

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Lectionary Title 9: **Escape to Egypt, Return to Israel**

Old Testament: Hosea 11 (NRSV, 1989)

God's Compassion despite Israel's Ingratitude

¹When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. ²The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols. ³Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. ⁴I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them. ⁵They shall return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. ⁶The sword rages in their cities, it consumes their oracle-priests, and devours because of their schemes. ⁷My people are bent on turning away from me. To the Most High they call, but he does not raise them up at all. ⁸How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. ⁹I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. ¹⁰They shall go after the LORD, who roars like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west. ¹¹They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria; and I will return them to their homes, says the LORD. ¹²Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah still walks with God, and is faithful to the Holy One.

New Testament: Matthew 2:13-23 (NRSV, 1989)

The Escape to Egypt

¹³Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' ¹⁴Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

The Massacre of the Infants

¹⁶When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸'A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.'

The Return from Egypt

¹⁹When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ²⁰'Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.' ²¹Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. ²³There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He will be called a Nazorean.'

General Concept: There were powerful forces that threaten the mission of the Messiah.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

N/K/YE: **The family took Jesus to Egypt to escape from Herod.**

ME/OE: **The family took Jesus to Egypt to escape from Herod.**

Y: **Jesus' family obeys God and overcomes the forces of evil.**

A: **God intervenes to fulfill the mission of the Messiah.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

This chapter of the book of Hosea speaks of a prophet who is very concerned about the destiny of the land of Ephraim who are about to suffer the terrible consequences of their stubbornness and refusal to return to God. This prophetic pronouncement reflects the voice of a prophet who is settled in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The tone of the Prophet Hosea reflects the time and context in the period following the death of king Jeroboam II in 745 BCE who earlier had presided over a stable and long reign of about 40 years. After him, there were a series of kings who succeeded one after the other usually in a very violent fashion of bloody takeovers and assassination.

Hosea sees the situation as sliding into chaos and near anarchy. This is just a few more years before its capital Samaria will fall into the hands of its conqueror Assyria in 721 BCE. Hosea describes this situation as a result of the greed for power among so many of those in the ruling elite of the land. In their lust for power they have all but ignored and forgotten their responsibility and accountability before God. According to Hos. 7:7, "*All of them are hot as an oven, and they devour their own rulers. All their kings have fallen; none of them calls upon me*", says the Lord." In Hos. 8:4, he also states: "*They made kings, but not through me; they set up princes, but without my knowledge. They made idols with their silver and gold for their own destruction.*"

Now the prophet expresses God's own extreme sadness and frustration over what is happening to His own people whom he had been nurturing like a parent since they were brought out of Egypt. God had loved Israel so much like a deeply caring parent, nurturing them like a child so as to make them a people enjoying the life of freedom and prosperity in the promised land. But God was so frustrated over what He had been seeing about the ongoing state of affairs in the nation where their return to a seemingly enslaving experience this time under the Assyrians is now inevitable. They will suffer the logical consequence of their abandoning the Lord and His ethical covenant demands. Yet the Lord Himself feels the pain and agony of such imminent disaster for His people. *My heart recoils within me, says the Lord (v. 8)*. Even God, like an ordinary loving parent just cannot bear the thought of the imminent death of the nation He himself created and gave birth to. God Himself was in pain and there was divine hesitancy to proceed with such punishment and desire not to destroy anymore His people Ephraim. "*For I am God and no mortal, the Holy one in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.*" (v. 9)

Hosea reveals the most distinct and unique character of God being Holy, that this unique Holiness of God is revealed most perfectly in God's remaining so full of compassion and pity even to a people who deserves to be punished and even destroyed. This God feels what it feels like to suffer destruction in the hands of a foreign tormentor.

God knows and feels the pain of being uprooted from one's homeland, from the security of one's home and then brought to a completely strange land, powerless, nameless as a people. God always intends for His people to live the lives intended for them right at the very beginning, a people living in freedom, abundance, stability, security, with joy and a sense of fulfillment under the protection of their covenant God.

This divine will of God continues to be His will for all other peoples. God desires nothing but the good for everyone and for all His creation. It is never God's intention to punish and destroy a people and their world whom He had so lovingly created and blessed. God Himself will be in pain seeing the disastrous consequences of people's foolish and irresponsible and unjust ways. This is a most amazing truth about our God which should always drive us towards a life of humility, repentance and continuing commitment to share this powerful and truly transforming good news.

The narrative in Matthew 2:13-23 is about the escape of the family of Jesus from Judea to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. But they returned to Nazareth right after the death of the king. This story may be paralleled by the story of the massacre of the Israelite babies during their time in Egypt where Moses was protected by escaping through the basket and the river thus reaching the palace of the Egyptian princess who raised him until such time, he decided to return to his Israelite roots. Matthew also used other prophetic books to point the validity of Jesus' action to fulfill the necessary narrative of a Savior. Herod, carried out an evil and unwelcoming action to the One who is now seen and interpreted by the church community as the Messiah long awaited by the Jews; the one who was to bring forth change and a challenge to the social and cultural values of the Roman empire. Herod's action represented a hostile reaction to those who are about to fulfill the task of a Messiah who had been awaited for so long by the people; to serve and proclaim their liberation and salvation.

In this story, we see the real agenda of those who are in power and who always desire to stay in power so that they can continue enjoying the perks and prerogatives of their power while abusing and exploiting to the hilt their own people. They will resort to all means, even the most violent ones just to try to eliminate those who will represent an alternative order and who will proclaim and witness to an alternative message. This story, rooted also in the story of Moses and the Exodus will provide the template for the kind of mission and ministry that Jesus will carry out in the name of His Father God who wills nothing but the liberation and transformation of His people and the rest of creation. This is the mission for which he will also lay down his life, for which he will also be experiencing the most extreme of pain and suffering just like His loving Father in heaven.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

In Greek drama, the plot takes a sudden twist through the operation of a *deus ex machina* whereby a totally unconnected event descends from above in order to bring a resolution to an otherwise insolvable situation. This is not how God's messiah accomplishes his mission. The messiah must face human obstacles and finds ways of overcoming them through human efforts without the benefit of a *deus ex machina*. The evil King Herod could have nipped in the bud Jesus' mission if not for the wily Wise Men whose warning persuaded Joseph to hurriedly escape to Egypt. The road to the kingdom of God is not smooth and straight for easy travel. There are always Herods and other dark forces that are opposed to God's reign of justice and will not spare any means to thwart God's plan. God works out our salvation by partnering with us under the conditions of freedom taking into account our weaknesses and limitations. There are no magical shortcuts to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Fanatical beliefs that God's warriors against evil are invincible would only give the Herods of history opportunity to decimate the forces of righteousness.

In partnering with God to establish a reign of justice via the conquest of the reign of wickedness, we grow in wisdom, courage and strength even as we mature in the faith and grow in holiness. This is the way by which we shed off the outer layer of wickedness to the end that we may shine forth with the brightness of the new life. This kind of change is a pre-figuration of the resurrection that is yet to come.

Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. begin to tell the circumstances surrounding the flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to Egypt;
2. begin to explain why the family hurriedly left for Egypt;
3. explain how God helped the family escape from Herod; and
4. tell how to listen to God through parents, teachers, and other significant people.

II. Concept: The family took Jesus to Egypt to escape from Herod.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), song chart, crayons, pencils, scissors, cartolina, Pentel pens, ballpens

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet each child with a smile and a welcoming heart. It is important to start the lesson with a warm and caring atmosphere.
2. Opening prayer: To be led by a child (pre-assigned)
3. Opening songs:
 - “What a Mighty God”
 - O what a mighty God we serve 4x
 - O let us sing and praise the Lord 4X
 - O let us shout and praise the Lord 4X
 - O let us dance and praise the Lord 4X
 - O let us jump and praise the Lord 4X
 - “O What a Great, Big, Wonderful God”
 - O what a great, big, wonderful God, a great, big, wonderful God
 - A God who is always near to us guiding and protecting us.
 - A great, big, wonderful God.
 - “God is so Good”
 - God is so good, God is so good.
 - God is so good to me.
 - God answers prayers (thrice), He is so good to me.

B. Getting Ready

- Let the class do a guided game: “Message Relay”
1. Say: “It is good to start the morning right and to say what is right. Today, let us learn and appreciate the importance of listening and understanding messages.”
 2. Process: Prepare messages like:
 - a. God loves you all the time.
 - b. Jesus is our Savior.
 - c. Beloved, let us love one another.
 - d. We have a great big wonderful God.
 - e. God answers our prayers.
 3. Divide the children into two teams and let them form one line each.

4. Give the message to the first player. Then, he passes it to the next player behind him without looking back and turning around. When the message reaches the last player, the player runs to the teacher and shouts the message. It should be the exact words of the message. The first team to complete the most number of accurate messages wins the game.
5. Talk time: Have the learners reflect on the activity. Ask: What were you feeling when you were passing the message on to the person next to you? Why is it important to pass the correct message?

C. Learning Time

1. Motivation: Say: "In our story today, listen well because Joseph, the father of Jesus, received a message that is long and important. Find out who delivered this message.
2. Tell the story.

Escape to Egypt, Home to Nazareth

Long time ago, there was a mean king named Herod who lived in Egypt. Herod, the king, wanted to have the child Jesus dead.

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in his sleep and said, "Herod will be looking for the child in order to kill him. So get up! Take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you to leave."

Joseph got up, took the child Jesus and Mary, and left in the night!

When Herod heard about the escape of Joseph and his family, Herod gave orders to kill all the Jewish boys who were two years old and younger. Every parent cried for their slain son and refused to be comforted for the untimely death.

Joseph heeded the message and obeyed. Jesus was safe!

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and said, "Get up! Take the child and his mother and go back to the land of Israel.

But Joseph was a wise father; he and his family did not return to their place in the province of Galilee. Instead, he made his home in his town named Nazareth.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

1. Ask the following questions:
 - a. Who gave the message to Joseph? (The angel of the Lord)
 - b. What was the long message? (That Joseph was to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt to escape Herod who wanted Jesus dead)
 - c. How did Joseph obey? (He, Mary and Child Jesus left right away.)
 - d. What was Herod's order? (to kill all the Jewish boys two years old and younger)
 - e. What happened after Herod's death? (Joseph, Mary and Jesus settle down in Nazareth.)

For YE

2. Call on a pupil to retell one part. Guide each learner by giving cues using these sentence stems:

In the beginning, _____.

Then, _____.

But, _____.

After that, _____.

In the end, _____.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How did God keep Jesus safe from the mean King Herod? (God sent an angel to deliver the message to Joseph in his dreams.) How does God keep us safe from harm? (We listen to God through our parents, teachers, grandparents and other people who show us God's way. We obey them so we could be out of harm's way.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. **For N/K:** "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt," (Matthew 2:13)
For YE: "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel."
(Matthew 2:30)
2. Say: We will play a game called "God Says...". This is played the way the game Simon Says.. is played. You need to listen carefully. Follow the instruction if it starts with "God Says..." and do not follow the instruction if you do not hear "God Says..."
Practice: God says, "Take one step forward." (Pupils follow.) "Step backward."
(Pupils must not follow.) (Instructions may include: Form a line, hug a classmate, sit on the floor, hold hands, etc.)
3. **For YE:** Declare the Truth: Say: "Every day, God is always with us. We just need to listen carefully to his message for us. The older people around us help us understand what God says to us. Like what Joseph did in the story, we have to obey as well." Tell the class to write one promise you can do to show God that you can follow Him. The teacher will prepare a basket where the children can put their promises.

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse,
2. **For YE:** Reading of the promises to follow God. Call on the learners and ask them to read their promise and offer it to the altar.
3. Offering: "Salamat Sa Iyo"
4. Closing song: "God Made Every Part of Me"
5. Closing prayer: Dear God thank for everything. Thank you for teaching us always! Thank you for leading us. We pray for your continuous guidance! As we offer our footprints of Obedience helped us to live out our promises. Amen!

Middle and Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. tell the circumstances surrounding the flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to Egypt through a role play;
2. relate the warning made by the wise men with the order of the angel of the Lord;
3. realize that God gives warnings to protect His people; and
4. make a commitment to listen to God's warning through the reading of the Bible and the guidance from significant adults.

II. Concept: The family took Jesus to Egypt to escape from Herod.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), song chart, crayons, pencils, scissors, cartolina, Pentel pens, ballpens. pencils

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet each child with a smile and a welcoming heart. It is important to start the lesson with a warm and caring atmosphere.
2. Opening prayer: To be led by a child (pre-assigned)
3. Opening songs:
 - "What a Mighty God"
 - O what a mighty God we serve 4x
 - O let us sing and praise the Lord 4X
 - O let us shout and praise the Lord 4X
 - O let us dance and praise the Lord 4X
 - O let us jump and praise the Lord 4X
 - "O What a Great, Big, Wonderful God"
 - O what a great, big, wonderful God, a great, big, wonderful God
 - A God who is always near to us guiding and protecting us.
 - A great, big, wonderful God.
 - "God is so Good"
 - God is so good, God is so good.
 - God is so good to me.
 - God answers prayers (thrice), He is so good to me.

B. Getting Ready

Guided Game- "Message Relay"

1. Use this game to start the lesson. It is good start the morning right and saying what is right.
2. Objective of the game. Learn and appreciate the importance of listening and comprehending messages.
3. Process: Divide the children into two teams and let them form one line each. Give the message to the first player. He then passes it to the next player behind him without looking back and turning around. When the message reaches the last player, the player runs to you and shout the message. It should be the exact words of the message. The first team to do this is the winner.

4. After the game, have a short reflection. Ask the children how they felt when they transmit the message to others. Ask them how they feel during the game. Say: "Listening and comprehending is one of the virtue or skills in discerning the message of God to us."

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to close their eyes and imagine being told by their parents to do something that looks difficult to do. After opening their eyes, ask the children their thoughts about it. Say: "We will find out in the story about the circumstances that led the flight of Joseph and his family to Egypt and back to Israel."
2. Form three groups. Assign each group with some verses. Tell each group to read the verses and retell the story in their own words. Then ask each group to do a role play before the class one after another.

Group 1: **The Escape to Egypt** (verses 13-15). ¹³ Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' ¹⁴Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

Group 2: **The Massacre of the Infants** (verses 16-18). ¹⁶ When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. ¹⁷Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: ¹⁸ 'A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.'

Group 3: **The Return from Egypt** (verses 19-23) ¹⁹ When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ²⁰'Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.' ²¹Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. ²³There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He will be called a Nazorean.'

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask the following questions.

1. Who are the characters of the story? (Joseph, Mary, Jesus, Herod)
2. Who is Joseph? (Father of Jesus)
3. Who threatens Joseph's family and forced them to their escape to Egypt? Why? (Herod wants to kill Jesus.)
4. How did God protect Josephs' family? (Through the message of the angel of the Lord)
5. How did Joseph show his obedience to God? (Joseph obeyed God's message.)
6. Why do you think Joseph is a responsible husband and father? (Answers may vary.)
7. How can people show that they are responsible? (Answers may vary.)

8. Do you agree that God spoke to Joseph and instruct to escape from Egypt? Why or why not?
9. Do you agree that we live in a broken and sick world? Why or why not?
10. What prophecies were fulfilled in Matthew 2:13 to 23?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: "There are many obstacles in our way as Christians. But we need to use our listening and comprehending skills in order to discern the message of God to us. As God helped Joseph to overcome danger, I believe God is also with us to protect us as long as we trust Him." Ask: "How does God protect us from harm?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse:

For ME: "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt." (Matthew 2:13)

For OE: "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel. (Matthew 2:30)

2. **For ME:** Let the class play the game "Show and Tell". Say: "King Herod threatens the mission of Jesus by trying to kill him. But God through the angel appeared to Joseph and helped them escape from that danger. Joseph hid the messages and obey God." Make two groups. Tell each group to show and tell their answers to these questions:
 - a. "How can we listen to God's message to us to protect us from danger through the following persons?
 - 1) parents
 - 2) teachers
 - 3) grandparents
 - b. What can we read to help us discern the message of God?

For OE: Present the creative activity "Making Footprints of Obedience". Let the children trace their shoes or slippers or feet (both right and left) on a cartolina. Cut these out. On each footprint, write their resolutions or promise to continue obey their parents, teachers and other significant persons. Tell the class to choose from these examples:

- a. My feet will follow Jesus!
- b. I say, "I follow Jesus!"
- c. My feet will go where Jesus goes!

G. Closing Worship

1. Call selected pupils who will recite the memory verse.
2. Reflective action:

For ME: Tell the class to present any one of their presentations.
For OE: Call on the pupils to read their footprints of obedience.
3. Offering
4. Closing song: "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice"
5. Closing prayer: Dear God, thank for everything. Thank you for teaching us always! Thank you for leading us. We pray for your continuous guidance! As we offer our footprints of obedience, help us to live out our promises. Amen!

Youth Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. trace the flight of Joseph, Mary, and Jesus from Bethlehem to Egypt and back to Nazareth;
2. discuss the relation and significance of this flight to Egypt and back to Nazareth to prophecies made before;
3. deduce the urgency of the advice of the wise men and that of the angel of the Lord in relation to understanding and obeying God's call in one's life; and
4. explain God's ways of sending messages to His people and its application to one's life.

II. Concept: Jesus' family obeys God and overcomes the forces of evil.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), song chart, map, crayons, pencils, scissors, cartolina, Pentel pens, ballpens. pencils

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear Lord, help us to discern your message and obey you that leads us to overcome forces of evil. Amen!"
3. Opening song: "With Gifts That Differ by Your Grace" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 245)

B. Getting Ready

Tell the class to do the game "Up-Under Relay". Use this game to start the lesson. Let the learners follow the following procedure.

1. Divide the class into two teams and let each team form one line.
2. The first persons in both lines are the first players. Give the balloon to the first player. He or she then passes it to the next player behind him downward without turning around. As the next player receives the balloon, he or she passes it the next player downward until the balloon is passed on to the last player.
3. The last player will pass on the balloon to the one in front of him or her. This time the action is upward and the receiver will not turn around to get the balloon. The player will do this until the balloon reaches the first player.
4. All the players who successfully passed the balloon downward or upward to the next player without turning around are declared winners of the game.
5. After the game, discuss how the players how felt as they passed the balloon to others without turning around to see the next player. Then draw from them the importance of listening and comprehending instructions to be able to do the game correctly.

C. Learning Time

1. Motivation. Say: "Listening is one of the skills in discerning the message of God to us. Trusting and understanding God's message is a virtue we must nurture."
2. Tell the learners to count 1 and 2. Tell those whose number is 1 as the first group and all those whose number is 2 as the second group.

3. Ask the first group to read Hosea 11 and prepare notes to answer the guide questions.
 - a. Who are the characters of the story? (The speaker, Ephraim, Judah and the other people)
 - b. Who is the speaker in the text? (God)
 - c. How did He show his love for the people? (Refer to verses 1 to 4)
 - c. How did the speaker describe his feelings towards his people? (Refer to verses 5 to 8)
 - d. What did the speaker in the text promise He will do for His children if they obey him? (Refer to verses 9 to 12)
 - e. What will happen to those who do not obey? (Refer to verses 5 to 8)
4. Tell the second group to read and study Matthew 2:13-23. Let the learners prepare note to answer the following questions.
 - a. Who are the characters in the story? (Joseph, Mary, Jesus, Herod)
 - b. Why did they have to leave Bethlehem and go to Egypt? (Herod wanted to kill Jesus)
 - c. What was the first message of the angel of the Lord to Joseph? (Escape to Egypt)
 - d. What was Joseph's response to the angel's message? (He heeded the message and fled to Egypt.)
 - e. What was the second message of the angel of the Lord to Joseph? (Return to Israel)
 - f. What was Joseph's response to the angel's message? (He heeded the message and went back to Israel)
 - g. What do you think would be the implications of the killing of the Jewish boys 2-year old and below?
 - h. What prophecies were fulfilled in Matthew 2:13 to 23?

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

1. Tell the first group to share their notes to the class by answering the guide questions. Instruct them to present their answers through a choral reading.
2. Say: The prophet Hosea preached in the northern kingdom of Israel during its troubled time. Hosea was especially concerned about the idolatry of the people, their disobedience and their faithlessness toward God. Yet in the end, God's constant love for his people would prevail and he would win the nation back to himself and restore the relationship. This love is expressed in the moving words; "How can I give you up, Israel? How can I abandon you...? My heart will not let me do it. My love for you is too strong." (Hosea 11:8)
3. Ask: In what ways did the obedience of Jesus' family overcome the forces of evil? Let the second group form three small subgroups and have each subgroup act out in 2-minute skits what would have happened if: (1) Joseph did not heed the angel's message to flee to Egypt, (2) Joseph brought his family back to Jerusalem instead of Galilee, and (3) The wise men went back to Herod.
4. After the short skits, explain to the students the significance of Joseph's obedience in going to Egypt and in going to Galilee instead of going back to Judea. Also explain the significance of the wise men's decision to disobey Herod and instead ensure Jesus' safety, the promised King.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: The Gospel according to Matthew tells the good news that Jesus is the promised Savior, the one through whom God will fulfil the promise He made to his people in the Old Testament. The good news of God's redemption is not only for Jewish people, among whom Jesus was born and lived, but for all peoples of the whole world. Our particular text was the story of how God through the angel talked to Joseph in order for Jesus to be free from danger. Joseph's obedience to God's message through the angel was pivotal in overcoming the evil forces that sought to undermine God's redemptive plan for the whole world through Jesus Christ. By protecting the child Jesus from danger, Joseph became instrumental in the unfolding of God's plan to redeem the world.

Ask: "Like Jesus' family who obeys God and overcomes the forces of evil, how can we overcome our present challenges in life?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Tell the class to trace the journey of Jesus' family using the map on the activity sheet. Let the class to discuss the importance of full obedience to God as shown by Joseph in order that the promised Messiah is protected from danger.
2. Ask them to write in the boxes the events using these guide sentences.

Joseph takes Mary and Jesus to Egypt to escape from King Herod.

Joseph is visited by the angel of the Lord to tell him to escape to Egypt to protect Jesus from King Herod.

Jesus is born in Bethlehem.

Joseph and Mary set off to Bethlehem to take part of the census.

Once King Herod dies, Jesus is safe to go back to Israel. Joseph takes Mary and Jesus back to Nazareth.

3. Let the class realize that God is continually sending warnings for us to be saved from danger by discerning His message.
4. Ask the class to write some decisions they have made to use God's message for them in their lives.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering: Let the learners offer the decisions that they have made in applying God's message for them.
2. Closing song: "With Gifts That Differ by Your Grace" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 245)
3. Closing prayer: Dear God thank for everything. Thank you for speaking to us and always teaching us your ways. Thank you for leading us. We pray for your continuous guidance. As we offer our lives to you, help us to be obedient always to your Will. This is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Adult Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. tell how the hand of God works to send urgent warnings to His people in the case of Joseph and his family leaving for Egypt;
2. describe the significance of the advice of the wise men and the warning of the angel of the Lord for the family to leave for Egypt immediately; and
3. relate the happenings of the urgent flight of Joseph and his family to present-day struggles of Christians towards the road to the Kingdom.

II. Concept: God intervenes to fulfill the mission of the Messiah.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), song chart, map, crayons, pencils

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear Lord, help us to discern and obey your message. We know that this is a way of leading us to overcome forces of evil. In the mighty name of Jesus, we pray. Amen!"
3. Opening song: "With Gifts That Differ by Your Grace" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 245)

B. Getting Ready

1. Tell the class to listen to a testimony. Ask the oldest among the group to share his or her experience that is related to obedience or disobedience to God.
2. Say: "Listening and comprehending God's message is a way of discerning His message to us."

C. Learning Time

Tell the class to read the biblical references and present the following outline to serve as a guide:

1. Hosea 11
 - a. The love of God in the past (vv. 1-4), at the present (vv. 8-9), and in the future (vv. 10-11)
 - b. The exile for the rest of the people (vv. 5-7)
 - c. The sin of deceit (v. 12)
2. Matthew 2:13-23
 - a. The flight to Egypt (vv. 13-15). To protect Jesus from King Herod as warned in a dream and the fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy
 - b. The killing of the male babies and fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy in Jer. 31:15 (vv. 16-18)
 - c. The return to Israel particularly in Nazareth and the prophecy of Jesus being called a Nazorean is fulfilled (vv. 19-23)

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask the following questions and encourage the class to share their thoughts.

1. How does the hand of God work in protecting His people in the following situations?
 - a. During the time of Hosea
 - b. During the time Joseph and his family escaped to Egypt
 - c. During the time Joseph and his family returned to Israel
 - d. During the time of the killing of the male Israelites 2 years old and below
2. How does the warning of the angel of the Lord to the wise men and Joseph become significant to us today?
3. How similar are God's people in the past with God's people in the present?
4. How can present-day Christians benefit from the struggles of God's people in the past?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: "There are many obstacles/struggles in our life as Christians. But we need to use our listening and comprehending skills in order to discern the message of God to us." Ask: "Do you agree that God continually intervenes to fulfill His mission here on earth? How can discerning God's message help the church members?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Say: "The flight of Joseph is the same as our flight from hunger, unemployment, sickness. We live in a critical, broken, and sick world. These issues concern the mission of the church."
2. Ask: "What do you think is the role of the church in addressing these critical issues?" Encourage the class to list down possible church programs in their local church by which these issues can be addressed.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering: As the offering plate is passed, tell the class to place their list of possible church programs that will help address the critical issues that have been discussed earlier.
2. Closing song: "With Gifts That Differ by Your Grace" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 245)
3. Closing prayer: "Dear God, thank for everything. Thank you for teaching us always! Thank you for leading us. We pray for your continuous guidance to do what is right and pleasing to your sight. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen."