
Lesson Plans for Old Testament

Correlated with Curriculum Guidelines for Adolescent Catechesis and Confirmation, Diocese of Buffalo, 2004.

Lesson Plan #1: *THE PROPHETS* (Old Testament p.122)

Begin class with these 2 ‘calls to be a prophet’: Jeremiah 1:4-10 and Isaiah 6:1-9.

Activity: Have each student introduce himself/herself and answer the question: “What three things would you like people to remember about you?” If you wish you may spend some time having students reflect on points made by members of the class.

Introduce the meaning of “prophet” in the Old Testament as a person who was raised up by God to tell the people of the will, plans, and warnings of God. A prophet is not someone who tells the future! The Biblical prophets were people who had a personal relationship with God and were able to communicate his perspective to the people. Usually, the content of the prophet’s message concerned itself with faithfulness to God’s commandments and issues of social justice. Often, a prophet’s message was hard to hear because it forced people to change their lives. In addition, the prophets reminded people of God’s forgiveness and ongoing love for them. Usually the message of a prophet is universal. It not only applies to the people of his or her time; it also applies to people today.

Explain to the students that *three* (3) prophets are called *major prophets* because their books in the Old Testament are quite lengthy: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Allow the students individually or in groups of four to peruse these three books.

Introduce the *twelve* (12) *minor prophets* of the Old Testament who are called minor because their books are quite short: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Invite the students individually or in groups to read from the books of the minor prophets until they find a few verses that seem to apply to a current event or situation. Have them copy the passage and then explain how it applies and what they think the prophet would say about that event or situation today.

Review or Handout the five marks of the prophets:

1. Their call from God. Most prophets perceived a special call from God that caused them to leave their previous way of life in order to live as a prophet.
2. Their call to be God’s spokesperson or messenger. They spoke God’s mind to the people, often beginning their message with “Thus says the Lord.”
3. Their duty to protect the law of Moses and God’s covenant. They criticized people for sinning against God’s law and urged people to return to the covenant.
4. Their duty to be advocates for the poor. (They were concerned about social justice issues.)
5. Their duty as servants to call people back to right relationships with God. (They reminded people – by the example of their own lives – of God’s great faithfulness and ability to forgive them.)

The prophets were concerned about the sins and selfishness of the wealthy, about the worship of false gods, and about the unjust treatment of the poor. The prophets also taught that people should worship Yahweh alone, not false gods.

Brainstorm with the class on what would be the main social concerns of the prophets; on what religious issues troubled them.

Then, *ask*: “Do you think there are “prophets” in the world today? How would we recognize a modern prophet or identify a false prophet?” Discuss as needed. Suggest that Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Bishop Desmond Tutu are examples of modern prophets if the students fail to mention them. Optional: Encourage students to find news articles on modern prophets who are law-protectors, advocates for the poor, and servants. Have them cut out the articles and attach them to a poster with a brief explanation for each on why the person fits the particular category.

Optional: Have students working in groups prepare a journal of contemporary prophetic statements on the following issues. Besides the issues below, have the groups include at least three issues of their own.

- abortion
- death penalty
- genetic research
- warfare
- poverty
- environment
- immigration
- political refugees
- religious tolerance
- racism
- political reform

Read 1 Kings 19. God came to Elijah, not in the form of fire or earthquake or strong wind, but in a tiny whispering sound: a still, small voice. The prayer form called meditation is a way to find God in such a manner. Close eyes, assume a comfortable position, relax in the presence of God.

End class with a prayer: I will espouse you to me forever:

I will espouse you in right and in justice,
in love and in mercy;
I will espouse you in fidelity,
And you shall know the Lord. --- *Hosea 2: 21-22*

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Lesson Plan #2: *Development of the Bible* (Old Testament p.123)

SUPPLIES: paper
Pens/pencils
New American Bible
King James Bible

book stand
candles

TIPS FOR FACILITATING DISCUSSION

Let them answer the questions – waiting for answers is important

Reflective listening – repeat back what they say so that everyone hears it

As discussion goes on invite responses from the introverts (more quiet students)

*Please note that the possible discussion responses in italics are only suggestions. Feel free to come up with other discussion questions. The young people's responses may take the discussion in a different direction than given in the lesson plan. If that direction corresponds to the theme facilitate it through that.

ACTIVITY: Ask for 10 volunteers and tell them to stand in a straight line. You will whisper the following sentence to the first young person and he/she has to pass it down the line. Once it gets to the end the last young person will say the sentence out loud. Typically what he/she says will be different than the original sentence.

5 min.

Sentence: Five jolly jumping beans crossed the road to see twenty elephants jumping rope and singing songs.

SUMMARY: Prior to printed text all information was passed on by spoken word/orally. How accurate do you think this transmission was? In our short activity with 10 people our one sentence became very different. Imagine how a story would change as it was passed from person to person over a period of years.

ACTIVITY: Give each young person a sheet of paper and tell them to divide it into three columns.

1. In the first column instruct them to write down a description of one of their grandparents. They should write it as he/she would describe the grandparent.
2. In the second column instruct them to write down the description of this same grandparent if his/her spouse were writing it.
3. In the third column instruct them to write down the description of this same grandparent if their child (student's mother/father) were writing it.

15 min.

When the young people are done ask them the following questions.

What was the same about all 3 descriptions?

What was different?

Why were these different?

SUMMARY: In addition to oral tradition, the way things are described depends on who is speaking/writing. When we consider how the Bible became what it is today we have to think about how it developed. Originally the Bible was passed on by oral accounts. How these oral accounts were told depended on who was telling it. Would the descriptions be effected by the speaker's audience? Obviously this can also effect they way things are said.

ACTIVITY: Divide the young people into 3 small groups. Each group will write an account of Bishop Kmiec becoming the new Bishop of the Diocese of Buffalo. One group will write this for the Buffalo Evening News. Another group will write it for the school newspaper. The third group will write it for a letter to be sent to the priests and religious of the Diocese.

15 min.

When the groups are done have each group read their account. Note the differences and similarities. Ask the students if the accounts would be different if they were written in the fall of 2004 when this actually happened. Why or why not?

SUMMARY: The first Gospel was written 70 years after Jesus died. All of the accounts in the Bible were written after they happened. When we read the Bible we need to remember that not only did it develop from oral tradition but the passage of time and the write and audience had an effect on the final text of the Bible that we read today.

This is why when Catholics read the Bible we use the historical critical method of interpreting it. We consider all of these effects plus the history of the time that the events occurred when we read it.

TRANSLATION ACTIVITY: Select a passage from the Bible and ask 2 of the young people to read it. Have one student read from the New American Bible and the other from the King James Bible. When they are done reading note the differences. Ask if any of the young people take a foreign language. Can the same thing be said in two different languages? The answer is yes and no. The same message can be conveyed but it is difficult to say the message exactly the same way. The Bible has been edited (King James and New American) and it has been translated from and to different languages over time. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek.

15 min.

SUMMARY: The Bible is the inspired word of God. “Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.” (NDC) The historical critical method allows us to hear God’s message to us.

CANON OF SACRED SCRIPTURE

When wonderful and amazing things happen (like the life of Jesus Christ) there are many writings about it. The writings that are part of the Bible were not chosen but acknowledged to be inspired. In 393 A.D. the Council of Hippo and subsequent councils drew up a list or canon of inspired books. This is the Canon of Sacred Scripture that is the Bible we know today. There are a total of 73 books in the Bible (46 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.)

5 min.

CLOSURE:

Get 3/5 responses to the following depending on time:

- I now know . . .
- I still wonder about . . .
- I understand . . .

5 min.

CLOSING PRAYER: Do a Bible enthronement with candles and a procession. Let the students select a reading to use. You may want to use music too.

10 min.

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