



Community of Christ

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

YOUTH

18 JUNE 2017 — 23 JULY 2017

COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS



Lifelong Disciple Formation in Community of Christ is the shaping of persons in the likeness of Christ at all stages of life. It begins with our response to the grace of God in loving community and continues as we help others learn, grow, and serve in the mission of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, discipleship is expressed as one lives the mission initiatives of the church through service, generosity, witness, and invitation.

We invite you to use these lessons for your class, group, or congregation.

Lectionary-based: The weekly lessons connect the *Revised Common Lectionary* for worship with Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs.

Quick, easy: The lessons are designed for approximately 45-minute class sessions with two to three pages of ideas, discussion starters, and activities. Additional preparation help may be found in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament* (with focus on the gospel according to Matthew).

Lessons are available for three age groups. Recognizing each age group represents multiple stages of development, the instructor is encouraged to adapt lessons to best meet the needs of the class or group. When possible, optional activities are provided to help adapt lessons for diverse settings.

Children (multiage, 6–11): Help children engage in the Bible and introduce mission and beliefs with stories, crafts, and activities.

Youth (ages 12–18): Engage teens in scripture study and provocative questions about identity, mission, and beliefs.

Adult (ages 19 and older): Deepen faith and understanding with reflective questions, theological understanding, and discussion ideas.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Bible scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 6)

LESSON 30
18 June 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 9:35—10:23

Lesson Focus: Disciples are sent into the world to live Christ's mission.

Objectives

The learners will...

- focus on the meaning of Jesus' call to follow and obey.
- understand that Jesus wants them to be his friends and followers.
- explore what is needed to engage in Christ's mission.

Supplies

- Large writing surface and markers or chalk
- Bible (NRSV)
- Suitcase or backpack (optional)
- Copies of backpack page (end of lesson)
- Pens, pencils, markers, or crayons

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 9:35—10:23 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 84–85, available through Herald House. This lesson focuses on Matthew 9:35–38 and 10:5–7.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

On a large writing surface, make two columns titled Ordinary and Extraordinary. As youth think about what it means to be a disciple, have them list aspects of being a disciple that are ordinary and aspects that are extraordinary. Talk about their choices.

In this season after Pentecost, we hear stories of Jesus' ministry and our call as disciples to engage in his mission. This season is also known as Ordinary Time, from the word *ordinal* which means counted time. This time is not ordinary as in common or regular, but it is the time of counted weeks between Pentecost and Advent. It is a time focused on the teachings of Jesus, as well as the ordinary and extraordinary aspects of being disciples of Jesus.

If you have ever gone on a trip, you know that it takes a lot of preparation to get ready to go. You may need to have someone check your mail while you are gone. If you have a pet, someone has to take care of it. Probably the most important thing you have to do before going on a trip is packing your bag.

If a small suitcase or backpack is available, pass it around the class. When students receive the backpack or suitcase, have them respond to the following question:

- If you were going on a trip for one week and could only pack three items that fit in this bag, what would you pack?

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

Today's passage is Jesus' instructions as he sends the Twelve out in mission. Have youth share reading Matthew 9:35—10:15.

³⁵Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

¹⁰Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. ⁹Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. ¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹²As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

Discuss the following questions.

- Why did Jesus call and send the twelve disciples? (*He had compassion for all the people in need, and he needed help to carry out his mission of justice and peace.*)
- Where did Jesus instruct the disciples to go and not to go? (*Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Do not go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans.*)
- What were the disciples instructed to do? (*Proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons.*)
- What instructions did Jesus give the disciples regarding what to take and how to live? (*Don't take money, a bag, or extra clothes.*)
- What are the disciples instructed to do if they are not welcome in a community? (*Shake it off and leave the house or town.*)

The rest of the passage is Jesus' instruction to his disciples of the challenges ahead for them. Have youth take turns reading Matthew 10:16–23.

¹⁶"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ²²and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

We are not expected to take these instructions literally, but to consider what they mean for disciples today.

Assign each youth (or have them work in pairs) one of the above instructions (one or two verses). Have them respond to the following questions and share with the larger group.

- What is the challenge expressed in the verse?
- How would you interpret the challenge for disciples today?

Sharing the good news of Jesus is not always welcomed by others, but many are waiting to hear the good news of the peace of Christ, so we must keep sharing!

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of total lesson time)

Just as Jesus sent the Twelve in mission, disciples today are called and sent in Christ's mission. Community of Christ expresses this through five life-changing, world-changing Mission Initiatives. Ask students to list the five Mission Initiatives.

- Invite People to Christ
- Pursue Peace on Earth
- Abolish Poverty, End Suffering
- Develop Disciples to Serve
- Engage Congregations in Mission

Ask: Where do you find these Mission Initiatives taught in today's scripture passage?

When Jesus sent the Twelve to proclaim the good news and heal the sick, he was instructing them to share the peace of Christ with others. Inviting People to Christ means that we are to share the peace of Jesus (good news) with others.

- How have you experienced someone sharing the peace of Jesus Christ with another?

Give each student a copy of the backpack page. Inside the backpack, have them write or draw what they need to "pack" in order to share the peace of Jesus with others and what they need to leave behind outside the backpack. (For example: pack courage, leave behind fear.) When finished, have them share with the larger group.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived

(10% of total lesson time)

Give each member of the group time to complete and share with the group the personal challenge statement for this week.

Personal Challenge:

This week I will fill my bag with

and share the peace (good news) of Jesus with

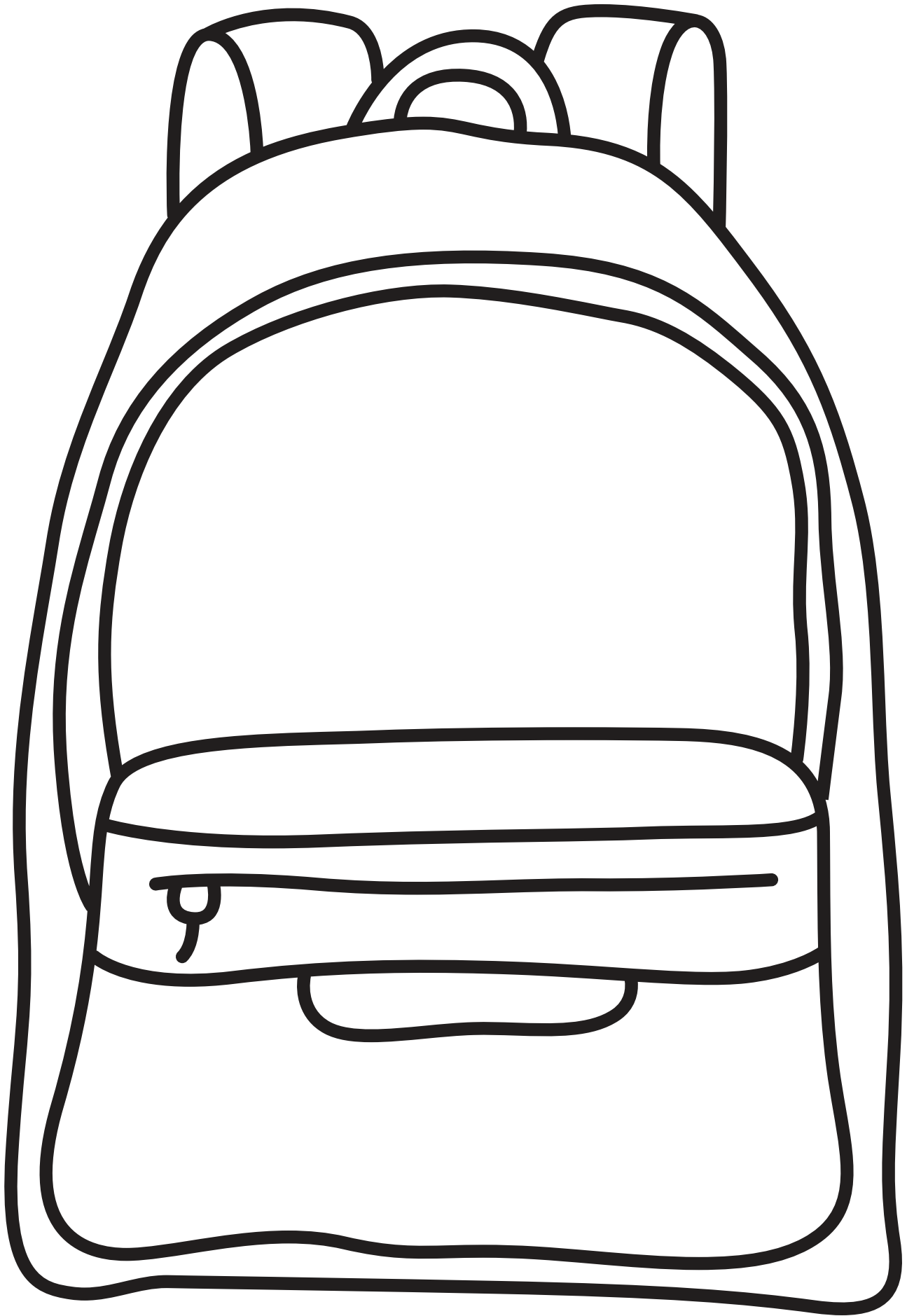
5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

(5% of total lesson time)

Read the following prayer, or invite a member of the group to offer a closing prayer.

We worship you, O God, with gladness. We are your people. Your love endures forever. You have been faithful to all generations. We give of our time, energy, and effort because we know the amazing ways your spirit makes a difference in the community and around the world. With joy in our hearts, we pray and sing joyfully. Halleluiah! Amen.



ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 7)

LESSON 31
25 June 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 10:24–39

Lesson Focus: Following Jesus and sharing God’s love with others is not always easy, but God’s love gives us strength and courage.

Objectives

The learners will...

- consider what it was like for those hearing Jesus’ words for the first time.
- discuss the responses of the disciples.
- explore how they will respond as disciples of Jesus.

Supplies

- Transparent jar, cup, bowl, or other container
- Pebbles or other small items to fill container
- Paper (timeline) and writing utensils

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 10:24–39 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 86–87, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Welcome youth to the space and begin the lesson with the game “Would You Rather?” Ask students the following questions and have them move to a designated space according to their response. Discuss why they make the choices they do.

Would You Rather? (Make your list of choices appropriate for the youth in the group.)

1. Go on a fun weekend trip with friends or spend one hour with a celebrity?
2. Read a book or play an instrument? (Remember, your voice is an instrument!)
3. Go to the mountains or go to the beach?
4. Play a team sport or play a video game in an online community?
5. Sing a solo or sing with a group?
6. Help someone in need or have lots of money?

7. Promote healthy living through exercise or healthy eating?
8. Listen to your favorite music or watch your favorite sports team?
9. Create your own artwork or admire a famous piece of artwork?
10. Give a gift or receive a gift?

One of Community of Christ’s Enduring Principles is Responsible Choices. Invite youth to read the following descriptions of Responsible Choices. If possible, project or post these descriptions to be viewed throughout the lesson.

- God gives humans the ability to make choices about whom or what they will serve. Some people experience conditions that diminish their ability to make choices.
- Human choices contribute to good or evil in our lives and in the world.
- Many aspects of creation need redemption because of irresponsible and sinful human choices.
- We are called to make Responsible Choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration
and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

The scripture passage this week can be troubling if understood literally. Jesus uses examples of common relationships to teach about difficult choices as a disciple. These are challenging words for us since they imply the things we believe are important and the social standards we submit to are turned upside down. The uplifting news is that God's love is inclusive of all. We don't have to hide things, we don't have to fear, and we don't have to keep secrets. God knows all and nothing is hidden from God. Nothing.

Have youth take turns reading Matthew 10:24–39.

²⁴"A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! ²⁶"So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³²"Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. ³⁴"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶and one's foes will be members of one's own household. ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Form two groups and assign each group vv. 24–31 or vv. 32–39. Have them discuss what the passage means and rewrite in their own words. Combine the two groups

and have them read the full passage in their own words. Discuss the following questions with the larger group.

- What was most challenging to understand in the passage? Why?
- What does it mean to deny yourself in order to serve God and follow Jesus?
- What difficult choices are you faced with as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- What helps you make Responsible Choices?

Before class begins, fill a clear container with rocks, pebbles, or other small objects. Make a note of how many objects are in the container. Share the following object lesson:

If you have ever gone into a store or market, you may have seen large jars, packages, cans, cups, bags, or other containers filled with items. Have you ever stopped to wonder how many items could be in a certain container?

Show students the container you have prepared and ask: Can you guess how many items are in this container? (Allow some time for them to guess.)

Wouldn't it be impressive if someone had the ability to look at this container and tell you exactly how many items are in the container? That would be pretty amazing, but let me tell you something more amazing than that! Today's scripture passage reveals that God knows exactly how many hairs are on your head. If you look around the room, you notice some have a lot of hair, and some don't have very much at all. (Fun fact: The average human head has about 100,000 hairs.) Luckily, it doesn't matter how much or how little hair you have! God knows everything about you, including things that are in your mind and heart (even things you may be hiding). God knows these things because God created every part of you...every little detail!

The scripture passage also reveals that God knows exactly how many birds are in the air, and if one of them falls to the ground, God knows it! If God cares when a little sparrow falls to the ground, can you imagine how much God cares for you? We can never fully understand the amount of love that God has for us. God cares for all persons so much that God sent Jesus to teach us about God's amazing love, no matter what our life circumstances and choices are!

- What would it look like for people to be equal, for us to not be fearful, for things to be out in the open, and for us to put God first?
- What is your most important relationship? Whom do you love the most?
- How do we pick Jesus over our siblings, our friends, or our mom and dad? How do we look into their faces and say, "I love Jesus more"? (We love each other best when we love God most.)

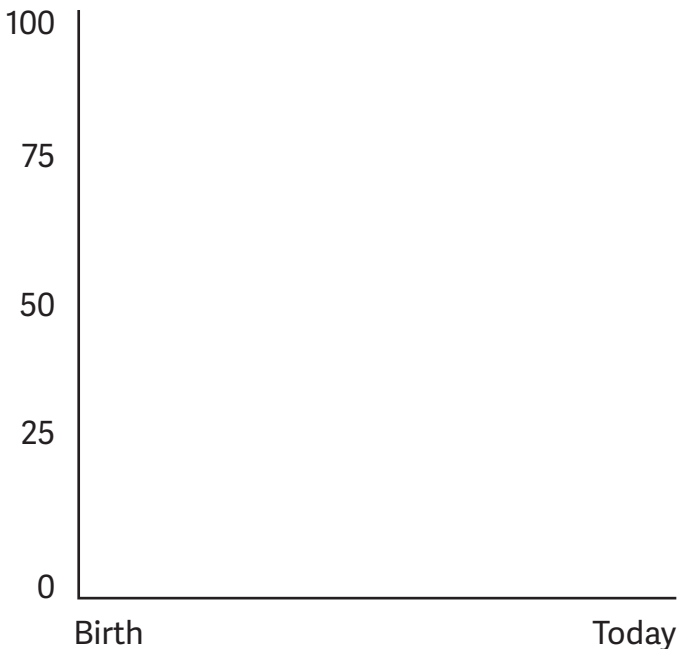
3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of total lesson time)

This week is all about how much God knows you. God knows you better than you know yourself, and God is always present even when you don't recognize it.

Now we will create a timeline of your faith journey with God. On a sheet of paper, draw X and Y axes. Label the Y (vertical) axis with the numbers 0 (bottom), 25, 50, 75, and 100 (top). This will be the percentage that you recognized God's presence in your life. On the X (horizontal) axis, at the far left, write the date of your birth. The farthest right point will be today. Chart your journey with God and consider the following questions. Write or draw examples of your responses around your timeline.

- Who are some people you have met, and what events have happened on your journey? How have they influenced your life? What was God doing in the midst of the events? What choices were you faced with during this time?
- When and how have you experienced the good news of the kingdom? What was happening in your life during those times? What changed in your life as you experienced God's love and presence?



4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived
(10% of total lesson time)

Personal Challenge

Invite the youth to share their timelines and respond to the personal challenge statement.

I recognize God's love and presence most when...

I will make Responsible Choices, such as

_____ ,

that will allow me to recognize God's presence and love more fully.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of total lesson time)

Close your time together with the following prayer.

Eternal God, we are thankful you know everything about us, including the hairs on our head. Thank you for sending Jesus to reveal your love. Guide us in making Responsible Choices as disciples of Jesus. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 8)

LESSON 32
2 July 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 10:40–42

Lesson Focus: Disciples represent Jesus and share the peace of Christ in all relationships.

Objectives

The learners will...

- explore descriptions of invitation, witness, and hospitality.
- describe ways to make a stranger feel welcome.
- consider whom they will invite to know the peace of Jesus Christ.

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 10:40–42 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 88, available through Herald House.

Supplies

- Large writing surface and markers or chalk
- Dictionary or access to internet (optional)
- Bible (NRSV preferred)
- Welcome sign or welcome mat (optional)
- Paper
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

On a large writing surface, make three columns titled Invitation, Witness, and Hospitality. Invite students to list words in each column to describe the title.

- What similarities do you find in all three columns?
- What differences are important?

If possible, use a dictionary or internet to look up definitions of each title. Which definitions are most related to living as disciples of Jesus Christ?

Sing or read “Jesu, Tawa Pano (Jesus, We Are Here)” CCS 71. This song expresses how we represent Jesus in the world. We are here to invite and welcome others to know the peace of Jesus.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of total lesson time)

Whoever invites you, invites Christ. Whoever invites Christ, invites God. This is an essential understanding of living as a disciple of Jesus Christ. When these words were written, there were no telephones or computers or even mail. Welcoming someone who came bearing a message implied welcoming the person who sent the message. God sent Jesus to help us understand the nature of God.

Read Matthew 10:40–42. Then have each youth read the passage and replace “you” with their name. Have them read the passage again and replace “you” with the name of someone with whom they disagree or someone who is a stranger to them. Discuss how it changes the meaning when they personalize it.

⁴⁰“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; ⁴²and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”

Have you ever noticed a welcome mat or sign that says Welcome? Where might you ordinarily see something like this? A welcome mat serves two purposes. It is a friendly reminder for guests to wipe their shoes before they enter your house so they won’t track soil into your home. It also tells guests they are welcome in your home.

How are people welcomed in your home? Are people invited into your home that look or believe differently than you? What about in our congregation? Do we make everybody feel welcome in our congregation?

Community of Christ upholds the Worth of All Persons as an Enduring Principle. As a faith movement, we work hard to be an inclusive body of disciples that continue to draw the circle wide (and draw it wider still!) and welcome everyone to a place at the table.

- What does welcoming the stranger look like?
- How do we welcome Christ into our lives?
- Who invited you to know the peace of Jesus? How did they do this?
- How is Community of Christ welcoming? How can we be more welcoming?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of total lesson time)

Invite the group to discuss how the congregation welcomes people on Sundays, as well as other days of the week. You can do this in smaller groups or in a large group. Do we welcome people as if they were Christ?

Challenge the group to consider ways to be more welcoming. What happens when a stranger walks in? Are there greeters to welcome them and introduce them to others? Can a stranger who speaks another language find

the restroom? Can a blind person find his or her way to a seat for worship? Brainstorm ways that you can improve how welcoming your congregation is. Can you make signs? Volunteer to be a greeter? Identify ways to improve your congregation’s hospitality and talk with the pastor about them?

Provide paper and crayons, markers, or colored pencils for each student. Have them create a welcome sign that reflects what the group has discussed.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived
(10% of total lesson time)

Invite youth to share practices of invitation, welcome, and hospitality they have experienced. (For example, offering water to someone who is thirsty, providing food to the hungry, putting up welcome signs, assigning individuals to entryways when people arrive at church, inviting somebody to play a game, and so on.) Then invite students to complete the personal challenge statement. They may choose to write or draw responses on the back of their welcome signs, share in groups of two or three, or share in the larger group.

Personal challenge:

This week I will invite

to know the peace of Jesus Christ by...

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of total lesson time)

Offer this prayer to close your time together.

Eternal God, we plead for your patience and awareness. May we remember that when we welcome others to our homes and to our church, it is the same as welcoming you. May we always have the strength to welcome all persons in your name. Amen.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 9)

LESSON 33
9 July 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30

Lesson Focus: All are invited to receive, embody, and share the peace of Jesus Christ.

Objectives

The learners will...

- discover tools to help lift and carry heavy objects.
- understand how Christ helps us carry burdens.
- discuss burdens they are carrying and how they can receive and share the peace of Christ.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV preferred)
- Variety of items which are not heavy and a couple that are heavy
- Picture of an automobile jack (optional)
- Picture of a yoke (included on p.14)
- Paper and pens, pencils, crayons, or markers

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 89, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Gather a variety of items (heavy and light) for students to lift. Heavy items should be a challenge to lift without presenting a risk of injury to students.

How strong do you think you are? Would you say that you not strong at all, somewhat strong, or very strong? How many of you think you could pick up this heavy item (select one)? How about another heavy item like this one (select one)? If you are able to lift these items, then you must be pretty strong. How many of you think you could lift a vehicle? Do you think that it possible? Many tools help lift things that we could not lift by ourselves. For example, to lift a car, you can use an automobile jack. (Show a picture, if possible.) If you put this jack under a car and pump the handle, you can easily lift a car that weighs over 3,000 pounds! Yes, with the help of a jack, you can lift a car!

- What other tools or techniques help us lift heavy objects?

Show a picture of a yoke and ask students if they know what it is and for what it is used. Tell the students it is a yoke, and have them listen for how it is used in the scripture passage.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of total lesson time)

Invite youth to take turns reading these verses from Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30.

¹⁶“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

¹⁷“We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.”

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; ¹⁹the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

²⁵At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

People were comparing Jesus with John the Baptizer.

- What did people say about John and Jesus? (*They criticized John for not eating and drinking, but they criticized Jesus for eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners.*)
- Why was Jesus frustrated with this? (*The people did not get who Jesus was or that his ministry was inclusive of all.*)
- In verses 25–26 Jesus indicates that even children understand Jesus’ ministry better than adults at times. What examples have you seen of children and youth engaging in Christ’s mission?

Jesus expresses his frustration with the way people responded to his ministry, but then he offers gratitude for those who have come to know God through him. The final verses reveal Jesus’ ministry is full of compassion and mercy.

- How is yoke used in the final verses to demonstrate Jesus’ compassion? (*It is described as a bond, keeping or tying people together.*)
- How has someone demonstrated this kind of compassion for you?

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of total lesson time)

Some of you may be carrying heavy burdens. Bullying, peer pressure, troubles at home or at school, and so much more might weigh you down. Some people are burdened by physical challenges. Maybe someone in your family is sick and you are worried about them. You may be having a hard time making passing grades in school. Whatever the burdens are in your life, some may be too heavy to handle by yourself. Well, guess what? You don’t have to! That is the wonderful message in today’s passage!

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” You don’t need to struggle with burdens that are too heavy for you. Scripture is full of promises to help us in times of trouble. These words of encouragement are just what we need to face the hard times that may come our way.

Invite one or more youth to read Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a.

Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s shalom, invites all people to come and receive divine

peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God’s peace and discover the blessings of all of the dimensions of salvation.

- How does this passage compare with Matthew 11:28–30?
- How does Jesus embody God’s shalom? (*His ministry was inclusive of all; he promoted justice for the marginalized; he promoted peace; he cared about those others did not care about.*)
- What leads to God’s peace and all dimensions of salvation (personal, social, environmental)? (*following Jesus, living like Jesus, promoting justice and peace for all, sharing the peace of Jesus, caring for the Earth and all creation*)
- What examples do you see of people living and sharing the peace of Jesus?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived
(10% of total lesson time)

Does Jesus promise that, if we ask, God will take our troubles away? No, but God will help us. The challenge for us is to recognize God’s presence and Christ’s peace. In fact, some of our struggles may help us grow and become stronger. They may also help us learn to trust in Jesus. But when the load is too heavy, he will help us carry it—and no burden is too heavy for Jesus.

Provide each student with a piece of paper (conserve paper by distributing half sheets) and items with which to write, draw, or color. Have youth make a T-chart on the paper. On the left side, have them list burdens (5–10) they carry. On the right side, list possible “yokes” (people, spiritual practices, Responsible Choices) that can make those burdens easier to carry.

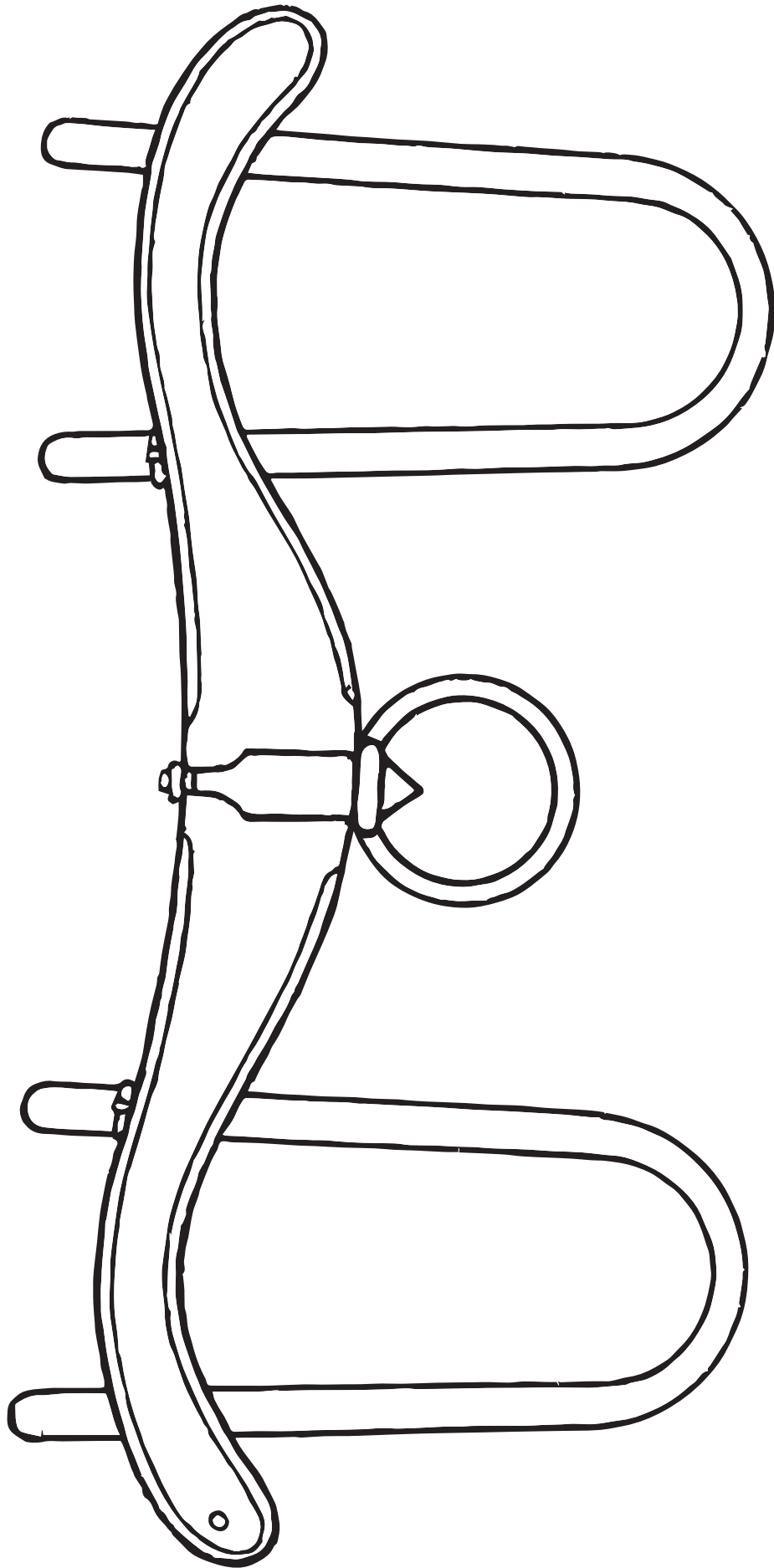
Invite youth to share one burden and yoke with the larger group.

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope
(5% of total lesson time)

Share this prayer to close your time together.

Eternal God, we are thankful that when we struggle under the load of life’s burdens, you are there to help us carry the load. Jesus showed us how to love one another and think of others, not just ourselves. Help us let go of the selfishness that weighs us down. Help us lift our spirits by putting the needs of others ahead of our own. Amen.



ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 10)

LESSON 34
16 July 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23

Lesson Focus: Jesus uses parables to teach disciples. The Parable of the Sower teaches disciples about caring for themselves, others, and the Earth.

Objectives

The learners will...

- compare rocky ground, thorny ground, and good soil and their effect on planted seeds.
- discuss the Parable of the Sower.
- explore how Jesus teaches disciples to care for themselves, others, and the Earth.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Seeds
- Four recycled containers
- Rocks or pebbles, dry hard dirt, thorns or weeds, potting soil
- Paper and pens, pencils, crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, pp. 90–91, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Prepare four containers, each with one of the following: rocks or pebbles, dry hard dirt, thorns or weeds, and potting soil.

Have you ever planted anything? If so, what did you plant, and how did you nurture the seeds and plants? The kind of soil you have is essential to the success of a garden. If the ground is too hard or filled with rocks and weeds, you won't have healthy plants.

Give individuals (or pairs) one of the four prepared containers and some seeds. Have them create a short story or scenario about what the contents of the container represent, what the seeds represent, and what happens to the seeds. They may choose to tell, read, illustrate, or act their story and share with the larger group. Be creative!

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of total lesson time)

Have youth take turns reading Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23.

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ²Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. ⁶But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and brought

forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹Let anyone with ears listen!”

¹⁸“Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. ²⁰As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. ²²As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. ²³But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

This story is typically called the Parable of the Sower. A parable is a story (which may or may not be true) that teaches a lesson or points to a greater truth. This parable is more about the soil than the sower or the seed. A portion of the seeds that were planted fell along the way where the ground was hard. The seeds lay on top of the ground, and the birds came and ate them. A portion of the seeds fell on the rough ground. The seeds grew rapidly; however, when the sun came, the plants died because they didn't have strong roots. Some of the seeds fell among weeds, and plants grew for a little time; however, the weeds took control and killed them. Luckily, a portion of the seeds fell on rich, fertile soil, and the plants became strong and sound and produced a decent harvest.

- Whom does the sower represent in this story? (*God, Jesus, teachers or ministers, disciples, anyone who shares the good news of Jesus*)
- What do the seeds represent? (*God's vision for creation, the gospel or good news that Jesus teaches, people, or creation*)
- What elements kept the seeds from growing? (*hard ground, birds, little soil, weeds, thorns*)
- What do these elements represent? (*unhealthy conditions, poor choices, forces of nature*)
- What can we do to help seeds or disciples grow in good soil? (*take care of the Earth, make healthy and Responsible Choices, learn and grow as disciples, share the good news of Jesus with others, encourage others*)

In Jesus' story, the word of God (good news of Jesus) is the seed, and we are the dirt. Sometimes we hear someone preaching, teaching, or sharing a testimony about Jesus;

but, we may be distracted. Maybe we are thinking about what we will do that evening or what we did yesterday. We hear the message, but we are not really listening to what is being said. This act resembles tossing seed on the ground and not in the ground. It won't ever develop into anything in our life.

Sometimes we hear the message and get excited about it, but we fail to act. Slowly we begin to lose that excitement. That resembles the seeds that fall on the rough ground. The plants spring up quickly but die because the roots are shallow.

Once in a while we hear the message and accept what it says, but we do not change the way we respond. That resembles planting the seed in the middle of weeds. What happens next? The weeds will soon take control of us!

When we hear the message, listen and attempt to comprehend what it says, and put it into practice, then we resemble great soil—soil where the seed flourishes and develops and delivers a strong and healthy harvest. That is the type of soil that Jesus needs us to be.

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of total lesson time)

Have one or more of the students read Doctrine and Covenants 165:1e.

Let nothing separate you from this mission. It reveals divine intent for personal, societal, and environmental salvation; a fullness of gospel witness for creation's restoration.

Discuss the following questions:

- How would you describe personal salvation to another person? (*wholeness and well-being in this life and the next*)
- How would you describe societal salvation to another person? (*justice and wholeness in relationships and among groups of people*)
- How would you describe environmental salvation to another person? (*care for the Earth and environment so that all life can flourish*)

Provide half sheets of paper for each student. Consider your life as a disciple. How does it compare to what the contents of the four containers represent? Take a few moments to draw a plant growing in healthy soil. How can you nurture good soil as a disciple and care for yourself, others, and the Earth?

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson
might be lived
(10% of total lesson time)

Ask the youth for suggestions about how they can make their roots grow deeper in Christ's love (safely fasting, prayer, scripture study, singing, meditation, worship, service, and relationships). Write their suggestions on the pictures of their plants.

God's vision for all creation to flourish is made real through generous disciples.

On the back of their plant drawing, have students write and respond to the following:

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, I am rooted in God,
the Source of life and love.

This week I will nurture good soil and care for
myself by...

I will nurture good soil and care for others by...

I will nurture good soil and care for the Earth by...

5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of total lesson time)

Close your time together with this prayer.

Loving God, we want to be like the good soil. Help us plant seeds of your love by caring for ourselves, others, and the Earth. In your name we pray. Amen.

ORDINARY TIME (PROPER 11)

LESSON 35
23 July 2017

Focus Scripture Passage: Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

Lesson Focus: Jesus teaches disciples to make Responsible Choices and love without judgment.

Objectives

The learners will...

- understand what Jesus means when he speaks of wheat in a parable.
- understand what Jesus means when he speaks of weeds in a parable.
- discuss Enduring Principles and make connections to the focus scripture passage.

Supplies

- Bible (NRSV recommended)
- Copies of Enduring Principles (*Sharing in Community of Christ*, 3rd Edition, pp. 12–14, available from Herald House or at www.CofChrist.org/common/cms/resources/Documents/Sharing-in-Community-of-Christ-3rd-edition.pdf)
- Small recycled containers, potting soil, and wheat seeds (optional)
- Paper, colored pencils, and tape or glue

Note to teacher: In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 92, available through Herald House.

1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares, and motivates for lesson
(15% of total lesson time)

Invite youth to share what they remember about the story from last week and what they learned. Ask them to describe what a parable is and how Jesus used parables.

Spend a few moments reflecting on the personal challenge for the past week. Invite youth to share how they nurtured good soil in the past week by caring for themselves, others, and the Earth.

2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction
(35% of total lesson time)

Today’s story is another parable that is similar to the story last week. Have youth take turns reading Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43.

²⁴He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ ²⁸He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

³⁶Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” ³⁷He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds

are the children of the evil one,³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers,⁴² and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

Discuss the following questions:

- How is this parable similar to the parable from last week? What is different?
- How would you describe shalom to another person? (*God's vision for creation, wholeness, justice, and peace*)
- What does the wheat represent in this parable? (*people who make Responsible Choices and care for themselves, others, and the Earth*)
- What do the weeds represent in this parable? (*people who do not make Responsible Choices and do not care for themselves, others, or the Earth*)

One of the greatest threats to a strong, healthy garden is weeds. Weeds will steal the nutrients from the soil that are supposed to help plants develop, and they will suppress strong plants. How do people take care of weeds? One option is to use a tool to dig out the weeds. However, if you do that, you run the risk of unintentionally injuring the strong plants.

Another approach to disposing of the weeds is to use weed killer. It will kill the weeds for sure. However, weed killer doesn't know a dandelion from a tomato plant. It kills each plant that it touches. Once in a while, it is best to allow the weeds to grow unbothered until the time has come to collect the harvest. At that point, you can separate the weeds from the healthy plants.

There are times when people in our families, schools, congregations, or communities are like weeds. They do not make choices that contribute to good in the world; or they do not care for themselves, others, and the Earth. Sometimes we are the weeds.

Jesus teaches disciples to focus on the wheat, not the weeds—to focus on fulfilling Christ's mission. When people are like weeds, we are to remember what Jesus teaches us: God's love and grace are for all persons. We are to live and love as Jesus modeled, and leave the rest to God.

3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing
(35% of total lesson time)

Provide each youth with a small, recycled container. Let the youth fill them 3/4 full with soil. Give each youth wheat or grass seed to plant in their soil and water it in.

As youth are planting their seeds, explain that in the early phases of growth, weeds and wheat may look similar. We must wait until each begins to develop before figuring out which is which. The wheat in the story symbolizes those who follow and live like Christ. The weeds symbolize those things that get in the way of God's purposes in our lives. Christ will always help us remove weeds from our lives.

Provide copies of the Enduring Principles. Assign each student one of the Enduring Principles. Have them read the descriptions and consider how living the Enduring Principle contributes to God's purposes in our lives and in the world. Share with the larger group an example of how living the Enduring Principle contributes to God's shalom.

4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived
(10% of total lesson time)

Parables like this show us what God's kingdom is like, since we frequently do not have the language and the understanding to grasp God's kingdom in an easier way.

This parable shows us that God is untiring with the world. God waits until the time is right before separating the wheat (the disciples) from the weeds (those things that hold us back and get in our way). God is giving us an incredible opportunity to develop into wheat rather than weeds. This parable shows us that God's kingdom on earth is blended with diverse individuals—those who model Jesus' ministry and mission and those that hinder that process.

The parable clearly explains that we shouldn't rush to judge whether somebody is a weed or wheat. We need to invite people to Christ and encourage them to grow as disciples.

Provide strips of paper for each student to write and complete the following action challenge. Have them decorate their strips, then tape or glue the strip to their containers.

This week I will live the Enduring Principle

by...

5 BLESS
Time of prayer, praise,
blessing, and hope
(5% of total lesson time)

Close your time together with this prayer.

Eternal God, help us love without judgment and live according to your purposes. Amen.