

THE IMPROVED ADULT TEACHER SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY



GOD'S WORLD & GOD'S PEOPLE

FALL QUARTER 2018 | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER



Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

The AME Sunday School Union and the Department of Christian Education are excited to share with you this update for our Church School curriculum. We have been attentive to the emerging needs of our church, and of our world, and have sought to provide significant changes to our lessons that keenly respond to these needs.

Over the past year, in conversation with scholars and thinkers from our connection, we have adopted a new methodological framework for our curricula. This newly fashioned lesson development employs the power of storytelling as the means through which our religious commitments are shared in our Church School classes. The new curriculum will continue to explore the biblical text, in conversation with relevant examples from popular culture and current events, to inspire a new type of engagement with our commitment to the Gospel.

We have shared a sample Church School lesson with you so that you might explore the contours of this work. We have also attached a brief introductory document that explains how best to utilize the lessons.

Our hope is that this new lesson structure will open the hearts and minds of our Zion toward a liberating and loving transformation.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Roderick D. Belin
President/Publisher
AME Sunday School Union



Rev. Dr. Garland F. Pierce
Executive Director
Department of Christian Education



Engaging the Curriculum

The world in which we live requires that people of faith represent that faith in such a way that provides hope to the hopeless, liberty to the oppressed, and freedom to the captives. In particular, the gospel of Jesus Christ gives us no other option; it is our call and mandate to share the story. The new curricula are structured with this goal in mind. The aim is to use the biblical text as a foundation for relevant conversation to the lives of people of color – ones that serve our members and lead to inward transformation. Most importantly, we desire to provide lessons that promote the theological underpinnings of our Zion and ones that promote the message of liberation that is central to African Methodism.

Inspired by the scholarship of Dr. Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, particularly found in *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*, we have adopted the use of storytelling and story linking as a new methodology. The Bible is our sacred text and therein lies the grand story of which we are a part. Our goal is to use these lessons to find the ways in which our individual stories fit in with the cultural stories of those from the African diaspora, and the grand story of God and God's creation.

In this exploratory guide to the lesson structure, it is our hope that we will enter with open eyes and hearts to encounter the wonders of the Divine. Storytelling, as a methodological framework, will offer for us the opportunity to engage the wrestling, to encounter the questions, and to join together in a communal pursuit toward faithful living.

Introduction

Each lesson begins with a brief paragraph or two as an introduction. This preliminary material is used to set the stage for the lesson, including key terms, background biblical text, and any contextual historical/cultural information. In this section, the teacher has the opportunity to engage the students in any initial thoughts about the scriptural passages and to ascertain where questions might be forming. It is imperative that the introduction includes any relevant shared material; the information presented herein will help to foster dialogue in the latter portions of the lesson.

Telling the Bible Story

As aforementioned, the crux of the new methodological framework is the role of storytelling in the lesson. We have come to believe, both through the gospel narrative and through our personal lives, that there is an innate and inherent power in the telling of the story. It is, in fact, the telling of the story of Jesus and his love that introduced our forebears to the gospel. Accordingly, this section of the lesson is to be used for explaining and interpreting the week's story. This portion of the lesson includes a critical explanation or exegesis of the text, alongside creative retellings of the story in historical, political, or social contexts. The classes should use this time to critically engage the telling of the story, as well as engage their own iterations of the story and its effect for their lives.

Sankofa

The story of which we are a part is piecemeal without the grand story of the African diaspora and the sundry stories of our ancestors. One of the ways in which we seek to expand our lessons is to consider how the liberation of the gospel might be shared to oppressed people of color globally. In this portion of the lesson, the class is invited to learn from an example or idea of faithful living that stems directly from the cultural stories of Africans and/or people of African descent. These stories will connect thematically to the assigned biblical text, and help in adding a new resource for our classes. We are encouraged to read and engage with these stories not primarily from our context, but rather to open our hearts and minds as we learn from the larger family of God.

Case Study

Each lesson will include a case study that presents real and relatively current stories that will connect thematically to the biblical text and help to bring out the lesson goals for the session. Taken predominantly from current events, this section offers the classes the space to engage with the story in a tangible and pragmatic way. Most of these stories will be tailored to the needs of people of color in our world, offering a dialectical platform to address the problems that we face. The case study will offer the space for us to engage with an actual event in the world and to use our lessons and story to offer a critically-informed response.

Life Application

After absorbing the matter of the biblical story, the Sankofa story, and the story within the case study, the lesson then provides us with the opportunity to include ourselves more fully in the story of our lives. This section of the lesson is arguably the most important part: what are we to do in response to the lesson? The curriculum is intent on providing ways for the students to mature their faith, to become aware of what God requires from us, and to find guidance for daily living. The instruction of the lesson must engage with this section with resolve and with ample time for transformative conversation. Each lesson will offer at least three questions in this section that will inspire the class to think – and act – in response to the stories they have heard. These questions are written to be open-ended in format, and they should be taught in this way. Questions that desire a “yes” or “no” answer are not appropriate for this level of thought; the goal is that, pedagogically, the students lift up their voices and share responses to the questions in ways that stimulate practical thinking.

Closing Devotions

Each lesson finishes with some offerings for a closing devotion. A combination of either prayers, prayer activities, hymns, praise songs, or other acts of worship are provided in the curricula. The specified elements of devotion are chosen and tailored to be aligned with the story of the lesson and the story of the gospel. Many elements in this section are particularly chosen from A.M.E. resources, including our hymnal, liturgy, or other published materials. Our work in this world cannot be done

without spiritual formation and disciplined devotion to God. Lessons should be planned in a timely manner to ensure that this section is not ignored and is not given a haphazard effort. The lessons craft this time as an offering to God of ourselves and the work assigned to our hands in the prayer that the Lord would continue to inspire and assist us in our work.

Final Considerations

We do not have to make a case regarding the importance of Church School and its effect on our lives. We have witnessed through the ages the import of Christian Education and the weight of communal learning in our Zion. It is, admittedly, our goal to enrich the lives of people of color in particular and oppressed peoples in general through the liberating and transformative power of the gospel. If we sing about liberty in our choirs, and if we preach about liberty in our pulpits, then we must also teach about liberty in our classrooms. Our lives have been transformed by the story of Jesus and by the retelling of that story in new and imaginative ways. It is our hope that this new methodology of storytelling will extend the reach of our Church School's impact in our churches, and by extension, broaden its influence in the lives of our members.

Rev. Roderick D. Belin

President/Publisher

AME Sunday School Union

GOD BLESSES JACOB AND RACHEL

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 30

Focus Scripture: Genesis 30: 22-32, 43

Key Verse: God heeded [Rachel] and opened her womb. Genesis 30:22 (NRSV)

GENESIS 30:22-32, 43 (NRSV)

22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God heeded her and opened her womb.

23 She conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach";

24 and she named him Joseph, saying, "May the Lord add to me another son!"

25 When Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country.

26 Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know very well the service I have given you."

27 But Laban said to him, "If you will allow me to say so, I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you;

28 name your wages, and I will give it."

29 Jacob said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you, and how your cattle have fared with me.

30 For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly; and the Lord has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?"

31 He said, "What shall I give you?" Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything; if you will do this for me, I will again feed your flock and keep it:

GENESIS 30:22-32, 43 (KJV)

22 And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.

23 And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach:

24 And she called his name Joseph; and said, The Lord shall add to me another son.

25 And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.

26 Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

27 And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake.

28 And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it.

29 And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

30 For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?

31 And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock.

Sample Lesson

32 let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and such shall be my wages.”

Genesis 30:43

43 Thus the man grew exceedingly rich, and had large flocks, and male and female slaves, and camels and donkeys.

32 I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire.

Genesis 30:43

43 And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.

KEY TERMS

- **Divination** – seeking knowledge by unknown supernatural means usually through certain prescribed practices or rituals; unusual insight
- **Reproach**– an expression of rebuke or disapproval.

INTRODUCTION

The story of Jacob concludes this portion of the narrative of Abraham’s promise, by reminding the reader that the blessings of God have already begun. Motivated by the dream of heaven and earth, accompanied by God’s personal message of reaffirmation, Jacob arrived to this land with a purposeful mission to find a wife. Yet, he would leave with much more. His tenure with Laban was deceitfully contrived by Laban himself. Jacob experienced the feeling of being victimized and deceived, not realizing the woman that was given to

him in Laban’s agreement was not the one he negotiated. Instead, he slept with Leah. To have her younger, beautiful sister Rachel, he must spend seven years serving Laban.

The story illustrates the conclusion of Jacob’s service to Laban with the blessings of his two wives and their maidens, seven sons, and a daughter. He not only was blessed with a great family but had large flocks, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys (vs. 43). Laban recognized the hand of God was upon Jacob, which also led to the entire community’s prosperity. As Jacob decides to return to his home, he learns that his release must be skillfully negotiated. Laban’s craftiness was no match for Jacob’s strategies and God’s divine favor. As Jacob prepared to return to his home, he would arrive a very wealthy man.

Laban’s craftiness was no match for Jacob’s strategies and God’s divine favor.

Sample Lesson

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Jacob has now fulfilled his responsibility to Laban and announces his plans to return to his home, accompanied by the wealth of his wives, children, servants and herds of animals. As Jacob attempts to leave the land of Haran with his wives and children, he is now posed with a similar predicament that kept him bound to Laban. Jacob knew how to be an opportunist when he stole his brother, Esau's birthright and blessing. But now he was experiencing a suspicious maltreatment from his father in law. Jacob's destiny however, will not be stopped by the actions of Laban. Laban receives understanding through untold mystical means that the prosperity he received was due to God's favor on Jacob (v.27). However, Laban does not want to lose the flow of prosperity that Jacob's presence has provided. Jacob negotiates a settlement between Laban, which all along he recognizes will bring him a larger and more valuable herd. Jacob's plan is successful and he leaves with a great wealth, as well as leaving a blessing of prosperity with his father-in-law and family.

SANKOFA

There is a Liberian proverb that says, "Though the palm tree in the jungle is

big, who knows how big its yield will be?" The proverb alerts the listener to several important points about life. First, one cannot judge the outcome or success of anything simply based on the outer appearance. In some cases, a smaller tree may be more productive than the larger ones. Jacob can be considered the smaller tree. He was born after his brother. He did not have the same stature or skill that Esau had. Yet there was more to Jacob than his exterior appearance. He was chosen to carry the promise. If Jacob relied on his appearance alone, he may have failed. The true test is the time of the yield. And, as the proverb states, "...who knows how big its yield will be"? The reality is that only God knows how things will end. God can then speak wisdom through the Holy Spirit to guide Christians and to remind us to look beyond appearances (1 Corinth. 2:9). This proverb is a reminder that there is One who has knowledge far beyond our capabilities.

Finally, the palm tree is in a jungle setting. The idea of the jungle indicates that there are many other palms around that may show evidence through their stature of their ability to produce or yield only a limited product. However, the younger palm that is still growing, has the potential to yield longer than possibly

Sample Lesson

the older palm. Alternatively, the smaller palm may not be able to handle harsher climates and lack of water. The wisdom to predict the outcome may be availed to humans; but, the ultimate answer comes from God.

CASE STUDY

The ability to strategically operate a successful business is a skill that has not been attributed enough to men and women of Africa. The richest African, for the seventh year in a row, is Nigerian cement and commodities tycoon, Aliko Dangote, with a net worth that Forbes magazine pegs at \$12.2 billion. That's up \$100 million from a year ago. One example is the CEO of the Dangote group.

This Nigerian businessman is the richest person of African descent in the world. Contributing to the development of Nigeria with the largest industrial conglomerate in West Africa, the Dangote Group employs upwards of 11,000 people, dealing with industries such as sugar refining, flour mills, food distribution, and cement. Also a heavy contributor to political parties in the region, Dangote's businesses account for one-fourth of the Nigerian Stock Exchange.

Exactly half of Africa's 20 billionaires became richer in 2016. The continent's biggest gainer -- in both dollar and percentage terms is Nigerian oil and telecom tycoon, Mike Adenuga. Adenuga's net worth increased \$2.7 billion to \$5.8 billion since December 31, 2015. No other African billionaire added more than \$1 billion to his or her net worth in the past year. Once again, the African continent demonstrates it is the home of promise and of great riches.

The wisdom to predict the outcome may be availed to humans; but, the ultimate answer comes from God.

LIFE APPLICATION

There are many misconceptions regarding the potential of people with African ancestry. People of African descent are resilient, strong, ambitious, and wise. African people are rich beyond the natural resources below the service of the ground. There is a cultural wealth and prosperity that can only be found in the uniqueness of being the inhabitants of the birthplace of God's creation. The love for community and hospitality promotes a distinct appreciation for spiritual interconnectedness. Yet, African people possess the skills and business knowledge to strategically prosper in a competitive global economy. The diverse gifts of the African diaspora


Sample Lesson

allow people of color to excel in numerous occupations and business pursuits. It should therefore not be surprising to see many Africans and African Americans across the globe who are exceedingly wealthy.

The critical perspective of African American wealth and economic status is directly linked to the extensive historical oppressive rules that have hindered the progress of black people. The complex socioeconomic impact of slavery, racism, and Jim Crow have obviously had adverse impact on black people and the communities in which we live. However, it is important to also take an active role in understanding the obvious missed opportunities to overcome the horrific crimes of injustice against the people on which the United States of America was built.

The biblical equation for addressing this problem is to recognize the responsibilities of overseeing the assets one has. As indicated by Jesus in the parable of the talents, there is always

an accounting of even the smallest asset. Black Americans have excelled and prospered in times when laws prohibited the acquisition of land/property in designated areas. Redlining, employment discrimination, and segregation in schools may have slowed progress but it did not stop the movement to become doctors, lawyers, astronauts, engineers, computer programmers, inventors, entrepreneurs, politicians and even President of the United States. It may have been difficult with many tricksters, opportunist, bigots, and terrorists standing in the way. The A.M.E. Church led the way in land ownership and building schools to educate and promote healthy and wealthy communities. Our work continues, and we must move forward to complete the work and carry on the legacy. There is nothing impossible with God.

The critical perspective of African American wealth and economic status is directly linked to the extensive historical oppressive rules that have hindered the progress of black people.

Questions

- The word “favor” is frequently used in Christian circles today. How do you define favor and what are the biblical references you use to support it?

Sample Lesson

- Wealth and riches are frequently discussed in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we find teachings by Jesus and the Apostles, which teach to seek the Lord and Kingdom of God first (Matt. 6:33). What is the primary factor that may justify the prosperity experienced by Jacob in this lesson? Where should we look for our ultimate victory?
- Discuss God's expectation for sound stewardship and where it is found in this lesson.

CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Song: "Just Know He Has His Hands on You" By Marvin Sapp – *Here I AM CD*

"The Best is Yet to Come" by Donald Lawrence and the Tri-City Singers Finale' Act 2 Disc 1

Closing Prayer

O Lord God, as the heavens are high above the earth, so are thy ways above our ways, and thy thoughts above our thoughts. Lord, we trust you and walk by faith today and always. We ask your divine help upon those who are in need, from the sick, to those in bondage, to those who are in need of deliverance and of salvation, and to those who need your providence in their lives and are seeking sustenance even now. We are grateful for your manifold blessings and ask that

you continue to speak to your children that we may be a symbol of integrity and an advocate for justice. We pray that you will correct the Jacobs among us and restore hope to the Rachels. Let our hearts always be rekindled by the promise that you gave Abraham; and, through him, we receive the promise of blessing and restoration through our covenant relationship with your son, Jesus Christ. We commit to you our lives in this relationship that makes us heirs to the inheritance; and, we shout Hallelujah and in Jesus' name we say, AMEN!

By: Reverend Dr. D. Melynda Clarke

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

November 19-November 25

Monday	Genesis 29:15-30 (Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel)
Tuesday	Genesis 29:31-35 (Leah Gives Birth to Four Sons)
Wednesday	Psalms 20 (The God of Jacob Brings Victory)
Thursday	Genesis 31:1-9 (Jacob Steals His Family from Laban)
Friday	Genesis 31:43-50 (Jacob and Laban Make Peace)
Saturday	Genesis 30:22-24; 35:16-21 (Rachel Gives Birth to Two Sons)
Sunday	Genesis 30:22-32, 43 (Jacob Prospers at Laban's Expense)

The mission of the AME Sunday School Union is to provide high quality resources to empower Christian believers to spread Christ's liberating gospel, pursue justice, and enhance the social development of all people.

