



DiscipleLand

Missions Education

Level 4, Quarter A—Eyewitnesses

Integrate these World-missions concepts into your **DiscipleLand** lesson. Introduce your children to one missions truth each lesson.

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4A—Missions Education

The First Team

Teacher Intro—Jesus’ apostles were the first players on “God’s team” that obeyed the command to make disciples of all nations. Filled with God’s Holy Spirit, these men and their supporters carried the Gospel message into new areas, trained converts, established and strengthened house churches, and passed God’s missionary heart onto a new generation of believers.

The “first team” players following those in the early church are unknown to many Christians. Yet, after the apostles died, God continued to move in mighty ways to advance His kingdom. Current mission strategies like tent-making, Bible translation, targeting centers of trade, and using power encounters have their foundation in the work of these faithful men and women. Along with first century believers, they endured hardship and persecution, considering the glorious message of Jesus as more valuable than their own lives.

Lesson 1—Fishers of Men

Supplies: world map, fishing tackle box and pole (optional)

The four Gospels give us glimpses into the lives of the disciples. In Acts, these men are called apostles, those who saw Jesus after He had risen from the dead. Let’s learn about some of these apostles and the part they played in spreading the Good News about Jesus.

Nicknamed the “Sons of Thunder,” James and John could be impulsive and self-centered. Jesus called these brothers from their fishing boats to follow him and become “fishers of men.” Discuss the equipment fishermen may have used in Jesus’ day. After Jesus’ death and resurrection, James and John became leaders in the early Church, putting Jesus before all else and learning to love others. Discuss what would be needed to fish for people.

James became a church leader in Jerusalem. On the map, locate Israel and the city of Jerusalem. He was outspoken about his faith, attracting the attention of those who hated the message of Jesus. Herod Agrippa ordered his death and James was beheaded. He was the first apostle to die for his faith. John, shared his faith, taught believers, and became the leader of the church in Ephesus. To prevent John from preaching about Jesus’ resurrection, authorities arrested and imprisoned him for two years on the Greek island of Patmos. On a map, locate Greece. Then point out the islands

in the Aegean Sea near the west coast of Turkey. **During this period in exile, John wrote the last book in the Bible, Revelation. It is believed that John died in Ephesus a very old man, probably in his nineties. James and John continued to be “fishers of men” until their deaths.**

Lesson 2—Preaching and Persecution

Supplies: Bible, world map

Peter the apostle is remembered for his outspoken nature. A believing Peter confessed that Jesus was the Son of God. A bold Peter boasted that he would never desert Jesus. A fearful Peter denied that he knew Jesus. A humble Peter felt Jesus’ forgiveness. Once the Holy Spirit came into Peter’s life, God used Peter’s words to teach and lead believers in the early Church.

Peter preached one of his most powerful sermons in Jerusalem. As a result, three thousand people believed in Jesus. Have students take turns reading some of this sermon in Acts 2:22-24; 38-39. Peter traveled far from Jerusalem, preaching and performing miracles of healing. People believe he went as far as Rome. On a world map find Jerusalem and trace possible routes to Rome.

Peter suffered for the message of Jesus that he preached. A great wave of persecution against believers arose in Rome. Concerned for his safety, Peter’s friends urged him to leave the city. A story is told that as Peter left Rome, he saw a vision of Jesus. He asked Jesus where He was going and Jesus replied, “To Rome to be crucified again.” Peter decided this meant he was supposed to return to the city. He did and was put to death on a cross, many believe, upside down.

Lesson 3—To the Ends of the Earth

Supplies: Bible, world map, 11 sticky notes with the names of the following countries or regions: Egypt, Greece, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, North Africa, Russia, Spain, Syria, Turkey

In Acts, Jesus described the big job the disciples would do with the power of the Holy Spirit. Read Acts 1:8 with the students. **The early Church began in Jerusalem, the very place where the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. We learned about how James, John, and Peter were witnesses. What about the other disciples? Where did they go?** Pass out the sticky notes to individuals or pairs. As you call out each country or region, have students with the matching sticky note find the location and place the sticky note on the map. **Israel, Egypt, North Africa, Turkey, Iran, Syria, Greece, Spain, Russia, and India.** After the map activity, invite students to share their reactions.

Andrew, Matthew, Bartholomew, Philip, and others were ordinary men who lived extraordinary lives. These apostles devoted their lives to telling other people about Jesus. They demonstrated what can be done by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 4—Holding the Ropes

Supplies: Bible, a piece of rope, Bibles, notecards with the following references: women (Luke 8:1-3); Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42); Lydia (Acts 16:12-15, 40)

The twelve apostles were the first of a vast host of men, women, and children who traveled far and wide, sharing the Good News about Jesus. Many others assisted these messengers of the Gospel by using the gifts and talents God gave them.

Hold up the piece of rope. **Suppose you needed to crawl down into a deep hole. How could this rope help you?** Allow students to share. **It would be important to have someone strong holding the other end of the rope to support you and pull you back up. William Carey, a famous missionary, volunteered to bring God's Word to India. To his friends who would remain in England he said, "Remember that you must hold the ropes." What do you think he meant?** Let students share.

Let's look at some examples of people who held the ropes for Jesus, his apostles, and the apostle Paul. Divide the students into three groups. Give each group a card and Bible. Look up and read the verses on your card. Find out how the women were holding the ropes, or helping the messengers to do their job. After about 3 minutes, let each group share their findings.

Providing money, food, shelter, and friendship encourages messengers of the Gospel and allows them to focus on their job. Women followed Jesus everywhere He went, helping to meet His needs. Mary and Martha opened their home to Jesus. He and His disciples stopped by many times on their way to Jerusalem. Lydia was a wealthy businesswoman, probably with a large house. When she became a believer, she invited Paul and Silas to stay with her. Lydia also offered her home as a meeting place for believers.

Do you know any missionaries? As they take the Gospel to other places in the world, what are some ways that believers can hold the ropes for them?

Lesson 5—First Tentmakers

Supplies: Bible, Bible-times map

What does it mean to earn a living? Let students share how their parents earn a living. **Tentmakers are missionaries who have a full-time job, but whose main focus is on sharing the Gospel and training new believers to follow Jesus. Let's find out how working missionaries got the name "tentmakers."** When the apostle Paul was ministering in the city of Corinth, he met Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, a couple who had moved from Rome because of persecution. Find Corinth and Rome on the map. **Paul befriended them because all three had something in common.** Have a student read Acts 18:3-4. **What did they do to earn a living? Paul lived with Priscilla and Aquila, made tents, and taught about Jesus in the Jewish place of worship.**

When Paul sailed to Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila went with him. Find Ephesus on the map. **They stayed to help spread the Gospel even after Paul had traveled on to other cities. While working at their tent-making trade, Priscilla and Aquila opened their home to believers, teaching them the Word of God. Later, they moved back to Rome. Paul wrote about them in a letter to believers in Rome.** Have a student read Romans 16:3-5a. **What new things did you hear about Priscilla and Aquila?** (Fellow workers with Paul, risked their lives for the Gospel, a church met in their home in Rome, etc.) **Paul and his two friends, Priscilla and Aquila, were the first missionary tentmakers.**

Today, some government leaders are opposed to the message of Jesus and will not allow missionaries to enter their country. These same leaders want their citizens to receive a good education, medical care, clean water, and healthy foods. In some of these countries, natural disasters like floods and earthquakes have destroyed homes. How could missionaries enter these countries as tentmakers? Lead a discussion on occupations that could address these needs.

Lesson 6—Martyrdom

Supplies: Bible, clip art of a lit firecracker, clip art of weight lifter

Many people opposed the message of Jesus during the early Church, arresting, beating, and imprisoning believers. People who die for their faith are called “martyrs.” God can use the deaths of His people to spread the Gospel into new areas and make believers stronger.

Imagine you are playing soccer outside with your friends. Have several students stand in a group. Someone throws a lighted firecracker and it lands near your group. Show the picture of the lit firecracker and put it on the floor near the students. **What would you and your friends do?** Let students act this out. Hopefully, they will scatter in different directions. Let’s see how martyrdom is like a lit firecracker. Stephen was a martyr during the early Church. The Jewish leaders killed Stephen because they did not believe his message that Jesus, the one they crucified, is the Son of God. Have a student read Acts 7:57-60. **After Stephen’s death, persecution against believers in Jerusalem increased.** Have a student read Acts 8:1, 4. **What were two results?** (Believers scattered, and the Gospel was preached in new areas.) **Martyrdom acts like a lit firecracker, causing God’s Word to spread to new areas where believers are scattered.**

Show the clip art of the weight lifter. **What do weightlifters go through to be able to lift hundreds of pounds?** Let students share. **It takes years of practice and many sore muscles to become this strong. Martyrdom is similar to weightlifting. Though painful, it strengthens the faith of other believers. One example is Polycarp. He was a student of the apostle John. He led the church in Smyrna, passing down what the apostles had taught him. Polycarp also wrote letters to believers, encouraging them to stand firm in their faith. At age 86, Polycarp was arrested, accused of being a Christian, and sentenced to death. Roman soldiers offered to free Polycarp if he would curse Jesus. Here is Polycarp’s response: “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and he never did me any injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior.” Polycarp was burned in a stadium before a crowd of people and then killed with a dagger. This act of martyrdom strengthened early believers, encouraging them to hold onto their faith, even when facing persecution or death.**

Pray for believers today who live in countries where they undergo persecution and sometimes face death.

Lesson 7—Early Bible Translation

Supplies: Bible, world map or globe

Hold up the Bible. **This copy of God’s Word is in English. Do you know the first languages in which the Bible was written?** Allow students to make guesses. **Old Testament books were written in Hebrew and Aramaic. By Jesus’ time, Greek was widely used in the area around the Mediterranean Sea. The original New Testament was written in Greek. When Roman armies conquered the region and extended their empire into new areas, the Bible was translated into Latin for the Roman-speaking world. The Goths, a large tribe in Europe, lived along the frontier of the Roman Empire. The Romans both feared and looked down on this crude, warlike people who fought against Roman domination. The Goths did not speak Greek or Latin. How would they hear God’s Word?**

In the 300’s God prepared Ulfila, a man with a special family background, for this important job. Many years earlier, Gothic raiders kidnapped his grandparents, took them from their homeland, and brought them to live as captives in Gothic territory. Locate Turkey, where Ulfila’s grandparents had lived. Locate Romania, the area where the Goths took them. Ulfila was born and raised among the Goths, but his father passed on his Christian beliefs, teaching his son to love and serve Jesus. When he grew up, Ulfila went to a special school to study the Scriptures and became an important church leader called a bishop.

Ulfila could have hated the Goths for the way they treated his grandparents. Instead, God gave Ulfila a special love for the Goths. For 40 years he lived among them and taught them about Jesus. This was not easy. Many Goths were nomads, moving from place to place without permanent homes. The Goths did not even have a written language. Ulfila created a new alphabet to represent the sounds in their words. Then he spent many years translating the Bible into the Gothic language. As Goths learned to read God’s Word, some trusted in Jesus. These travelers took God’s Word with them, helping spread it throughout Europe. God had uniquely prepared Ulfila to become one of the first Bible translators. Without his ministry and that of other translators who followed him, we would not have our English Bible today.

Thank God giving us His Word in our language. Pray for modern-day Bible translators working in cultures without written languages. Pray for wisdom as they create alphabets, translate God’s Word, and teach people to read.

Lesson 8—Aliens and Wanderers

Supplies: Bible, world map or globe, board or chart paper

The Romans invaded the Greeks. Then Goths and Anglo-Saxons invaded Roman territories. What are some reasons groups of people make war on one another? Let students share. **In the 500-600's, a new type of invader swept across Europe. These invaders were not looking for revenge, wealth, land, or fame. Motivated by their love for God, they left the security of their homes and family and trudged on foot across Europe, bringing the Gospel to new areas. Dressed in white robes, carrying walking sticks, and armed with God's Word, these evangelists were called "peregrini," which means wandering monks. Write the word "peregrini" on the board or chart.**

Most monks were trained in religious schools called monasteries in Northern Europe. Locate England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland on the map. They pledged to spend their lives as missionaries. The peregrini loved God's Word. Can you recite a verse from the Bible that you know from memory? Allow students to share verses. **Tradition says that the peregrini sang the entire book of Psalms every week. Allow students to investigate how many chapters are in Psalms. They also spent many hours alone with God in prayer. The monks constantly looked for opportunities to teach God's Word and serve others. Because many of the tribes of Europe were illiterate, the peregrini established schools and taught their students to read the Bible.**

Though they often faced hardships like loneliness, poverty, hunger, harsh weather, exhaustion, rejection, and persecution, the peregrini continued to take the Good News of Jesus to the Goths and Anglo-Saxons of Europe who had never heard. Can you think of any people in modern times that are so sold out for God that they endure hardship, separation from friends and family, and persecution to invade our world with the Gospel? Let students draw modern parallels. Then pray for the groups of people they mention.

Lesson 9—Following the Trade Routes

Supplies: world map or globe, board or chart paper

Write "Columbus" on the board. **Why is this explorer famous?** Allow responses. **Many people give Columbus credit for discovering a new world, but this was not the goal of his exploration. His primary reason was to discover a shorter route from Europe to India, China, Japan and the Spice Islands. These countries produced rich silks and spices that were sold at a good price in European shops. Finding a quicker route to the Far East meant more trips, more goods, and more money. Did you know that hundreds of years before the time of Columbus, God used trade routes to spread the Gospel?**

Merchants crossed Asia by camel caravan, using an overland trade route that is now called the Silk Road. It stretched across deserts and mountain passes, connecting the Roman world in the west with China in the east. Travelers exchanged not only goods, but ideas. Christian travelers carried the message of Jesus. In the 600's, an early missionary named Alopen traveled from Syria all the way to China. Write "Alopen" on the board. Locate Syria and China on the map and discuss a possible west to east route. At that time, the Tang Dynasty was in power in China. The leaders encouraged ideas from the outside world. The Chinese emperor received Alopen warmly, gave him permission to translate the Bible into the Chinese language, and allowed preaching. During this period of openness, thousands of Chinese people believed in Jesus. Christian churches and schools were built. Evidence for early Christianity in China comes from a stone monument unearthed in northern China. Made of black limestone, this ten-foot monument has carving of dragons and a cross. Chinese and Syrian words on the monument tell the history of Alopen's arrival in China with the "luminous religion." What does "luminous" mean? Discuss uses of the word "light" in the Bible.

Today, people can travel almost anywhere in the world in a few days. They can exchange ideas globally with the click of a mouse. How do you think God uses these modern means to spread the Gospel? Allow students to share ideas.

Lesson 10—Power Encounters

Supplies: Bible, small table with the following items (two small magnets with the same charge, two cups of water, food coloring, plastic spoon, small rubber ball)

We've been learning about ways the Gospel comes into a culture. Let's find out how people react when they first hear about Jesus. Gather the students near a table. Some people think of Christianity as a false religion, or a religion for other cultures. They keep their own beliefs and reject the Gospel. Write "reject" on the board. Demonstrate rejection. Have two students lay the two magnets end to end and observe what happens. Other people see Christianity as one of many ways to God. They add and mix in the Gospel with their other religious beliefs. Write "add and mix" on the board. Demonstrate. This food coloring is the Gospel message. This water stands for what a person already believes. Have a student add a drop of food coloring to one cup of water and stir. What happens to the Gospel? Allow responses. Sometimes people believe the Gospel, letting go of their past beliefs about God and forms of worship. Write "forsake and believe" on the board. Demonstrate. This ball is the Gospel message. This water is beliefs a person already holds. Have a student drop the ball into the water and observe what happens. How is this different from the food coloring? (The ball floats to the top instead of mixing in.) In this person's heart, the Gospel message rises up above all other religious beliefs as both unique and superior.

Refer to the floating ball. One way God demonstrates His superiority is through a power encounter. In Old Testament times, Elijah organized a showdown between Baal and the true God. Read 1 Kings 18:22-24. What were the results of this power encounter? Then read verse 39. In the 700's, God used another power encounter to turn the hearts of the German people of Europe to Him. Boniface, a Christian missionary, was grieved. Even after he shared about the true God in Germany, people continued to follow Viking superstitions. They worshiped Thor, the god of thunder, leaving offerings at Thor's sacred oak tree. Boniface publicly challenged Thor to a showdown. Ax in hand, Boniface said, "If you are God, demonstrate your power by protecting this tree." The crowd expected Thor to strike Boniface down before he began chopping. A few minutes later, Boniface stood unharmed beside the fallen oak. When the people saw that their thunder god was powerless against the God of Boniface, many turned from following Thor and put their faith in Jesus. Reference the three reactions on the board. How did the Germanic peoples first react to the Gospel message? (Reject.) After the power encounter, how did their reaction change? (Forsake and believe.)

In places where people believe in and fear powerful evil spirits, God uses power encounters today. Pray that as people see the superiority of the Living God, they will put their trust in Jesus. Pray that their fears will be replaced with joy and hope.

Lesson 11—Captives and Converts

Supplies: world map or globe, 3 sticky notes with "Jesus" printed on each one

"Viking raiders, run for your life!" cried frightened villagers along the rivers and seacoasts of Western Europe. The Viking ships sailed south from Scandinavia during the 800-900's. Locate the Scandinavian countries of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark on the map. Some Vikings entered mainland Europe looking for seaports to trade their furs, timber, and ivory. Other Vikings grew rich by looting Christian churches and religious schools, stealing their gold and silver. Monasteries in England, Ireland, and Scotland were favorite targets. Europeans feared the Vikings, but God loved these raiders from the north and had a plan to reach them with the Gospel.

Choose two girls and four boys to stand in front. Whenever the Vikings raided villages, they often kidnapped women and took them to Sweden, Norway, or Denmark as their wives. Some of these women were Christians. Put a "Jesus" sticky note on the first girl's shirt. Point to the first boy. You are a Viking husband. Stand next to your wife. Other captives became slaves, working on Viking ships or farms. Some of these slaves were Christians. Choose a boy to be a Christian slave. Put a "Jesus" sticky note on his shirt. Point to the third boy. You are a Viking master. Stand next to your slave. All four of you are sailing north to Scandinavia. Have the group wave goodbye to them and have the four students walk to another part of the room and remain standing. How do you think God will spread the Gospel to the Vikings living in Scandinavia? Let the students make predictions.

Some Vikings liked Europe so much, they decided to settle there. Many of these married European women and raised families. Some of these women were Christians. Put a "Jesus" sticky note on the remaining girl's shirt. Point to the last boy. You are a Viking, but you live in Europe. Stand next to your wife. How do you think God will spread the Gospel to Vikings who remain in Europe? Let the students make predictions. Have the two students remain standing.

During their many trips to European countries, Vikings traders and raiders encountered Christians. Some Viking husbands believed in the God of their wives. Have the two girls pass their "Jesus" sticky notes to their husbands. Some Viking masters believed in the God of their slaves. Have the slave boy pass his "Jesus" sticky note to his master. By the year 1000, Christianity became widespread in Scandinavian culture.

Did you know that today, many people come to the United States from other countries? Some come to attend college or find good jobs. Others come to escape war or natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, or drought. What if each of these people met a believer in Jesus while living in our country? What might God do? Let students discuss possible effects.

Lesson 12—Foundation of Modern Missions

Supplies: world map or globe, TV remote

In the first thousand years after Jesus' life, God moved in different ways to build His Church. How did God spread the Gospel across Europe and parts of Asia? Review with students such methods as scattering through persecution, martyrdom, Bible translation, using trade routes, power encounters, and invasions.

Hold up the TV remote. **Let's fast forward to the late 1700's. America has become a new nation and in Europe, a new phase of Gospel outreach is beginning. In England, William Carey is convinced that Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations has not changed and that God is calling European Christians to take the Gospel the ends of the earth. Other Christians do not agree. Whose example does Carey point to in support of his belief? Listen to Carey's words as he addresses a group of preachers. Point your finger at the group and say excitedly, "See what the Moravians have done! Can we not follow their example, and in obedience to our heavenly Master go out into the world and preach the Gospel to the heathen?"**

Who were the Moravians? Because of religious persecution, some European Christians fled from Moravia, a region in the Czech Republic. A nobleman named Count Zinzendorf offered them a safe place to live on his land in Germany. Find the Czech Republic and Germany on the map. Called Moravians, these Christians refugees joined together to build a community where they lived, worked, worshiped God, and shared their faith. The 600 residents were committed to worship, Bible study, and prayer. What did the Moravians do that made William Carey hold them up as an example? They believed God's promise that people from every nation will be represented in heaven. They took Jesus' command to make disciples seriously and personally. They put God's love for the people of the world above their own comfort.

Directed by Count Zinzendorf, the Moravian community sent many of its own members to live and work in cultures where no one had ever heard of Jesus. These men and women shared the Gospel with slaves, Eskimos, and Native American tribes. As you read, let students locate countries on the map. Moravian missionaries went to the Caribbean islands, Greenland, Finland, North America, Suriname in South America, South Africa, the Netherlands, the Arctic, Algeria in Africa, and Sri Lanka, an island off the coast of India. The Moravians' example of faith, obedience, teamwork, and sacrifice provides a strong foundation for modern-day missions efforts.