

# Teaching Aids

## SESSION 1

### Isaiah 40 Readers Theater

Print, one per youth, for use during Encounter (The Story).

*Readers: All, Voice 1, Voice 2, Side One, Side Two*

**All:** Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

**Voice 1:** A voice cries out:

**Voice 2:** "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all [people] shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

**Voice 1:** A voice says,

**Voice 2:** "Cry out!"

**Voice 1:** And I said, "What shall I cry?"

**Side One:** All people are grass, their loyalty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.

**Side Two:** Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"

**Side One:** See, the Lord God comes with might, and rules with a triumphant arm; God comes to reward the people and make things right.

**Side Two:** God will feed the flock like a shepherd; God will carry the lambs and gently lead the mother sheep.

## SESSION 9

### Yeast and Balloon Activity

Follow these instructions for use during Encounter (The Story).

1. Fill a clear plastic soda or juice bottle with about 1 in / 2.5 cm of warm (not hot) water.
2. Pour the contents of a packet of yeast into the bottle and swirl gently.
3. Pour 1 tsp / 5 ml of sugar into the bottle and swirl gently. Sugar is the food that the yeast will "eat."
4. Stretch out a balloon and place it over the mouth of the bottle.

Place the bottle in a warm spot out of the way. As the yeast devours the sugar, it releases carbon dioxide, which should inflate the balloon. Allow 15–20 minutes for this to happen (although it can happen in as few as 5 minutes).



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## SESSION 1

### Leveling Prayer

Print, one per youth, for use during Empower.

*Readers: Reader 1, Reader 2, All*

**Reader 1:** God who brings down;

**Reader 2:** God who lifts up;

**All:** show us your glory.

**Reader 1:** No matter if we are tall or short,

**Reader 2:** rich or poor,

**Reader 1:** popular or often left out,

**All:** we know that in your kingdom all are loved and accepted.

**Reader 2:** Help us to work so that all people have an equal chance at a good life.

**Reader 1:** We celebrate Jesus and his arrival of into the world,

**Reader 2:** who showed us that all people matter to you

**All:** and that all people are worthy of your love. Amen.

## SESSION 2

### Contemplative Prayer Instructions

Use these instructions to guide youth through the spiritual practice in Connect to God.

*To contemplate means to think deeply about something. In contemplative prayer, you focus on one word or image. You relax and just sit in the presence of God, rather than saying a lot to God. Contemplative prayer helps us wait on God. It helps us to be ready to listen if God brings something to mind or has something to say to us.*

1. Get into a comfortable position. Relax your shoulders. Take several deep breaths.
2. Close your eyes. Think about one phrase or picture that focuses you on God. For today, use your name. Imagine God calling your name as you sit in silence.
3. When you feel your mind wandering, come back to your name. Listen for what God might be calling you to do this week. Ask God to direct your thoughts, and then see where they go.
4. Open your eyes and look at your name on the piece of paper. Spend time coloring your name or write down anything that comes to you that seems important. Offer everything you are thinking about to God, no matter how silly it seems.
5. End with a simple prayer in your own words, or use this one: *God, thank you for knowing my name. Thank you for the love that your presence brings to me and to the world. Amen.*

## SESSION 2

### "What's in a Name?" Questions

Pose these questions during Connect to Each Other.

- Why do you like or dislike your name?
- Are you named after someone in your family?
- Do you know how or why your name was chosen?
- Do you share a name with someone famous or someone else you know?
- Do you know what your name means?
- If you could change your name, what would you change it to?
- How do people mispronounce or misspell your name?
- What is a nickname you are sometimes called?

## SESSION 3

### Wrestle Prompts

Use these ideas to help guide your discussion in Explore (Wrestle).

From *The Hobbit*, by J. R. R. Tolkien:

- Show a clip from the beginning of the movie where Bilbo argues with Gandalf about joining the expedition to slay the dragon. Search YouTube for "Gandalf trying to persuade Bilbo for a journey."
- Compare Bilbo's response with Mary's in today's story.

From *A Wrinkle in Time*, by Madeleine L'Engle:

- In this story, 14-year-old Meg is a misfit at school and in her family. By the end of the story, she understands that she is the only one who can save her brother, who is trapped on a dangerous, evil planet. One of her companions asks Meg if she has the courage to go alone. Meg says no, but that it doesn't matter, because it's the only thing to do. Another companion then quotes 1 Corinthians 1:25–28.
- Have youth look up the passage quoted and talk about how it connects with today's story about Mary.

From *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, by J. R. R. Tolkien:

- In the midst of their difficult journey to Mordor, Sam encourages Frodo with these words: *"I used to think that [adventures] were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, because they wanted them. . . . But that's not the way of it with the tales that really mattered. . . . Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually—their paths were laid that way. . . . But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't. And if they had, we shouldn't know, because they'd have been forgotten. We hear about those as just went on. . . ."*
- For a clip of the movie that incorporates these words, search YouTube for "LOTR The Two Towers—The Tales That Really Mattered."

### Questions:

- What would you do if you were faced with a difficult task or dangerous journey?
- What might have happened if Mary had said no to her strange task?
- What are smaller, more everyday situations where you have to be courageous? (This might include sticking up for someone that no one likes or pursuing an interest that your friends don't share.)

### SESSION 3

#### Magnificat Strips

Copy and cut apart these strips for use in Explore (Respond).

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With all my heart I praise the Lord, and I am glad because of God my Savior.  
God cares for me, his humble servant.

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From now on, all people will say God has blessed me.  
God All-Powerful has done great things for me, and God's name is holy.

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God always shows mercy  
to everyone who worships him.

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The Lord has used his powerful arm  
to scatter those who are proud.

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God drags strong rulers from their thrones  
and puts humble people in places of power.

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God gives the hungry good things to eat  
and sends the rich away with nothing.

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God helps his servant Israel and is always merciful to his people.  
The Lord made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his family forever! —based on Luke 1:46–55 (CEV)

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## SESSION 4

### "Going to Bethlehem" Game Instructions

Cut apart for use during Explore (Collaborate). Have youth glue or tape each card on a piece of construction paper and tape them on the floor in numeric order to make a trail between two signs labeled "Bethlehem" and "Shepherds' Field."

<p><b>1. You're so happy to be going to see the newborn child. Say "Praise God" three times and roll the die again to take an extra turn, moving closer to Bethlehem.</b></p>	<p><b>2. Praise God with the shepherds by singing the chorus of "Angels We Have Heard on High," then move forward 2 cards. If you don't want to sing, stay here and wait for your next turn.</b></p>
<p><b>3. You stumbled and fell. Go back to card 1.</b></p>	<p><b>4. Point up and say "I saw the angels and heard them sing" to remain on this card; otherwise, go back 2 cards.</b></p>
<p><b>5. Invite another shepherd to join you on this card.</b></p>	<p><b>6. One of your sheep has followed you. You must take it back to the shepherds' field and wait for your next turn to start over again.</b></p>
<p><b>7. Shake hands with three other shepherds while saying "Jesus is born" to stay on this card, or else you must go back to the shepherds' field.</b></p>	<p><b>8. You lost your shepherd's crook in the dark. Miss your next turn as you stay here and look for it.</b></p>
<p><b>9. If you can say "Merry Christmas" in another language, you may move forward 1 card. If not, stay here and wait for your next turn.</b></p>	<p><b>10. Recite the memory passage to stay on this card; otherwise, go back 3 cards.</b></p>
<p><b>11. You are hungry. Stop to have a bite to eat and miss your next turn.</b></p>	<p><b>12. You are so close to Bethlehem. Say "I can see the city of David" to stay on this card, or else go back 5 cards.</b></p>

## SESSION 5

### Matthew 2 Readers Theater

*Readers: Narrator 1, Narrator 2, Magi, Herod, Chief Priest*

**Narrator 1:** In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the East came to Jerusalem, asking:

**Magi:** Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.

**Narrator 2:** When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him. He called together the chief priests and scribes and asked:

**Herod:** Where will the Messiah be born?

**Narrator 1:** They told him,

**Chief Priest:** In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

**Narrator 2:** Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,

**Herod:** Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and honor him.

**Narrator 1:** When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

**Narrator 2:** On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

## SESSION 5

### Magi Scavenger Hunt

Search for the listed items in the building. Your team will receive one point for each item you photograph. If everyone on your team is also in the picture, you will receive one bonus point per item. You *cannot* take a photo or screenshot of something on a website! (You must find the items somewhere in the building.)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> child                      | <input type="checkbox"/> the exact time                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> crown                      | <input type="checkbox"/> someone named Joseph, Joe, or Joey            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> star                       | <input type="checkbox"/> someone named Mary, Maria, Marisa, or MaryAnn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> an item made of gold       | <input type="checkbox"/> a set of three similar items                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> perfume or other fragrance | <input type="checkbox"/> ruler   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wise person                | <input type="checkbox"/> someone kneeling                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> angel                      |  |

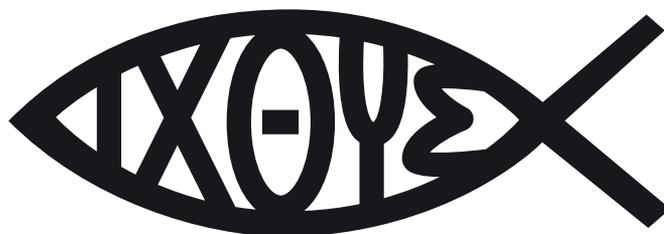
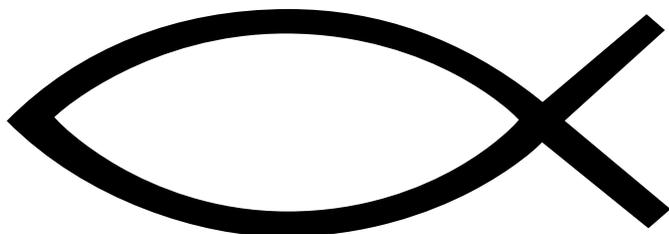
**SESSION 6**  
***Ichthys* Info**

Read this text and share the picture during Explore (Respond).

In the early days of Christianity, when being a Christian was unusual—not to mention illegal!—followers of Jesus used a fish symbol to recognize each other. *Ichthys* [ICK-thoos] is the Greek word for “fish.”

For early Christians, the fish symbol reminded them how Jesus’ first followers fished for a living. It helped them remember Jesus’ call to fish for people.

The Greek word for fish is also an acrostic. An acrostic is a word formed from the first letters of several words. *Ichthys* is made up of the beginning letters (in Greek) of the words *Jesus Christ God’s Son Savior*.



**SESSION 6**  
**“Jesus Does” Strips**

Print and cut apart the strips below and place them in a basket or bowl for use during Explore (Wrestle).

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**Feeds hungry people**

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**Goes away to a place by himself to pray**

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**Washes others’ dirty feet**

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**Welcomes children**

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**Visits and helps those who are sick**

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**Eats with people no one else likes**

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**Studies scripture and teaches others about it**

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**Travels many places to share God’s love**

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**Forgives those who hurt or betray him**

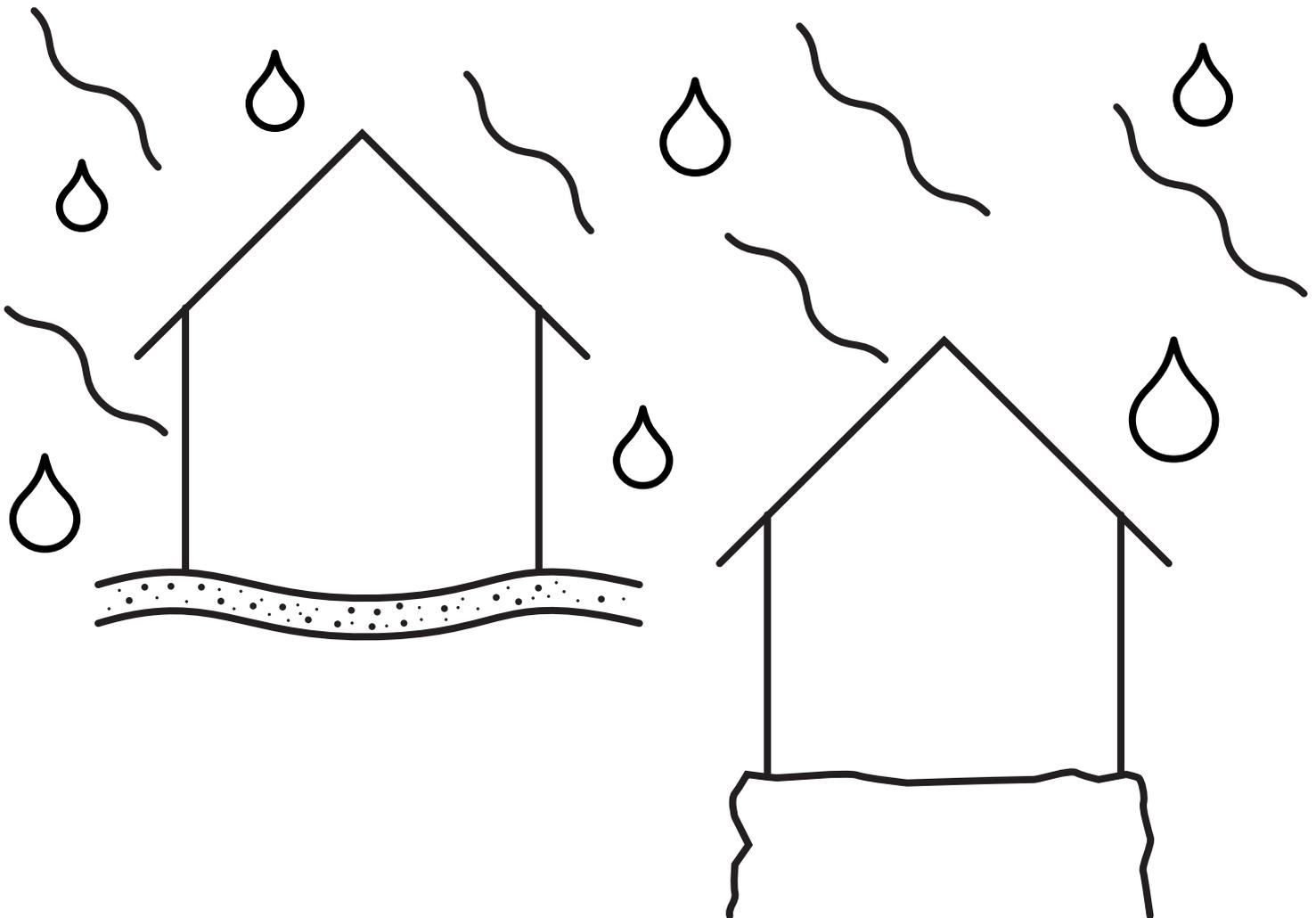
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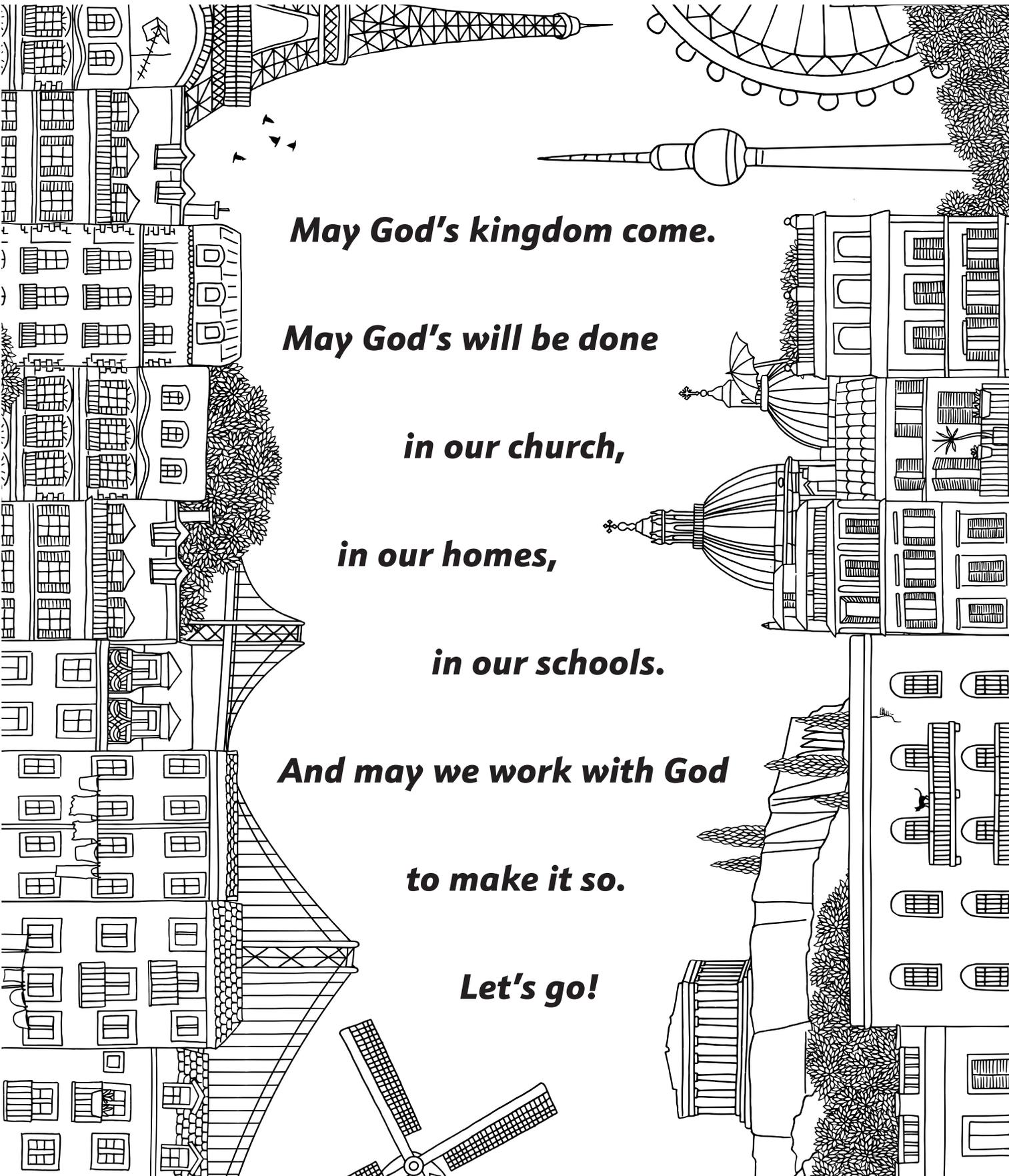
## SESSION 8

### "Sandy Versus Solid Foundation" Discussion Guide

Refer to the sample drawing to see how the finished drawing will look. Use large poster board or a whiteboard and draw large images so that you can add words in different parts of the drawing during the discussion.

- **Draw the "sandy soil" on the left.** Ask the youth to identify values, practices, and even laws that a community might have that would go against the teachings of Jesus (seeking revenge, looking out only for yourself, emphasis on gaining as much money as possible). Write their responses under the line of sand.
- **Draw the "rock" on the right.** Ask them what values, laws, and practices of the community are in line with Jesus' teachings (forgiveness, taking care of each other, sharing resources, seeking peace). Write these responses on the rock.
- **Draw a house on the sandy soil and one on the rock.**
- **Draw wind lines and several large raindrops.** Say that sometimes "storms" (challenges) come to our communities. Ask the youth what things might threaten to hurt a community (racism, violence, actual storms that destroy land or homes). Write their responses on the lines and in the raindrops.
- **Discuss the house on the sandy soil.** How would a community with these values deal with the threats you have listed (ignore or deny problems, take care of only yourself and your family, avoid helping)? Write their responses in the house. Erase a part of the house for each response, representing the negative impact. Encourage the youth to share specific ideas, not just say, "It would be bad."
- **Discuss the house on the strong foundation.** How would a community with these values respond to the threats you have listed (come together to fix issues, apologize, build relationships, listen to the experience of others)? Again, urge youth to be specific about how this community would function and why.





***May God's kingdom come.***

***May God's will be done***

***in our church,***

***in our homes,***

***in our schools.***

***And may we work with God***

***to make it so.***

***Let's go!***

**SESSION 10****"How Much Would You Give?" Chart**

Copy this page, one per person, for use with the Explore (Wrestle) activity.

<b>End all disease</b>	\$ _____
<b>Always feel safe</b>	\$ _____
<b>End world hunger</b>	\$ _____
<b>Have friends everywhere you go</b>	\$ _____
<b>Clean water for all people</b>	\$ _____
<b>Get straight A's</b>	\$ _____
<b>Bring peace to all countries</b>	\$ _____
<b>Understand every part of the Bible</b>	\$ _____
<b>Travel anywhere in the world</b>	\$ _____
<b>Spend time with anyone I want</b>	\$ _____
<b>Buy everything I want</b>	\$ _____

## SESSION 11

### "The Rich Man" Readers Theater

Copy one per youth for use in Encounter (The Story).

*Characters: Narrator, Man, Jesus, Disciples, Peter*

*(Start with Jesus and disciples in the middle and the man off to side.)*

**Narrator:** As Jesus was traveling with his disciples, a man ran up and knelt before him.

*(Man runs up and kneels.)*

**Man:** Teacher, what must I do to have eternal life?

**Jesus:** Why do you ask me about what is good? There is one who is good. You must keep the commandments.

**Man:** Which ones?

**Jesus:** You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. You shall not defraud. Honor your father and mother.

**Man:** Teacher, I have kept all these. What do I lack?

**Jesus:** Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

**Narrator:** When the man heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

*(Man leaves.)*

**Jesus:** *(to Disciples)* How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!

*(Disciples look at each other, perplexed and confused.)*

**Jesus:** Yes, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.

**Disciples:** *(shocked)* Then who can be saved?

**Jesus:** *(looking at the disciples)* For mortals it is impossible, but not for God. For God all things are possible.

**Peter:** Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?

**Jesus:** Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will have eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

**SESSION 11**  
**Beatitudes Cards**

Copy and cut apart for use in Explore (Words to Live By).

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**Blessed are the poor in spirit,**  
**for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

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**Blessed are those who mourn,**  
**for they will be comforted.**

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**Blessed are the meek,**  
**for they will inherit the earth.**

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**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,**  
**for they will be filled.**

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**Blessed are the merciful,**  
**for they will receive mercy.**

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**Blessed are the pure in heart,**  
**for they will see God.**

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**Blessed are the peacemakers,**  
**for they will be called children of God.**

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**Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,**  
**for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

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## SESSION 13

### Station Cards

Copy and cut apart the Station Cards for use in Explore (Respond). Place each card, along with the specified item, at a separate location in the room. Next to each Station Card, set out markers and a sheet of paper with “Our Ideas” written at the top.

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#### Station 1

**I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.**

##### Canned Food

One of every six Canadian children faces hunger each year. In the United States, more than one in five children are at risk; among African Americans and Latinos, that figure is one in three. What could adults and leaders do to address this problem? What could you do to help someone who is hungry or thirsty? Where could you and your family go for help if you needed food?

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#### Station 2

**I was a stranger and you welcomed me.**

##### Welcome Mat

As more people move to North America from other countries, and as people move more within their own countries, we see more people who seem like strangers. How can you welcome those who are different from you at school, at church, in the community, and around the world? What welcome would you want to receive if you were a stranger in a new place?

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#### Station 3

**I was naked and you gave me clothing.**

##### Clothing

What are some groups of people who may need clothing or who don't have adequate clothing for the climate? What could your church or community do to address a clothing issue for families? What could you do if you have extra clothing you don't need?

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#### Station 4

**I was sick and you took care of me.**

##### Get Well Card or Balloon

Did you know that being visited when you're sick helps you feel better physically? Studies have shown that visits from caring people stir up “mirror neurons” in the brain and increase feelings of happiness, which can actually help a sick person heal faster. What care and support do you want when you feel sick? What could you do for someone else who is sick, even someone you don't know well?

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