

Grounded in Connection

A SUMMER SERIES EXPLORING
OUR CONNECTION TO GOD
AND TO ONE ANOTHER

ADAPTED FROM CHURCH ANEW

Adam & Eve

In Genesis, God says that "It is not good for [hu]man to be alone." God created Adam and Eve to be in community. In 2023, then U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy released an advisory called "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation" outlining the ways that loneliness functions as a national health crisis. The report found that loneliness is associated with many health concerns reminding us that our flourishing and wellness depends on human connection, belonging, and relationships.

Genesis 2: 4-22

In Genesis 2, Eve is often described as Adam's helpmate. More often than not, people place a value of subordinate or hierarchy on the helper language; however, throughout the Old Testament, God is considered a helper to Israel. There was never meant to be a hierarchy placed on this word. It is a mutual working and tending together. It is more the image we see in Romans 12: we are one body in Christ with many parts.

Road Trip Activities

- A to Z Animals: go through the alphabet giving an animal for each letter. Make it harder by recalling all the animals that have already been named!
- Adam's name means Earth Creature. Eve's name means Life. Do you know what your name means and how you got it? What about your other family members -- what do their names mean?
- SPARK Bible p. 8

Questions for Connection

- Tell someone about a time you felt a deep sense of connection and belonging. What was it about that time, about you, or about others that made you feel so connected?
- Tell someone about a time you felt the sting of loneliness. Where did you feel it in your body or spirit?
- Who are the people who have made you feel most known and connected in your life? What is it about them that connects so deeply with you?
- God said that "It is not good for humans to be alone." Where do you see the symptoms or consequences of loneliness playing out in our world?

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Play: A to Z Animals

God brings every animal to Adam the Earth Creature, and Adam gives them names. Can you name an animal for every letter of the alphabet?

Start with: The first player says “A is for _____” and fills in the blank with an A animal. The next player says “B is for _____” with a B animal. Keep going until you get to Z ... and remember to ask for help if you can't think of an animal for your letter!

Then try: Can you come up with a name to go with every letter?

The first player would start with “A is for __ (A name) __ the __ (A animal) __.”

The next player would continue with “B is for __ (B name) __ the __ (B animal) __.”

Keep going all the way to Z!

Extra hard: How many of those names and animals can you remember?

The first player starts with “A is for __ (A name) __ the __ (A animal) __.”

The next player would continue with “B is for __ (B name) __ the __ (B animal) __, A is for __ (A name) __ the __ (A animal) __.”

The next player would need to add a C name and a C animal and *also* remember the B name and B animal and the A name and A animal...

How far can you go in the alphabet until someone forgets?

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10 Commandments
The Ten Commandments are not simply Divine laws for individual behavior – they are not a litmus test for one's purity or righteousness. Rather, they are guides for living in right relationship with God and neighbor. Moses and the Israelites understood that these commandments were intended to foster the functioning and flourishing of the whole community.

Exodus 20: 1-20

The ten commandments are often seen as the rules God wants us to follow; however, if we reduce them to only rules we lose the richness behind them. They are meant to provide a way to be in relationship with God and one another. This passage begins with God saying, "I am the Lord your God..." This signifies the relationship between us and God. We belong to one another. I am yours and you are mine.

Road Trip Activities

- Every group of people -- friends, family, church, the people at God's mountain -- has rules. What rules does your family have? What rules would help you feel most like a family?
- Eyes Closed, Ears Open: Grab a pencil or marker and sit next to someone. One of you gets the pencil and closes their eyes. Now the other person needs to give you maze directions! "Go straight," "turn left," "go up," "stop!" and so on. When you've made it to the end of the maze, switch roles.
- SPARK Bible p. 94

Questions for Connection

- Tell someone about a relationship that has impacted or transformed the way you understand the world and your role in it.
- In individual relationships, as in societies, good and healthy boundaries often lead to greater health and connection. Tell someone about a time you had to negotiate or renegotiate boundaries with someone in your life. How is your relationship different since having those conversations?
- While the commandments speak about individual actions, they are intended to be a community shaping force. How does the health of our own individual relationships impact the health of our communities?

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Widow at Zarephath

Elijah's miraculous interaction with the widow at Zarephath is a story of abundance unveiling the myth of scarcity. We live in a culture and an economy that relies on people feeling isolated, deficient, and always the next purchase away from satisfaction. When we get curious about the gifts, strengths, assets, and capacities of neighbors and communities, we will discover that we have everything we need to be the people God is calling us to be.

1 Kings 17: 8-16

We as Christ followers, are to expand our understanding of who is our neighbor and who is our community. God expanded care to a widow, an outsider because God so loves the world. Think of the word kind. The etymology of the word kind, in English, comes from the root word kin. This is also where the word humankind comes from. So it is natural for us to extend kindness to people who are kin to us, who are like us, and yet this scripture invites us to expand our compassion and care beyond people who are like us.

Road Trip Activities

- Work with your grownup to plan a meal you can make together. You might have all the ingredients in your house already, or you might need to plan a trip to the store.
- If you could have the biggest table in the world, who would you want to sit with you?
- Spark Bible p. 140

Questions for Connection

- When neighbors work together for the common good, the seemingly impossible becomes possible. Tell someone about a time when you worked together with others to accomplish something challenging.
- God has given every person gifts and capacities that can fuel social change. What is something you know how to do well enough that you could teach someone else?
- What we pay attention to grows. If we expect scarcity, we'll find scarcity. But if we look for abundance, we can be sure that we'll find it. Where have you seen abundance in your community recently?

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INGREDIENTS

INSTRUCTIONS

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Esther & Mordecai

Esther uses social capital, the potential and power derived from her relationships, and her access to power and privilege, to advocate for her people's safety. She models allyship and accompaniment, and a willingness to sacrifice her standing and safety for the common good.

Esther 4

Power is an interesting dichotomy. We often see it as something that only a few people have. They have the influence, the money, the ability to speak and move freely because they hold all the cards; however, in the dome in which God reigns we ALL have power and authority to speak truth and move with integrity. In fact, in community, we are responsible to do so. We each carry a sacred part in bringing about the dome in which God reigns on earth as it is in heaven. Do we see it? Do we recognize it?

Road Trip Activities

- Who helps you remember your own strengths when you feel afraid? Find time this week to thank them for helping you be brave.
- Mordecai and Esther made different decisions about showing they knew God. Sometimes a question with two options doesn't have one right and one wrong answer -- it matters what the person answering thinks! You can try this out by playing "Would You Rather."
- Spark Bible p. 152

Questions for Connection

- Tell someone about a time when you or someone you know sacrificed power, position, or privilege to help or stand in solidarity with someone else.
- Tell someone about a time when you felt truly powerful – like you had the ability to really make a difference and that you had been put in a position for “such a time as this.”
- Community organizing activates people's self-interest to build power and make positive changes in the community. What are some of the community issues or possibilities that are especially important to you?
- Power gets a bad rap because of the painful ways we've seen it used in our communities. What are some examples of power being used to build up, rather than to tear down?

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Play: Would You Rather...

Mordecai and Esther made different decisions about showing they knew God, but in the end, both of them helped save God's people from destruction. Sometimes a question with two options doesn't have one right and one wrong answer -- it matters what the person answering thinks! You can try this out by playing "Would You Rather." Here are some questions to get you started...

- Would you rather be too hot or too cold?
- Would you rather fly or to be invisible?
- Would you rather eat ice cream with ketchup or pizza with chocolate?
- Would you rather be able to read minds or talk to animals?
- Would you rather sneeze mustard or cough salt?
- Would you rather eat only your favorite food forever, or get to eat everything except your favorite food forever?
- Would you rather know everything or be happy about everything?

Can you make up your own Would You Rathes?

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Peter

Peter betrays Jesus, damaging their relationship, by denying him three times during his arrest and trial. There are many ways that relationships can be damaged, and each of us have hurt and have been hurt by loved ones. After his resurrection, Jesus seeks to repair his relationship with Peter by asking him to reaffirm his love as many times as he denied him. Healing and repair is a mutual process of honesty, accountability, forgiveness, and recommitment.

John 18 & 21

Being in community can be difficult. Feelings get hurt, betrayal, heartache, and pain sometimes happen in community. Even though Peter denied Christ three times, Jesus invites him back into community. In the dome in which God reigns no one is disposable. No one is thrown away. All are welcome back into the fold. All who are hungry are invited to come and eat.

Road Trip Activities

- In this week's story, the disciples get a miraculous catch of fish -- 153, to be exact! Pick something to count and see how high you can get. Or get your family together and take turns counting -- how fast can you get to 153?
- Breakfast bingo: Summertime breakfasts can be different from our schooltime breakfasts. Maybe you eat something different, or with different people, or in a different place. Check off all your breakfast experiences this summer.
- SPARK Bible p. 462

Questions for Connection

- What lessons did you learn about healing and forgiveness growing up? How has your understanding changed over time?
- What are some of the essential steps towards healing a damaged relationship?
- Tell someone about a time when you had to seek forgiveness for some pain or harm you had caused in a relationship. What did you do to try and repair the connection?
- Guilt and shame are powerful emotions that tell two different stories – guilt says “I’ve done something wrong” and shame says “There’s something wrong with me.” How have you seen shame impact people and relationships and what are some antidotes to shame that can restore someone to community?

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Milk	In a car	With a fork	Pizza	Bread
Sitting on a picnic blanket	Cereal	Donut	Cooked on a campfire	Oranges
On a plate	Pancakes	With people who love you	Eggs	Yogurt
In a restaurant	On a beach	Apples	In a bowl	On a boat
Fish	Smoothie	Toast	On a plane	With a spoon

There are 5 things from the disciples' breakfast with Jesus. Can you find them? Did the disciples get bingo?