

Fine-tuning Our Focus on Missions

Lessons 5-8

Adult Missions Education 2020



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Table of Contents

Let's Get Started!	4
Setting the Scene	6
LESSON 5 Newly Assigned Missionaries	7
LESSON 6 Alabaster.....	20
LESSON 7 Youth on an Adventure with God	34
LESSON 8 Where to from Here?	42

Let's Get Started!

Welcome to the 2020 Adult Missions Education. You may notice changes, but you can be sure the current missions content should appeal to a wide range of ages in your congregation.

New: A Staggered Release of Lessons

This year, we are releasing Adult Missions Education lessons in a new way. Four lessons will be released in **March**, four in **July**, and four in **November**. With these releases will also come videos for many lessons. Lessons and videos are being translated into French, Portuguese, and Spanish. All lessons and videos will be available on the NMI website (www.nazarene.org/nmi) and may be downloaded for free.

Launching a New Learning Year

- Review this guide, noting upcoming topics and planning the lessons within your church calendar. Some options may require more than a month to initiate; keep this in mind as you plan.
- While the lessons are planned for approximately an hour, material can be used for shorter “missions moments” in worship services, Sunday school classes, small groups, and fellowship times.
- Consider your group. If they like to discuss, plan such times in the sessions. Some people learn while “doing.” Provide topic-sensitive activities, and your group will remember the information better.
- If you wish to use a video, plan for any technical equipment needed and test the audio and video in advance of your session.
- **Something New:** A number of lessons have intergenerational components or aspects of the topic designed specifically for youth and/or children. This is ideal for involving those age levels and letting them know they have roles in missions.

The Lessons

Most lessons follow the same format. Using the summary below, familiarize yourself with lesson components and their purposes.

- **Lesson Purpose:** Missions stories are inspiring and more memorable when listeners understand the importance behind them. Stating the purpose isn't necessary, but consider it in your planning.
- **Scripture:** The verses coordinate with the topic. These are sometimes used within the presentations. If not, please read them to the group. This helps your people associate scripture with missions.
- **Fast Facts:** These statistics about the lesson topic are, at times, worked into the presentation. For those times when they are not, use them to enrich the learning experience.
- **Lesson Information:** This may include an introduction, one or more missions stories, and sometimes additional material on the topic. Use as much of the Lesson Information as time allows.
- **Presentation Ideas:** There are three options to present the material. Feel free to create your own.
 - Option 1 is for groups that, due to space or lifestyle, prefer to stay seated during the session.
 - Option 2 is for groups that prefer moving around the room as they learn.
 - Option 3 is for groups that prefer in-depth discussion. You may add questions. Just keep the group on topic.
- **ACT ON IT:** These practical ideas for personal involvement pertain to the lesson topic. They are varied and can include prayer, giving, and participating in local or global projects that may turn into long-term ministries for your church.
- **Recipes:** Food is culture! In most lessons, we have included recipes from places mentioned in the material. Many were provided by Nazarenes who lived/live in that area. Because the recipes are global, measurements and temperatures may differ from where you live.
- **Resources:** This lists websites, videos, books, and additional articles on the lesson topic. If you are reading the PDF version of the guide, the web links are live, so you can go directly to the web page.
- **Handouts:** These are as varied as their topics. They may be puzzles, reader's theatre scripts, information reminders, and discussion tools. Most lessons have at least one, but feel free to create your own to coordinate with your presentation. When people take something home, they can think further about the topic, allowing God to speak.

New Video Supplements to the Lessons

- Again this year, we are creating short videos to accompany many lessons. These videos may be used in the following ways:
 - Promote aspects of missions in your local church,
 - Announce an upcoming missions service,
 - Educate your people regarding the lesson topic, or
 - Sermon illustrations.

Additional Ideas to Enrich the Presentation

- In most options, we suggest that others assist you in the presentation. Involvement invests individuals in the topic and helps them remember and apply the concepts taught.
- Visit this website throughout the year for additional information about the lesson topics: Nazarene Missions International (www.nazarene.org/nmi).
- Many people may be unfamiliar with the locations mentioned in this guide. Help them by having a world map or a globe available.

Fine-Tuning Our Focus on Missions

This year's theme is meant to build upon last year's: Bringing New Focus to Missions. Help bring focus to our mission as a church, and to understand our individual and local church role(s) in carrying out that mission to God's glory. There are "focus" lessons on mission areas: old and new. We will meet missionaries: newly sent and retiring. Of course, within these lessons, we focus on our Top 5 Areas of Impact: Prayer, World Evangelism Fund, Alabaster, Engaging Children and Youth, and Links. Participation in each of these areas connects people to the larger Nazarene family. As the group progresses through the lesson content and learning activities, there should be a deeper clarity and an expanding appreciation for NMI and its purpose to "mobilize the church in missions." Both are relevant and imperative to the growth and maturing of the local church, increasing its significant reach around the world. Through stories and scriptures and missions principles, we fine-tune the focus through an NMI lens, which should help us to see what we may have missed, or clarify our vision for what we must be and do to participate effectively in sharing the eternal purposes of God in missions.

This Year's Authors

For the 2020 *Adult Missions Education* lessons, three writers present four lessons each:

Debbie Salter Goodwin

Debbie has served with her husband, Mark, for 40 years of pastoral ministry. Debbie is a freelance writer, speaker, and spiritual formation blogger living in Roswell, Georgia, USA.

Cheryl Crouch

Early in her marriage Cheryl served with her husband, Jeff, as a Nazarene missionary to Papua New Guinea. More recently, she has been a local and district NMI president. Cheryl is an active layperson, teacher, and writer living in Denton, Texas, USA.

John Haines

John Haines serves as the executive assistant to the global NMI director. John served on the Eurasia Region as regional education coordinator prior to his current assignment with NMI.

We thank every contributor for the part they have played in bringing this year's *Adult Missions Education* together.

Throughout the process of bringing these lessons together, we are seeking to "fine-tune our focus on missions" in order to be better equipped to work together in this great missions enterprise. Biblically, this find its roots in the living out of our disciple lives with clarity, singularity, and holy passion to be the holy people of God, and to bring glory to Him. We really do need each other. Our lives and work are enriched, because together with you, in Jesus' name, we are changing our world.

Lola Brickey
Global NMI Director

Setting the Scene

Setting the Scene for Lessons 5-8, released on 1 July, 2020; we have taken a slightly different approach... one we trust will be enlightening and helpful.

As you read and make use of the following four NMI lessons, be mindful of the following:

1. It has been an extraordinary time since our first release on 1 March, with all that has occurred in our world and the life of the church due to the COVID-19 pandemic. What an opportunity to find new ways and open doors of ministry for the Church of the Nazarene around the world.
2. You will notice a difference in these lessons. They have been written to be used primarily in the context of small groups such as families at home or traditional church settings, include activity options for children and youth, and can be presented through video conferencing such as Zoom and WhatsApp as well as in person. The lessons are more devotional in nature and will work well in a group of any size, in any setting.
3. While it is never certain when lessons will be presented, these four have been written with the months of July-October in mind, each with a significant occasion or celebration from Old Testament Jewish celebrations, and/or from our Orthodox theological roots¹, both of which John Wesley would have warmly welcomed in the life of the church. Rich theology and scriptural background inform these celebrations.
 - a. July marks the days around the summer solstice² and the Nativity of John the Baptist, the “Forerunner of Christ.” In February 2019, a large class of newly commissioned missionaries was sent out by the Church of the Nazarene. They, too, have nativity stories. We learn that God prepares men and women from all backgrounds and cultures to be **forerunners** of Christ in the world.
 - b. August, in the lead-up to what many still adhere to as our September Alabaster Offering, focuses on the two women who lavishly gave what they had in grace and gratitude: the widow’s two mites/pennies, and Mary’s alabaster jar of expensive ointment/oil poured out on the feet of Christ.
 - c. September celebrates Rosh Hashana, a new year’s festival that leads quickly to Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement-see October’s lesson). In this lesson, it seems good to think about the adventure that comes with our first obedient steps in following God’s call. The life and sacrifice of Abraham and his son Isaac demonstrate the depth of faith and trust in the God Who called them to follow Him into Promise.
 - d. October celebrates the Jewish Festival of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and the lessons that Jonah had to learn: lessons of obedience and open-mindedness and open-heartedness to those he had no love for, nor experience of. To “do missions,” one must have a Jonah awakening, and that awakening reminds us that if God can save and change us, He can save and change anyone.
4. Remember, if you have not been able to utilize the first four lessons, released on 1 March (or even previous years’ lessons), they may be used anytime, as you gather together for missions education and study.

¹ John Wesley appreciated and utilized many of the theological tenets of the Eastern Church, in following the early church fathers (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianus, and Athanasius of Alexandria, John Chrysostom) and mothers, and Orthodox understanding of grace.

² Summer solstice in the Northern Hemisphere is the same day as the winter solstice in the Southern Hemisphere, and vice versa.

5

Newly Assigned Missionaries

by John Haines

LESSON PURPOSE

This lesson introduces some of the newly assigned missionaries, who are from countries around the world, now serving in varied contexts following the 2019 General Board commissioning of the largest missionary class in many years.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 1 is the Scripture background for this lesson. Read it in its entirety, and imagine how the characters in the story must have felt when they heard the marvelous things God had for them and their children.

...And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace. (Luke 1:76-79, NIV)

FAST FACTS (Feel free to use either or both of the Fast Facts listed in each bullet point. Some groups like statistics, while others like general information that might not typically be known.)

Statistics

- In 2019, there were 586 missionaries originating from 67 world areas. Of these missionaries, 360 served as global deployed, and 226 were sponsored deployed. Last year, 86 new missionaries were added. Within the missionary families, there are 312 missionary kids.
- The work of the Church of the Nazarene in Mozambique opened in 1922; in 2019, there were 960 organized churches, 996 not-yet-organized churches, and 228,174 members.
- The work of the Church of the Nazarene in Papua New Guinea opened in 1955; in 2019, there were 405 organized churches, 215 not-yet-organized churches, and 29,922 members.
- The work of the Church of the Nazarene in Italy opened in 1948; in 2019, there were nine organized churches and 372 members. The work of the Church of the Nazarene in Russia opened in 1992; in 2019, there were 19 organized churches and 458 members.
- The work of the Church of the Nazarene in Guatemala opened in 1904; in 2019, there were 685 organized churches, 97 not-yet-organized churches, and 96,721 members.

General Information

- Although Portuguese is the national language, there are over 40 local languages spoken across the country, and the majority of Mozambicans speak more than one.
- Papua New Guinea has more than 1,000 people groups, and the people speak more than 800 languages.
- Italy's national dish is pasta, and, until recently, a smile was not considered a sign of politeness in Russia.
- The Mayan people were present in Guatemala as early as 18,000 BC, and ruins of their temples can still be seen today.

LESSON INFORMATION

Many Christians do not know the importance of the period of time between the dates of 24 June and 7 July in the Orthodox¹ traditions of the Church. This marks the Orthodox celebration of the “Nativity of John the Baptist—the Forerunner.” Most know parts of the story of John’s unlikely conception and birth to an elderly, righteous couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth. Many know of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth before John’s birth. Many know that John lived and ministered in the wilderness awaiting the appearance of the Messiah, Christ. But, there is much more to the story.

Every nativity, or the occasion of a person’s birth, is likely to be a piece of a larger story that goes back generations. Every missionary **forerunner** has a nativity story that is larger than themselves. There are characters who have prayed for someone who will come into the family line and go out into the world; there are seasons of apparent barrenness, seasons of anticipation, seasons of disappointment, and finally, seasons of joy when promise comes to fulfilment.

Even the dates, connecting to the Summer solstice (traditionally related to John’s birth) and Winter solstice² (traditionally related to Jesus’ birth) hint at the declaration of John that “*He must increase, I must decrease...*” (John 3:30, NASB). This shift in seasons reminds us that the Light that came into the world is to grow and grow, filling the darkness and bringing hope. John’s time was short, but intentional in its purpose, to announce and make way for Christ in the world.

This seems a fitting passage to consider as we meet several newly assigned missionaries, **forerunners** with a similar mission to John’s, whose stories are no less filled with the marvelous interventions of God in their lives: calling them, preparing them, and through the church, sending them to be a light in the world. Every response to God, every choice to participate in His will, marks and measures one’s life and purpose by a divine standard that provides anchor points in life and spans time, building a bridge that honors God’s eternal purposes.

In the 2019 General Board Commissioning Service, the largest in many years, there were 32 missionary adults, with 18 children, sent to serve in various assignments across the world regions of the Church of the Nazarene. The majority were non-North American, which is significant. Many tend to think of Nazarene missionaries as being sent primarily from the United States, but in our global church, missionaries are called, sent, and supported from many countries. God calls children, youth, and adults from every country where

the Church of the Nazarene ministers and the mission of the church is enriched through the diversity, not only of gifts, but also of languages, and the cultural perspectives each brings to missions.

It is noteworthy that the majority of these missionaries, some of whom we will look at more closely in this lesson, came to a personal faith experience as children or adolescents. Most received their call to missions and ministry early in life, supported by their families and local churches, and sent by their countries and regions. Today, we have 586 missionaries originating from 67 world areas, who are “forerunners” on mission in the world, seeking to prepare the way of the Lord to burst into darkness with transformative light.

Let’s meet some of these recently commissioned and deployed missionaries:

Africa: Admirado and Celeste Chaguala are from Mozambique, and serve as global missionaries to Mozambique on the Africa Region.

Admirado [ahd-meer-AH-doo] Chaguala [shah-GWAH-lah] accepted Christ as Lord and Savior when he was 12 years old. Born in Mozambique, Admirado has grown up to serve the Lord in the Maputo [mah-POOT-oo] church as music conductor and worship leader in the Portuguese services. He came to full surrender to Christ’s will for his life in ministry and missions at the age of 20, during the first national NYC (Nazarene Youth Congress) in Maputo in January 2000. He has served through *JESUS* film and has helped in numerous Work & Witness teams that came to Mozambique to build the Bible College. He says: “*As a forerunner of Jesus Christ, I see myself as a person with God’s favor like Mary. She didn’t deserve it; she came from a disadvantaged background, but we learn that the Savior would come from Mary’s kindred. This is a sign of favor from God.*”

“*[Having a] global perspective has always meant something very important in my preparation as a missionary. I have in mind that I am a part of a global family, and this becomes critical to the church that is growing and spreading out; to understand that as a denomination in different areas of the world, we are one and united, the oneness of spirit is what makes it possible for us to be a global family. As a missional church, it is important that we envision the church in global perspectives.*”

Admirado serves in the role of leadership development, growing the church in Mozambique.

¹ John Wesley appreciated and utilized many of the theological tenets of the Eastern Church, in following the early church fathers (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Athanasius of Alexandria, John Chrysostom) and mothers, and Orthodox understanding of grace.

² Summer solstice in the Northern Hemisphere is the same day as the Winter solstice in the Southern Hemisphere, and vice versa.

Celeste [se-LESHT] Chaguala, Admirado's wife, also born in Mozambique, accepted Christ as Savior at the age of 17. She, too, served in music ministry in the Portuguese services in her local church, as well as using her office skills in service to the Mozambique Nazarene Seminary and as literature coordinator in the Lusophone [LOO-suh-fohn], Portuguese-speaking field. After some years of service as project manager for the NGO (non-governmental organization), Samaritan's Purse, God made it clear that He wanted this couple to serve in Nazarene missions. She says: *"In 2014, I decided to resign and serve the church starting with my family. From there, I felt God calling me to missions, to serve Him wherever He would guide me."*

"I like the process of preparation to be a missionary in the Church of the Nazarene. Church involvement means a lot to me because I believe that all of the process starts at the local church level with local pastors and leaders helping to prepare the believer. In the local church, we are discipled, we are involved in local ministries. For me, I see it as preparation for me to become a missionary. Serving in the local church helps the candidate to understand more about how the church functions: locally, on the district and field, and even the region and global levels. Everything starts in the local church."

Asia Pacific: Peter and Jenny Isaac are from Papua New Guinea, and serve as global missionaries to the Melanesia/South Pacific Field on the Asia-Pacific Region.

Peter Isaac accepted Christ as Savior when he was 15. His family disapproved and forbade him to go back to church, but he persisted. As he grew in his faith and learned more about the church, he felt called to become a pastor at the age of 17. He met and married Jenny, who had come to faith when she was 12. Both attended college, became teachers and chaplains, as well as planting churches in the surrounding communities. In 2006, they were called to go to Vanuatu [vah-noo-AH-too] as missionaries. Their ministry roles now include church planting, leadership development, teaching, and district superintendent.

Eurasia: Luca and Elena* are from Sicily and Russia, and are establishing the work of the Church of the Nazarene in Belarus as global missionaries on the Eurasia Region. (*Names changed for security reasons.)

Luca [LOO-kah] accepted Christ as Lord at the age of 17, growing up in Sicily. He attended European Nazarene College, where he met Elena [e-LAY-nuh], a young lady from Russia, who had come to know Christ through the ministry of Chuck and Carla Sunberg when they served as field strategy coordinators. She was 19. Luca felt his call to missions during his first trip to Russia, and Elena sensed that same calling some

years later while pastoring Moscow First Church of the Nazarene. Both have served in educational roles in the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), and feel that their time of preparation allowed time for them to clarify their call. When the right time came, they felt "more than ready and excited to go!" Together, this gifted couple has followed God's call to to Belarus [be-luh-ROOS], where they are laying the foundations for the Church of the Nazarene in that country. Their young daughter has given access to other young families and children, helping them to establish a children's ministry. They are "forerunners" of Christ, too. Here is how they see that role in their lives at this time:

"The country of Belarus has a long history of the Christian Church; there are many churches that have existed for years and even centuries. But many people don't have a living relationship with Christ. When we moved to our new place of ministry, it was a new country and a city where we knew no one. We couldn't openly preach or teach about Christ (because of strict religious laws). So, for the first couple years, it was a life of making connections and friendships that oftentimes was just sharing life...and, at times, testimonies of what God has done in our lives. It was living the life shaped by Christ as a testimony to Him, jumping at every opportunity to serve others in the name of Christ."

Mesoamerica: Carlos and Ana Salazar are from Guatemala, and serve as global missionaries on the Mesoamerica Region.

Carlos [KAHR-lohs] Salazar [SAH-lah-sahr] was raised by his grandmother and uncles after his parents divorced. They tried to instill in him good values, but he ended up on the streets, a gang member and drug addict. He met Ana [AH-nah], who had given her life to Christ at the age of eight (8). She says: "We started attending church when I was that age, and every time they made a call, I accepted it over and over again." Carlos went to church with Ana and gave his heart to the Lord at the age of 17. They married, and their faith grew as they ministered together. A missionary, David Cooper, saw something in him and asked him to help as a camera operator for the Iberoamerica [ee-BE-roh-ah-ME-ree-kah] 2000 conference.³ While working in Nazarene Communications, Carlos accepted his call to missions at the age of 27. Ana believes that her NMI president did an excellent job of "nurturing a spirit of missions" in her life. She identifies with the Luke passage:

"This is a beautiful passage, and I identify with it because as missionaries and as followers of Jesus, God has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation. It is what we have to do, with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must guide people to turn to the Lord, our God, and find salvation by the grace and mercy of God. It is what

³ Iberoamerica 2000 Conference was an evangelism conference held in Guatemala for the South America and Mesoamerica regions.

happened to me; someone helped me to turn to the Lord and find salvation by His mercy."

When they were wrestling with their call, their daughter Amy said, "It was those words, and the simplicity of her childlike faith that made it possible for her to understand God's call, and made it clear to us that this was what God wanted for us as a family. We said YES to Him!"

PRESENTATION IDEAS

Here are three presentation options that can be used in a traditional church setting, at home, or using video conferencing.

Option 1—for a small group setting, enacting the story of Luke 1

Prepare

- Have Bibles ready to read Luke 1; or print out **Handout 1**, which is a narrative of Luke 1.

Present

- Enact the story found in Luke 1, and discuss the actions and reactions of the characters in relation to God's plans for John.

Option 2—for groups that include children

Prepare

- Cut up the flashcards on each of these missionary couples, along with the cards on the countries to which they have gone...ready to play a matching game while telling their stories. (See **Handout 3: Matching Game**).

Present

- Divide the information of the lesson into portions that make it easy for children to retain and relate to the stories of the missionaries

Option 3—for groups of all ages

Prepare

- All of these missionaries accepted Christ as Savior in their childhood or youth. This is true for many missionaries. Use a yardstick (meter stick) and place colored tape or colored paper arrows (see **Handout 4: Yardstick [Meter Stick]**), at the years when these significant decisions were made.

Present

- As you go through the lesson material, it becomes obvious that God is at work in the lives of children and youth: in saving them, and in calling them to service. Let the Yardstick (Meter Stick) Handout represent the movement of God in young lives. See what you can observe or learn just from placing the ages of accepting Christ as Savior, and "calling," on the yardstick (meter stick) and locating your own age of asking Christ into your heart and life, and the year of your "calling," if you have sensed one.
- What do you think are the factors that contribute to this? Impressionable, sensitive, influences, etc.?

ACT ON IT (practical ideas for personal involvement)

- Encourage everyone to think about the young ages at which most of the missionaries studied accepted Christ into their hearts and lives, and the ages at which they felt a sense of God’s “calling” upon their lives. How can we encourage families to have these conversations? If you haven’t had this conversation in your family, find time to do that.
- Pray for your children and youth, both within your family and within your church family, that God will make their hearts and minds sensitive to His call upon them. Pray for the courage to encourage them in following God wherever He leads.
- Check with your childrens or youth pastor to see if there are any children or youth in your church who are beginning to sense a call to missions, and then commit to pray for them by name on a regular basis.
- Pray for these newly assigned and deployed missionaries, that God would bless them in their various places of missions service, and that during times when meeting together is not permitted, they may find creative and effective ways to minister in the specific cultures.

RESOURCES (“handy helps” for the leader)

- **Websites**

- The Chagualas
 - www.ncm.org/blog/dreams-of-hope-in-mozambique
 - youtu.be/CaWHJ4QNvII
- The Isaacs
 - www.bit.ly/Isaacs-Article1
 - www.bit.ly/Isaacs-Article2
- Luca and Elena (Names changed for security reasons)
 - www.bit.ly/Luca-Elena-Article

- **Books**

- Dunnagan, Ann. *The Mission-Minded Child: Raising a New Generation to Fulfill God’s Purpose*. © 2007, IVP Books.
- Dunnagan, Ann. *The Mission-Minded Family: Releasing Your Family to God’s Destiny*. © 2008, IVP Books.

RECIPES

In the Orthodox traditions, “The Nativity of John” (7 July) relates to some rather interesting edibles: if the sky is starry on Ivan’s (John’s) Night, it means a good harvest of mushrooms; if there is heavy dew on Ivan’s Night, one might expect a good crop of cucumbers. Of course, we think of John the Baptist as “eating locusts and honey” in the wilderness. So, recipes that include mushrooms, cucumbers, and honey (don’t bother with the locusts unless you are very daring) would be good to do as a family or small group and share while studying the lesson.

“Frango a Zambeziana” (Zambeziian Chicken; a Mozambican recipe)

Ingredients:

- 1 chicken
- 3 cloves of crushed garlic
- Lemon Juice
- Bay Leaf
- Salt
- 1 can of coconut milk (in Mozambique, we normally grate one fresh coconut).

Preparation:

1. Season the chicken with garlic, lemon juice, bay leaf, and salt and marinate for 1 hour.
2. Add the coconut milk, you can add a little warm water because the milk canned coconut is very dense. Let marinate for another 30 minutes.
3. Roast the chicken on the grill.
4. Boil the season that was used to marinate the chicken with a bit of butter for five minutes and pour over the chicken after it is grilled.

You can accompany the chicken with French fries and lettuce salad.

Draniki (a Belarusian recipe)

www.natashaskitchen.com/meat-stuffed-potato-pancakes

Guatemalan Flakes

www.bit.ly/Guatemalan-Flakes

(Handout 1)

Scripture Narrative of Luke 1

(author's paraphrase and adaptation)

It was long ago that a righteous couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, lived in a seemingly endless waiting: waiting for a child, a son, in whom they could see their hopes fulfilled. But, they were very old, and as the days passed, it seemed impossible that they would ever see the fulfillment of their deepest longing.

Zechariah served in the temple, and one day, when it was his turn to burn incense to God, representing their prayers to God, as they assembled outside. While Zechariah was at his priestly task, an angel, Gabriel, appeared to him and said:

“Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayers have been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. ...he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (vv. 13-17)

Zechariah was doubtful, and asked for some certainty: “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.” But, because of his doubt, Gabriel said: “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.” (vv. 19-20)

Well, Elizabeth did indeed become pregnant, and for five months remained in seclusion. Her niece, Mary, came to visit Elizabeth six months into Elizabeth's pregnancy. Gabriel had also visited Mary and her husband-to-be, Joseph, and made a similar promise: “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call him

Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” (vv. 30-33)

Mary, unlike Zechariah, simply said: “I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled.” She went to visit Elizabeth, and stayed for three months. Elizabeth's son was born. She took him to the synagogue to be circumcised and named, and she named him John, as Gabriel had said. Eyes turned to Zechariah, thinking he would have a better name for this little promised one, but being unable to speak, he wrote to their surprise, “His name is John.” Immediately, his mouth was opened and he began to speak and praise God, saying:

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.” (vv. 68-79)

And so, the message and mission of this **forerunner** was declared, lived out, and fulfilled.

(Handout 2)

My Nativity

What is the date of your birth? _____

What stories leading up to your birth did your parents tell you?

Tell about sensing a call to a purpose for your life. Share with your small group, family, or church.

What would you like to do with your life, as a *forerunner* of Christ?

This may be accomplished anywhere in the world, including your own neighborhood.

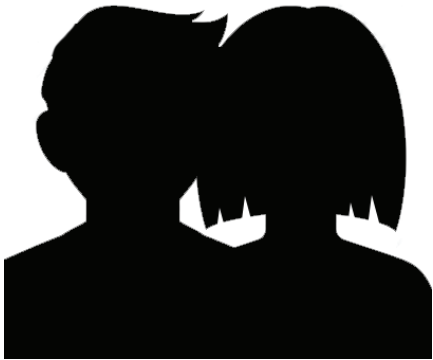
(Handout 3)
Matching Game



Admirado and Celeste Chaguala



Peter and Jenny Isaac



Luca and Elena



Carlos and Ana Salazar

Him:

Age Accepted Christ as Savior: 12
Age Accepted call to missions: 20
Role: leadership development and church growth

Her:

Age Accepted Christ as Savior: 17
Age Accepted call to missions: Young Adult
Role: Literature coordinator, resource pastors with ministerial material for discipleship. Translates various resources into local languages. Serves as secretary for Statistics and Credentials

Him:

Age Accepted Christ as Savior: 14
Age Accepted call to missions: 35
Role: Church Planter, District Superintendent, Trainer, Teacher at Theological College

Her:

Age Accepted Christ as Savior: 12
Age Accepted call to missions: 34
Role: Support the District Superintendent, Train Bible college teachers by co-teaching classes with them, Train pastors' wives in church leadership skills, and encourage women's ministry and other ministries

Him:

Age Accepted Christ as Savior: 17
Age Accepted call to missions: 20
Role: Church Planter

Her:

Age Accepted Christ as Savior: 19
Age Accepted call to missions: 44
Role: Church Planter

Him:

Age Accepted Christ as Savior: 17
Age Accepted call to missions: 27
Role: Regional Communications

Her:

Age Accepted Christ as Savior: 7
Age Accepted call to missions: 8
Role: Regional Communications

**Country of citizenship:
Mozambique**

**Country of citizenship:
Papua New Guinea**

**Country of citizenship:
Italy and Russia**

**Country of citizenship:
Guatemala**

**Serving in:
Mozambique**

**Serving in:
Vanuatu**

**Serving in:
Belarus**

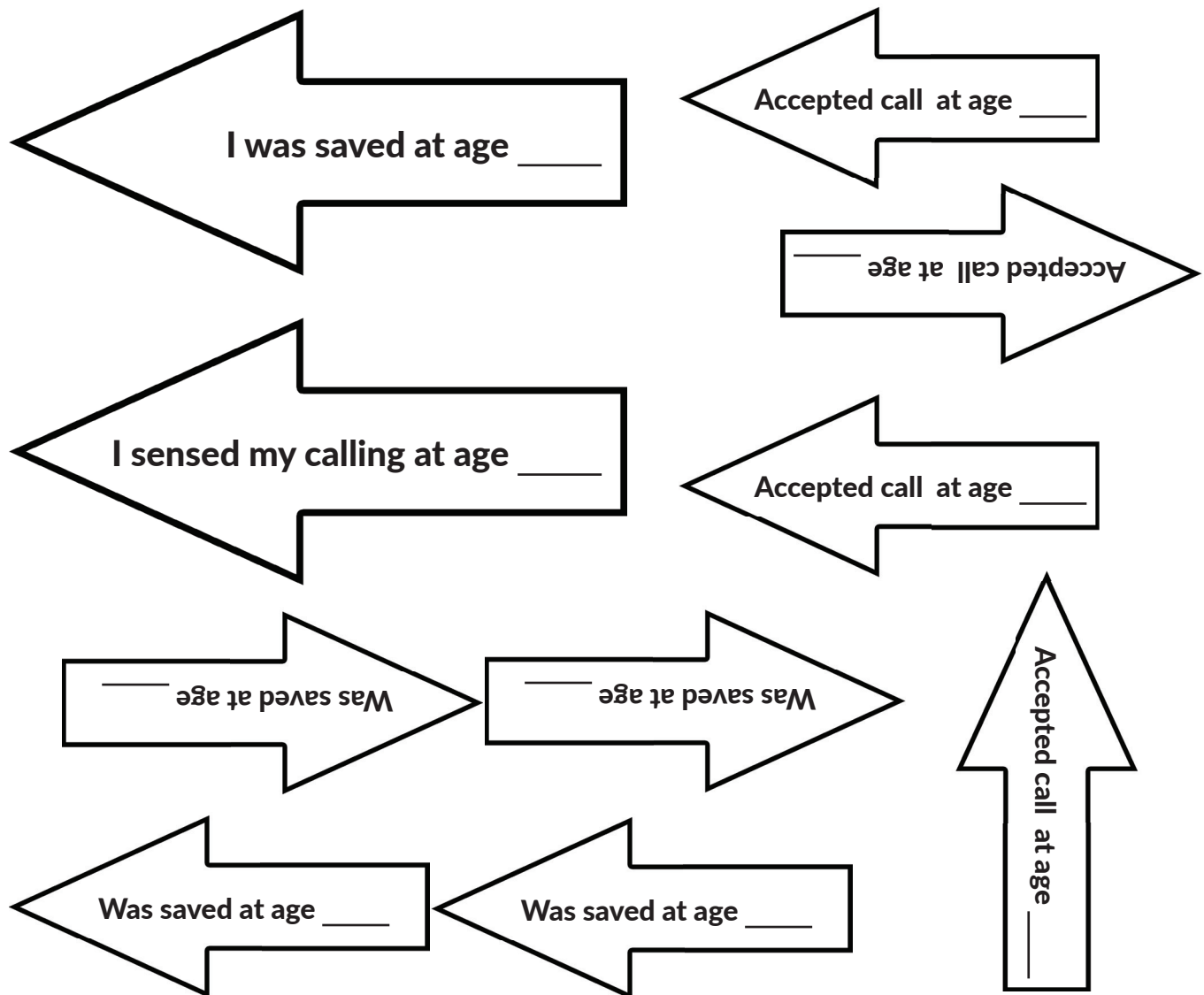
**Serving in:
Guatemala
Mesoamerica Region**

(Handout 4)

Yardstick (Meter Stick)

Use a ruler or yardstick (meter stick). Starting with the edge of the ruler or yardstick (meter stick), representing "birth," let every inch (2.5 centimeters) thereafter represent a year of life and development. Now, place a red piece of tape or paper at the inch (2.5 centimeters)/year when each of the missionaries studied accepted Christ as Savior; and place a blue piece of tape or paper at the inch (2.5 centimeters)/year when each of the missionaries studied in the lesson said they sensed God's "calling" on their lives. Locate your age of asking Christ into your heart and life (with a red piece of tape or paper); and If you have such a sense of God's "calling" on your life to be a "forerunner" who prepares the way for Christ, locate your age of "calling" (with a blue piece of tape or paper) on the ruler/yardstick (meter stick), as one among many whom God chooses to send out.

(If you do not have access to blue and red tape, use the cut-out arrows provided below, and color them red or blue to use as markers in this exercise.)



6

Alabaster by John Haines

LESSON PURPOSE

This lesson looks at one of the NMI's Five Areas of Impact, Alabaster, and some "out of the box" ways in which Alabaster funds are making a difference around the world. Though one of the oldest missions giving approaches of the Church of the Nazarene, Alabaster is nimble and able to address current challenges around the world, to provide places of worship and ministry, thanks to the faithfulness of all who give.

SCRIPTURE: Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on. (Mark 12:41-44, NIV)

FAST FACTS

- Alabaster is a soft mineral that can be carved into shapes. It resembles marble, but is translucent, and can be easily damaged. During ancient times, it was often shaped into something that would hold perfume or oil that has been used in traditional medicine or religious ceremonies. Because the alabaster was so delicate, and the oil came from plants grown far away, they would be considered very costly.
- In 1948, Rev. Elizabeth Vennum [VE-nuhm], Global NMI Council member, was asked to think and pray about a challenging project for NMI. (Read Elizabeth Vennum's story in the Handouts.)
- The Alabaster offering, she said, was God's idea modeled after the sacrifice of the woman who anointed Jesus' head with expensive perfume poured from an alabaster jar (Matthew 26:6-13). She gave something she didn't need, because of her love for Jesus.
- At the 1949 Global Council meeting, the plan was unanimously adopted, and the first offering was received later that year. The Board of General Superintendents approved the plan for Alabaster funds to be used exclusively for buildings and properties in cross-cultural ministries.
- As of 2019, more than US\$117.5 million had been given to Alabaster, an increase of US\$2.54 million, or 1.55% over the previous year, resulting in almost 10,000 projects for churches/chapels, Bible schools/school buildings, mission/district centers, hospitals/clinics, missionaries'/national workers' homes, and properties.

LESSON INFORMATION

The story of the widow's mite (two small copper coins worth only a few cents in Mark 12:41-44) easily relates to the story of the woman who broke the alabaster gift of oil over Jesus' head (Matthew 26:6-13), with the similar story of the oil poured over Jesus' feet (John 12:1-8). These are the only times such extravagance is mentioned in the Gospels. The lavish "waste" of the precious oil or ointment, in the opinion of the disciples, and the self-denying generosity of the little widow at the temple treasury, mark out for us the principles out of which Alabaster as a missions offering was conceived—giving for others by denying ourselves! Offerings of grace (an action of love and adoration) and offerings of gratitude (an action or reaction of thanksgiving and awe-struck humility that has no words to sufficiently express a heart full of praise). In neither case is there a hint of withholding the gift, or of seeking to control its use. There was just lavish self-surrendering love being poured out, and Jesus noticed and called it to our attention.

John Wesley reflected on this generous gift, and said: "See what judgment is cast on the most [superficial and self-centered], outward actions by the Judge of all! And how acceptable to him is the smallest, which springs from self-denying love!"

From the beginning of the Alabaster offering tradition in the Church of the Nazarene, there has been an intentional focus on sacrificing something **not needed** so that what is needed around the world: churches, hospitals, schools, centers of ministry, and pastors' housing, could be built with the help of the sacrificial giving of Nazarenes everywhere.

Alabaster at the Founding of Missions Work in Hungary

One of the greatest privileges of my missionary career was to help lay the foundations for the work of the Church of the Nazarene in Hungary, as district superintendent. My role was to help establish the work of the church, and to prepare those who would lead that church into the future. When we first started the work in Hungary, we had no churches in any of our ministry locations. We squeezed congregations into living rooms, and sometimes into rented school rooms or town halls. These new Nazarenes were curious about many of the things they would hear me talk about as "typically" Nazarene, one of which was Alabaster offerings. I explained the history of this wonderful Nazarene tradition of sacrificial giving for the sake of building churches around the world. There was great excitement at the thought that they, being new to the church, could participate in something that would immediately mark them as part of the global Nazarene family.

Now, bear in mind, we had no church buildings in Hungary at the time, and there was a question that arose again and again. "If we give to Alabaster offering, does that mean we will have church buildings here in Hungary for worship and ministry?" I had to explain that our giving would go into the work of Alabaster around the world, and it may be some time before we'd see an Alabaster church in Hungary. But, if we were faithful to give to others whose need may be even greater than our own, the day could come when their gifts might help us build churches for Hungarian congregations. Every church jumped in, creatively imagining how they might participate, out of their limited resources. There was great enthusiasm in every age-group. Hairdressers gave their tips, farmers gave a portion of their produce, and families sacrificed all they could. Out of their little, they gave so much. They were lavish in their giving. It was humbling to see. People who were not even a part of the churches would give because of their neighbors and friends who asked: "Would you like to help us build a church in places where they have no church?" Some would reply, "But, there is no church in this town...you meet together in a house." "Yes, but someday, we'll have a church here!" came the confident reply. Their first ever Alabaster offering exceeded US\$1,000. Within a couple years, their Alabaster church was under construction. It now stands in the center of their village, like a bright yellow sunburst of hope (see photo in Resources), attracting those around them to enter in and meet the Christ who drives away every dark shadow in their lives.

Alabaster was in the DNA of the Hungary Church of the Nazarene from the beginning. In due course, dreams were realized, and now, every Church of the Nazarene in Hungary was made possible, in large measure, because of your Alabaster giving. And other churches around the world have been made possible, because of theirs. The church in Hungary is still giving faithfully to Alabaster!

PRESENTATION IDEAS

Here are three presentation options that can be used in a traditional church setting, at home, or using video conferencing.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have all had to sacrifice some things that were normal in our lives, simply because they were not available, or we could not get to them with the “shelter in place” orders. Are there things you’ve realized are not necessary? Things you could do without for a longer-term, the cost of which you could contribute to Alabaster? Remember, every gift you contribute is helping to build hospitals, clinics, schools, and churches—all of which may look quite different from those built in the past with Alabaster funds. They may be located in high-rise apartments; they may be moveable structures that can serve a community and then be transferred to another, or they may be new sections of schools and hospitals that will be designed for the new normal after COVID-19.

Option 1—for a small group setting

Prepare

- Have Bibles ready or print out the attached to read Mark 12:41-44.
- Have **Handout 1** ready for someone in the group to read aloud.
- Use **Handout 6** to complete the Word Search Puzzle and see who completes it first.

Present

- Unpack the two principles of “grace” and “gratitude,” using **Handout 2: “Grace and Gratitude,”** as markers for why we take Alabaster offerings in the Church of the Nazarene.
- Read the **Handout 1, *The Alabaster Lie***. Ask your group to respond to the piece. Have you ever thought your giving was “a waste” or that the money you put in your Alabaster Box or container could be used in a more productive way? Put those doubts aside. Alabaster is irreplaceable in achieving the purposes for which it was established, and every time you give, you expand the reach of the Kingdom of God through the Church of the Nazarene.
- Ask what each participant might “give up” on a weekly or monthly basis to put that money toward Alabaster. What will drive that sacrifice: “grace” or “gratitude”?

Option 2—for groups that include children

Prepare

- It may be useful to have all the types of Alabaster containers you have used (old boxes, jars, bottles, bags, etc. to help participants imagine the limitless options in this exercise).
- You’ll need items like scissors, paper, tape, glue, colored sharpie pens, or paint.
- Use **Handouts 3, 4, and 5** to assist in this exercise.

Present

- Instruct the children on the cycle of imagination, design, creation, and use (See **Handout 3: Imagination-Design-Creation-Use**). Allow time for them to think about what kind of Alabaster box, jar, can, bag, etc., they might make to hold their Alabaster offerings. Every member of the group may do this individually.

Option 3—for groups of all ages

Prepare

- Print out enough copies of the **Handout 2: “Grace and Gratitude”** for each member of the group. Provide pens for writing.

Present

- We all have unique perspectives because of what we have experienced in life. Using **Handout 2: “Grace and Gratitude,”** have each person write under the headings examples from their own lives of what an offering of grace and an offering of gratitude might look like. Have each describe what they think they could do to make such offerings, for others, by giving up something precious to them.

ACT ON IT (practical ideas for personal involvement)

- Involve every member of your group in filling Alabaster boxes, jars, or other created containers.
- Since Alabaster giving is about sacrificing something you may want, but don’t necessarily need, make a list of the things in your weekly life that you could do without, giving that money to Alabaster instead. Tally up the value of those things you could do without. How much money could you give to Alabaster if you did not spend it on these items?
- If your group doesn’t want to create an Alabaster container, then order your Alabaster boxes from The Foundry Publishing (www.thefoundrypublishing.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=Alabaster; call toll-free—1-800-877-0700; Order number—O-5; cost—\$13.99 for a package of 25). You can do this from the NMI website by going to www.nazarene.org/alabaster.
- Think about how and why you give. Are your gifts filled with grace and gratitude? Try to identify one thing for which you wish to express grace or gratitude with every deposit into your Alabaster box or container. Name your blessings as you give, and name your sacrifices as you give. Be intentional.

RECIPES

PLAY WITH YOUR FOOD

Alphabet Soup

Purchase dry alphabet pasta, and make your family’s favorite soup recipe. Shortly before serving the soup, add the pasta and let it cook until done. Then have a race to find out who can spell “ALABASTER” the fastest. (If you purchase canned alphabet soup, there may not be enough letters for everyone.)

Alphabet Cookies

This recipe is one that groups can do together. Spell out “ALABASTER” with the cookie dough. www.verybestbaking.com/recipes/144763/spell-it-out-letters-of-love

Build an Edible Building

Below is a link to ideas of making edible buildings from vegetables to graham crackers. After everyone builds his or her “Alabaster project” (church, house, school, etc.), vote on the “most creative,” “healthiest,” or any other awards you can think of.

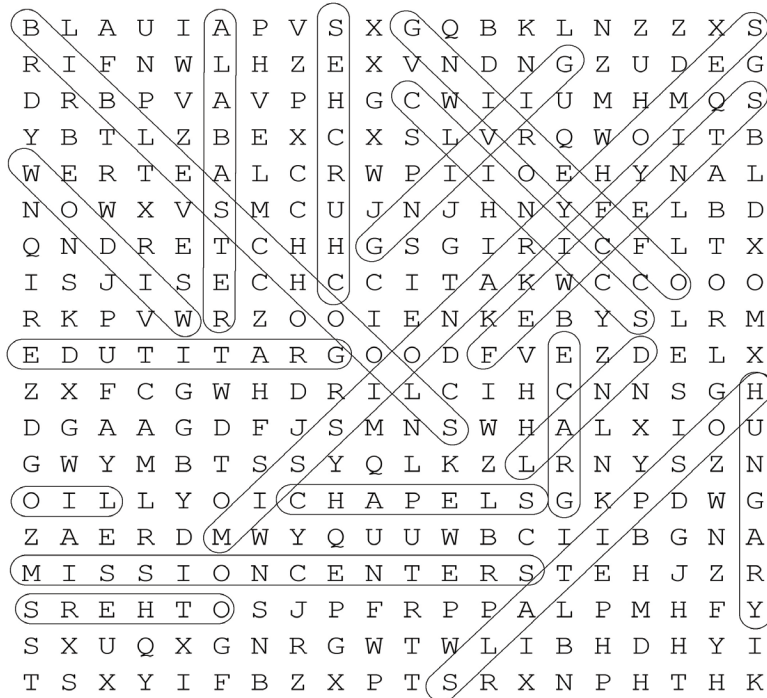
www.homestratosphere.com/gingerbread-house-alternatives

RESOURCES (“handy helps” for the leader)

- **Websites**
 - NMI website, Alabaster page: www.nazarene.org/alabaster
 - Culbertson, Howard. Alabaster offering and Elizabeth Roby Venum—more detailed story of the Alabaster offering: home.snu.edu/~hculbert/vennum.htm
 - Culbertson, Howard. Alabaster offerings: International building and property-purchase fund: home.snu.edu/~hculbert/alabaste.htm
- **Articles/blogs**
 - Church of the Nazarene Eurasia. “Alabaster offering funds used to purchase Spain parsonage,” *Nazarene News*. Posted: 11 May, 2017. www.nazarene.org/article/alabaster-offering-funds-used-purchase-spain-parsonage
 - Bartle, Neville. “Alabaster Giving Has Big Impact on Seabrook Church in New Zealand,” Asia-Pacific Region’s website. Posted: 24 June, 2015; modified: 14 February 2020. www.asiapacificnazarene.org/alabaster-giving-has-big-impact-on-seabrook-church-in-new-zealand
 - Armstrong, Clark. “At Seven Years Old...He Saw an Alabaster Miracle!” Asia-Pacific Region’s website. Posted: 6 December, 2014; modified: 14 February, 2020. www.asiapacificnazarene.org/at-seven-years-old-he-saw-an-alabaster-miracle
 - Eurasia Region. “New Nazarene Auditorium in Razgrad is City’s Largest” *Eurasia Region SnapShots*. Posted: 21 June 2010. www.eurasiaregion.org/new-nazarene-auditorium-in-razgrad-is-citys-largest
- **Books**
 - Johnston, Lillian. *The Alabaster Adventure*. Nazarene Publishing House. Kansas City, Missouri, USA: 1990. (Available on Amazon.com.)
 - Crutcher, Tim (editor). *Building on God’s Foundation: 50 Years of Alabaster*. Nazarene Publishing House. Kansas City, Missouri, USA: 1999. (Available on eBay.)
- **Videos**
 - Hungary Alabaster Video from 2001 www.bit.ly/HungaryAlabaster
 - Nazarene Media Library. Numerous Alabaster videos from the past in multiple languages. Go to medialibrary.nazarene.org and search for “Alabaster.”
- **Photo of first Alabaster Church of the Nazarene in Hungary**
 - www.bit.ly/Foldes-Hungary



Solutions for Handouts 5 and 6



All images are Alabaster Buildings

Select all images with
Alabaster Buildings

**Hadjuhathaz Church
Hungary**



**Nazarene
Theological College
Manchester Library**



**Reynolds Memorial
Hospital
India**



**CIS Field
Ministry Center**



**Bangladesh
Ministry Center**



**Eurasia Regional
Education and
Literature Office**



**Navajo Nation
Church and
Parsonage**



**Whitefield Church
Bangalore, India**



(Handout 1)

The Alabaster Lie

I remember that April morning in 1949 in Miami, Florida when it happened. I was reading a letter: "Today we placed an order for \$1,000 worth of Alabaster boxes." This was the last hurdle before launching Alabaster giving. After the general church approved the plan, 14 months of painstaking preparation followed. I had been keenly conscious that it was given of God.

Wouldn't you think that would bring joy? Before I had time to rejoice, the pious voice of the devil said, "Now...the General (NMI) Council is all excited about this. Today they have invested \$1,000 of God's money in boxes that will never bring in \$1,000. What a shameful waste!"

His lie was overwhelming. Indescribable darkness closed in. I found myself on my knees saying, "Lord, You know this is not my plan; it's Yours. I now commit the outcome of Nazarene Alabaster giving to You forever." God's presence dispelled the darkness and silenced the contradicting voice.

Through the years, Alabaster dollars numbering millions—and miracles of grace flowing through Alabaster channels—have underscored God's faithfulness!

Has Satan ever lied to you before or after an Alabaster breaking?¹ Has he ever insinuated a better use for the amount the Holy Spirit has suggested you place in your box? Remember, his suggestion echoes the first Alabaster lie to Mary of Bethany. When she anointed the Master, Satan asked through the voice of an indignant disciple, "Why this waste? It could have been sold...and given to the poor" (Mark 14:4-5). Poor who? The subtle suggestion is usually "Poor you...you need this for yourself."

What a privilege to increase the enormity of his Alabaster lies! As we do, we increase Alabaster aroma, Alabaster buildings, and Alabaster miracles around the world!

—Rev. Elizabeth Venum
1989, Adapted by Gail Sawrie

¹ In the early days of Alabaster offerings, boxes (or the seals on them) were broken, and the contents poured out into a larger Alabaster container (sometimes a model church or a wheelbarrow, etc.). In many parts of the world, this is still the practice, and Alabaster jars or clay containers are "broken" for the offering.

(Handout 3)

Imagination - Design - Creation - Use

Imagination: the ability to produce or simulate novel ideas or concepts in one's mind.

What do you "imagine" an Alabaster container to look like? It doesn't have to be a box.

Design: to draw or plan or produce something to show the look and function or workings of what one imagines.

How would you "design" your own Alabaster container? See other Handouts for symbols and words.

Creation: the action or process of bringing something into existence, giving form to what has been imagined and/or designed.

Time to create! What words, symbols, colors, etc., will you use to make your Alabaster container unique?

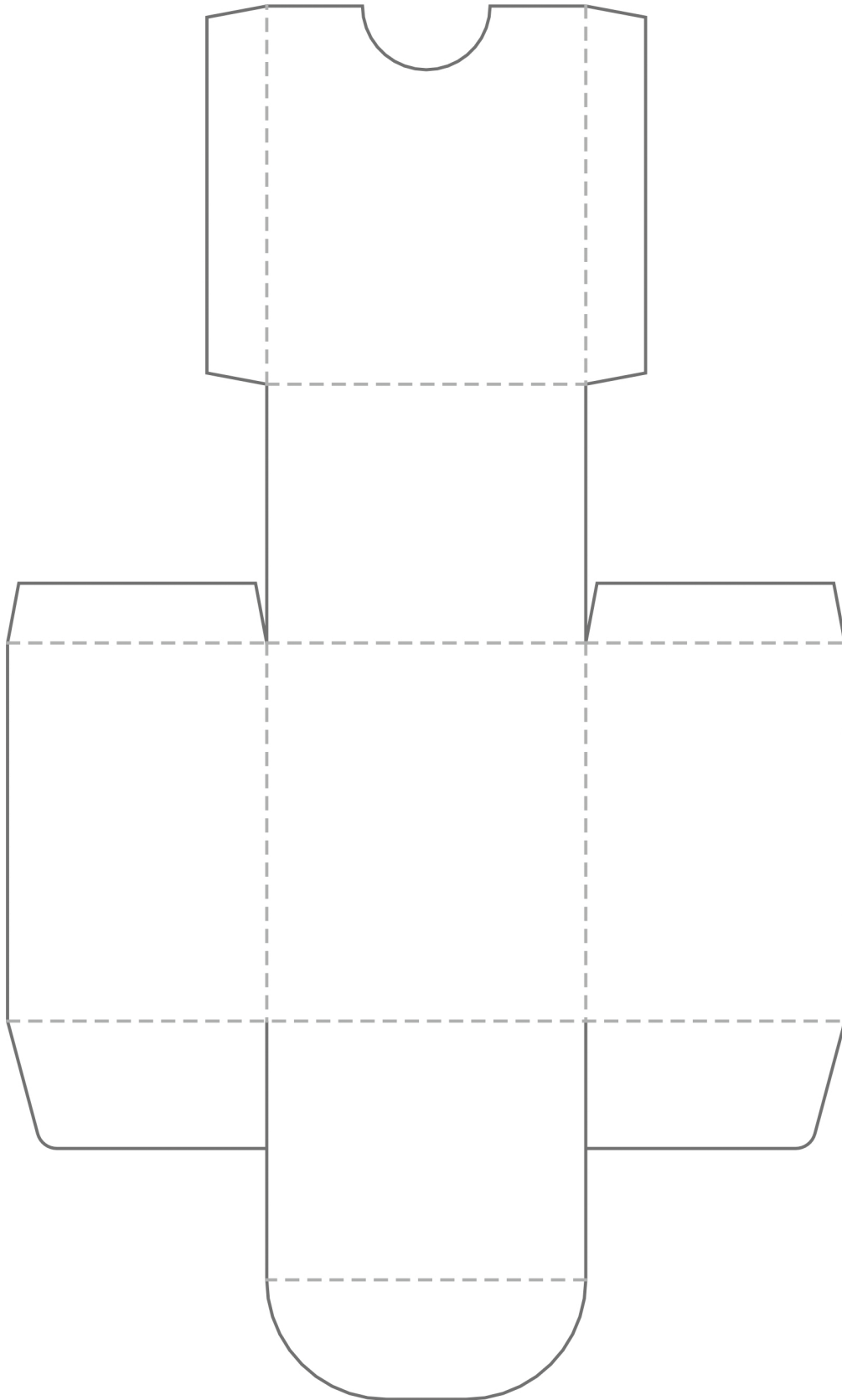
Use: to give function to that thing which one has created, fulfilling its purpose based upon design.

How do you "plan to use" your Alabaster container? (Hint: plan to put something in it every week!)

(Handout 4)

Alabaster Designs

(Use cardstock for best results)



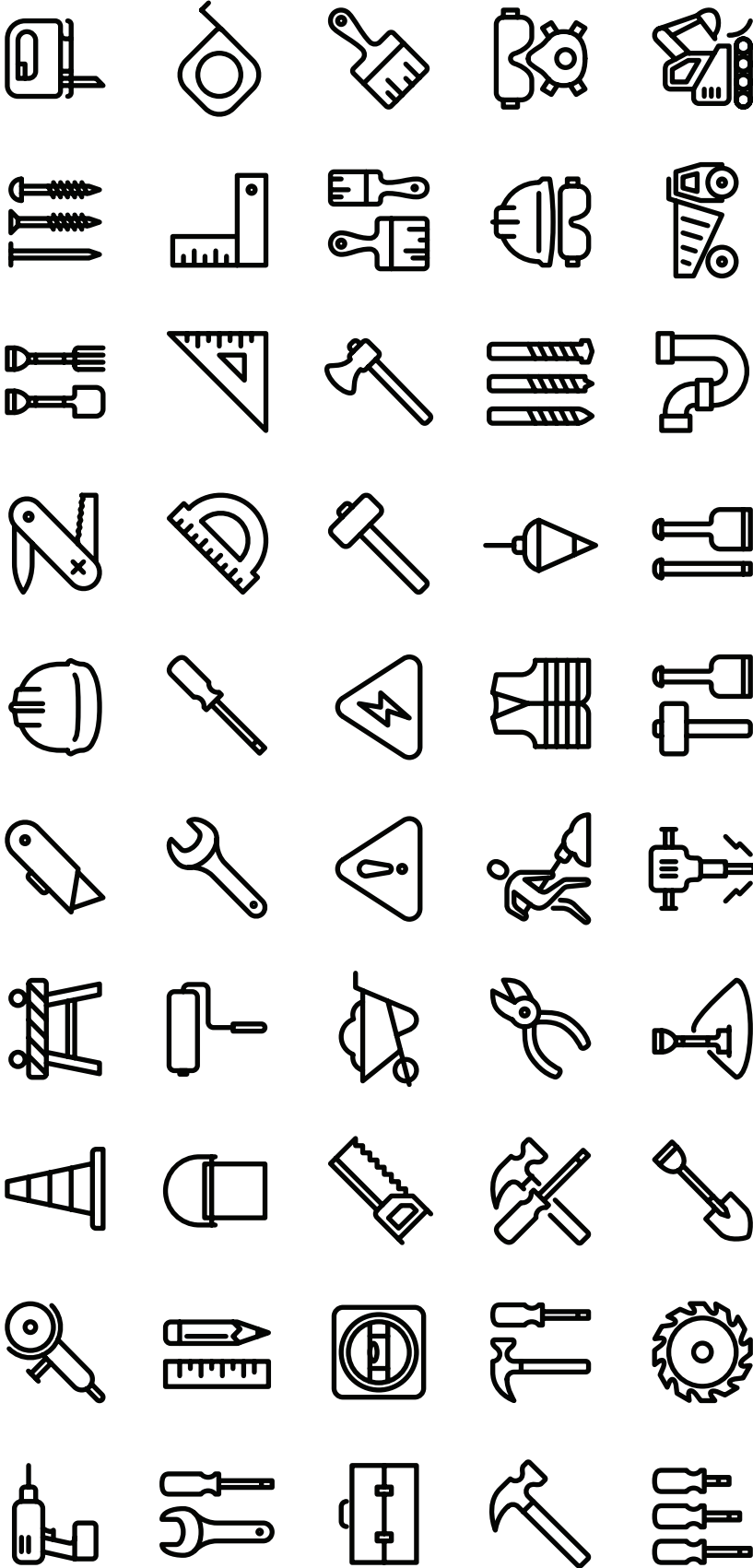
Instructions: Cut out and color. Then paste or tape onto the offering containers you have created.

ALABASTER
ALABASTRO
ALBÂTRE
옥합헌금

ALABASTER
ALABASTRO
ALBÂTRE
옥합헌금

ALABASTER
ALABASTRO
ALBÂTRE
옥합헌금

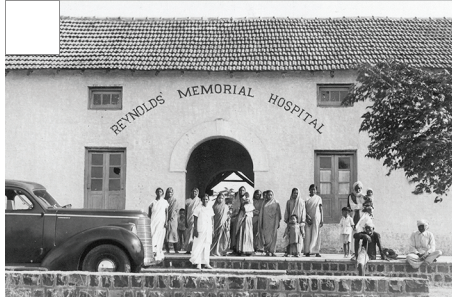
Instructions: Cut out and color any or all. Then paste or tape onto the offering containers you have created.



(Handout 5)

Identify all the places where Alabaster funds are at work

Select all images with
Alabaster Buildings



I'm not a robot

(Handout 6)

Alabaster Word Search Puzzle

B L A U I A P V S X G Q B K L N Z Z X S
R I F N W L H Z E X V N D N G Z U D E G
D R B P V A V P H G C W I I U M H M Q S
Y B T L Z B E X C X S L V R Q W O I T B
W E R T E A L C R W P I I O E H Y N A L
N O W X V S M C U J N J H N Y F E L B D
Q N D R E T C H H G S G I R I C F L T X
I S J I S E C H C C I T A K W C C O O O
R K P V W R Z O O I E N K E B Y S L R M
E D U T I T A R G O O D F V E Z D E L X
Z X F C G W H D R I L C I H C N N S G H
D G A A G D F J S M N S W H A L X I O U
G W Y M B T S S Y Q L K Z L R N Y S Z N
O I L L Y O I C H A P E L S G K P D W G
Z A E R D M W Y Q U U W B C I I B G N A
M I S S I O N C E N T E R S T E H J Z R
S R E H T O S J P F R P P A L P M H F Y
S X U Q X G N R G W T W L I B H D H Y I
T S X Y I F B Z X P T S R X N P H T H K

ALABASTER
HOSPITALS
BIBLE SCHOOLS
HUNGARY
CHAPELS
LAND

CHURCHES
MISSIONARY HOMES
CLINICS
MISSION CENTERS
FEW CENTS
OFFERING

GIVING
OIL
GRACE
OTHERS
GRATITUDE
WIDOW

7

Youth on an Adventure with God

by John Haines

LESSON PURPOSE

This lesson considers what it means to “go on an adventure with God,” based upon the story of Abraham and his son Isaac. Hearing God’s call and responding to it can be challenging for anyone of any age, but for many people, it may seem as though what is being asked of them to blindly trust in God, when He has not yet fully revealed His plan for their lives. Adventures can seldom be fully understood before they begin. Indeed, most of us can only begin to understand the adventure until we stand on the “other end” of it. Ultimately, the only way to experience an adventure with God is to just take the first steps on the journey and see where they lead you..

SCRIPTURE: The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:1-3, NIV)

...the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.” But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless...a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed, you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:1-6, NIV)

FAST FACTS

- “You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards.” (Steve Jobs)
- “Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.” (Søren [SOH-ren] Kierkegaard [KIR-ki-gahrd])
- “Faith is a belief system; trust is action. Faith is believing that God is who God says He is and that what God can do, only God can do. But trust takes things a step further. It is making the willful choice to trust that God will do what He promises. The head versus heart.” (Pablo [PAH-bloh] Diaz [DEE-ahs])
- Ishmael was the son of Abraham and Hagar, Sarah’s handmaiden. Following the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah, Ishmael and his mother were banished to the desert. Although he was not important to Judaism and Christianity, Ishmael is considered to be a foundational figure to Islam.
- Did you know that many people (all ages) begin to sense their calling from God to missions through a Work & Witness trip, or a Nazarene Youth Congress event they attended? Maybe your first adventure with God will be such a trip or event.

LESSON INFORMATION

“The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step,” said the Chinese philosopher, Lao [LOU] Tzu [TSOO]. That first step can be a fearful thing. It must have been so for Abraham and his family. In the Hebrew calendar, this is a celebration known as Rosh [RAHSH] Hashana [huh-SHAH-nuh], a new year’s celebration which sets up the Yom [YOHM] Kippur [ki-POOR] Festival, or Day of Atonement. This lesson and the next are interrelated and are meant to encourage us in our spiritual formation as we seek to follow God on the adventure of a lifetime, to encounter others, and embrace all whom God brings across our paths. God’s mission...the one He wanted His people to embrace, was a mission to be holy in the midst of an unholy world and to demonstrate their trust and faith in the One True God, who loves all His children.

Read Abraham’s story and that of his adventure with God, and one is struck by several simple principles:

- God called Abraham to leave everything familiar to him, and trust in One who would guide every step of the journey into Promise. God provides no road map. He is the roadmap! And to help Abraham understand, He simply says: “I will show you.” In the language of this text, one interpretation is a picture of God pointing over the shoulder of Abraham, as Abraham keeps his eyes on God. It is a picture of walking backward into the future. Not an easy thing to do, but God is not a trickster who is trying to point Abraham (or us) in the direction of trouble or peril, He is pointing us around those things that can trip us up as we try to discern and follow His will in our lives.
 - Ask just about any missionary who has answered God’s call and made themselves available to His leading, and they will tell you that sometimes it feels as though missions life is all about walking backward into the future. Often, it seems like direction is unclear, and instructions are coming from too many quarters at the same time. What is the answer to this? Keep your focus on God. He knows the way He is taking you.
- Every time Abraham (and Sarah) took their eyes off God, who is pointing them in the right direction, they mess things up. They grow anxious about God keeping His promise that night under the stars, and they turn to find their own solution. Hagar and Ishmael are a prime example of this that has had a long-lasting impact on the peoples of that area of the world and beyond.
 - Sometimes, in the press of urgency that occurs on the mission field, it is tempting to follow Abraham’s example in this, rather than trusting in God, who knows and is the answer to whatever we are faced with.
- It is interesting that faith and trust are counted to Abraham as righteousness (right-ness) in God’s eyes.
 - Sometimes the most righteous thing we can do in missions is to simply trust God with our best efforts at understanding His will and allow Him to stay in control.
- It is also notable that Abraham’s faith has great influence on the faith of his son, Isaac, who trusts his father, who trusts his God. Ultimately, as we see in the Genesis 22 passage, Isaac is so trusting that he carries the wood for his own sacrifice, and though he asks questions along the way, he is willing to help build the altar and allow himself to be bound upon it. Imagine the emotional interchange between this father and son, before, during, and after this test of faith.
 - We need to remember the influence we have over others, and live in such a way as to instill trust in God, One who never fails to keep His word and lead us on to Promise fulfilled.
- When God makes a promise, He keeps it, because He *is* himself the promise He makes. A riddle? No! Every promise God made to Abraham and His people, He has kept, because He offers himself as the answer to whatever they are asking. He still does this for us!
 - In the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, maybe now is a time when we have all been drawn to lean heavily on God’s promises. Have we understood that He *is* the Promise in whom we need to trust?

PRESENTATION IDEAS

Here are three presentation options that can be used in a traditional church setting, at home, or using video conferencing.

Option 1—for a small group setting

Prepare

- Have Bibles ready or print out **Handout 1** to read Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 22:1-18.

Present

- Practice “walking backwards into your future” based on the story of Abraham. Have someone practice pointing over the shoulder of another person and move around the room with them walking backward, according to your direction. Remember, you are trying to help them get to their destination without injury or mishap. You are watching over as well as directing their footsteps. This may take some getting used to, so try it again if the “journey” seems to go off-track.

Option 2—for groups that include children

Prepare

- Have a world map to look at, and to select a country to which you would like to imagine yourself going. Another good option is to purchase an inflatable globe, and allow participants to locate a place on the globe where they might imagine themselves going in service. (www.bit.ly/Inflatable-Globe)
- Provide a copy of the **Handout 2, Essential Traveler’s Checklist**.
- Find an old suitcase, and gather items that you think you would need to begin a journey to a far-away place on the mission field. What would you need? Make a list to begin your search if that will help you. Remember, sometimes “less is more” when preparing to serve in another culture. Electrical items may not work because of the electrical current standards there. Go online and see whether the items you’re considering would be useful or not when you arrive at your destination. Explain that only one suitcase is allowed on your first trip, and it cannot weigh more than 50 pounds (22 kilograms). You will have a limit of only a small personal item on the plane with you, so keep it light. This could be a fun exercise to video and playback to show how challenging it can be to “get it right” before a trip. Packing, discarding unnecessary items, re-packing, weighing—all good experience in preparing for an adventure.

Present

- Decide on the country you imagine yourself going to. Choose a place to which you have never been.
- Go online and see what you can learn about that country: climate, traditions, production of goods and crops, etc.
- Open your suitcase, and take a good look inside. Ask yourself, “What can I fit in this suitcase that will actually be useful to me when I get to the mission field?” Then, begin your search. You’ll obviously need some clothes, but what is the climate in the country to which you’re going? Personal hygiene items will be required, but can you get what you need on arrival? Some of your favorite sweets might come in handy to help you get over the hump of missing home, but are there delicacies in the country to which you are going? Can you fit it all? Even if you can, weigh your packed, closed suitcase, and see if you are at the legal limit. If your weight is too high, what will you decide to leave out? This exercise is something that every missionary has to go through every time they travel, on the field, or internationally. Remember the “less is more” principle and learn to travel light in life.

Option 3—for groups of all ages (good for video conferencing type of meeting)

Prepare

- Provide a journal (book with blank pages) for the journey you are about to take.
- Provide a copy of the **Handout 2, Essential Traveler's Checklist**.
- Provide a measuring tape, and some masking tape, and allow participants to measure out and see the actual dimensions of the suitcases allowed, and have them imagine the size and shape, by taping its dimensions on the floor for a better visual aid. Then, show them the actual configuration of the suitcase.
- As with the option above, look at a map or globe, and determine where you imagine yourself to travel on an adventure with God. Will you travel alone or with others? Think about all of the items you'll need for your journey: Passport, vaccine confirmations, visas, money or credit cards, travel documents (tickets), appropriate clothing, resources like books, Bible, items that will enable you to communicate with others, particularly if you don't yet know the language. Make a list of all the things you will pack in your backpack (and only a small suitcase, since you plan to carry everything on the plane, and not check baggage), and keep the size and weight to legal limits, which is 22 inches (55 centimeters) long, 14 inches (35 centimeters) wide, and 9 inches (22 centimeters) deep, and no more than 22 pounds (10 kilograms). If you plan to take a larger suitcase to hold more of the items you need, be aware your suitcase may be stopped at check-in, and you may be asked to check it. Remember, checked baggage cannot exceed 50 pounds (22 kilograms)..

Present

- Take your journal and give it a name (could be based on dates or destination).
- Write about your preparations for your adventure, and include a list of all the things you packed when your packing is complete.
- Write a short journal entry about your destination country: points of interest, what you hope to see and do there, language (Do you know any phrases of that language? Practice, practice, practice!), and if you have any concerns or anxieties about the journey or the destination. Are there ministry challenges and approaches with which you will be faced on arrival?
- Write a short prayer in your journal as a reminder that God, who has called you to go, is with you and will be there to greet you on your arrival.

Psalm 139:7-9 paraphrased by the author, says, "Where can I go to escape Your Spirit? Where can I be outside Your presence? If I climb the winds into the heavens, You are in the heights! If I choose to descend into the nightmare of the dark regions, You are in the depths! If I take the wings of the morning dove and fly eastward to the dawn, to hide on the far side of the seas...You are there to greet me on my arrival."

ACT ON IT (practical ideas for personal involvement)

- Think about what "walking backward into the future" feels like—the feeling of being out of control, of the unknown, of what happens when we take our eyes off God. Determine that you will focus on Him and walk in faith where He wants to take you.
- Consider the influence you have on others and the ways in which your trust in God impacts their lives. But remember, they may well have an influence on your life, too. Their simple trust may be the example you need.
- Think about the way in which Abraham fought off the birds of prey that were swooping down to steal his sacrifice (Genesis 15). What might this story teach us about keeping watch over the things we commit to God, and safeguarding our sacrifices to Him?

RESOURCES (“handy helps” for the leader)

- **Websites:**
 - Inflatable World Globe (package of twelve [12]). www.bit.ly/Inflatable-Globe
- **Articles/blogs**
 - Diaz, Pablo. “The Difference Between Faith and Trust in God.” Guideposts.org. Posted: 24 April 2019. www.bit.ly/Faith-Trust
- **Video:**
 - The Bible Collection. “Abraham Sacrifices Isaac.” Posted: 9 May 2016. youtu.be/bxslGuEiy-Q
 - Crossroads Kids’ Club. “What’s That Word: Trust.” Posted: 17 August 2017. youtu.be/NUrnkAODF2g
 - iFindSermons. “Object Lesson on Faith.” Posted: 28 December 2015. youtu.be/FLOXL9h_Loo
 - iFindSermons. “Object Lesson on Trust.” Posted: 30 March 2014. youtu.be/6sJjnS5jgqQ

RECIPES

Challah¹ [KAH-lah OR HAH-lah]

It is traditional to eat special, round loaves of challah at the Rosh Hashanah meal. Challah is also eaten on Shabbat [shuh-BAHT] and all festivals, except Pesach [PAY-sahk].

Makes one round loaf of bread.

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons (19 grams) of dry yeast
- 1/3 cup (71 milliliters) of warm water
- 2/3 cup (156 milliliters) of hot water
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) of salt
- 1 tablespoon (12 grams) of sugar
- ¼ cup (59 milliliters) of oil
- 3 eggs
- 3 ½ cups (437 grams) of flour

Preparation:

1. Dissolve yeast in warm water in your large bowl.
2. Add salt and sugar, and stir.
3. Beat two eggs and oil together. Then, slowly add to the yeast mixture.
4. Add three cups (375 grams) of flour, and ½ cup (188 milliliters) of hot water, slowly. Stir until the dough forms a ball.
5. Sprinkle large cutting board with half of remaining flour and place dough on top.
6. Knead for about 10 minutes, until the dough does not stick to board or your hands.
7. Place dough back into bowl for about two hours and cover with a clean, damp towel.
8. Let the dough rise for about two hours, or until it is double in size.
9. Put the dough back on lightly floured board and knead for about one minute.
10. Roll dough into a long, snake about 18 inches (46 centimeters) long. Form the dough into a flat spiral on a greased cookie sheet. Press the end against spiral and seal it with a little water.
11. Place dough spiral on the baking sheet and let rise for another 45 minutes.
12. Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit (190 degrees Celsius).
13. Brush top of dough spiral with one beaten egg.
14. Bake for 40 minutes.
15. Remove challah, and place on rack to cool.

Dip your challah in your favorite fruit jam or honey!

¹ Adapted from: Berger, Gilda (1998), *Celebrate! Stories of the Jewish Holidays*. New York: Scholastic Press.

(Handout 1)

Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 15:1-6, and Genesis 22:1-18

The Call...

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. (Genesis 12:1-3, NIV)

The Promise...

...the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless...a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:1-6, NIV)

The Sacrifice...

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain **I will show you.**"

Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am," he replied.

"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."

Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me." (Genesis 22:1-18, NIV)

LESSON PURPOSE

This lesson looks at the changing face of life during the global COVID-19 crisis and how the mission of the church has been impacted; and what we could do in the “new normal” of recovering balance following the crisis. Issues like social distancing (how to live incarnationally at a distance); self-isolation and quarantine (how to keep putting others first); response to church closures and ministry postponement (balancing the scriptural mandate “not to forsake the gathering of yourselves together...” and the requirement to close doors, and limit attendance) need to be considered. How should we respond if we are requested to stay at home again in a few weeks or months? What is the church to be in such times? How do we maintain our missions-mindedness and effectively “reach out” when all of society is “pulling in”?

SCRIPTURE: The book of Jonah (chapters 1-4).

In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From deep in the realm of the dead I called for help, and you listened to my cry. You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, “I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.” The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you, LORD my God, brought my life up from the pit. When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God’s love for them. But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, “Salvation comes from the LORD.” (Jonah 2:2-9, NIV)

FAST FACTS

- Did you know that the Prayer Mobilization Line (PML) has been focusing on the response of the church around the world to the COVID-19 pandemic? Each week, there has been a call from the Board of General Superintendents to pray for those affected, and for the church in response. Subscribe to PML by going to www.nazarene.org/nmi/prayer.
- Churches of the Nazarene around the world experienced “lockdown,” with governments asking or requiring their people to stay at home. For some remote areas, this was not a challenge; however, for other areas, churches had to quickly determine ways to worship or disciple the churches’ members. In many cases, the online viewing of services has exceeded regular attendance, and congregations are seeing new responsibilities beyond their regular congregants to their wider communities.
- With regularity, we have been reminded that the wearing of face masks is not so much about protecting ourselves but others. Missions often succeeds or fails on the simple premise of whether we Christians are mindful of others’ needs and wellbeing, and put those before our own comforts and convenience. Your face mask is a testimony to your love for others.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), as of 17 June 2020, there were 8,061,550 confirmed cases of COVID-19 globally and 440,290 deaths. WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard <https://covid19.who.int>
- Between mid-May and 1 June 2020, WHO delivered over 55 tons of health supplies by road to northeast Syria. These shipments contained equipment and medical supplies to treat many diseases, including COVID-19.

FAST FACTS (Continued)

- “Clean hands save lives” and “Applaud healthcare workers” campaigns celebrated in North Macedonia. Midwives and nurses were honored with applause, as over 500 healthcare professionals were awarded the “Clean hands” certificate of recognition by WHO.
- Since the start of the pandemic, there was an urgent need to accelerate the research and development of COVID-19 candidate vaccines. WHO supported this effort. As of 1 June 2020, over 120 candidate vaccines have been mapped, and sites in 40 countries have expressed an interest to join the Vaccine Solidarity Trial.

LESSON INFORMATION

For most of us, celebrating Easter and Pentecost in “isolation” was surreal. But, if we think about it, the story of the disciples just following Christ’s crucifixion is one of isolation, fear, uncertainty, and despair. Then came Sunday morning, and new life—God-breathed life—was theirs. Jesus comes to them to affirm the new reality of resurrection from the dead, and hope for life—abundant life!

Then, Jesus told his disciples to “wait” and pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of what was to be “the Church.” In the first instance, the disciples were hunkered down, afraid of all the uncertainties outside the door behind which they had locked themselves. In the second, they obediently wait and pray for the promised Spirit; and when He came, they were free in the world to *be* the Church and to spread the Good News of Life and Hope wherever they went.

This COVID-19 crisis is not the first global pandemic that has decimated large numbers of people, often the most vulnerable, the poorest, the oldest, those with other conditions upon which the pandemic took its toll. It may well be the first that most of us living have known. And if history does indeed repeat itself, it will not likely be the last of its kind to impact the fragility of life on this weary planet.

For many, the “stay at home” lockdown lasted for a long time. Some fared better than others. But, once restrictions were lifted, the church was “set free” to *be* the Church and spread the Good News of Life and Hope wherever we go. If a resurgence occurs, how will we respond? These kinds of times are times for praying, times for preparing our souls for whatever comes next. As the Body of Christ, let’s get it right.

In the Hebrew tradition of Yom [YOHM] Kippur [ki-POOR], or the Day of Atonement (the holiest holiday in the Jewish calendar), and the story of Jonah that fills it, we see the unfolding story of a man whom God is calling on a mission to a wicked city. Nineveh is a civilization on the brink of total annihilation, and certainly, a place he has no desire to go, to do

something he has no desire to do. He is to declare God’s word and the desolation that was coming if the city did not turn from its wickedness, and to proclaim hope in the Lord who is loving, forgiving, and life-affirming. Jonah was anxious about both sides of this assignment. Traditionally, the day/night before Yom Kippur, the people of God are called to make sure things are “right” between themselves and others... to acknowledge the need of God’s forgiveness for prejudice and closed-mindedness on our part, so that we may have right relationship with others. If we want to be in right relationship with God, we must make sure we are in right relationship with others. Jesus taught us to pray in this way: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.” One need only look at the most recent news to see how relevant this is to us all right now.

Jonah fought God and tried to run away from the assignment. He first boarded his donkey, slow and ponderous...maybe to give him time to think strategy, and ended up in the port city of Jaffa. Then, he thought, “I’ll take a ship from here to anywhere and get away from this “call of God.” He sold his donkey, bought passage on a ship, and then came the storm. It imperiled all of the crew, because of his doubt and inner debate about God’s mission, and in the chaos of the storm, he acknowledged his sin, in refusing to do what God had asked. He finally yielded to be God’s ambassador to Nineveh, and the ship and everyone on board was saved, having thrown Jonah overboard. As the seas swirl around him, he is swept into the belly of a huge fish, and for three days, he pleads with God. Finally, the fish heaves him out and deposits him on the shore of his dreaded assignment. He went straight to Nineveh and began his mission under God’s direction and provision.

In Nineveh, the people and their leaders turned from their unholy ways and repented before God, and God forgave them everything. Jonah struggled with God’s love and grace lavished out on people he thought

did not deserve it. He pouts about God's decision to spare the city and all its inhabitants, and sits in the sun, whining. God causes a tree to grow overnight that shelters Jonah from the blazing sun and Jonah rests, happy in its shade. But, the next morning, he sees that the tree has been devoured by a worm, and he rages against God, in his pity for the tree (and himself). God finds it curious that Jonah can feel so strongly about a tree he did not plant nor tend but seems to have no feelings for the people of Nineveh. Finally, it became clear to Jonah...if he can be forgiven and granted life, then anyone can. The point: the Day of Atonement is about our understanding that we need to see one another through eyes of grace if we hope to be seen through God's eyes of grace and come to know His forgiveness and love.

As we think about the church *being* the church when it is under strict lockdown or even moderated services, we could take helpful lessons from our brothers and sisters around the world, who have in times of political and social mandate to "isolate," found ways to grow the church through prayer, encouragement, and selflessness. What will our churches look like in the aftermath of COVID-19? Will we immediately and naturally revert to houses of fellowship? Will we return to faithful, storehouse tithing, following a season of profound shortage and focus on self and the family unit faced with what "shortage" means? Will our gaze be outward- or inward-focused?

Some practical steps to take in the "wilderness wandering" of COVID-19-type realities:

- Solitude is better than loneliness. Solitude can replenish life and centers on renewing communion with God; loneliness tends to be self-centered.
- Prayer is bigger than, and engages more than, the person (all of our prayers rise together, and join the prayers of the saints gone before us).
- Renewed family engagement is a blessing (not a curse). It provides opportunity to learn about and think about missions and the kinds of responses we will take to God's call on our lives (individually and corporately).
- We are reminded that God is at work by His Holy Spirit in times and places where we cannot be.
- How might we re-engage in more meaningful Links connection with our missionaries who are also limited? With limitations on travel and cancellations of home assignments, some missionary families have been separated for some time from their families at home on the one hand, or from the fieldwork that they long to return to on the other. Both missionaries and districts responded so well to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions that came with it. Some missionary kids (MK's)

were unable to get home from colleges, etc. Thank you for supporting and staying connected, and for letting MK's know they had a home if they could not connect with family during the pandemic. We know we can count on NMI leaders to stay connected.

- And what of planned mission trips? What will happen to them? Here is some helpful and creative information on "Virtual Work & Witness" that may just be suitable to you and your church family in the days ahead. It comes from the Campbell-White family, living and working in Thailand. It is just one example of the creative ways we may need to "do missions" in the future.
- Virtual Work & Witness Here is a quick glimpse at what a Virtual Work & Witness trip might look like... (www.bit.ly/VirtualWorkWitness)
 - Teams make a 2-4 week commitment to "gather" online at least four times for personal connection and mutual encouragement. During these times together, your team and the host church in Southeast Asia will share what God is doing in their area of influence. You will get to know a little bit about each other and what life is like in another part of the world; and most importantly, pray together that God's Kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven! Your SE Asia Field Work & Witness Coordinators, Kevin and Jeni Campbell-White, will coordinate and host these gathering times through Zoom, a simple, secure, online meeting space that anyone can use for free. And during our times together, we'll include fun ideas of how you can "experience" SE Asia from the comfort of your own home, with new recipe ideas, bits of language learning, and more! (See **Handout 3: Photo Scavenger Hunt**, and give it a try.)
 - Teams choose a Work & Witness Project to participate in with a local church in SE Asia. You could dig a well in a village in Cambodia that needs access to water. You could provide Bibles and hymnals for churches and believers in areas that have few or none. You could help repair a dangerous roof at the Maetang [MA-tang] Tribal Children's Home/Chapman International College Campus. You could be a part of any of these or numerous other projects and watch as God provides others to help bring the project to completion!
 - Teams commit to sending project funds to SE Asia through the proper channels of Global Treasury Services. Whether you send \$100 or \$100,000, God will use your gift to further His Kingdom in SE Asia! Experience the joy of hearing from your brothers and sisters in Christ as they share during your online gatherings how the building project is going. Share pictures and videos of the progress, and seek counsel and advice as they work to be good stewards of what

- God has entrusted them with through you.
- During the 2-4 week “virtual trip,” both teams and local churches in SE Asia commit to pray for one another every day, participate in a daily Bible reading plan, and of course, connect on Facebook and other social media platforms!
 - So, there are various components to a “Virtual Work & Witness Trip”:
 - **Before the “trip.”** You will learn something about where you will go. Don’t be like Jonah, and form opinions before you actually encounter the people. This is a time of prayer, preparation, practice, listening and learning, and giving to make ready for the “trip.”
 - **The “trip.”** You go through some cultural orientation, meet the missionaries you will “serve alongside,” get your itinerary, begin to build relationships by sharing a meal typical of the culture, praying together, practicing telling your story as a “witness” to God’s grace, and connecting with and learn from each other (games, songs, crafts, language, etc.)
 - **After the “trip.”** You debrief and discuss all you’ve learned, and how you’ve been impacted by the experience, continue to connect via Facebook or other social media platforms, personally commit to continue to pray for those with whom you’ve served on your “Virtual Work & Witness” trip, and continue to check up on one another, and discuss ways to encourage and enable others to go on such a trip as well.

PRESENTATION IDEAS

Here are three presentation options that can be used in a traditional church setting, at home, or using video conferencing.

Option 1—for a small group setting

Prepare

- Have Bibles ready or print out **Handout 1** to read Jonah’s Story.

Present

- Assign readers to read each of the three parts of Jonah’s story (see **Handout 1**). Jonah seems to move from his doubt and debate about God’s desire to see an “enemy nation” repent and find forgiveness and favor, to his disobedience to God’s call and assignment. We see him trying to run as far from it as possible and come to an acknowledgment of his sin. Finally, he fulfills God’s “call” to go to Nineveh. He does what God asks him to do, but when God forgives Nineveh, Jonah is angry. Why?
- What lesson does God teach Jonah through the tree He provides?
- Take a survey of your group and see how each participant thinks they might have acted. Be honest!

Option 2—for groups that include children

Prepare

- Have the video called “Eh [AY] Buffalo [buhf-ah-LOH]” ready to show your children. Let them watch it, and practice the game for a few minutes. Then, have them play it. For additional information and help with this, refer to the “Eh Buffalo” instructions in **Handout 2**.

Present

- Follow the instructions and learn how to count from one to ten in Thai.
- Play the game “Eh Buffalo,” and see how good you get at it.
- Share it with your friends.

Option 3—for groups that include all ages

Prepare

- Have copies of the instructions to **Handout 3, Photo Scavenger Hunt**, ready for your youth to take with them as they attempt to fulfil the requirements of the hunt.

Present

- The purpose of this exercise is to learn a little something about the culture of Thailand so that if you went on a “Virtual Work & Witness” trip, you’d be somewhat prepared for the way things are done in that country. Cultural sensitivity and contextual awareness are key to acceptance within a community that is different from your own.
- When you have finished playing the games (either the children’s “Eh Buffalo” game or the Photo Scavenger Hunt), prepare and share one of the Thai meals together. Cook it together, serve it together, eat it together, and pray for the work in Thailand, and for those of your age-group who were struggling under the COVID-19 lockdowns. You’ll understand how they might have been feeling. Be assured; they were praying for you, too.

ACT ON IT (practical ideas for personal involvement)

- You will notice that for missionaries to be effective in any context, they must “go” and “get to know” those among whom they serve. This means developing an understanding that everyone and anyone is worthy of God’s grace and forgiveness. One has to move past the temptation to see others as “less than” oneself.
- Could your group be engaged/involved in a virtual Work and Witness project somewhere? What will it require of you to make this a meaningful alternative to actually traveling to another country?
- Pray for the work of missionaries and local church leaders around the world who are having to find creative and meaningful ways to minister during a global pandemic. Every context requires a contextually appropriate response. There is no “one size fits all” approach.

RESOURCES (“handy helps” for the leader)

• Websites

- World Health Organization. WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard. World Health Organization. Posted: 17 June 2020. For most up-to-date COVID-19 statistics: <https://covid19.who.int>
- Africa Region. “TUKO PAMOJA: Democratic Republic of Congo.” Africa Region website. www.africanazarene.org/tuko-pamoja-democratic-republic-of-congo
- Barber, Steve. “Over 2000 Children & Adults Receive Free Masks in Myanmar.” Asia-Pacific Region website. Posted: 1 May 2020. www.asiapacificnazarene.org/over-2000-children-adults-receive-free-masks
- Fink, Vania. “A nurse’s story: God’s peace in a time of fear.” Eurasia Region website. Posted: 13 May 2020. www.eurasiaregion.org/a-nurses-story-gods-peace-in-a-time-of-fear
- Balbuena, Dhariana. “Guatemalan Teenager Celebrates Important Birthday by Sharing with Others.” Mesoamerica Region website. Posted: 25 May 2020. www.mesoamericaregion.org/en/2020/05/guatemalan-teenager-celebrates-important-birthday-by-sharing-with-others
- USA/Canada Region. “COVID-19 Personal and Ministry Resource for Nazarene Clergy.” USA/Canada Region website. www.usacanadaregion.org/ministry/clergy-development/covid-19
- Virtual Work & Witness. www.bit.ly/VirtualWorkWitness

• Articles/blogs

- Go to www.bit.ly/PML-for-Lesson8 and look at PMLs from 1 April through the present and see information for the general church and specific countries, as together the church around the world has interceded for those most affected by COVID-19.
- Visit www.nazarene.org/news and enter “COVID-19” in the search window for a list of churches’ and regions’ responses to this pandemic.

RESOURCES (Continued)

- **Books**
 - Berger, Gilda. *Celebrate! Stories of the Jewish Holidays*. New York: Scholastic Press, 1998.
 - Cioccolanti, Steve. *From Buddha to Jesus: An Insider's View of Buddhism and Christianity*. Oxford: Monarch Press, 2010.
 - Livermore, David A. *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2006 and 2013
- **Videos**
 - A fun video from the Campbell-Whites in Thailand about "Virtual Work & Witness"
youtu.be/2RxD71nWy4
- **DVDs, etc.**
 - The film, *The Killing Fields*, about the rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

RECIPES

Kreplach¹ [KREP-luhk]

Triangular-shaped dumplings that are often eaten before the fast of Yom Kippur

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup (59 milliliters) of vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons (10 grams) of salt
- 1 cup (236 milliliters) of warm water
- 4 cups (499 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1 pound (453 grams) ground meat seasoned with salt and pepper

Preparation:

1. Mix oil, salt, and warm water in a bowl.
2. Stir in flour.
3. Knead dough until smooth and soft and form into a ball. Divide the ball into two parts, and cover one part with a damp cloth or towel.
4. Roll uncovered ball of dough out on floured board until it is a ½ inch (12 millimeter) thick rectangle (about 10 inches [25 centimeters] by 12 inches [30 centimeters]). Cut into 30 two-inch (5 centimeter) squares.
5. Place a teaspoon of meat onto each square.
6. Dip your fingers in flour. Fold up the edges of the dough and press them together to form a triangle. Let stand for 10 minutes.
7. Repeat steps 4, 5, and 6 with the second ball of dough.
8. Drop kreplach into boiling soup or saltwater and cook for 30 minutes.
9. Serve in soup, or remove from broth and brown for 10 minutes in a 375 degree-Fahrenheit (190 degree Celsius) oven.
10. Three kreplach make one serving.

¹ Adapted from: Berger Gilda (1998), *Celebrate! Stories of the Jewish Holidays*. New York: Scholastic Press.

RECIPES (Continued)

Fruits in Syrup²

Fruits of the season cooked in syrup are a popular Sephardic [su-FAHR-dik] dessert for the end of Yom Kippur. This dish can be made a few days in advance.

(Serves six)

Ingredients:

- 1 cup (191 grams) of sugar
- 3 cups (709 milliliters) of water
- 1 teaspoon (2.5 grams) of cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon (.5 grams) of ground cloves
- Juice of one lemon
- 8 firm apples, pears, or plums
- 2 teaspoons (10 milliliters) of vanilla

Preparation:

1. Combine sugar, water, cinnamon, cloves, and lemon juice in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally.
2. Boil mixture for 15 minutes. Lower heat to simmer.
3. Peel fruits. Cut into quarters and remove cores.
4. Add fruit to a saucepan and cook for seven minutes.
5. Remove saucepan from heat. Stir in vanilla.
6. Transfer to glass bowl and store in refrigerator.

Thai Coconut Chicken Soup

<https://themodernproper.com/coconut-chicken-soup>

Spicy Thai Basil Chicken (Pad Krapow Gai)

www.bit.ly/Pad-Krapow-Gai

Thai Mango Sticky Rice (Kao Niao Mamuang, ข้าวเหนียวมะม่วง)

<https://bit.ly/Mango-Sticky-Rice>

² Adapted from: Berger, Gilda (1998), *Celebrate! Stories of the Jewish Holidays*. New York: Scholastic Press.

(Handout 1)

A Narrative of Jonah's Story

PART ONE:

In the Hebrew tradition of Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement (the holiest holiday in the Jewish calendar), and the story of Jonah that fills it, we see the unfolding story of a man whom God is calling on a mission to a wicked city, Nineveh...a place he has no desire to go, to do something he has no desire to do: to point out God's word and the desolation that was coming if the city did not turn from its wickedness, and to proclaim hope in the Lord who is loving, forgiving, and life-affirming. Jonah was anxious about both sides of this assignment. Traditionally, the day/night before Yom Kippur, the people of God are called to make sure things are "right" between them and others...to acknowledge the need of God's forgiveness for prejudice and closed-mindedness. If we want to be in right relationship with God, we must make sure we are in right relationship with others. Jesus taught us to pray in this way: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us."

PART TWO:

Jonah fought God, and tried to run away from the assignment. He first boarded his donkey, slow and ponderous...maybe to give him time to think strategy, and ended up in the port city of Jaffa. Then, he thought, "I'll take a ship from here to anywhere and get away from this "call of God." He sold his donkey, bought passage on a ship, and then came the storm. It imperiled all of the crew, because of his doubt and inner debate about God's mission, and in the chaos of the storm, he acknowledged his sin, in refusing to do what God had asked. He finally yielded to be God's ambassador to Nineveh, and the ship and everyone on board was saved having thrown Jonah overboard. As the seas swirl around him, he is swept into the belly of a huge fish, and for three days he pleads with God. Finally the fish heaves him out and deposits him on the shore of his dreaded assignment. He went straight to Nineveh and began his mission under God's direction and provision.

PART THREE:

In Nineveh, the people and their leaders turned from their unholy ways and repented before God, and God forgave them everything. Jonah struggled with God's love and grace lavished out on people he thought did not deserve it. He pouts about God's decision to spare the city and all its inhabitants, and sits in the sun, whining. God causes a tree to grow overnight that shelters Jonah from the blazing sun, and Jonah rests happy in its shade. But, the next morning, he sees that the tree has been devoured by a worm and he rages against God, in his pity for the tree (and himself). God finds it curious that Jonah can feel so strongly about a tree he did not plant nor tend, but seems to have no feelings for the people of Nineveh. Finally, it became clear to Jonah...if he can be forgiven and granted life, then anyone can. The point: the Day of Atonement is about our understanding that we need to see one another through eyes of grace if we hope to be seen through God's eyes of grace, and come to know His forgiveness and love.

(Handout 2)

“Eh Buffalo” Game Instructions

Go to www.bit.ly/Eh-Bufferalo to watch a quick instructional video with Caleb Campbell-White and some friends who learned this game while on a Work & Witness trip in Thailand... along with a demonstration by some of the kids at Ban Jaidee (House of Good Heart) in Thailand.

Counting in Thai

nung (๑ or 1) - sawng (๒ or 2) - sahm (๓ or 3) - see (๔ or 4) - hah (๕ or 5)
hok (๖ or 6) - jet (๗ or 7) - bet (๘ or 8) - gaow (๙ or 9) - seep (๑๐ or 10)

Playing the Game

(All of these words except the counting are simply nonsense words and have no meaning!)

Eh buf-fa-lo
ee ma rey
Sam ba tee ah

Eh ma, reh ma, sikh, sikh, sikh Eh
a, reh ma, sikh, sikh, sikh

nung - sawng - sahm - see - hah - hok - jet - bet - gaow - seep

Sit in a circle with your legs crossed and put your hands palms up in front of you. Your right hand should be resting on top of the left hand of the person beside you.

Everyone will chant together, but one person begins the clap. With your right hand you will clap the right hand of the person to your left. When they receive the clap, they will then pass it to the person on their left and it proceeds around the circle.

On the words sikh-sikh-sikh one person claps the person beside them 3 times before the clap continues around the circle.

As the claps continue with the counting, the person who says “seep” (10) must succeed in clapping the hand of the person to their left. If they do not, they are out. The person to the left must quickly remove their hand before being clapped or they are out. They may not move their hand until after someone says “gaow” (9). If they move too early they are out. If someone moves their hand to avoid being clapped on any other number besides 10, they are out.

The game proceeds until only one person remains.

(Handout 3)

Photo Scavenger Hunt

THAILAND EDITION

- 1. With someone older than your team.**
In Thailand it is not impolite to ask your age, in fact age is honored! (Bonus for the oldest!)
- 2. A video of your team counting to 10 in Thai.**
- 3. At 7-11.** Thailand has the 2nd most stores per capita in the world. Property values are higher the closer you are to a Seven. You can take care of everything at the Seven, from paying your bills, to buying airfare, and more... but no Slurpees!
- 4. At Starbucks.** Bangkok is home to the 2nd largest Starbucks in the world!
- 5. Under a US flag.** The Thais are very proud of the fact that they are the only country in SE Asia that has never been colonized by a Western power, but has remained free... but freedom here is a little different than in the US!
- 6. Selfies.** with a group in the following poses... peace, thumbs up, tiny heart. If you don't know what a "tiny heart pose" is, Google can help you!
- 7. Wai.** This is the standard greeting in Thailand. We do not shake hands, hug, or touch when greeting.
- 8. Wearing a mask.** In Thailand we were wearing masks long before COVID-19! They are fairly common and come in very handy when downtown amid the pollution, and millions of people who might cough on you!
- 9. Eating something weird.** The food in Thailand is amazing, but there are some things you might not be used to. My favorite... sautéed bamboo grubs!
- 10. Eating tropical fruit.** The tropical fruits, like mango, papaya, mangosteen, dragonfruit, and more, all taste MUCH better here!
- 11. With a lizard.** Geckos are very common, even in the nicest hotels (see Proverbs 30:28). But we also have monitor lizards and the largest crocodile farm in the world!
- 12. A video of your team saying the name of the longest city in the world!** And no, you may not have your team actually say "the name of the longest city in the world!"
- 13. Your team's best impression of the national animal of Thailand.** A century ago there were over 100,000 of these in the wild. Today... fewer than 5,000.

THE RULES...

- All team members must be in every photo.
- No repeat photos! Points are counted for each unique photo.
- No combining multiple items into one photo.
- While creative interpretations of the items are generally allowed, the leaders have the final say as to whether each photo receives points.
- Photos with “someone” or “a group” must include people not on your team.
- Obey all laws, DON'T BE LOUD, blend in.
- Have fun and be very respectful!

ONLINE OPTION: If you're doing this online you can take screenshots of your group in a group call with each item as part of the photo in some way (also online, or one person actually there).

I/We	(F) chan-(M) pom/rao
Hello.	sa-wat di kaa/krap
Thank you.	๖๗ khun kaa/krap
Excuse me.	ก๊๖๖ toot kaa/krap
What is your name?	khun ช๖๖๖ arai
My name is...	chan/pom ช๖๖๖...
Nice to meet you.	yin-di ti-dai ruu-jak
How old are you?	khun a-yu tao-rai
Where is the toilet?	hong-naam yu ti-nai
How much does this cost?	a-ni tao-rai
What is this called in Thai?	a-ni riak wa passa tai
Picture.	tai ruup
Not spicy.	mai p๖๖๖ (l๖๖๖i), mai sai prik
Yes/No	chai/mai (chai)
Can/Cannot	dai/mai dai
Good/Bad	di/mai di
I like ___ a lot.	chan/pom ช๖๖๖๖ ___ maak
God bless you.	Pra-jao ui-p๖๖๖๖

Pronunciation Guide

- “k” as in **kin**
- “g” as in **skin**
- “ch” as in **chip**, but a little softer
- “j” as in **jeans**, but a little softer
- “p” as in **pin**
- “bp” as in **spin**
- “b” as in **bin**
- “t” as in **till**
- “dt” as in **still**
- “d” as in **dill**
- “f” as in **fire**
- “s” as in **sun**
- “h” as in **house**
- “m” as in **mile**
- “n” as in **now**
- “ng” as in **sing** (pronounced this way even at the beginning of a word)
- “l” as in **love** (or “n” at the end)
- “r” as in the Spanish pronunciation of **rio** (or “n” at the end)
- “y” as in **yard**
- “w” as in **win**

Words that end in k, g, p, b, t, or d are dead endings and are not aspirated... in other words there is no puff of air after you say it, it just stops.

- “i - ii” as in **meet** “e - ee” as in **pet**
- “ε - εε” as in **err** (with an English accent)
- “๖ - ๖๖” as in **foot** (said while smiling with your teeth closed)
- “๖ - ๖๖” as in **about** (duh!)
- “a - aa” as in **father**
- “u - uu” as in **boot**
- “o - oo” as in **go**
- “๖ - ๖๖” as in **laud**
- “ai” as in **sky**
- “ao” as in **chowder**
- “ua” as in **too** alone
- “ui” as in the French pronunciation of **Louis**

Double vowels are just longer.

Please use the following guide to provide pronunciations for any unfamiliar words or names:

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

VOWELS

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Key Words</u>	<u>Usual Spellings</u>
ay	age, pray	a, ai, ay
a	ask, back	a
ah	father, ox	a, o
aw	auto, law	au, aw
ee	each, sea	e, ee, ea, ey, y
e	egg, men	e
air	air, bear	air, are, ear
er	her, bird, fur	er, ir, ur
ie	ice, pie, my	i, ie, y
i	inch, will	i
oh	open, nose	o, oa, ow, oe
ew	new, moon	u, ew, oo, ue
oo	good, bush	oo, u
ou	out, cow	ou, ow
oy	oil, boy	oi, oy
yew	use, human	u
uh*	up, just, sofa	u, a, e, i, o

* This is the same as the schwa sound found in many dictionaries.

CONSONANTS

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Key Words</u>	<u>Usual Spellings</u>
b	boat, rib	b, bb
ch	child, church	ch, tch
d	day, road	d, dd
f	foot, leaf	f, if, ph, gh
g	gate, leg	g, gg
h	hill, behind	h, wh
j	joy, page	j, g, dg
k	king, music	k, c, ck, ch
ks	fox, tax	x, cks
kw	queen, equal	qu
l	life, well	l, ll
m	man, arm	m, mm
n	new, son	n, nn, kn
ng	drink, sing	n, ng
p	power, sleep	p, pp
r	race, year	r, rr, wr
s	sun, face	s, c, ss, sc
sh	sheep, fish	sh, ch, ti
t	teach, cat	t, ft
th	thin, truth	th
th	this, bathe	th
v	vine, love	v
w	water, reward	w
y	you, lawyer	y
z	zeal, breeze	z, zz, s
zh	treasure	s, z

To show accented syllables, type the symbols in all caps (example: example [eks-AM-puhl]).

