Teacher Notecards Level 5, Quarter B—
New Testament Champions

Use these Teacher Notecards as a reference when teaching *Explore Scripture*.*

Print on paper or cardstock. Fold in half, then fold again along the gray line. This will create a two-sided, notecard-sized piece for you to hold in your hand.

*The narrative form has been edited to fit on these cards. Please see the full *Explore Scripture* sections of each lesson for more interactivity, application, and content.

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Big Idea: **Jesus Christ, God's only Son, comes to earth and prepares to do God's work.**

Matthew 3

Era #1—Jesus Arrives

We are building a New Testament timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era explores Jesus' birth, childhood, and the beginning of His ministry. During this era, Jesus Christ, God's only Son, comes to earth and prepares to do God's work. (picture 5B.1).

This era can be divided into three major sections:

- **Birth** (04 BC) *God sends His only Son, Jesus, to be the world's Savior (Luke 1:1–2:38)*
  Key People—Joseph, Mary, Herod
  Key Places—Bethlehem, Egypt
- **Boyhood** (04 BC—AD 10) *Jesus grows in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and people (Luke 2:39-52)*
  Key People—Joseph, Mary
  Key Places—Egypt, Nazareth, Jerusalem

- **Baptism** (AD 26) *John baptizes Jesus in the Jordan River, preparing Him to do God's work (Luke 3)*
  Key People—John the Baptist
  Key Place—Jordan River Valley

Read Matthew 3:1-17. John the Baptist stepped out of the Judean desert, opened his mouth, and shattered 400 years of silence. What did he say? Invite students to look for clues in John 1:29-34 (Jesus is from God; He is the Lamb who came to take away the world's sin; He is the One John had preached about; John's purpose was to reveal Him to Israel.)

After John baptized Jesus, the two went separate ways. John continued preaching and baptizing. Jesus also taught the people and gathered a growing number of disciples around Him. The whole region was stirred because of what these two men were doing and saying!

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Champion—John the Baptist

Who was this man, John the Baptist? Suppose we had written John a letter while he was in jail. We might have received a response similar to the following. Read and discuss John's hypothetical letter, below (picture 5B.2).

Hello! Thanks for writing. I've been in prison for about a year now and have had lots of time to think. I thought I knew what was going on…what God was doing…but I don't really understand everything. Sure wish I did!

I don't mind sharing with you about my life, although some parts will seem peculiar to you. I'm an only child—my parents were very old when I was born. The stories about my Dad's Temple experience and the way I got my name are really amazing (see Luke 1:7-15)! Ever since I was a boy, my parents "set me apart" from the rest of my people to do God's will. The Holy Spirit has guided my life from the beginning.

Some call me a non-conformist—perhaps even a radical. For the most part, I have been alone (but not lonely) and single-focused—tackling the next thing God tells me to do. Not everyone has been happy about what I say—especially King Herod. That's

why I'm in jail now.

On the other side of these bars, everybody is talking about Jesus and the things He is doing—extraordinary stuff! I sent some friends to talk with Jesus—just to help me understand what's going on. When I hear from them, I'll try to get back with you and fill you in.

For God's glory, John

How is John's message still echoing today—or is it? Are people in our world doing what John did—if so, whom? Is this important—why or why not? Are people responding? Encourage responses.

Jesus chose not to answer John's question directly. Instead, the Lord explained that He was the One spoken about in Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 61:1-4). Jesus wanted John to know that God's Promised One—the Lamb—the Savior—the King of kings—had arrived.

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Big Idea: **Jesus offers forgiveness and new life to everyone who believes in Him.**

John 3:1-21, 19:38-42

Era #2: Year of Introduction

We are building a New Testament timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era is about the first year of Jesus' ministry. People soon learned that Jesus Christ is the greatest teacher the world has ever known (picture 5B.3)!

This era can be divided into five major sections:

- **Faces Temptation** (AD 27) *Jesus resists Satan's efforts to tempt Him to sin (Luke 4:1-13).* Key People—Satan; Key Place—Judean Wilderness
- **Calls Disciples** (AD 27) *Jesus invites people to leave their jobs to become His followers (John 1:35-51).* People—Andrew, Peter; Place—Galilee
- **Cleanses Temple** (AD 27) *Jesus shows zeal for God's House, removing commercial and corrupt interests (John 2:13-25).* People—Jewish Merchants; Place—Jerusalem
- **Explains Eternal Life** (AD 27) *Jesus discloses the way to heaven—being born*

anew (John 3:1-21). People—Nicodemus; Place—Jerusalem
- **Discusses Worship** (AD 27) *Jesus reveals the way to worship God—in Spirit and in truth (John 4:4-42).* People—Woman of Sychar; Place—Samaria

Champion: Nicodemus

Nicodemus was a learned rabbi, or teacher, likely from the upper class of Jews. He was a respected member of the Jewish Sanhedrin or High Council. As a devout Pharisee, Nicodemus was conservative in beliefs. He wanted to evaluate Jesus fairly and thoroughly. Jesus told Nicodemus that no one could even see the kingdom of God without a spiritual rebirth (picture 5B.4).

Suppose that Nicodemus kept a journal of key events during his lifetime. Let's listen to some things he might have written. Ask for volunteers to read each journal entry. After each child reads, stop and discuss Nicodemus' comments.

Summer, AD 26 *I am following peculiar events in Galilee very closely. Some friends of mine, good Pharisees, ventured into the wilderness and talked with a rough-cut man named John. He appeared from nowhere, telling our people to repent and to prepare for the Messiah. He seems to be genuine, but his lifestyle is very odd. People are flocking to John—he's a powerful speaker. I need to plan a trip up there to see him for myself.* (John 1:19-28)

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Fall, AD 26 *When John baptized a man named Jesus, God spoke from heaven and a dove came down. John has been telling people that Jesus is the anointed One. This situation could become alarming.* (Matthew 3:15-17)

Passover Week, AD 27 *This man named Jesus came to Jerusalem for Passover. He entered the Temple and caused all sorts of trouble: upending tables, driving people and animals out with a whip, and telling people that God's house is for prayer. Who does He think He is? Someone must stop this Jesus before things really get bad!* (John 2:12-18)

Passover Week, AD 27 *I joined a large crowd and listened to Jesus speak—what a spellbinding storyteller! People were hanging on every word. Jesus openly opposed the Jewish leaders, though. Strangely, I agree with most things Jesus says. It's hard to argue against Him.*

Passover Week, AD 27 *I saw Jesus heal someone today! This was genuine; no magic or trickery involved. It's time to sit down and talk with this man—away from the crowd and all the excitement.* (John 2:23)

Passover Week, AD 27 *I interviewed Jesus this evening—and the conversation went in an entirely different direction than I had expected. He told me that no one could*

even see the kingdom of God without a rebirth. I tried to probe further, but Jesus kept talking about God's love, eternal life, believing in God's Son, and being born again. I was very impressed with Jesus' sincerity. What He said was fascinating, but confusing. Now I have a lot of things to rethink. (John 3)

Feast of Tabernacles, AD 29 *Jesus is back in the city. Everyone wants to hear Him speak and to see Him perform a miracle. Several of my rabbi friends are jealous of His popularity. The Council sent the Temple police to arrest Jesus, but they came back empty-handed. After the police listened to Jesus, they couldn't bring themselves to do it! The rest of the Council was really irritated, but I stood up and reminded them that our Law does not permit us to judge anyone before a proper hearing. But that set them against me! Lord God, what's going on here?* (John 7:50-52)

Passover, AD 30 *These past few days have been unimaginable! Jesus was illegally arrested, tried, and crucified. I'm so ashamed of the way the High Priest and the Council have acted. This afternoon I joined my friend Joseph and brought spices to help wrap Jesus' body for burial. Where will all this lead?* (John 19:38-40)

Why was Nicodemus a New Testament Champion? Encourage responses.

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Big Idea: **Jesus calls twelve men to become His special followers, His apostles.**

Luke 5:27-32, 10:1-20

Era #3: Year of Popularity

We are building a N.T. timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era is about the second year of Jesus' ministry. Many people follow Jesus, but He chooses twelve disciples to be with Him everywhere (picture 5B.5).

This era can be divided into five major sections:

- **Faces Rejection** (AD 28) *Jesus enrages many self-focused worshipers from His hometown (Luke 4:14-32).*
  Key People—Jesus' Friends and Family
  Key Place—Nazareth
- **Chooses 12 Disciples** (AD 28) *Jesus selects 12 men to be His closest followers, His apostles (Luke 5:1-11, 27-32, 6:12-16).*
  Key People—Disciples, Matthew
  Key Place—Galilee

- **Preaches Sermon on Mount** (AD 28) *Jesus explains how God's people can live righteously (Matthew 5-7).*
  Key People—Jewish followers
  Key Place—Galilee Mountainside
- **Delivers Parables** (AD 28) *Jesus conceals truths about God's kingdom within engaging stories (Matthew 13).*
  Key People—Gathered Multitude
  Key Place—Sea of Galilee Shore
- **Stills Storm** (AD 28) *Jesus displays His power over the natural elements (Luke 8:22-25).*
  Key People—12 Disciples
  Key Place—Sea of Galilee

Read (with dramatic flair), the following narrative that Matthew might have had with his friends: "You might think I'm crazy, but before you say anything—listen! I want you to come to my house for dinner tonight. You can't imagine who is going to be there—I can hardly believe it myself! So there I was, sitting at my booth collecting taxes as always, when everything got quiet. I mean…something felt…weird. When I looked up, there He was—Jesus—the guy everybody's talking

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about—right in front of my booth! I opened my mouth, but nothing came out. Then, do you know what He said to me? Do you? Guess! Just guess! Anyway, you just have to come over and see for yourself! Tell the whole gang to be there—and don't be late. This party you'll never forget!"

Why did so many common people want to follow Jesus? Encourage responses. *Why did most religious leaders criticize Jesus?*

What do you think Jesus meant in verse 31? (People who know they need help will seek help; sinners acknowledge their need and turn to Jesus in faith. People who think they are okay see no need of help; they don't consider themselves sinners.) *How did Jesus' response in verse 32 apply to Matthew? How does Jesus' response apply to you?*

Jesus called Matthew, along with eleven others, to be His closest disciples. He called them to leave their professions, their families, and their plans—inviting them to learn from Him. The twelve traveled everywhere with Him—listening to Him teach the people, witnessing His miraculous powers, and becoming fellow-laborers in His work. Discuss ways that Matthew's life changed after Jesus called him.

Champion: Matthew

Why was Matthew a New Testament Champion (picture 5B.6)*?* Encourage responses.

Read Luke 10:1-20. Jesus trained the twelve to be Apostles ("sent-ones"). He also sent out seventy (some translations say "seventy-two") others with His authority to the surrounding towns and villages. Christ gave these workers power to heal the sick, to pronounce blessings on those who welcomed them, and to proclaim Good News to those who listened. Talk about what it means to be Jesus' disciples today.

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Big Idea: **Jesus performs amazing miracles and heals many people.**

John 11

Era #4: Year of Opposition

We are building a New Testament timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era is about the third year of Jesus' ministry. Jesus performs amazing miracles and heals many people. Nothing is impossible for Christ (picture 5B.7)!

This era can be divided into five major sections:

- **Feeds 5,000** (AD 29) *Jesus multiplies five loaves and two fish to satisfy a large crowd of hungry people (Luke 9:12-17).*
  Key People—Gathered Multitude
  Key Place—Remote area near Bethsaida
- **Reveals Glory** (AD 29) *Jesus transforms Himself, showing His divine glory to Peter, James, and John (Luke 9:28-36).*
  Key People—Peter, James, John
  Key Place—Galilee Mountain

- **Heals Lepers** (AD 29) *Jesus heals ten lepers who ask for help; only one returns to show gratitude (Luke 17:11-19).*
  Key People—10 Lepers, Disciples;
  Key Place—Samaria
- **Provides Sight** (AD 29) *Jesus gives eyesight to a man who had been blind since birth (John 9:1-41).*
  Key People—Blind Man, Parents, Pharisees
  Key Place—Jerusalem
- **Raises Lazarus** (AD 29) *Jesus visits the tomb of Lazarus and brings him back to life (John 11).*
  Key People—Mary, Martha, Lazarus
  Key Place—Bethany

Read and discuss John 11:1-6 together. Explain Jesus' close friendship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. When Jesus and the disciples came to Jerusalem, they often stayed in their home nearby.

Read and discuss John 11:7-16. Talk about the increasing opposition of the religious leaders in Judea. After they attempted to stone Jesus, He and the disciples had recently left Jerusalem (11:8). People in the area were on the alert. Due to

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Jesus' popularity, he couldn't walk around without being noticed. The disciples knew that traveling to Judea could mean death (11:16).

Read and discuss John 11:17-29. Talk about how verse 25 might have sounded to Martha. Discuss the concept of "resurrection." Explain how a body begins to decompose the moment it dies. Only God has power to reverse the process of deterioration and bring life back into a corpse.

Read and discuss John 11:30-37. Comment about Jesus' emotional response to the situation (11:35). Follow Mary's movements: Jesus asked for her; she responded quickly and went to Him, falling at His feet. (In Luke 10:39 Mary sits at Jesus' feet to learn. In John 11:32 Mary seeks comfort at Jesus' feet. In John 12:3 Mary wipes Jesus' feet to serve Him.)

Read and discuss John 11:38-44. Explain that Jesus had a purpose for allowing Lazarus to die (that God would be glorified, John 11:4). Jesus showed His power and authority over our greatest enemy—death.

Champions: Mary & Martha

When Jesus was a guest in their house, Mary wanted to do nothing more than sit at His feet and learn from Him. Jesus commended her for this priority (Luke 10:42). Mary is best known for her generous act of anointing Jesus' feet and head with costly oil and wiping them with her hair (John 12:3).

Since the Gospels portray Martha as leader in the home (Luke 10:38), she is probably the older sister. Martha is a "doer." She exhibits the traits of hospitality and servanthood, wanting to properly care for the needs of others (picture 5B.8). *Why were Mary and Martha New Testament Champions?* Encourage responses.

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Big Idea: **Jesus dies on a cross and comes back to life, triumphing over death.**

John 20:19-31

Era #5: Jesus Triumphs

We are building a New Testament timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era is about the final months of Jesus' ministry. Jesus dies on a cross and comes back to life, triumphing over death (picture 5B.9)!

This era can be divided into five major sections:

- **Denounces Hypocrisy** (AD 30) *Jesus pronounces judgment on people who lead others away from God (Matthew 23:1-39).*
  Key People—Scribes, Pharisees
  Key Place—Jerusalem
- **Eats Last Supper** (AD 30) *Jesus shares a final Passover meal with His disciples (John 13-17).*
  Key People—Disciples
  Key Place—Upper Room

- **Judas Betrays Jesus** (AD 30) *Jesus submits to arrest and illegal trials, leading to His conviction (Luke 22:47-53).*
  Key People—Judas, Soldiers, Disciples
  Key Place—Garden of Gethsemane
- **Soldiers Crucify Jesus** (AD 30) *Jesus dies on a cross and is buried in a sealed tomb (Luke 23:33-56).*
  Key People—Soldiers, Followers
  Key Place—Golgotha
- **Rises from Grave** (AD 30) *Jesus comes back to life, making appearances to many people (Luke 24:1-49).*
  Key People—Women, Disciples, Thomas
  Key Place—Jerusalem

Let's pretend that we are the disciples—just after Jesus' crucifixion. Our leader is gone. We have every reason to believe that the Jewish leaders will send the police to find Jesus' followers and kill us, too. Whisper your questions and ask kids to respond with whispers. But we still have each other—or do we? Judas not only betrayed Jesus, he also betrayed us. Who can we trust now? Could someone else in our group be a mole or spy? Where is Thomas? Why isn't he with us at this important time?

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Read and discuss John 20:19-25 together. Tell what you might have thought or felt about the situation before Jesus appeared. Encourage kids to respond. Tell what you might have thought or felt when Jesus was there. *Why did Jesus invite the disciples to look at His hands and His side?* Encourage responses. Sometime after Jesus left, Thomas showed up. Tell what you might have thought or felt about Thomas' strong statements of disbelief.

Read John 20:22 again. *Do you remember something like this happening in another time and place?* Refer kids to Genesis 2:7. At that time, God the Father breathed into Adam, the first man, and gave him life. In this verse, God the Son breathed new life and the Holy Spirit's power into His disciples. *How does this incident change the attitude of the disciples?*

Read John 20:26-29. *How do your thoughts and feelings about Thomas change now? What does verse 29 say about people who believe even though they don't have the opportunity to see Jesus face-to-face? Who does that include?*

Champion: Thomas

Through the centuries, Thomas is best known as the "doubter" who, after seeing Christ alive, becomes the "devoted." Thomas had been with Jesus from the beginning. He witnessed the amazing miracles, listened to the powerful messages, and proclaimed God's kingdom to the surrounding towns and villages. No one questioned Thomas' allegiance. When Lazarus died, Christ announced that He would return to Judea (where opposition from the Jewish leaders was steadily mounting). Thomas was the first disciple to say he would go, too—and die if necessary (John 11:16) (picture 5B.10). *Why was Thomas a New Testament Champion?* Encourage responses.

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Big Idea: **Jesus sends the Holy Spirit who empowers His disciples to testify about Him.**

Acts 2

Era #6: The Church Begins

We are building a New Testament timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era is about the birth of the Church. The early days of the Church were full of excitement and wonder (picture 5B.11).

This era can be divided into four major sections:

- **Jesus Ascends** (AD 30) *After Jesus commissions His followers to go make disciples, He rises into the clouds (Acts 1).*
  Key People—Jesus, Disciples;
  Key Place—Jerusalem
- **Holy Spirit Descends** (AD 30) *On Pentecost, God's Spirit falls on believers, empowering them to witness about Christ (Acts 2).*
  Key People—Peter, Disciples
  Key Place—Jerusalem Temple

- **Lame Man Walks** (AD 31) *Peter and John heal a crippled man in Jesus' name, amazing many (Acts 3-4).*
  Key People—Peter, John
  Key Place—Jerusalem
- **Stephen Dies** (AD 32) *Stephen boldly testifies about Jesus, infuriating Jewish leaders who stone him (Acts 6-7).*
  Key People—Stephen, Sanhedrin
  Key Place—Jerusalem

Have you ever seen a newborn baby or animal? Encourage kids to respond. Every new birth is special—a miracle. When God gives birth to something brand new, it is bound to have a pretty spectacular and miraculous beginning! Many years ago, on a holiday called Pentecost, God breathed life into the Church, the body of Christ. It was a very special day.

As I read Acts 2:1-6, stop me when you hear about something that is miraculous. Let's see what miracles God planned for this special day.

- Acts 2:2—The Holy Spirit's arrival was accompanied by the loud sound of the wind, but no breeze blew.

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Level 5B—New Testament Champions *Lesson 6: The Church Begins*

- Acts 2:3—Tongues of fire appeared beside everyone, but no heat or burning occurred.
- Acts 2:4—The Holy Spirit filled believers who spoke in languages that they had not learned.
- Acts 2:6—Visitors to Jerusalem marveled when they heard the believers speaking their languages.

After this, Peter stood up and explained what was going on. Peter told everyone that hundreds of years before this day, Joel, a prophet from the Old Testament, had predicted that these events would happen (Acts 2:17-21). Next, Peter reminded the crowd that King David had also looked forward to this day. David's Psalms spoke of the Messiah's triumph over the grave (Acts 2:22-31). Finally, Peter proclaimed that Jesus was the long-awaited Christ, the Messiah. The Jewish leaders had crucified the Anointed One whom God had sent to deliver them (Acts 2:32-36)!

When Peter finished speaking, what did the large crowd of people ask? (Acts 2:37—They believed Peter's words and wanted to know what to do to avoid God's judgment and to receive His forgiveness.)

What did Peter tell them to do? (Acts 2:38—Peter told them to repent and be baptized in Jesus' name to receive forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.)

How many people responded to Peter's message? (Acts 2:41—3,000 people believed and were baptized!)

Champion: Peter

From the beginning, Jesus had called Peter to leave his fishing boat to follow Him. Though Peter was the first to proclaim that Jesus was the Messiah (Matthew 16:16), he was also the one who denied the Lord three times. Peter became the undisputed early leader of the infant Church. God also used Peter to open the door to the Gentiles (Acts 10-11) (picture 5B.12). According to tradition, the Romans arrested Peter and brought him to Rome where he was crucified upside down. *Why was Peter a New Testament Champion?* Encourage responses.

During the next few days and weeks, God continued to do some amazing things! As I read, let me know when you hear about an activity that the new Christians did together. As you read Acts 2:42-47, stop and comment about the atmosphere and activities of the new Church.

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Big Idea: **The Holy Spirit directs Jesus' disciples to proclaim the Good News in new regions.**

Acts 8:1-13, 26-40

Era #7: The Church Scatters

We are building a New Testament timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era is about how persecution forces Christians to scatter from Jerusalem into new regions. As a result, many Jews and Gentiles hear and respond to Jesus' message of forgiveness and new life (picture 5B.13).

This era can be divided into four major sections:

- **Ethiopian Believes** (AD 33-34) *Philip explains the Good News to a visiting official who is then baptized (Acts 8).*
  Key People—Philip, Ethiopian official
  Key Place—Gaza Road
- **Saul Believes** (AD 34-35) *After Jesus confronts him about persecuting Christians, Saul believes (Acts 9).*
  Key People—Saul, Ananias

Key Place—Damascus
- **Gentiles Believe** (AD 40) *Cornelius trusts in Jesus and receives the Holy Spirit (Acts 10-11).*
  Key People—Peter, Cornelius
  Key Places—Caesarea, Jerusalem
- **Persecution Increases** (AD 44) *After James' death, an angel delivers Peter from Herod's prison (Acts 12).*
  Key People—Peter, James, Herod
  Key Place—Jerusalem

Turn to Acts 8 in your Bibles. I'm going to ask you several questions and let's see who can find the answers in the verses I give you. Philip and Stephen were two of the seven deacons in the early Church. In a sudden and surprising turn, Stephen was arrested, tried, and stoned to death! This event rocked the Church and launched a wave of persecution.

Who was primarily responsible for this persecution? (Acts 8:3—Saul tormented the Church.) *What things did Saul do to the Christians?* (Acts 8:3—Saul dragged them from their homes and put them into prison. Later on, this same man became Paul the Apostle!) *What did the Christians do?* (Acts 8:4—they escaped Jerusalem, scattering to other places.) *How was this persecution part of God's plan?* (Acts 1:8—God wanted the believers to go into new regions.)

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Where did Philip go after his good friend Stephen had been murdered? (Acts 8:5—Samaria.) *What did Philip do there?* (Acts 8:6—he told the people about Jesus and performed miraculous signs.) *How did the Samaritans respond?* (Acts 8:7-8—they listened to Philip, believed, and rejoiced.) *What happened to a Samaritan man named Simon?* (Acts 8:9-13—Simon, a popular sorcerer, believed in Jesus and was baptized.)

God calls all Christians to be His witnesses. This next episode with Philip and the Ethiopian gives us a wonderful example of personal evangelism. Let's see why Philip became known as "the evangelist." Divide the class into three groups:

- God Group: What did God do? Note God's actions and involvement.
- Philip Group: What did Philip do? Watch for Philip's actions.
- Ethiopian Group: What did the Ethiopian official do? List his actions and involvement.

Ask each group to sit together and listen carefully as you read through each verse of Acts 8:26-40. (Invite the kids to follow along in their Bibles.) Pay close attention to the activities of your key person. Follow the action from his viewpoint. Stand up when you see your person involved. After you read each verse, pause to respond to someone in each group who stands up. *How did you see God/Philip/the Ethiopian involved?*

What did you learn about personal evangelism from this episode? Encourage kids to respond.

Champion: Philip

This is not the same Philip who was one of the twelve apostles. The early Church chose Philip to be one of its first deacons (Acts 6:5). After Steven's death, Philip left Jerusalem and traveled north to Samaria where Jesus had revealed His identity to the Samaritan woman. Many people there responded to Philip's presentation of the Gospel. God then sent Philip to a desert road where he introduced an influential Ethiopian to the Savior. After this, Philip lived in Caesarea and became known as "the evangelist." (picture 5B.14) *Why was Philip a New Testament Champion?* Encourage responses.

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Big Idea: **The Holy Spirit appoints messengers who explain God's salvation everywhere they go.**

Acts 18

Era #8: The Church Expands

We are building a New Testament timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era is about the expansion of the Church. The Holy Spirit sets apart messengers who take the Good News into new regions—explaining God's salvation everywhere they go (picture 5B.15).

This era can be divided into four major sections:

- **to Cyprus & Galatia** (AD 48-49) *The Holy Spirit appoints Paul and Barnabas to travel as missionaries (Acts 13-14).*
  Key People—Paul, Barnabas
  Key Places—Cyprus, Galatia
- **to Asia Minor & Greece** (AD 50-52) *Paul and Silas travel west, proclaiming the Good News everywhere (Acts 15-18).*
  Key People—Paul, Silas, Lydia

Key Places—Philippi, Athens, Corinth
- **to Asia Minor & Greece** (AD 53-56) *Paul and Silas revisit churches they had previously established (Acts 18-21).*
  Key People—Paul, Apollos, Aquila, Priscilla
  Key Places—Greece, Ephesus, Jerusalem
- **to Rome** (AD 56-62) *While traveling as a prisoner to Rome, Paul tells many about God's way of salvation (Acts 22-28).*
  Key People—Paul, Felix, Festus, Agrippa
  Key Places—Caesarea, Rome

Imagine that the mayor of your city decided that everyone with blue eyes had to leave. People with blue eyes would not be allowed to live in your city. Everyone who has a family member with blue eyes, please stand up. You'd have to pack up everything you owned and get out of town. Once you left your home, you'd be on the road with hundreds, maybe thousands, of other blue-eyed families. Where would you go? What would you do for food? How would you make a living?

This is like what happened in Rome about A.D. 49. Emperor Claudius decided that every person with Jewish ancestry who lived in Rome had to move out.

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Jews would no longer be allowed to live in Rome. Aquila and Priscilla were one couple who left Rome for that reason. They sailed from Italy to Greece and finally settled in a place called Corinth. That is where they met Paul, who became a lifelong friend. Read Acts 18:1-4.

Paul had just come from Athens, where he had preached the Gospel. When he arrived in Corinth, he met Aquila and Priscilla. Paul was a tentmaker like Aquila and Priscilla, so he stayed with them and helped with their work while he preached the Good News in Corinth. The three became great friends, and when God called Paul to continue his missionary efforts in Ephesus, the couple sailed with him. Have someone read Acts 18:18. These three missionaries worked side-by-side, teaching and nurturing the believers wherever they were.

After awhile, Paul continued his journey, but Priscilla and Aquila stayed in Ephesus. Read Acts 18:24-25. Apollos preached about Jesus, but he had not heard the complete story. He only knew part of the Gospel. Read Acts 18:26-28. *How did Priscilla and Aquila complete Apollos' understanding of the Gospel?* Encourage responses. Priscilla and Aquila expanded Apollos' teaching and encouraged him.

Apollos gladly received their instruction. He went on to become a great leader in the early Church.

Champion: Aquila and Priscilla

When Emperor Claudius ordered all Jews to leave Rome, Aquila and Priscilla moved to Corinth where they met Paul and established a lifelong friendship with him. Later on, the husband and wife team accompanied Paul to Ephesus where they established a house-church. At some point during these years of ministry, Aquila and Priscilla risked their own lives for Paul (Romans 16:3-4). In Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla invited a young teacher named Apollos into their home. Apollos became a leading Christian apologist and debater (picture 5B.16). *Why were Priscilla and Aquila New Testament Champions?* Encourage responses.

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Big Idea: **The Holy Spirit strengthens the churches, encouraging them to live uprightly.**

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Era #9: Churches Multiply

We are building a New Testament timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era is about the growth of the church. The Holy Spirit strengthens the churches, encouraging them to live uprightly (picture 5B.17).

This era can be divided into four major sections:

- **in Asia Minor** (AD 51-60) *Letters from Paul encourage churches to live for Christ (Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians).*
  Key People—Paul, Asian Christians
  Key Places—Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse
- **in Macedonia** (AD 51-61) *Letters from Paul explain how to be models for Christ (1 & 2 Thessalonians, Philippians).*
  Key People—Paul, Greek Christians
  Key Places—Thessalonica, Philippi

- **in Corinth** (AD 55) *Letters from Paul challenge believers to remain united in Christ (1 & 2 Corinthians).*
  Key People—Paul, Corinthian Christians
  Key Place—Corinth
- **in Rome** (AD 57) *Paul's letter motivates Christians in Rome to live righteously (Romans).*
  Key People—Paul, Roman Christians
  Key Place—Rome

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Level 5B—New Testament Champions Lesson 9: *Churches Multiply*

Champion: Paul

Paul was trained to be a devout Pharisee. As a young man, Paul witnessed Stephen's martyrdom and became zealous for his Jewish heritage. He received permission to arrest Jesus' followers. This led to a wave of persecution against Christians. But God had another plan for Paul's life. While Paul was headed to Damascus to arrest believers there, Jesus confronted Paul, leading to his dramatic conversion to the faith. This event changed the course of the church forever. Paul traveled through Asia Minor, Macedonia, and many key Greek and Roman cities, proclaiming the Good News and forming new churches. Paul wrote letters to churches that he helped establish (picture 5B.18).

Christians were afraid of Paul because he had tormented the Church in Jerusalem. Even after Jesus met Paul on the road to Damascus, Ananias was afraid to go near him. *But what did the Holy Spirit say to Ananias so he would visit Paul?* Read and discuss Acts 9:16. From Paul's early days as a believer, he knew that he would encounter trials and suffering.

Throughout Paul's ministry, people opposed him and made life difficult for him. *What were his opponents like?* Read and discuss 2 Corinthians 11:13. To encourage the Christians living in Corinth, Paul found it necessary to "boast" about his trials. He summarizes the suffering he has endured for Christ—and challenges his opponents to compare their trials with his. Draw a simple "scoreboard" on the board. Read through 2 Corinthians 11:22-33. Stop after each verse and have the kids decide on an appropriate number of runs/points that Paul should receive—and the score that his opponents deserve.

Paul survived more challenges as a Christian than anyone else!

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Big Idea: **The Holy Spirit teaches church leaders to selflessly serve God's people.**

Titus 2:1-8

Era #10: Leaders Learn

We are building a New Testament timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era is about leaders who keep learning. The Holy Spirit teaches church leaders to selflessly serve God's people (picture 5B.19).

This era can be divided into three major sections:

- **to Forgive** (AD 60) *Paul encourages Philemon to forgive his runaway slave, Onesimus (Philemon).*
  Key People—Paul, Philemon, Onesimus
  Key Place—Colosse
- **to Obey** (AD 63-65) *Paul instructs Titus to remind the church to respectfully obey ruling authorities (Titus).*
  Key People—Paul, Titus
  Key Place—Crete

- **to Teach** (AD 63-67) *Paul motivates Timothy to faithfully teach God's Word (1 & 2 Timothy).*
  Key People—Paul, Timothy
  Key Place—Ephesus

Close your eyes and imagine the scene as Paul sat down to write letters to his friends. Paul was in Rome—in a prison cell. He probably had heavy iron manacles around his ankles and wrists. He was now an old man who had preached the Good News of Jesus for decades. Over the years Paul had been beaten, tortured, and left for dead because people opposed his relentless efforts for Christ. His body was scarred; his bones and muscles ached from old wounds.

Imagine being in Paul's cell. *If you touched the wall, what do you think it would feel like?* Encourage kids to respond. The stone might have felt smooth, and maybe a little slimy. *What do you think the cell might look like?* Encourage responses. Cells were quite small. An oil lamp may have been Paul's only source of light. The oily smell of the lamp mingled with the stale odor of the cell. The floor was probably damp and cold. Paul may have shivered and coughed as he wrote letters to his friends.

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How would you respond if a dear friend, someone who was like a father to you, wrote a personal note to you from a prison cell? Discuss how Titus may have responded when he received this letter from Paul.

In spite of Paul's personal situation, he sent this letter to encourage his younger friend. Titus was living on the island of Crete, training church leaders.

Champion: Titus

Paul wrote this letter to Titus from a prison cell in Rome, about AD 65. The words, "my true child," indicate that Paul, himself, probably led Titus to faith in Christ. Titus became one of Paul's most trusted and versatile coworkers. He often traveled with Paul and delivered several of Paul's letters to churches. Titus stayed in Crete for an extended time, appointing leaders there. Wherever there was a need, Paul knew he could count on Titus (picture 5B.20). *Why was Titus a New Testament Champion?* Encourage responses.

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Big Idea: **The Holy Spirit encourages all believers to walk in Jesus' footsteps.**

Hebrews 12:1-13

Era #11: Christians Walk

We are building a New Testament timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era is about living like Christ. The Holy Spirit encourages all believers to walk in Jesus' footsteps (picture 5B.21).

This era can be divided into five major sections:

- **in Good Deeds** (AD 45-50) *James exhorts believers to separate themselves from worldly influences (James).*
  Key People—James (Jesus' half-brother)
  Key Places—Scattered Churches
- **in Trials** (AD 63-66) *Peter reminds Christians to trust God's promises as they endure hardship (1 & 2 Peter).*
  Key People—Peter, Silas
  Key Places—Scattered Churches

- **with Jesus** (AD 64-68) *The author explains that Jesus Christ is the supreme High Priest (Hebrews).*
  Key People—Unknown Author
  Key Places—Scattered Jewish Converts
- **in Mercy** (AD 70) *Jude cautions believers to reject false teachers who may lead them astray (Jude).*
  Key People—Jude (Jesus' half-brother)
  Key Places—Scattered Churches
- **in Fellowship** (AD 90) *John tells God's children to remain true to the Lord (1, 2 & 3 John).*
  Key People—John, Gaius
  Key Places—Churches in Asia Minor

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Champion: James

James was Jesus' younger half-brother. At the height of Jesus' popularity, James and his brothers were antagonistic toward Him (John 7:3-5). But after Christ's resurrection, everything changed. Jesus made a private appearance before His sibling, convincing James that He was, indeed, alive (1 Corinthians 15:7). James became a leader of the Jerusalem church. James presided at the pivotal Jerusalem Council, embracing Gentile believers. About AD 66, Jewish High priest Ananus ordered James' arrest. It is likely that he was thrown from the Temple tower to his death (picture 5B.22). *Why was James a New Testament Champion?* Encourage responses.

Open your Bibles to Hebrews 11. Hebrews 11 is a popular Bible chapter that tells about Old Testament champions whose names are written in the "Hall of Faith." Listen to some of the people and their accomplishments. Read Hebrews 11:32-40. Those people have already run their race. They have competed and now are turning the baton over to us. It's our turn to take over where they left off. Read Hebrews 12:1. *What do you think the "cloud of witnesses" is?* Encourage responses.

For us, these witnesses are Old Testament champions, New Testament champions, and Christian champions through 2,000 years of church history. They are all part of the cloud of witnesses, the huge crowd of people who are cheering us on as we run the Christian race.

What do you think of when you hear the word "discipline"—is discipline good or bad? Encourage kids to respond. Sometimes people think of "discipline" as a bad thing, but discipline is really our friend. Discipline helps us grow stronger and wiser and better. God wants us to welcome His discipline—because He always has our best interests in mind.

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Big Idea: **Jesus returns to defeat Satan, judge all people, and rule the new heaven and earth.**

Revelation 19-22

Era #12: Jesus Reigns

We are building a New Testament timeline and learning about champions who lived during each era. Today's era is about the future. Jesus returns to defeat Satan, judge all people, and rule the new heaven and earth (picture 5B.23).

This era can be divided into three major sections:

- **in Heaven** *Jesus reveals Himself as the Ancient of Days, the first and last (Revelation 1).*
  Key People—John, Jesus
  Key Places—Patmos, Clouds
- **in Churches** *Jesus sends personal messages to seven churches in Asia Minor (Revelation 2-3).*
  Key People—7 Angels;
  Key Places—7 Churches in Asia Minor

- **in Future Events** *Jesus reveals coming judgments that will culminate in a new heaven and earth (Revelation 4-22).*
  Key People—Angels, Satan, Beast
  Key Places—"Babylon," New Jerusalem

The last few chapters of the Bible are fascinating! In chapter 18, God defeats and judges "Babylon" and the Antichrist. Chapter 19 describes the celebration in heaven, the wedding feast of the Lamb, and Christ's victory in the Battle of Armageddon. In chapter 20, Satan is bound in chains, believers are raised to life, and people await the Great White Throne Judgment. Chapters 21-22 describe the new heaven and earth.

Read Revelation 19:11-16 and discuss the return of Christ. Ask kids to closely observe the details. *Who is on the horse? Why does He have a sword? What is unique about His robe? Who is in His army?* Encourage kids to respond.

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The verses that explain the Book of Life are sobering (20:12-15). Some students may express concern about themselves or another loved one. Be sensitive as you respond to the children. Be prepared to speak to their needs. If you have unbelievers in your class, explain God's plan of salvation, emphasizing that trusting Jesus Christ to forgive their sins and to give them new life is the only way that their names can be written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Just before the end, God will cast Satan into the lake of fire and sulfur—along with the beast and the false prophet. All these events set the stage for the new heaven and new earth that God will create.

Champion: John

John—along with James, his brother—left their fishing careers to follow Jesus. John was one of three "inner-circle" disciples. He was also the first to see the empty tomb. John played a leading role in the early Jerusalem church. Later on, he lived in Ephesus, preaching about Jesus' love and fighting heresy. While banished to the island of Patmos, John received God's glorious revelation (picture 5B.24). *Why was John a New Testament Champion?* Encourage responses.

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