

Chapter 3

Parish Religious Education Adaptation

Student Preparation

- Students were assigned to read Chapter 3, “Stories for the Journey: Creation and the Founding of A People” pages 60–85.
- Students were also asked to complete the Chapter 2 Review Puzzle as a follow up to the last lesson.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Break down into small groups of three or four with one student assigned as group “scribe” or reporter. Give each group the same homemade set of eight to ten “Story Starter” cards featuring characters, phrases, and sentences that spark curiosity. (*e.g.*, “Obviously, the man in the blue shirt had no idea where to go . . .”; *Tricia’s driver’s license was only four days old . . .*” etc.) Using all the cards, the groups should write a short “Who done it?” story. Have the stories read aloud and encourage students to compare and critique them. (*This activity will take most of the Warm-up period.*)
- Collect and check the Chapter 2 Review Puzzle.

Part 1: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: God’s Creation, Original Justice and the Fall of Man, Renewal of Life (60–70)

- Point out that the group stories were written and read for fun and entertainment. Storytelling, however, is also a powerful way to teach about faith, virtue, and God. Jesus, for instance, was a master storyteller. (*Students should recall some favorite Gospel stories.*)
- Have everyone close their eyes and listen carefully as a student reads the two creation stories in Genesis. (Genesis 1:1–2:4a and Genesis 2:4b–25). On the board or overhead, list the ways that the two stories are the same and the ways that they are different. List also religious truths presented in the stories, including the **covenant** or agreement God makes with his people. Define the terms **ancestor**, **evolution** and **story cycles**.
- Move on to the stories about “the fall” of Adam and Eve and the story of Cain and Abel. “What religious truths do we learn from these stories?” (*Make sure that students see that the disobedience of Adam and Eve was more than a foolish mistake. That act ended a life in paradise for them and for all of humanity. Expand upon the concept of **original sin** and the phenomenon of evil with teachings from the CCC (390). Explain too that the promise of salvation made to Adam and Eve would reverse the consequences of Adam’s and Eve’s sin when Jesus was born.*) Ask students to briefly discuss the Cain and Abel story. Soon after **original sin** entered the world, violence and murder, examples of **personal sin**, quickly followed. (*If there’s time, draw out the important distinctions between original and personal sin.*)
- Switch gears and distribute a quick pop quiz on the Noah story. (*Ask ten to twelve multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank questions based on Genesis 7. For example, “How many animals did Noah take on the ark? How long did the flood last?”*)
- Have students correct one another’s quiz by locating answers in Genesis 7. Discuss the covenant that God makes with Noah and Noah’s descendants. What are the larger implications of God’s promise not to send another flood? (*Be prepared for students who ask why God still permits floods and other natural disasters to afflict many people.*)
- Summarize some of the important literary and cultural links between these primeval stories in Genesis and other cultures. For example:
 - Many ancient peoples had flood stories similar to the Hebrew story about Noah.
 - Glacial melt about 7,000 years ago deepened the oceans and seas, including the Black Sea which rose 6 inches. It flooded coastal farmlands and settlements in the entire Mediterranean area.
 - The “Epic of Gilgamesh,” a popular Mesopotamian poem, was written as early as 2,0000 B.C. In the poem, a man, his family and the world’s animals escape a flood sent by a divine being when the man builds and stocks an ark.
 - There is a crucial difference between the Gilgamesh plot and the spin that Hebrews give the flood story, however. In Genesis, God wants people to be good and offers salvation again and again. The god in the Gilgamesh story is cruel and unforgiving.
- The Babel story is a fable explaining the origin of languages. It is also a condemnation of Babylon, a sinful civilization in the Jewish mind. Babel, in fact, is a play on the word “Babylon.”

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- In their journals, assign students to consider and respond to the second Journal Assignment entry on page 81. In particular, they should focus in on practical strategies for reconciliation in their own lives.

Part 2: Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Ancestors of Faith, Abraham: Father of Faith, The Blessing of Jacob, Joseph in Egypt: Foreshadowing the Exodus, Further Reflections (70–85).

- Recruit students to tell about their ancestors. “How were they heroes to their families?”
- Remind the group that today, we can easily link family histories to famous historical events. “Her grandfather was born a week before the Titanic sank in 1912”; “She was just ten when President Kennedy was shot in 1963.” etc. Fitting events into a historical framework is important. It adds to our understanding of those events. As much as possible, Scripture scholars have done the same thing in their study of Old Testament stories.
- Ask students to describe some of the ways that scholars can “date” Genesis passages. (*Refer them to “Ancestors of Faith” and “Formation and Arrangement of Ancestor Stories.” on pages 71-74*) What were the big challenges, disappointments, successes in these stories?”
- Some of the stories in Genesis, however, can be assigned only approximate dates. These stories are reportedly “set in history.” The stories about Abraham and Sarah, for instance, are set in history within the 2,000 to 1700 B.C. era.
- Divide the class into small groups for two activities. Students can work together first to complete the Handout #3, “The Faith of Abraham.” Have the groups then re-read and discuss the Genesis stories about Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph in Egypt. (*They should use the textbook and Bible.*) Have the groups prepare three-minute skits or mimes based on the story cycle they were assigned. Remind the groups to make their presentations detailed and faithful to Scripture. Videotape and play back the presentations, if possible. (*Allow fifteen to eighteen minutes for these presentations.*)
- Collect any Handout worksheets and the Review and Reflection Questions from Chapter 2.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes):

- Dim the room lights but wait to light the prayer candle(s).
- Play a song or two from “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat,” a box office Broadway musical hit from the early 1990s. The music is fun, catchy and tells Joseph’s story quite well. (*Tapes or CDs of the musical should be available at libraries.*)
- Ask a volunteer to light the prayer candle(s).
- Say: “Thank you, God, for the story of Joseph and other people of faith in the Old Testament. Help us to learn from their stories and their struggles.” Invite students to verbally thank God for the stories of faith among their friends and families. (*e.g., “Thank you God, for the story of my grandfather who had to walk five miles on Sundays to go to church, etc;” “Thank you, God, for the story of my neighbor who is ill with cancer but is still full of faith and cheerfulness.”*)
- Pray together the Traditional Jewish Prayer on page 85.
- Conclude with the musical Prologue or Finale from “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.”

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign Chapter 3 Review and Reflection Questions on pages 61, 65, 67, 70, 74, 79, 81 and 83.
- Have students read Chapter 4 “The Journey to the Promised Land Begins: The Exodus and the Sinai Covenant” (pages 88–109) for the next session.