

History of the English Bible – Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan for Children and Youth
Applicable for children 3rd grade and above
Multi-Generational Adaptation Attached

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Concept or Focus: Experiential Learning on the history of the English Language Bible

Setting:

- *Location:* Local Churches
- *Audience:* Children and Youth
- *Time:* 50 minutes

Supplies:

- Large piece of foam or poster board that acts as a teleprompter and contains the following words in this order: Barrier, Bridge, Fear/Flames/and Fire, Battles, Surprised, Fear/Flames and Fire, Strong, Totally Understand, Freedom of Religion
- Copies of the attached script to hand out to the narrator or narrators of the drama

Instructions:

- The drama can be acted out by one group, or the children/youth can be broken into small groups for multiple performances at the end

Preparation:

The leaders in charge of this lesson need to study the 2nd Corinthians passage and interpretation provided at the end of this lesson plan so they are fully prepared to lead the biblical reflection.

Goal: To gain basic awareness of the history of the English bible and make correlations to one’s faith and practice

Lesson Step and Time Allotted	Teaching Activity	Resources Needed
Opening (3 minutes)	Welcome the children and youth. Let them know that they are going to learn about the history of the bible in a fun way that tests their acting skills!	This class needs to take place in a room that has a large enough area for the children/youth to be able to act out the script.
Instructions and Rehearsal	(Direct script for facilitator)You are all going to participate in a drama that	The children/youth need time to rehearse acting out these bolded

(10 minutes)	acts out the history of the English bible. There will be one narrator who reads the script, and then you guys will act out the bolded words as soon as you hear the narrator say these words. You will then freeze in the position you are in while acting out the bolded words. After a few seconds, the narrator will continue reading the script and this pattern repeats itself all the way to the end of the drama. While the drama is going on, you will have a teleprompter in front of you to help you remember what word you are supposed to act out next.	words. The children/youth can act out the words as individuals, but it is highly recommended that for most or all of the words, the children/youth work together to come up with drama representations of acting out these bolded words as a community. Before the children/youth rehearse, the leaders can act out a few of these words in an exaggerated, fun, dramatic way that brings giggles to the children/youth, so the children/youth feel full permission to have fun with this and act out the words using big, bold, dramatic movements.
Experiential Drama on the history of the English bible (15 minutes)	Go through the drama explained above using the script that is at the end of this lesson plan.	Have fun and offer the children/youth a lot of reaction, applause and praise during the drama
Lesson Step and Time Allotted	Teaching Activity	Resources Needed
Lesson Reflection (10 Minutes)	Take a few moments with the children/youth to discuss the following two questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is one thing you learned about the history of the English bible that you did not know before? • What is one thing about the history of the English bible that touches your heart? 	The children/youth can sit on the floor or at tables for this portion of the lesson plan. They can complete this portion in the larger group or be broken into small groups. Give the script out to the children/youth so they can look at it during this discussion. If small groups are used, have everyone come back to the larger group to share their answers.

<p>Biblical Reflection based on 2nd Corinthians 4:7-15 (10 minutes)</p>	<p>Talk to the children/youth about how the word suffering is not a popular word these days, but the bible is full of people who suffered and sacrificed so that the gospel of Jesus Christ could be spread throughout the world. Often the spreading of the gospel came at great risk. Jesus Christ's life is the ultimate example of one who suffered and made the ultimate sacrifice. In the story they just acted out, there were those who took great risks, suffered and sacrificed so that all of us could have the privilege of reading and understanding the bible. Talk to the children/youth about risk, and ask them how they might take a risk to spread the love of Jesus Christ, even if that risk means having to sacrifice. Remind the children/youth that as a church, we are all called to be a witness of the love of Jesus Christ to the world. Brainstorm different ways the children/youth can take risks, sacrifice and show Christ's love at home, at school and in the community. One example might be sitting in the school cafeteria with someone who does not have many friends. The sacrifice would be giving of one's time with friends at lunch and the risk would be friends not approving. Another example might be volunteering one night to serve at the homeless shelter. The sacrifice would be giving up time in the evenings and the risk might involve initiating conversations with the homeless, not being certain of how those conversations will go.</p>	<p>After the leaders read the passages from 2nd Corinthians and discuss the interpretation (both attached), they can decide upon the direction they want to go with the passage during this reflection.</p>
<p>Closing Prayer (2 minutes)</p>	<p>Dear God, help us all to have some of the courage of those who fought for and gave us the privilege of being able to read and understand the bible. Thank you for their suffering and their</p>	

	sacrifices in the name of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Direct us towards the risks you want us to take to spread the love of Jesus Christ to the world. Help us have the bravery to follow through on those risks.	
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History of English Language Bible - Script

Welcome to the performance of History of the English Language Bible!

Being able to read the Bible freely is a gift. There have been brave people throughout history who have given us that gift.

Centuries ago, church leaders were the only ones who could read the Bible. These church leaders thought if common people could read the Bible, the common people would question the church leaders' authority.

This placed a **BARRIER** between common people and the Bible.

Then along came John Wycliffe. He said the wealth and power of church leaders is the opposite of what scripture says. He said Christians should think for themselves. He wrote a version of the English Language Bible that put the Bible into every day speech.

This started building a **BRIDGE** between common people and the Bible.

Because John Wycliffe and his Bible encouraged Christians to think for themselves, the power of the church and the King were threatened. Wycliffe's Bible was banned and some who read it were branded as heretics and burned at the stake.

FEAR, FLAMES and **FIRE** came between the common people and the Bible.

During what is called the Renaissance Period, people began to think and explore ideas for themselves. Ancient manuscripts of the Bible were found and this allowed some to examine the original words of the apostles. Once again, this threatened the church and government, and two theologians named Martin Luther and John Calvin declared how the power and wealth in the church was a sin to the common people. Their rebellion started what we call the Protestant Reformation.

BATTLES ensued.

Martin Luther said faith alone is the key to salvation. He said the common people do not need a priest to go between themselves and God. He published a German version of the Bible and he

had great success. In England, a theologian named William Tyndale was working secretly in England, Germany and other places, fighting hard for the same things as Luther. Tyndale wrote a version of the New Testament in English so common people could understand. Once again, this threatened the church and the government's power, and the night before Tyndale's Bible was to be published, the printing house was raided.

They were totally **SURPRISED!**

Tyndale's Bible was secretly printed and made small so it could be secretly carried around by common people in their everyday life. Some of Tyndale's Bibles were burned by the Catholic Church. Tyndale was eventually burned at the stake.

Once again, **FEAR, FLAMES AND FIRE** came between the Bible and the common people!

A man named Archbishop Thomas Cramner convinced King Henry VIII to authorize a National Bible that was put into every English church. Being able to read and hear the Bible really empowered the common people because the Catholic Church still only allowed priests to read the Bible in Latin. The common people showed their power by reading the English Language Bible out loud.

This was a HUGE statement saying we can individually stand directly before God, without clergy or priests! On our own, we are **STRONG!**

The Puritans wanted the church they read about in the Bible where there was no bowing, no candles and no bishops. They loved the Geneva Bible, because it had explanations written in the margins. People could read and **TOTALLY UNDERSTAND** the Geneva Bible themselves!

When King James came into power he had scholars create a National Bible called the King James Bible. Many used the King James Bible to start churches that empowered the common people.

The many deep and brave sacrifices of those who would not let go of their dream and call from God to fight for the common people's right to read and interpret the Bible paved the way for wonderful things to happen. Jonathan Edwards and other ministers started a Great Awakening of passion for how the gospel influences, directs and empowers believers' personal and professional lives. This movement spread to many denominations and is still going on today. Thomas Jefferson and others signed laws declaring that no one could be penalized based on their religious beliefs.

All of this allows us all to worship freely and passionately now, and **CELEBRATE** the Bible and our faith!

Biblical Passage and Interpretation

2nd Corinthians 4:7-15 – “But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.”

These passages spoken by Paul pull together two themes from the book of 2nd Corinthians that are often intertwined – suffering and reconciliation. Paul is using clay jars, referring to them as treasures, to represent the suffering and reconciliation that occurred from the ‘glory’ of Christ’s suffering and the ‘glory’ of his imminent coming. Right before these passages Paul uses the word glory and says God shines the glory of God in the face of Christ. Paul connects all of this together by saying that this priceless treasure of Christ’s suffering and imminent coming that contains the glory of God is held in fragile, somewhat broken vessels. Paul is placing his own suffering and story inside of God’s cosmic plan for creation that includes the reconciling event in Christ, the imminent renewal of creation. By inserting his story into God’s reconciling story, Paul is validating his suffering and ministry as being genuine to the gospel. He is pulling together his own story inside of the themes of suffering and reconciliation. Paul then tells the people to be “carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible” in their bodies, “for while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus’s sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh.” This exemplifies a broader aspect of the theme of reconciliation that is not just about Paul or the people, but is about the church being a witness and example of a community of reconciliation. The churches’ life is to be a communal witness to the world of God’s reconciling act through Jesus Christ.

Multi-Generational Adaptation

This adaptation is designed to be an activity around this lesson plan that involves many generations. This adaptation can be used as a substitute for everything in the lesson plan before the lesson reflection. The lesson reflection, biblical reflection, and closing can be used by multi-generations when either the lesson plan or this adaptation is used.

The following script is designed to be used in a room where ten stations are set up to tell the story of the Reformation Bible. Each station has one word that is bolded that is the word to be emphasized at that station. Use the largest available room. A fellowship hall setting is ideal. The script is to be read by an adult narrator who travels to each station and proclaims the story out loud. The idea of this entire narration and the stations is for all generations to prepare the room for a final presentation, and then invite the congregation to come view the presentation all the way through. If that is not possible, the narration for each station can be placed in written form at each station, and the entire display can be left out and in place. The congregation can walk through the display at any time. If a church is celebrating the Reformation, this display can be left up the entire time the celebration is happening. The facilitator can decide how elaborate he/she wants to be in terms of giving people ways to artistically and aesthetically set up the individual stations. Participants can draw/paint/color representations of the bolded words to decorate a station, props that represent the bolded words can be brought in to decorate each station, (the facilitator can provide a list of items congregation members can bring in before the class starts), costumes that represent the narration and bolded words can be used, etc. Another option is for ten stations to already be basically set up before the class starts and then participants can design colorful pieces to go around this basic set up. Music can be brought in that goes

behind the narration. The sky is the limit. Enjoy brainstorming what will make the decoration of each station easy, fun, creative and collaborative.

Narrator Script for Multi-Generational Adaptation

(First Station) Being able to read the Bible freely is a gift. There have been many brave people throughout history who have given us that gift. Centuries ago, church leaders were the only ones who could read the Bible. These church leaders thought if common people could read the Bible, the common people would question the church leader's authority. This placed a **BARRIER** between the common people and the Bible.

(Second Station) The only church that existed in western Europe was the Roman Catholic Church. Church was not voluntary but mandatory. Believers obediently followed the priests during the Catholic mass. Priests faced the altar, away from the congregation. Priests spoke in Latin and read the Bible in Latin. By obediently following the priests and doing these things, the congregation believed that this was their true path to **HEAVEN**.

(Third Station) Then along came John Wycliffe (1320's – 1384). He said the wealth and power of church leaders was the opposite of what scripture says. He said Christians should think for themselves. He and some followers wrote a version of the English Language Bible that translated the bible from Latin and put the Bible into common, every day speech. Because John Wycliffe and his bible encouraged Christians to think for themselves, the power of the church and the King were threatened. Wycliffe's Bible was banned and some who read it were branded as heretics and burned at the stake. **FEAR, FLAMES** and **FIRE** came between the common people and the Bible

(Fourth Station) Well after his death, Wycliffe was declared a heretic. His body was dug up and his ashes scattered as a sign of power by the church. Despite the churches' attempts to silence Wycliffe and his followers, many persisted and continued to translate Wycliffe's Bible. This was a tedious sacrifice as every one of Wycliffe's Bibles had to be translated by hand and took six months to complete. Today, more copies of Wycliffe's Bible exist than virtually any other medieval text. Wycliffe and his followers stared **DANGER** in the face, over and over again, so that we could have these Bibles today.

(Fifth Station) During what is called the Renaissance Period (1300-1700), people began to think and explore ideas for themselves. There was an explosion of original art and literature. There were new discoveries of ancient manuscripts that really helped people be able to translate the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek. People could look closer at the original words of the apostles. Once again, this threatened the church and government. Two 16th century theologians

named Martin Luther and John Calvin declared how the power and wealth in the church was a sin to the common people. Their rebellion started what we call the Protestant Reformation. For the next century and a half, **BATTLES** ensued.

(*Sixth Station*) Martin Luther said faith alone is the key to salvation. He said the common people do 'not' need a priest to go between themselves and God. He published a German language version of the New Testament and he had great success. In 1524, a theologian named William Tyndale was working secretly on an English bible, fighting hard for the same things as Luther. Tyndale wrote a version of the New Testament in English so common people could understand it. Instead of focusing on the word priest, he used the word Presbyter to purposely challenge the churches' power. Instead of focusing on doing everything right to get to heaven and following priests, Tyndale focused on love. Once again, this threatened the church and the government's power, and the night before Tyndale's Bible was to be published, the printing house was raided. Everyone, including Tyndale, were totally **SURPRISED!**

(*Seventh Station*) Tyndale lost part of his text during the raid, but he bravely persisted. Tyndale's Bible was eventually secretly printed in 1526. It was made very small, only a few inches tall, so it could be secretly carried around by common people. Leaves of Tyndale's Bibles were taken out and put inside large books that were not banned and these books were smuggled into England. The leaves were taken out and put back together once transporters were on shore. These Bibles were sold on the black market. Tyndale's Bibles were burned by the Catholic Church. Tyndale went into hiding in what is today Belgium, but was eventually caught. He was put into solitary confinement for more than a year, and in 1536 he was burned at the stake. Once again, **FEAR, FLAMES AND FIRE** came between the Bible and the common people.

(*Eighth Station*) Another hero came along named Archbishop Thomas Cranmer who had a passionate belief that every person had the right to read the Bible in one's own native tongue. In 1539, Cranmer convinced King Henry VIII to authorize a National Bible that was put into every English church. Being able to read and hear the Bible really empowered the common people because the Catholic Church still only allowed priests to read the Bible. The common people showed their power by **SHOUTING OUT THE WORDS OF THE BIBLE**. This was a HUGE statement saying we can individually stand directly before God, without clergy or priests! On our own, we are strong! However, when Queen Mary – a Catholic believer - came into power, she had 300 Protestants burned, earning her the nickname Bloody Mary. She had Cranmer arrested as a heretic and he was eventually burned at the stake.

(*Ninth Station*) Thanks to these brave heroes, multiple translations of the Bible were now out in the world. The power of the words of the Bible began to permeate inside people's minds and hearts. People began reading the Bible and making up their own minds about what it meant.

The Geneva reformers came up with the idea for a team of scholars to write an English Language Bible that would number the verses for the first time, as well as provide explanatory comments in the margins. It became known as the Geneva Bible. When King James came into power, he had scholars write a National Bible called the King James Bible. The King James Bible became a vital part of religious life, empowering the common people to read, interpret and **STAND CONFIDENTLY BEFORE GOD!**

(Tenth Station) The many deep and brave sacrifices of those who would not let go of their dream and call from God to fight for the common people's right to read and interpret the Bible paved the way for wonderful things to happen. A pastor named Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) recognized that when he emphasized personal connections between people's lives and the words in the Bible an increase in a feeling of personal power and passion emerged within his congregation. Edwards and other ministers started a Great Awakening of passion for how the gospel influences, directs and empowers believers' personal and professional lives. This movement spread to many denominations and is still going on today. In America, Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) and others signed laws declaring that no one could be penalized based on their religious beliefs. All of this allows us all to worship freely and passionately now, and **CELEBRATE** the Bible and our faith!