for specific examples.

### 9 Will It (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Elisha asked to inherit a double portion of Elijah's spirit. This spirit helped him to continue serving God among the people. This activity is designed to help learners think about what qualities they could bequeath to their friends and family so as to appreciate their own spirits, gifts, and talents and consider how they use them. For younger children, you might want to get some older volunteers who can help younger children to write or type.

#### **Supplies:**

- computers with word processing software
- (optional) printer
- Bible

Explain what a will is and how it makes certain that a person's valuables are passed on to their family and friends. Read or review the scripture, 2 Kings 2:1–14. Remind children of verse 9, where Elisha requests a double portion of Elijah's spirit. What do the children think Elisha meant by "a double share of your spirit"? Have the group think about those things that make each of us unique in some way—our personality, interests, appearance, abilities, imagination, skills, knowledge, memories, or experiences. What are some things they like about who they are? (Perhaps a very special memory that makes them happy, something they do that they really enjoy, something about their appearance or personality) Encourage the children to think about these things and make a list of things about themselves that make them unique—who each is and no one else. Use the computers to draft a "will" that gives some of these things to someone else.

An example is: I'd give my cooking skills to my friend Susan. I'd give my love of ants to Bill to give him something fun he'd really enjoy. I'd give memories of being in Alaska to Toni, who hasn't been there. I'd give my long brown curly hair to my baby sister.

Reserve the last few minutes for learners to share their wills with the group.

*Option:* If you have printers available, print out the wills for learners to take home and share with their families.

End with a prayer such as: *Dear God, thank you for making me who I am. Thank you for giving me friends and family to share my gifts with. Help me to use my gifts to make this a better world. Amen.*

### Reflect

Take a few moments to consider how the workshop went. What worked best? With what did you struggle? What changes would you make before the next session? Now, go deeper and consider how your understanding of the scripture is different than before. Is it saying something new and fresh in your life? How will you respond?

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# Encountering Scripture



## Workshop: Drama

### About this Rotation

Christian scripture includes books from the Hebrew tradition as well as New Testament stories of Jesus and the early church. Some Christian traditions also include the Apocrypha. Through a divine and human process, scripture is gathered in the Bible. As Christians, we believe that scripture is the living word of God. It is central to our faith as individuals and as a community. In our encounter with scripture, God meets us and we meet God. Scripture is our family story, holding us together in Christian community. These sacred texts help us to listen in our diversity and to find common language amid controversy. We actively engage with the Bible—sometimes we challenge and struggle with scripture and sometimes scripture challenges and unsettles us. Because the Bible has been used to judge, condemn, or hurt, we have a responsibly and a calling as God's people to remove fear, distrust, and disempowerment and to move toward confidence, empowerment, and love.

### About Workshop Rotation

This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences. Intelligences are different ways of learning: visual/spatial, logical/mathematical, verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. All of us learn through all of the intelligences but most people have different abilities and preferences in these areas. For example, some learn best through moving their bodies while others learn best verbally or visual media.



For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.
- *Workshop*: the primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: the one who uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherds*: leaders who stay with and support a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week.

## About this Workshop

Scripture is a collection of stories about our history as people of faith, as well as a collection of wisdom and rules for living. Encountering these stories, especially through drama, brings them to life in ways that can impact our own lives. In this way, scripture can teach us about ourselves, our world, and our relationships both with one another and with God. While this workshop will primarily focus on the story of Ruth and Naomi, it is important to remember that we intend to teach the practice of encountering scripture. Participants may learn the story but, more important, they will learn ways to engage with and find meaning in the Bible.

The focus story for this rotation is John 1:1–14. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures to help children learn the practice of faith Encountering Scripture.

**BIBLE FOCUS STORY:**

***John 1:14***

**SUPPLEMENTAL STORY:**

***Ruth 1***

## Leader Preparation

Elementary age learners are concrete thinkers and encounter scripture most often as story. The following activities are designed not only to teach the story, but also to teach ways of retelling and interpreting the story through drama. Thinking dramatically requires thinking about characters' histories, motivations, emotions, and abilities, both physical and spiritual. Bible stories often don't tell us all these aspects of each character in the story. Creating a story behind the story (what actors call the "back story") requires learners

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 Act Out (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Read and become familiar with the story of Ruth, Naomi, and Orpah from *The Children's Illustrated Bible*, p. 106, or any other children's story Bible you prefer. (Remember, for this workshop we only follow the story to where Ruth and Naomi journey to Bethlehem.) After talking about the story for a few minutes to be certain the learners understand it, the learners will have an opportunity to act out the story. This activity may be done without costumes, but it will enhance the experience if you prepare costumes for your learners. (Your church may have costumes for the Christmas program available for use, or you might choose to use extra choir robes or even scarves to indicate who Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah are.)

#### Supplies:

- *The Children's Illustrated Bible*, or comparable Bible story book
- (optional) costumes or scarves
- (optional) youth or adult volunteer characters

Read the story of Naomi and Ruth out loud. Ask the learners about each character: *Who is Ruth? Naomi? Orpah? How were these three women related? Why was Naomi leaving Moab to go to Bethlehem? Why do you think Orpah decided to stay in Moab? Why did Ruth go with Naomi?* (We don't know all these women's histories or motivations, so there is no one correct answer. We do know that it was very hard for a woman without a male relative, such as a father, husband, or son, to live in those days. There was no one to earn money, protect her, or help her grow food.)



to use their own imaginations. In this imaginative engagement with stories, we bring our selves to the story. And that can make the story speak to us in our own faith journeys. As you read the story of Ruth, consider all the characters in the story. Imagine what they look like, how they move, what their voices sound like, how old they are. Picture the characters as different ages, such as Ruth at age sixteen, age thirty, and age fifty, or Naomi at forty, at sixty, and at eighty. What might they be feeling? Consider what the story might be saying to you. As you read the beginning of John's gospel, consider a time when someone brought light to you. How has God become flesh and lived in your life?

*Prayer: Gentle God, help me to encounter you in these scriptures. Give me a fresh heart and a lively imagination so that I might lead these learners to love you and your Word. Amen.*

### Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from "Exploring and Engaging Activities," at least one from "Discerning and Deciding Activities," and at least one from "Sending and Serving Activities." The first activity in each category is designed for "easy preparation" (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.

Choose volunteers to act the parts of the three women; the rest of the group will be the audience. If you have time, you might want to repeat the exercise so all get a turn. While the characters are female, since this is a drama it is okay for boys to play the characters. This is not type casting! For younger learners, the leader will read the story out loud while the characters act out movements and postures to go with the story. Older learners may be able to improvise the story on their own, adding their own dialogue. Alternatively, divide the story into scenes and have small groups prepare words and actions to go with each scene.

After the drama, gather for conversation. Ask: *How do you think the women felt? How did they know what to do—go or stay? Do you think they might have heard stories that helped them decide?* Show them a Bible, and where the book of Ruth comes (midway through the Old Testament). Explain that somewhere in the stories that come earlier, these women learned about God and how to make choices that were good for them and for other people. For older learners, you might want to ask: *How do you think this story could help you sometime in your life? In what sort of situations might this help you make good choices?* Ask learners if there are other Bible stories they could act out, and assure them they can do that at home and might even get to do that some other time at church.

*Option:* Invite adults or youth to play the characters and then talk with the children about their role.



### 2 Poster Tableaux

**Leader preparation:** Read and become familiar with the story of Naomi and Ruth. (Remember, for this workshop we only use Ruth 1. We follow the story to where Ruth and Naomi journey to Bethlehem.) Consider your age group and its gender makeup. This type of activity may evoke giggles and some self-consciousness on the part of older learners. Be sure everyone has a chance to be part of the tableaux, but don't push those who refuse. After some more outgoing members of the group take part, offer the others the chance again, and they may join in. It is important that we remember this activity is not about gender roles but about encountering and embodying the story in order to see where the story might speak to our lives. Both Ruth and Orpah can be assumed to have made the right choice for themselves, and this may need to be emphasized, since the story follows Ruth's choice and not Orpah's. Why does it follow Ruth's choice? Because she becomes part of David's and Jesus' genealogy. Before the workshop begins, display the artwork in a place where all the learners can see it. Also become familiar with the working of your digital camera (and any other technical equipment you choose to use).

*Option:* If you have easy projecting options, these would be fun, but learners will also just enjoy seeing the photo on the camera's screen.

#### Supplies:

- artwork: "Naomi Entreating Ruth and Orpah to Return to the Land of Moab" by William Blake, <http://affiliates.allposters.com/link/redirect.asp?item=1590989andAID=1413628417andPSTID=1andLTID=1andlang=1>
- Bibles
- digital camera

Have learners sit near the artwork. Ask them to describe what is happening in the artwork, helping them to identify feeling words to describe the expressions they see on the women's faces. They might surprise you with elaborate stories. After a few minutes of wondering and guessing, tell your learners the title of the painting and read them the story from Ruth 1. (For older learners, pass out Bibles and

- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

help them find Ruth 1 in the text. For younger learners, you might choose to read from the *The Children's Illustrated Bible* or another children's Bible.) Read the story out loud, and then take time to look at the artwork again. Ask questions such as: *What part of the story might it depict? What might the women be feeling? We heard Ruth went to Bethlehem with Naomi, but what do you think happened to Orpah when she went to her parents' home?* Ask for volunteers to re-create the positions of the figures in the artwork. Ask them to hold the pose until the leader counts to three. Take pictures of them in the pose. Show the volunteers the pictures first, then the rest of the group. If their expressions are different from those on the artwork, discuss why that is. (Most likely because they are having fun and not really making difficult life decisions.) Do this until everyone who wants to pose has had a turn.

Gather around the artwork again to talk about the difference in the experiences of the learners from the emotions depicted in the artwork. Ask if any of the learners have ever felt like the women in the artwork. *When? How do you feel about that relationship/situation now?* Spend time with your learners wondering about what happens next in the story. If they need prompting you might ask: *I wonder if the women find Naomi's family home? What kind of work might they do?* Tell your learners that if they read on in the story, things turn out well for Naomi and Ruth: they work hard, take care of each other, and eventually find a new home. Ruth finds a new husband, and Naomi becomes a grandmother. We don't know what happened in Orpah's life.



### 3 Tug O' Heart

**Leader preparation:** We often face difficult choices in life: whether to stay or go, between two friends' needs, between our work and our family. Most elementary age learners face choices that are just as important to them. Some choices are as simple as whom to sit with at lunch, some as difficult as whether to live with Mom or Dad. Even when the choice is not theirs, they feel the tug of their hearts when their parents have chosen to move to a new neighborhood, or when a friend is doing something they know is wrong. Both Naomi and Orpah felt a tug of heart between the mother-in-law they loved and the only life/culture they'd ever known. This activity is designed to help learners encounter the emotions of the scripture story in a fun and physical way.

#### Supplies:

- stretchy bands (nylon knee highs, or something similarly stretchy)
- (optional) artwork: "Naomi Entreating Ruth and Orpah to Return to the Land of Moab" by William Blake, <http://affiliates.allposters.com/link/redirect.asp?item=1590989andAID=1413628417andPSTID=1andLTID=1andlang=1>
- *The Children's Illustrated Bible* or similar children's story Bible
- Signs reading "Moab" and "Bethlehem"

Read the story to the learners from a children's Bible. (Remember, for this workshop we only follow the story to where Ruth and Naomi journey to Bethlehem.) Ask whom they identify with or who they would be if they were in the story. Explain that it was very difficult to be a woman in those days because women couldn't own property and couldn't work outside their home. *If they didn't have a father, husband, or son who had a home, what could they do?* These women were in that position, so when a famine came and there was hardly any food, Naomi decided she had to take her chances and travel back to live with her cousins in Bethlehem. Ask how do the children think the women felt.



Explain that sometimes playing a game can help get at the emotions in a Bible story, and that the group will play a game to see how the women in the story might have felt. Divide into groups of three, and give each group two stretchy bands to hold between them (so that one member of the team will be holding onto two bands). Assign one member of the team to try to go to Moab, and one to try to go to Bethlehem, and the one in the middle to change direction whenever you call “switch.” Remind them the rules say if anyone falls down, the game is over. Then “ready, set, go.” After five to ten seconds, call “switch”; then after another brief interval call “switch” again. After a couple of switches, call an end to the game and collect the stretchy bands. Gather the learners in a circle and ask how they felt when the group was moving away from their goal. *How did it feel when they switched goals? How might the women in the story have felt pulled in different directions?*

## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### 4 Where Is Home? (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** The essential problem the women face in the story of Ruth is security. Where will they go? When Naomi’s husband was alive, she knew her home was with him. When Ruth’s and Orpah’s husbands or their father-in-law were alive, they knew where their home was—with their husbands and, after the husbands died, with their husbands’ family. Because of social norms in that time and place, when all three men died, they had no home. So when Naomi, the eldest, decided to return to her family of origin, Orpah and Ruth had to choose whether to stay with the family they had married into or return to their own family of origin. Which place would feel more like home? The following activity is designed to help learners discover where they feel most at home and to begin to feel comfortable finding their way around the Bible.

#### Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- drawing paper and markers or crayons
- Bibles, one per child
- children’s illustrated Bibles or Bible story books

Recall the story of Ruth if learners have heard it already, or tell a summary the story from Ruth 1. In the story of Ruth, three women—Naomi, Ruth and Orpah—have to find a new home. They need to survive, to be safe, to find a home. List on newsprint or a whiteboard some words we associate with being at home. Ask them for feeling words. *What does it feel like when you’re safe and secure somewhere?* Pass out paper and drawing materials and ask the learners to draw a place where they feel at home. If they have more than one place where they feel particularly at home, ask them to draw that, too.

Our Bible talks about being “at home with God.” Invite children to practice finding a passage in their Bible. Show them where to find the table of contents with the list of books of the Bible and how to look up a passage by title of the book, chapter, and verse. Have them find Ruth 1. Have younger children hold a Bible and feel the pages. Older children can help them locate the book of Ruth. Now find Psalm 36:7.

Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the verse. *What is a “refuge”?* *What do you think this verse means?* Because Naomi was Jewish, she knew this verse of scripture. *Do you think if she felt safe “in the shadow of God’s wings?” How does this verse make you feel?* Let younger children pretend they are chicks taking shelter under the wings

of their parent. Have two older children be the parent bird's wings, and another older child be a fox or a cat. Everyone else is a chick. The chicks play. When the fox or cat appears, the parent bird calls out a warning. The chicks rush to shelter under the parent bird's wings where the fox cannot find them.

### 5 Going "Home" Game

**Leader preparation:** Sometimes a game can loosen up a group and make an encounter with scripture fun—something we don't always associate with scripture, but maybe we should. You may have to alter the set-up of your workshop room to provide hiding places for this variation on the game Sardines.

**Supplies:**

- Bibles

Invite children to help you recall the story of Ruth and Naomi or tell the story in your own words. Have children practice their Bible skills by finding the book of Ruth in their Bibles. Show them how to find Ruth 1:16. Read the verse aloud. Ruth promised to never leave Naomi and to always take care of her. Ruth's loyalty to Naomi is used as an example of the kind of promise God makes to all people. God promises to always be with us and to care for us forever. Just as Ruth made her home with Naomi, God is at home with us. And we are always at home with God, no matter where we travel. Explain that the goal of this game is to get "home," and "home" is where the first chosen one is located. One person will be chosen, and then everyone will hide their eyes and count to ten while that person hides. Two others will be chosen to be seekers while everyone else hides their eyes again. Another count to ten, and if the seekers have not found "home" and hidden there, they are "out" and rejoin the circle—but don't get another chance to seek. Continue until everyone has had a turn. Gather back into the circle and ask: *How did it feel to be seeking? How did it feel to be "out"?* (If anyone got "out") *How did it feel when you found "home" and hid there?*

Make the game a little more complicated. This time, everyone has to choose a different hiding place, and all search for "home" at the same time. There will also be a "stopper" who will be blindfolded, but all those touched by the stopper while they are looking for "home" have to freeze right where they are. The leader will count to ten and anyone who isn't hidden at "home" will be "out."

Gather back into the circle and ask: *How was this different? How did you feel if you got caught? What if you didn't make it to "home"?* *How did you feel when you did make it "home"?* *How was this game like the Bible story we read from Ruth? What kind of feelings did the women have in the story that might relate to the feelings you've identified in the game?*

### 6 While I Run this Race: Scripture in the Spiritual

**Leader preparation:** Ruth and Naomi weren't running a race, but they must have experienced many of the hardships the African Americans knew who created this kind of spiritual music. This song can describe both the relationship between Ruth and Naomi in their travel from Moab to Bethlehem, but also their relationship with God. In Ruth 2 (which is beyond the scripture basis for this activity), Naomi expresses her understanding that God has led them on this journey so Ruth might meet and marry Boaz. Feel free to create any actions to go with the lyrics.

**Supplies:**

- song: “Guide My Feet” (Tune: Guide My Feet, 8.8.8.10.) <http://www.hymn-site.com/fws/hymn.cgi?2208>
- CD or MP3 player to play the song
- words to the hymn printed on newsprint or whiteboard

Explain that the song the group is going to learn comes out of the African American slave tradition. Slaves were not allowed to own property; neither were Ruth and Naomi. Slaves had little security and were the first to suffer when times got tough, like Ruth and Naomi suffered when a famine came to Moab. Ruth and Naomi could probably relate quite well to this song. Listen to the song, and sing along. Ask: *Which of these verses made you think about Ruth and Naomi? Why? Which ones might be talking about their relationship with God?* This song is also talking about our relationship with God. Sing it again with that in mind. If you have developed motions to go with the verses, teach those to the learners. Ask if the learners see how the music makes us think of the Bible story and also ties that to our current lives. We encounter scripture in lots of different ways, don't we?

## Sending & Serving Activities



### 7 Encountering God in Your Neighborhood (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Our focus scripture for this rotation is John 1:1–14. This is a complex scripture and difficult for even older children to grasp (tough even for some adults!). But verse 14 is more concrete and can be applied by learners to their lives. Read a paraphrase of the text such as the following:

The Word became a living being and came to live among people. We have seen how wonderful God is because know Jesus, the One and Only, the One who came from God, full of grace and truth.” *The Message* translation puts it this way: “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.” Read John 1:14 in several different translations from <http://www.biblegateway.com>. In this activity, we focus on the idea of God moving into the neighborhood.

**Supplies:**

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

As learners answer the following questions, write their answers on the newsprint or whiteboard. Have younger learners think of some of their favorite Bible stories. Ask: *How do the stories tell us about God? What is God like? Who do you know that is like that? How about any animals? Tell me about a time you've noticed someone being kind or protecting (or any other characteristic of God that the learners name).* Have the learners act out an example of someone behaving like God. Assign parts to volunteers; the rest of the group is the audience. Choose new volunteers and do another scenario. If there is time, continue in this way until all the scenarios have been acted out.

Ask older learners: *What are some of your favorite Bible stories? What did you learn about God from these stories? What are the characteristics of God? Where/how do you see these in people/animals/places in your neighborhood? What are some situations where you've experienced God? Let's try to improvise around these.* Ask for volunteers to be various characters, the rest becoming the audience. Continue in this way as long as you have time.

For both age groups, ask in what other ways they can let the spirit of God in them make a difference in their neighborhood, family, or school. Write the answers on the newsprint/whiteboard or, for older learners, encourage them to write their answers on slips of paper they could take with them.



### 8 Puppets Perform Everyday Miracles

**Leader preparation:** Puppets have a way of freeing children to more fully enter the story. In this activity, we encounter a difficult scripture for children: John 1:1–14, which is our focus scripture for this rotation. As mentioned in the previous activity, this is a highly complex scripture and difficult for even older children to grasp (tough even for some adults!). But verse 14 is more concrete and can be applied by learners to their lives. If you have not yet done so, read John 1:1–14 in different versions of the Bible from [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com). Using puppets to act out everyday scenarios, learners can encounter the spirit of God embodied not only in this scripture, but also in their lives. This activity begins with the puppet plays and circles back to the encounter with scripture. Make scenario cards—slips of paper on which is written a scene to be acted out—from the Attachment: Activity 8

**Supplies:**

- puppets: several humans and several animals
- “Scenario Cards” Attachment: Activity 8

Gather learners into appropriate sized groups (some scenarios require three actors, some four) and pass out scenario cards from the attachment and appropriate puppets. Older puppeteers can read their own card and assign parts within the group, while younger learners can have the scene explained to them by the leader or their shepherd.

Give the groups a few minutes to decide who will be which puppet and how they will act out the scenario. Take turns performing the puppet plays and being the audience. The leader will have to call an end to each performance. (Decide whether you feel more comfortable assigning the groups a particular amount of time, or if you will simply lead the applause when they have come to some sort of conclusion.)

When the plays are finished, gather learners into a discussion circle. Ask: *When have you seen any of these types of situations in your life? Where was God working in these situations? What Bible stories do these situations bring to mind?* (Some possibilities are: Jesus welcoming Zacchaeus, who was ostracized/bullied because he was a tax collector; the Good Samaritan; the innkeeper finding room in the stable for Jesus’ birth; Jesus calling the disciples; Jesus welcoming the children.) Encourage the learners to explain what similarities they see.

Introduce the scripture by explaining that the Bible isn’t only stories. Sometimes it is one person of faith writing to other people to explain what they know of God. Read John 1:14 from *The Message* translation: “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to

finish.” *What do you think this scripture is talking about? Who is the Word? Explain that we think the writer is talking about Jesus and his special relationship with God. Remind them of the Bible stories they were just talking about and how we learned about God through Jesus. Can we still learn about God from other people? How does that happen in your lives? How can you show the spirit of God in your lives?*

Ask the shepherd to write some of these answers on slips of paper that the learners can take home with them to share with their families or remember during the week.



### 9 The Oprah Interview Tag Team

**Leader preparation:** Yes, Oprah will interview Orpah, Naomi, and Ruth in this activity. These women had significant losses. Naomi had lost the support of her extended family and native culture when she moved to Moab with her husband. When her sons and husband died (we do not know under what circumstances), she suffered not only emotional losses, but also the loss of security and protection that only a male relative could provide in those times. Read Ruth 1 to recall the story. Ruth and Orpah also suffered these losses, but at least they were among their home culture and, we can surmise, not too far from extended family. Each woman had to choose the best road forward for herself. Two (Naomi and Orpah) chose to return to their biological roots, to their native cultures, for comfort and safety. Ruth chose to remain with her chosen family, though her motivations are not made clear in the Bible. As you encounter this scripture, what does it say to you about loss? Perhaps your learners will surprise you as they encounter this scripture in the format of an interview show. Set up chairs as on a TV talk show set. If you wish, microphones can be made by taping a tennis ball to a cardboard towel or toilet paper roll and spraying with a metallic gray paint.

#### Supplies:

- character cards (cards with character names and information) from “Oprah TV Interview Show,” Attachment: Activity 9
- list of questions from “Oprah TV Interview Show,” Attachment: Activity 9
- (optional) Bible-times costumes for Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah
- (optional) microphones
- Bible or children’s story Bible

Ask learners if they know who Oprah Winfrey is, and if anyone ever saw her show or another talk show. Review or read the story of Ruth, Naomi, and Orpah from Ruth 1 or a children’s story Bible. Explain that you will be acting out a pretend TV talk show. Different people can be the host, asking questions of the characters from the Bible story—Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah. Explain about the losses each woman had suffered and review the choices each had made. Then ask for volunteers to start the show, explaining that as we go through the show various other learners will “tag team” characters and take their part so that everyone gets to participate. Pass out the character cards as you choose volunteers, and give the person playing the host the list of questions from the attachment. When the actors have taken their seats “Oprah” can begin asking her questions. Depending on how many learners are in the workshop, you can send in new actors at intervals designed so that all get a turn. When a new actor goes in, the departing actor gives her or him the character card or the list of questions. Reserve a few minutes at the end of the activity for learners to put down their cards and think (or write) about how this story can help them make choices in their lives.





### Reflect

After the workshop, take time to consider how your learners may have opened up new insights into the scripture for you. Do you think or feel differently about either of these scriptures than you did before the workshop? How have you grown from this encounter with scripture? What do you see as living examples of scripture in your life? How can you help someone else encounter God's Word through your life?

Attachment: Activity 8

Scenario Cards

<p>Two kids are picking on another kid on the playground. A fourth kid sees what is happening. What can she or he do to help the one being bullied?</p>	<p>A kid stops to smell a neighbor's flowers. The grumpy neighbor yells at the kid, accusing her/him of picking the flowers, won't listen to the kid's explanation, and stomps off, leaving the kid feeling bad. A friendly dog/cat/bird sees what happens. What can the animal do to make things better?</p>	<p>Some kids at school are collecting canned food to give to the food bank. They ask you to help them pack the boxes and carry them to the office, but you don't feel like helping today.</p>
<p>Two animals want to play in the same pond, but don't want to share the water. What can the third animal do to help them get along?</p>	<p>A new kid at school doesn't know where to sit at lunch time. Two best friends are sitting together when the new kid comes in. How can they make the new one feel welcome?</p>	<p>Someone in your class makes a joke about your hat, and everyone else laughs. You feel angry, and at lunch you sit on the steps instead of playing with your friends.</p>
<p>Write your scenario here:</p>	<p>Write your scenario here:</p>	<p>Write your scenario here:</p>

Attachment: Activity 9

Oprah TV Interview Show

Character Cards

OPRAH—Big-time TV celebrity

NAOMI—Older woman, from Bethlehem whose husband moved her to Moab during famine in Judea, mother-in-law of Ruth and Orpah, widow, mother of two sons who died, chooses to go back to Bethlehem

ORPAH—Younger woman, widow with no children, from Moab, daughter-in-law to Naomi, chooses to go back to her family of birth in Moab

RUTH—Younger woman, widow with no children, from Moab, daughter-in-law to Naomi, chooses to go with Naomi to Bethlehem

Questions

1. Would you please tell me your name and where you are from? (Ask this question to all the characters.)
2. How are you all today?
3. Naomi, why did you come here to Moab? Tell me more about what that was like for you to move away from home.
4. Naomi, what happened to your husband?
5. Orpah, how did you come to know Naomi? What happened to your husband?
6. Ruth, how did you come to know Naomi? What happened to your husband?
7. Well here you are all here now. Are you going to stay together?
8. How are you going to take care of yourselves?
9. Can you get jobs to support yourselves? Do you have any land to grow food on?
10. Naomi, what are your plans for the future?
11. Naomi, you say you are going back to Jerusalem. You left a long time ago when there was a famine. Do you think there will be food for you in Bethlehem? Will you still have family and friends in Bethlehem?
12. Naomi, why did you encourage Ruth and Orpah to go home? How does it feel to imagine them leaving? Will you miss them?
13. Orpah, how do you feel about leaving Naomi and going back to your own family? Are you excited? Sad? Both?
14. Ruth, how do you feel about traveling all the way to Bethlehem? That's almost to Jerusalem . . . will you be safe? Why have you decided to go to a strange land? Do you think you will be welcome there? Will it be hard for you to adjust?
15. Naomi, how do you feel about having Ruth come with you to Bethlehem?

# Encountering Scripture



## Workshop: Food

### About this Rotation

Christian scripture includes books from the Hebrew tradition as well as New Testament stories of Jesus and the early church. Some Christian traditions also include the Apocrypha. Through a divine and human process, scripture is gathered in the Bible. As Christians, we believe that scripture is the living word of God. It is central to our faith as individuals and as a community. In our encounter with scripture, God meets us and we meet God. Scripture is our family story, holding us together in Christian community. These sacred texts help us to listen in our diversity and to find common language amid controversy. We actively engage with the Bible—sometimes we challenge and struggle with scripture and sometimes scripture challenges and unsettles us. Because the Bible has been used to judge, condemn, or hurt, we have a responsibly and a calling as God's people to remove fear, distrust, and disempowerment and to move toward confidence, empowerment, and love.

### About Workshop Rotation

This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences. Intelligences are different ways of learning: visual/spatial, logical/mathematical, verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. All of us learn through all of the intelligences but most people have different abilities and preferences in these areas. For example, some learn best through moving their bodies while others learn best verbally or visual media.

For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.
- *Workshop*: the primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: the one who uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherds*: leaders who stay with and support a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week.

## About this Workshop

Food is a very common theme throughout scripture because is such an important aspect of human life. In the Christian Scriptures (New Testament), many stories center on meals. Jesus feasts and eats with friends and with strangers, he feeds hungry people and his disciples, and he eats food with many people that others shun. The Last Supper is a final meal with friends. Food is also a central theme in many parables, such as the parable of the dough in the yeast, the Prodigal Son, or Lazarus and the rich man. In scripture food is a sign and symbol of God's abundant grace (Psalm 23), a sign of covenant relationship (as in the book of Exodus), a call to participate in God's justice and compassion (John 21:1-19), and a sign of hope for the future (Revelation 22:1-3). Food is an important element in the story of Esther. The book contains the accounts of several banquets, some lasting 180 days! There are also three days of fasting and praying that Esther requests as support when she goes to speak to the king. Esther makes her request to save her people over a fine banquet she prepared for the king and his evil adviser, Haman. The activities in this workshop centered on food and baking provide an entry point into the scripture because food is such an important, enjoyable, and social aspect of their daily lives.

The focus story for this rotation is John 1:1-14. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures to help children learn the practice of faith Encountering Scripture.

### BIBLE FOCUS STORY:

***John 1:1-14***

### SUPPLEMENTAL STORY:

***Esther 4:1-17***

## Leader Preparation

Consider what role food plays in your life. What feelings do you associate with food? What are some important rituals and activities associated with food within your circle of family and friends? Think about the place of food in North American culture. The story of Esther is a major focus of this workshop. In this workshop we read Esther

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 I Wonder (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Read and become familiar with the story of Esther saving the Jewish people. Take time to wonder about the story (the same aspects you will consider with your learners). Consider what this story might have to say to you in your life today. What situations in our world or in your own community are similar to the crisis that Esther and Mordecai faced? Prepare to tell the section of the story of Mordecai asking Esther to help save her people from Esther 4:1-17. You might plan to read the story from the *The Children's Illustrated Bible*, p. 169, or from another children's Bible. With older children you might read from a contemporary English version, or you might tell the story in your own words. Review the background to the story of Esther from "Background to the Book of Esther," Attachment: Activity 1.



4:1–17, in which Mordecai convinces Esther to risk her life to save her people. The story takes place during the exile, when the Jews are struggling to maintain their culture and religion as a minority people in the powerful Persian Empire (which ran from India all the way to Ethiopia). As you prepare for this workshop, read the story of Esther in its entirety and the notes on the story of Esther from “Background to the Book of Esther,” Attachment: Activity 1. What does Esther’s story tell us about God? About how God works in our world? About our own responses to God’s call to risky faith?

*Prayer: God of abundant love, help me to feel your presence with me. Give me wisdom and openness as I prepare for leadership in this workshop. May story and food be signs for me of your generosity and compassion. Help me to lead in love. Amen.*

### Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging Activities,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding Activities,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving Activities.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (*The Children’s Illustrated Bible*, another children’s Bible, or a Bible in contemporary English)
- “Background to the Book of Esther,” Attachment: Activity 1

Tell the group the story of Esther. Read the story of Mordecai and Esther from the *The Children’s Illustrated Bible*, p. 169, or tell it in your own words using the attachment as a guide. Take time to wonder with the children about this story, using statements such as: I wonder

- why Mordecai wouldn’t bow down to Haman.
- if the entire Jewish people did not obey the king’s laws, or was something else going on with Haman.
- why Mordecai went to Esther for help.
- how Esther must have felt being asked to risk her life her people. Esther planned a feast for the king and for Haman. In fact, she had two feasts. Haman and the king were delighted.
- what kind of food Esther served. Note some common foods in Ancient Persia such as stews (meat and fruit with herbs), lamb and goat meat, rice, wheat bread, yogurt, apricots, artichokes, eggplants, lemons, limes, oranges, pomegranates, pistachios, spinach, and spices such as cinnamon, cloves, coriander, dill, nutmeg, and paprika. Invite children to comment on which of these foods are familiar to them and which are not.

At Esther’s second feast, the king said he would give Esther anything she wanted. Ask: *What do you think Esther asked for? Why do you think she might have chosen a feast as a way to tell the king about the plot to kill all the Jews?*

### 2 Celebrate with Food

**Leader preparation:** This activity uses images of food and feasting as a way to engage with the story of Esther.

#### Supplies:

- Bible (*The Children’s Illustrated Bible*, another children’s Bible, or a Bible in contemporary English)
- pastry and supplies for making Hamentaschen pastries, or premade Hamentaschen
- recipe for Hamentaschen pastries <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Food/Hamentaschen.html>
- (optional) oven

Read the story of Esther from the *The Children’s Illustrated Bible*, or tell it in your own words using Attachment: Activity 1 as a guide. Explain that the Jews were a small group of people living in Persia. They had been taken away from their land and made to live in a foreign country. They tried to keep the traditions and customs of their homeland. The people of Persia didn’t understand the Jews, and some people, such as Haman, oppressed them and even tried to hurt them. Today, the story of Esther is told at a Jewish celebration called Purim, a joyful celebration. At Purim Jewish children make three-cornered hats to remind them of bad Haman. They tell the story and make a three-cornered pastry called Hamentaschen, which is shaped like Haman’s hat.

Make pastry for Hamentaschen and bring a simple filling such as strawberry jam or honey, or make or purchase Hamentaschen pastries ahead of time. See the recipe at <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Food/Hamentaschen.html>. If

baking Hamentaschen, arrange for access to an oven. Fill the Hamentaschen pastries and fold them up to make a triangle shape. As the pastries bake, invite the children to retell the story of Esther. Ask them what foods we eat at celebrations. Enjoy the pastries and celebrate that Esther's bravery saved the Jewish people!

### ③ Neighborhood Block Party

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed to help learners explore God's presence with us here and now. It is built on the focus scripture, John 1:1–14, with concentration on verse 14. Write the words of John 1:14 on a piece of newsprint or whiteboard. If possible, use a contemporary version such as *The Message* or The Contemporary English Version. See <http://www.biblegateway.com> for different versions of this passage.

#### **Supplies:**

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- paper and crayons or markers
- (optional) pictures of a variety of foods
- (optional) scissors and glue sticks

Ask children if they have any neighborhood parties, like a block party in the summertime, open houses during the holidays, or a community gathering in an apartment building. *What happens at these parties? Why do neighbors get together like this?* Think of other occasions when neighbors might get together. Often, when something bad happens to someone, neighbors will help out. Neighbors may bring food if someone is sick, help one another dig out after a big snowstorm, collect clothing or household items for a family after a fire, or check in on an elderly person who lives next door. Do they think people got together to eat and drink and play games and dance (or whatever else is mentioned) in Bible times, maybe in Nazareth where Jesus lived? Jesus had lots of meals with his friends and neighbors. Have older children look up some of these passages about Jesus celebrating or having a meal with friends or neighbors: John 1:1–3, Luke 11:37, Luke 19:5, Matthew 26:17–18, Luke 5:26. With younger children, show where the passages are in the Bible and provide a short summary. If you have a children's illustrated Bible, show a picture of Jesus that involves sharing food or eating.

Discuss what some typical foods were that Jesus might have eaten. People in Jesus' time didn't eat meat at every meal because it was expensive. Most people only served meat at special occasions. Fish, sheep, and some birds were the most common meats. Other foods included yogurt made from goat milk, nuts, soybeans, grains such as wheat and barley, figs, pomegranates, olives, and apricots. Honey was a special sweet treat, and grapes were used to make wine.

Show John 1:14 that you have written on a whiteboard or newsprint, and ask what the learners think it means. Explain that "the Word" refers to Jesus, who was born as a baby and came to show us God's love. Ask: *What does the verse tell us about Jesus? If Jesus lived in our neighborhood and was invited to our party, what foods would you make to share?* Learners can either draw pictures of favorite foods or pick out pictures of foods and glue them to a piece of paper. While doing this activity, discuss why they are choosing these foods and wonder about what food might have been Jesus' favorite.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### 4 Hot Potato (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed to help learners understand the parts of the scripture, and then apply the concept of asking and receiving help to their own lives. You may choose to use a real potato (this is a food workshop, after all!) or a soft ball, bean bag, or any other handy item that can easily be tossed from one to another. Prepare to tell the story of Esther or plan to have the children retell it with you. The outline on Attachment: Activity 1 may be helpful.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (*The Children’s Illustrated Bible*, another children’s Bible, or a Bible in contemporary English)
- Potato, soft ball, or bean bag
- “Background to the Book of Esther,” Attachment: Activity 1

Review the story in Esther 4:1–17, or tell the story from the outline on the attachment. As you ask the following questions, toss the potato to one of the children. As that child answers, he or she tosses the potato back to you.

- What happens first? (Mordecai learns of the planned murder of the Jews.)
- What does he do? (Puts on mourning clothes and goes to the king’s palace.)
- What then? (Esther sends her servant to him.)
- Who did Mordecai ask to help him? (Esther, through the eunuch Hathach)
- Who did Esther ask to help her? (Hathach, and all the Jewish people to pray and fast)

And so on through all the steps of the story. Hold the potato as you ask learners to think of a time when they had to ask someone for help. Then, when you throw the potato to them, they can tell about that time or who they asked for help.

### 5 A Fast Fast

**Leader preparation:** This scripture begins with Mordecai putting on mourning clothes and preparing for the death of the Jewish people. We are told people are fasting, as people often do when faced with great sorrow and fear—we lose our appetites. But fasting is also a way people of all faiths connect with God. Fasting can help center a person’s thoughts on God. Look up information about faith practices of fasting. Muslims fast during the daylight hours for a whole month every year in Ramadan. You can learn more about Ramadan at <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Islam/2007/01/Ramadan-Primer.aspx>. Jews fast during Yom Kippur, also known as the Day of Atonement, one of the holiest days of their year. You can learn more about Yom Kippur at <http://www.beliefnet.com/Faiths/Judaism/2005/10/The-Abcs-Of-Yom-Kippur.aspx>. Many Christians also fast or give up certain foods during Lent. The fast that Esther asks Mordecai and the Jews to undertake on her behalf helps her to draw on God’s strength for the difficult task that is before her. Another aspect of all three faiths’ practice of fasting is to realize and empathize with those who go hungry not out of choice. Many North American children do not know what it is like to be hungry. Some know all too well.



**Supplies:**

- candy (take allergies or food restrictions into consideration)
- Bible (*The Children's Illustrated Bible*, another children's Bible, or a Bible in contemporary English)

Gather learners into a circle and place the bowl of candy in the center without commenting on it. Invite the group to describe a "fast." *Why on earth would someone choose not to eat something?* Depending on your age group, you may get answers such as, "It tastes yucky," "It's gone bad/spoiled," "They're allergic to it," or "It's not good for you." Talk about the reasons cited in the leader preparation section for people fasting. Read the story of Esther from Esther 4:1–17. *Why do you think Esther wanted to fast and pray? Why did she want all the Jewish people to fast and pray for her?* Ask if anyone has ever been really hungry. *How long had you gone without eating?* Esther and her Jewish friends fasted for three days! What is the longest time anyone in the group has gone without eating? *Have you ever thought about all the children in the world that are hungry?* It's not healthy to go a long time without eating, but sometimes, when we fast as part of a community of faith, it can bring us closer to God. Now it's time to break our fast. Pass the candy and hold onto your piece until all have one. *We'll break our fast together, in community.*



**6 Tabouli!**

**Leader preparation:** This activity refers to the focus scripture John 1:14 and is designed to give children an experience of working in community together and a taste of a food Jesus and other people in Bible times might have enjoyed. Tabouli is a type of salad that is commonly eaten throughout the Middle East. It is very easy to prepare, and it is a lot of fun for a group to prepare together. A recipe can be found at <http://www.greatpartyrecipes.com/tabouli-recipe.html>. You may choose to omit onions and garlic for the children. For very young learners, you will want to precut the vegetables. Depending on the time available, you may want to presoak the bulgur (fine cracked wheat). If you can soak it during the first part of your workshop, your learners will find the transformation of the bulgur from a dry, hard grain to a fluffy and soft ingredient very interesting. It will also provide for some good discussion, so consider mixing the bulgur and hot water at the very start of the workshop before beginning your first activity. It will take about 20 minutes to soak up the water, and then you will be ready to begin this activity. (If time or space does not allow for this, save some bulgur in its dry state to show your learners the before/after difference.)

**Supplies:**

- ingredients for making tabouli "Tabouli Recipe," Attachment: Activity 6
- knives and cutting boards if learners are old enough to handle safely (or scissors)
- bowl and spoon for mixing
- small cups and spoons or forks for tasting
- Bible (*The Children's Illustrated Bible*, another children's Bible, or a Bible in contemporary English)

If we could visit Israel or Palestine right now, we would probably find someone eating tabouli. It might have been one of Jesus' favorite foods. First, look at the bulgur and discuss how it was hard and dry—almost impossible to eat. See what the hot water has done. Discuss the ingredients: Do some like one more than another? Does anyone really not like or have an allergy to one ingredient? Wonder if these things might taste different once they are all combined. With older learners, let them cut the vegetables and herbs into small pieces and combine them with the bulgur in a bowl. With learners too young to handle knives, have

them add the ingredients already chopped, or use scissors to cut up parsley and mint. Measure and add the dressing ingredients, and toss all together. (This is really better after it sits awhile and is chilled.) While you are waiting, read a story about a meal in Bible times from Luke 14:16–23. Pass around samples of tabouli to taste. Discuss the group’s reactions, reminding them that all people have different tastes, so we would expect some to like tabouli and others not to like it. What stories do the children know about Jesus meeting people different from himself? (If you make enough tabouli to have some left over, the learners might enjoy giving tastes out during fellowship after the workshop.)

## Sending & Serving Activities



### 7 Brainstorm! (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Esther started out in a powerless position, not even able to go to see the king without his permission. But she ended up saving her people. Children also often find themselves in powerless positions. But even the youngest can help to make a difference. This activity is designed to spark learner’s creativity and interest them in making a difference through one of your church’s ministries or through an ecumenical organization such as Heifer Project or Church World Service. At the following websites, you can print out pictures and stories of how these organizations are working all around the world. That will make the discussion more real and more exciting for children. If you aren’t already familiar with what ministries your church is involved in, contact someone on your outreach or mission committee to find out. Consider what Mordecai meant when he said that Esther came into a royal position “for such a time as this.” Consider your own life situation. What opportunities for service or care are available to you? Maybe you are where you are “for such a time as this.”

**Supplies:**

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- information about your church’s outreach ministries or about Heifer Project (<http://www.heifer.org/>) or Church World Service (<http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer>)
- index cards and pencils
- “Background to the Book of Esther,” Attachment: Activity 1

Tell the story of Esther, or have the children recall it with you. See the attachment. Discuss what Esther was doing during those three days of fasting and prayer. Sure, she was praying. She was also probably planning—trying to think of how she could change the king’s mind. *What did Esther want to do? How did she do this?* Mordecai told Esther that maybe she had become queen “for such a time as this.” *What do you think he meant?* What ideas do the children have about what they might be able to do to help the world because of who they are and where they are right now? Ask learners if they could change one thing about this world, what it would be. Write their ideas on a whiteboard or newsprint. Then discuss what your church is doing, or what other organizations are doing along the same lines. *How can you support these efforts?* Write their answers on the other half of the newsprint. Ask learners to commit to doing one of their ideas. Pass out index cards and pencils and have them write down their commitment to take home and share with their family.



### 8 What's in a Word?

**Leader preparation:** This activity builds on the focus scripture, John 1:1–14. This can be a difficult scripture even for adults to wrap their minds around. This activity is designed to help learners see that scripture can help them make decisions in their own lives. Although we use a recipe analogy, it is important to affirm that particular scriptures may lead them in different directions depending on the circumstances of their lives at the time they encounter them. This activity will probably work better with older learners. Select recipes of foods based on biblical ingredients and themes from <http://www.cookingwiththebible.com/results.aspx?option=all&q=all>.

**Supplies:**

- a Bible in contemporary English
- “Humus Recipe,” Attachment: Activity 8
- ingredients and equipment for making humus
- pita chips, carrot and celery sticks
- recipes of food based on biblical ingredients <http://www.cookingwiththebible.com/results.aspx?option=all&q=all>

Display the recipe cards (if learners are readers) and have them take turns pouring/measuring ingredients into the blender. *What would happen if we didn't have these recipes? Do you think we might put in too much of something? Would that make a difference?* Blend up the hummus, put it in a dish, and pass around the pita chips. Let everyone taste it and discuss if they like it or not. Show the recipes that you have selected. Read the ingredients. Talk about which ones sound good. Open the Bible. Ask: *How might the Bible be like a recipe book?* (for example, it may instruct us what to do, it might have “ingredients” for a good life; it contains some lists and rules; some recipe books have stories and so does the Bible) *How is the Bible different from a recipe book?* (The Bible has letters, songs, poems, and other kinds of writing that are not in recipe books.) Show the children Psalm 23 (a song), 1 Corinthians 1 (a letter), and Proverbs 11:25 (a proverb). The Bible doesn't always give clear, short instructions; sometimes it has puzzles and things we have to figure out for ourselves. Read Matthew 22:37–39 aloud. Ask how this is passage like a recipe. Read aloud John 1:1–3, and ask if this passage is like a recipe. *Why or why not?*



### 9 Food Bank (Requires pre-activity preparation)

**Leader preparation:** If your church has an ongoing relationship with a food bank and collects canned food every week, your preparation will be easier. If not, advertise to your congregation well in advance of the workshop that the children will be collecting food for a local food bank each week, and ask for contributions. Store the contributions in the workshop learning area; then set them out on a table with empty boxes or bags below. If your church does not have a food bank, research food banks in your area and determine which you will support with this project. If you want to take the service aspect even further, recruit parents of your learners to take their children and deliver the food to the food bank.

**Supplies:**

- Bible (*The Children's Illustrated Bible*, another children's Bible, or a Bible in contemporary English)
- (optional) “Background to the Book of Esther,” Attachment: Activity 1
- canned and nonperishable foods
- boxes and bags
- poster board, markers, pictures of canned goods and other nonperishable food, glue sticks

In a circle, recall the story of Esther, or tell it from the attachment if children have not yet heard it. Talk about how Esther did something her people really needed—saved them from death! Ask the learners if there is something they can do for people who really need something, such as hungry people who need food. If anyone suggests helping at a food bank, tell them they have that opportunity today. Have the children package foods for the food bank, organizing them by category and putting them in bags or boxes.

*Option:* Use art supplies to make posters to advertise to your congregation the need to give food to the food bank. Decorate the posters with pictures of food. Post the posters where others in the congregation will be able to see them.

### Reflect

What was the most fun activity in this workshop? What were some of the significant moments of connection or conversation for the learners? What would you do differently next time? What did you learn from your learners during this workshop? Where is God calling you to take a risk and make a stand, as Esther did?

Attachment: Activity 1

**Background to the Book of Esther**

The story of Esther has a folktale quality. It is set “once upon a time” in the land of Persia. The hero, Esther, is beautiful, brave, and good. The villain, Haman, is bad through and through. The king is powerful, but foolish. Together, beautiful Esther and wise old Uncle Mordecai use cunning and bravery to foil the villain, win over the king, and restore the fortunes of their people. Because many events in the book are not historically accurate, biblical scholars suggest Esther is a historical novella written to explain the meaning of the Jewish festival of Purim. Although the story probably is fictional, there was a Jewish community in exile in Persia during this period.

The story of Esther is told at Purim, one of the most joyful and fun holidays on the Jewish calendar.

The setting: The royal palace at Susa, the Persian capital, sometime between 587 and 538 BCE

**The characters:**

- **Mordecai** is a member of the exiled Jewish community living in Persia. He once saved the king’s life by revealing an assassination plot. Mordecai wears sackcloth (a coarse, scratchy fabric used to make sacks) as a sign of mourning.
- **Esther** is also Jewish. She is Mordecai’s niece and was raised by Mordecai, who acted as her guardian after her parents died. Esther was chosen to be queen by the king of Persia after the previous queen was banished for refusing to obey the king’s orders. Esther lives at the royal court. Mordecai has forbidden Esther to tell anyone she is Jewish. Although Esther is queen, she does not have authority with the king. Women, particularly those attached to the royal household, were kept in special quarters and could not go where they wanted. According to the story, for her to go before the king without being summoned was to risk her life.
- **Haman** is a noble who has been given a title of honor by the Persian king. Haman hates Mordecai and plots to kill him. When Mordecai refuses to bow down to Haman, Haman plots to annihilate all the Jews in Persia.

**The key events:**

- Esther is chosen as queen by King Xerxes and takes her place in the royal harem.
- Mordecai uncovers an assassination plot; he tells Esther, who warns the king.

- A nobleman named Haman is given a place of honor by King Xerxes.
- Haman orders Mordecai to bow down to him, but Mordecai refuses.
- In revenge, Haman offers King Xerxes a bribe to let him kill all the Jews.
- King Xerxes declines the bribe but lets Haman do as he wishes.
- Haman issues an order under the king’s authority to annihilate all the Jews in Persia.
- Mordecai hears of the order and puts on sackcloth as a sign of mourning.
- Esther hears about Mordecai, sends messages to him, and learns of the plot.
- Mordecai begs Esther to talk to the king; Esther reminds him she could be executed for approaching the king without being summoned.
- Esther asks Haman and the Jews to fast and pray for her.
- Esther approaches the king, who agrees to listen to her request; she invites Haman and the king to two elaborate banquets.
- At the second banquet, after the king has offered to do whatever she asks, Esther reveals Haman’s plot to kill all the Jews in Persia.
- The king executes Haman and gives his estate to Esther.
- Mordecai is honored for his previous action to save the king’s life.
- The edict to destroy the Jews is repealed, and the Jews live in peace and prosperity in Persia.

**Attachment: Activity 6**

### **Tabouli Recipe**

#### **Ingredients**

- 2 cups bulgur (a type of cracked wheat)
- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 cucumber, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, chopped
- 2 cups finely chopped fresh parsley
- 1 cup chopped lettuce (optional)
- 1 bunch green onions, sliced very thin (optional)
- ½ cup of finely chopped fresh mint, (optional)

#### **Dressing**

- ½ cup lemon juice
- ¾ cup good quality olive oil
- 2 teaspoons salt, or to taste

#### **Directions**

Soak the cracked wheat in the hot water until the water is absorbed, about 30 minutes. When it's ready, drain any excess water, if necessary, and squeeze dry.

Meantime, prepare the vegetables for the salad and mix the dressing ingredients together. Set aside.

Stir together the prepared wheat, other salad ingredients, and dressing in a medium bowl. Serve chilled or at room temperature. Makes about 8 cups, 12 to 16 servings.

**Attachment: Activity 8**

### **Humus Recipe**

#### **Ingredients**

3 cans (14.5 oz.) garbanzo beans (chick peas), rinsed and drained  
1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon tahini (a paste made from sesame seeds)  
3 cloves garlic, chopped  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
3 to 5 tablespoons cold water  
1 tablespoon olive oil

#### **Directions**

Combine all ingredients, *except water and olive oil*, in a food processor or blender. Pulse until mixture becomes somewhat smooth, but do not over mix. Add water as necessary to facilitate blending.

Pour mixture into a bowl and add olive oil. Stir to ensure the mixture is well combined.

Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to three days.

# Encountering Scripture



## Workshop: Games

### About this Rotation

Christian scripture includes books from the Hebrew tradition as well as New Testament stories of Jesus and the early church. Some Christian traditions also include the Apocrypha. Through a divine and human process, scripture is gathered in the Bible. As Christians, we believe that scripture is the living word of God. It is central to our faith as individuals and as a community. In our encounter with scripture, God meets us and we meet God. Scripture is our family story, holding us together in Christian community. These sacred texts help us to listen in our diversity and to find common language amid controversy. We actively engage with the Bible—sometimes we challenge and struggle with scripture and sometimes scripture challenges and unsettles us. Because the Bible has been used to judge, condemn, or hurt, we have a responsibly and a calling as God's people to remove fear, distrust, and disempowerment and to move toward confidence, empowerment, and love.

### About Workshop Rotation

This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences. Intelligences are different ways of learning: visual/spatial, logical/mathematical, verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. All of us learn through all of the intelligences but most people have different abilities and preferences in these areas. For example, some learn best through moving their bodies while others learn best verbally through visual media.



For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.
- *Workshop*: the primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: the one who uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherds*: leaders who stay with and support a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week.

## About this Workshop

The very first way we begin to learn is through play. No matter how old we grow, playing games is still one of the best ways we learn—in part because we are having fun, but also because play engages the imagination. Through play we can experiment in a safe context with other ways of thinking, being, and doing. Think how young children use play as a simulation of more adult behaviors, for example, or how playing games with rules helps children learn skills for social interactions, or how games such as Monopoly simulate situations in the larger society. Games also involve the whole body, so we are learning on more than the level of mind. However, it is important to take time for the discussion that pulls the game together with the encounter with scripture. Reflection allows learners to process the experience of the game and discover new insights.

The focus story for this rotation is John 1:1–14. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures to help children learn the practice of faith Encountering Scripture.

### BIBLE FOCUS STORY:

***John 1:1–14***

### SUPPLEMENTAL STORY:

***Acts 8:26–40***

## Leader Preparation

Children love to play games. They have so much fun they don't always realize that they are learning. However, reflection is an important part of the process. Take time to think about what you want them to go home with or how what they learn from these activities might apply to their lives. Some leaders have fears about keeping control of the workshop when the learners

## Exploring & Engaging Activities

### ① Lifeboats (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed to help learners explore the story of Philip and the Ethiopian. The game should move quickly, leaving enough time to read the scripture afterward.

#### Supplies:

- noisemaker (a metal wastebasket or a pan, and a spoon to bang it with, or a bell to ring, or a kazoo to blow)
- watch or clock with a second hand
- Bible or children's Bible story book containing the story of Philip and the Ethiopian
- sheets of newsprint or old newspapers

Gather the children and tell them the story of Philip and the Ethiopian from Acts 8:26–40. If possible, tell the story in your own words or use a children's Bible. Spread out several sheets of newsprint or newspaper on the floor. You will need one piece for every two or three participants. Ask the learners to form groups of two or three standing on a sheet of newspaper. Explain the game: Every time the leader bangs the pan or rings the bell, children have 15 seconds to form a new group on a different piece of paper. Pretend that the sheets of paper are lifeboats

## Encountering Scripture



are so active. Remember, your learners will take their cues from you. Do not display anxiety. Have fun during game time, and take a moment to re-center yourself when it is time to discuss or process the game. Encourage those who are acting as shepherds to assist the children in changing gears. Also, having supplies ready will keep the workshop moving.

*Prayer: God of light and laughter, thank you for sharing your love with me in so many ways. Help me to rest in your love as I guide these young ones to encounter your word of love and compassion through these games. Amen.*

## Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging Activities,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding Activities,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving Activities.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

of safety in a shark-filled sea. While they are in the lifeboat, they will have about 45 seconds to discuss the question the leaders asks or to do what the leader asks them to do. Follow directions every time you hear the sound! Make the noise to begin the game.

Questions to ask:

- What was the Ethiopian official doing?
- What did Peter and the Ethiopian talk about on the road?
- What is “baptism”?
- Think of two things Peter might have told the Ethiopian about Jesus.
- Why do you think the Ethiopian wanted to be baptized?
- Pretend you are baptizing the Ethiopian.
- Imagine you could ask Philip anything at all about Jesus. What would you most want to ask?



## 2 Play “Jesus Says”

**Leader preparation:** Read the directions for the activities. Consider stories you have recently explored or ones your group may know well. What ideas would you like to add to the list of sayings? If your children enjoy leading, encourage them to be the leader as well.

### Supplies:

- “Paraphrase of John 1:1–5, 14,” Attachment: Activity 2

Read John 1:1–5, 14 from the attachment. Jesus helped us to know what God is like. Invite the children to play “Jesus Says” with you. Invite the group to stand in a circle. Explain that as we grow to know Jesus, we get to know about the words he said and the things he did. We begin to understand some of the things he would like for us to do. *In today’s game, you will only do the things the leader says if the leader says, “Jesus says.”* It is similar to the game “Simon Says.” At first, you will want to be the leader to give the children the idea. After a few times, you may let the children come up with an idea of something Jesus would or would not do. If the statement includes “Jesus says,” the children are to act out whatever the statement is. For example: “Jesus said, ‘Feed the poor.’” You and the children would pretend to feed the poor. Or perhaps the statement would be, “Don’t share things with others.” This would not be something Jesus would say, and the phrase “Jesus said” is not included, so the children would stand in place.

Some “Jesus says” examples are:

- Jesus says, “Come, follow me.”
- Jesus says, “Love your neighbor.”
- Jesus says, “Fear not. I am with you all the time.”
- Jesus says, “Forgive and you will be forgiven.”

Some examples for statements without “Jesus says” are:

- Take something that doesn’t belong to you.
- Be angry and stay that way.
- Don’t play with people you don’t like.
- Take more than you need.



From Bible stories you have recently read together, select other ideas that will be familiar to the participants. This game can be used at any time the group needs to be up and moving.



### 3 Build a Chariot

**Leader preparation:** Find a large box, possibly from a refrigerator, and cut out the form of a chariot. See “Pictures of Chariots,” Attachment: Activity 3, for a simple design. Make it large enough for two children to stand behind it. Obtain a second box to create a horse if you have time and space. If a box is not available, use newsprint or poster board to draw the chariot and tape pieces together. Gather a few pictures of chariots from books or the Internet.

**Supplies:**

- refrigerator box or other large box, or newsprint or poster board and tape
- water-based paints and brushes or markers
- paint shirts, if needed
- pictures of chariots from books or the Internet
- “Pictures of Chariots,” Attachment: Activity 3
- Bible or children’s Bible

Show the children pictures of chariots from the attachment. Ask if any of the learners have seen a chariot in a movie or museum. Read or retell the story about Philip and the Ethiopian man. The Ethiopian is riding in a chariot and reading. On the very bumpy roads this would not have been easy. When he invites Philip into the chariot to talk, the two men ride together as Philip tells the man about Jesus. They stop only when the Ethiopian official sees water and asks to be baptized. Invite the children to paint or decorate the chariot you have cut out from a refrigerator box or drawn on newsprint. If you are painting, be sure the paints are water based and you have coverings for the floor. Small adult shirts worn with the buttons in back will help protect clothing. Depending on your group, you may need to designate what areas each person will decorate. When the chariot is finished, have the children take turns “riding” in it. Another child may enjoy pulling it and pretending to be a horse. Ask each child to name one thing he or she knows about Jesus to tell someone when it is his or her turn to ride in the chariot.

*Option:* If a large box is not available, turn a table (other than a round table) on its side for a chariot. Tape newsprint to the side and decorate the newsprint as the side of the chariot.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### 4 Who Is That? (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed to help learners experience the difficulty of recognizing Jesus. It will work for any age, although it is best if players are approximately the same size.

**Supplies:**

- Bible

Read John 1:1–10. Point out verse 10, where it is written that Jesus was in the world but people didn’t recognize him. Wonder whether we would recognize Jesus if he



moved into our neighborhoods today. Play a game to see how easy or difficult it is to recognize someone. Divide learners into two groups. Have one group stand facing the wall, while the other group is mixed around and moves into position to stand back-to-back with someone from the first group. (The goal is for those in the first group not to automatically know who is standing behind them.) Have the first group reach over their shoulders to try to recognize who is behind them by touching the person's head. Give everyone two or three guesses before turning around to see who is behind him or her. The second group now lines up facing the wall and the game is played again. Gather everyone into a circle to discuss how easy or difficult it was to recognize someone just by feel. Talk about how in Jesus' time many people were looking for the Messiah, but didn't know what that person would look like. *How do they think John the Baptist recognized Jesus as Messiah? How would we know Jesus if he moved into our neighborhoods today?*

### 5 Racing Together

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed to encourage the kind of cooperation and awareness that we are called to use to overcome differences so we can move forward together.

**Supplies:**

- Bibles

Tell the story of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26–40) and notice what it says about Philip and about the Ethiopian. Philip was Jewish. He was one of Jesus' disciples from a small town in Galilee. The Ethiopian was an important man from Africa who worked in a high position for the queen of Ethiopia. Discuss how different the two men are in social status, backgrounds, nationality, and experiences. This game will help us learn how to work together with folks who are different from ourselves. Have the learners form pairs and stand at one end of the room. Have them remove shoes and stand together one in front of the other. The one in back must touch her or his toes to the heels of the partner at all times. The one behind might want to hold the partner's waist or shoulder to help provide balance and stability. When the leader says "Go," the pairs should carefully race to the other side of the room. If they break the heel-toe connection, the pair does not have to start over, but can work on a strategy for staying together and try to finish from that spot. When all partners have reached the other side, pairs can switch places and race back.

Discuss how easy or difficult it was to work together in this game. *Does it help that you can speak the same language? What makes it hard for us to work with other people?* The early Christian church included many people of different languages, religions, nationalities, and backgrounds. Notice that the Ethiopian didn't hesitate to ask to be baptized and that Philip didn't hesitate to baptize him. *What other stories from the Bible do you know of people of different nationalities or backgrounds working together and helping one another?* Children may know the story of the Good Samaritan or the story of Ruth, or they may know that Jesus' disciples and followers were a mixed group that included tax collectors, fishers, both women and men, and some of high status as well as people without much money. Read aloud Luke 8:1–3. *What helps us get along with people who are different from us?*

### 6 What Did You Say?

**Leader preparation:** This activity is about learning to communicate across languages and learning to cooperate for the good of all. Locate Bibles translated into a language other than English, or go to sites such as the following to locate versions of Genesis 1 in different languages: <http://www.biblegateway.com>, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible>, <http://www.deadseascrollsfoundation.com/scrolls.html>, or <http://www.mit.edu:8001/afs/athena.mit.edu/activity/c/csa/www/documents/Spanish/Bible.html>. Bookmark or save pages that have interesting pictures or pages of the Bible in different languages to show the group.

**Supplies:**

- Bible
- crayons
- paper
- tape
- Bibles in languages other than English, or a computer with Internet access

Tell the story of Philip and the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26–40), or invite the group to help retell it together. Point out that the Ethiopian had trouble understanding the Jewish Scripture. *Why might that be?* Phillip communicated in such a way that the Ethiopian was able to understand the scripture and how it related to the story of Jesus. Say: *Let’s see how easy it is to complete a project when we don’t understand one another.* Help form the learners into groups of three or four and give each group ten crayons, a roll of tape, and three sheets of paper. Give them a minute to discuss how they can make the tallest tower using just those supplies. After a minute, announce the rules of the game: *Everyone has to participate. The person wearing the most blue can only say “tikka-tikka.” The person on the right of that person can only say “whoopi.” The third person can only say “bongo.”* They will have five minutes to complete the task using only those words. Start the game. After five minutes, have everyone show their towers. *Was it easy or difficult to understand one another? Why? Do you think Phillip and the Ethiopian might have experienced any of these difficulties? Do you ever have trouble making friends, parents, teachers understand what you are trying to say?* Our Bible has been translated into many different languages. Show the Bible you brought, or go to sites you have bookmarked to show Bible texts in different languages. Ask: *Does anyone know what languages the Bible was first written in (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic)? Jesus probably spoke both Aramaic and Greek, and he was also able to read the Bible in Hebrew (the language the first part of the Bible was written in.) What languages can you speak, or are you learning?*

## Sending & Serving Activities

### 7 Together Tag (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This is a game about inclusion. Philip didn’t hesitate to include the Ethiopian in the new Christian community. Children often experience just the opposite, especially in the upper elementary grades where clique-forming is a practiced art form.

**Supplies:**

- Bible
- bed sheet or large tablecloth

Talk about how Philip brought the Ethiopian into the Christian community. That’s what baptism is: a sign that we are part of the larger Christian community.



Play a game to show a fun way to bring friends together. Ask for a volunteer to be “It.” Give the bed sheet or tablecloth to It. Explain that the goal is for It to try to tag others by touching them with the sheet. If a child gets tagged, she or he joins It by grabbing one end of the sheet and both try to catch another. Each time someone is tagged, that person grabs hold of the sheet and joins the team. Make sure children hold the sheet at waist height, so no one gets hurt.

After the game, ask the learners how they could compare this game to the story of Philip and the Ethiopian. Where have they experienced something like this in their lives? Discuss times and places where all are included, and how to include more folks in their circle.



### 8 Be the Machine (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Think about the children in your group. What stories about Jesus do they know and love? Plan a place or situation in which they might tell one of these stories (for example, in church, at a seniors’ group meeting, with a group of younger children).

#### Supplies:

- Bible
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Ask children to work in groups of three. Ask each group of three to act out the object or scenario you give them. The rules are:

1. Each person can make only a single repeated gesture (such as lifting one’s arm up and down across one’s body) and a single repeated sound (perhaps saying ah, ah, ah, or making a creaking noise repeatedly).
2. Each of the three people must coordinate their sounds and gestures to make a single image.

Give teams only a few seconds to figure out their sounds and movements. Start with some warm-ups. After each scenario, let groups admire the sound/movement creations of others. Here are suggested scenarios:

- be a washing machine
- be an old-fashioned typewriter (or a computer)
- be a chicken on a BBQ grill
- be a chariot

Invite children to recall the story of Philip and the Ethiopian, or tell the story from Acts 8:26–40 if the group has not yet heard the story. Talk about what Philip did to share the good news about Jesus with others. *What kind of machine might have been helpful in this situation?* Invite the children to create that machine following the rules of the game.

*Option:* If your group is large and you have extra helpers, divide into smaller groups for this task.



### 9 Feed One Another

**Leader preparation:** This game is about nurturing one another, as Phillip nurtured the Ethiopian with the scripture. Since this game involves a food, please be sure to find out about any allergies that any of your learners might have. If marshmallows are not appropriate, try candy corn or gummy bears.

**Supplies:**

- paper muffin cup liners
- miniature marshmallows (or other candy if needed to avoid allergies)
- toothpicks

Form learners into evenly divided teams of three or more, and have them sit or stand in a line. As you pass to each child a paper muffin cup containing miniature marshmallows and a toothpick, explain the rules of the game. They may not touch the candy with their hands. No one can eat directly out of his or her own cup. Another team member must feed each person. When the game starts, the first person in line will use the toothpick to feed a piece of candy to the person in line behind him or her. Then that person turns around and does the same for the next person behind. And so on. The last person in line runs around to the front of the line and feeds the first person. Depending on time constraints, you can run this race several times and see if teams can better their times. Afterward, discuss what it was like to feed someone else. *What was it like to be fed?* Talk about how Philip was, in a way, “feeding” the scripture to the Ethiopian as he opened the meaning of the story of Jesus. We need other things in life beside food to help us grow in body, mind, and spirit. Encourage learners to think of things besides food that we need in our life to grow. Ask how the Bible “feeds” us and how else we are fed some of these things.

### Reflect

Which games worked best with your group? What was the most fun for you as a leader? Consider which games seemed to lead to interesting reflection or conversation. What did participants learn from these experiences? Where did you encounter difficulties? What would you do differently next time?

**Attachment: Activity 2**

**Paraphrase of John 1:1-5, 14**

In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God from the very beginning. The Word was with God. The Word was God.

Through the Word all things were made. Not one thing was made without the Word.

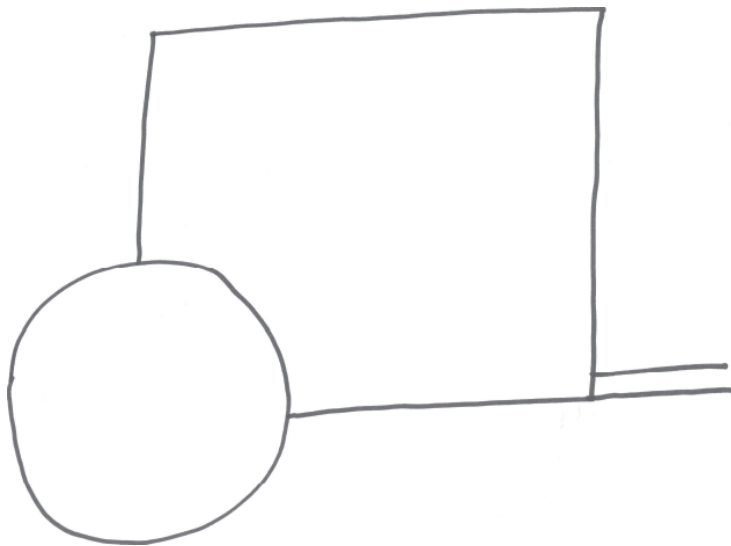
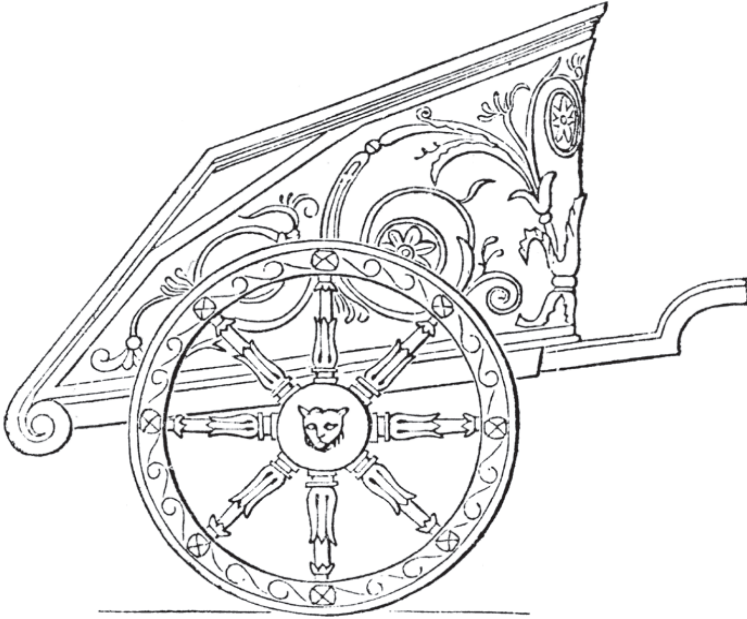
In the Word there was life and that life was a light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness. The darkness can never put out that light.

The Word became a human being and lived on the earth. We have seen how wonderful he was. There has never been anyone like him, so full of grace and truth, so much like God.



Attachment: Activity 3

Pictures of Chariots



# Encountering Scripture



## Workshop: Music

### About this Rotation

Christian scripture includes books from the Hebrew tradition as well as New Testament stories of Jesus and the early church. Some Christian traditions also include the Apocrypha. Through a divine and human process, scripture is gathered in the Bible. As Christians, we believe that scripture is the living word of God. It is central to our faith as individuals and as a community. In our encounter with scripture, God meets us and we meet God. Scripture is our family story, holding us together in Christian community. These sacred texts help us to listen in our diversity and to find common language amid controversy. We actively engage with the Bible—sometimes we challenge and struggle with scripture and sometimes scripture challenges and unsettles us. Because the Bible has been used to judge, condemn, or hurt, we have a responsibly and a calling as God's people to remove fear, distrust, and disempowerment and to move toward confidence, empowerment, and love.

### About Workshop Rotation

This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences. Intelligences are different ways of learning: visual/spatial, logical/mathematical, verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. All of us learn through all of the intelligences but most people have different abilities and preferences in these areas. For example, some learn best through moving their bodies while others learn best verbally or through visual media.

For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.
- *Workshop*: the primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: the one who uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherds*: leaders who stay with and support a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week.

## About this Workshop

In this Music Workshop, we will encounter Psalm 96 and John 1:1–14 through music and movement. Music reaches into different part of our brains than do spoken or written words. It also touches a special part of our spirits. It has always been integral to worship, although the style changes depending on the interests, tastes, and culture of different people. Children respond quite strongly to music, bouncing in rhythm from before they can sit up on their own, so it is no surprise that God meets us in music—both sacred and secular. Studies show that making up a song as a memory aid is very effective.

The focus story for this rotation is John 1:1–14. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures to help children learn the practice of faith Encountering Scripture.

### BIBLE FOCUS STORY:

***John 1:1–14***

### SUPPLEMENTAL STORY:

***Psalm 96***

## Leader Preparation

What kind of music speaks to your spirit? In this workshop we will encounter several different types of music as well as scripture. Each type brings us a new gift—even the cacophonous sounds of children writing their own music. So take time to enjoy the diversity, and don't be afraid to call for moments of silence between activities, since silence is an integral component, too.

Prayer: *Joyful God of sound and silence, guide me this day in using music to en-*

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 Sarah's Circle (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** "We Are Dancing Sarah's Circle" is sung to the tune of "Jacob's Ladder." Consider the imagery of a circle. It has no beginning and no end. How is the symbolism of a circle different from that of a ladder? Named after Abraham's wife, Sarah, who laughed at God's promise that she would have a child and rejoiced when it came true (Genesis 17, 18), the song might call to mind many other scripture stories. It certainly reminds us of the times when Jesus told the people "the first will be last, and the last first" (Matthew 19:30, 20:16, 27:64, Mark 10:31, Luke 13:30) since a circle disrupts traditional hierarchy. We seek and find our history in scripture, in one another, in our faith tradition, and in our experiences as we move through life as people of faith. We keep growing, welcoming new generations into the circle, and moving forward into God's plan.

#### **Supplies:**

- Bible
- song: "We are Dancing Sarah's Circle," (tune: Jacob's Ladder, 8.8.8.5)  
<http://www.theinterpretersfriend.org/songs/w-r-dncg-srh%27s-crcl.html>

Show the learners the Bible. Tell them the Bible is really many books. It is a collection of stories, histories, wisdom writings, poetry, proverbs, letters, and even songs. It tells us about who we are, how we became aware of God, and how we are to relate to God and to one another. It tells us about what God wants for our planet, and it gives us ideas about how to take care of one another and do what

## Encountering Scripture

*counter scripture, spirit, and all those you have brought to my care. Help me to turn to you with the sounds of my joy and of my sorrow, and to teach these young ones to do the same. Amen.*

God would like us to do. The song the group is going to learn tells us about that, too.

Teach “We Are Dancing Sarah’s Circle.” After each stanza, discuss what the words mean. For instance, say, “I wonder where we find our history.” Of course, it’s in the Bible, but also in each other. You may get some creative answers that will deepen your own encounter.

## Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging Activities,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding Activities,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving Activities.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

### 2 Praise with Music

**Leader preparation:** If you have a person available who enjoys praising with song and musical instruments, invite him or her to come to the group. Ask your guest to share two or three songs or hymns that are full of praise and to share what they know about the songwriter(s). If a guest musician is not available, bring recordings or song books with some of the children’s favorite music.

#### Supplies:

- rhythm instruments
- an easy-to-read version of Psalm 96:1–2
- hymnbooks, song books, or recordings of children’s favorite hymns
- (optional) song: “Our God Is an Awesome God” by Michael Smith [http://www.tsrocks.com/m/michael\\_w\\_smith\\_texts/our\\_god\\_is\\_an\\_awesome\\_god.html](http://www.tsrocks.com/m/michael_w_smith_texts/our_god_is_an_awesome_god.html)
- (optional) song: “My God Is So Great” by Ruth Harms Calkin [http://sundayschoolsources.com/songs.htm#My\\_God\\_is\\_so\\_Great](http://sundayschoolsources.com/songs.htm#My_God_is_so_Great)
- (optional) song: “Praise Ye the Lord!” <http://www.trinity-reformed.org/praise.html>

Show the learners the Bible. Point out the Book of Psalms. Say: *This book of the Bible is a collection of hymns from more than three thousand years ago. Many of the psalms are what we call “praise psalms”—they celebrate and say thanks for all the wonderful things that God has done. We still write songs to and about God. What are some of your favorite songs or hymns?* Read aloud Psalm 96:1–2. Here’s the verse from *The Message*: “Sing God a brand-new song! Earth and everyone in it, sing! Sing to God—*worship* God! Shout the news of [God’s] victory from sea to sea.”

Introduce your guest, if you have one, and invite your guest to sing and play for the children two or three songs of praise. If the children know the songs, encourage them to sing or play rhythm instruments. After each song, have the guest share information about the songwriters. Invite the children to say what they heard and felt in the song. If time permits, invite the children to choose songs they would like to sing that give praise to God. If a guest is not available, play recorded selections of hymns. Invite children to accompany the music with rhythm instruments.

### 3 Flamingo Dance

**Leader preparation:** We can express and also create joy when we dance. We get to know one another, and ourselves, as embodied creatures of God. In scripture dance is integral to many of the most joyous scenes: Moses and Miriam leading the people across the Red Sea to safety and David returning the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. This activity uses a short video clip from the PBS show “Nature” to introduce the idea that God intends for all the earth to sing and dance with joy. Locate the video <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/andes-the-dragons-back/video-dance-of-the-flamingos/3104/> and arrange to show it to your group.



**Supplies:**

- computer with access to the Internet
- song: “We Are Dancing Sarah’s Circle,”(tune: Jacob’s Ladder, 8.8.8.5)  
<http://www.theinterpretersfriend.org/songs/w-r-dncg-srh%27s-crcl.html>

Explain that the psalms are songs that were written long ago to worship God. Read Psalm 96:1–2, 11–12. Show the video of the flamingo dance. Ask: *Do we dance like the flamingos? We could. Let’s try.* Play music and have the learners copy the flamingo dance. *Does that feel very natural?* People don’t usually dance like birds. People all over the world do dance in circles. Sing “We Are Dancing Sarah’s Circle” and dance in a circle. You might ask learners to link arms and circle one way, changing direction after each stanza.

**Discerning & Deciding Activities**

 **4 Make a Joyful Noise—Sing a New Song (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader preparation:** Collect kazoos, harmonicas, tambourines, drums, and other musical noisemakers. If you choose not to use instruments, the children will still enjoy making the sound effects. Just be aware the activity will not take as much time. Write out an easy-to-read version of Psalm 96 on newsprint or marker board. You can locate a simple version at <http://www.biblegateway.com>, or use *The Message* by Eugene Peterson.

**Supplies:**

- marker board or newsprint and markers
- an easy-to-read version of Psalm 96
- (optional) rhythm instruments and other simple noisemakers

Read Psalm 96 verse by verse. After each verse, talk about what the words mean. Help learners to use their voices, hands, and feet to create sound effects to go with each verse. If you like, make a simple tune to go with the words, pausing for the sound effects.

*Option:* Distribute instruments and sing the song again, adding additional sounds for each stanza.

 **5 Chant: Learning the Books of the Christian Scriptures (New Testament)**

**Leader preparation:** Make copies of the chant from the attachment. Rehearse the chant until you have established a rhythm and can lead it without relying on the printed page. If you don’t feel competent developing the chant, go to <http://www.sirchio.com/index.php?page=cds&family=kids>. Brian Sirchio has a delightful recording of children singing and reciting the books of the New Testament. You can purchase just that track from his CD.

**Supplies:**

- “Books of the New Testament Chant,” Attachment: Activity 5

Have everyone stand, if able. Clap the rhythm you have established for the chant. Teach the children one part of the chant at a time. Before you know it, everyone will be able to say the books of the New Testament. Show them where the New

Testament is found in the Bible, or have the children find the New Testament in their Bibles.

*Variation:* Once children are familiar with the books of the New Testament, have children find the gospel of John in their Bibles. When we have an idea of the order of the books, we can find it them quickly.

### 6 Psalm 96: Many Ways to Praise

**Leader preparation:** The way a song is played can dramatically change the way we feel. In this activity you and your learners will experience distinctly different versions of Psalm 96. You can purchase and download these versions through iTunes. iTunes software is free and works on different kinds of computers, or on an MP3 player. Each version costs only a dollar. If you are not familiar with this technology, ask a youth or young adult in your congregation to help you. After you have downloaded the songs, you can burn them to a CD for use in your workshop. Some versions of Psalm 96 to look for are:

- Psalm 96 from the album *First* by Carl Cartee
- Psalm 96 from the album *If Music Be the Food of Love* by the University of Utah Singers
- Psalm 96 “O Sing Unto the Lord a New Song” from the album *The World of Psalms* by George Guest, John Scott, and St. John’s College Choir, Cambridge
- Psalm 96 (Hassidic style) from the album *Siddur Audio Erev Shabbat Service* by Rabbi Mark Zimmerman

#### **Supplies:**

- recordings of different versions of psalm 96
- CD player, MP3 player, or computer with speakers

Have learners take a seat or lie down comfortably in the room. Explain that you are going to play different versions of the same song—Psalm 96—and you want to know what they think of each version. First, read Psalm 96 from *The Message* or other contemporary version of the Bible so they know the words. Play a song; then ask for initial reactions based just on this song. Repeat with each song. Have the learners sit in a circle and discuss how each song made them feel, which they preferred, and why.

## Sending & Serving Activities



### 7 Write a New Psalm (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed to help learners understand that God is still speaking, and one way is through us. They will encounter the scripture and encounter their own understandings in a way that lets them speak creatively to all of us. If you physically can, plan to write down the final psalm and send someone to a printer in the closing moments of the workshop to make copies for everyone to take home. Also, consider publishing each group’s psalm either individually or as a collection so that your congregation can appreciate this encounter as well.

**Supplies:**

- Bible in two different versions
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Read Psalm 96:1–6 in two different Bible versions. Ask learners to point out differences and similarities. *Which words describe God? Which tell people what to do?* Put the Bibles aside and ask the learners how they would describe God. Write their words on the whiteboard or newsprint. Now ask them to think of how they think people should behave toward God. Write those words and phrases on the whiteboard or newsprint, too. Use the learners’ descriptors to write a new psalm. Make copies of the new psalm for each one to take home. Consider sharing the psalms with the entire church, either on a weekly basis or as a collection at the end of the rotation.

**8 Guide My Feet in Times of Trouble**

**Leader preparation:** This is an African American spiritual, a specific style of hymn, in which there is usually a duality in the lyrics. Spirituals communicate Christian ideals while at the same time conveying the hardships of the life of a slave. These songs embody spiritual, emotional, and physical realities all at the same time. Become familiar with the song, and, if you have time, download it and record it onto a CD or MP3 player for use in the workshop.

**Supplies:**

- song: “Guide My Feet” (Tune: Guide My Feet, 8.8.8.10.) <http://www.hymn-site.com/fws/hymn.cgi?2208>
- (optional) CD or MP3 player to play the song
- Bible

Sometimes we reach out to God when we are in a difficult situation, such as when someone we love is very sick or when we’re trying to do something really hard. People sing to God in these times, as well as in the happy times. Explain that the song you are going to learn comes out of the African American slave tradition. Slaves had little security and were the first to suffer when times got tough. Listen to it, and sing along. *Do you think the song is about a real race? What else could it be about?* This song is also talking about our relationship with God. Sing it again with that in mind. If you have developed motions to go with the verses, teach those to the learners. Songs can help us feel close to God when we are worried, alone, or in trouble. There are many parts of the Bible that also give people comfort. Read aloud Psalm 23:1–3. *What image is used to describe God? How is this comforting?* Then read Psalm 18:2. *What image of God is in this psalm? Is this comforting? What are some other images for God in the Bible? (A lamb, an eagle, a strong tower, a loving parent). Which image of God do you like to think of when you are feeling sad or troubled?*

**9 Word Alive**

**Leader preparation:** Find hymnbooks with the song “I Love to Tell the Story.” You can read about the history of this song at several websites by searching for “I Love to Tell the Story history.” Sung for many years in church schools around the world, this song expresses the love for the story of Jesus and the joy in telling God’s story to others, an outgrowth of encountering scripture and a similar idea to that found in Proverbs 2 about God’s word.



### Supplies:

- song: “I Love to Tell the Story” (tune: Hankey 7.6.7.6.D. with refrain) [www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh156.sht](http://www.hymnsite.com/lyrics/umh156.sht)
- Bible

Begin by teaching the children the refrain to the song. When they are comfortable singing it, teach them the first stanza. First, read it aloud. Point out that the songwriter got great joy from telling the story of God and Jesus. *What stories from the Bible make you happy?* After they have discussed these questions, sing the first stanza, teaching one line at a time. Read aloud John 1:1–14. *What image is used to describe God or Jesus? How is God like a word? How is Jesus like God’s word?* This scripture says that God’s word came alive and lives near us. Ask what do the learners think this means and how we show that God’s word is alive in us and close beside us.

### Reflect

Take a few minutes to get in touch with some music that speaks particularly to your spirit. Let it fill and minister to you. Then consider: What particularly moved you about this workshop? What did you find frustrating? How will you deal with that next time? What did you learn about God? About yourself? About your learners? Say a prayer or sing a song of thanks to God for music and for this time with your group.



### **Books of the New Testament Chant**

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John  
Tell good news—our Jesus story;  
Then in Acts of the Apostles—  
Deeds of followers and disciples.

Letters to the church so new:  
Romans, Corinthians One and Two,  
Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians,  
First and Second Thessalonians.

There are letters still to go  
As the church begins to grow:  
Timothy One and Timothy Two  
Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews.

James, then Peter One and Two  
Then we only have a few:  
John, John, John—three Johns in all  
And Jude's letter very small.

Last of all comes Revelation—  
Hopes and dreams for God's creation.

# Encountering Scripture



## Workshop: Science

### About this Rotation

Christian scripture includes books from the Hebrew tradition as well as New Testament stories of Jesus and the early church. Some Christian traditions also include the Apocrypha. Through a divine and human process, scripture is gathered in the Bible. As Christians, we believe that scripture is the living word of God. It is central to our faith as individuals and as a community. In our encounter with scripture, God meets us and we meet God. Scripture is our family story, holding us together in Christian community. These sacred texts help us to listen in our diversity and to find common language amid controversy. We actively engage with the Bible—sometimes we challenge and struggle with scripture and sometimes scripture challenges and unsettles us. Because the Bible has been used to judge, condemn, or hurt, we have a responsibly and a calling as God's people to remove fear, distrust, and disempowerment and to move toward confidence, empowerment, and love.

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For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.
- *Workshop*: the primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
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- *Shepherds*: leaders who stay with and support a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week.

## About this Workshop

This workshop is designed to help learners recognize how they encounter God's word in their daily lives through science and nature. In several of these activities, learners discover how many Bible stories they know. Children are most likely to be familiar with Christmas and Easter stories. Older children may also know other stories, such as the Good Samaritan, Noah, the Lost Sheep, or Moses. This workshop builds on children's natural curiosity and love of stories to help them grow in their capacity to explore and engage with the Bible.

The focus story for this rotation is John 1: 1–14. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures to help children learn the practice of faith Encountering Scripture.

### BIBLE FOCUS STORY:

***John 1:1–14***

### SUPPLEMENTAL STORY:

***Proverbs 2:1–8***

## Leader Preparation

The book of Proverbs is part of the wisdom literature of the Bible. This part of scripture is not concerned with worship practices, law, or history, but with how to live life well. The book of Proverbs is a collection of short wisdom sayings and proverbs that span many centuries. The book is addressed from an elder to a young person. Read Proverbs 2:1–8. What important messages do you hear in this passage? Think of people you know. Whose wisdom has impressed you? Who has taught you

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 What Is Wisdom? (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Make a copy for each person of "What Is Wisdom?" Attachment: Activity 1. Consider what the word "wisdom" means to you. Think about how you might explain this concept to the learners in your group. Read Proverbs 2:1–8. When have you struggled hard to understand something important in your life? How was God present for you in this quest? Write on a piece of newsprint or whiteboard the words "If you search hard for wisdom, you will find God" (from Proverbs 2:3–5). Display it where it is visible to the group.

#### Supplies:

- "What Is Wisdom?" Attachment: Activity 1
- pens or pencils
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Invite learners to think of a time when they didn't understand something—perhaps a difficult lesson in school, or a time when they wanted to know how something worked or what was going on. Invite conversation about puzzling things in the world and encourage learners to ask questions about some of the puzzles of nature or the universe (for example, how did the world begin, how does gravity work, how do trees know the right time to bloom or lose their leaves). Don't answer the questions, but encourage questioning. Refer to the paraphrase from Proverbs 2:3–5 that you displayed. Ask: *What do you think it means to "search hard for wisdom"? Do you think we discover more about God when we ask questions about*

## Encountering Scripture

about or brought you closer to God? How did they reach you? Consider how you can be a source of inspiration and wisdom for the children in your group. In this session you will help children discover wisdom in the words of scripture. Be open to the wisdom children offer you. How are they a source of inspiration and joy in your life?

*Prayer: Wise and Loving God, thank you for bringing me closer to you all the time. Thank you for reaching out to me through scripture and people and through the learners I will lead this week. Please touch me with your wisdom and loving nature that I might share love and wisdom with others. Amen.*

### Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging Activities,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding Activities,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving Activities.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

*the world? Why or why not?* Hand out copies of “What Is Wisdom?” Ask learners to consider which items are “wise” and which are not. Share responses and discuss why certain options were selected as being wise. Note that there are different possible responses and no single “right” answer. Encourage children to talk about the reasoning behind their responses.

With younger children, select items from the list to read aloud. After each item is read, ask children if they think it is wise or not. Encourage children to share the reasons for their responses.

## 2 Encountering Scripture in Nature

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed to see how we can see and be reminded of scripture when we experience nature. Find photographs of the natural world that remind you of familiar Bible stories—for example, a rainbow for the story of Noah; pictures of plants and animals for creation stories; a mustard seed and bush for one of the parables; a field of wheat and a bunch of grapes for the Last Supper; colorful leaves for the changing seasons as mentioned in Ecclesiastes; or pictures of lambs, doves, rocks, eagles, and light, to evoke images of God from the Bible. By letting nature evoke a memory of a Bible story, we can help learners see that scripture is all around us. Locate photographs of nature and bring them to show the children. Pictures can be found in nature magazines, calendars, or in books. National Geographic has a wonderful site full of photographs you might use at <http://photography.nationalgeographic.com/photography/?source=NavPhoHome>.

### Supplies:

- nature photographs
- Bibles
- art supplies such as markers, colored pencils, crayons, and paper

Look at the photographs of nature and ask the children to describe what they see. Ask if any remind them of Bible stories. (For example, some might say a rainbow reminds them of the story of Noah’s Ark, or the rocks and animals remind them of the creation story.) The Bible is full of stories about nature—for example, stories of storms, stories about animals, or stories about plants. Read Mark 4:26–34. *Are there any pictures to go with this story?* There are several Bible passages about birds (Isaiah 40:31 and Luke 12:6). Ask if anyone knows a story about a fish (for example, Jonah, or Jesus’ helping his disciples catch fish in John 21:1–19). Read the following passages and see if children can find images to go with them:

- Psalm 18:1–3 (rock)
- Luke 15:3–7 (sheep)
- Isaiah 11:6–8 (wolf, lamb, leopard, goat, calf, lion, cow, bear, lion, straw, grass, ox, snake)

Read Genesis 1:1–3. *Are there pictures for this story?* All of nature reminds us of the beautiful world God created. Consider how nature speaks to us about God. In a way, creation is like God’s word or scripture. *What does nature tell us about God?* Distribute art supplies. Invite the children to draw a picture of a nature scene—perhaps a place in nature that they love. As they work, talk with them about what they learn about God in that scene.

### 3 Cloud Gazing

**Leader preparation:** Most of us have whiled away a pleasant hour finding shapes in the clouds. Watch the video of clouds and bookmark it so that you can show it to the group. If you do not have access to computers with Internet connection, search the Internet for photographs of clouds and print off expressive pictures of clouds. Find out information about clouds from sites such as <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud>, <http://alex.edfac.usyd.edu.au/blp/sample%20lessons/moxham.data/html/page2.html>, or <http://www.weatherwizkids.com/weather-clouds.htm>.

**Supplies:**

- video: “Clouds” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VwTnyRHEZSO>
- computer with Internet connection, or pictures of clouds

Watch the video of clouds, or show pictures you have brought. Ask: *What do you see in the shapes of the clouds? Do clouds look solid? Can we walk or see through them? Are clouds solid? How do you know? Do you think people always knew clouds were not solid?* Discuss how scientists have to “search for” knowledge or insight “like an adventurer on a treasure hunt.”

Read Proverbs 2:1–8 or a paraphrase such as the following:

If you ask for help to understand what is right . . .  
 If you ask lots of questions . . .  
 If you try to learn good things . . .  
 If you hunt for truth and wisdom they way you’d hunt for treasure . . .  
 Then you will know God. Because God gives us wisdom. God’s words are good and true.

This scripture passage encourages us to do the same—seek knowledge not only about the world, but also about God. *Why do you think it is important for us to search for wisdom and understanding?* Encourage learners to talk about what they know about clouds. *What are clouds made of?* (water vapor) Share information about clouds or invite children to use computers to find out more about clouds. This is a good site for children: <http://www.weatherwizkids.com/weather-clouds.htm>.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### 4 In the Beginning (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** Read the article “In the beginning . . .” from Attachment: Activity 4. Consider what these creation stories have in common. How are they different from one another? What important truths or insights are contained within each story? Practice telling each story in your own words.

**Supplies:**

- “In the beginning . . .” Attachment: Activity 4
- Bibles
- (optional) creation stories from around the world <http://www.gly.uga.edu/railsback/CS/CSIndex.html>

Tell the three creation stories from “In the beginning . . .” You might want to add some other creation stories from around the world. After each story, ask children questions such as the following: *What do you like about this story. Is the story in our Bible?* Invite older children to find the two biblical passages in their Bibles. Ask: *If not the Bible, where do you think this story comes from? How is God (or the Creator) present in this story? What is God/the Creator doing?*

For older children, ask: *What truth or wisdom does this story contain? Is it possible for more than one of these stories to be true at the same time?* A story can be “truthful” without being scientifically factual. For example, the story of Napi, the creator, speaks of a caring creator who loves people and the earth. Science and the Bible can both be true in different ways. The Genesis story speaks of God’s role in bringing all things into being. God’s love and creative power are shown in nature, including in the Big Bang theory.

*For younger children:* Invite children to tell a story of creation in their own words. They might choose one of the stories from “In the beginning . . .” or another one they know, or a story they make up.

### 5 You Are What You Eat

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed to help learners understand that we are changed by what we take in to ourselves. Carnations show how we are what we “eat”; see <http://www.stevespanglerscience.com/experiment/00000144>. Carnations can take up to 24 hours to change colors, so to speed up the process cut the stems about 2 inches long and then slit the lower inch vertically just before putting the flowers in the colored water. You should buy your carnations a day or two ahead, and experiment with them at home to find which colors absorb the fastest in these particular flowers. Use a generous amount of food coloring in the vase for best results.

**Supplies:**

- white carnations
- scissors or knife
- small vases or juice glasses with water
- food coloring
- pens and paper (optional)

Fill small vases or juice glasses with water, add food coloring, cut carnation stems to about 2 inches and slit the lower half of stem lengthwise, placing immediately into colored water. There is an old saying, “You are what you eat.” Ask if the learners think this will be true for carnations. Ask what this proverb means. Do they know any other proverbs? Learners may not know what a proverb is. Explain that it is a short wise saying. Children may recognize some of the following proverbs:

- Look before you leap.
- You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.
- Many hands make light work.
- A dog is a person’s best friend.
- Don’t cry over spilt milk.
- Seeing is believing.
- The best things in life are free.

The book of Proverbs in the Bible contains many short wise sayings. Read some of the following wisdom sayings from the book of Proverbs and invite the children to talk about what these proverbs mean:

- A good reputation is better than riches. (Proverbs 22:1)
- To be wise is to love yourself. (Proverbs 19:8)
- If you don't hear the cry of the poor, no one will hear you when you call for help. (Proverbs 21:13)
- Better a crust of bread in peace, than a feast in a house of anger. (Proverbs 17:1)
- Those who put other people down are foolish; a wise person remains silent. (Proverbs 11:12).
- A soft answer turns away anger. (Proverbs 15:1)
- Pride comes before a fall. (Proverbs 11:2)
- A beautiful person who behaves foolishly is like a gold ring in a pig's snout. (Proverbs 11:22)
- Wisdom is better than jewels; understanding is more valuable than gold. (Proverbs 8:10–11)
- Those who give away what they have become richer. (Proverbs 11:24)
- Trust in God; do not rely on what you know. (Proverbs 3:5)

*Option:* Distribute pens and paper and have children write short proverbs of their own or invite children to pair up to create some short wisdom sayings to share with the group. Check back on the carnations to see if they have begun changing colors. Tell learners they can check on them again at the end of the workshop.

### 6 Finding Wisdom Like Buried Treasure?

**Leader preparation:** Proverbs 2:1–8 says that we should look for wisdom as eagerly as we might hunt for treasure. Preview the video of a fossil search and bookmark it so that you can show it to the group. Prepare a sand tray for your group so that you can pretend to hunt for treasures from the past. Bring real fossils if you can obtain them or other small objects to bury in the sand such as small figures or interesting stones. If you have extra time to prepare, plan to make fossils with your group. Sites such as the following provide ideas and directions: [http://www.creativekidsathome.com/activities/activity\\_26.html](http://www.creativekidsathome.com/activities/activity_26.html), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwrgBLw0e4E&feature=related>, and <http://www.reachoutmichigan.org/funexperiments/quick/fossilprint.html>.

#### **Supplies:**

- Bible
- video: “Fossil Search” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5V8XmIOm8Ms&feature=related>
- computer with Internet access
- sand tray with hidden objects
- small paint brushes
- (optional) supplies to make fossils

Ask if anyone knows what scientists are called who hunt for fossils or other evidence of the past (paleontologists). Ask what the learners know about what paleontologists do. Show the YouTube video at to the group. Ask why scientists search for fossils, and have the group notice how hard they look. Read Proverbs 2:1–8 out loud or use a paraphrase such as the following:

If you ask for help to understand what is right . . .  
 If you ask lots of questions . . .  
 If you try to learn good things . . .  
 If you hunt for truth like you'd hunt for treasure . . .  
 Then you will know God. Because God gives us wisdom. God's words are good and true.

The scripture urges us to hunt for wisdom the way we'd look for treasure. Ask why they think wisdom is important, and what are some ways we can search for wisdom or understanding. Set out the sand tray. Have children pretend to be paleontologists looking for treasures from the past. If they find an object, they can use a paintbrush to gently brush off the loose sand. If you have extra time and interest, make fossils following the directions on one of the Internet sites above.

## Sending & Serving Activities



### 7 Fear and Awe (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** We see God in nature, and we learn about God in nature. The more we learn about nature, the more awed we may be by its wonder and complexity. The more we learn about God, the more we love and respect God. Many children wonder why the Bible talks about “fear of God.” This activity is designed to help children grapple with that phrase and understand that fear does not just mean being afraid. It can also mean respect, awe, or an overwhelming sense of wonder. The Hebrew Bible’s concept of “fearing God” could be the feeling of looking up at a nighttime sky full of stars. Awed by the vastness of space and time, we also become aware of our smallness in comparison to the huge universe. In our encounter with God, we might feel overwhelmed by a sense of a reality greater than we can even imagine. When have you felt a sense of awe at the majesty and vastness of God or God’s creation? Think of an awesome experience you have had in nature that you would like to share with the group, such as seeing the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls, whitewater rafting, watching shooting stars during a meteor shower, a lunar eclipse, seeing a wild grizzly or cougar, or watching a thunderstorm.

**Supplies:**

- Bibles

Ask learners if they’ve ever wondered why the Bible sometimes talks about us being afraid of God. Read Proverbs 2:4–6 or the following paraphrase: If you search for wisdom like a treasure hunter looking for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of God. You will come to know God. For God gives wisdom and truth comes from God.

It sounds like being afraid of God is a good thing. *Do you think that this is what the writer means? What could it mean to “fear God”?* Wonder with the learners about how that could be. Invite children to recall seeing lightening flash or watching a huge thunderstorm. *Can something be really beautiful or exciting and scary at the same time? What other things in nature can be beautiful, but also awesome or even terrifying?* (A volcano, huge ocean waves, a waterfall) *What are other awesome things in nature?* Share an experience you have had of the awesomeness of nature. Invite learners to share experiences of their own.

*Option:* With younger children, pretend you are walking in a rain forest together. Imagine all the things you see—great towering trees, monkeys, and birds. Imag-



ine what you hear—the drip of rain, the calls of birds, a low growl, a chattering monkey. *How does it feel? Do you ever feel that way when they hear a Bible story? Do you ever feel that way when you think about God? Is “fear of God” the same as being afraid of God? Why or why not?*



## 8 Wise Ones

**Leader preparation:** In this activity, participants will learn about the work of four famous scientists. They will consider how search for knowledge can help us learn how to care for one another and our world. Read information about famous scientists from the article “Wise Ones,” or gather children’s books about scientists from the list on the attachment. Be sure to include scientists with diversity of gender, race, and national or ethnic origin in your selections.

### Supplies:

- “Wise Ones,” Attachment: Activity 8, or children’s books about Marie Curie, David Suzuki, and George Washington Carver (see the list of books on the attachment)
- Bibles

Read Proverbs 2:1–5. Who do learners think might be saying this? Who is being spoken to? Note that there are many possibilities. One possibility is that this is being written by a father to a son, but it could also be a grandparent or a wise elder speaking to a child. *Who are some wise people you know? What are they like? How do they show they are wise?* Share information about Suzuki, Curie, Carver, and Franklin from the article “Wise Ones,” Attachment: Activity 8, or have children read the children’s books you selected. For young children, read one of the children’s books to the children. Ask: *Do you think this person is wise? What makes you think that? What has this person done to discover new knowledge? What has he or she done to help other people or our world? How does learning more about our world help us to care for it? How can we care for our world?*

## 9 Wise Creatures

**Leader preparation:** Look at instructions for making animal masks from paper plates. See [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_6358732\\_make-paper-plates-first-graders.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_6358732_make-paper-plates-first-graders.html), [http://www.sandiegozoo.org/kids/craft\\_wolf\\_mask.html](http://www.sandiegozoo.org/kids/craft_wolf_mask.html), or <http://igarmina-huow.copious-systems.com/articles/4d1bfae11a8efc7c080006ea/>. Gather materials to make a mask from a paper plate and make a sample animal mask.

### Supplies:

- markers and newsprint or whiteboard
- materials to make masks, including paper plates; hole punch; ribbons, yarn or elastic string; scissors; colored markers
- materials to decorate masks, such as colored paper, feathers, fake fur, yarn, felt, sequins, egg carton cups (for noses), tape, and glue

Read Proverbs 2:1–6. Ask how we can tell if someone is wise. *What animal do you think is the wisest? Why?* Most learners will give you actions the animal does that provide food or safety or some other good. List on newsprint or a whiteboard the animals mentioned and the actions or qualities that go with each one. Point out that the learners are looking to the animals’ actions and outcomes to prove wisdom. *Would that work with people? When someone tells you to do something, how could you decide whether it is a wise thing to do? How can you use this lesson in you lives?*



Show learners how to make an animal mask from a paper plate. Show your sample. Make a mask of a wise animal. If you have additional time, have children put on their animal masks. Let the animals talk with one another about things they do that are wise. Or talk about how caring for and protecting animals and our earth is a good and wise thing to do.

### Reflect

Take a few minutes to consider what your favorite part of this workshop was today. What worked best? What would you do differently next time? Where did God show up unexpectedly? What did you learn from your learners?

**Attachment: Activity 1**

**What Is Wisdom?**

*Which of the following are examples of wisdom? Create some wise examples of your own.*

- Treat others the way you want to be treated.
- If you want a friend, be a friend.
- Find out more about the world.
- Take whatever you want from anyone you want.
- Come to church.
- Learn to read.
- Work hard at school.
- Don't do your homework.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Tell the truth.
- Help other people.
- Be curious.
- Tell other people what they should do.
- Wash your hands before you eat.
- Watch lots of television.
- Ask questions to find out how things work.
- Spend time with animals and nature.
- Keep your promises.
- Always try to be first in line.

*(Add some more examples of your own)*

**Attachment: Activity 4****In the beginning . . .****THE BIG BANG!**

There was a Big Bang. This was the very beginning of our universe, about 13.73 billion years ago. In the very first micro-second after the Big Bang, time itself got started. Stars began to form just after the Big Bang. The Big Bang released a huge amount of energy into a small universe. This made the universe get bigger, which created more space. The universe is still getting bigger. All kinds of energy zapped and zoomed around the universe. Super-energetic particles broke into smaller pieces and then glued themselves back together again. Eventually, there were particles called electrons and protons that got together to make hydrogen atoms. Clouds of hydrogen atoms floating around together formed nebulas, which developed into the first stars. Things cooled down and smashed and crashed together to make planets and moons. In one little corner of the universe, our home star, our sun, was born. About 4.5 billion years ago, the planet Earth was formed. Earth slowly cooled down. In a soupy mix of chemicals and energy, life began. Slowly, simple organisms changed and evolved to create millions of different life forms, including the plants and animals we know today.

**A WORD TO BEGIN**

In the beginning, there was the word. The word was God and the word was with God. The word was with God in the beginning. Everything that was made came about because of the word. Without the word, there would be nothing at all. The word is life—life of the world and light for everyone. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness is much too weak to put it out. (John 1:1–3, paraphrased)

**“LET THERE BE LIGHT,” GOD SAID**

In the beginning, when God created heaven and earth, the earth was a shapeless nothing. There was nothing but darkness. The spirit of God was floating over the deep nothingness. God said, “Let there be light,” and light came into the darkness. “That’s good,” said God. God separated light from dark, day from night. So there was morning and there was evening, the first day. (Genesis 1:1–3, paraphrased)

**EARTH DIVER**

Long ago, water covered the entire world. Napi, the creator, wanted to find out what was below all the water. Napi sent a duck to search below the water, but the duck had to come up to breathe. The duck found nothing. So Napi sent Otter and then Badger, but neither Otter nor Badger could find out what was down there under the water. Finally, Muskrat dove beneath the water. Muskrat was down a very long time. Finally, Muskrat came up to the surface. In Muskrat’s paws was a ball of mud. Napi took the lump and blew on it until it dried. The mud became the earth. Napi molded the hills, valley, and mountains. Napi created the valleys with their tall trees and small plants. The first people were shaped from the mud. Napi taught men and women how to hunt and how to live. When the work of creation was finished, Napi climbed a mountain high into the heavens and disappeared from sight.

**NOTES**

1. Information from: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline\\_of\\_evolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_evolution), <http://www.historyforkids.org/scienceforkids/physics/space/bigbang.htm>, and [http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/bi/Big\\_bang](http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/bi/Big_bang).
2. A Canadian Blackfoot Indian creation story. Source, R. D. Francis, R. Jones, and D. B. Smith, *Canadian History to Confederation*, 3rd edition (Toronto: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1996).

**Attachment: Activity 8****Wise Ones**

**Marie Curie** (1867–1934) was a French chemist and physicist. Born in Poland, Curie worked for most of her life in France. She is the most famous female scientist of all time, known especially for her work on radioactivity. She was a pioneer in the field of radioactivity and the first person ever to get two Nobel Prizes: one in physics and one in chemistry. Curie was also the first woman to become a professor at the University of Paris. She discovered ways radiation can be used to treat cancer. Maria Curie lived in a time when women were supposed to stay at home and do what men told them to do. In spite of the opposition and prejudice Curie faced, she became an independent woman and a world-famous scientist.

**David Suzuki** (born March 24, 1936) is a Japanese Canadian environmental activist and scientist. Suzuki is well known for his TV and radio shows and books about nature and the environment. Suzuki has worked for many years to help reverse climate change. In 1990, he helped create the David Suzuki Foundation “to find ways for society to live in balance with the natural world that sustains us.” The foundation works to protect oceans, prevent climate change, and help create clean energy. Suzuki is well known for speaking out about environment issues. He criticizes governments that do not do enough to protect the environment.

**Ursula Franklin** (born September 16, 1921) is a Canadian physicist who specializes in the study of metals. She was born in Munich, Germany. Franklin has taught at the University of Toronto for more than forty years. Franklin is a Quaker who lives out her faith working for peace, disarmament (ending the arms race and the stockpiling of nuclear weapons), and the rights of girls and women. She speaks and writes about the connection between peace, human rights, and social justice. Franklin has received numerous honors, including the Canadian Governor General’s Award.

**George Washington Carver** (1864–1943) was born a slave in Missouri. He struggled to get an education and eventually graduated as a scientist from what is now Iowa State University. Carver was a chemist who specialized in agriculture. He created ways to improve soil quality so crops would grow better. He recognized that certain plants (legumes) put nitrates into the soil, and this work eventually led to crop rotation (planting crops that improve the soil alternately with other crops). Carver also discovered industrial uses for plants such as sweet potatoes, peanuts, and soybeans.

**Books for Children:**

*Picture Book of George Washington Carver* by David Adler (published by Holiday House, 2000)  
<http://www.amazon.com/Picture-George-Washington-Carver-Biography/dp/082341633X>

*Looking at the Environment* by David Suzuki (published by Stoddart Publishing, 1991)

*There’s A Barnyard In My Bedroom* by David Suzuki (published by Greystone Books, 2008)  
<http://www.amazon.ca/Theres-Barnyard-Bedroom-David-Suzuki/dp/155365532X>

*Marie Curie’s Search for Radium* by Beverly Birch and Christian Birmingham (published by Barrons, 1996)  
<http://www.amazon.com/Curies-Search-Radium-Science-Stories/dp/0812097912>

# Encountering Scripture



## Workshop: Video

### About this Rotation

Christian scripture includes books from the Hebrew tradition as well as New Testament stories of Jesus and the early church. Some Christian traditions also include the Apocrypha. Through a divine and human process, scripture is gathered in the Bible. As Christians, we believe that scripture is the living word of God. It is central to our faith as individuals and as a community. In our encounter with scripture, God meets us and we meet God. Scripture is our family story, holding us together in Christian community. These sacred texts help us to listen in our diversity and to find common language amid controversy. We actively engage with the Bible—sometimes we challenge and struggle with scripture and sometimes scripture challenges and unsettles us. Because the Bible has been used to judge, condemn, or hurt, we have a responsibly and a calling as God's people to remove fear, distrust, and disempowerment and to move toward confidence, empowerment, and love.

### About Workshop Rotation

This method of education is informed by Dr. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences. Intelligences are different ways of learning: visual/spatial, logical/mathematical, verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, musical/rhythmic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. All of us learn through all of the intelligences but most people have different abilities and preferences in these areas. For example, some learn best through moving their bodies while others learn best verbally or through visual media.

For those new to Workshop Rotation, a little vocabulary:

- *Rotation*: the overarching story or concept that will be explored through a number of workshops focusing on different intelligences.
- *Workshop*: the primary site of learning; workshop plans focus on one or two of the intelligences while incorporating others in a secondary way to give learners various experiential ways of understanding the rotation's overarching concept(s).
- *Workshop leader*: the one who uses this curriculum to plan the workshop, adjusting each workshop to best meet the needs of learners, considering age range, size, disabilities, or any other special needs of the group.
- *Shepherds*: leaders who stay with and support a specific group through all the workshops in any rotation as they develop relationships with the learners.

Faith is learned experientially and in relationship. Shepherds are the key relational component, since they move through workshops with the learners. Workshop leaders can work with shepherds to gear each workshop to the particular group of learners they will have this week.

## About this Workshop

Video does not need to be a passive experience. In this workshop you will encounter many active ways to view and to make videos. Since our scripture is most often encountered as the written or spoken word, video helps us break out and encounter scripture differently.

The focus story for this rotation is John 1:1–14. At least one activity in each workshop is developed around this story. Each workshop will also have activities based on other scriptures to help children learn the practice of faith Encountering Scripture.

### BIBLE FOCUS STORY:

**John 1:1–14**

### SUPPLEMENTAL STORY:

**John 21:1–19**

## Leader Preparation

Spend time considering what you think is the most powerful aspect of video. What do you think is the most destructive aspect of video? How will you emphasize the first and minimize the second?

*Prayer: Loving God, lead me in encountering your scripture. Thank you for entrusting these learners to my leadership. Help me to be a conduit for your love, your creativity, your desire to bring these young ones into your Light. Amen.*

## Exploring & Engaging Activities



### 1 Tell a True Tale (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This video presents a song about Jesus and the disciples and fishing. It conflates both the story of Jesus calling the disciples to be “fishers of people” at the very start of his ministry and the miracle of Jesus guiding the disciples to a huge catch of fish at the very end of his ministry, after the resurrection and immediately before the ascension. Younger children may be confused if you try to tease out these two stories, but older learners may appreciate that the songwriter encountered the scripture in his own way. Become familiar with the equipment your church has to play these videos. Preview the video, read John 21:1–20, and consider what this story is saying to you right now. Remain open to what your learners may have to teach you in their encounter with this scripture.

#### Supplies:

- video: “I Tell a True Tale” at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGG0sJet-iQ> and arrange for viewing equipment.
- *The Children’s Illustrated Bible*, or other simple Bible translation
- computer with Internet access and equipment to view video
- (optional) popcorn (be sensitive to any allergies among the children)

Pass out the popcorn (if provided) and tell your learners that they will hear a tale from the Bible—told just a little bit differently than they might have heard it before. Play the video. After discussing the story, point out (especially to older learners) that this song includes more than one of the stories about Jesus and

## Workshop Development

For each workshop leaders may choose from nine activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from “Exploring and Engaging Activities,” at least one from “Discerning and Deciding Activities,” and at least one from “Sending and Serving Activities.” The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation with supplies normally found at the church). Using all nine activities could take 90–120 minutes.

- To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose three activities, using one activity from each category.
- To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose four or five activities, using at least one activity from each category.

the fishermen—and that stories of Jesus helping the disciples catch a miraculous number of fish occur in every Gospel and at several times in the story of Jesus’ time as a preacher and teacher. Then read the story from John 21:1–20 from the *The Children’s Illustrated Bible* (p. 280–81) or from another Bible story book. Point out how the last verse of the song picks up where Jesus’ instruction to “look after my flock” leaves off.

### 2 Storyboard

**Leader preparation:** This becomes an exercise in engaging the scripture by shifting from the listener’s passive perspective to the active perspective of a storyteller, moving the story from words to visuals. Making a storyboard is one of the first steps toward making a film or video. In this activity the big book will serve as our storyboard and the first step toward engaging the story of the Miracle of the Fishes (John 21:1–20). We look at the pictures from the position (or point of view) of the camera. If the camera is far from the subject, it is a “long shot,” closer is a “medium shot,” and very close is a “close up.” For additional help in making a storyboard, see <http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/media/teachers/pdfs/2002F/021108NSw1.pdf>.

#### Supplies:

- book: *The Friends Go Fishing* by Joy Cowley, illustrated by Chris Rothero (Instructional Fair, 1996)
- crayons or markers and paper
- Bibles

Explain that when a director is about to make a film or video, she or he makes something called a “storyboard,” where each scene is drawn out for the point of view of the camera. Explain that the big book called *The Friends Go Fishing* is drawn like a storyboard for the story of Jesus helping the disciples fish. This story takes place after Jesus’ resurrection. The Bible tells us that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he rose from death. Read the story out loud once, then read it again, explaining that the title page would be a “long shot,” pages 2–3 make up a “medium shot,” and pages 4–5 are a “close shot.”

Give older children Bibles and have them look up John 21:1–19 for themselves. Have shepherds work with younger children to recall the key events in the story. Invite participants to work in small groups to make their own storyboards for two or three scenes of this story.

*Option:* If you also do Activity 5, you might choose to use the storyboard you create in this activity to produce a video of the story.

### 3 Clean Up

**Leader preparation:** Choose a cleanup video such as <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID1kzsQ5psg&feature=related> or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ltjh7HnHH8s&feature=related> or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTSShIER5P8&feature=fvw>. Preview the video and consider the questions you will use for discussion. This activity is designed to help learners understand that preparing to encounter scripture is important. Consider what you do to prepare to listen to a Bible story or read a passage of scripture. What do you do to encounter an honored guest? How are these two kinds of preparation similar? How are they different?



### Supplies:

- video viewing equipment and computer with Internet access
- (optional) video recording equipment
- supplies for cleanup (garbage bags or recycling boxes if needed)
- children's Bible story book

Show the video you have chosen. Discuss why these people are cleaning this room. *Could someone important be coming to visit?* Invite the learners to clean up the learning area as a way of welcoming the Bible stories the way they would welcome a special guest, making it comfortable for storytelling in the process. Decide on tasks and have everyone help clean up.

*Option:* Position a camera so that you can record the clean-up process and play it back in fast motion. Gather in your newly comfortable learning space and tell or read a favorite Bible story together.

## Discerning & Deciding Activities



### ④ To Recognize and Respond (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This activity is designed to help learners recognize everyday miracles and times or places where God has reached out to touch them, and to begin to consider how to respond to those encounters. Preview the videos before the workshop, and consider times when you have encountered God in scripture and in life and how you have responded.

### Supplies:

- video: "The Miraculous Catch of Fish" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=he99bRBUzuc&feature=related>
- video: "Amazing Blue Whale Encounter" [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OV6l3\\_Ct4&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OV6l3_Ct4&feature=related)

This first video is from a Catholic priest talking about the first time scripture came alive for him. Show the video; then talk about recognizing God. Where do the learners see God in their own lives? How do they respond to that? If they expected to see God in their own lives, do they think they might see scripture coming alive for them? Watch the second video, in which some folks have a close-up encounter with a blue whale. Ask about what the people said, how their voices sounded. *Have you ever seen some amazing thing? What was it? What did it feel like to have that experience?*

### ⑤ Shoot It

**Leader preparation:** Become very familiar with the camera and technology you will use in this workshop. In that way, you can keep the focus on the experience of encountering the scripture and not on the technology. Decide what you will use for costumes: sheets simply draped around the fishermen may work best. A boat may simply be a table turned on its side, or you can give your inner artist some playtime to make something more realistic. The fishermen's net needs to be large enough for several learners to haul on it. You might find something at a craft store, or you could make one from rope or even strips of plastic bags. Arrange for a volunteer to edit the video if you do not have these skills yourself. You will want to show each workshop group its own video. You might also want to arrange for a showing to a wider audience of friends and family or the congregation.

**Supplies:**

- video camera
- (optional) tripod
- costumes and props, especially a large net
- equipment to show the video
- a children's Bible storybook with the story of John 21:1–19
- markers and newsprint or whiteboard

Read or recall the story from John 21 of Jesus meeting the disciples on the beach. For older children, use verses 1–19. For younger children use only verses 1–14. Talk about how the disciples might have felt after a long night of no fish . . . and how they might have felt after pulling in that large haul of fish . . . then how they felt after realizing the man on the beach was Jesus. Assign parts to the learners and choose costumes. Work with the group to make a list of four or five key scenes. Record the title of each scene on newsprint or whiteboard. Have all the characters clarify who they are and what they are doing in the scene. Let the actors improvise while you shoot the video, scene by scene. Reserve enough time to show the actors their video.



**6 Gone Fishin'**

**Leader preparation:** Locate and preview the following fish videos to share with your group:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGOKngtkt4&feature=related>,  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-v8fnmKpRs&feature=related>, and  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9\\_f5reW-kfo&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_f5reW-kfo&feature=related).

Notice how you feel as you watch these videos. What fascinates you about fish? Recall how Jesus served fish to his disciples when he met them on the beach.

**Supplies:**

- video viewing equipment and computer with Internet access
- Bible
- a large fishnet, hammock, or wool knotted together to make a simple fishnet pattern
- “Fish Pattern,” Attachment: Activity 6, copied onto colored paper
- scissors, markers, paper clips

Read or retell the story of Jesus and the disciples fishing from John 21:1–14. Invite group members to imagine what this scene might have looked like. Show the following short videos:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGOKngtkt4&feature=related>,  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-v8fnmKpRs&feature=related>, and  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9\\_f5reW-kfo&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_f5reW-kfo&feature=related).

Invite the group to discuss what they see. *How might it have felt for the disciples to see the fish after fishing so long without catching anything? What might it have been like for them to see Jesus again after they thought he was dead?* Invite learners to imagine themselves there that day. Peter was so excited he jumped right in the water. Ask what might the learners have felt or said or done.

Distribute the fish pattern shapes. Ask learners to cut out a fish and draw a picture of themselves there on the beach with Jesus or in the boat with the disciples. Hang up the fishnet (or hammock or simple net made from yarn) and attach the illustrated fish shapes using paperclips.

## Sending & Serving Activities

### 7 Word Alive (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This activity is drawn from the focus scripture, John 1:1–14. Read this passage. Try to see it through the eyes of the age group you will have in this workshop. God came to us, became human, and lived with us, showing us God’s love and longing for us to live good lives. How is God like a word, alive with us? How do we hear and experience God’s word through the Bible? Consider how God is still speaking to us today. Preview the video and arrange for viewing equipment.

**Supplies:**

- video: “Love the Neighborhood” [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usDhbpLZ\\_o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usDhbpLZ_o)
- video viewing equipment

Introduce this video by asking the learners to watch what is happening in the video. Show the video. *What are some things people in the video did to help others or help care for their neighborhood? Why do you think they are doing this?* Read aloud John 1:1 and 14, or use this version from *The Message*:

“The Word was first; the Word present to God, God present to the Word. The Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.”

The passage tells us that God was there in the very beginning and is still alive in our neighborhood. *How can we experience God’s word in our neighborhood? If we hear loving words, is that God’s word, for example? If we see kindness, is that God showing kindness?* Invite learners to think of other ways we might experience God’s word (or God’s love) in our neighborhoods.

### 8 Responding Through Giving

**Leader preparation:** In the story about the fish, Jesus gives the disciples a really large catch and makes them breakfast; then he asks them to feed his sheep, look after his flock, and care for his followers—all of us. When we encounter this scripture, it calls us to do the same—take care of others. But how can children do that? One way is through organizations such as Heifer Project International. Your church may already have a relationship with this organization. You can familiarize yourself with what has been done in the past by contacting someone on your mission or outreach committee. Preview the videos before the workshop and arrange for video viewing equipment.

**Supplies:**

- video: Pass on the Gift” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twx0ePKIvmU&feature=related>
- video viewing equipment and computer with Internet access
- a children’s Bible story book with the story of John 21:1–19, or a Bible in an easy-to-read version
- information about Heifer International <http://www.heifer.org/>, or information about another outreach project your congregation supports

Read or tell how Jesus asks Peter to help feed his sheep in John 21:15–17. *What did Jesus want Peter to do?* How could Peter do this? Jesus wants all those who love him to help care for others. Explain that some people respond through a group known as Heifer Project International. See how many learners have heard of it. Show the video “Pass on the Gift.” Brainstorm how to raise funds for Heifer Project, or for another outreach project in which your congregation might be involved.

### 9 Interviewing the Disciples

**Leader preparation:** Become very familiar with the camera and technology you will use in this workshop. In that way, you can keep the focus on the experience of encountering the scripture and not on the technology. Also be familiar with the passage from John 21:1–17 so that you can tell the story simply and gear it to your age group in each workshop.

**Supplies:**

- video camera
- TV or computer to view the interviews

Tell the story from John 21:1–17. If learners have already heard the story, invite them to help you retell it. Remind learners that in the story, the disciples—who were professional fisherman—have worked hard all night and caught nothing. Ask: *How do you think they felt? Then someone comes along and tells them to do something differently, and everything changes!* Ask each learner to think about a time when everything was going wrong, but someone came along to help and made things better. Set up the video camera and have each one tell her or his story to the camera. Some children may be more comfortable telling their stories in pairs, as a dialogue, rather than as an individual video star. Ask if they’ve ever had a chance to make things better for someone else, or describe a way they might do this.

### Reflect

After the workshop, take quiet time to consider what worked best and what you would do differently if you were leading this workshop another time. What did you learn from your learners? What fresh insights did you experience from these new encounters with these scriptures? How do you feel called to respond?

Attachment: Activity 6

