

Youth Teaching Resources

January 9, 2022



Season after Christmas

Psalm 147:1-20—"A Good Beginning"

In Christ We Have ...

Season of Epiphany

Acts 8:4-17 (RCL 8:14-17)—"Amazing Grace"

1 Corinthians 12:1-11—"Amazing Gifts"

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a—"Amazing Oneness"

1 Corinthians 13:1-13—"Amazing Love"

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

“Amazing Grace”

Acts 8:4-17

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Robert Tackett-Evans

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Gathering

Begin your time together by reflecting on last week’s challenge.

- Choose at least one aspect of your daily life and consider what you do and how you do it as an act of praise. Reflect on the following question: How does considering this aspect of your life to be praise or worship of God change how you approach the activity? Why?

Invite students to share their insights. Once everyone has had a chance to share, move on to today’s lesson.

Opening Exercise

Show the YouTube Clip titled “Malfoy Calls Hermione MudBlood.” The clip can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xpj3krxJtNU>. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability. (Most youth will be very familiar with Harry Potter due to its timeless popularity.)

There are a couple of definitions that will be helpful to you in leading a discussion around the video clip.

Muggle—A person with no magical abilities.

Mudblood—A derogatory word for a wizard or witch who was born to muggle parents. It is a way of saying these witches/wizards have dirty, or impure blood.

After showing the video, consider asking the following questions to facilitate a discussion.

- What does Malfoy call Hermione?
- What does the word “mudblood” mean? Why do you think that word so offensive?
- What purpose do you think it serves to call someone a “mudblood?”
- Can you think of groups of people our society treats as “mudbloods?” Who are some of those people?

Listening to the Scripture

Read Acts 8:4-17 aloud. Begin your discussion around the text by asking students to share their initial observations and insights. Consider asking a question like the following:

- What details stand out to you in this reading? (*Students are invited to name details they find confusing, interesting, troubling etc.*) Why does this stand out to you?

Listening to the Scripture *continued*

You will want to consult Tony's commentary to help address any possible questions students may raise about the text. Once everyone has had the opportunity to share their initial questions or insights, continue the discussion with questions like the following:

- Today we hear about Phillip. Where did Phillip go to proclaim the good news about Jesus?
- Does Samaria sound familiar to you? Where have you heard of Samaria before? (*Think of other biblical stories.*)
- What do you know about Samaritans? (*Invite students to share what they have heard about Samaritans. Use Tony's commentary to help students gain a deeper understanding of who the Samaritans were. Help students make the connection between the text and the video: because the Samaritans were not pure blood Jews due to mixed marriages, they were seen as "mudbloods."*)
- With this information about Samaritans, why do you think it is significant that Phillip chose to go to Samaria to proclaim the good news of Jesus?
- What was the result of Phillip's proclamation of the gospel?
- Peter and John went to Samaria as well. What did they do when they arrived in Samaria? (See v.15)
- What was the result of Peter and John's prayer?
- Phillip had gone to Samaria because he believed the good news of Jesus was for "everyone." What evidence do you find in the scripture that affirms Phillip's belief? (*Consider the work we find the Holy Spirit doing in the text.*)
- Who are those people today that we consider modern-day "mudbloods" or deem to be "less than?" Do you think the good news of the gospel is for those individuals as well? What are the barriers that keep us from sharing the good news of the gospel with them?
- What steps might you take to do your part in sharing the good news of Jesus with those whom we often leave out, or consider to be "less than?"

If students would like to continue with the discussion, consult Tony's *Digging Deeper*. You might consider asking questions like the following:

- Martin Luther King, Jr. famously observed: "It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning." Do you think that observation rings true? Why?
- In what ways do you think we are segregated? Who are those people that are missing in our communities of faith? Why do you think they are not represented?
- Does this disturb you?
- What steps could you take to embody the inclusivity of the gospel?

If students would like to take the discussion further, consider what Tony poses as *The Hardest Question*.

- How do we explain the "Samaritan Schism?"

Application

Today we hear in the scripture and Harry Potter that Samaritans and Mudbloods were considered to be “less than” because of the “impurity” of their blood. These designations were means to exclude others. In the case of the Samaritans, it was radical that Phillip believed the gospel of Jesus was meant for even the Samaritans. This week, consider the following: Who are those people in your life, whether at school or somewhere else, whom you or others often exclude? What is the reason for excluding them? Is that honestly a good reason? What can you do be more inclusive in your treatment of these individuals? Once you have answered these questions, take concrete action to do something about it. Be prepared to share about your experience when we come back next week.

Close with prayer.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Samaria—King Omri moved the capital of Israel from Tirzah to Samaria around 884 BCE. According to 1 Kings 16:24, Omri “bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; he fortified the hill, and called the city that he built Samaria, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill.” The Hebrew name of Samaria was *Shomron*, and the hill in question was a very large hill.

The site of Samaria was largely limited to the top of the hill. Though expanded by Omri’s son Ahab, it was not a large city, but served primarily as a royal and administrative compound. Samaria has been carefully excavated by archaeologists, who have confirmed the presence of monumental buildings from the time of Ahab, along with numerous costly items such as furniture inlays of ivory, statues, wall panels, and glass inlays, opulent lifestyles that provoked the prophets from Elijah to Amos.



Samaria was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 BCE. Sargon renamed it *Samerina*, and claimed to have rebuilt it even better than before.

The city was later the focus of a massive reconstruction under Herod the Great, who made it into a lavish Roman city. This would have been the city known to Philip and other first century Christians. The small theater pictured above would have come from this period.



A change of hands—Archaeology confirms the shift in population following the demise of the Northern Kingdom. Not only does the material culture show signs of changing, but two clay tablets found in the ancient town of Hadid—between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv—record legal transactions between people with non-Israelite names.

The tablets were inscribed in cuneiform, in the Assyrian language, and date to the early seventh century, BCE. One records a transfer of land, and the other records a loan. None of the names

Digging Deeper *continued*

in the documents are Yahwistic. One of the tablets is pictured above (photo by the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University, from [Haaretz](#)).

Still appalling—Many years ago, Martin Luther King, Jr. famously observed: “It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is eleven o’clock on Sunday morning.”

That observation remains true. Does it trouble you? Can you think of ways to make that situation better?

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

How do we explain the “Samaritan Schism?”

Following the exile, both Ezra and Nehemiah sought to enforce a doctrine of ethnic purity among the returning exiles. In their minds, the only “pure” Jews were those who could establish a pedigree of descending from Jews who had been in exile. This eliminated descendants of Jews who had remained in the land—primarily the poor—on the assumption that their families would have intermarried with people of other ethnicities.

After the return, many of the former exiles also married among the local peoples, but for Ezra, this was detestable, meaning that “the holy seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands” (Ezra 9:2-4). When he learned the extent of it, according to his own account, Ezra ripped his mantle, tore at his hair and beard, and went into mourning (Ezra 9:2-4). Following a loud prayer of repentance, he persuaded the people that they had broken faith with God and concluded “So now let us make a covenant with our God to send away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law” (Ezra 10:3).

After first attempting to call everyone to a mass meeting but being thwarted by heavy rain, representatives were appointed to canvass all of the people and compiled a list of those who had intermarried with local people. The resulting list included not just laypeople, but also many priests and Levites, whose names are listed in Ezra 10:16-43. The text claims that all of these were forced to end their marriages and abandon their children: “All these had married foreign women, and they sent them away with their children” (Ezra 10:44).

Interestingly enough, the text notes that two men opposed the measure: “Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah opposed this” (Ezra 10:15). One might expect their opposition to have been from self-interest, but they are not mentioned on the list of those who had married foreign peoples. While we cannot be sure of their motives, perhaps they saw the cruelty of the practice and felt compassion for the families who would be separated. Perhaps they had a more inclusive attitude, believing that foreign peoples could be incorporated into the Hebrew family without diluting their allegiance to Yahweh.

It is evident, however, that both Ezra and Nehemiah believed it would work the other way. Knowing that women raise the children and have the most influence over them, they were particularly concerned with instances in which Hebrew men married non-Hebrew women.

Nehemiah took an even more contentious and hands-on approach than Ezra. Consider his account of how he dealt with the issue:

The Hardest Question *continued*

In those days also I saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab; and half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke the language of various peoples. And I contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. Did not King Solomon of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin. Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?” (Neh. 13:23-27).

Intermarriage was not the only issue. After both Israel and Judah had been conquered and their elite populations deported, people of the land continued to worship Yahweh, and others who have been deported from other lands had also begun to worship Yahweh. When it became known that those who had returned from exile planned to rebuild the temple, some of them sought to help. Though the writer of Ezra regarded them as “adversaries of Judah and Benjamin,” they wanted to assist in the effort and worship in Jerusalem.

According to the text, “they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of families and said to them, ‘Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of King Esar-haddon of Assyria who brought us here’” (Ezra 4:1-2).

The returning exiles would not allow it, however, seeing themselves as the only legitimate Jews: “But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of families in Israel said to them, ‘You shall have no part with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus of Persia has commanded us’” (Ezra 4:3).

So it was that local residents who had never stopped worshiping Yahweh were cut off from the community of the returning exiles on the premise that their mixed heritage disqualified them from further participation in Israel. This was the beginning of the Samaritan schism, a divide that only deepened in the coming years. Not permitted to worship in Jerusalem but still desiring to worship, the Samaritans built their own temple atop Mount Gerizim. During a brief period of Jewish independence, the Hasmonean king John Hyrcanus destroyed the Samaritan temple (about 111-112 BCE), pushing the two groups even further apart.

These are the historical roots of the sharp divide between Jews and Samaritans in Jesus’ day. Though they worshiped the same God and lived in adjacent lands, the history of enmity kept them apart. This is what makes Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) and Philip’s work among the Samaritans (Acts 8) so exceptional.

Even today, a small community of Samaritans continues to live on Mount Gerizim, and they still observe the Passover with blood sacrifices. And to this day, Jews are forbidden to marry Samaritans.