Living a Life on Fire:
Lessons from Epic Bible Characters



LIFE ON FIRE

YOUTH MINISTRIES
Florida Conference

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Using This Guide

Welcome to the Life on Fire study guide. This guide is designed to help and your group you learn about God's stories for your lives. In this section, you will find helpful information about what you will find in each lesson.

Each lesson starts with an Icebreaker and some Starter Questions. Then your group leader will start your group on a journey to learn about the stories of amazing Bible Characters.

Please be respectful of what other group participants share, and be sure that what is said in the group stays in the group.

Section Key: All Guides



First Look -

This icon lets you know you are about to read an introduction to the lesson and story. You will read this together as a group.



Read -

This icon lets you know you're about to read a Scripture passage. These passages are included in the guides for ease of reading. All the passages in this guide are in The Message translation. These sections alternate with the Explore sections throughout the guides.



Explore -

This icon lets you know you are about to ask some group questions and read some commentary about the passage you just read. These questions help you to unpack the verses. After the questions, you will often find analysis of the passages and insights about the characters involved. Read this together with the group as you read the passages. There are several pairs of Read and Explore sections throughout each guide.



Closing Questions -

After you work through all the Read and Explore sections, the guide will finish with the Closing Group Questions. Use these questions to recap what you learned throughout the lesson and to discuss how to make the lessons relevant to your lives.



Personal Reflection & Action -

For the final few minutes of your time together, you will quietly answer the Personal Reflection & Action questions in the back of the lesson. This is a personal journal that will help to make what you've learned in each lesson personal and relevant.

We're so glad that you have chosen to participate in this small group, and we hope that this guide will help you to learn how to live a Life on Fire for God!

Lesson One - Messy Stories



First Look

We can think of people who have a Life on Fire, but the problem is, even though we grow up watching movies and hearing stories about amazing people, most of us feel like our lives are anything but on fire. How can we have these kinds of lives?

The Bible is full of examples of people who were on fire for God, and believe it or not God means for us to have lives like theirs!

Did you know that Paul was a tent-maker? If he lived today we'd probably meet him in the aisles of REI. He sold tents and preached Jesus on the side. And those chance meetings at REI were his foundation for building relationships to introduce people to Jesus. Jesus' disciples came from many different backgrounds. Several of them were fishermen before they met Jesus. One of the disciples was a tax collector; basically, an accountant for the IRS. Normal people working normal jobs.

Are you familiar with the word "calling?" When people use that word, we usually think about people who were "called" to do ministry - like being a pastor, a missionary in a different country, or serving the poor. But the idea of "calling" actually includes much more than that. God calls us all to share our love of Jesus with others where we are. When we look at these characters, we see that God used them in the context of their talents and backgrounds. God wants to do the same with us. Our calling is where our passions, talents, and the needs of others collide.

Characters

You may think that the main character in your story is you. But in most stories there is more than one main character. The main characters are who (or what) you focus on in your story.

Is your story life all about you? Who or what do you put first? Movies, games, and books? What about the people around you? Friends, family, loved ones, strangers, students, teachers, the homeless and the helpless? Where is God in your story? Have you made Him a main character?

Living a life on fire means being intentional about what we put first in our lives.

You decide who the main characters of your story are.

Your Story

Read - Psalm 139:13-16

13-16 Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking!
Body and soul, I am marvelously made!
I worship in adoration—what a creation!
You know me inside and out,
you know every bone in my body;
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit,
how I was sculpted from nothing into something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth;
all the stages of my life were spread out before you,
The days of my life all prepared
before I'd even lived one day.

- Psalm 139:13-16

Explore - Psalm 139:13-16

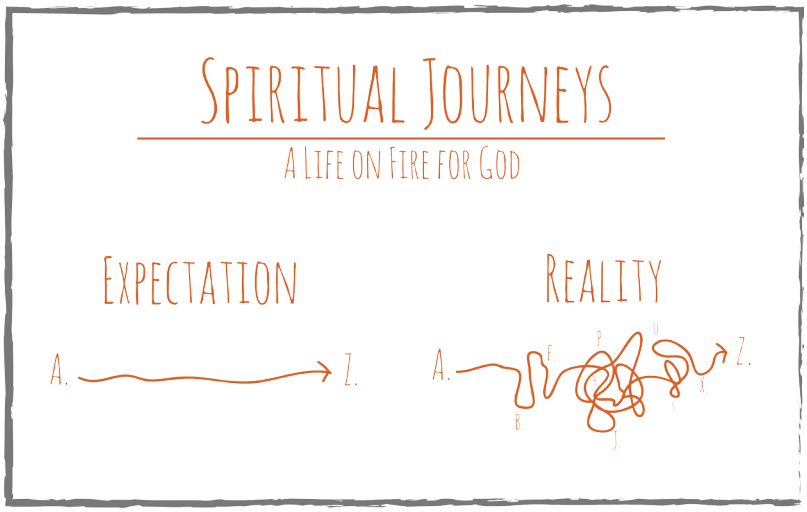
- **What do these verses tell us about how God knows us?**
- **What reaction does the writer have to figuring out that he is fearfully and wonderfully made?**
- **What do you think these verses can tell us about God having a unique story for each of us?**
- **How do these verses relate to the idea of calling?**

God designed each one of us to be uniquely us. Psalm 139:13 says that God knew us before we were even born! Each one of our lives will be its own unique story. We may be able to relate to parts of others' stories, but each one of us is a unique combination of personality, biology, interests and talents. This can make having a Life on Fire messy.

Often times, we think of our spiritual journey as being a straight line, but that isn't how real life looks. When we look at most characters in the Bible, their lives

don't really look like a straight line. They look like a squiggly line. Sometimes we make mistakes, sometimes we go backwards, sometimes we go to the side, sometimes we go forward and then we turn right back around. When God inspired the writers of the Bible, He knew that we would need to see the "messy stories" of the Bible characters. That's how life was for them, and that's why the good and the bad parts of their stories are included.

When we think about what our life stories should look like, we usually think it has to be a straight line, from Point A (where we are now) to Point Z (where we'll will end up), like the first on the left labeled "expectation". But really, life is a lot more like the second image. It is squiggly and messy and hard to see which way we are going. Even when we are following Jesus, our life stories are messy. Even when our lives are on fire, they can still be squiggly lines.



So how do we make sure that we are going in the right direction? How do you stay on fire when the winds of life are trying to put your fire out?

A Life on Fire is about having Jesus as our ultimate destination, not about how quickly or smoothly we get there.

Read - Matthew 14:24-31

24-26 Meanwhile, the boat was far out to sea when the wind came up against them and they were battered by the waves. At about four o'clock in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water. They were scared out of their wits. "A ghost!" they said, crying out in terror.

27 But Jesus was quick to comfort them. "Courage, it's me. Don't be afraid."

28 Peter, suddenly bold, said, "Master, if it's really you, call me to come to you on the water."

29-30 He said, "Come ahead."

Jumping out of the boat, Peter walked on the water to Jesus. But when he looked down at the waves churning beneath his feet, he lost his nerve and started to sink. He cried, "Master, save me!"

31 Jesus didn't hesitate. He reached down and grabbed his hand. Then he said, "Faint-heart, what got into you?"

- Matthew 14:24-31



Explore - Matthew 14:24-31

- **Why did Peter ask Jesus to call him to come instead of just trying to walk on the water right away?**
- **There are clues in verses 29-30 that may tell us something about why Peter began to sink. Why do you think he sank?**

"Peter stepped out of that boat in faith. It was faith that now sustained him on the waters of Galilee and gave him buoyancy. But faith was active only so long as he kept his gaze on Jesus."

- SDA Bible Commentary[1]

Just like Peter, we sometimes see Jesus doing amazing things and we want to join him. We want to be out there with him, walking on water, even if it requires us to do something scary or impossible. But also like Peter, we can doubt what we are doing and if Jesus is really calling us to walk out on the water after all.

But if we look to Jesus and how he is working in the world, we will be able to tell if what we are doing is what He wants. The more we know Jesus, the more our desires will align with what He knows is best for us. Sometimes, we might want to run away from what God is asking of us. We might think that doing something else will fulfill our lives . We will find that these things don't make us truly happy. We are happiest when we are doing what God designed us to do.

Read - Psalm 37:3-6

3-4 Get insurance with God and do a good deed,
settle down and stick to your last.
Keep company with God,
get in on the best.
5-6 Open up before God, keep nothing back;
he'll do whatever needs to be done:
He'll validate your life in the clear light of day
and stamp you with approval at high noon.

-Psalm 37:3-6



Explore- Psalm 37:3-6

- **How do these verses relate to living a Life on Fire?**
- **When things get tough when we're living a Life on Fire, what do these verse tell us we should do?**
- **What does the phrase "get insurance with God and do a good deed" mean?**

Sometimes people will not like our calling. Those people may even be our friends, family, or church community. Remember how some people didn't like what Daniel was doing and threw him into the lion's den? Imagine how crazy Paul's family thought he was when he did a complete 180 degree turn and went from persecuting Christians to preaching the gospel. Even when faced with people who question our calling, we must be true to what God is asking us to do, because that is what having a Life on Fire is about.

"Once upon a time there was ___. Every day, ___. One day ___. Because of that, ___. Because of that, ___. Until finally ___."

-The Story Spine, used by Pixar Studios[2]

Closing Questions

1. Who are some of your favorite Bible characters?

2. How were their lives messy?

3. What are some things that God could ask somebody to do that might bother their community or communities?

4. How do all the ideas we discussed today help you to live a Life on Fire?



Personal Reflection & Action

Reflect on these questions individually and write your answers below:

1. What does your personal journey with God look like right now?

2. Can you think of a Bible character who had a messy story that you identify with most?

3. What do you think a Life on Fire could look like for you?

4. What are some things that God could be calling you to do?

Lesson Two - Service



First Look

Sometimes, school seems like the worst thing on the planet. It distracts us from all the important things in life, like friends, sports, music, and reflecting on who we are and what we're called to do. There is so much busy work. And really, it's not just school. Home, church, and work can create distractions too. How do we deal with these distractions? How can we have lives on fire even in the middle of the worksheets and assignments that life throws at us? The story of a boy named David is a great place to explore this question.

David was a simple shepherd boy and spent a lot of time out in the wilderness, alone, taking care of his sheep. Things didn't stay that way, though. The story of David and Goliath is a famous Bible story full of excitement and bravery. But David didn't go from zero to sixty in two seconds. His calling was gradual, and his time spent quietly herding sheep shaped him in important ways that made it possible for him to stand up to Goliath, and later in his life, lead as the King of Israel.

Characters

David - Shepherd, runt of the family, future king of Israel

Samuel - Prophet of God

Jesse - David's father

Saul - The king of Israel

Goliath - Giant Philistine

David's Story

At this time in Israel's history, Saul was the king. He was the first King and he had been anointed by God for the task. However, Saul lost sight of his calling as king, and did what felt good to him at the time instead of what God wanted. God told the prophet Samuel he has rejected Saul as king asked Samuel to anoint a new king (1 Samuel 16:1).

Read - 1 Samuel 16:10-13

10 Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel. Samuel was blunt with Jesse, "God hasn't chosen any of these."

11 Then he asked Jesse, "Is this it? Are there no more sons?"
"Well, yes, there's the runt. But he's out tending the sheep."
Samuel ordered Jesse, "Go get him. We're not moving from this spot until he's here."

12 Jesse sent for him. He was brought in, the very picture of health—bright-eyed, good-looking.
God said, "Up on your feet! Anoint him! This is the one."

13 Samuel took his flask of oil and anointed him, with his brothers standing around watching. The Spirit of God entered David like a rush of wind, God vitally empowering him for the rest of his life.

- 1 Samuel 16:10-13

Explore- 1 Samuel 16:10-13

- **What clues do these verses give that tell us that David was a surprise choice for the next King of Israel?**
- **What can we learn about the relationship between calling and service from this passage?**
- **How do you think David felt after these events?**
- **How do you think his brothers felt?**

1 & 2 Samuel

Author:
The author is unknown.

Audience:
The Israelites

Date Written:
After Israel was divided into two kingdoms, Israel (north) and Judah (south), in 930 B.C.[1,2]

David was an unlikely choice for King. He was the youngest son and probably the smallest in his family. He spent most of his of time tending sheep. Not a very kingly activity.

Read - 1 Samuel 16:14-23

14 At that very moment the Spirit of God left Saul and in its place a black mood sent byGod settled on him. He was terrified.

15-16 Saul's advisors said, "This awful tormenting depression from God is making your life miserable. O Master, let us help. Let us look for someone who can play the harp. When the black mood from God moves in, he'll play his music and you'll feel better."

17 Saul told his servants, "Go ahead. Find me someone who can play well and bring him to me."

18 One of the young men spoke up, "I know someone. I've seen him myself: the son of Jesse of Bethlehem, an excellent musician. He's also courageous, of age, well-spoken, and good-looking. And God is with him."

19 So Saul sent messengers to Jesse requesting, "Send your son David to me, the one who tends the sheep."

20-21 Jesse took a donkey, loaded it with a couple of loaves of bread, a flask of wine, and a young goat, and sent his son David with it to Saul. David came to Saul and stood before him. Saul liked him immediately and made him his right-hand man.

22 Saul sent word back to Jesse: "Thank you. David will stay here. He's just the one I was looking for. I'm very impressed by him."

23 After that, whenever the bad depression from God tormented Saul, David got out his harp and played. That would calm Saul down, and he would feel better as the moodiness lifted.

- 1 Samuel 16:14-23

Historical Setting:

Israel is transitioning from being led by Judges to being led by a king throughout the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. At the beginning of the book we meet the final Judge, Samuel, and continue to the first King, Saul, and on to the second King, David. The events in 1 Samuel take place between 1100-1011 B.C. The Events in 2 Samuel take place between 1011-971 B.C.[1,2]

Explore - 1 Samuel 16:14-23

- **What are some characteristics that Saul's servants used to describe David?**
- **Why did David play the lyre for Saul, even though he was going to be taking Saul's place as King in the future?**
- **If you were David, how would you have felt working and serving King Saul, even though Saul was not being a good king?**

By this time, David had already been anointed to be the next king of Israel. Even though David knew he was in line to be King, he chose to give Saul respect. It's one of the most difficult things for us to do, practicing hard things not just once, but over and over. But God uses them to help us grow. When David served Saul, even though it was hard, God was preparing David's heart for being the future king of His people.

It's those small and tough things that God uses to prepare us for greatness. In David's case, it prepared him for one of the most well-known battles of all time.

Read - 1 Samuel 17: 8-11, 32-37

8-10 Goliath stood there and called out to the Israelite troops, "Why bother using your whole army? Am I not Philistine enough for you? And you're all committed to Saul, aren't you? So pick your best fighter and pit him against me. If he gets the upper hand and kills me, the Philistines will all become your slaves. But if I get the upper hand and kill him, you'll all become our slaves and serve us. I challenge the troops of Israel this day. Give me a man. Let us fight it out together!"
11 When Saul and his troops heard the Philistine's challenge, they were terrified and lost all hope.

...

32 "Master," said David, "don't give up hope. I'm ready to go and fight this Philistine."

33 Saul answered David, "You can't go and fight this Philistine.

You're too young and inexperienced—and he's been at this fighting business since before you were born."

34-37 David said, "I've been a shepherd, tending sheep for my father. Whenever a lion or bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I'd go after it, knock it down, and rescue the lamb. If it turned on me, I'd grab it by the throat, wring its neck, and kill it. Lion or bear, it made no difference—I killed it. And I'll do the same to this Philistine pig who is taunting the troops of God-Alive. God, who delivered me from the teeth of the lion and the claws of the bear, will deliver me from this Philistine."
Saul said, "Go. And God help you!"

- 1 Samuel 17: 8-11, 32-37



Explore - 1 Samuel 17: 8-11, 32-37

- **How did the events that David talks about in verses 34-37 prepare him to confront Goliath?**
- **Why was David confident that he could defeat Goliath?**
- **Why was Saul cautious of letting David battle Goliath?**

When Goliath challenged Saul and his people to a duel , David rose to the challenge without hesitation. David was there only to visit his brothers who were fighting in Saul's army. When Saul questioned David's ability to confront Goliath, David told Saul about times when he faced other adversaries such as when a lion and a bear attacked his herd.

Just like the parable of the talents that Jesus tells in Matthew 25:14-30, to begin with, David was entrusted with something small - taking care of sheep. Over time, he went on to bigger things - serving Saul, fighting Goliath, and eventually, becoming King. He did well with the little things, and because of that, he was able to face bigger hurdles in his future.

Do you remember what school was like when you were in first grade? You were just beginning to learn how to read and how to add and subtract. Now that you are older, you probably look back onto those things and think about how easy school was before you had homework every night, had to learn algebra, and write research papers.

But those early years gave you the building blocks to understand and learn the things you are doing right now. The things you are learning right now will give you the information you need to do more difficult things in the future, like going to college and having a career. If you had chosen not to learn the things you were supposed to when you were younger, you wouldn't be where you are right now. Looking back, those things may seem like they were easy, but at the time, that school level was a challenge you had to meet.

If David had not given his all when he was shepherding, there is no way he would have been prepared to face Goliath. That would have taken an impossible amount of courage to begin with, but since he had learned how to trust and serve well in smaller situations, like protecting his herd of sheep against an attacking bear or lion, he was able to calmly rise to the challenge and protect his people, God's sheep, from Goliath.



Closing Questions

1. Why do you think David acted the way he did?

2. How did David's early years of service help him to defeat Goliath?

3. What is the relationship between being humble and doing difficult tasks?

4. How can you see David being on fire even through seemingly unimportant tasks?

Personal Reflection & Action

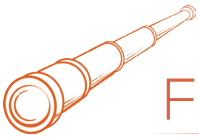
Reflect on these questions individually and write your answers below:

1. Do you see service as something that is honorable or something that is boring?

2. What type of service do you see God asking you to do in your life right now?

3. How can you be a good steward of your time now, so that when God asks you to do more in your life you will be ready?

Lesson Three - Seeking God



First Look

Jesus said that eternal life was all about knowing God. But how can we even know God? Sure, we can do things for Him. We can trust that He works things out, and live the best we can. But how can we actually know God? He's far away and it is hard to get to Him. David struggled with this question in his story, even when things were going great for him. In the middle of making mistakes, he continued to struggle with it. But he kept pushing forward, trying to know God, even when it was hard to see Him on the other end.

David's Story



Read - Acts 13:20-22

20-22 "Up to the time of Samuel the prophet, God provided judges to lead them. But then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul, son of Kish, out of the tribe of Benjamin. After Saul had ruled forty years, God removed him from office and put King David in his place, with this commendation: 'I've searched the land and found this David, son of Jesse. He's a man whose heart beats to my heart, a man who will do what I tell him.'

-Acts 13:20-22

Characters

David - King of Israel, poet and songwriter

God - David's friend, Lord, and guide

Nathan - Prophet



Explore - Acts 13:20-22

- **What did God mean when he said that David was "a man whose heart beats to my heart?"**
- **Why did God "remove" Saul from office?**

We often hear people say that David was a man after God's own heart. What does that mean? David had a very close and personal relationship with God. Though David lived in a very different time than we do now, his search for connecting with God isn't that different from our search now. We want to be known by God just as much as David did; we want to belong to God just as David wanted to belong. Let's look at some of the ways David connected with God throughout his life.



Read - Psalm 139:23-24

23-24 Investigate my life, O God,
find out everything about me;
Cross-examine and test me,
get a clear picture of what I'm about;
See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong—
then guide me on the road to eternal life.

- Psalm 139:23-24



Explore - Psalm 139:23-24

- **What does this Psalm that David wrote tell us about the way he viewed his relationship with God?**
- **What things does David ask God for in this passage?**

David was very honest and transparent in his relationship with God. Rather than looking into his own heart, David let God do the searching. He spent a great deal of time both in prayer and meditation on God's word. He spent much of his time opening his heart to God by reading scripture, praying, and writing songs and poems. As a result, he wrote 74 Psalms of his thoughts[1]!

When we read the Psalms, we can see David's joy, pain, love, anger, praise, and sadness very clearly. David did not feel the need to pretend to be somebody he wasn't when he was around God. David knew that God already understood his heart and loved him anyway. They had a real relationship.

Read - Psalm 25:4-5, 1:1-3

4 Show me your ways, Lord,
teach me your paths.
5 Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.

- Psalm 25:4,5

1 Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,

2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and
night.

3 That person is like a tree planted by
streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither–
whatever they do prospers.

- Psalm 1:1-3

The Book of Psalms

Authors:
David, Solomon (David's son), Moses, Ethan, the Sons of Korah, Heman and other unknown authors

Audience:
God's people

Date written:
Between 1440 (time of Moses) to around 538 B.C (after the Babylonian Exile)

The Book of Psalms has nearly 2500 verses.[1,2]

Explore - Psalm 25:4-5, 1:1-3

- **What can we learn from the first passage about how David viewed God's laws?**
- **Explain the imagery in Psalm 1:1-3 above.**

David came to love God's laws, understanding them as a blessing not a hinderance. Even in the very first verse of the Psalms, he shares his love for God and Scripture.

David used his prayer time to open up his heart to God and share exactly what was on his mind. During David's darkest times, he reached out to God, even when he felt like his prayers were hitting a brick wall.



Read - Psalm 55:1-2, 142:1-4

1 Listen to my prayer, O God,
do not ignore my plea;
2 hear me and answer me.
-Psalm 55:1,2

1 I cry aloud to the Lord;
I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy.
2 I pour out before him my complaint;
before him I tell my trouble.
3 When my spirit grows faint within me,
it is you who watch over my way.
In the path where I walk
people have hidden a snare for me.
4 Look and see, there is no one at my right hand;
no one is concerned for me.
I have no refuge;
no one cares for my life.

-Psalm 142:1-4



Explore - Psalm 55:1-2, 142:1-4

We can find every emotion, every mood, in David's psalms. He was honest when he was angry and wished for God to trample his enemies. He was honest when he was overjoyed with love for God and those around him. He was honest when he made huge mistakes. He left nothing out when he talked to God, and because of that he was able to grow in an amazing way.

He may have been a man after God's own heart, but David's story is messy too.

David was a king, a mighty warrior, a musician, loved by many, and had a great relationship with his Creator. But one day, he too made a mistake by committing adultery with another man's wife, lying about it several times, then finally sending that man to the front lines, where he was killed. He had strayed off course. God knew that He needed to get a message to David. So, God sent the prophet Nathan to tell David what he had done. But He did it in a way that would help David realize his mistake and make things right from the bottom of his heart.



Read - 2 Samuel 12:1-9

1 The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said,
"There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor.

2 The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle,

3 but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

4 "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

5 David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! 6 He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul.

8 I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more.

9 Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites."

- 2 Samuel 12:1-9



Explore - 2 Samuel 12:1-9

David had blindly committed sin, unaware of how far he had fallen. As soon as the weight of his sin had sunk in, he honestly repented and came to God. This is the psalm that David wrote after he came to realize his mistake.



Read - Psalm 51:1-4, 10-12

1 Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

...

10 Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

- Psalm 51:1-4, 10-12

Explore - Psalm 51:1-4, 10-12

It's raw. It's messy. And it is very honest.

Even in the darkness, David sought God and was honest with Him. The reason why we see David as such a strong biblical character who lived his Life on Fire for God, is that he actually knew God. He freely praised and worshipped God, and was not afraid to humble himself and ask for forgiveness for his mistakes.

David's spiritual practices can help us too. We can learn to speak honestly with God about what is on our minds and hearts, be bold enough to be angry with God, be humble enough to repent, tell God that we don't think we can go on, praise him for his goodness and wonder, find the hope that He freely offers to us, and tell God that sometimes it's hard to know if He's even listening. These are all traits of a real relationship with God.

David knew his story was messy, but he kept pushing forward anyway.

Closing Questions

1. What was it about David's spirituality that made him comfortable to come to God with anything?

2. What are a few things that keep people from seeing God's law the way David did?

3. What emotions do people usually hide from God?

4. What was it about David's perspective that allowed him to repent so quickly?

Personal Reflection & Action

Reflect on these questions individually and write your answers below:

1. Is there anything you are holding back from God that is preventing you from experiencing joy in your life?

2. What is one way you can practice giving God a chance to speak into your life?

3. What are two or three ways that you can connect with God more? Pick one of those things to practice.

Lesson Four - Rerouting



First Look

Moses is an epic character with an epic story. Born a Hebrew slave but raised in an Egyptian palace, accused of murder, he ran away from his problems to the desert. He was visited by God in the form of a burning bush, freed God's people from Pharaoh, divided the waters of the Red Sea, and met with God on the top of a mountain to get the Ten Commandments and give them to the Israelites.

Pretty epic, huh?

We often think of Moses as one of the biggest characters in the Bible. His story is full of the conflict that fuels Hollywood movies. But when we look at his story in Exodus, we can see that it wasn't always so fast-paced. God chose Moses for a specific purpose, but Moses took a detour by killing an Egyptian who was abusing a Hebrew slave and running away.

Moses was about 40 years old when he ran away from Egypt (Ex. 2:11-15). By the time God called him back to Egypt to deliver his people, Moses was 80 years old, and his brother Aaron was 83 (Exodus 7:7). He had lived quite a few years before his story started picking up, and even more years passed before Moses' story took a twist - and led him back to Egypt.

Characters

Moses - Main character, Hebrew, shepherd of Israel

Jethro/Reuel - Moses's father-in-law and mentor

Zipporah - Moses' wife

Pharaoh - Oppressive to the Hebrew people

Hebrew Slaves - God's people, who were enslaved in Egypt

God/Burning Bush - God speaks to Moses through a bush that does not burn up

What happened between those two points in Moses story that brought him to the burning bush?

Moses' Story



Read - Exodus 2:11-20

11-12 Time passed. Moses grew up. One day he went and saw his brothers, saw all that hard labor. Then he saw an Egyptian hit a Hebrew—one of his relatives! He looked this way and then that; when he realized there was no one in sight, he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand.

13 The next day he went out there again. Two Hebrew men were fighting. He spoke to the man who started it: "Why are you hitting your neighbor?"

14 The man shot back: "Who do you think you are, telling us what to do? Are you going to kill me the way you killed that Egyptian?" Then Moses panicked: "Word's gotten out—people know about this."

15 Pharaoh heard about it and tried to kill Moses, but Moses got away to the land of Midian. He sat down by a well.

16-17 The priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came and drew water, filling the troughs and watering their father's sheep. When some shepherds came and chased the girls off, Moses came to their rescue and helped them water their sheep.

18 When they got home to their father, Reuel, he said, "That didn't take long. Why are you back so soon?"

19 "An Egyptian," they said, "rescued us from a bunch of shepherds. Why, he even drew water for us and watered the sheep."

20 He said, "So where is he? Why did you leave him behind? Invite him so he can have something to eat with us."

-Exodus 2:11-20

Explore - Exodus 2:11-20

- **Why did Moses kill the Egyptian?**
- **Would you say that Moses knew how to control his anger? Why or why not?**
- **Why did the Hebrew men say "Who do you think you are, telling us what to do? Are you going to kill me the way you killed that Egyptian? " to Moses?**
- **Moses killed a man. So why did he help the Midianite women?**
- **Based on these verses, what can we tell about how Moses felt about justice?**

Exodus

Author:
The author is generally believed to be Moses.

Audience:
The Israelites

Date Written:
Between 1446-1406 B.C.

Historical Setting:
The book of Exodus takes place about 400 years after the story of Joseph in Genesis. When Joseph's family (the descendants of Abraham) came to Egypt, the Egyptian leaders were friendly to them, but sometime within the span of those 400 years, a revolt happened and new Egyptian monarchs took the throne. They were suspicious of foreigners and as the Israelites grew in number, they were forced into slavery and oppression. The book was written soon after the Exodus took place.[1,2]

Throughout Moses' life, you can see that he always had a very strong sense of justice. He studied law and politics as he grew up in Egyptian society. He rescued the daughters of Jethro (who is also called Reuel sometimes, like in the above verse) at the well from some shady characters. He delivered the Ten Commandments to Israel understanding the background of law. He acted as the judge in Israel, settling disputes to the point that he was judging around the clock, until his father-in-law Jethro suggested setting up a council of judges to lighten the load. Moses was a lawyer, a judge, a vigilante.

But he made a big mistake.

God had placed him in circumstances that allowed him to be involved in Egyptian culture and society and to hopefully change things from the inside, while also knowing that he came from the humble beginnings of an oppressed group of people. But one day Moses' sense of right and wrong caused him to well up in anger, and he wound up killing another man. He had to run away, erasing the opportunity to save God's people from the inside.



Read - Exodus 2:21-23, 3:1-2, 7-12

21-22 Moses agreed to settle down there with the man, who then gave his daughter Zipporah (Bird) to him for his wife. She had a son, and Moses named him Gershom (Sojourner), saying, "I'm a sojourner in a foreign country."

23 Many years later the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery and cried out. Their cries for relief from their hard labor ascended to God.

...

3:1-2 Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the west end of the wilderness and came to the mountain of God, Horeb. The angel of God appeared to him in flames of fire blazing out of the middle of a bush. He looked. The bush was blazing away but it didn't burn up.

...

7-8 God said, "I've taken a good, long look at the affliction of my people in Egypt. I've heard their cries for deliverance from their slave masters; I know all about their pain. And now I have come down to help them, pry them loose from the grip of Egypt, get them out of that country and bring them to a good land with wide-open spaces, a land lush with milk and honey, the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

9-10 "The Israelite cry for help has come to me, and I've seen for myself how cruelly they're being treated by the Egyptians. It's time for you to go back: I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the People of Israel, out of Egypt."

11 Moses answered God, "But why me? What makes you think that I could ever go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

12 "I'll be with you," God said. "And this will be the proof that I am the one who sent you: When you have brought my people out of Egypt, you will worship God right here at this very mountain."

-Exodus 2:21-23, 3:1-2, 7-12

Explore- Exodus 2:21-23, 3:1-2, 7-12

- **Why do you think Moses spent so long in the desert before God called him back to Egypt?**
- **What parallels can we find between Moses career as a shepherd and his call from God to lead his people our of Egypt?**
- **How did Moses react to God asking him to lead His people out of Egypt?**
- **Why did Moses react that way?**
- **How did God say Moses would be able to prove that God was with him?**

Moses' story leads him to run to the desert, into isolation and exile, but also to find an earthly guide and father figure in Jethro, the Midianite priest. Jethro gave Moses a new job to do. It wasn't as grand and prestigious as serving as nobility in Egyptian society. Sitting in the desert, tending to sheep day after day, he had a lot of time to reflect on his life, the special circumstances God had placed him in as a child, and what God had planned next for his life. Not only did that experience teach Moses about his past, it also taught him patience. Moses' sense of justice was good, but the way that he lost his temper and killed the Egyptian was not. God had to give him a way to learn patience so he could be the humble and strong leader God had designed him to be. Then, and only then, does God appear to Moses and call him to the next stage of his journey.

Pharaohs

Recent scholarly and archaeological research of Egyptian history points to either Thutmose III and Amunhotep III or Seti I and Ramses II as the two oppressive pharaohs in the Exodus story.[1]

Read - Exodus 3:1-12

1-2 Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the west end of the wilderness and came to the mountain of God, Horeb. The angel of God appeared to him in flames of fire blazing out of the middle of a bush. He looked. The bush was blazing away but it didn't burn up.

3 Moses said, "What's going on here? I can't believe this! Amazing! Why doesn't the bush burn up?"

4 God saw that he had stopped to look. God called to him from out of the bush, "Moses! Moses!"
He said, "Yes? I'm right here!"

5 God said, "Don't come any closer. Remove your sandals from your feet. You're standing on holy ground."

6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father: The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob."
Moses hid his face, afraid to look at God.

7-8 God said, "I've taken a good, long look at the affliction of my people in Egypt. I've heard their cries for deliverance from their slave masters; I know all about their pain. And now I have come down to help them, pry them loose from the grip of Egypt, get them out of that country and bring them to a good land with wide-open spaces, a land lush with milk and honey, the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

9-10 "The Israelite cry for help has come to me, and I've seen for myself how cruelly they're being treated by the Egyptians. It's time for you to go back: I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the People of Israel, out of Egypt."

11 Moses answered God, "But why me? What makes you think that I could ever go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

12 "I'll be with you," God said. "And this will be the proof that I am the one who sent you: When you have brought my people out of Egypt, you will worship God right here at this very mountain."

-Exodus 3:1-12

Explore- Exodus 3:1-12

Have you ever used a GPS, or maybe a maps app on a smartphone? The GPS helps us find the best route from Point A to Point B. But of course we don't have to take that route. The GPS doesn't take over our car and control our every move. We can turn the car left even if the GPS is telling us to go straight. Sometimes we

accidentally take a wrong turn, and sometimes we do it on purpose.

The cool thing about a GPS is that it reroutes us. No matter which way we turn, even if we strike out on our own , it will reroute and give us new directions.

That's exactly what God did with Moses. Moses took a wrong turn. It probably would have been a lot easier to release the Hebrews from captivity if Moses had been able to work from the inside. But God rerouted Moses into the desert for a soul-searching venture, and when Moses was ready, he was able to live out his passion for justice and his people, and use his knowledge of the Pharaoh to bring God's people into the next chapter of their story.



Closing Questions

1. How did God use Moses' upbringing to equip him to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt?

2. What emotions do you imagine Moses felt as he thought back on the first 40 years of his life?

3. How can you see Moses Life on Fire even though he took a detour from God's original path?

Personal Reflection & Action

Reflect on these questions individually and write your answers below:

1. When was a time that you were forced to reflect on a mistake that you made?

2. What did you learn about yourself during that experience?

3. As you think about it now, how do you think God wants to use the lesson you learned from your mistake?

4. Moses was passionate about justice. What is something you are or could be passionate about? Do something this week to develop in this area.

Lesson Five - Engaging Culture



First Look

Daniel's story is one that we can really relate to. When he was young, the Israelites were taken by the Babylonian king and forced to live in exile in Babylon. The culture of Babylon was very different from the culture of Israel. They dressed differently, talked differently, and worshipped other Gods. The Israelites had each other, but they were far from home. Sometimes that's what it feels like living on this planet, knowing that the way our world is now is not how God designed it to be. Sometimes we feel like we are in exile, just like Daniel and the Israelites.

Characters

Daniel/Belshazzar -
Jew, author of the book, main character

Hannaniah/Shadrach -
Jew, friend of Daniel

Mishael/Meshach -
Jew, friend of Daniel

Azariah/Abednego -
Jew, friend of Daniel

King Nebuchadnezzar II -
King of Babylon, has bad dreams

Have you ever been to another country? It's hard to get people to understand when you aren't speaking the same language. You might even be trying to say something simple like, "Where is the bathroom?" If you don't know the right word to convey the message, they won't hear you, won't understand you, or will think you are saying something totally different!

In Daniel's story, we see how he was able to speak the "language" of the culture that he was in to build relationships and introduce the Babylonians to God.

Daniel's Story



Read - Daniel 1:3-6

3-5 The king told Ashpenaz, head of the palace staff, to get some Israelites from the royal family and nobility—young men who were healthy and handsome, intelligent and well-educated, good prospects for leadership positions in the government, perfect specimens!—and indoctrinate them in the Babylonian language and the lore of magic and fortune telling. The king then ordered that they be

served from the same menu as the royal table—the best food, the finest wine. After three years of training they would be given positions in the king's court.

6-7 Four young men from Judah—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—were among those selected. The head of the palace staff gave them Babylonian names: Daniel was named Belteshazzar, Hananiah was named Shadrach, Mishael was named Meshach, Azariah was named Abednego.

- Daniel 1:3-6



Explore- Daniel 1:3-6

- **What were Daniel and his friends required to do during their three years of training?**
- **What is a modern day parallel for those things?**

Daniel and his friends were thrown into a whole new culture. It was probably an exciting time for them, but there were a few things they weren't okay with.



Read - Daniel 1: 8-17a

8-10 But Daniel determined that he would not defile himself by eating the king's food or drinking his wine, so he asked the head of the palace staff to exempt him from the royal diet. The head of the palace staff, by God's grace, liked Daniel, but he warned him, "I'm afraid of what my master the king will do. He is the one who assigned this diet and if he sees that you are not as healthy as the rest, he'll have my head!"

11-13 But Daniel appealed to a steward who had been assigned by the head of the palace staff to be in charge of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: "Try us out for ten days on a simple diet of vegetables and water. Then compare us with the young men who eat from the royal menu. Make your decision on the basis of what you see."

14-16 The steward agreed to do it and fed them vegetables and water for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked better

and more robust than all the others who had been eating from the royal menu. So the steward continued to exempt them from the royal menu of food and drink and served them only vegetables.

17a God gave these four young men knowledge and skill in both books and life. In addition, Daniel was gifted in understanding all sorts of visions and dreams.

- Daniel 1: 8-17a



Explore - Daniel 1: 8-17a

Daniel

Author: Daniel

Audience: Jewish Exiles living in Babylon

Date Written: About 605-530 B.C.[1,2]

- **Why would Daniel and his friends ask to skip the king's diet, but accept their new names and learn the language and literature of Babylon?**
- **What was Daniel able to show to the king's servants about his character by eating a simple diet?**
- **Why do you think God gave Daniel and his friends knowledge of all kinds of literature and learning?**

Daniel and his friends were true to what God asked them to specifically avoid, but still learned everything else about the culture they were in.



Read - Daniel 1: 17b-20

17b At the end of the time set by the king for their training, the head of the royal staff brought them in to Nebuchadnezzar. When the king interviewed them, he found them far superior to all the other young men. None were a match for Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

19-20 And so they took their place in the king's service. Whenever the king consulted them on anything, on books or on life, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his kingdom put together.

- Daniel 1: 17b-20

Explore - Daniel 1: 17b-20

- **Why were Daniel and his friends set apart from the other young men?**
- **What does this biblical story demonstrate about how people can gain influence in their culture?**

You probably know the rest of the story. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream, and nobody in the land could interpret it. The king was so angry, he threatened to kill all of his wise men. Daniel prayed to God to help him interpret the dream, and God did.

Read - Daniel 2:24-30

24 So Daniel went back to Arioch, who had been put in charge of the execution. He said, "Call off the execution! Take me to the king and I'll interpret his dream."

25 Arioch didn't lose a minute. He ran to the king, bringing Daniel with him, and said, "I've found a man from the exiles of Judah who can interpret the king's dream!"

26 The king asked Daniel (renamed in Babylonian, Belteshazzar), "Are you sure you can do this—tell me the dream I had and interpret it for me?"

27-28 Daniel answered the king, "No mere human can solve the king's mystery, I don't care who it is—no wise man, enchanter, magician, diviner. But there is a God in heaven who solves mysteries, and

Historical Setting:

Judah has a series of bad kings during the lead up to the Jews' exile in Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar (II) took control of Jerusalem and required the current king of Jerusalem, Jehoiakim, to pay "tribute" to him. After some time, Jehioakim, and subsequent kings, refused to do so which resulted in subsequent deportations. In total there were three deportations over the course of fifteen years, until the Jewish nation fell completely. Daniel and his friends were probably taken during the first deportation, which means that he and his friends spent Judah's last days in Babylon.[1,2]

he has solved this one. He is letting King Nebuchadnezzar in on what is going to happen in the days ahead. This is the dream you had when you were lying on your bed, the vision that filled your mind:

29-30 "While you were stretched out on your bed, O king, thoughts came to you regarding what is coming in the days ahead.The Revealer of Mysteries showed you what will happen. But the interpretation is given through me, not because I'm any smarter than anyone else in the country, but so that you will know what it means, so that you will understand what you dreamed.

- Daniel 2:24-30



Explore- Daniel 2:24-30

- **Why did God reveal the dream to Daniel?**
- **Why would it be important for the king to understand the dream?**
- **Often we are told not to engage in the culture around us. What parts of Daniel's story challenge that idea?**

So why would God put Daniel in a place where he could speak into the life of the King, a man who probably could care less about God and his people? God puts people in these cultures because he wants to help them. In order to speak into culture, you must first know how to speak the language. God wanted to help the King, so he encouraged Daniel and his friends in the study of Babylonian culture, and through that they were able to gain influence and ultimately, access to the King.

There were parts of the culture of Babylon that Daniel and his friends refused to participate in, like the palace diet, because it went against their beliefs. But they also weren't afraid to participate in reading and learning new things, and there's a lesson in that for us.

There are good things about culture, and there are bad things about culture. In order to reach out to the people in our communities, we must understand their culture, filtering the bad parts of culture out and using the good parts of culture to reach people.

Until you get to know someone and understand their background - the culture that they grew up in and know - you can't begin to help them understand Jesus and how awesome he is.



Closing Questions

1. What can we learn from Daniel's story about engaging in the culture around him to apply to our own lives today?

2. What are some ways that you can influence the culture around you by speaking its "language?"

3. How does speaking into the culture around us reflect a Life on Fire for God?

Personal Reflection & Action

Reflect on these questions individually and write your answers below:

1. What are some special ways that God has equipped you to engage culture?

2. Name three steps you can take to either develop those talents and skills or to find a way to impact people outside of your church community with them.

3. How can you support others who are trying to change culture?

Lesson Six - Remembering Roots



First Look

It is important to be able to translate what we know into the language of a culture, but it doesn't matter if we lose who we are in the process. When you are reaching out into the world, how do you remember your spiritual roots? Daniel and his friends can show us how they worked to remember their roots even when they faced adversity.

Daniel's Story



Read - Mark 8:34-37

34-37 Calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to saving yourself, your true self. What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you? What could you ever trade your soul for?

- Jesus, Mark 8:34-37



Explore- Mark 8:34-37

- **What did Jesus mean when he said, "What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you?"**
- **What are some things that we often try to receive in exchange for our soul?**

Names

Daniel and his friend's Babylonian names, given to them when they were chosen to learn and work at the palace, are derived from the names of Babylonian gods. This was done to try make Daniel and his friends feel especially separated from their culture and their God.[1]

These words were spoken by Jesus, but we can see how Daniel understood this 500 years before Jesus was on earth. Let's take a look at how Daniel and his friends lived this out, even when people were working against them. Let's revisit some of the stories of Daniel that we've already talked about.



Read - Daniel 1:8-16

8-10 But Daniel determined that he would not defile himself by eating the king's food or drinking his wine, so he asked the head of the palace staff to exempt him from the royal diet. The head of the palace staff, by God's grace, liked Daniel, but he warned him, "I'm afraid of what my master the king will do. He is the one who assigned this diet and if he sees that you are not as healthy as the rest, he'll have my head!"

11-13 But Daniel appealed to a steward who had been assigned by the head of the palace staff to be in charge of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: "Try us out for ten days on a simple diet of vegetables and water. Then compare us with the young men who eat from the royal menu. Make your decision on the basis of what you see."

14-16 The steward agreed to do it and fed them vegetables and water for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked better and more robust than all the others who had been eating from the royal menu. So the steward continued to exempt them from the royal menu of food and drink and served them only vegetables.

- Daniel 1:8-16



Explore - Daniel 1:8-16

- **Why did Daniel and his friends ask to skip the diet of the king's palace?**
- **What clues in the text can we find that indicate that it was personally important to Daniel and his friends that they not eat the king's food?**
- **How does this story show that Daniel was remembering his roots?**

Daniel had the courage to stand up against something that he believed God did not want him to do. He could have decided that he didn't want to ruffle feathers or make a big deal out of things. Maybe he was afraid that he would get in trouble, maybe even be killed, for refusing to eat the king's diet. But because he was on fire for God, he made up his mind that he would stay true to what God asked of him.

If we take a look at how Daniel reacted when King Nebuchadnezzar's dream could not be interpreted and he decided to kill a bunch of his servants, we can see another way that Daniel remembered his roots.



Read - Daniel 2: 17-23

17-18 Daniel then went home and told his companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what was going on. He asked them to pray to the God of heaven for mercy in solving this mystery so that the four of them wouldn't be killed along with the whole company of Babylonian wise men.

19-23 That night the answer to the mystery was given to Daniel in a vision. Daniel blessed the God of heaven, saying,

"Blessed be the name of God,
forever and ever.

He knows all, does all:
He changes the seasons and guides history,

He raises up kings and also brings them down,
he provides both intelligence and discernment,

He opens up the depths, tells secrets,
sees in the dark—light spills out of him!

God of all my ancestors, all thanks! all praise!
You made me wise and strong.

And now you've shown us what we asked for.
You've solved the king's mystery."

- Daniel 2: 17-23

Explore - Daniel 2: 17-23

- **According to the text, what were the first two things Daniel did after he learned that the King was going to kill all his wise men if they couldn't interpret his dream?**
- **How was Daniel able to interpret the dream?**
- **What was the first thing that Daniel did when he received his answer?**
- **How did remembering Daniel's roots help him to interpret the dream?**

Daniel didn't try to use his own knowledge and skill to interpret the dream. He got support from his friends, and went to God. He knew that it was through God that they had been placed in this special position, and since they were God's people, Daniel trusted that God would deliver them.

Daniel's friends had their own chance to remember their roots.

If you remember the story of the fiery furnace, King Nebuchadnezzar's dream was about a giant statue that represented different kingdoms. Daniel told the king that his kingdom would fall. Nebuchadnezzar didn't really listen to the warning, and in desperation to solidify that he was an awesome king, he built his own real-life version of the statue, this time entirely made out of gold. He then instructed everyone to bow down to the statue, which represented the king and his kingdom, when the band started to play.

Read - Daniel 3:8-15

8-12 Just then, some Babylonian fortunetellers stepped up and accused the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "Long live the king! You gave strict orders, O king, that when the big band started playing, everyone had to fall to their knees and worship the gold statue, and whoever did not go to their knees and worship it had to be pitched into a roaring furnace. Well, there are some Jews here—

The first 6 chapters of Daniel are about historical events. The remaining chapters are prophetic writing.[2]

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have placed in high positions in the province of Babylon. These men are ignoring you, O king. They don't respect your gods and they won't worship the gold statue you set up."

13-15 Furious, King Nebuchadnezzar ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be brought in. When the men were brought in, Nebuchadnezzar asked, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you don't respect my gods and refuse to worship the gold statue that I have set up? I'm giving you a second chance—but from now on, when the big band strikes up you must go to your knees and worship the statue I have made. If you don't worship it, you will be pitched into a roaring furnace, no questions asked. Who is the god who can rescue you from my power?"

- Daniel 3:8-15



Explore- Daniel 3:8-15

- **Why did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow down to the statue?**
- **What kind of danger did they face by choosing not to obey the order?**



Read - Daniel 3:16-26

16-18 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar, "Your threat means nothing to us. If you throw us in the fire, the God we serve can rescue us from your roaring furnace and anything else you might cook up, O king. But even if he doesn't, it wouldn't make a bit of difference, O king. We still wouldn't serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up."

19-23 Nebuchadnezzar, his face purple with anger, cut off Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace fired up seven times hotter than usual. He ordered some strong men from the army to tie them up, hands and feet, and throw them into the roaring furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, bound hand and foot, fully dressed from head to toe, were pitched into the roaring fire. Because the king was in such a hurry and the furnace

was so hot, flames from the furnace killed the men who carried Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to it, while the fire raged around Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

24 Suddenly King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in alarm and said, "Didn't we throw three men, bound hand and foot, into the fire?"
"That's right, O king," they said.

25 "But look!" he said. "I see four men, walking around freely in the fire, completely unharmed! And the fourth man looks like a son of the gods!"

26 Nebuchadnezzar went to the door of the roaring furnace and called in, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the High God, come out here!"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego walked out of the fire.

- Daniel 3:16-26



Explore- Daniel 3:16-26

- **What clues can we find in these texts that suggest that the boys were confident when they confronted the king?**



Read - Daniel 3: 28-30

28 Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him! They ignored the king's orders and laid their bodies on the line rather than serve or worship any god but their own.

29 "Therefore I issue this decree: Anyone anywhere, of any race, color, or creed, who says anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be ripped to pieces, limb from limb, and their houses torn down. There has never been a god who can pull off a rescue like this."
30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

- Daniel 3: 28-30



Explore - Daniel 3: 28-30

- **How did God take care of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego during this experience?**

Daniel and his friends refused to forget where they came from. They remembered that they were God's people, even though they were in exile in a different land and culture. Since they were so young when they came to Babylon, they spent most of their lives in its culture, and yet they were able to remember their roots as children of God. They were some of the smartest men in all of the king's service, but they understood that none of the esteem or knowledge that they had would matter if they forgot where they came from, just like Jesus talked about in the first passage we explored.



Closing Questions

1. In a previous lesson we talked about how Daniel and his friends engaged with culture. Why do you think they were relaxed toward some aspects of the culture but stood firm against others?

2. In what ways would it be easy to forget our roots while trying to speak into our current culture?

3. Have you ever faced something that you had to stand up against because of your beliefs, even if it would have been easy to just give in?

4. How do the different perspectives of the stories of Daniel and his friends mirror what a Life on Fire could look like today?

Personal Reflection & Action

Reflect on these questions individually and write your answers below:

1. When have you forgotten your roots?

2. What are some things that you love about culture that might make you forget about your roots?

3. What are some ways to help you to remember your roots when you are also trying to engage in culture?

4. Is there anything in culture that you need to cut out of your life?

Lesson Seven - Overcoming Obstacles



First Look

Esther's story would make the perfect Hollywood movie. It has suspense, romance, intrigue, an evil plan, and an unlikely hero.

Esther is one of the most interesting women in the Bible. A girl from the wrong side of the tracks overcomes immense cultural and personal obstacles to ultimately save her people from a supervillain. Her story takes place in the same culture and setting as Daniel's story, but many years later, about 70 years after the Israelites were first forced into exile in Babylon.

Esther's Story

Before Esther enters the story, the stage is set with a new king of Persia, Cyrus, releasing God's people from exile in Babylon. We read in Ezra 1 that Cyrus had been moved to let the Jews return to Jerusalem to build a new temple of worship for God. But not all Jews decided to go back to Jerusalem. Some of them, like Esther's family, decided to stay in Persia.

After some time, a new king came to the throne of Persia. King Xerxes was a very proud king. The book of Esther begins with Xerxes throwing a party to show everyone his vast wealth and resources. The location was breathtaking, they drank from golden cups, the pavement was made out of jewels, and he shared the best royal food with his guests. He tried to show to his guests that his empire had limitless resources and he had incredible power.

Characters

Esther/Hadassah - A Jew, becomes queen, saves her people

Mordecai - Esther's cousin, a Jew

King Xerxes - King of Persian Empire

Haman - Xerxes' right hand man, wants to kill all the Jews

Hagai - The King's assistant, in charge of training and treatments of Esther

Vashti - The Queen at the beginning of the story



Read - Esther 1:10-12a, 16-22

10-11 On the seventh day of the party, the king, high on the wine, ordered the seven eunuchs who were his personal servants (Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas) to bring him Queen Vashti resplendent in her royal crown. He wanted to show off her beauty to the guests and officials. She was extremely good-looking.

12 But Queen Vashti refused to come, refused the summons delivered by the eunuchs. The king lost his temper.Seething with anger over her insolence, the king called in his counselors, all experts in legal matters.

...

16-18 Memucan spoke up in the council of the king and princes: "It's not only the king Queen Vashti has insulted, it's all of us, leaders and people alike in every last one of King Xerxes' provinces. The word's going to get out: 'Did you hear the latest about Queen Vashti? King Xerxes ordered her to be brought before him and she wouldn't do it!' When the women hear it, they'll start treating their husbands with contempt. The day the wives of the Persian and Mede officials get wind of the queen's insolence, they'll be out of control. Is that what we want, a country of angry women who don't know their place?

19-20 "So, if the king agrees, let him pronounce a royal ruling and have it recorded in the laws of the Persians and Medes so that it cannot be revoked, that Vashti is permanently banned from King Xerxes' presence. And then let the king give her royal position to a woman who knows her place. When the king's ruling becomes public knowledge throughout the kingdom, extensive as it is, every woman, regardless of her social position, will show proper respect to her husband."

21-22 The king and the princes liked this. The king did what Memucan proposed. He sent bulletins to every part of the kingdom, to each province in its own script, to each people in their own language: "Every man is master of his own house; whatever he says, goes.

- Esther 1:10-12a, 16-22

Explore - Esther 1:10-12a, 16-22

- **Based on how the King treated his wife, Vashti, how do you think the culture viewed women?**
- **Why do you think the King was angry with Vashti?**
- **How can you see the King exerting his power over others in these verses?**
- **How would you describe the King after reading these verses?**

Read - Esther 2:1-11

1-4 Later, when King Xerxes' anger had cooled and he was having second thoughts about what Vashti had done and what he had ordered against her, the king's young attendants stepped in and got the ball rolling: "Let's begin a search for beautiful young virgins for the king. Let the king appoint officials in every province of his kingdom to bring every beautiful young virgin to the palace complex of Susa and to the harem run by Hegai, the king's eunuch who oversees the women; he will put them through their beauty treatments. Then let the girl who best pleases the king be made queen in place of Vashti."
The king liked this advice and took it.

5-7 Now there was a Jew who lived in the palace complex in Susa. His name was Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish—a Benjaminite. His ancestors had been taken from Jerusalem with the exiles and carried off with King Jehoiachin of Judah by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon into exile. Mordecai had reared his cousin Hadassah, otherwise known as Esther, since she had no father or mother. The girl had a good figure and a beautiful face. After her parents died, Mordecai had adopted her.

8 When the king's order had been publicly posted, many young girls were brought to the palace complex of Susa and given over to Hegai who was overseer of the women. Esther was among them.

9-10 Hegai liked Esther and took a special interest in her. Right off he started her beauty treatments, ordered special food, assigned her seven personal maids from the palace, and put her and her maids in the best rooms in the harem. Esther didn't say anything about her family and racial background because Mordecai had told her not to.

11 Every day Mordecai strolled beside the court of the harem to find out how Esther was and get news of what she was doing.

- Esther 2:1-11

Explore - Esther 2:1-11

- **What clues can we find in these verses about how Esther may have felt about being taken from her family to live at the citadel?**
- **Do you think Mordecai and Esther had a close relationship? Why or why not?**
- **Why did Mordecai tell Esther to hide her nationality and family background from the King and other people in the palace?**

Esther

Author: Unknown. The author's perspective on the events in Esther suggest that the author was Jewish. The author's knowledge of Persian language and custom also suggests that the author was probably living in Persia during the time of these events. The SDA Bible Commentary suggests that the author was "intimately acquainted with the palace and with Persian court customs and regulations." Some scholars suggest that the author was Ezra.

Date written: After 460 B.C.

Audience: Jewish People

Historical Setting: During the time that Esther takes place, the Persian Empire was at the peak of it's power. The Persian Empire had expanded its reach and riches. A few misguided battles as well as, "...the disturbances elsewhere in the far-flung empire, may have conditioned the mind of the king to look with favor upon Haman's plan to exterminate the Jews," says the SDA Bible Commentary.[1]



Read - Esther 2: 15-18, 3:8-11, 4:9-17

15 When it was Esther's turn to go to the king (Esther the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had adopted her as his daughter), she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the king's eunuch in charge of the harem, had recommended. Esther, just as she was, won the admiration of everyone who saw her.

16 She was taken to King Xerxes in the royal palace in the tenth month, the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of the king's reign.

17-18 The king fell in love with Esther far more than with any of his other women or any of the other virgins—he was totally smitten by her. He placed a royal crown on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti. Then the king gave a great banquet for all his nobles and officials—"Esther's Banquet." He proclaimed a holiday for all the provinces and handed out gifts with royal generosity.

-Esther 2: 15-18

Was this Esther's happily every after? Not quite. Here's where the story gets a lot more messy.

Through a series of interesting events, an evil man, who happens to be the King's number two, Haman, decided that he hated the Jews and developed a plan to wipe them out.

8-9 Haman then spoke with King Xerxes: "There is an odd set of people scattered through the provinces of your kingdom who don't fit in. Their customs and ways are different from those of everybody else. Worse, they disregard the king's laws. They're an affront; the king shouldn't put up with them. If it please the king, let orders be given that they be destroyed. I'll pay for it myself. I'll deposit 375 tons of silver in the royal bank to finance the operation."

10 The king slipped his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, archenemy of the Jews.

11 "Go ahead," the king said to Haman. "It's your money—do whatever you want with those people."

- Esther 3: 8-11

Mordecai found out about the plan, and came to Esther, knowing that she is the only one who can save them. Esther still hadn't revealed her nationality to the King.

> **9-11** Hathach [Esther's servant] came back and told Esther everything Mordecai had said. Esther talked it over with Hathach and then sent him back to Mordecai with this message: "Everyone who works for the king here, and even the people out in the provinces, knows that there is a single fate for every man or woman who approaches the king without being invited: death. The one exception is if the king extends his gold scepter; then he or she may live. And it's been thirty days now since I've been invited to come to the king."
>
> **12-14** When Hathach told Mordecai what Esther had said, Mordecai sent her this message: "Don't think that just because you live in the king's house you're the one Jew who will get out of this alive. If you persist in staying silent at a time like this, help and deliverance will arrive for the Jews from someplace else; but you and your family will be wiped out. Who knows? Maybe you were made queen for just such a time as this."
>
> **15-16** Esther sent back her answer to Mordecai: "Go and get all the Jews living in Susa together. Fast for me. Don't eat or drink for three days, either day or night. I and my maids will fast with you. If you will do this, I'll go to the king, even though it's forbidden. If I die, I die."
>
> **17** Mordecai left and carried out Esther's instructions.
>
> **- Esther 4:9-17**



Explore - Esther 2: 15-18, 3:8-11, 4:9-17

- **How did Esther react when she found out about Haman's plan to kill all the Jews?**
- **What reasons did Esther give Mordecai that she couldn't stop what was happening?**
- **What finally convinced Esther to do something to save her people?**

Things did not look good for Esther and her people. The whole reason that the King decided to look for a new wife was because Vashti had stood up to him. His reaction was, "Every woman, regardless of her social position, will show proper respect to her husband," and "Every man is master of his own house; whatever he says, goes" (Esther 2:20,22). No wonder Esther was scared! That is why Esther had to get her strength from something bigger than herself. She wouldn't be able to save her people without God helping her overcome these obstacles.



Read - Esther 5:1-8

1-3 Three days later Esther dressed in her royal robes and took up a position in the inner court of the palace in front of the king's throne room. The king was on his throne facing the entrance. When he noticed Queen Esther standing in the court, he was pleased to see her; the king extended the gold scepter in his hand. Esther approached and touched the tip of the scepter. The king asked, "And what's your desire, Queen Esther? What do you want? Ask and it's yours—even if it's half my kingdom!"

4 "If it please the king," said Esther, "let the king come with Haman to a dinner I've prepared for him."

5-6 "Get Haman at once," said the king, "so we can go to dinner with Esther."

So the king and Haman joined Esther at the dinner she had arranged. As they were drinking the wine, the king said, "Now, what is it you want? Half of my kingdom isn't too much to ask! Just ask."

7-8 Esther answered, "Here's what I want. If the king favors me and is pleased to do what I desire and ask, let the king and Haman come again tomorrow to the dinner that I will fix for them. Then I'll give a straight answer to the king's question."

- Esther 5:1-8

Explore - Esther 5:1-8

- **Given how the King treated Vashti, what is interesting about the way the King treats Esther?**
- **How do you think Esther felt when the king extended his scepter to her?**
- **Why did Esther ask to have dinner with the King and Haman instead of telling him what was going on right away?**
- **In verses 7-8, Esther asks the king to dinner again instead of telling him what is going on. Why do you think she did that?**

Read - Esther 7:1-6

1-2 So the king and Haman went to dinner with Queen Esther. At this second dinner, while they were drinking wine the king again asked, "Queen Esther, what would you like? Half of my kingdom! Just ask and it's yours."

3 Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor in your eyes, O King, and if it please the king, give me my life, and give my people their lives.

4 "We've been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed—sold to be massacred, eliminated. If we had just been sold off into slavery, I wouldn't even have brought it up; our troubles wouldn't have been worth bothering the king over."

5 King Xerxes exploded, "Who? Where is he? This is monstrous!"

6 "An enemy. An adversary. This evil Haman," said Esther. Haman was terror-stricken before the king and queen.

- Esther 7:1-6



Explore - Esther 7:1-6

- **What key differences can we see in the way the King treated Vashti at the beginning of the story and the way he treated Esther in these verses?**
- **Why did Esther wait so long to reveal that she was a Jew?**
- **How did Esther gain favor with the King so he would understand the situation when she told him that Haman was trying to kill her people?**
- **How did Haman feel when he found out that Esther was a Jew?**

There are many lessons in the book of Esther. Hers is one of the best stories in the Bible because it illustrates how things that are terrible can work together for the good of God's people, and how incredible obstacles can be overcome with determination and guidance. We can see her fire for God growing throughout her story, from hiding who she is in the beginning to boldly standing before the king and asking for him to spare her people. Esther's story can encourage us as we overcome our own set of cultural and personal obstacles while living a Life on Fire for God.

Closing Questions

1. What were some major cultural and personal obstacles that Esther had to overcome to save her people?

2. Who helped Esther overcome obstacles along the way, and how did they help?

3. How can you trace Esther's growth from the beginning of the story to the end? What changes in her character can you see?

4. How can you see Esther's "fire" growing throughout her journey?

5. What cultural obstacles will you face while living a Life on Fire?

6. What other lessons, besides how to overcome obstacles, can we learn from Esther and the other characters in her story?

Personal Reflection & Action

Reflect on these questions individually and write your answers below:

1. How have you seen your "fire" grow or change?

2. What cultural obstacles will you personally face as a believer in Jesus?

3. Who are some people in your life that can help you overcome those obstacles?

4. Is there someone in your life who you need to have a difficult conversation with? Find a way to have that conversation this week.

Lesson Eight - Messy Community



First Look

There are many themes that run through the stories of the Bible, but one of the strongest is community. Each person in the stories we've talked about were brought forward in their journey by community with God, family, or friends, or all three.

The Bible has a lot to say about community. Jesus especially gave us a beautiful example of community in his ministry and in what he taught his followers. Having a Life on Fire means sometimes you disagree with others in your community, but love each other anyway.

Messy Community



Read - Romans 12:3-8

3 I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

4-6 In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a

Characters

Paul - Author of most of the New Testament letters, missionary

Barnabas - Paul's assistant, another missionary

John Mark - Paul and Barnabas's assistant

Jesus - Rabbi, friend, Savior

Judas - The disciple who betrayed Jesus

You!

whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.

6-8 If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

- Romans 12:3-8



Explore - Romans 12:3-8

- **What can we infer about how God views diversity by looking at these verses?**
- **What do these verses say about how to be unified even though we are different?**
- **According to the text, how does humility play into being a part of the body of Christ?**

Since we are human, we don't always get along though. We'd like to think that having Jesus in our lives means that we all get along great, but God created us to be diverse. With diversity sometimes comes disagreement.



Read - Matthew 18:15-20

15-17 "If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend. If he won't listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won't listen, tell the church. If he won't listen to the church, you'll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God's forgiving love.

18-20 "Take this most seriously: A yes on earth is yes in heaven; a no on earth is no in heaven. What you say to one another is eternal. I mean this. When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action. And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I'll be there."

- Jesus, Matthew 18:15-20



Explore - Matthew 18:15-20

- **Given that Jesus is talking about disputes between believers in these verses, do you think that it is normal for disagreements to arise between those in the Body of Christ? Why?**
- **What are the steps that Jesus suggests for settling disputes?**
- **When we read between the lines, what do these verses say about unity?**

If any Bible character knew anything about community and settling disagreements, it was Paul. Paul wrote much of the New Testament, and often wrote on the topic of community in many of his letters to churches throughout the region.

He spent a lot of time traveling from city to city, building up new communities and checking in with them on repeat journeys. One of the most interesting lessons we can learn about community is about a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas.



Read - Acts 15:36-41

36 After a few days of this, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let's go back and visit all our friends in each of the towns where we preached the Word of God. Let's see how they're doing."

37-41 Barnabas wanted to take John along, the John nicknamed Mark. But Paul wouldn't have him; he wasn't about to take along a quitter who, as soon as the going got tough, had jumped ship on them in Pamphylia. Tempers flared, and they ended up going their separate ways: Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus; Paul

chose Silas and, offered up by their friends to the grace of the Master, went to Syria and Cilicia to build up muscle and sinew in those congregations.

- Acts 15:36-41



Explore - Acts 15:36-41

- **Why did Paul disagree with Barnabas about taking John Mark with them on their journey?**
- **How did they handle the disagreement?**
- **What were some possible positive outcomes of the disagreement?**
- **Even if Paul and Barnabas disagreed on who to take on the journey to the point that they split up, in what ways did they continue to have unity?**

It's hard to know if Paul and Barnabas were ever reconciled. A few verses in 2 Timothy and Colossians suggest that they, as well as John Mark, who was the reason for their argument, were reconciled, even though we don't know how long it took, because these books were written years after the events in Acts.



Read - 2 Timothy 4:9-13, Colossians 4:10-11

9-13 Get here as fast as you can. Demas, chasing fads, went off to Thessalonica and left me here. Crescens is in Galatia province, Titus in Dalmatia. Luke is the only one here with me. Bring Mark with you; he'll be my right-hand man since I'm sending Tychicus to Ephesus. Bring the winter coat I left in Troas with Carpus; also the books and parchment notebooks.

- 2 Timothy 4:9-13

10-11 Aristarchus, who is in jail here with me, sends greetings; also Mark, cousin of Barnabas (you received a letter regarding him; if he shows up, welcome him); and also Jesus, the one they call Justus. These are the only ones left from the old crowd who have stuck with me in working for God's kingdom. Don't think they haven't been a big help!

- Colossians 4:10-11

Explore - 2 Timothy 4:9-13, Colossians 4:10-11

- **In these verses, what is Paul's attitude toward John Mark?**
- **Given Mark's history of abandoning Paul and Barnabas in Pamphylia, why is Paul's reaction to Mark in these texts so interesting?**

So, even Paul had trouble resolving issues, even with the guidance that Jesus gave in Matthew. What are we supposed to do when we have tried to settle differences and it just doesn't work? Do we ignore the person? Throw them out? Is that what the Body of Christ is supposed to look like? What if we just cut off a foot if we didn't like what the foot had to say about a certain issue? Well, then we wouldn't be able to walk. That's not very useful!

For one last example of what to do when you disagree with somebody, maybe someone who you think is your enemy, we can look to Jesus.

Before he went to the garden with his disciples, before he was captured, tried, and hung on the cross, he had communion with his disciples. There was a person at the table that night who truly was Jesus' enemy - Judas. But Jesus still broke bread with him, engaged in community with him, and still offered love to Judas even though Jesus knew that Judas would betray him.

Read - Matthew 26:20-30

20-21 After sunset, he and the Twelve were sitting around the table. During the meal, he said, "I have something hard but important to say to you: One of you is going to hand me over to the conspirators."

22 They were stunned, and then began to ask, one after another, "It isn't me, is it, Master?"

23-24 Jesus answered, "The one who hands me over is someone I eat with daily, one who passes me food at the table. In one sense the Son of Man is entering into a way of treachery well-marked by the Scriptures—no surprises here. In another sense that man who turns him in, turns traitor to the Son of Man—better never to have been born than do this!"

25 Then Judas, already turned traitor, said, "It isn't me, is it, Rabbi?"
Jesus said, "Don't play games with me, Judas."

26-29 During the meal, Jesus took and blessed the bread, broke it,
and gave it to his disciples:

Take, eat.
This is my body.

Taking the cup and thanking God, he gave it to them:
Drink this, all of you.
This is my blood,
God's new covenant poured out for many people
for the forgiveness of sins.

"I'll not be drinking wine from this cup again until that new day when
I'll drink with you in the kingdom of my Father."

30 They sang a hymn and went directly to Mount Olives.

-Matthew 26:20-30



Explore - Matthew 26:20-30

- **Why do you think Jesus continued to eat with Judas even as he knew that Judas would betray him?**
- **Why is communion a symbol of community in our church?**
- **What can we learn from the Last Supper about dealing with conflict?**

If Jesus can eat communion with somebody who would betray him, we can certainly put aside our differences long enough to worship together and not let those differences get in the way of serving him. With the people at the table that night, it was a messy community. Judas betrayed Jesus, Peter denied him, and many of the disciples ran away as soon as he was arrested.

As you are living a Life on Fire for God, remember that from time to time you will have disagreements with other people in your community. Just like the stories of the characters in the Bible, our community is a messy one, full of broken people who Jesus loves. And that's what makes our stories so amazing.

Closing Questions

1. How can you see the theme of community running through the Bible stories we've talked about?

2. What does unity in the church look like?

3. What are ways that you can remain unified with your friends, brothers, sisters and community members even if you disagree?

Personal Reflection & Action

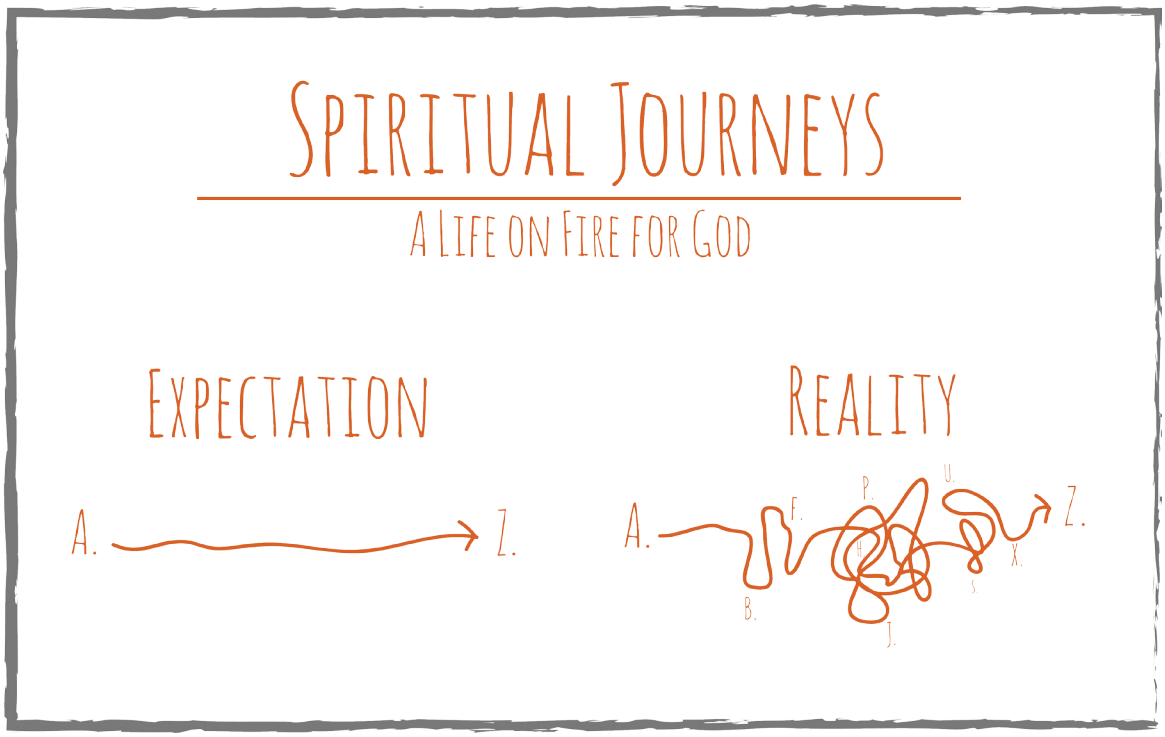
Reflect on these questions individually and write your answers below:

1. What are some areas that you feel like you personally disagree with others?

2. How can you show compassion, love, and that you are a team to those people you disagree with?

3. What can you do to treat people with love even if you disagree in the future?

Lesson Nine: Living It



So how do we live our lives on fire for God? The stories that we've looked at during our time together give us examples, but they also tell us that having a Life on Fire can look very different for different people. David was a wonderful example of service and a close relationship with God, and yet he still made mistakes. Moses was so angered by injustice that he lost control, killed a man, and ran away, but God rerouted Moses to what he was meant to do - lead God's people out of slavery and to the promised land. Daniel and his friends managed to both engage the culture around them in meaningful ways and still remember who they were in God. Esther overcame huge obstacles to become the one person who could save God's people from total destruction in Persia. And Paul, Barnabas and John Mark were able to follow the example of Jesus and set aside their differences to continue telling others about the gospel because they knew what was most important - showing people who Jesus was.

As we continue to seek God and to grow in our understanding of who He is, remember the examples these Bible characters give us. Sometimes our stories are messy and sometimes our communities are messy too. Living a Life on Fire isn't about going in a straight line from Point A to Point Z. It has twists and turns and surprises along the way. Living a Life on Fire means that we keep our eyes on Jesus, and we give it all we've got.

Stories Recap

Write what you learned from each character's story.

Lesson One

Main Characters: **You**
Bible Passages: **Matthew 14:24-31; Psalms 37:3-6, 139:13-16**
What I learned:

Lesson Two

Main Characters: **David**
Bible Passages: **1 Samuel 16 & 17**
What I learned:

Lesson Three

Main Characters: **David**
Bible Passages: **2 Samuel 12:1-9; the Psalms; Acts 13:20-22**
What I learned:

Lesson Four

Main Characters: **Moses**
Bible Passages: **Exodus 2 & 3**
What I learned:

Lesson Five

Main Characters: **Daniel**
Bible Passages: **Daniel 1 & 2**
What I learned:

Lesson Six

Main Characters: **Daniel and Friends**
Bible Passages: **Mark 8:34-37; Daniel 1-3**
What I learned:

Lesson Seven

Main Characters: **Esther**
Bible Passages: **Book of Esther**
What I learned:

Lesson Eight

Main Characters: **Paul, Jesus**
Bible Passages: **Romans 12:3-8; Matthew 18:15-20, 26:20-30; Acts 15:36**
What I learned:

Action Questions

Discuss these questions as a group:

1. How have the stories we've talked about given you examples of living on fire for God?

2. What has been your favorite story? Why?

3 After reading these Bible character's stories, what do you think living a Life on Fire for God looks like today?

4. What are some ways that you can live a Life on Fire for God?

5. How can you help others live a Life on Fire for God?

Personal Reflection & Action

Reflect on these questions individually and write your answers below:

1. After reading these stories and discussion with your group, what are ways that God is asking your to live a Life on Fire?

2. What can you do to maintain that fire and keep growing now that you're done with this study guide?

3. Who can help you along the way?

4. What is ONE next step for you to live a Life on Fire?

Resources

For title, author, history and commentary on each book of the Bible, check out the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*. You can also find background information in any study Bible.

Lesson One - Messy Stories | You

For more books that talks about the story of the Bible, read *Epic* by John Eldridge and *The Great Controversy* by Ellen White.

Listen to "The World You Want" by Switchfoot.

Listen to "Pilot Me" my Josh Garrels.

Lesson Two - Service | David

Read in "David: A Heart After God" in *A Work of Heart* by Reggie McNeal.

Lesson Three - Seeking God | David

Read *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young

Lesson Four - Rerouting | Moses

Listen to "White As Snow" by Jon Foreman.

Read "Moses: A Heart on a Mission" in *A Work of Heart* by Reggie McNeal.

Listen to "Wanderer" by Allison Brook.

Lesson Five - Engaging Culture | Daniel

Read *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise* by Dravko Stefanovic.

Read *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* by Andy Crouch.

Read *Pursing Christ. Creating Art: Exploring Life at the Intersection of Faith and Creativity* by Gary Molander.

Lesson Six - Remembering Roots | Daniel

Read *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise* by Dravko Stefanovic.

Listen to "Zion and Babylon" by Josh Garrels.

Lesson Seven - Overcoming Obstacles | Esther

Listen to "Broken and Beautiful" by Ellie Holcomb.

Listen to "Beautiful Things" by Gungor.

Lesson Eight - Messy Community | Paul, Jesus

Listen to "Bread and Wine" by Josh Garrels.

Endnotes

Lesson One - Messy Stories | You

1. "The Gospel According to St. Matthew: Introduction." In Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, edited by Francis Nichol, 416-417. Vol. 5. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1954.

2. Price, David. "Pixar Story Rules (one version)." The Pixar Touch. May 15, 2011. Accessed November 30, 2014. http://www.pixartouchbook.com/blog/2011/5/15/pixar-story-rules-one-version.html.

Lesson Two - Service | David

1. Barker, Kenneth L. "1 Samuel - Introduction." In Zondervan NIV Study Bible: New International Version, 373-377. 2008 Update. ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008.

2. "The First Book of Samuel: Introduction." In Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, edited by Francis Nichol, 447-454. Vol. 2. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1954.

Lesson Three - Seeking God | David

1. "The Book of Psalms: Introduction" In Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, edited by Francis Nichol, 615-629. Vol. 3. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1954.

2. Barker, Kenneth L. "Psalms - Introduction." In Zondervan NIV Study Bible: New International Version, 778-789. 2008 Update. ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008.

Lesson Four - Rerouting | Moses

1. Barker, Kenneth L. "Exodus - Introduction." In Zondervan NIV Study Bible: New International Version, 85-89. 2008 Update. ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008.

2. "The Second Book of Moses Called Exodus: Introduction" In Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, edited by Francis Nichol, 491-495. Vol. 1. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1954.

Lesson Five - Engaging Culture | Daniel

1. Barker, Kenneth L. "Daniel - Introduction." In Zondervan NIV Study Bible: New International Version, 1311-1312. 2008 Update. ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008.

2. "The Book of Daniel: Introduction" In Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, edited by Francis Nichol, 743-754. Vol. 4. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1954.

Lesson Six - Remembering Roots | Daniel

1. "The Book of Daniel: Introduction" In Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, edited by Francis Nichol, 743-754. Vol. 4. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1954.

2. Barker, Kenneth L. "Daniel - Introduction." In Zondervan NIV Study Bible: New International Version, 1311-1312. 2008 Update. ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008

Lesson Seven - Overcoming Obstacles | Esther

1. "The Book of Esther: Introduction." In Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, edited by Francis Nichol, 457-462. Vol. 3. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1954.

LIFE ON FIRE

YOUTH MINISTRIES
Florida Conference

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