

Lesson Plans that Work

Easter People: Faith Practice and Climate Justice

Lesson Plans for Youth: Lesson Three

Theme: God calls me forward into the unknown.

Background: Climate change is an unintentional consequence of the industrial revolution. At that time, people started developing machines and processes that depended on fossil fuels extracted from the earth. This began long enough ago that our entire society now depends on fossil fuels. It can feel impossible to imagine a world without that dependency. It can feel like leaving behind everything we have ever known, without having any idea where we are going. Fortunately, our faith tradition equips and calls us to do just this. Today we reflect on the story of Abram, a spiritual ancestor whose story can give us strength.

Supplies Needed: You will need a prayer table, a candle, a prayerbook, and Bibles for each participant. If you have an image of a road or path with a curve in it easily available, add that too. For the in-person activity, you will need a blindfold, a ball, and a bucket/basket.

Before: Prepare your prayer table. Open the prayerbook to p. 832 “Of Self-Dedication” and place it on the table open to this page. Prepare the in-person activity or pull up the video to show online.

Beginning: Ask the youth if any of them have ever moved somewhere completely new before. Did they completely know where they were going or how it would turn out?

Opening Prayer: Light your candle, tell the youth the opening prayer is adapted from the one on p. 832 in the prayerbook on the prayer table, and pray:

*Eternal God, turn our hearts; guide our minds;
Fill our imaginations; control our wills.
Teach us how to belong to you completely.
Then use us, we pray, as you will.
Use us for your glory,
For the well being of your people
For all your Creation,
Through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Tell the story: If you have not yet, or if some students are new, share the “Note on Scripture” in the curriculum overview. Also, share the background above. Then invite the youth to open their Bibles to Genesis 12.

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, Genesis 12:1. Summarize the story so far:

- This is the first time we hear of Abram. We don’t know about him before this moment.
- Abram hears God call him to leave behind everything: his country, his family, his home.
- God doesn’t give Abram a specific destination. He just says “I will show you.”

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, Genesis 12:2-3. Summarize the story so far:

- God promises to make Abram (one person) into a nation (many people).
- God promises to make Abram's name great, so others consider him a blessing.
- God promises to bless those who bless him, curse those who curse him, and bless the world through him.

Read aloud, or invite youth to read aloud, Genesis 4a. Summarize the story and what it teaches:

- Abram says "yes" to this call, leaving behind what he knows without knowing where he is going.
- The "yes" from Abram is echoed in the "yes" from others in the Bible: Moses who says "yes" to God's call to lead Israel out of slavery; Mary who says "yes" to bearing Christ.
- Saying "yes" to God's will means not knowing the specifics but trusting and practicing.
- When we follow this path, we can be fruitful; we can bless future generations.

This matters for climate justice because our ancestors left us a way of life that is unsustainable. Many of our life patterns have been shaped by the industrial revolution and legacies of injustice. For the health of future generations, God is calling us to a place we don't yet know: We are called to say "yes" to seeking life patterns that are currently unknown and unfamiliar.

Reflection Questions: Who do you know that has left everything behind to find life and health? Anyone from history? Anyone from your community or family story?

Online Activity: Watch the three-minute video about The Rev. Zachariah Char, a refugee who became a priest, found here: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/1194817096800/for-immigrant-a-spiritual-refuge.html>

Discuss: When someone is looking for refuge, do they always know where they are going? They are looking for safety. How might we learn from their willingness to leave everything behind to be safe and have a better way of life?

In Person Activity: Blindfold or ask one youth to close their eyes, then set up a task in the room in front of them (for example, pick up a ball and put it in a basket/bucket). Provide a spokesperson to direct the blindfolded youth, who cannot see the task. Place the rest of the youth facing the room/task. Direct them to communicate the task without words to the spokesperson, who will communicate it to the blindfolded youth. How long does it take?

Then, switch out all the youth, move around the task, and try again, but this time have the spokesperson able to see the field. How long does it take now?

We can't always see where we are going, so the most important thing is to try to hear where God would have us go, because God can see the whole situation better than we can.

Gather/Ending: Summarize what Scripture teaches: We are descended from someone bold enough to begin again, trusting God to turn him into a blessing for everybody. God didn't know

how it would turn out as God started creating. We can borrow God's courage as we work to heal Creation.

Prayer: To close, offer the Prayer for Self-Dedication again, either in the words of the prayerbook or the adaptation:

*Eternal God, turn our hearts; guide our minds;
Fill our imaginations; control our wills.
Teach us how to belong to you completely.
Then use us, we pray, as you will.
Use us for your glory,
For the well being of your people
For all your Creation,
Through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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