

Lesson

5

The Faith of Jesus

LESSON DESCRIPTION: This lesson will introduce the students to Unit 2: Our History and Heritage as well as exploring the (Jewish) faith of Jesus. The lesson will be framed with the story of Jesus' own time

spent in the temple learning from his elders as a young boy. It will explore the history of the Israelites and will prepare students for their own journey into the history of Christian and specifically Methodist faith.

<i>Lesso</i>		
<i>SECTIO</i>	<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>DURATION</i>
Connect	2,000 Years Is a Long Time	15 minutes
	Unit 2 video: "Our History and Heritage"	5 minutes
Explore	The Story of Israel	20 minutes
Reflect	Reading as Prayer	10 minutes
Create	Show and Tell	15 minutes
Next	At home, at school, and in your community	Ideas to try this

Supply List

Connect: 2,000 Years Is a Long Time

_ 2 pieces of sheets of flip chart paper.

Label them "The Faith of Jesus" and "Our Faith Now"

_ Markers

_ Unit 2 video: "Our History and Heritage"

Explore: The Story of Israel

_ Bibles

Reflect: Reading as Prayer

_ Bible

_ Student Guides

_ Writing utensils

Create: Show and Tell

_ Student Guides

_ Drawing utensils

Next

_ Student Guides

- C O N N E C T -

Video Time 5 minutes

[Show the Unit 2 video: “Our History and Heritage.”]

ASK: What stood out to you from the video?

2,000 Years Is a Long Time 15 minutes

[**LEADER PREP:** Post 2 sheets of flip chart paper side by side on the wall before the students enter (a dry-erase board or chalkboard could also be used). Write “The Faith of Jesus” at the top of the paper on the left and “Our Faith Now” on the top of the paper on the right.]

SAY: How many of you have stared at a clock waiting for a class to end? Did it feel like time had slowed to a crawl? Maybe even stopped and gone in reverse? That’s one of the problems with time; it never speeds up when you need it to. In fact, it never speeds up at all. There’s no fast-forward button on life; and that tricks us into thinking that every moment is the most important, every crisis is the worst and every event is the biggest ever.

It’s hard to have perspective, to look at the long, slow march of time and see how each moment, each crisis, and each event builds on top of the last one to bring us here. That’s what the next six lessons are about. We’re going to talk about the history of the church, the history of faith, and how we’re part of the history of those who are yet to be born. To get us started, let’s watch a quick video introducing the next few lessons.

[You will be asking students some questions about the Jewish faith at the time of Jesus. Give the students a minute to name answers aloud. Remind the students that it’s OK if they don’t know a lot already. It’s expected that they won’t know much. If they don’t have any answers, prompt them with the answers that follow each question. Assign someone to summarize them on the sheet of flip chart paper

labeled “The Faith of Jesus.”]

SAY: We’re going to start our look at the history of faith by talking about the faith of Jesus. Jesus was born into the Jewish faith, which you may be familiar with because it’s the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and most of the other people you’ve heard about in Sunday

school. Let's look at what you know about the Jewish faith at the time of Jesus. Who'd be willing to summarize our answers on the board under the "The Faith of Jesus" section?

- Do you know where Jewish people at the Jesus' time

worshipped? Most communities would meet in

synagogues, which were local buildings set aside for religious ceremonies and instruction. Synagogues would often serve as schools as well.

[Ask a volunteer to write the word *synagogue* on the board.] However, on special feast days,

especially Passover and the Day

of Atonement, many Jewish people would travel to the Temple in Jerusalem to participate in the religious festivals and ceremonies. We'll talk more about the Temple in the next activity. (Ask the student volunteer to write "Temple in Jerusalem" on the board.)

- What important holidays or celebrations did they have?

The Jewish people had several holy days set aside to remember God's acts throughout their history. There were seven festivals including Passover, the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of First Fruits, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Festival of Booths. The most important of these was Passover, when the people would remember God leading them out of Egypt. You can learn more about these festivals in Leviticus 23.

- What did they study to learn about God?

They would have studied the books that make up what we call the Old Testament. It was typically divided into three parts: the Law (Torah), the Prophets (Nevi'im), and the Writings (Kethuvium). Memorization and dialogue were very important in studying the Scriptures for Jewish leaders. But the vast majority of Jewish people were unable to read or write, so they learned about God mostly

through stories passed down from family, and teaching from the rabbis in the synagogue. Each week, rabbis and Jewish leaders read Scriptures, told stories about the faith, and gave commentaries (called Midrash) about the Scriptures.

SAY: We should remember that Jesus was born more than 2,000 years ago. While we have the Bible to tell us a lot about that time, as well as history books and archaeologists, there is still a lot that's not been documented. Let's think about Our Faith Now. I need someone

to summarize our answers on the board. These questions may seem obvious, but let's brainstorm as many answers as we can.

- How would you describe where we worship? How do we worship?
- What important traditions and holidays do we celebrate as Christians?
- What traditions (and practices) do we have as Methodists?
- How do we study the Bible? How do we learn about God?

Discussion Questions

- What seems similar between the faith of Jesus and our faith? What is different?
- What do you think people 2,000 years from now will think about the place and way we worship?
- What do you think they'll see as strange that we see as being normal?
- How does this help you gain perspective on your own faith?

- E X P L O R E -

The Story of Israel 20 minutes

SAY: You might find confirmation strange. Maybe you're the only one of your friends at school who's going through it. But there's a long legacy of people who at your age committed to a special group to learn more about their faith, ask questions, and look for answers. Even Jesus went through something similar in the book of Luke. Who would be willing to read Luke 2:41-52 aloud for us?

[Have a volunteer student read Luke 2:41-52 aloud.]

SAY: To get a sense of what Jesus would have been

learning in the temple, we will be reading aloud from several important passages in the Old Testament which help to tell the story of God's people. I will need five volunteers to read the Scripture aloud.

[Have the volunteers find and mark their passages before you read the next section. The first volunteer will read Nehemiah 9:1-13. The second, Nehemiah 9:14-25. The third, Micah 6:1-8. The fourth, Nehemiah 9:26-38. The fifth will read Isaiah 9:1-7.]

SAY: Before we read these passages it might help to know a little about the world where Jesus grew up. Centuries before Jesus was born, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered Israel, exiled the people, and destroyed the temple. After 150 years, a man named Nehemiah was allowed to bring some of the people back to repair the walls of Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple. However, the people of Israel were never truly free of their captors. The rule of Babylon gave way to the rule of the Persians and then the Greeks, and eventually, decades before Jesus' birth, the Romans came to power. By the time Jesus heard these words his people, the Israelites, had been dispersed all over the empire, and the nation of Israel had been under the thumb of a ruling nation for 600 years.

SAY: When Nehemiah and his small group of Israelites returned to Jerusalem, they rededicated themselves to their faith and their tradition. Our first two readings are from the Book of Nehemiah, where the people collectively remember their history and repent of their sins. As you listen to these Scriptures, imagine that you are in the Temple with Jesus, possibly hearing these words for the first time.

Jesus is sitting in the same temple that Nehemiah built after returning from exile more than 400 years ago and learning the same story of faith that his people had passed down for generations. Think about what these words would have meant to someone in his situation.

[Have the first two volunteers read Nehemiah 9:1-13 and Nehemiah 9:14-25 aloud.]

SAY: Despite God's goodness, the Israelites still wanted things their own way; and so God sent prophets to bring them back to God. This next reading is from one of those prophets, a man named Micah.

[Have the third volunteer read Micah 6:1-8 aloud.]

SAY: But the people did not listen to Micah's words; they did not do justice, embrace faithful love, or walk humbly

with their God. Let's pick up the story again in Nehemiah.

[Have the fourth volunteer read Nehemiah 9:26-38 aloud.]

SAY: This was still the situation in the time of Jesus. The Babylonians no longer ruled Israel, but the Romans had taken over and Israel remained an occupied nation. Yet there was still a promise for the future and a hope.

[Have the fifth volunteer read Isaiah 9:1-7 aloud.]

Discussion Questions

- What stuck out to you from the story of Israel?
- What did you find important?
- How did some of the passages make you feel?
- What, do you think, would these words have meant to Jesus?

- R E F L E C T -

Reading as Prayer 10 minutes

SAY: We're going to try something that you may never have done before. It's called *lectio divina* (LEK-tsea-oh di-VEEN-ah), which is Latin for "divine reading." It's a way to meditate on a particular passage of Scripture.

The passage we're going to focus on was a very important part of Jesus' Jewish faith. It's a prayer called the Shema (shem-AH) that's found in the book of Deuteronomy. I'm going to read through this prayer three times and you'll focus on something different each time. For the first time, just listen to the Scripture and let it wash over you.

[Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 aloud at a steady pace.]

SAY: Take a deep breath, relax. This time I want you to pick out a word or phrase that jumps out to you.

[Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 aloud again at a steady pace.]

SAY: Take another deep breath, close your eyes, and focus on the word or phrase you picked while I read through one more time.

[Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 a final time, a bit slower than the first two times.]

SAY: In your student guides, write a few sentences about the word or phrase you picked and what you noticed

about these verses. Think about how this prayer connects to the history of Israel we talked about earlier.

[Give the students 3–5 minutes to write. Then invite a few of them to share if they would like to.]

- C R E A T E -

Show and Tell 15 minutes

ASK: Who'd be willing to read the instructions aloud for the Create activity in your Student Guide?

[Let the volunteer read. Then allow time for students to ask any questions they may have about the assignment.]

SAY: Take about 10 minutes to complete this activity. Go! [Allow time for students to work on their own.]

SAY: Let's come back together and share our creations.

Discussion Questions As Time Allows

- Who'd be willing to share what you created?
- What did you like about this activity? What was challenging?
- What did you learn today that will stay with you?

- N E X T -

Ideas to Try This Week

[Point out the ideas to try during the week.]

At home: Lead your family in the Reflect and Create activities. Invite them to read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and capture a word or phrase. Then invite them to create an image or illustration on one half of a blank piece of paper. Have them swap with another family member and draw their image or illustration again.

At school: Find your history teacher and ask how learning about the past affects our present and our future. What is the significance of remembering our heritage? How does this shape our future? Take notes on what this teacher says and

share them at your next confirmation class.

In your community: Research the history and heritage of your community. Visit the library, search online, and talk with your neighbors about what they remember about the history and heritage of your community. What difference does it make to know the history of the place you call home?

Lesson

6

The Early Church

LESSON DESCRIPTION: This lesson will give the students an overview of church history from the beginning of the church to just before the Reformation. The lesson will both explore the broad scope of church history and allow the students to connect personally

with some of the more important figures in Christian history. Finally, this lesson will try and connect the story of the church’s formation and expansion to the faith of students today.

<i>Lesso</i>		
<i>SECTIO</i>	<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>DURATION</i>
Connect	What’s In a Name?	10 minutes
Explore	The Expansion of the Church Lesson 6 video: “The Early Church”	15 minutes 10 minutes
Reflect	Great Cloud of Witnesses	5 minutes
Create	Lights, Camera, Action!	15 minutes
Next	At home, at school, and in your community	Ideas to try this

Supply List

_ Lesson 6 video: “The Early Church”

Connect: What’s in a Name?

- _ Roman pictures and decorations
- _ Sheet of flip chart paper
- _ Sticky notes
- _ Writing utensils

Explore: The Expansion of the Church

- _ A handful of small prizes (such as candy)
 - for the “Name That Christian” game
- _ Internet-capable devices such as smartphones and tablets

Reflect: Great Cloud of Witnesses

- _ Student Guides
- _ Writing utensils

Create: Lights, Camera, Action!

- _ Student Guides
- _ Writing utensils
- _ Internet-capable devices
 - such as smartphones
 - and tablets

Next

- _ Student Guides

- C O N N E C T -

What's in a Name 10 minutes

[**LEADER PREP:** To set the mood for your lesson this week, consider decorating the room in a Roman style. This may be as simple as posting pictures of Roman emperors, statues, and architecture around the room, projecting a video or images showcasing Rome, or even a PowerPoint presentation of Roman images on a loop as students enter class.

Before class begins, prepare for the naming activity. You will need pens, enough sticky notes for each student to have one, and a sheet of flip chart paper posted on the wall titled, "What's in a Name?"]

SAY: Last week we talked about how, in the time of Jesus, Israel was under Roman occupation. Rome was the most powerful empire in the world. As the church expanded and grew it became increasingly intertwined with Rome. At first, this was very dangerous. One of the early leaders of the church, Paul, was arrested for preaching the gospel and eventually executed in Rome. About 200 years later, the Roman emperor Diocletian persecuted and killed many Christians.

But Christianity became stronger and stronger in the Roman Empire and became the official religion in a.d. 380. Christianity expanded wherever Rome went; and as a result, much of the church's history is tied to the history of the Roman Empire. This means that a lot of the earliest Christian writers and leaders wrote and spoke Latin and the earliest translations of the Bible were in Latin. People like Jerome are remembered for translating the Bible into Latin, while others like Augustine and Tertullian are remembered for their explanation of faith and theology.

In Roman times, sculpture and art played a central role in culture. Many of these sculptures would be dedicated to famous people in honor of the great things

they had done in their lives. For instance, a sculpture might be dedicated to Tertullian, the father of Latin Christianity, or Jerome, the father of biblical translation.

[Hand out sticky notes. Explain the format for writing out the students' Latin names.]

SAY: To prepare for our lesson about the early church, everyone is going to find their own Latin name.

- For the boys, take the first four letters of your middle name and add either “ius” or “ian.”
- For the girls, take the first three letters of your middle name and add either “ia” or “illa.”

Choose whichever option you think is most fun; and if you like them both, then use them both and have a double name. On the sticky notes I provided, write “To (your Latin name), mother/father of” and leave a blank. We’ll get to that part in just a second. Write your name on the sticky note now.

[Give the students a minute to write down their Latin names.]

SAY: Now the name is only the first part. The next part is what you want to be remembered for. Take a couple of minutes and write on the back of the sticky note what you hope would be written on a statue of you 1,000 years in the future.

[Give the students 2 minutes to write down what they want to be remembered for. Have them post the sticky notes on the flip chart paper, and leave it on the wall throughout the rest the History and Heritage unit. Let a few students share their names. Prompt some of the shyer students to share if they feel comfortable.]

- E X P L O R E -

Video Time 10 minutes

SAY: The story of the church is long and filled with many twists and turns. There are countless teachers and preachers, writers and monks, kings and queens who play a role in the history of the church. It’s filled with tales of war and political intrigue, but also boundless love and beauty. People spend years and years trying to understand it and piece it together. Unfortunately, we don’t have quite that much time, so we’re going to give you the 180-second version of the rise of the church.

[Show the Lesson 6 video: "The Early Church."]

ASK: What stood out to you from the video?

SAY: That's a lot to information to take in, so let's discuss what we've learned.

Discussion Questions

- What was the most important thing that you learned from the video?
- What were you surprised to learn?
- What questions do you have after learning about this history?
- How, do you think, does this history apply to you and your faith?

The Expansion of the Church 15 minutes

SAY: In order to learn a little bit more about some of the important people from the history of the church, we're going to play a game called "Name That Christian." In each round, I'm going to give you clues about a particularly important person in church history. You'll have to search online to discover whom the clue applies to. Whoever gets the right answer first will win a prize. There are four clues for each person, and the clues get easier as we go, but that means it'll be easier for everyone else to find them too. Ready?

[Read the bulleted clues (below) one at a time, leaving 30–45 seconds after each clue to give the students time to search. If a student guesses the answer, give him or her a small prize, such as a piece of candy. If a student guesses before you give all of the clues, remember to tell the students the rest of the information about the person in question. The clues for each person are listed below his or her name.]

Augustine

- Early Christian theologian and philosopher
- Was a bishop of the church in Africa
- "The Bible was composed in such a way that as beginners mature, its meaning grows with them.
- Wrote the first Christian memoir, *Confessions*

Gregory the Great

- Gave away his family's abundant wealth and became a monk
- Is known as the father of Christian worship
- Sent Augustine of Canterbury on a mission to convert the Britains

- Became Pope of the Catholic Church in a.d. 590

Julian of Norwich

- Lived a monastic lifestyle
- Nearly died and had a mystical encounter with God

- The saying “All shall be well and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well” is attributed to her.
- Wrote *Revelations of Divine Love*

Francis of Assisi

- Is the patron saint of Italy
- Lived a monastic lifestyle and founded the Order of the Friars Minor
- “Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”
- The current Pope of the Catholic Church is named after him (*This clue is from 2016. Please update this clue if Pope Francis is not the Pope.*)

- R E F L E C T -

Great Cloud of Witnesses 5 minutes

SAY: Today we’ve learned about some of the people who have been part of the story of the church, and as a result, part of the story of our faith. Now I want you to imagine what it would be like to meet one of these people, to have dinner with him or her, and to ask anything you want about his or her life and faith.

Choose one person from the list in your Student Guide that you would like to have dinner with. Where or what would you eat? And what are three questions that you would ask this person?

SAY: Now turn to your Student Guide, and record your choices in the Reflect section.

- C R E A T E -

Lights, Camera, Action! 15 minutes

SAY: Who'd be willing to read the instructions aloud for the Create activity in your Student Guide?

[Ask the volunteer to read the instructions aloud.]

SAY: Take about 10 minutes to complete this activity. Go!

[Allow about 10 minutes for the students to work on their own.]

SAY: Let's come back together and share our creations.

Discussion Questions As Time Allows

- Who would be willing to share what you created?
- What did you like about this activity? What was challenging?
- What did you learn today that will stay with you?

- N E X T -

Ideas to Try This Week

[Point out the ideas to try during
the week.]

At home: Go online and research more about the person from church history you selected in the Reflect section. Write down notes from what you learn and share them at the next confirmation class.

At school: Summarize today's lesson in five words. Share them with five different people at school.

In your community: Find some sidewalk chalk and recreate the church history timeline on the sidewalk in your community. Invite your neighbors to join you as you literally walk through the history of the church.