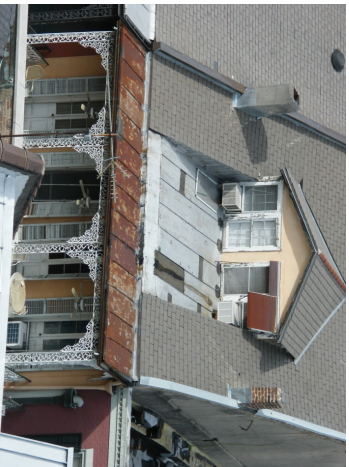


Who is Meant to Be in God's Family

Circle the people who are meant to be in God's Family.

www.BethesdaLutheranCommunities.org



Early Childhood Lesson



LESSON TRUTH
We are all meant to
be in God's family.

 Bethesda
LUTHERAN COMMUNITIES

Bible Verse

"But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose."

1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

Opening Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us.
Thank you for loving us all the same.
We are all part of your family. Help us
remember that. Help us be kind to others.
Help us show love to others. In your
name we pray. Amen.

Message

Did you know that Jesus was a teacher? Yes, Jesus taught people about his Father, God, just like I teach you about God. One time Jesus was teaching people on a hillside about some of the things that God wants us to know. You can find the stories in the Bible. While Jesus was teaching, some parents brought their children to him. They wanted Jesus to bless them.

When some people tried to tell the parents to take the children away, Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me. Don't keep them away. The kingdom of heaven belongs to people like them." (Matthew 19:14 NIV)

Isn't that wonderful? Jesus said that even the children are meant to be in God's family!

Do you think mommies are meant to be in God's family?

Do you think daddies are meant to be in God's family?

Do you think brothers & sisters are meant to be in God's family?

Do you think your neighbor is meant to be in God's family?

Yes...we are ALL meant to be in God's family.

Do you think people who use a wheelchair are meant to be in God's family?

Do you think people who are blind are meant to be in God's family?

Do you think people who can't hear are meant to be in God's family?

Yes...we are ALL meant to be in God's family.

Let's pray...

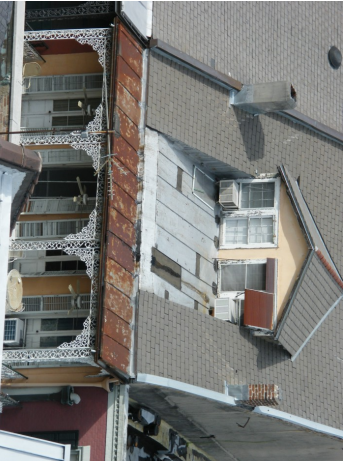
Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for being a teacher. Thank you for loving children. Thank you for the Bible. Help us remember that everyone is meant to be in your family. Help us love others. Help us tell others about you. In your name we pray. Amen.

Who is Meant to Be in God's Family

Circle the people who are meant to be in God's Family.

www.BethesdaLutheranCommunities.org



Early Childhood Lesson

Teacher Copy



LESSON Truth

We are all meant to be in God's family.



Bible Verse

"But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose."

1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

Opening Prayer (consider saying a few words & having the children repeat the words)

Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us. Thank you for loving us all the same. We are all part of your family. Help us remember that. Help us be kind to others. Help us show love to others. In your name we pray. Amen.

Opening Thoughts

Let's play a game called **Who Belongs**.

When I call out something, if you have it or are wearing it or believe it **stand up & yell I belong!**

For example...if you are wearing red today, stand up... now yell ***I belong!***

Great! Now sit down...here we go:

Wearing blue

Have a bike

Like cookies

Have a pet

Like to swim

Here's a tricky one...is everyone listening?

Who is in (***name of teacher's***) class...that's right!

Everyone should be standing. Everyone is in my class.

Everyone is meant to be here!

Good job; now sit down and let me talk to you about another place that we are all meant to be.

Message

Did you know that Jesus was a teacher? Yes, Jesus taught people about his Father, God, just like I teach you about God. One time Jesus was teaching people on a hillside about some of the things that God wants us to know. You can find the stories in here, the Bible (show the Bible). While Jesus was teaching, some parents brought their children to him. They wanted Jesus to bless them. When some people tried to tell the parents to take the children away, Jesus said, (open your Bible to read verse) "Let the little children

come to me. Don't keep them away. The kingdom of heaven belongs to people like them." (Matthew 19:14 NIV)

Isn't that wonderful? Jesus said that even the children are meant to be in God's family!

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Yes...we are ALL meant to be in God's family. Let's pray...

Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for being a teacher. Thank you for loving children. Thank you for the Bible. Help us remember that everyone is meant to be in your family. Help us love others. Help us tell others about you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



Lesson Truth

We are all meant to be in God’s family.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”



Opening Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, you are the maker of us all. You love us and you want all of us to be a part of your family. Help us hear your word today. Help us listen. Bless us as we study and learn together. Amen.

Opening Thoughts

Do you know who created you? Do you know whose plan it was that you would have brown hair or green eyes? Did your parents get to pick out if you were going to be a boy or a girl or was that someone else’s decision? That’s right! God created you; it was his plan and he loves you very much!



Can you tell me what each picture above is?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
 4. _____ 5. _____

What is it about each picture that makes you think it is what you think it is?

Look at the answer key. How did you do?

What made the pictures hard to guess?

We were only given one characteristic, or part, of the picture. We did not see the whole thing!

This situation happens with people many times, too. Take David, for instance. Some people could not see all that David was meant to be because they only saw him as a little kid. Look it up in 1 Samuel!

God Meant for David to be King

Read 1 Samuel 16:1

- The prophet Samuel was saddened by the fact that King Saul had stopped following God's plan. Because of his sinful ways, God and Samuel rejected him and his family as king. What did God tell Samuel to do?

Read 1 Samuel 16:6–7

- Why do you think Samuel thought that Eliab was the son God wanted to anoint, or name, king?
- What did God say to Samuel?
- What do you think it means to "*look at the heart not the outward appearance.*"

Read 1 Samuel 16:10–11

- How many of Jesse's sons came to Samuel to see if they were to be the king?
- At first, David was not brought to Samuel. Where was he?

Read 1 Samuel 16:13

- How did Samuel let David's father and brothers know that David was chosen to be king?
- David was the youngest brother, and probably the smallest. He was the one they sent to watch the sheep. Even though David was these things, God had a plan. He knew what he meant David to be...king!

God Meant for David to Defeat Goliath

Read 1 Samuel 17:3–4

- The Israelites (God's chosen people) were on one side of the battle & the Philistines were on the other side of the battle. How tall was Goliath, the Philistines' champion?
- That is almost as tall as a basketball hoop and taller than most of your bedroom ceilings at home!

Read 1 Samuel 17:8–11

- Would you want to do battle against someone who was nine feet tall?

Read 1 Samuel 17:16, 32–33

- After 40 days, no one was willing to fight Goliath. Finally, David said that he would try it.
- What did King Saul say to David?

Read 1 Samuel 17:37

- David knew that he could trust God and his plan to make him king.

Read 1 Samuel 17:40, 45, 47

- Goliath had a sword, spear and a javelin to fight with; what did David have?
- Why did David pick something simple like stones to defeat Goliath? Who did he want to have credit for defeating the giant?

Read 1 Samuel 17:49

- David was a young boy, nowhere near nine feet tall, but he defeated Goliath with God's help.
- God meant for David to beat Goliath in battle.

God has a plan for all of us. He knows what we are meant to be. He can see past the small things that others think about us and see the big plan for our lives.

Do you know what a disability is? Do you know anyone with a disability?

If I were a person who was blind, I could not see. But, what *could* I do?

If I were a person who was deaf, I could not hear. But, what *could* I do?

God does not want us to look at the outside, at what people may look like or what people may or may not be able to do. God wants us to look at the heart. If we only see someone as a person with a disability, it is a little like looking at the first pictures we looked at. It is NOT the entire person.

God loves us all the same. God forgives us all the same. God knows what we are meant to be.

Closing Thoughts

Throughout David's life, he had people protect him and help him until it was time for him to be king. They saw David as he was meant to be. They saw God's plan for his life. God has a plan for all of our lives. We are all meant to be in his family. We are all meant to be loved. We are all meant to be forgiven. We are all meant to be in heaven with him some day. It is important for us to see everyone, including people with disabilities, as part of God's family...all that they are meant to be.

Check below all of the ways you can help others become all that they are meant to be.

- teach others about Jesus**
- don't talk to others**
- include others in church and school**
- ignore those who look like they may need a friend**
- be kind**
- walk past someone without saying hello**
- be a friend**

Closing Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, you are the one and only true God. You see us for all we are meant to be. Help us share this good news with others so that they can come to know you. Forgive us when we forget to be kind to others, especially people that seem different from us. Help us see the heart of people and all that they are meant to be, and not just a piece or part of them. Thank you for loving us all the same. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



1. CAR



2. HUMMING BIRD



3. BIRTHDAY CAKE



4. VIOLIN



5. APPLE



Lesson Truth

We are all meant to be in God's family.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

"But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose."



Opening Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, you are the maker of us all. You love us and you want all of us to be a part of your family. Help us hear your word today. Help us listen. Bless us as we study and learn together. Amen.

Opening Thoughts

Do you know who created you? Do you know whose plan it was that you would have brown hair or green eyes? Did your parents get to pick out if you were going to be a boy or a girl or was that someone else's decision? That's right! God created you; it was his plan and he loves you very much!



Before we start our Bible study, let's look at some of these photos. Can you tell me what this picture is?

Why do you think it may be a picture of (the students guess)? (discuss)

I can see why you may think it is a picture of (the students guess) because of (characteristics).

(Repeat the above with each picture)

Let's see if we were correct. (Turn to answer key)
How did we do?

Why do you think that we had trouble guessing what each picture actually was?

Correct! We were only given one characteristic, or part, of the picture. We did not see the whole thing.

This situation happens with people many times, too. Take David, for instance. Some people could not see all that David was meant to be because they only saw him as a little kid.

Let's look in the Bible to find out what I am talking about.

God Meant for David to be King

Read 1 Samuel 16:1

- The prophet Samuel was saddened by the fact that King Saul had stopped following God's plan. Because of his sinful ways, God and Samuel rejected him and his family as king. What did God tell Samuel to do?

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Do you know what a disability is? Do you know anyone with a disability? (discuss)

If I were a person who was blind, I could not see. But, what *could* I do? (discuss)

If I were a person who was deaf, I could not hear. But, what *could* I do? (discuss)

God does not want us to look at the outside, at what people may look like or what people may or may not be able to do. God wants us to look at the heart. If we only see someone as a person with a disability, it is a little like looking at the first pictures we looked at. It is NOT the entire person.

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Closing Thoughts

Throughout David's life, he had people protect him and help him until it was time for him to be king. They saw David as he was meant to be. They saw God's plan for his life. God has a plan for all of our lives. We are all meant to be in His family. We are all meant to be loved. We are all meant to be forgiven. We are all meant to be in heaven with him some day. It is important for us to see everyone, including people with disabilities, as part of God's family...all that they are meant to be.

How can you help others, especially people with disabilities, become all that they are meant to be? (answers—try to bring out: teach others about Jesus, include others in church & school, be kind, make sure our church & school are accessible, be a friend)

Check below all of the ways you can help others become all that they are meant to be.

- teach others about Jesus**
- don't talk to others**
- include others in church and school**
- ignore those who look like they may need a friend**
- be kind**
- walk past someone without saying hello**
- be a friend**

Closing Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, you are the one and only true God. You see us for all we are meant to be. Help us share this good news with others so that they can come to know you. Forgive us when we forget to be kind to others, especially people that seem different from us. Help us see the heart of people and all that they are meant to be, and not just a piece or part of them. Thank you for loving us all the same. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



1. CAR



2. HUMMING BIRD



3. BIRTHDAY CAKE



4. VIOLIN



5. APPLE



Jr. & Sr. High Bible Study

Lesson Truth

God created each person to be unique in carrying out his plan of salvation.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

Opening Prayer

Father God, we praise you that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. You created each of us to be a blessing to those around us and to the world that we live in. Please forgive us when we don't place value on your creation or when we tear each other down. Lift us up, Lord. Fill us with a spirit of love and acceptance for each other. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

“Line Up!” Activity

This activity will get your whole group moving and working together as one. On the count of three, line up:

- By Height: Shortest to Tallest
- By Birthday: January 1 through December 31
- By Shoe Size: Smallest to Largest

Opening Discussion

Would the people with the smallest and largest shoe size please stand.

1. *Would the person with the smallest shoe size make a better president? Why or why not?*

Would the shortest and tallest people please stand.

2. *Would the person who is taller make a better teacher? Why or why not?*

Would the people with the earliest birthday in the year and the latest birthday in the year please stand.

3. *Would the person with the latest birthday in the year be able to share God's word more effectively than the any other person? Why or why not?*

WANTED: The Lord looks at the Heart

Just seeing the word **WANTED** may conjure up a whole lot of pictures in your mind.

4. *What do you think of when you see the word **WANTED**?*

In the Bible verses we are about to read, God sent Samuel to find a new and faithful King to serve over his people. King Saul had disappointed God and God **WANTED** a certain someone to fill this role.

Read: I Samuel 16:6–11

God knew exactly what person he **WANTED** to fill the role of serving his people as king over Israel. One by one, all seven of Jesse's sons passed before Samuel until there was only one left.

5. *What qualities would you desire to have in the leader of your country?*

What qualities would God desire in the leader of the Israelites?

As Samuel first listened to God's leading, he knew that the new man to serve as king over Israel had not yet been found.

6. *Why is waiting to find the right leader difficult? What are some things you can do to insure that you make wise decisions when voting or selecting a leader?*

CHOSEN: This is the One

Take a minute and remember back to your grade school years, that horrible moment when the teacher says, "We're picking teams." Perhaps you were the one who was always picked first, or maybe someone in the middle, or even the person who was **CHOSEN** last. That moment felt horrible; but once the game got going, it didn't really matter who was picked when because you were now playing like a team and everyone had a part to play in winning the game.

Read: 1 Samuel 16:11–13

Waiting patiently is not always an easy thing to do, especially if you feel that you have not been **CHOSEN** quickly enough. Samuel's mission would not be complete until he found the one **CHOSEN** by God to serve as the next king of Israel. He waited as the seven brothers passed by him and none were chosen king.

7. *As Samuel waited for this youngest son to arrive, what did he tell the group to do?*

Can you imagine the tension in the room?

Is there a time you can share when you felt impatient, where you felt that you were waiting forever? What was going on and how did you handle it?

As the youngest son David arrived, the Lord said, "This is the one."

Finally, this young man was **CHOSEN** to be king over Israel.

SET APART: The Lord Came Powerfully

Have you ever prayed that God would make it perfectly clear what you are meant to do and how to do it right?

Does anyone wish they had the ultimate answer from God *right now* about something...a clear-cut answer, no questions asked?

8. *Would any of you be willing to share a concern you have with the rest of the group? How can he/she know God's answer to this prayer?*

Would anyone else be willing to share your concern?

Some answers to prayer are very clear, while other times we have to wait for an answer. In Samuel's case, God clearly directed him that David was to be the king over Israel. God **CHOOSE** David. God **SET APART** David for several reasons.

What does vs. 7 tell us God looks at when choosing a leader?

9. *What do you suppose this means?*

*As God looks at your heart, what task may God have you **SET APART** to do? Do you have any ideas of a task in the future?*

One last, powerful action took place symbolizing that David was **SET APART**. While in the presence of his family, Samuel anointed him with oil. This action of blessing is God's way of reinforcing his decision. It seals the deal. In David's case, it signified that he was to serve as God's **WANTED**, **CHOSEN** & **SET APART** king—serving over all the Israelites.

Closing Thoughts

People with disabilities are **WANTED, CHOSEN & SET APART**, just as God's entire family is, to share God's Plan of Salvation with the world!

10. *Consider the people you know with disabilities. What gifts do you see in them when it comes to sharing God's love with others? What about people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; what gifts do you see in them? How can your group include people with disabilities into the family of believers in your church?*

Reread 1 Samuel 16: 7.

Please keep this verse in mind as you work to include all people, with and without disabilities, in meaningful ways in the life and ministry of the Church at large and in your own local church.

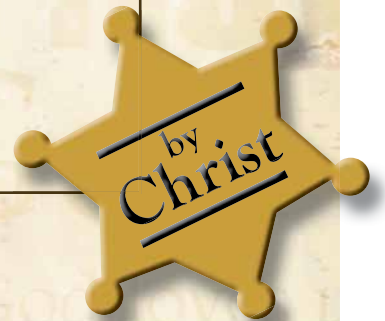
Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, as we read today in scripture, outward appearances mean nothing to you because you look at the heart. Help us look at the heart of the people who you surround us with. Enable us to see the gifts all people bring and use them wisely in our classes and churches. Open our eyes to see the gifts that we can bring to glorify your name as well. Fill us with your Holy Spirit. In your name we pray. Amen.

Optional Activity

As part of the closing prayer, group leaders may provide a word of blessing individually over their students. Students may also do so over their leader. For deeper meaning, you may choose to use anointing oil with the blessing.

· WANTED ·



I am **WANTED**; why do I come to church? _____

I am **CHOSEN**; my favorite Bible verse is _____

I am **SET APART**; my gifts & talents are _____



Adult Bible Study

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”



Imagine a high-hurdler, tensed in the starting block before a race. The gun goes off, and simultaneously, her body propels forward. As she runs, you can see the years of training and discipline as she moves toward the first hurdle. Her body is an economy of motion. Nothing is wasted. She barely clears the hurdle, not really jumping, just easily stretching over it. It seems as if she defies gravity, as if her feet never touch the ground. Then the final sprint and forward lean, and the race is over before the echo of the starting pistol has left the stadium.

A well-trained athlete, whatever the sport, is a beautiful example of how, when everything works together, the result seems to be perfection. It is when the outcome looks as if it were simply meant to be.

Several times in his letters, Paul uses the example of an athlete to describe his life desires.

Read **1 Corinthians 9:24–27**.

1. *To which two athletic events does Paul refer? What obvious contrast does Paul make between the athlete and the Christian?*

As is the case with most analogies, this one falls short of describing the Christian life exactly. *What phrase in verse 24 does not apply to the Christian?*

2. *What was Paul’s purpose according to this passage? How could the discipline of the body affect his, and your, spiritual efforts?*

Greek culture was well-known for its admiration of athletic achievement. The city of Corinth was no exception. In fact, it hosted a series of athletic contests that were second only to the Olympics in ancient times. For this reason, most of the members of the Corinthian church would be familiar with Paul’s example.

It would be like a writer today referring to the home-town professional sports franchise.

2 Timothy 4:6–8 might add further clarification to this example. Read this passage.

3. *What additional information do Paul’s words here provide? Who wins the “crown of righteousness?”*

Paul’s use of these examples might lead us to think that he was a strapping athlete, strong and physically fit. However, careful reading of his letters reveals quite the opposite.

Read **2 Corinthians 12:6–10**.

4. *What is the result of “Paul’s thorn”? How was Paul made strong in his weakness. How are we made strong in our weaknesses?*

It is impossible to know exactly what Paul’s “thorn” was. However, we can be fairly certain that it was a physical disability and that it was at times debilitating. There are some additional hints in his letter to the Galatians.

Read **Galatians 4:12–14**.

Here Paul refers to a “bodily ailment” that caused him to remain among these congregations.

5. How did Paul describe this ailment? Have you ever faced a bodily ailment that held you back from something? What were Paul's expectations because of this ailment? What were your expectations because of your ailment? Ironic and significant: Paul had a bodily ailment that, at times, slowed him down. Revisit v.#13. What could this mean?

Read **2 Corinthians 10:10**.

6. What further light might this shed on Paul's disability?

Ironic and significant: Paul had a physical burden that went uncured and yet he is given the power through Christ to lift others burdens.

Paul was one of the greatest men of God that ever lived, but God chose to allow him to live with a disability that could have interfered with the work that he had been called to do. The passage in Galatians tells us that he was acutely aware of the effect that his appearance could have. However, Paul was able to embrace his disability and use it to teach others.

Read **1 Corinthians 12:12–26**.

7. How might Paul's personal experience with disability have shaped what is written here? Paul had spent considerable time in Corinth (see Acts 18). How might the knowledge of Paul's disability affected how Corinthians understood Paul's Letters?

Reopen your discussion on **2 Corinthians 12:6–10**. Does this passage add anything to your understanding of Paul's view of weakness?

Return to the opening paragraph about the hurdler and apply Paul's example of the Church as the human body. Think about how each body part is essential for the racer to perform at her peak. As you imagine her running the race, think about which parts of the body are visible and obviously contributing to her efforts. Then consider those parts which you cannot see.

8. Could the runner compete if his heart was not pumping blood to his muscles, or if his lungs were not replenishing the blood's oxygen levels?

Finding body parts that are not essential to the overall performance of this athlete would be difficult. Remember, success in the race is only a small part of the big picture.

Paul wanted the church at Corinth to understand that no one should feel inferior, and at the same time, no one should feel superior. This is not solely a case of self-image.

9. What does 1 Corinthians 12:18 tell us about our place in the body? Compare this verse to Ephesians 2:10. Why should we feel neither inferior or superior?

As baptized Christians, we are equal participants in the mission of the Church. In fact, every one of us is indispensable in this mission, even those individuals who appear weak to our sensibilities. You might be saying, "Wait a minute, I thought this was a study on people with disabilities!"

It was! **The lesson to be learned is that God does not consider disabilities when he calls us by Word and Sacrament—he only asks us to do our part**, the part that he has already predetermined us to do. Should we, as the Body of Christ, see anyone any differently?

Women's Bible Study



Lesson Truth

God created you to be exactly who you are, with all the gifts and challenges that make up your “self.” No matter what the expectations of others or the insecurities in your heart, God has crafted you for a specific purpose and is eager for you to realize your potential.

Bible Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18 (NRSV)

“But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose.”

Jeremiah 1:5 (NirV)

“Before I formed you in your mother’s body I chose you. Before you were born I set you apart to serve me. I appointed you to be a prophet to the nations.”

Opening Prayer

Father God, open our hearts to hear your call on our lives. Let the criticisms and expectations of others and our own self doubts take on less importance as we learn to embrace the people you meant us to be. Amen.

Opening thoughts

As women today, we have many pressures and expectations imposed upon us regarding what, and who, we are meant to be. There are pressures about what we are meant to be doing or the choices we are making. There are superficial expectations; for example, how we should look or what foods we should eat. We feel judged about how we spend our time, who we associate with and how much we accomplish in a day. It can be very overwhelming.

What are some pressures that you face?

What are some things that you do to help yourself when you feel overwhelmed?

Thankfully, we can remember that our heavenly Father is here for us. If we focus on what God means for us to be, we will not be discouraged. (See **Joshua 1:9**.)

Meant to be unique

We are uniquely made! Reread **Jeremiah 1:5**.

Each of us is exactly as we were *created* to be. What freedom to know that it doesn't matter how we compare to others! God does not compare. God designed us as he meant us to be, gifted specifically for his purpose, **BEFORE** we were even conceived!

1. *How does this passage make you feel? Do you feel a sense of relief?*

God is talking directly to you in this passage. Rewrite this passage using your name and your thoughts.

The verse goes on to say that God set us apart, or consecrated us, before we were born. That means to dedicate solemnly to a purpose or goal. It means we have specific work to do. God means for us to use our gifts to further his kingdom.

2. *What are some gifts that you have that can further God's Kingdom?*

Do you see, or know of, any specific gifts that others in this room have?

Telling others about our Savior Jesus, his love and the free gift of salvation is our ultimate purpose. Our gifts are means to that end; they are the tools we have been given to achieve that purpose.

We can be encouraged by looking at some women in the Bible who had amazing experiences as they lived the lives God had planned for them.

Meant to be courageous

Esther is a surprising story on many levels. You can read her story in the Book of Esther. It isn't very long, and the plot is laced with many twists, turns and complications. It is as good as any mystery novel! Esther was just as unsure, young, deceitful, reluctant, fearful, and self-serving as we may be. Her gifts, though, led her to be exactly what God meant for her to be. She was courageous and trusted in him. God used her in powerful ways to save many lives. She literally saved a nation!

3. *It is hard to walk the line of fear and courage.*

Have you ever felt afraid? Did you pray for courage?

What happened?

Meant to be influential

Priscilla was quite the missionary. You can visit her story in Acts 18:1–26. She worked alongside of her husband, Aquila, in their thriving business at a time when that was not typical. She was mentored by Paul when he was in Rome on one of his early missionary trips. She became most influential as a co-founder of the early Christian church. Priscilla talked to everyone, everywhere about Jesus. She told everyone who would listen about the crucified and risen Lord. She is credited with the expansion of the church, though women were not allowed to speak in the public arena at that time. Her home was a place of teaching and learning and was one of the first “house churches.” Many of her students went on to be gifted teachers sharing the good news.

4. *Have you been gifted with the talent to share your faith easily?*

Who was the last person you talked to about Christ?

Meant to be a leader

Deborah's story is told in the book of Judges, chapters four and five. She was gifted as a judge. A “judge” in Israel was someone who led the tribe in times of peace and settled arguments and problems. War found them gathering the tribes and leading the defense or offense against the enemy. Deborah once encouraged

and sent a small band of Israelites into battle against the much larger army of Canaan. She summoned the most able military general and told him what to do! Her tribe was victorious against many odds and this gave them their first access to the fertile land of Canaan.

5. *Have you ever needed to “take charge” of a situation?*

Did you like being the leader?

Are there places or groups you can lead within your congregation?

There are many more wonderful stories of women in the Bible living out the lives they were meant to have. Take some time this week to visit:

Ruth and Naomi in the book of **Ruth**

Elizabeth in **Luke 1**

The wife of Pontius Pilate in **Matthew 27:19**

Dorcas in **Acts 9:36–43**

Mary, the mother of Jesus, in **Luke 2**

Meant to Be Part of God's Kingdom

As in the Bible, we are all uniquely gifted by God for a purpose. Being human and prone to judgment of others, however, it is often hard for us to see others' gifts. Consider the following scenarios:

- The neighbor who spends more time in her garden than picking up her kids toys in the front yard
- The chronically happy person who exasperates us because they are *never* anything but happy
- The teenager who never looks us in the eye and is constantly staring at his electronics
- The man in the wheelchair who draws throughout every service and meeting
- The coworker who cries on a dime
- The man behind us who sings *very* loud
- The woman with intellectual and developmental disabilities who runs to the coffee/snack table during the last hymn of the service
- The widow who tells story after story about when she was young

6. *Have you ever found yourself grumbling or making assumptions about others?*

Why do you think we judge others?

What could you do next time you feel frustrated with another person?

Revisit the scenarios above. *What gifts may God want us to see in these people?*

Closing thoughts

There are times we get discouraged. We feel that the expectations of those in our lives are unending. We struggle to identify our gifts and flounder when trying to use them. Christ is the answer!

Seeing the giftedness in others—especially someone who rubs us the wrong way or whose disabilities are visible—is often challenging. Christ is the answer!

Consider asking others what they like about themselves. Take the time to help others feel capable and flourish in God's Kingdom. Inspire someone to know they are meant to be part of God's family. Christ is the answer!

Closing prayer

Lord Jesus, we know that you want us to use our gifts to spread the word about you. Be with us when we get discouraged. We know you want us to see your gifts in others. Help us to do so and be an encouragement to them. Help us never dismiss or belittle anyone's contribution to our God's Grand Design and to embrace and encourage the diversity God created. In your name we pray. Amen.