

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

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SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTORY WEEK:

1 Samuel 16, John 9

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/
BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:

¶163 Basic Rights and Freedoms, H, Book of Resolutions #4285 “Overcoming Ableism and Audism”

OBJECTIVE:

To help youth explore how God’s perspective is radically different from ours — a vision that sees beyond appearance, disability, stigma, or status. Students will reflect on how God calls and heals even those others overlook, and how they, too, can live as children of light.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

Blindfolds, Markers, Bible/Scripture handouts (1 Samuel 16, John 9, Psalm 23), paper with face silhouette-per student.

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say: Let’s begin by taking a moment to settle in. Find a comfortable position, put your feet on the floor, and let your hands rest gently in your lap.

Say: Take a slow, deep breath in... and let it out. Again, breathe in... and release. Let the busyness of today fade into the background. Let your body feel heavy and grounded. Let your mind become quiet.

(Pause for stillness.)

Say: I’m going to read Psalm 23 aloud. I invite you to close your eyes, relax your shoulders, and just listen.

(Slowly read Psalm 23, allowing space between each verse.)

Say: As you heard the words, ‘green pastures,’ ‘still waters,’ ‘restores my soul,’ notice if anything stood out to you.

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(Pause for responses)

Say: Now think about this question. What would it mean for your soul to be restored today? Maybe you've been stressed, tired, overwhelmed, or just feeling a little empty. Restoration can mean peace. It can mean comfort. It can mean feeling safe or guided or renewed.

(Pause students to reflect silently.)

Say: Take one more deep breath in... and let it out slowly.

Pray: Holy God, our Shepherd, thank you for being the One who leads us beside still waters and restores our souls. Help us feel your peace today. Help us trust your guidance. Help us rest in your presence. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say: Today we are going to explore two stories about how people see and how God sees. One story is about choosing a king and the other is about a man born blind. Both stories challenge us to look deeper than appearances.

Say: We are going to read the passages twice. First, we will read them aloud then we will read again in pairs.

Say: Let's start with 1 Samuel 16. Listen for moments where someone is seen differently.

(Assign readers and read 1 Samuel 16:1-13.)

Say: Now we will read John 9:1-12. Again, notice moments where people see the situation differently or make assumptions.

(Assign readers and read John 9:1-12.)

Say: Now, find a partner. Read both passages again together. As you read, mark or highlight any phrases where someone is judged, misunderstood, or seen in a surprising way.

NOTES

Read the texts in pairs or aloud dramatically.

Have youth mark phrases where someone is *seen differently*.

Have them do a read through of both texts then have them mark the phrases

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(5 minutes for pairs to read and mark.)

Say: Let's start with John 9. Look at the phrases you marked.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do the disciples ask whose sin caused the man's blindness? (*People back then often believed suffering was always caused by someone's sin, either the person or their family.*)
- How does Jesus respond? (*Jesus says the blindness wasn't caused by sin at all. He shifts the focus from blame to purpose. This shows that God doesn't see suffering as punishment.*)
- What does this tell us about God's view of suffering? (*God doesn't blame people for every struggle. God sees the whole person, not just their condition.*)

Say: Now, let's look at 1 Samuel 16.

Ask: What does God say about how humans look vs. how God sees?

(Pause for responses.)

Say: These stories connect to our lives in powerful ways. Let's reflect together.

Reflection Questions

- When have you felt unseen, misunderstood, or judged by your appearance?
- What does it mean to believe that God sees your heart, your real intentions, your struggles, your goodness?
- How can we, as a church and a youth group, unlearn spiritual blindness, the kind of blindness that makes us judge, assume, or overlook people?

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GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

Activity 1

Say: Everyone take a silhouette sheet and a marker.

Say: On the outer edges of your paper, write words or labels the world sometimes gives you. Things people assume because of your appearance, abilities, background, or identity. These can be things people say out loud or things you've felt placed on you silently.

(Pause for 2-3 minutes for activity.)

Say: Now in the center, right over the silhouette, write how God sees you. You can draw from Psalm 23 or this verse from 1 Samuel 16:7 “People look at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.” Write words like: loved, enough, courageous, worthy, seen, capable, or anything that speaks truth to you.

(Pause for students to write.)

Discussion Questions:

- What labels did the world put on you that felt heavy or untrue?
- How did it feel to replace them with how God sees you?
- What surprised you about what you wrote?

Say: Just like the labels we wrote on the outside of our mirrors, people often label others based on what they can see or what they assume. Ableism does this when it treats someone's disability as their whole identity, instead of seeing their gifts, their strengths, their heart.

Say: God never looks at someone and sees only one part of them. God sees the whole person, their courage, their kindness, their creativity, their calling. When we follow God's example, we stop reducing people to labels. We see their full humanity. We treat every person as someone made in God's image.

NOTES

Supplies: silhouette sheet and markers for students.

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Activity 2

Say: In pairs, decide who will be the ‘navigator’ and who will be the person with their eyes closed. I’ll pass out blindfolds.

Say: Navigators, your job is to guide your partner safely around the room using only your voice. No touching, no pulling, no pushing. If you are the one with your eyes closed, your job is to listen closely and move slowly. We are going to do this for about two minutes. Navigators, be gentle and clear. For those blindfolded, let me know if you need to stop at any time.

(Pause for activity.)

Say: Now switch! The navigators become the ones with eyes closed, and the others will guide.

(Pause for activity.)

Discussion Questions

- What did it feel like to be guided with your eyes closed?
- What did it feel like to be the one giving guidance?
- What helped trust happen?
- What made it harder?

Say: When someone closes their eyes, the rest of us suddenly become more aware of things we usually take for granted, like how loud the room is, how close objects are, how fast people walk. For people who are blind or have low vision, the world isn’t scary or less than, but it often becomes harder because other people don’t create space with respect.

Say: Ableism shows up when we assume someone with a disability needs to be ‘fixed,’ or that they are helpless or less capable. But today we saw:

- Trust happens through communication and respect
- Everyone can participate fully when people create space fairly.

NOTES

Supplies: blindfolds for half the class. Create pathways/open space in the classroom.

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- Being vulnerable doesn't make anyone less valuable.

God calls us to see all people, of all abilities, as fully human, fully capable, and fully beloved.

Say: Overcoming ableism starts with changing how we see, how we speak, and how we treat each other. Let's be people who make space for everyone's full personhood, because that is the world God desires for all of us.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

Say: I'm going to read a passage from Ephesians 5:8-14. Listen closely to these words and let them speak to you personally.

(Read the passage slowly, allowing pauses between phrases.)

Say: Let's focus on this line 'Now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light.'

Ask: What does it mean to be a light in a world that can feel dark or hard? How can your actions, words, and attitudes reflect God's love and goodness?

(Pause for reflection.)

Say: Now I want each of you to think of one way you can reflect God's light this week. It could be something big or small.

(Possible responses: helping someone who feels left out, speaking up for someone who's treated unfairly, showing kindness to someone having a hard day, taking care of God's creation.)

Pray: May your eyes see as God sees. May your hands heal as Jesus heals. And may your light shine where others feel unseen. Amen.