



SUNDAY SCHOOL SIMPLIFIED

BEYOND BUMPER STICKERS

— SCRIPTURE THAT STICKS —

Vol. 01
A SIX LESSON PACKET

A LETTER FROM THE CANDLER FOUNDRY

Dear Friend,

Maybe you've noticed — as we have — that some of the Bible's most beloved lines have become a little too familiar.

"I know the plans I have for you."

"Be still, and know that I am God."

"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

We've posted them on billboards, stitched them onto pillows, and, yes, printed them on bumper stickers. While these soundbites often provide comfort, there's plenty to explore beneath the surface.

Beyond Bumper Stickers is an invitation to slow down and read six of these well-worn passages in their original historical context. In doing so, we hope you'll find each verse to be more spiritually enriching than ever before.

We've designed these lessons to be easy — you can study on your own or with a group, no leader necessary.

We're glad you're here. May these old, familiar words meet you in a new way.

Grace and peace,

THE CANDLER FOUNDRY

IN THIS PACKET

1 For I Know the Plans I Have for You

JEREMIAH 29

2 Be Still, and Know That I Am God

PSALM 46

3 Have Dominion Over the Earth

GENESIS 1-2

4 I Can Do All Things Through Christ

PHILIPPIANS 4

5 All Scripture Is Inspired by God

2 TIMOTHY 3

6 Love Is Patient, Love Is Kind

1 CORINTHIANS 13

THE RHYTHM OF EACH LESSON

1

Open with prayer.

2

Read the passage out loud as a group.

3

Watch the provided 3 Minute Bible video.

4

Talk through the questions.

5

Close with prayer.

LESSON ONE

FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU

Jeremiah 29:1, 4–14

OPENING PRAYER

Faithful God, you spoke hope to your people even in the long years of exile. As we read these familiar words together, lead us into the fuller story you are telling us. Give us patience to listen to your Word and to one another. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

READ THE SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 29:1, 4–14

New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition

[Read at Bible Gateway \(NRSVUE\) — or scan the code](#)



WATCH THE 3 MINUTE BIBLE

Jeremiah's Letter to the Exiles

3 Minute Bible video

vimeo.com/1218983605

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** “For I know the plans I have for you” is the line we meet on mugs and graduation cards. Often, we interpret this verse as a promise to an individual person. Who is the “you” that is being addressed in this passage? Does this change your original perception of verse 11?

- 2** God promises a return to Jerusalem. Will the exiles who received the letter participate in the return? How might Jeremiah’s exiled audience have received this message?

- 3** In verses 4-7, what sort of life are the exiles instructed to lead until the promise is fulfilled? When God speaks in verse 11 of “plans for welfare and not for harm,” what does “welfare” seem to mean?

- 4** A popular translation of verse 11 reads “plans to prosper you” (NIV). How is “prosperity” commonly understood today? How does “prosper” in place of “welfare” change the meaning — and is God promising prosperity the way we tend to imagine it?

- 5** The exiles were asked to settle in, seek the good of Babylon, and keep their faith in a hopeful future. When have you had to remain faithful amid disappointing or uncertain circumstances in your own life?

CLOSING PRAYER

Loving God, we thank you for your promise to be faithful to us, never forgetting us or forsaking us. As we go, keep us hopeful through long seasons of waiting, and help us remember to trust in you. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

LESSON TWO

BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

Psalms 46

OPENING PRAYER

God of refuge and strength, when the earth feels unsteady, you remain in our presence. Quiet the noise within us as we gather, and help us to hear your voice above the chaos of our lives. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

READ THE SCRIPTURE

Psalms 46

New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition

[Read at Bible Gateway \(NRSVUE\) — or scan the code](#)



WATCH THE 3 MINUTE BIBLE

God Is Our Refuge: Reading Psalms 46

3 Minute Bible video

vimeo.com/1214332162

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 “Be still, and know that I am God” is often taken as a cue to slow down and relax. Where have you heard this verse, and what have you taken it to mean?

- 2 In the video, Dr. Bonfiglio notes that we tend to read the Psalms too “spiritually,” when many reflect material, outward catastrophes such as war and displacement. What words or phrases in Psalm 46 point to these circumstances?

- 3 God is a “very present help in trouble” (verse 1), even while the world described remains unstable. Is the psalmist describing help that is already being experienced, a promise for future deliverance, or both?

- 4 Verse 10’s command to “be still” could also be translated from the original Hebrew as “stop fighting.” Reread verse 9, where the psalmist describes God as the one who “makes wars cease.” If verse 10 is translated as “Stop fighting, and know that I am God!,” to whom might this command be directed? What does the psalmist want the reader to know about who is actually in charge?

- 5 What practices help remind us that chaos — even when it seems to surround us — does not have the final word?

CLOSING PRAYER

God of peace, you are the one who remains ever-faithful to your creation. Even as chaos seems to reign, help us remember your promise of deliverance. Remind us that only love, not chaos, will have the final word. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

LESSON THREE

HAVE DOMINION OVER THE EARTH

Genesis 1:1–2:4a; 2:15

OPENING PRAYER

God our Creator, you spoke the world into being and called it good, and you entrusted care of it to those made in your image. As we connect with the stories of our holy beginnings, help us read them as a calling. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

READ THE SCRIPTURE

Genesis 1:1–2:4a; 2:15

New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition

[Read at Bible Gateway \(NRSVUE\) — or scan the code](#)



WATCH THE 3 MINUTE BIBLE

Image & Dominion: Reading Genesis 1–2

3 Minute Bible video

vimeo.com/1214332189

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Genesis 1:26 is often cited in isolation to describe humanity's relationship to creation. Consider verse 26 in its broader context of the first reading. What
- 1** patterns do you notice in the way creation takes shape? Where do humans appear in the sequence, and what does the order of creation suggest about humanity's relationship to the rest of creation? (There are no wrong answers!)

 - 2** Before humans are told what to do, they are told who they are: creatures made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Why does identity come before instruction?

 - 3** The word "dominion" is often used to mean control exercised for personal gain. But in Genesis, humanity's dominion is over a world God made and called good. How should that frame what dominion over the earth looks like?

 - 4** As the video notes, Genesis tells two creation stories. In the second (2:5-15), God forms the human and instructs him to "till it and keep" the garden. The Hebrew word for "till" can also be translated "serve." How does the second creation story of serving the earth inform our understanding of "dominion"? Are those concepts contradictory? Why or why not?

 - 5** Are humans capable of exercising power and authority while also acting in service? What structures or practices help us maintain a service-oriented approach to our responsibilities?

CLOSING PRAYER

God of all, you created us in your image, and you called us to serve what you called "good." Make us faithful bearers of your holy image. Give us gentle and grateful hearts, mindful of our sacred responsibility to care for your creation. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

LESSON FOUR

I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST

Philippians 2:2–11; 4:10–13

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, as we turn to Scripture, quiet the distractions that keep us from hearing clearly. Teach us the humility of Christ, who chose the way of service and love. By your Spirit, help us to hear something new in these familiar words. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

READ THE SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:2–11; 4:10–13

New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition

[Read at Bible Gateway \(NRSVUE\) — or scan the code](#)



WATCH THE 3 MINUTE BIBLE

Un-Structuring the Bible

3 Minute Bible video

vimeo.com/1219267316

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** Philippians 4:13 is often used as a motivational phrase, including in the context of sports. Where have you seen or heard it quoted? What message has it conveyed to you? Has this passage had personal meaning to you?

- 2** In our culture, when we describe someone as “strong” (whether it’s a politician, athlete, or business leader), what do we usually mean? What does strength look like in those settings?

- 3** Philippians 2:2-11 consists of what is called the “Christ hymn,” which reminds us that Christ took the form of a servant and became obedient even unto death. Paul encourages his readers to follow Christ’s example by letting go of their earthly status rather than seeking power and personal gain. What, then, does Paul seem to mean when he says Christ “strengthens” him?

- 4** In Philippians, Paul speaks of his own imprisonment, and in 4:10-13, he describes knowing both hunger and plenty, both need and abundance. How does this context inform how we understand the “all things” that Paul is strengthened to do?

- 5** If strength, as Paul understood it, does not look like personal success or power, how might that change the way we view what it means to be strong in our own lives?

CLOSING PRAYER

God of compassion, you became like us and emptied yourself for our sake. Give us strength that looks more like yours. Help us to “do all things” for your sake and for your glory. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

LESSON FIVE

ALL SCRIPTURE IS INSPIRED BY GOD

2 Timothy 3:14–17; Genesis 2:4–7

OPENING PRAYER

Living God, you breathed life into dust and called it holy, and you breathe new life into Scripture that speaks to us today. As we turn to your Word, teach us to receive it and discern it responsibly and reverently. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

READ THE SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 3:14–17; Genesis 2:4–7

New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition

[Read at Bible Gateway \(NRSVUE\) — or scan the code](#)



WATCH THE 3 MINUTE BIBLE

Inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16)

3 Minute Bible video

vimeo.com/1218983645

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** To the extent you were raised in a church tradition, what did that tradition teach about the Bible and its authority? How did you engage with Scripture in your formative years?

- 2** How does your current faith community read, teach, and interpret Scripture? Has your relationship to Scripture, and your understanding of its authority, changed over time? To what extent is Scripture important to your own faith?

- 3** In 2 Timothy, Scripture is described as something that teaches, corrects, and trains over time. What does that mean in practice for your faith community? What guardrails does your tradition use to avoid interpretations of the Bible that are self-serving, unloving, or unfaithful?

- 4** Which understanding asks more of us — one that understands the Bible as factually inerrant, or one that allows for human error and calls on us to discern its meaning? (There are no wrong answers!)

- 5** Have you ever found a particular Scripture to be life-giving and meaningful, even if you didn't read it as factually true? Have you found "good news" in a passage that first felt troubling or confusing? If so, what helped that shift?

CLOSING PRAYER

Faithful God, we give thanks for the gift of Scripture. Give us the courage to continue wrestling with its meaning for us today. Help us to hear your good news, even in texts that challenge or confuse us. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

LESSON SIX

LOVE IS PATIENT, LOVE IS KIND

1 Corinthians 13:1–13

OPENING PRAYER

God of love, open our hearts to your Word and help us hear what you would teach us. Show us the depth of the love you have called us to practice. Guide our discussion and give us grace to listen to one another. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

READ THE SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 13:1–13

New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition

[Read at Bible Gateway \(NRSVUE\) — or scan the code](#)



WATCH THE 3 MINUTE BIBLE

More Than a Wedding Poem: 1 Corinthians 13

3 Minute Bible video

vimeo.com/1218983700

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 “Love is patient, love is kind” is a wedding staple. But as Dr. Arnold notes in the video, Paul wrote these words to a church in turmoil. What words or phrases suggest that the passage is meant to correct what is wrong? Does the understanding that Paul was writing to a troubled congregation change how you read this passage?
- 2 How does Paul understand love? Is it rooted more in action or in emotion? How is Paul’s description of love similar or different to how you experience it in your own life?
- 3 Paul writes to a church fighting about spiritual gifts like prophecy and speaking in tongues. If Paul were writing verses 1-3 for the modern church, what ministries, achievements, or other gifts might he mention? How do we know when we’re engaging in our ministry as a church with love?
- 4 Churches often measure success in terms of growth and numbers — attendance, stewardship, and programs. How does Paul’s understanding of love challenge those measures? How would Paul define a church’s success or failure?
- 5 Consider your own church’s worship and congregational life. Where do you see Paul’s vision of love lived out well? Where is there room to live more fully into Paul’s call to the church?

CLOSING PRAYER

Holy God, you have called us to be a church rooted in your love. Help us to be bearers of your kindness and patience. Continue to shape us, and shape your church, so that we grow ever-closer to you. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Extra viewing, artwork, and reading for classes that want to go deeper.

What Happened During the Exile?

Lesson 1 · Jeremiah 29 · 3 Minute Bible

vimeo.com/1219870379

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



Who wrote the Psalms?

Lesson 2 · Psalm 46 · 3 Minute Bible

vimeo.com/1219870516

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



What is adam?

Lesson 3 · Genesis 1–2 · 3 Minute Bible

vimeo.com/1219676911

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



What is an encomium?

Lesson 4 · Philippians 4 · 3 Minute Bible

vimeo.com/1219870600

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



Who wrote the Pauline letters?

Lesson 5 · 2 Timothy 3 · 3 Minute Bible

vimeo.com/1219870709

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (CONT.)

What are the Pastorals?

Lesson 5 · 2 Timothy 3 · 3 Minute Bible

vimeo.com/1219870840

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



Understanding Paul's Letters

Lesson 6 · 1 Corinthians 13 · 3 Minute Bible

vimeo.com/1219870939

[Scan the code, or type the link above](#)



RECOMMENDED READING

Scholarly commentaries for every lesson in this packet.

Women's Bible Commentary, Third Edition (Revised and Updated)

Ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe & Jacqueline E. Lapsley · Westminster John Knox

ISBN 978-0-664-23707-3

[Amazon](#)

[Bookshop.org](#)

Theological Bible Commentary

Ed. Gail R. O'Day & David L. Petersen · Westminster John Knox

ISBN 978-0-664-22711-1

[Amazon](#)

The New Testament in Color: A Multiethnic Bible Commentary

Ed. Esau McCaulley, Janette H. Ok, Osvaldo Padilla & Amy L. B. Peeler · IVP Academic

ISBN 978-0-8308-1409-1

[Amazon](#)

[Bookshop.org](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (CONT.)

The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures

Michael D. Coogan & Cynthia R. Chapman · Oxford University Press

ISBN 978-0-19-776817-4

[Amazon](#)

[Bookshop.org](#)

The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation

Luke Timothy Johnson & Todd C. Penner · Fortress Press

ISBN 978-0-8006-6361-2

[Amazon](#)

[Bookshop.org](#)



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