

Celebrating Women's
Leadership in the Church

EQUALLY CALLED

YOUTH CURRICULUM

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BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY

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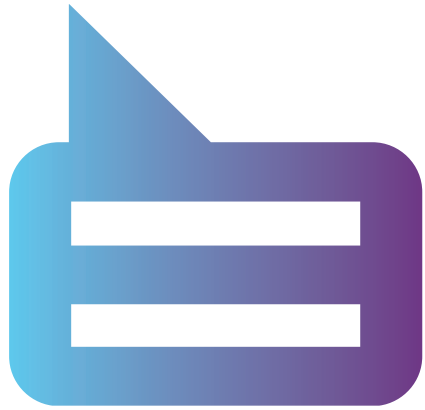
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SESSION 1 Creation and Fall

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1-2:4a; Genesis 2:4b-25; Genesis 3:1-23

IN THIS SESSION

We will consider the creation accounts and how they have shaped our understanding and treatment of women throughout our culture and inside the Church.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Session 1 video and a way to play it for the group
- Chart paper
- Markers
- Bibles for everyone

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- We will spend time today in the two creation accounts. This lesson is heavy on the teaching side. There is a lot of ground to cover to pave the way for the lessons to come. Take time to familiarize yourself with Genesis 1-3 and consider the best ways to teach this information to your particular group. Should it be done as a large group? Should you divide into smaller groups? Are there any graphics you might include on a slideshow to help them stay engaged?
- Much of this lesson is adapted for youth from the Individual Study Guide. You will find greater detail in this document as well. Spend some time in this document as it might be helpful during discussion.

- Watch the video for this session and look through the discussion questions, highlighting any you might want to emphasize.
- Consider the activities in this guide and adapt as necessary for your particular group.

INTRODUCTION

Place two pieces of chart paper on the wall. One should read, “Being female means...” The other should read, “Being male means...” Ask the youth to write answers that complete the sentence on each piece of chart paper. When everyone has had a chance to participate, go through the answers and consider the responses. Ask the youth to consider why they wrote what they wrote. Where do these ideas come from?

Say: Over the next few weeks, we are going to take a closer look at what the Bible says about the role of women and men in society and especially in the Church. We will also consider how God calls us all equally to help make God’s dream a reality here on earth as it is in heaven.

Watch the Session 1 video and spend time with the discussion questions.

THE PAST

(Reading and Discussing Scripture)

Say: Our Bible has two different accounts of creation, with two very different explanations of how people were created. While these accounts are quite different, both are true because they help us make sense of our world and our role in it.

Genesis 1

In the first creation account, found in Genesis 1, we have a very poetic telling of creation. Each day something new is created and ends with a repeated refrain, “and it was good.” Scholars think this text might have been used when the people of God were in exile as part of their worship together. The people of God were separated and scattered, removed from everything that was familiar, surrounded by people who didn’t believe in God or worship like they did.

Read or ask a youth to read Genesis 1-2:4a.

Ask: Why do you think people in exile needed this particular retelling of creation? How might it have been comforting? Why might they have needed to hear “it is good” over and over again?

Talk with youth about how it might be helpful to hear “it is good” in a time when things didn’t feel so good. Perhaps the people of God needed an artistic/poetic telling of creation to remind them that they are unique, important works of art; that God cares about them enough to create the world and all the living things in it; that God has faith in God’s people to care for creation.

Say: Most of us don’t speak Hebrew, which means we miss some important differences in the language in these texts. On the sixth day God creates humans. The word used in Hebrew is *adam*. When it’s used this way, it is not the name of an individual person. It’s simply a generic name for all of humanity, made in God’s image.

Read or ask a youth to read Genesis 1:27, substituting adam (pronounced ah-dahm) for humankind or mankind.

Ask: Does this change the way you understand this story of creation and the roles of men and women in it?

Say: In Genesis 2, we have a different account of creation. It is a specific story about the creation of one man and one woman, Adam and Eve. This story attempts to make sense of the way humans interact with each other, our world and God. This story starts with God creating a man, named Adam—the word in Hebrew is still *adam*, but here it is used to refer to a specific person we know as Adam.

Read or ask a youth to read Genesis 2:4-25.

Ask: How is this account of creation different? Why do you think the story is told again in this way? What do you think this story says about the relationship between humans? Does it say anything in particular about the relationship between men and women?

Say: Throughout the centuries, these creation stories have been used as proof that women should have different roles than men, especially in the Church. In Baptist life, you may have come across the term “complementarian.” A complementarian believes that God has given women and men distinct roles in the home, the church and even in society that do not often overlap. This Genesis story is one of several texts complementarians often point to as proof that God thinks women should be secondary or take a backseat role, allowing men to lead.

But in Genesis 1, God calls *adam* (humankind) into being, names them, and blesses them with purpose. God even shares God’s own power with them, charging them to care for all that God has made and to “be fruitful.” There is no power structure here. Instead, God calls *adam*, male and female, together to share in God’s own care for creation.

In Genesis 2, God created Eve to be a “helper” to Adam, and she is formed from Adam’s rib; these two are literally one flesh—suggesting an equality that is only possible when we recognize that we are called to work and live as one.

It is also important to note that the word “helper” is often used in reference to God (particularly in the Psalms and the book of Isaiah). This is an example of humans being made in God’s image, not a suggestion that women exist solely to help men.

Genesis 3

Say: But humans don’t always live the way God intended. Let’s take a look at where it all starts to fall apart.

Read or invite a youth to read Genesis 3:1-23.

Ask: Whom did God tell not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? (The answer is Adam; Eve had not yet been formed.)

Say: Even though God tells Adam not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Eve definitely knows the rule, because she tells the snake that she isn’t supposed to eat from that tree.

Ask: Where was Adam when she ate from the tree? (He was with her and also ate the fruit.)

Say: Throughout this story, Adam and Eve act together. They both eat the fruit, they experience shame for disobeying God, they try to hide their nakedness and to hide from God. Adam tries to blame Eve and even God; but they act together.

Ask: What is God’s response?

Say: God lays out three curses: one for the snake, one for Eve and one for Adam. But historically, we’ve put a lot more emphasis on God’s words for Eve than on what’s said to the other two characters in this passage.

Ask: What do you notice about the three curses? How would our understanding change if we saw them as descriptions of how broken humans relate to each other instead of orders for how God wants the world to be?

Say: I wonder if this story is more about broken relationships and a lack of trust than it is about who is supposed to lead and who is supposed to follow. Do you think this is what God intended or a consequence of our actions?

THE PRESENT

You may want to split into smaller groups for more intimate discussion.

Say: The stories of creation have long shaped our assumptions and presumptions about God's intentions for women—and about a hierarchy of men over women. The themes found in these stories have been interpreted through a lens of human culture instead of relationship and partnership. These interpretations have supported power structures that have dominated by and centered around men for centuries, both in and outside of the church.

Ask: Have you heard these stories used to describe the roles of men and women? What did that sound like?

- How are both women and men hurt by understanding the story of creation as a story of power and hierarchy? How do both women and men lose out when there is a lack of true partnership?

Say: The video we watched at the beginning of our session references a report called the *State of Women in Baptist Life*. This report suggests that while churches say they support women as equal leaders in the church, they often act differently.

Ask: Why do you think this is?

THE FUTURE

Say: Genesis 1 and 2 offer a picture of what the world could look like when women and men work together as equals to care for God's creation, but we are far from this goal.

Ask: What do you believe about the role of women and men? How do those roles play out in your daily life? In your home? At your school? In this church?

- How do you think your home, your church, your school, your community or the world might be different if it fully embraced and enacted God's intention of partnership and equality?
- What can we do to help make this dream a reality?

CLOSING

Hang a third piece of chart paper on the wall that reads, "Being a human means..." Invite the youth to complete the sentence on the chart paper. Consider playing music to promote a prayerful attitude as they do so.

When everyone has had a chance to respond, offer a prayer asking God to help us join in making God's dream for equality come true.

SESSION 2

The Jesus Model

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 8:1-3; Luke 10:38-42; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18

IN THIS SESSION

We will focus on the importance of women in Jesus' ministry. We will consider the many ways that Jesus pushed against the patriarchal assumptions of his culture: by calling women as disciples, by centering the experiences of women who had been marginalized by their society, and by teaching women alongside men, encouraging their participation and leadership in the work of God. We will also take a closer look at the ways women ministered to Jesus, an example of ministry for us all today.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Session 2 video and a way to play it for the group
- [YouTube video](#)
- Genealogy graphic found at the end of this session and a way to display it for all to see
- Bibles for everyone
- Family Tree Template or blank paper
- Markers or colored pencils
- Tape
- Large space to display family trees

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- We will consider the Gospels today as we take a closer look at the women involved in Jesus' ministry. Take time to familiarize yourself with the Scripture passages in this lesson.
- Much of this lesson is adapted for youth from the Individual Study Guide. You will find greater detail in this document as well. Spend some time in this document as it might be helpful during discussion.
- Watch the video for this session and look through the discussion questions, highlighting any you might want to emphasize.
- Consider the activities in this guide and adapt as necessary for your particular group.

INTRODUCTION

Watch “[Run Like a Girl](#)” on YouTube.

Ask: Have you ever used the phrase “like a girl” to demean someone? Where do you think this phrase came from? Have you ever thought about someone preaching or being a deacon or teaching Sunday school “like a girl?”

Say: Unfortunately, women are often treated as less valuable and less talented in the Church too. We’re going to take a look at some of the women who hung out with Jesus and see what it really looks like to minister “like a girl.”

Watch the Session 2 video and consider the discussion questions.

THE PAST

(Reading and Discussing Scripture)

Genealogy in Matthew

Show the youth the included image of the genealogy found in Matthew 1:1-17. (Please note, the women are listed in [color] print.)

Say: Matthew starts his Gospel with a genealogy of Jesus. A genealogy is like a family tree. In Jesus’ day, a genealogy would not include the women of the family. It would trace only the men.

Ask: What is different about this genealogy?

Say: This family tree demonstrates the importance of women to the salvation story. Matthew purposefully includes women in Jesus’ genealogy—even though this was not a common Jewish practice. The women named are ones who push against a male-dominated culture with courage and faithfulness.

- After losing two husbands before producing a male heir, **Tamar** takes matters into her own hands to preserve her place in the family line.

- **Rahab** is a Canaanite woman who acts as the head of the household, making the decision to defy the king’s orders and hide the spies who have come to stay at her house. Because of her mercy she is spared when the Israelites attack Jericho. She eventually becomes King David’s great-great-great grandmother.
- **Ruth** is a Moabite woman who is loyal to her Israelite mother-in-law, even after her husband dies. She follows Naomi back to her home country and uses her creativity to preserve her and her mother-in-law’s family line.
- **Bathsheba** is a married woman who was impregnated by King David. When she was found to be with child, King David had her husband killed in battle. Though Bathsheba was subject to the abuse of the king, her son was King Solomon.
- The genealogy ends with **Mary**—a young, poor, Jewish woman, engaged to be married. She has found favor with God and is chosen to be the mother of Jesus.

The presence of these women in the lineage of Jesus is foreshadowing what is to come. While women may have been overlooked and marginalized in history, they are often faithful followers who will become central in the ministry of Jesus and the formation of the Church.

Women Who Followed Jesus

Say: We often think of Jesus’ disciples as being all men but many women were also followers of Jesus—ministering to Jesus, learning from Jesus and teaching alongside the men. While society often overlooked the women, Jesus went out of his way to show them love and grace.

Divide the youth into 3 groups. Assign each group a woman/women to research. Ask each group to read the assigned texts in order to answer the following questions. They will report back to the group.

Mary and Martha of Bethany
Luke 10:38-42; John 11:17-44

Mary Magdalene
Luke 8:1-3; John 20:1-18

Women in Luke
Luke 8:1-3; 23:44-56; 24:1-12

- What do we know about her/them?
- What was her/their relationship to Jesus?
- What might have been unusual about her/them in their time?
- What leadership skills did she/they have?

Come back together as a group and invite each small group to share what they learned about the women they studied.

Ask: How do people typically view women in the Bible? Do you think the same is true of women in the Church today? Why or why not? Were you surprised to see so many women surrounding Jesus' life and ministry? What surprised you? What is something new you learned about Jesus' ministry by studying the women that surrounded him?

THE PRESENT

Divide again into small groups for more intimate discussion. Invite each youth to create their own "Spiritual Family Tree," listing the people who have had an impact on their faith. (They can create their own artistic version of this tree or you can provide copies of the template provided at the end of the lesson.)

Ask: Are there women listed on your spiritual family tree? How have these women influenced your faith life? Why do you think the role of these women has been downplayed over the years?

Say: The role of these women has often been pushed aside in the Church. They have not been considered disciples, much less apostles. Even the word "*diakonos*" which is translated "deacon"

has been changed in many Bible translations to "worker" or "servant" in reference to women. It's not different in many churches today.

According to the *State of Women in Baptist Life* report, "30 percent of women surveyed said they held a different ministerial title than their male counterpart(s)" (*SWBL*, 4).

Even though women were the first to experience and proclaim the resurrection, the *SWBL* notes that, "59 percent of women in ministry said they are overlooked and silenced in their ministry settings" (*SWBL*, 3) and CBF "was the only group to have fewer women serving in pastoral roles in 2021 than in 2015" (*SWBL*, 21). We definitely have work to do!

THE FUTURE

Ask: How have you seen women treated differently than men at home? At school? At church? What can you do as an individual to make sure everyone is valued and heard equally? What can we do as a church to empower more women to serve and lead?

CLOSING

Bring the group back together. Collect all of the spiritual family trees and hang them in a central location. Pray over the trees, giving thanks for all the people, both men and women, who have influenced our faith. Pray for those who have been discounted and under-valued, that their voices are heard and their gifts honored. Pray for the youth, that they will live into their place on the family tree, being a source of hope and compassion for those to come.

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

-Matthew 1:1-17

Patriarchs

Monarchy

After Deportation

Abraham	Solomon by the wife of Uriah	Salathie
Isaac	Rehoboam	Zerubbabel
Jacob,	Abijah	Abiud
Judah	Asaph	Eliakim
Perez and Zerah by Tamar	Jehoshaphat	Azor
Hezron	Joram	Zadok
Aram	Uzziah	Achim
Aminadab	Jotham	Eliud
Nahshon	Ahaz	Eleazar
Salmon	Hezekiah	Matthan
Boaz by Rahab	Manasseh	Jacob
Obed by Ruth	Amos	Joseph the husband of Mary
Jesse	Josiah	Jesus, who is called the Messiah
King David	Jechoniah	

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

SESSION 3

The Early Church

SCRIPTURE

Acts 16:11-15; Romans 16:1-16; Galatians 3:27-29; Philippians 1:3-11

IN THIS SESSION

Today, we will spend time in Paul's letters. Spend some time with the Scriptures for the lesson so that you have a broad picture of Paul's words and actions.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Session 3 video and a way to play it for the group
- Bibles for everyone
- Phone with access to TikTok or Instagram

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Much of this lesson is adapted for youth from the Individual Study Guide. You will find greater detail in this document as well. Spend some time in this document as it might be helpful during discussion.
- Watch the video for this session and look through the discussion questions, highlighting any you might want to emphasize.

INTRODUCTION

Tell the following story:

One day, Spencer came home to his apartment. Instead of being greeted by Penelope, like he usually was, he was greeted by Lucy. Spencer's roommate was in the bathroom so he wasn't there to make introductions. Instead, Lucy introduced herself. "Hi, I'm Lucy, Marvin's girlfriend," she said.

Spencer said hello and then asked about Penelope. "Where is Penelope?" he asked. "She is usually here." Now, Lucy didn't know who Penelope was, and she had a lot of questions!

She asked Spencer how often Penelope was there. "Every day." Spencer told her, "Marvin especially loves talking to her in the mornings."

When Lucy heard this she got very mad and stormed out of the apartment.

Ask: Why did Lucy get angry?

Say: Listen to the story one more time. Does your understanding of the story change?

One day Spencer came home to his apartment. Instead of being greeted by Penelope, like he usually was, he was greeted by Lucy. Spencer's roommate was in the bathroom so he wasn't there to make introductions. Instead, Lucy introduced herself. "Hi, I'm Lucy, Marvin's girlfriend," she said.

Spencer said hello and then asked about Penelope. "Where is Penelope?" he asked. "She is usually here." Now, Lucy didn't know who Penelope was and she had a lot of questions!

She asked Spencer how often Penelope was there. "Every day." Spencer told her, "Marvin especially loves talking to her in the mornings."

When Lucy heard this she got very mad and stormed out of the apartment. Spencer never got a chance to tell her that Penelope was their pet parrot.

Ask: Did your understanding of the story change? How so? Who was affected by this misunderstanding? [Lucy, Spencer, Marvin]

Say: The context of a story makes a big difference in how we understand and interpret the story. Taking something out of context can make small, silly differences in the story, but these differences can also create major misunderstandings in relationships.

Watch the Session 3 video and consider the discussion questions.

THE PAST

(Reading and Discussing Scripture)

Say: The Apostle Paul played a huge role in shaping our understanding of Christianity. In fact, 13 letters (or books) in the New Testament are attributed to Paul/his teachings.

Paul ministered all over the ancient Mediterranean world both in-person and by writing letters. He advised, encouraged and even corrected churches through his letters, often addressing concerns and problems that occurred in these first churches. These letters are known as "occasional literature," meaning that they are written to particular people in particular contexts, dealing with specific occasions and situations that arose among these people. When we read Paul's letters today, we have access to his words but not to the problems, issues and social conditions that prompted him to write. It is like listening to one side of a two-sided conversation. These will always be aspects of Paul's writing that lie just beyond our understanding since we are hearing only one side of the conversation.

Divide into 2 groups. One group will read texts that describe Paul's support of women leaders in the church. The other group will read the texts where Paul seems to condemn women in leadership. Each group is to infer Paul's stance on women in ministry from the texts they read and report back to the group. If it suits your group, you could allow them to have a debate "for and against women in ministry," based on what they read in their Scripture passages.

Group 1: Acts 16:11-15; Romans 16:1-16

(Consult page 12 of the Individual Study Guide for more information about these passages.)

**Group 2: 1 Corinthians 14:34-40;
1 Timothy 2:8-15**

(Consult page 12 of the Individual Study Guide for more information about these passages.)

Ask: Based on what you read, how does Paul understand the role of women in the Church? Why do you think this?

Say: When we read Paul's letters, we get differing pictures of how he views women and their roles in the Church. In fact, some of his writings seem to directly contradict each other. I think it is important to consider all of Paul's writings and to consider the big picture of the Early Church before we start teaching that Paul wants to silence all women in all churches for all time or that he forbids women from teaching and preaching.

Read or ask a youth to read Galatians 3:27-29.

Say: In the region of Galatia, the Church faced a crisis. Many Gentile believers had accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but now some Jewish-Christian teachers were insisting that these Gentile Galatians must ascribe to Jewish law, specifically circumcision, to be part of the family of Abraham. The passage we just read is Paul's answer to this disagreement. For Paul, there is no outer condition that separates us from salvation in Jesus. In other words, you don't have to be circumcised to be a Christian.

When Paul said we are all one, he didn't mean we are all exactly the same. He lists some of the very things that make us different. Our differences are what make us beautiful, unique and whole. We cannot oppress people or treat them like they are worth less just because they are different. There is no ranking system in the Kingdom of God. In Christ, we are all one.

You may want to divide into small groups so participants can have more intimate conversation.

Ask:

- What would the world look like if everyone were the same?
- What might it look like if we truly learned to embrace and celebrate our differences?
- Have you ever been treated unfairly because you were different? How did that feel? Why do you think you were treated that way?
- Have you ever treated someone else unfairly because they were different? How did that feel? Why do you think you did that?
- Why do you think humans have such a hard time accepting people who are different?

THE PRESENT

Say: Just as Paul wrote to the Early Churches in a particular time and context about specific issues and experiences, our churches today are affected by context too. We can learn from the way the Early Church did things without assuming their specific experiences are the rule for all churches throughout all time. Instead of focusing on just a few things Paul said to a specific church, we can learn from the wide vision Paul had for the Church and follow the model of the women who served as leaders with him.

Unlike in Paul's day, women today are often underrecognized and underappreciated both inside and outside the Church.

Ask:

- How do you feel about women in leadership outside the Church? Do you think the Church should have different expectations for women inside the Church?
- Why do you think we are tempted to treat women differently at church?

THE FUTURE

Say: Nearly 2,000 years after the Apostle Paul wrote his letters, his teachings still have huge impacts on the life of the Church. Paul himself could not have imagined that his epistles would have such importance.

Ask: How might our treatment of women today affect future generations?

Say: If we follow Paul's example and learn to embrace our oneness in Christ, we can help build God's kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

Read or ask a youth to read Philippians 1:3-11.

Say: In this Scripture, Paul prays that the church in Philippi will be able to determine what really matters (vs. 10). He suggests that the key to this knowledge and insight is an overflowing love (9).

Ask: How might love help us figure out how to follow Christ in today's culture and context?

CLOSING

Say: In Paul's context, letters were a common way to communicate, especially when people didn't live nearby. Today, letters have been replaced by various forms of social media.

Invite your group to create a series of Instagram stories or a Tik Tok video that encourages your congregation to love and celebrate the differences within the church. Paul often started his letters with the greeting, "Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." What would a greeting in our day sound like? (Consider sharing this with the larger congregation.)

SESSION 4

The Reign of God

SCRIPTURE

Joel 2:18-32; Acts 2:1-21; Matthew 6:9-13

IN THIS SESSION

We will take a closer look at the prophet Joel's vision of a day when all people joined in God's dream for the world. We will also spend time with Peter's sermon at Pentecost, declaring that Joel's vision has become a reality. The youth will be invited to dream of ways they can help make God's dream come true.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Session 4 video and a way to play it for the group
- Bibles for everyone
- Paper and markers/colored pencils

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Today we will spend time with Joel's vision and Peter's recounting of that vision at Pentecost. We will also echo the Lord's prayer "on earth as it is in heaven." Spend time familiarizing yourself with these texts.
- Much of this lesson is adapted for youth from the Individual Study Guide. You will find greater detail in this document as well. Spend some time in this document as it might be helpful during discussion.
- Watch the video for this session and look through the discussion questions, highlighting any you might want to emphasize.
- Consider the activities in this guide and adapt as necessary for your particular group.

INTRODUCTION

Break into small groups of 4-5. Each group will create an invention that solves a problem in their lives (the sillier the problem, the better). They are to sketch an apparatus and give it a name. They will pitch their inventions to the adult leaders in the room (think “Shark Tank”). The adult panel decides how much “money” they will invest to produce their invention. Judges should be looking to invest in a product that will improve the world.

Say: What is something in your life that you wish were easier? Create an invention that will solve this problem. Sketch the apparatus and give it a name. Then prepare to pitch your product on Shark Tank. A panel of esteemed judges will decide how much money they will invest in your product based on which products will make the world a better place.

Ask: How did you decide which problem you wanted to solve? Was it hard thinking of a solution? Why or why not? What type of impact might your invention have on the world?

Say: When people see a problem, they often look for ways to fix it. Sometimes these are easy solutions or inventions to small problems. Over the past few weeks, we have been talking about bigger issues that affect the way people are treated in church and in the world. We’ve looked at the ways women are discriminated against and are told there are limits to what they can do. Can you think of other ways we exclude or discriminate against people? These issues can feel big, but the hope for change and improvement begins with people dreaming and imagining a better, more equitable world. We can learn from stories in Scripture and see what it is like for people to try to listen to God and imagine a world that God hopes for. We can imagine what that looks like in our world today, and we can be a part of the change.

Watch the Session 4 video and consider the discussion questions.

THE PAST

(Reading and Discussing Scripture)

Say: We started this series looking at a story written during the exile. God’s people had been pushed away from all that was familiar. The world looked different and they were scared. They wondered where God was in their hurt and pain. And so, they told the story of how they came to be—of a God who lovingly and artistically created them and gave them an important job to do.

They also looked toward the future. While the people of God were in exile, the prophet Joel paints a picture of a world to come, giving them hope and something to work toward.

Read or ask a youth to read Joel 2:18-27.

Ask: What are some of the things God promises in this Scripture?

Say: God promises to care for their physical needs. God is promising to take care of all that God created.

Read or ask a youth to read Joel 2:28-29.

Say: Joel doesn’t stop with the care of physical needs. He continues his vision—God’s dream of a world where everyone is full of God’s spirit; where everyone works together to help make God’s dream a reality.

Centuries later, on the day of Pentecost, Jesus’ disciple, Peter, quotes Joel’s words, suggesting that the day Joel envisioned is here. Christ has died, risen and taken his place with God, and the Holy Spirit has come to fill *all* God’s people. The reign of God will not be fully realized until Christ comes again; but we are invited to join with God to help all of God’s creation find their place in God’s dream.

Read or ask a youth to read Acts 2:1-13.

Ask: Who received the spirit at Pentecost? Was anyone left out? [only those standing on the edge sneering]

Say: The Spirit is poured out on *all* people. This Scripture names a diverse group of people from many different cities and doesn't distinguish between the men and the women. All who are open to God's movement receive the Spirit. After this happens, Peter begins to preach.

Read or ask a youth to read Acts 2:14-21.

Ask: Does this sound familiar?

Say: Peter is quoting Joel. He is saying that the day Joel envisioned is here. Everyone is invited to participate in God's call to care for all of God's creation.

Ask: If Peter is so clear that everyone is invited to join in making God's dream a reality here on earth, why do you think some try to limit who is allowed to minister and lead?

THE PRESENT

Say: Joel dreams of a day when all people will experience the Spirit at work in their lives and in the world and Peter says that day has come. But we don't always act like it. We still try to put limits on the ways the Spirit can move.

Ask: In what ways do we still try to limit the Spirit?

Say: When we pray the Lord's Prayer, asking for God's "kingdom come" and for God's will to be done, we are yearning for the day when *all* will experience the Spirit's outpouring, and *all* will recognize the Spirit at work, just as the Scriptures describe.

When God created *adam* (humankind), God put *adam* in charge of caring for creation. I think Joel's vision is a picture of what God intended when God created us and asked us to work together to care for the world.

Ask: In what ways have we fallen short of this vision? What can we do to better live into God's dream for the world?

THE FUTURE

Say: I think we all have a role to play in helping to make this dream a reality; but this role won't look the same for everyone. God created us unique and diverse so that together we can care for God's unique and diverse world. In the second creation account (from session 1), when God created Adam, he said: "It's not good for Adam to be alone." And he created Eve to be his helper. From the very beginning of creation, we are called to work together, using our unique gifts and diverse personalities to create a world where all people are valued and cared for.

We've spent the past several weeks talking about women in ministry. And while it is important that women are included in the leadership of the church, not everyone is called to ministry within the church. But that doesn't mean that those who don't work as professionals in church are off the hook. We *all* are called to ministry in some way using the unique and varied gifts God has given us.

Ask: Imagine a world where everyone's gifts were valued and appreciated. Where would you fit in? What would you be doing? What is your role in helping God's dream come true?

Say: At the beginning of our lesson, we created a silly invention for a trivial problem. Let's keep dreaming with big imaginations; but this time, let's consider our unique gifts and our world's greatest needs.

Ask: Imagine with me ... What is something very specific *you* can do to help bring about God's dream here on earth as it is in heaven?

Allow youth to draw or write their plan and then to share either in small groups or with the larger group.

CLOSING

Say: There are many obstacles and voices in the world that will try to stifle your dream. Don't let anyone tell you, "You can't." Let's also be careful we aren't the voices in the world telling others they can't either.

As you close, invite each youth to complete the following sentence based on the dream they shared previously. "I can..."

After each person makes their "I can" statement, the group will respond by saying: "God pour out your spirit!"