

ONCE UPON a TIME...

A FOUR WEEK JR. HIGH SERIES

Creators

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LESSON 1 ----- CALLED TO Create

LESSON 2 ----- THE FALL

LESSON 3 ----- THE FLOOD

LESSON 4 ----- THE CALL

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LESSON 1

THE Creator Made YOU To Create...

"Let US Make MAN IN OUR Image, IN OUR LIKENESS" - GENESIS 1:26-30

Teaching/LESSON

Me

What a great message (referencing drama). It is truly amazing what people are able to create. The sounds that we are able to create with our voices and instruments and then combine them to produce such beautiful sounds can be breathtaking. I visited a battle of the choirs recently and listened to some amazing Jr. High and high school chamber choirs. It is amazing as you listen as more and more voices are added to the song and the beauty and the intensity builds. Or maybe you are a movie fan and you love being swept away into the worlds created by JRR Tolkien in *The Lord of the Rings* or sail the seas with the *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Stories that are so detailed that they become worlds of their own. Or maybe you love art. Sitting down at an empty canvas or in front of a lump of clay is so exciting because there are so many possibilities to paint, to mold, to create.

We

There are many things that are unique and exciting about being human...laughter, love, In and Out Cheese burgers. But one of the most exciting things is that we have the ability to create. Look at the beautiful art, the crazy athletics, beautiful buildings, or a creative birthday cake, creating is just in our blood. It is what we do. Everyone here loves to create something. Growing up I loved to create short stories. I had all the control and could produce whatever my heart desired. For you it may not be writing, but everyone has one thing that they cannot just do, they have to do it well.

I believe that this is one of the things that we have in common with God because God is a creative God who loves to create and who loves His creation. If you go to the very beginning of God's story this is what we see him doing. Let's read Genesis 1-Genesis 2:4 together just to get a feel for this story as a whole.

God

Read Genesis 1-Genesis 2:4. Often our first reaction as we read a creation account is to ask a lot of science questions of the story, to think about evolution and about things we are hearing in school. These are fine questions to ask, but sometimes they can distract us from what the text is trying to say. I would much rather enjoy a great song than want to understand the music theory, or enjoy a good meal without knowing how many tablespoons of an ingredient were put into it. In the same way, we should not take this beautiful story which says some really big important things and try to read it as a science textbook. It just will not work. So what are the big things that the story is saying? The first thing we have to understand what the first people who heard the story would have heard.

For Genesis to say that there is one God who is creating would have been shocking to the surrounding people because they believed in many Gods. As well, God creating stars would have been shocking because in many of their stories were Gods themselves or existed before the God's even arrived. Saying that God created them is saying that this God is powerful, more powerful than their Gods.¹

Also shocking to the culture would have been that God created people and gave them a high position of power. In some of their stories the Gods only created people to do manual labor and they often seem annoyed at them!² But look again at 1:26-28. As creation draws to a close God makes a bold move. He takes his creation and he entrusts it to part of his creation! But this part is special, because people are not JUST a part of creation; they are made "like" God (verse 26-27).

People have similarities and characteristics that are like God. And as we have just read one of God's characteristics is that he is a creator. I believe this is one of the Godly characteristics we have; this is part of being in God's image. This is something that is unique to humans; you don't see it anywhere else among the other animals or anywhere else in creation.

And as creative beings God gives to freedom to use this ability. The people are commanded to "reign over" (verse 28) the creation. Almost like being given a basketball play, art supplies, or an instrument and being told to "go"!

The people he created are not like the animals that are only told to multiply (verse 22), they are given a mission. The importance of this mission is shown in the repetition of what is told to the animals plus the addition.³ The creator invites them to be co-creators. To be a part of what God has done and is doing. To manage, and preserve, and care for his creation!

But in this freedom there is a choice, a boundary. There is a tree that they cannot eat from (Genesis 2:15). As the creator of everything God knows what is good and what is bad,

¹ Benjamin Foster. "Akkadian Epic of Creation (Enuma Elish)." In *The Context of Scripture*. Vol. 1, Canonical Compositions From the Biblical World (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

² "Atrahasis." In *Myths From Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 399.

³ Robert Alder, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (United States: Vincent Torre, 1981), 41.

he made the rules, he made everything. As co-creators, people had an awesome privilege, but also a huge responsibility.

You

Since we are God-like we can create realities, we have that unique ability. Since we “reign” over creation we have some control. We can choose to be a part of what God is doing, or we can choose to try to use all the freedom that has been given to us. There are always rules to creation. If the creative musician does not play by the rules of music she creates only noise. If the creative athlete does not play inside the rules of the game they are penalized. If the artist does not use the rules of art they produce only ugliness.

So how about you? Are you acting as a co-creator with God, or as a creator on your own? Co-creators partner with God in creating life. Co-creators use the words that they speak to bring people joy and peace. Co-creators can love people who are in need, helping these people to become all that God wants them to be. Co-creators ask how they can care for God’s creation.

Creators think first of creating realities that are good for them first and are not concerned with others. Creators use words to manipulate people and even intentionally hurt them to get what they need. Creators look to get ahead and are not concerned about people or things that get in the way.

Us

The story of Genesis showed the original showed the people that God was God and that he was great. It also told them that people were an amazing “Godly” creation that was a huge part of his plan. And being given this status means we have a huge responsibility. In the Spiderman series, when Peter Parker is wrestling with whether or not to own the title of Spiderman. As he wrestles, the words of his Uncle Ben echo in his mind that with “great power comes great responsibility”. As God’s people, think of the beauty this world would see and feel if we “owned” what we are as co-creators in God’s plan. If we connected with God’s plan so that what we were doing was what God was doing. The impact would be great because we would be acting in exactly the way God has created us.

Drama/Skit

A Masterpiece in the Subway

Characters

Joshua Bell

Narrator

Several Subway Passerbys

Young child

(The following drama is based on a true story⁴)

The scene starts with a black stage. The lights come up as a young man enters with a t-shirt, jeans, and a baseball cap on. He is carrying a violin case. He puts the case on the ground, opens it, and takes the violin out. And begins to play. The actor will be not really be playing but to pretend to "lip sync" play to a Joshua Bell violin solo. If you can find an actor that can really play well all the better. The Narrator enters the scene and as he/she begins to talk to the audience the volume on violin playing is turned down a bit. The young man continues to "play" throughout.

Narrator: It seemed like any other normal day in the DC Metro Subway Station. The subway customers were used to seeing street musicians on a regular basis. It was a commonplace activity as many people were always trying to find a way to make an extra buck.

However, something is different about today. Never has the walls of this station ever heard such beautiful sounds coming forth from the strings of this instrument. With each note and melody; came the creation of a masterpiece, a work of art set to music.

(passerby's begin walking by the young man paying no real attention, some too busy, some distracted, people keep passing by throughout)

You would think that every eardrum that reverberates with the sounds of such a masterpiece would draw a large crowd. You would think those within an earshot of these sounds would love to be a part of it all; taking in this creative process before their eyes, or rather before their ears.

But no. Very few stopped to listen. Other just quickly threw money in and move on. Some would slow down for a moment, but then realize they needed to catch their train.

⁴Weingarten, Gene. "Pearls Before Breakfast." The Washington Post. 8 April 2007 (p. W10).

Who is this unknown musician, that is creating beauty in such an unlikely place?

Little did these passer-biers know that this young man's name is Joshua Bell and he is one of the most well known violinist in the world.

Just three days ago he played at Boston Symphony Hall where people paid \$100 to hear him play. In a few days he will play in a symphony hall where there will be standing room only.

You see that violin in his arms? That violin was made in 1713 and Bell paid 3.5 *million* dollars for it. It is amazing to think that Joshua is sharing such a valuable gift with the 1000's passing by, but very few of them take time to notice.

(small child enters with a Mom on a cell phone.)

Interestingly enough there were a few small children that would stop and be drawn in by the artistry of Bell. One boy stood closely to Bell in absolute awe. However, he was quickly swept away by mom who suddenly noticed that her child was slowing her down.

As Joshua wraps up this intriguing experience he discovers receiving \$32 some dollars in change, yet very little attention otherwise.

(Bell packs up and walks off stage, lights say up on the narrator)

What a shame for those in that subway station that day to miss an opportunity to take in this musical creation.

However, aren't we all guilty of that from time to time?

God, the creator of the universe is inviting us to join Him in building the Kingdom of God.

(fade in Joshua Bell music once again)

Do we hear... see... know the masterpiece that God has set before us in scripture?

Are we listening? Or are we letting the distractions of life pass by the opportunity to join in what God is doing to the world... in your town... your school...or family?

You are created in His image and God is asking you to...

Stop.... listen....enjoy.... and create.

(Joshua Bell Music fades up, as the lights fade down and Narrator exits)

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Read Genesis 1:1-2. What did God create the heavens and the earth out of?

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. - Genesis 1:1-2

God created the heavens and the earth out of *nothing*. How did he do it? The Bible doesn't say exactly, only that it was God that created all things. This makes science exciting, as we try to figure out how God's creation works! Whether you believe in evolution or some other theory, just remember that God did it.

2. After God created everything in the heavens and the earth, he created man and woman. Read Genesis 1:26-31. What is different between how God created other things (like land, light, plants and animals) and how he created humans?

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

*²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."²⁹And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.
- Genesis 1:26-31*

We were created in God's image. This does not mean we are all little gods, but that God created us to be like him. This was the final touch to his creation, and he said everything he made was *very good* after he was done.

Genesis 1:26: Why does this verse say "let *us* create man in *our* image..."? This is a key to understanding that God consists of the Heavenly Father, the Son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. We often think about God as someone far away in heaven. But this verse tells us that God's Spirit was present (Genesis 1:2), and so was Jesus.

3. Are humans any more "special" than the rest of God's creation? Why or why not?

When we read the creation story, it's clear that humans are set apart in God's eyes. We are the only ones created in God's image, and the rest of creation was given to us to use and take care of. This is also obvious when we look at how the world works. Humans have the power and authority to dominate over all the plants, animals and even nature.

Controlling Weather? Still not convinced we have more control over things on this earth than any other living thing? Check out what they're doing in Moscow, Russia to stop the snow this winter: <http://www.popsci.com/science/article/2009-10/moscow-mayor-pays-russian-air-force-wage-war-winter>⁵

4. God has a purpose for everything he creates. As an example, he created the sun to bring light to the earth. What does God create humans to do? See *Proverbs 19:21, Romans 8:28, Mark 12:28-31*

Jesus clarified that above all things, our purpose is to love God and love others. With great power comes great responsibility. And that leads us to our next question...

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand. - Proverbs 19:21

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. - Romans 8:28

²⁸ And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.'³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." - Mark 12:28-31

Getting Practical

5. How does it feel to know God created you and I to be responsible for his creation? Since we now know our value in God's eyes and our purpose, how do we live it out? What are we responsible to do? See *Genesis 1:28-29*

Be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28) - God created the first man and woman, but gave them (and now us) the responsibility of keeping the human race going. God still creates people, but he gives us the blessing, honor and responsibility to play a big part in the process.

Subdue and have dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:28) - Take care of God's creation, including the plants, animals, environment.... (go green)

⁵ Jeremy Hsu, "Geoengineering Moscow Mayor Promises No Snow This Winter," *Popular Science*, October 19, 2009, <http://www.popsci.com/science/article/2009-10/moscow-mayor-pays-russian-air-force-wage-war-winter> (accessed November 30, 2009).

6. Read Isaiah 42:5 and Psalm 139:1-16. These passages speak about God's hand in the creation of people. After reading, how do you feel about your role as a co-creator with God in this process?

*Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it.
- Isaiah 42:5*

*¹O LORD, you have searched me and known me!
²You know when I sit down and when I rise up;*

*you discern my thoughts from afar.
³You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

*⁴Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.*

*⁵You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.*

*⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.*

*⁷Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?*

*⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*

*⁹If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*

*¹⁰even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.*

*¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"*

*¹²even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.*

*¹³For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's
womb.*

*¹⁴I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully
made. Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.*

*¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you, when I
was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

*¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.*

- Psalm 139:1-16

7. If a friend let you borrow their iPod Touch (or whatever the popular music/video device of the day is), how would you treat it? Knowing EVERYTHING belongs to God (see Job 41:11), how should we treat the plants, animals and the entire earth?

Take care of it. Is "going green" something Christians should be concerned about? YES! Since we know the truth, that God created the earth for us, we are responsible for it's upkeep.

8. If we follow God and play our very important role in the creation of people and keeping up the earth, how are we blessed?

Genesis 1:29 - God takes care of us!

LESSON 2

THE FALL...

"...your eyes WILL be opened...KNOWING good and evil." - GENESIS 3:4-5

TEACHING/LESSON

Me

Have you ever really blown it? I mean really screwed up so bad that you look back and cannot even begin to understand what you were thinking. As you look back there is no possible way you could screw something up...but you did! One of the most famous plays ever in the Super bowl is a play made by Leon Lett a Dallas Cowboys lineman. After the quarterback fumbled, Leon Lett picked up the fumble and had a clear road to the end zone. What he didn't know was that a player for the Buffalo Bills was running after him and as Leon put his arms out to celebrate the Bills player dove and knocked the ball out of his hands just before he crossed into the end zone. Today, that is the play that Leon Lett is remembered for. In one moment he lost the ball, a Super bowl touchdown, and became the punch line of a joke. Two words sum up this experience for Leon..."if only". If only he had not celebrated too soon he would not have lost so much.

I have had one of these moments. It is not quite as fun as Lett's. When I was a second grader in school, not in my mind...that was last year, there was girl in my school who everyone picked on. We all said that she had "it". We were not sure what it was but we did not want to get it. We avoided getting it by not touching things that she was touching. For example, when she put her feet on the cafeteria floor everyone in the cafeteria lifted theirs up. On the playground, she was on the ground everyone got off the ground. And when she was off the ground, everyone got on it. Because everyone picked on her, she ended up being entirely alone. This is one of my biggest "if only" moments. A moment I would like to have back. A moment that was so simple and easy to do the right thing...but I did not. I could have walked over, made a friend, and helped someone who was in so much need. Something so simple for me could have meant so much to someone else. If only.

We

In these moments that we regret we are saddened by what we lost. And we have all had them. Maybe you have chosen to gossip about someone and lost a friend in the process. Maybe in a fight with your parents you said some words you can't take back. Maybe you chose not to study for a test, which resulted in failing, which resulted in grounding. No matter what your story, you know that things could have been different, better, like they were before.

God

The people in the Bible have the exact same problem. This ability to screw up or what the Bible calls sin is a problem we all have and struggle with. We talked about creation last week and how God created people and then gave them responsibility, making them co-creators with him. He gave them a special place in creation and had a special relationship with Him. People walked in a garden with their God, loved each other, and cared for creation. But there was one thing God said no to...one thing in all of creation. Lets read Genesis 3. Again, during this series we are reading chapters not verses to try to get a feel for the big picture.

If only. If only I had not eaten the apple or listened to the snake. If only I had trusted God. If only I could have been content with all of the good things God has given me. I would not be where I am at now.

There are so many things that happen in this story but we still want to focus on the idea of co-creators. God created people to be a part of his plan, but He was still going to be God. People were given huge responsibility but He was still always going to be greater. It is ironic that the one thing in his creation that was most like him wanted to be even more, to be just like Him⁶. It is funny that the one thing the snake offers the people...they already have...that ARE LIKE GOD.

And in this moment the people give up their role as co-creator. They say I do not want to be "co" anything; I want to be in charge. And they trade their relationship with God for the chance to be God.

And because of it the "if onlys" begin to pile up. The woman was going to give birth, but now it is going to hurt more. The man was going to work but now it will hurt more. Instead of reigning over creation, they will reign over each other. But more than anything else, the biggest if only is that the damage their relationship with their God⁷. When they were trusting Him, loving Him, being a part of his plan (a big part but a part none the less) things were fantastic. When they through off the "co" and became creators of a new reality they found that God suddenly became distant.

⁶ Peter T. Voght, *Interpreting the Pentateuch An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 72.

⁷ Ibid.

God still loves them, you see that when he shows them grace. He doesn't wipe them out; instead he even clothes them with animals (verse 21). God doesn't abandon the plan...which is awesome. He doesn't pull the car over and panic (reference to skit), but the plan has now taken a new turn...that people have created.

At the heart of it we are just like Adam and Eve. In fact, I can't even be hard on them because the same things that happen in their life happen in my own. I don't go a single day without stepping outside of God's plan and trying to create my own selfish realities. I insult people to build myself up. I am impatient because things are taking "MY" time. I lie if it will make my life easier even if it hurts people in the process. I know that may be shocking to because you think as a youth pastor I have it all t together...but I don't. But we are all in the same boat.

I was talking with a friend of a friend who is an atheist which means that he does not believe in any God. He told me that if he gets to heaven and God says you cannot come in because you did not believe in my Son, even though I lived a good life, I would not even want to be in that heaven. My response to him was that I agreed! I agreed that if he got to heaven as a "good man" and was not allowed admittance he should not want to be there, that God sounds terrible. But then I told him that when I go before God I know that I am not "good". I know that I have screwed up royally and that I don't' deserve to be there and that he does not need to let me in!

Romans 5:6 gives us the answer to what Adam and Eve would now need, what every other sinner would need, and what you and I would need. (Read Romans 5:5) It tells us that Christ died for sinners. That he came for people who were created by God for a relationship with Him had lost it because they chose to do it their way. That's what the cross of Jesus is all about. The death of Jesus seems like such an extreme, dying, shedding blood, all that pain. But that is what it took to redeem and to fix broken people.

You

Where are you at in the story? Do you believe you are doing life well, or can you look back and see the problem that Adam and Eve had? Can you see the times you have turned away from God, tried to do it your way and have had things blow up in your face. The good news is that God's plan for you did not end when you sinned, he did not give up on you. Instead he chose to bring you back into a relationship with Him through His Son. As you transition into small groups I want you to think about this idea and small group leaders I want to challenge you to make this the idea you close with tonight. Do you see the sin and stuff in your life and will you allow God to take care of it.

US

Due to the personal nature of this week's lesson, the "Us" section will be covered in small groups.

Drama/Skit

FLATS and CLOWNS

Characters

Dad
Mom
Teenage Sister
Younger Brother
A Clown

(Scene opens with a family in a car heading out on a vacation together. Dad is driving the car, and everyone is happy as they are all heading on vacation. The family is overboard cheesy happy as they are traveling together. Think Brady Bunch exaggerated cheeseball family)

Family *(singing, with lots of energy)* - It's a small world after all!!! It's a small world after all, it's a small, small world!!!!

Dad- Great singing kids! Boy I can't wait to get to Disney world and get on that Space Mountain! Did you know that ride all completely in the dark?!

Son- Really DAD? Wow! This is going to be the best trip ever!

Mom- It sure is I'm glad your dad planned out and created our whole itinerary for the entire week! He did lots of research on the internet.

Dad- That's right! I went on tripmaker.com and plugged where we needed to go and when, and poof it shot out this perfect itinerary. I have a turn by turn directions, a listing of every hotel we will stop at, and list of every gas station fill up. A perfect plan for a perfect vacation.

Son- Hey Dad! Did you talk to the Johnson's about *their* trip across the country? Did Mr. Johnson, you get some advice about their trip?

Dad- Oh son he tried to, but there was no need for advice! I did all the research needed myself. You are in GOOOOOD hands my boy!

Sister- Dad that's great, but what if the unexpected happens, like a flat tire or an accident or something?

Dad - *(a beat, unsure)* Uh, well...ummm...uh I'm not sure honey. I never thought about that. But, how could anything happen? I mean...umm... I created a perfect plan. I don't think anything could ruin this trip. I've got everything under control (smiles and puts his arm around Mom and looks at Mom) Don't I honey?

(a bump.. and everyone is jolted, everyone overreacts and screams, everyone is oddly scared and confused)

Sister: What is the world was that?!!!!

Dad: *(very flustered)*- I don't know! I don't know. Let me look at the plan! *(quickly looks at his "plan".)* I know....no.....no... I can't believe it!!!! A major bump is NO WHERE ON THE PLAN!!! *(flying off the handle)* WHAT are we going to do!? *(starts to weep)*

Son: *(starting to weep)* Daddy!!! I'm scared. What's happening?!

Mom: *(turning from sweet to very harsh)*- JUST great Bill!!!! Now what do we do?

Dad: *(combative)*- I have no idea, Margo! You find where a major bump on the road is in the plan?! *(throws plan at her)*

(both kids are now weepy uncontrollable in the back seat)

Mom: Will you two be quiet! Let me think, for a minute. *(to dad)* Should we get out and check out the car?

Dad: I don't know! Check the manual? Wait, that's no good I threw it away.

Mom: You did what?!

Dad: I threw it away. I never thought I would be in this kind of situation.

Mom: *(looking out the window)*- Wait a minute. Someone is coming.

Sister: Who is it?! What's happening!?

Mom: I can't tell. Wait a minute, it's getting closer! *(Her face changes to complete FEAR)* What? No? It can't be! IT'S A CLOWN!!!

(a person dressed in a complete clown outfit enters)

Family: NOO!!!! Ahhhh!
(Son starts to hyper ventilate in a bag, the rest of the family is also out of control)

Dad: A clown! What is he doing here?! *(frantically looking through "the plan")* What does the plan say about clowns!?

Mom: Quick! Lock the doors.

(The clown is more normal than the family)

Clown: *(tapping on the widow)* Hey, we have a circus set up down the road and I saw that you maybe needed some help.

Mom: GET AWAY FROM US YOU FREAK OF NATURE!

Clown: Ah ok...ummm. I'm just here to help. It looks like you have a flat tire. I have some tools to help if you want me to run back and grab them.

Sister: Go squirt some water in someone else eye you Bozo!

Clown: Fine suit yourself, just trying to help, shesh.

(walks off)

Son: Is he gone?

(Family gains there composer a bit)

Daughter: Dad, look one more time in the plan. Is there anything else about hitting bumps or strange clowns walking up to cars?

Dad: I see nothing honey. We're doomed!!!!

Mom: *(looking at the plan as well)* - Wait...look! A note from Mr. Johnson. It says, noticed your right tire was a little low, it might blow on the trip. Tried to tell you before you left but you didn't want any advice. I snuck a spare in the trunk before you left. Have a great trip.

(family freezes)

Sister: *(to audience)* How about you? How often do you take matters in to your hands and not consult with God or some other wise counsel? Are you the only one controlling this journey called life. Or are you working side by side with God everyday?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

RECAP: Last week we talked about how God created all things, and our role in his creation. We are created in the *image* of God, and given the great responsibility of allowing God to work through us to keep up his creation, and even create new things.

1. When Adam and Eve were created, they had all they would ever need or want on the earth. What was the one thing God told them not to do?

Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." - Genesis 2:17

2. We all know what happens, right? They eat from that tree. But before we go there, what does "knowledge of good and evil" mean? Read Genesis 2:25 (before they ate) and Genesis 3:6-7 (eating the fruit).

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. - Genesis 2:25

⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. - Genesis 3:6-7

What word in this story makes you giggle? Naked! This is more than just about sex or clothing. Adam and Eve didn't even know what it meant to be evil. What they did know was that God loved them, and all their needs would be met forever. When Adam and Eve were naked, this symbolized that there was nothing between them and God. When they sinned, their new clothing symbolized the barrier sin placed in that relationship.

3. Adam and Eve had everything. Why do you think they wanted to eat the fruit and know about good and evil? Re-read Genesis 3:4-6.

Even though God created man and women in his *image*, he didn't create them know all he knows. He did this because he knew we couldn't handle it. That is the definition of sin, focusing on what *we* want instead of what *God* wants.

⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. - Genesis 3:4-6

4. If God created us to love him and love each other (see Mark 12:28-31), why would he give us an option to disobey him?

What would love be if we didn't have a choice?

²⁸ And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.'³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." - Mark 12:28-31

5. How do we show our parents, friends, or boyfriend/girlfriend we love and respect them?

By obeying (parents), spending time with (friends), and showing our affection (boyfriend/girlfriend). All require us to make a choice. There isn't any force *making* us do these things.

6. Would our love for these people be as meaningful if God designed us, like a robot, to love and respect (without any option) them?

Of course not. God chose to create us to have a relationship with him, and we have a choice whether or not to follow him.

7. So instead of forcing, God had a plan for Adam and Eve. That plan included all their needs being met in the Garden of Eden, living forever in his presence, and helping him take care of creation and populate the earth. What happened when they didn't follow the plan? Read Genesis 3:22-24.

- No longer able to eat from the tree of life (and because of this, will someday die)
- Kicked out of the Garden of Eden
- They had to work the ground to get their food

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. - Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

²²Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" ²³therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life. - Genesis 3:22-24

8. Does God abandon Adam and Eve, since they didn't follow his plan for their lives?

No, but the situation changes. Since they now know evil, life gets complicated. They now cannot experience a perfect connection with God. They are literally kicked out of the Garden of Eden and will not live forever. By not following the rules, they put a barrier between them and God.

9. Just because Adam and Eve sinned, is it possible for us not to sin? See Romans 7:15, Psalm 51:5

Try to go one day without thinking a bad thought, being rude or saying something you shouldn't. Is it possible? Probably not! We are not any different than Adam and Eve. Just read what Paul (the most influential Christian ever) and David (the greatest king ever) said about trying to live without sinning:

For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. - Romans 7:15

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. - Psalm 51:5

10. So if sin is a part of every human, do we all deserve to die and go to hell (which is just a fancy term for being away from God forever)? Read Romans 8:12-17 and John 3:16.

Well...yes. We don't have any "tree of life" to eat from, so death is inevitable. That's where Jesus comes in.

¹² Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³ For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

¹⁵ So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. ¹⁷ And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. - Romans 8:12-17

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. - John 3:16

11. Have we been stripped of our responsibility to serve God, taking care of his creation and creating things with him?

No! By God's amazing sacrifice on the cross through Jesus, things are made right again between us and God. We are still called to be a great part of God's plan, which includes taking care of creation and creating new things.

LESSON 3

THE FLOOD...

"BEHOLD, I ESTABLISH MY COVENANT WITH YOU AND YOUR OFFSPRING" - GENESIS 9:8-12

TEACHING/LESSON

Me

A really smart guy said that, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us"⁸. This is so true because these are the thoughts that define us and effect how we live our life and the decisions we make. If we think that God is a good, loving God who is on our side we will live our life differently than if we think God is waiting to give us a backhand smack every time we mess up. If we believe the second we will live our life in fear, worrying that we could never come close to this God.

Today we are going to look at a story that almost everyone knows. The story of the flood. If you had not heard the story before a few years ago, you probably know some of the details now after seeing Steve Carell transformed into Noah in the blockbuster hit *Evan Almighty*. In EA, the flood occurs again in modern day and Carell builds an ark while his neighbors laugh at him. Laugh that is until the flood waters come and then all the people pile on board after the animals. (Show clip of the flood scene from Evan Almighty).

We

Of course the flood is exciting and the movie is funny, but there is a serious question that Evan asked in the movie, and that was "why me". God's answer to him in the movie is because he loves him. When things are tough and God is doing big things through you, the movie says that it is evidence of God's love. We are often like Evan in the movie and as things get tougher and tougher we tell God to stop loving us so much.

⁸ A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy: The Attributes of God: Their Meaning in the Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1961), 1.

When we read the story of the flood, surprisingly we do see a story of a loving God. Some people see an angry, mean God who is way out of line. But if we let the story speak for itself, a loving God appears.

God

Genesis 6:1-5

When we left off last week people rebelled against God and things broke down rapidly from there. Only a few chapters later the world is so jacked up by sin that it is nearly beyond saving. Part of the problem is the "Nephilim". It is likely that these are evil angelic beings that are on the earth⁹. By taking women as their wives and having kids with them they can rid the world of people. And if there are no more true people left than they will not be able to crush evil like God promised that the "seed" of the woman would someday do (Genesis 3:15). In short, God predicts that a person will crush evil or Satan, Satan decides that if his angels mingle with people they can get rid of people, so there will be no one to crush him.

It is a great plan, and it is working to perfection. Verse 5 tells us that "all" the thoughts, of "all" the people, were evil, "all" the time! God's coming judgment is not Him hurting good people; it is Him dealing with pervasive evil!!! All seems to be lost!!! But suddenly there is hope; one good man and his family are left. God uses the rest of the chapter to tell Noah what he is about to do, to build a boat, to save the animals, and his family and also humanity. Noah does as God says and he and his family are saved in the Ark while the rest of the world is wiped out.

The rains come and go and all life not in the ark is destroyed. But now we are going to skip ahead to chapter 9 to see what God says to Noah after he gets out of the boat. Genesis 9:1-9. This should sound familiar, multiply, fill the earth, the plants are yours, and the animals are yours. The promises that God made to the first people he repeats to Noah. God is good on his word. And in verses 12-15 a new promise is given, because of Noah's faithfulness the world will never again be destroyed like it was.

You

What do you read? What do you hear? Is God angry, you bet. But when you look at the big picture every single person who loved God was saved. God was not unfair or in the wrong. The flood judged people or things that needed judgment. And had God not acted the world would have come to an end! Noah would have eventually died. Eventually the people would have all been "polluted" by the evil their midst. The world we know today that sometimes is very tough but is still full of so much good would not exist! God acts were acts of grace and love. Could He have simply wiped things out completely, sure? But he chose to stick with his creation and keep fighting for it. And again, he calls people to be a

⁹ Arthur Glasser, *Announcing the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 47.

part of his plan. It is always God's plan, God's idea, God's motivation. But he continually uses people to accomplish this. Faithful people help create these new realities. People are co-creators with him.

As Christians, Peter says that we find ourselves in a similar situation. Read 1 Peter 3:17-21. In the midst of a generation of people who are rejecting God, Peter tells the church that they need to stand firm. And, like Noah, they have been delivered through it. And not just 8 people as was the case in the flood. Instead through baptism many people are saved through the water.

When you think about the story of Noah do you think about a story of anger and judgment only, or do you see grace and deliverance. When you look at the world today and all the pain and struggle and think that that God is angry or absent. Or do you see a God who is breaking through, showing grace, saving people, and working in lives. As followers of Jesus we need to see that grace.

And not just see it but be a part of it. It was God's grace but he used Noah and his ark to be the vehicle. Today God uses his people to be vehicles of that grace. Being "saved" and put in right relationship with God through Jesus is all God's idea, God's love, and God's doing. But like he does over and over in the Bible, faithful people are the vehicles used to get that grace to the people.

US

Imagine if as God's people we believed this, if we took up this truth. If we were the witnesses he called us to be. If we were to be the salt and light he has called us to be. If we were love and serve the poor and go to be broken hearts and people. We need to take up the role of co-creators, of partnership, of mission. That is why as a group we do things and plan events that we can invite our friends to. As a youth group we do things to try to bring people closer to God. As I often say, these "Hook" events are going to be fun and that will definitely benefit you. But we need to be a group who looks to take people who are struggling and connecting them with a God who saves. We have the "ark". We are in a place of safety, but God's plan for us is that we are a group of believers that looks to join God in what He is doing.

Drama/Skit

THE SHOW CHOIR

Characters

Sue
Tracy
Kirk
Jake
Mr. Williams
Edwin

Scene 1 *The Hallway*

(The first scene starts in a school hallway as a group of 2 guys and 2 girls are walking the hallway)

Sue- Guys we are never going to win the district show choir competition if with the way we have been performing.

Tracy- Yeah, maybe we would have a chance if Jake would actually sing the notes, instead of sounding like a dog giving birth to puppies.

Jake- *(to Tracy)* At least I don't look like a dog. Rrrruff!

Kirk- *(gives Jake a high five)*- Nice one!

Sue- I'm serious guys. We need to come up with a great song and a great performance or we have no chance.

(a nerdy boy Edwin enters carry a few books)

Jake- Hey Tracy here comes your boyfriend. *(Jake and Kirk laugh)*

Tracy- Shut up Jake!

(Jake trips Edwin as he walks by and his books go flying, the four all laugh. Edwin starts picking up his books)

Jake- Hey Edwin, how was Physics Club today? You think you would've learned how to keep your balance. *(Jake and Kirk laughing)*

Edwin-(*shy, avoiding*) Yeah, I guess I should have.

Jake- So uh..where are you headed next? The Science Olympiad?

Edwin- Actually no, I have something else going on.

Kirk- Oh yeah, what's that?

Edwin-(*defeated*) It doesn't matter. (*exits*)

Sue- Come on guys we need to get going or we are going to be late for Show Choir practice!

Blackout

Scene 2
The Choir Room

Mr. Williams- We have been practicing for months and I have to be honest with you; this show choir is in for a disaster when it comes to districts. We don't have one good song ready, we don't have any good choreography planned, and we don't have anyone that can sing the solos!

Tracy- (*attitude*) Excuse me! I have been singing solos for this choir for the 3 years, and I am not about to stop.

Mr. Williams- Tracy you and I both know you can't hit the high notes in the Mariah Carey song. (*Tracy is visibly offended*)

Sue- I can try the solo Mr. Williams.

Mr Williams- You are an alto Sue. (*sigh*) We need to go in a different direction. We need something fresh and new that ignites our group all the way to the top at districts!

Kirk- We need some sick new moves is what we need! (*does a little Michael Jackson type spin.*)

Tracy-(*reacting to dancing*) I think I am going to be sick.

Mr. Williams- What we need is some fresh blood in the show choir. Someone with something unique to offer. Something that this school has never seen before.

Sue- Yeah, but who? I can't think of anyone in this school that could do that.

Mr. William- Listen kids! I have invite a student that I think has just what we need to bring that spark to the show choir. Stay right here I'm going to go get him.(*exits*)

Tracy- Who could it be?

Kirk- I have no idea.

Jake- This better be good.

Sue- No doubt.

(enters Edwin with Mr. Williams)

Mr. Williams- Kids, I would like to introduce you to Edwin!

(the four students pause a beat, and then burst out in laughter)

Jake- Edwin? You have got to be kidding? Edwin?

Tracy- Mr W., Edwin has as much musical talent as a dinner plate!

Sue- Yeah, this is ridiculous, we are wasting precious time that could be used practicing!

Mr Williams- Guys, you need to give Edwin a chance. Right now we have very little hope. What do we have to lose?

Sue- Whatever. Let's get this over with.

(It is important that Edwin is cast as a boy that can really dance and ham it up. Have him take off his coat to reveal a fancy outfit. Maybe replace his nerd glasses with sunglasses. Play a song that has a strong male voice and opportunities for funny/but good dance moves. A good selection may be Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger". Have Edwin lip sync to the vocals and dance. Have him play off the audience for even better effect. The routine will go over best if the audience knows the boy playing Edwin. The reactions of the students on stage should at first be shock and then really starting to get into it. You most likely do not want to play the whole song as it will be difficult to choreograph that much movement. In the last 30 seconds of the routine have the whole cast join in the choreographed dance, but make sure Edwin is the only one lip syncing.)

(After the dance over the whole cast gathers around Edwin giving him high-fives and side hugs. The students have changed their feelings toward Edwin.)

Tracy- Wow Edwin that was really good!

Jake- Wow, we are really going to be awesome at districts now!

Mr. Williams- Edwin, you have saved our team. See kids, sometimes help comes from the most unlikely of places.

Sue- No kidding. Edwin, where did you learn to move like that?

Edwin- Actually, is all just Physics! *(nerdy laugh) (blackout)*

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

RECAP: So far, we've covered the basics: God created everything, and our sin messes with his perfect plan for our lives. Ever since Adam and Eve first ate the forbidden fruit, things really went downhill. We learned in the lesson today that it got so bad, there was only one family still worthy in God's eyes (Noah).

1. Wow, what a story! Often times, we look at stories in scripture and just browse over them without really *listening* to what actually happened. When we look closely at the story of Noah, does anything make you uncomfortable? Angry? Confused?

Some Examples:

- Nearly EVERYONE on the earth was evil (only one family was good)
- God flooded the earth and everyone drowned
- A big boat fit that many animals?

2. What do you think God saw in Noah that was different from everyone else? See Genesis 6:9

Noah was not perfect, but he was righteous and blameless when compared to the evil around him. The most important part of this verse is the end, "and he walked with God."

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. - Genesis 6:9

Noah Gets Drunk? Noah was far from perfect. We read that directly after the flood was over, he drank too much wine and was found naked in his tent (Genesis 9:20-23). This was a disgrace, in the same way Adam and Eve felt when they sinned and realized they were naked. By reading about Noah's sin, we know that God can do amazing things through imperfect people.

3. God then asked Noah to build a HUGE boat (450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet tall, *see Genesis 6:15*), fill it with two of every kind of animal, and then board the ship with his family. To put that size into perspective, a football field is 360 feet long by 160 feet wide and 45 feet is about the height of a 4 story building. If God asked you to do this, what would you say?

This was a huge task! It sounds impossible until you read on and discover that Noah lived a lot longer than we do (950 years). This gave him plenty of time to get things together as God had commanded.

People Lived HOW Long? You may remember from the first week that people were not designed to die, rather death was a result of sin. So after Adam and Eve introduced sin into the world, people slowly began to live shorter and shorter periods of time. Today, the average life expectancy in the United States is estimated to be 78.11 years¹⁰.

4. What was Noah's response? See Genesis 6:22, 7:5

Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. - Genesis 6:22

And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him. - Genesis 7:5

5. Have you ever created something that, after getting into it, you had to throw away and start over again?

6. How can we see God's love in this story?

If we believe what the Bible is saying, we know that the world really was beyond hope. Remember in Psalm 139, we read that God knows everything about us, even our thoughts and the decisions we will make. So if he says the world is beyond hope, we know we can trust him. And instead of God simply wiping the earth clean, he used the one family who had potential to fix the problem and start over. This shows God's love and commitment to all people. You and I are here today because God cared enough about us to begin a new generation of people through Noah!

7. Should we be afraid of this happening again? Read Genesis 8:20-22.

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. ²²While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." - Genesis 8:20-22

8. Even though we don't have to worry about God flooding the planet, we do want to be seen as righteous in God's eyes. How can we do this? Read what Jesus said in John 15:18-20.

We need to make sure we are *in the world*, but not *of the world*. This doesn't mean we live a life of isolation, but that we are noticeably different as we strive to follow God's way in our life.

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. - John 15:18-20

¹⁰ "Country Comparison :: Life expectancy at birth," CIA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2102rank.html> (accessed December 5, 2009).

9. What are the benefits of living a life for God?

Like Noah, we are given the great honor and blessing to be a part of God's plan!

LESSON 4

THE CALL...

"I WILL BLESS YOU ... SO THAT YOU WILL BE A BLESSING." - GENESIS 12

TEACHING/LESSON

Me

In life we are all often "called" to do things. Whether by phone or maybe by someone pulling us aside to talk, these calls can be simple or life changing. In these talks big things can happen. I remember when my parents gathered me and my brothers together one night when I was ten years old. Whenever our parents got us together to tell us something we all knew that it was going to be a big deal and that things were going to be different now. On this night my parents got us together to tell us that we were going to have another brother! How did they know it was going to be a boy, well there were already five boys in the family so I think my parents now believed that all they were able to have is boys? They started with the great news that our family was going to get bigger. But then they followed it up with a call to step up and how we would all have to work together since, well, our family was getting really big! My brothers were so excited that even the new responsibilities seemed like pure joy!

We

When we are called to do something great in life it usually feels like that. When your parents call you to do chores that is probably not too exciting. But what about when your band teacher calls you to step up and play the first chair part to help your band in a competition? It is probably not too exciting when your teacher calls on you to give an answer in class, but how about when that teacher calls you to lead your classmates in a project?

When an important person calls us to do an important thing suddenly life takes on a whole new meaning. What about if the God of creation called us to be a part of what he is doing! That would be a powerful source of the call with a powerful message. What would you say? Would you allow God use you to help others and to transform your life in the process? Over the last few weeks we have seen that God does that over and over. He calls

Adam and Eve to care for creation. He called Noah to build an ark to save his family and preserve mankind. He continued to work out His plans by using faithful people. The same continues today. But this call we are going to read about today is so clear that we will call it "the call". Things have not gone so well since Noah got off the boat. People continued to struggle to be in a relationship with God but God continues to strive for his people, by using people.

God

Read Genesis 12:1-8. God begins by telling Abraham what he needs him to do. The call is to go somewhere. Abram needs to leave what he knows, his land, his family and go into the unknown. God continues to explain what he will receive if he goes and is faithful. First he is going to receive land (v. 2). If he leaves the place where he is living not only will he have another place, but he will receive land back and more (great nation). Abram's name will also be great. As God builds a great nation through him he and his family name will receive much fame.

Finally, all people on the earth are going to be blessed by Him and what God is doing through Him. I think that this is important to note. Never does God call someone to do something and bless them only to bless them. God always has all people in mind when he uses and blesses someone. In verse 4 we see Abrams reaction. He leaves and goes in the way God told him to.

Because Abraham says yes and goes, God is then able to unleash the blessings. God goes on to use Abraham to call a model people to himself. That group is called Israel and for hundreds of years God uses them to show himself to the world. He gives them the 10 commandments and the law. He taught his people how to be in a relationship. And finally, eventually, Jesus came through Abraham (Matthew 1 and Luke 3).

This is not just some story that is off in the past. It is a pattern that we see over and over in the Bible. When Jesus calls his disciples he says almost the exact same thing. Follow me and I will make you fishers of men (Mark 1:17). Follow me, first he invites the disciples to do something, to move, to go, and to follow. Then he promises them transformation. This is not some little menial task the disciples will be different because they follow. And finally they will be seeking people. They are not called to just be with God and be blessed; God's vision is always that the blessing would move to other people as well.

Then is that just for them or does this idea of God calling still apply to you and I today? Read 1 Peter 2:9. This tells us that the follower of Jesus has been called out of the world so that they can "declare" the praises of God.

You

One of the saddest things is that many followers of Jesus today do not understand that calling is available to them. God calls us to a relationship with himself through Jesus. Most Christians get that. But a lot of times it stops there. Like Noah, Abraham, Adam, Eve, and

the disciples, we are also called to be co-creators. Like with all of them God starts by blessing them, but God's eyes are always on the whole world as well. Really, people have been given the responsibility of bringing Jesus to the world. (At this point the speaker can delve into the great commission as an example of a "calling" that is upon His people. This is a good opportunity to discuss both individually and as a group how this can be fulfilled) God is always the one who supplies the power, but He continues to choose to use people.

US

This is a reality that we need to grab a hold of and own. I remember being so excited about the chance to do something big by helping to raise the new brother when my parents told me we were going to have a new family member. In the same way, I have always been excited when someone important has given me an important mission. And there is no one more important and no task more important than the mission that has been given to the church by an all powerful God. Are you willing first to allow God to transform your life with a commitment to his Bible, to the church, to prayer, to missions, to times and places where you allow transformation to happen in you.

But after that are you willing to embrace the missions that have been given to you. The mission to share your faith with your friends so that your faith does not stop with you? To use your free time and your extra resources to be a blessing to the world?

God is the creator but he has invited people to co-create with him, to be used by Him. Are you willing to answer this call? To help God bring his life to your family, your friends, your school, and your world.

Drama/Skit

BLeSSed

Characters

Mom
Johnny
Keven
Coach
Sarah

Scene 1- Johnny's Bedroom

Mom (*excited*)- Johnny, wake up honey! Wake up! (*tries to wake up her son but shaking him*) Come on, I've got some wonderful news for you!

Johnny - What? What? What is it Mom?

Mom - We just got a letter from Harvard University. Congratulations honey! You have been accepted! Johnny, you are going to Harvard!!

Johnny- Really? Wow! That's great.

Mom- Congrats! Wow, you have really been blessed with a lot of smarts. Dad and I are so proud of you.

Johnny- Thanks mom.

Mom- Well, get up you have a big day ahead of you. (*about to leave*)

Johnny- Ok, thanks mom.

Mom - (*turns back*) - Oh yeah, Linda across the street called this morning. Her son is having trouble in Algebra 2. She was wondering if you could stop by later tonight and give him a little tutoring.

Johnny- Oh Mom, I can't. I'm going to the movie with the guys tonight.

Mom- Ok, I'll let them know.

Scene 2 - School Hallway

(Johnny's checking the list to see if he made the basketball team. He is with his friend Kevin.)

Kevin- *(walking in with Johnny)* I probably didn't make it. I have tried out for the past 2 years and have never made the varsity team.

Johnny- This is our year Kevin. I feel really good about our chances this year.

Kevin- *(unsure)*- I don't know about that. I can't look.*(covers eyes)*

Johnny- Ok, here is the list. Believe me. This is our year. *(facing front, finger pantomiming downward looking for the names. He turns to Kevin smiling big.)*

Kevin. We made it. WOOOOO HOOO!

(The boys celebrate like really excited teenagers. Doing dances, giving high fives, etc.)

Kevin- I can't believe it! Woo Hoo! I am pumped! YES, YES, YES!

Johnny- I told you had nothing to be worried about.

Kevin- You were right. It is going to be an incredible season!

Coach- *(enters)* Congratulations guys!

Johnny- Thanks, coach.

Kevin- Yeah, thanks Coach. You won't regret your decision.

Coach- I'm sure I won't. Don't forget, practice starts next Monday. I expect to see you two there at 3:30 sharp.

Kevin- No problem coach. We'll be there.

Coach- Hey, there was another thing that was going to ask you guys. This weekend I am heading up a basketball clinic for some 3rd and 4th graders and I was wondering if I could use some help with the free throw station.

Kevin- Sure, I'm free.

Coach- What about you Johnny?

Johnny- Ahh...umm... I'm not really good with kids. Besides I have already made some plans with my girlfriend.

Coach- *(disappointed)* Johnny, you have a lot to offer, I hope you would reconsider. Kevin, I will see you on Saturday. See ya guys!

Scene 3- The Golf Course

(Johnny and Kevin are carrying golf bags)

Kevin- Man, this caddy job is the greatest gig ever. I can't believe that last guy tipped me \$30 bucks!

Johnny- You think that is good? Check this out. *(pulls out a wad of cash)* This is all that I have made this weekend in tips.

Kevin- *(grabs money for Johnny, and starts counting)* Holy cow, there is at least \$250 bucks here!

Johnny- *(takes money back)* I told you this job was the best!

Kevin- No doubt. Thanks for telling me about it. What are you going to do with your money? Got any plans?

Johnny- I'm planning on getting the new 32 gig IPOD Touch. *(or whatever is popular at the time)*

Kevin- Good call.

(Enters Sarah, holding a coffee can with "Hunger Fund" on the front)

Kevin- Hey Sarah. What's up?

Sarah- Hey guys. Hot enough out here for you?

Johnny- It's not too bad. It's all in a days work. What brings you out here today?

Sarah- Oh, my dad belong to the club, and he is playing a round today so I thought I would tag along to maybe raise some funds for the 30 Hour Famine.

Kevin- What's that?

Sarah- Oh. I am going without food for 30 hours to raise awareness for world hunger. I am trying to find people that will sponsor me as I go without, so other can eat.

Kevin- Oh, that's cool.

Sarah- Would you guys like to donate?

Kevin *(thinking about it)* Ummm...sure I have 10 bucks to spare.*(puts it in the can)*

Sarah- Wow, thanks. What about you Johnny? Would you like to donate?

Johnny- Ummm, uh...I really don't have any I can spare right now. Sorry. My church gives a bunch of money to hunger and my parents give to our church, so its not like I don't care or anything.

Sarah- I understand. I'll see you guys later. *(Sarah exits)*

Kevin- Really? None to spare. hmMMM. *(boys exit)*

(Sarah enters again as boys are exiting)

Sarah- *(to audience)*

In the Bible, God told Abram: "Leave your country, your family, and your father's home for a land that I will show you.

I'll make you a great nation and bless you.

I'll make you famous; you'll be a blessing.

I'll bless those who bless you; those who curse you I'll curse.

All the families of the Earth will be blessed through you."

What about you? God has given us all so much. Why? For what purpose?

What are the gifts God has given you? And what are YOU, doing with them?

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

RECAP: This is the last week of our series Called to Create. We've looked at how and why God created humans (to love and serve), that humanity ultimately fell off God's plan and sinned, and now we must focus on being righteous in God's eyes through our faith in him. And the best part of having faith in God is that he will use us to do amazing things! Today we're talking about the story of Abraham, and God's call on his life.

1. Read Genesis 12:1-2. What does God promise to Abram (later to be called Abraham)?

¹Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ²And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. - Genesis 12:1-2

2. What do you think about this calling?

3. This story shows us that God blesses our lives so that we can be a blessing to those around us. What did God see in Abram that made him worthy of this great blessing?

Just like Noah, Abram had faith in God. We see this in his response to God's call in Genesis 12:4.

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. - Genesis 12:4

4. This was God's greatest calling to anyone at this point in history. He would eventually bring Jesus into the world through Abram's descendents. Was Abram perfect? Read about what he did when he went to Egypt. See Genesis 12:11-13.

Not even close! In the first chapter, we read that Abram leaves his country as God commanded, and lies to the king of Egypt by saying his wife is his sister. He did this because he was afraid they would kill him in order to steal his wife, since she was beautiful.

¹¹When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, ¹²and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me, but they will let you live. ¹³Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you, and that my life may be spared for your sake." - Genesis 12:11-13

5. Have you ever been in a situation where you knew the right thing to do, but did the wrong thing because it seemed easier or less dangerous?

6. Just being born in this country, we have all won the lottery. What gifts has God given you?

Allowance: In Kenya, Africa, the average yearly income per person is \$680 US Dollars¹¹. That is just a little over \$13 per week. Many of you probably make more than that in your weekly allowance!

7. What are you going to do with those gifts?

8. To wrap up this series, let's dream a bit. God has a purpose for each of us, and that purpose is to do something amazing. Adam and Eve were called to start the human race. Noah's purpose was to build a giant boat and save humanity. Abraham was to begin a family who's descendants would show God's love to the world and eventually bring Jesus.

What do you think God is calling you to do? In other words, what has God given to you that you can in turn give to others?

What is God calling you to do today? Next year? When you *grow up*?

¹¹ "Kenya - Statistics," UNICEF, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/kenya_statistics.html (accessed December 5, 2009).