



The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem Creative Christian Education

TRUSTING GOD SERIES



This series is focused on our relationship with God through the Creation, the Ten Commandments, and people who honored God through their lives.

This Christian Education template is designed to assist leaders and teachers, lay and ordained, to bring the Bible alive by sharing local knowledge of the times of Jesus and Christians in the Land today. This is a special offering of the Diocese of Jerusalem which covers Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine. The Christians of this region are the historic Arabic speaking Christians who maintain the Christian presence mentioned in the story of the Pentecost. Through the centuries, these Christians have maintained insights into cultural traditions, images, and geographical contexts of Biblical references from the times of Jesus. Often called the 'Living Stones', the Arab Christians of the region are our living connection with the people whom Jesus taught and healed.

"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability... Amazed and astonished, they asked 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear each of us in our own native language?' ... Cretans and Arabs, in our own languages, we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." Acts 2: 4-11

FORMAT: Multi-age Christian education discussion with lesson plans for children.

Lessons in this series are aimed at 45 minutes but will depend on the teacher, the number, ages, and abilities of the children involved. It is designed in a format for a multi-age group found in most churches. The lesson is set for elementary school children which can be easily simplified for younger children or expanded for older children. Given the expected mixed ages and abilities, it is suggested that the older children be asked to prepare materials for the younger children, assisting them where needed so every child can finish the craft without time left with nothing to do.

The lessons can be shortened by eliminating portions or lengthened by adding a relevant children's story or video. When desired, older children can be set off in a separate part of the room to prepare a skit demonstrating the story while the younger children sing a song or make the craft.

The individual teachers will select the opening song appropriate for the children in their care. It is best to choose a song that is regionally and age appropriate which has relevance to the theme or has a unifying quality.

The readings, lessons, craft ideas, and closing prayer are provided. The leader will need a Bible and materials listed for each lesson.

Additional Christian Education materials and supplemental information about the ministries of the Diocese, including pictures, can be found on the diocesan website www.j-diocese.org.

Lesson plans and bulletin inserts are a gift from the Diocese of Jerusalem and no reprinting for profit is permitted unless permission is granted by the office in Jerusalem, making the Diocese of Jerusalem the beneficiary. Additional Christian Education materials and supplemental information about the Diocese can be found at www.j-diocese.org.



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TRUSTING GOD – Lesson 1 – God the Creator

FOCUS AREA/THEME: Jesus said: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The Gospel of Matthew 22:37-39

Greetings and best wishes to you from your Christian brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Jerusalem spread through Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine. These Arabic Speaking Christians, living as a tiny minority among the Jewish and Muslim majorities in the region, are the vital roots of Christianity at its place of origin and are often called the ‘Living Stones’ of our faith.

Song or Activity: Use the song chosen by your leader/group for this series.

SHORT BIBLE READING: John 1:1-5 - (Genesis 1:1-2:3 optional) - God the Great Creator

LEARNING/STORY: From John’s Gospel, look at the power of ‘Word’ or words. We can use words to start ideas and projects, to make things happen. We can direct people and animals with words. How do our parents direct us with words? How do we direct our animals with words? We can use words to build people up or knock people down. We can use them to tell the Truth, our truth, Jesus’ Truth, or we can use them to tell lies and mislead people. Our ‘word’ is our honor, our integrity. Our words affect what people think of us and expresses who we are.

In the land of Jesus today, people put great importance on words. Words to honor God are mixed into daily language, greetings, partings, wishes for good health, and future plans. Many business arrangements are still conducted based on a person’s honest word instead of signed documents and details. How does that apply to John’s Gospel?

Words cause reactions in thought and behavior. How is ‘Word’ used in this Bible passage? Some scholars think that the ‘Word’ in John’s Gospel means Jesus. What happens if you re-read the lesson for today and substitute ‘Jesus’ for ‘Word’? If Jesus is Love in human form, what happens if you re-read the lesson substituting ‘Love’ for ‘Word’?

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

Poster board or large paper, plain white paper, light brown/tan paper, colored markers, scissors, glue

CRAFT ACTIVITY: Cut numerous cloud shapes from white paper. Cut numerous shapes of any kind from the brown/tan paper. Have the children write positive words or phrases on the white shapes and negative words or phrases (no swear words) on the brown/tan shapes. On the large poster or plain paper, draw a wavy line across the middle. Ask the children to glue the white shapes above the line (in the sky) and the brown/tan shapes below the line (in the dirt).

END WITH PRAYER: *Thank you God for giving us your son, Jesus, who shows us how to live. Please bless the Christians in the Holy Land today as they live their faith and follow Jesus. Help me to follow Jesus too.*

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TRUSTING GOD – Lesson 2 – Our relationship with God



FOCUS AREA/THEME: Jesus said: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The Gospel of Matthew 22:37-39

Greetings and best wishes to you from your Christian brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Jerusalem.

SONG: Use the song chosen by your leader/group for this series.

SHORT BIBLE READING: The first five Commandments - Our relationship with God. Exodus 20:1-11

LEARNING/STORY: The Diocese of Jerusalem is part of a group of dioceses called a Province. The Diocese of Jerusalem is part of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai now in the Diocese of Egypt, which is another diocese of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. See if you can find Mt. Sinai on your map.

Discussion: Who gave the commandments? What are the commandments for? Do you think God is really jealous or does he just want our attention and loyalty? Do you think a loving God really punishes children for something their parents did or do you think God means that children and others if adults are mean to them? Does wrongful use of the name of God mean just saying bad words or does it mean trying to get God to do what you want instead of you doing what God wants? Why does God want us to keep one day holy? What kind of work should we not do? Is the day to honor all that God created? Is it to stop and think about God’s place in our lives and our relationships?

When we tell stories, share news, explain or ask for things, sometimes people do not understand what we are saying because we all think differently. Imagine the people who were sharing this news about Moses and what God told him. In learning what the Bible says about our relationship to God, we have to get an idea of the people who were sharing the story, where they lived and worked, and what was important to them. We have to know that God is a loving God and then figure out what the Bible story means, not just what we think it says. As we learn more about the place where Jesus lived, the place where Arab Christians maintain the Christians presence, we understand more about the images and biblical accounts of Jesus’ life and how we can best live faithfully and lovingly in God.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

Tea bags, pen, ribbon, Paper – ecru if possible

CRAFT ACTIVITY:

Make a scroll. Wet tea bags and put them on the papers to change the color and make them look old. Write this on the paper: “I am the Lord your God” Tie the rolled up paper with ribbon.

END WITH PRAYER: *Thank you God for giving us your son, Jesus, who shows us how to live. Please bless the Christians now living in the Holy Land as they follow Jesus. Help me to follow Jesus too.*

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TRUSTING GOD – Lesson 3 – Learning to live together



FOCUS AREA/THEME: Jesus said: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The Gospel of Matthew 22:37-39

Greetings and best wishes to you from your Christian brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Jerusalem spread through Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine who maintain the Christian presence in the Land where Jesus lived, died, and was resurrected.

SONG: Use the song chosen by your leader/group for this series.

SHORT BIBLE READING: The last five Commandments - Learning to live together. Exodus 20:12-17

LEARNING/STORY: Review last week’s discussion about the purpose of the 10 Commandments. Look at the last 5 and see how they help us live together happily. The Diocese of Jerusalem is part of the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East. The leaders have to meet each year to share their work and practice living together as a Province. What church do you belong to? What diocese and province does your church belong to?

How do we all live well together according to God’s Commandments? What does hurting another person do? What does stealing do in a group of people? Does it make everyone afraid and nervous? What does cheating on our families and friends do to our relationships and our lives? What does ‘honoring’ our parents do for us? Why should we not spend time wishing for what other people have?

(For older children, continue to explore ways we honor our parents and what ‘do not kill’ means. Do we honor our parents by obeying them if they want us to lie or cheat to look good or ‘get ahead’ in life? Does ‘do not kill’ mean in anger, self-defense, in greed, in political wars? How do these commandments affect how we live together in peace?)

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

Stones or paper for tablets, paint, varnish, permanent marker pen

CRAFT ACTIVITY: Make a commandment stone (or paper tablet. Paint a smooth stone. While it is drying, think of a commandment about living together as a group or Church School. Write your commandment on the paper tablet and/or a few reminder words on a stone. Varnish the stone.

END WITH PRAYER: *Thank you God for giving us your son, Jesus, who shows us how to live. Please bless the Christians now living in the Holy Land as they follow Jesus. Help me to follow Jesus too.*

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TRUSTING GOD – LESSON 4 – Mary, Mother of Jesus



FOCUS AREA/THEME: Jesus said: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The Gospel of Matthew 22:37-39

Greetings and best wishes to you from your Christian brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Jerusalem spread through Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine.

SONG: Use the song chosen by your leader/group for this series.

SHORT BIBLE READING: The Saints who followed the Commandments: Mary, mother of Jesus. Luke 1:38

LEARNING/STORY: Mary, mother of Jesus, the first Saint. Talk with the children about Mary as the Mother of Jesus. An angel was sent by God to tell her she would be the mother of a special child who would be the son of God. What did Mary do? Ask the children to repeat the Bible verse. ‘Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Mary was faced with a real problem; the Angel prepared Mary to have baby Jesus before she married Joseph instead of after they were married. She could have been very scared because the punishment was usually severe. Instead, Mary trusted God and raised Jesus willingly. Then she trusted God as Jesus left home teaching about life with God even though some people wanted to hurt him for what he taught about peace and love.

How hard is it to listen to God? Talk about what it is like to do the right thing when others want you to join the crowd doing something hurtful, mean, or foolish. How hard is it to go alone when other people might not like you for it? How hard is it to give up something or someone you love or care about because God wants them to share their gifts somewhere else? The Arab Christians of the Diocese of Jerusalem follow God this way every day. Living as a minority, they stand strong teaching people to respect each other, to work together, to help people in need, and to proclaim Peace and Love in a region of conflict and fear.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

Ruler, scissors, pens, Scotch tape, glue, colored paper, bendable straws, glitter, stars, etc. for decorating.

CRAFT ACTIVITY:

Mary’s symbol is a lilly. Make a lilly with your hand. Put your hand on a paper and draw around it. Cut it out. Write the name of Mary and Jesus and the child’s name on the palm of the paper hand. Decorate it. Curl the fingers of your paper hand so make flower petals. Curl around a straw and tape it. Put the child’s name on the outside also.

END WITH PRAYER: *Thank you God for giving us your son, Jesus, who shows us how to live. Please bless the Christians now living in the Holy Land as they follow Jesus. Help me to follow Jesus too.*

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TRUSTING GOD – LESSON 5 – John the Baptist

FOCUS AREA/THEME: Jesus said: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The Gospel of Matthew 22:37-39

Greetings and best wishes to you from your Christian brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Jerusalem spread through Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine. Arabic Speaking Christians maintain the Christian presence mentioned in the biblical account about the first Pentecost. Looking at this minority proclaiming peace and reconciliation, our Arab Christian brothers and sisters offer us new appreciation of John the Baptist.

SONG: Use the song chosen for this series.

BIBLE READING: Luke 1:13-17; Matthew 3:1-6 (Luke 1:5-23, 57-66) John the Baptist, Jesus’ cousin.

LEARNING/STORY: In the time of Jesus, names were very important. Names were given to honor people and to give the child a certain nature. Names are still very important among the Arab Christians today. The name of John’s mother, Elizabeth, is from a Hebrew name which can mean ‘God is a promise’ or ‘God is abundance’. What do you think it means in this story? The name of John’s father, Zechariah, means ‘God remembers’. The name ‘John’ comes from a Hebrew name and means ‘the Lord is gracious’. How do the names tell part of the story? Why do you think the angel told Zechariah to name his son ‘John’ against the tradition of choosing a family name?

Look on the map and find Jerusalem. John the Baptist in a place called Ein Karem, near Jerusalem on a beautiful hillside. Ein Karem means ‘Spring (water source) of the Vineyard’. John left Ein Karem, a beautiful place with life giving water and ample food to go into the desert. Can you find the desert on the map between Jerusalem and the Jordan River? Why do you think he left his comfortable and secure home to go into the desert where he would have no comfort or security and no dependable source of water or food?

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Map of Israel/Palestine

Large tablet paper or poster board, green paper, scissors, glue, marker, brown paint or crayons

CRAFT ACTIVITY: Make a name tree. Draw a tree on your large paper. Cut it out if you wish. Color the tree brown. Write ‘Mary’, ‘John’, and ‘Jesus’ on the trunk of the tree. Add your minister and teachers’ names to the branches. Cut out leaves from the green paper. Put the children’s names on the leaves and glue them to the upper part tree, one branch for each class or spread throughout the tree.

If expanding this lesson series on your own by adding other saints to study, allow space to add other saints on the main branches of the tree.

END WITH PRAYER: *Thank you God for giving us your son, Jesus, who shows us how to live. Please bless the Christians now living in the Holy Land as they follow Jesus. Help me to follow Jesus too.*

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TRUSTING GOD – LESSON 6 – Identity and God

FOCUS AREA/THEME: Jesus said: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The Gospel of Matthew 22:37-39

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SONG: Use the song chosen by your leader/group for this series.

BIBLE READING: Identity and the importance of names - Matthew: 1:20-24; Luke 2:21

LEARNING/STORY: Names are very important to all of us. Parents give a lot of thought to what name they will give their child based on the meaning, the family association, or as a wish for the child’s personality. Names were even more important when Jesus was born. Last names were not simply passed on from generation to generation. People were known as the son of someone, like ‘Jesus son of Joseph’ or as people of a place, like ‘Joseph of Arimethea’. Among the Arab Christians in the Middle East today, parents are honored with the birth of their first son by how others address them. No longer called by their given names, parents are called ‘father of (son’s name)’ or ‘mother of (son’s name)’. Thus, names like ‘Abu John’ (father of John) or ‘Imm Yousef’ (mother of Joseph) are commonly heard in conversation. This use of names strengthens the bonds between people as relationships are repeatedly stressed.

We read that Mary and Joseph were told what to name Jesus. In this way the Angel Gabriel, shares with all of us the role Jesus will have in our lives and of his relationship to God. It is commonly held that the name ‘Jesus’ comes from the Hebrew name meaning ‘Yahweh (God) is salvation’. Why do you think the Angel Gabriel gave Jesus that name? In verse 23, we are reminded that the prophets predicted a child, born of a virgin, named ‘Emmanuel’. We often use that name and the name ‘Christ’ for Jesus also. The name ‘Christ’ means ‘the Anointed One’.

Optional: Research meanings of names for Mary and Joseph. Does knowing the meanings of the names in the Bible help us understand more about the Bible message and God?

Have children talk about their names. What do they mean? How do we use names with each other?

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Assorted left over craft items, drawing paper, crayons/pencils, etc.

CRAFT ACTIVITY: We saw that Mary’s symbol was a lily. Have each child design their own symbol with available supplies. Ask them to talk about what their symbol represents about them.

END WITH PRAYER: *Thank you God for giving us your son, Jesus, who shows us how to live. Please bless the Christians in the Holy Land today as they live their faith and follow Jesus. Help me to follow Jesus too.*

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