



# Weaving God's Promises

## LESSON 11 God's People in Exile

### Summary of the Story

Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian army destroys Jerusalem and captures Judah. Its people are carried away in exile to Babylon, the capital of Babylonia.

### Where You'll Find Today's Story

#### **In the Bible**

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*.

**2 Kings 24-25**

#### **In Children's Bibles**

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space below.

#### **In Our Sunday Lectionary**

These stories are not told in church on any Sunday.

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## Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

Around Elijah's time, the nation of Israel, consisting of the 12 tribes of Jacob (the sons of Jacob and their descendants), fell apart. Shattered by inner conflicts and threats from outside aggressors, the nation was divided in 924 B.C. into two parts: Israel, made up of the 10 northern tribes (the Northern Kingdom), and Judah, made up of the two southern tribes (Southern Kingdom). Israel was conquered by Assyria in 722 B.C. and Judah fell in 587/586 B.C.

After the conquest, Assyria led away most of the Israelites (the Northern Kingdom). Those inhabitants were never heard from again. Popular tradition calls them the *Lost Tribes of Israel*.

By 625 B.C., the Assyrian star had faded and another star begins its rise to power: Babylonia. Under Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian army marches into Jerusalem and destroys it. Their capital city of Jerusalem and their Temple—the one place of worship—are destroyed. The people are scattered.

Only a remnant of Jerusalem remained. The land was laid to waste and became desolate. Not until 522 B.C. under Cyrus the Great of Persia would the people be allowed to return to their homeland and to the home of their God. God's chosen people had lost their homeland.

The Exile (also called the *Babylonian Captivity*) was a time of some of the greatest writings of the Old Testament, especially the writings of the prophets. Amos, Hosea, and Micah, whom we will learn about next year in *Weaving Together the Family of God*, called the people to worship God—not only externally but also in their hearts—by holding true to the justice and righteousness, compassion and mercy that are the essence of God's character.

Jeremiah foretold the exile and explained how Israel's people, themselves, were responsible through their sinful ways. But he also promised an end to the Exile and a new spirit for the people of God, admonishing them to remain faithful to God.

Ezekiel lived among the exiles and prepared them for their eventual return to Israel.

Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40-55) welcomed the arrival of King Cyrus; his arrival paved the way for the return of the exiles to Israel.

The Exile was a pivotal time in Israel's spiritual journey as a people and an important chapter in their—and our—story of salvation. People have wondered, where did we go wrong? How is God here with us? Why did God let this happen? You can read some of the Psalms of lamentations and sorrow—Psalms 44, 79 and especially 137—as songs of exile.

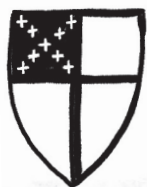
This exile reminds us of the other exiles that we have learned about: Adam and Eve, Cain. This is part of *our story*—the stories of exile in the Bible are really about our separation from God. Here it is good to remember that these separations are caused by us. God never abandons us. The physical separation—like the Israelites' forced separation from their Promised Land—is, for the biblical writer, only an outward expression of their inward separation from God. The people have abandoned God by worshipping other idols or failing to keep God's commandments or doing injustice to the poor.

The writers explain that Israel and Judah were guilty of infidelities to God so numerous and so terrible that destruction was the only fit punishment. Therefore, it is we who separate from God, yet God still calls us to return to God. It is the role of the prophet to confront the people who have wandered away from God and to bring them back to God's ways.

Let us remember and be thankful for God's faithfulness to us. We often stray from faithful living—not always “loving God with all our hearts” or “loving our neighbor as ourselves.” We often let other values or things get in the way of our relationship with God. It may be when we decide to sleep late rather than go to church, or when we are too busy to pray regularly, or when we let our anger seethe rather than seek reconciliation. But God still waits for us and still seeks us.

Later, in Jesus' parable of the Lost Sheep, we learn that God seeks us even when we wander away and lose track of God.

Again, *God stays with us, no matter what.*



## The Episcopal Thread

The story of exile is the story of sorrow, repentance and alienation from God.

It may be that Episcopalians do not often see their relationship with exile because, in general, the Anglican or Episcopal tradition is one that is comfortable with regular repentance and return to the Lord. It is recognized that exile from God's presence is a self-imposed exile caused by sinfulness, blindness or willfulness that keep us from doing God's will.

So the theme of repentance and return is pervasive in Anglican thought and worship life. For example, the Eucharistic Prayers all acknowledge that our sins alienate us from God and “again and again, you called us to return” (Eucharistic Prayer C, *BCP*, p. 370). The Church takes for granted that, even when we try, we will sin, so one promise asked of us in the Baptismal Covenant is: “Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?” (*BCP*, p. 304).



## Weaving God's Beloved Community

War and conquest has sent the Israelites into exile, into a foreign nation. Today, the mass migrations still happen—from South and Central American nations, from Asia, and recently from Ukraine. Some people flee from the violence; others are deported forcibly. War is devastating to lives.

A fundamental characteristic of God's Beloved Community would be the resolution of differences through peaceful means like negotiation and compromise, and above all respect for the dignity of those with whom we disagree.

Topics that can be discussed with children:

Whether at home, in school, or at the playground, sometimes you and somebody else might disagree. What are good words that you can use to work out your differences. How do words like “please” and “I'm sorry” help?

You may meet somebody from another country besides the United States, or another neighborhood besides your own. How can you help them feel welcome?



## Gathering

As the children enter the classroom, engage them in a quiet activity related to today's lesson. You'll find several ideas for entry activities, which can be easily adapted to the lesson, on pages 1-2 in the Appendix, also found on the Website. You'll also find a Gathering Activity handout on page 11 in the activity section at the end of this lesson.

You might offer older children a brief fellowship, giving the children a chance to catch up with each

other on the past week's happenings, establish friendships and build community.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer, for example:

- Thank you, Lord, for bringing us together to learn about your love for us. Thank you for all of the children who are here today. Help us to know that you are always with us. We pray this in Jesus' name. *Amen.*



## Telling the Story

The readings in the Bible, 2 Kings 24-25, are an account of the end of the state of Judah, of the capture of Jerusalem and of the fall and captivity of Judah. If this account is in your children's Bible, read it; if not, tell the story in your own words. or read from the version of the story we provide, found on pages 8-10.

With this story, we suggest that you use story aids, such a flannel board or a set of building blocks or other construction toys that can be easily knocked down at the appropriate point in the story. These aids will make visually clear the reality of the destruction.

Here is a summary of the events as told in 2 Kings:

**2 Kings 24:1-7:** The king of Judah, Jehoiakim, rebels against King Nebuchadnezzar after being his servant for three years. "The Lord sent against him" bands of enemies (other tribes) "to destroy it." So Judah is overrun by enemies.

**2 Kings 24:8-12:** After Jehoiakim comes Jehoiachin, who is, according to the writer of 2 Kings, as evil as his father. That means that he does not worship God as God commanded. Nebuchadnezzar's army besieges Jerusalem and takes Jehoiachin prisoner.

**2 Kings 24:13-17:** Jerusalem is captured.

Nebuchadnezzar's army destroys the Temple and all of the treasures in it. And he "carries away" all of the people and sends them to Babylon. He leaves the poorest people behind. (They later settle in Samaria, intermarry with foreigners and become known as Samaritans.)

**2 Kings 24:18-25:21:** Zedekiah follows Jehoiachin as king over Judah. Zedekiah is also evil. When he rebels against Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar brings his army and besieges Jerusalem. The king Zedekiah flees by night, but is captured and taken to Babylon. Judah falls to Babylon and the people are taken away. (This passage repeats some of the earlier passage in Kings 24:13-17.)

You may want to end this story with "Where is God in all of this?" But let the children ponder this without speaking. Time for discussion will follow later in the lesson. Right now it is important to let the story to sink in.



## Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your classroom.

### Materials

- small table with a cloth to cover it
- 2 candles or a single large Christ candle
- matches
- Bible
- cross
- optional:* flowers (real, fake or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read one or two verses from today's scripture to help the children connect the story that they just

heard with the Bible. If working with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Because of the severity of the readings in these chapters, you may want to select a passage that reassures the children of God's presence and protection, for example a passage from Isaiah, who comforts the people in exile or a passage from Jeremiah, who prophesies Judah's doom, tells why, then promises restoration.

Suggestions for the reading:

- Isaiah 41:8-10, 17 (Isaiah comforts the people)
- Jeremiah 18:1-11 (the potter and the clay)
- Jeremiah 23:1-4 (the Lord brings the flock back to their sheepfold)
- Jeremiah 31:1-3 (God's faithfulness)
- Jeremiah 31:31-34 (the New Covenant)

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

*Reader:* A reading from the book of (*name of book*): (*Read the selected passage.*)

*Reader:* The word of the Lord.

*All:* Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite prayers of thanksgiving for what God has done for us during the past week.
- Welcome any prayers of concern or petition that children may have at this time. Children may offer prayers for themselves or for anyone in need or trouble.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special occasions.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



## Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace, such as:

- For the food that we are about to receive, O Lord, please make us truly thankful. *Amen.*

Or encourage children to share one of their favorite table graces from home or church camp.

Now is a good time, while sharing a snack, to begin talking about the story. The Exile is a terrible event, but God's presence and faithfulness, even in the midst of our own unfaithfulness, can be discussed.

Older children may ask why God let this happen. Indeed, an eternal question is "Why do bad things happen?" However, God does not will evil. And good can come out of bad events. It is our response to misfortune that is important in our spiritual life and our relationship to God.



## Activities: Arts, Crafts, Games, Drama, etc.

After the Sharing, begin an activity to supplement and enhance today's story. While the children are doing an activity, talk about the story so they make the connection.

Several story-related activities are provided at the end of this lesson.

Additional activity ideas can be found on pages 3-6 in the Appendix where we've provided suggestions and directions for a variety of general activities that can be adapted to any lesson. Also included are outreach and service projects that can be done at any time.

## ACTIVITIES FOR THIS WEEK'S SESSION

Handwriting practice area with horizontal lines on a green textured background.



## THREADS Take-Home Paper

At the end of this lesson you will find a two-page take-home paper for families called *Threads*. *Threads* provides parents with a briefer version of the information on scripture and Episcopal faith found in the introduction to the lesson, as well as multiple suggestions for household activities and prayer. Parents can use *Threads* to continue each child's classroom experience at home throughout the week. We suggest duplicating and distributing these two pages to children and/or their parents at the end of each lesson.



## Memorization

Continue to encourage intermediate children to memorize the books of the Bible and the Ten Commandments.

For additional memorization, they may work on our liturgical responses, such as the Nicene Creed, the Sanctus (“Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...”), the Thanksgiving prayer after communion, the Confession and the Lord’s Prayer.

You’ll find suggestions for ways to help the children with their memorization on page 15 in the Appendix, also found on the Website.



## Weaving Our Faith

Before the end of the class, help the children integrate the lesson into their lives by asking questions such as:

- What was the story about today?
- How was God present in this story?
- What did we learn about God?
- What else did we learn today?

Encourage the children to remember key words and phrases from today's story, such as:

- *exile*
- *prophets*
- *Israel and Judah*
- *God's faithfulness*



## Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or

back to their homes in the knowledge of God’s love and protection. The prayer can be very simple and straightforward, such as this one:

- O merciful and loving God, you love us even when we stray away from you. Help us to keep your commandments to love you and to serve you, so that we may stay with you as you stay with us. We ask this in the name of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

End the class with a dismissal that is used in church, such as:

- The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The children respond:

- And also with you.



# Weaving God's Promises

## 2 KINGS 24-25

It is a scary thing to be taken away from your home and made to live somewhere else—somewhere strange and far away. That's what happened to God's people a long time ago. This is their story.

### **Judah is in trouble**

Around 500 years before Jesus is born, King David's great kingdom of Israel has shrunk to the little kingdom of Judah. The other 11 tribes that were part of the kingdom of Israel are now gone.

Judah is surrounded on all sides by other kingdoms, some little and some big. They all try to get along with each other. But sometimes they fight. And sometimes a big kingdom comes along and tries to conquer its smaller neighbors. Egypt is a big kingdom that sometimes wants to take over the other kingdoms and make itself bigger. Assyria was another, mean kingdom that *did* capture Israel. When the Assyrians took over Israel, they sent many of the people away from their land, especially the ones from 10 of the tribes of Israel. We never hear from these people again, so now they are called “the 10 lost tribes of Israel.” After they left their land, they just disappeared.

This time, it's the Babylonians who want to take over. Babylonia is a big kingdom. Their big city is called *Babylon*. The Babylonians want to capture all of the little kingdoms around them and make them part of the Babylonian kingdom. And because their army is big and strong and mean, they can do that.

In the little kingdom of Judah, the people there—now called *Jews*—are afraid. They know that the Babylonian army is much bigger than their army. They know that when the Babylonian army comes to fight Judah's army, Babylonia will win. And they do.



## **The Babylonian army wins**

Many of the people run away from the countryside where they live. It is not safe there, not with a big army coming. They will be killed if they stay in their homes in the countryside. So many of the Jews go to the big city of Jerusalem. They hope that maybe, because Jerusalem is big and has walls all around the city, the Babylonians will not be able to get inside, and they will be safe.

But that did not happen. God's prophet Jeremiah warned the people of Jerusalem that Nebuchadnezzar, Babylonia's king, was coming. He warned them that the army was coming and they will get inside Jerusalem. "It's no use fighting," says Jeremiah. "Give up peacefully, and if they send you away, go away peacefully."

But the king inside Jerusalem does not want to give up peacefully. He wants to fight. He hopes that if his people fight, and if God is on their side, they will win.

But here comes Nebuchadnezzar and his army. It is big and powerful. The people hole up inside Jerusalem. They lock all the doors. They put heavy logs to bar the gates. They get ready with swords.

The Babylonian army knocks down the gates, pushes down the doors, and captures the people. They grab the people by their hair and take them outside the city.

"Where are you taking us," they ask.

"We're taking you to Babylon, our city. That's where you will live from now on. Jerusalem is not your city anymore. Judah is not your kingdom anymore. Now, Babylonia is your land."

## **The people are taken away**

So the soldiers take most of the people from the land and push them beyond the city gates. From there, they put the people in a long, long line and make them walk to Babylonia. Even the king of Judah is walking with his people. All of the people weep as they leave their land.

When they look behind them, Jerusalem is burning. The soldiers have set the city on fire. They set the temple on fire, too, so the temple of God, so lovingly built by King Solomon, is now just a heap of burnt rubble. Now the city is a heap of burnt rubble, too.

A few people are left behind—just a few poor people. They watch as their neighbors walk away, weeping. “When will we see our land again?” the people ask. “Where is God, that he should make us go away into exile?”

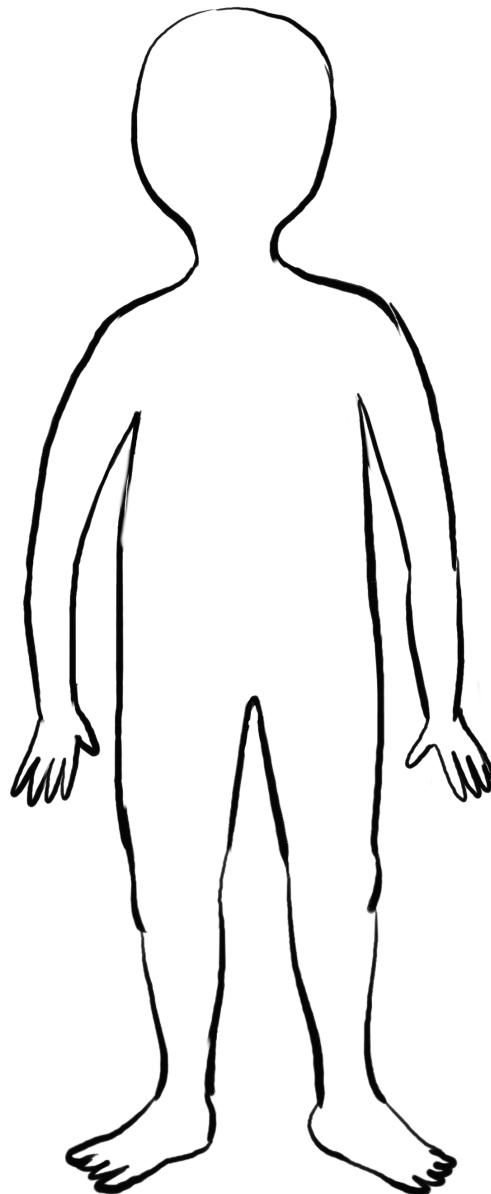
One of the people walking to Babylonia is a man and prophet named Ezekiel. He says to the people, “God is with us, no matter what. God will save us in God’s time.”



# Weaving God's Promises

## GATHERING ACTIVITY TRAVELING CLOTHES

The Israelites are moving a long way from their homeland. What do they need to wear to travel all the way to Babylon? Draw these clothes on the child below. Draw your face too, showing how you feel about moving away.





# Weaving God's Promises

## SCROLLS IN CLAY POTS for Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

People in ancient times stored their precious documents in clay pots. Sometimes, they hid these pots in caves to keep them safe. The Dead Sea Scrolls, hidden in caves near Qumran, were safely stored until the twentieth century. Perhaps people brought their scrolls with them on their way to exile in Babylon.

Children make Hebrew scrolls and clay pots to store their scrolls, just as the people in ancient times did.

### Materials:

- air-drying or self-hardening modeling clay
- tan or brown paper
- twine or brown yarn
- markers
- Hebrew Word to Copy* (p. 13)



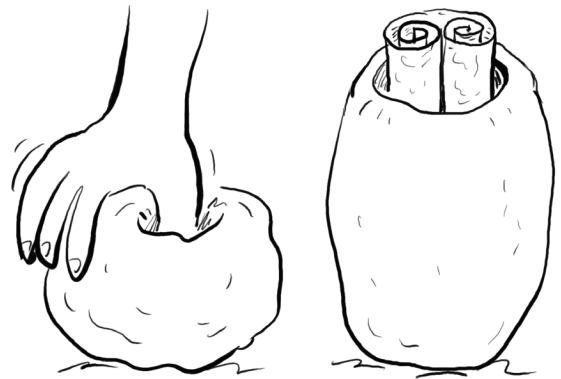
### Preparation:

Make copies of the Bible words written in Hebrew, one copy for each child.

### Directions:

Hand out 3" balls of clay and copies of the Bible verses. Invite each child to make a clay pot and a scroll. Help the younger children as needed. Give the children these directions:

1. Crumple a piece of brown paper and smooth it out so it looks like old parchment.
2. Pick a verse in Hebrew and copy it onto the paper.
3. Roll up the paper at both ends so the rolls meet in the middle. Tie with twine or yarn.
4. To make the clay jar, press your thumb into the middle of the ball of clay to make the opening. Then gradually shape the clay into a tall pot shape. Smooth the outside. Make sure the scroll will fit inside.
5. When the jar is dry, place the scroll inside.



# HEBREW WORDS TO COPY

Hebrew letters are written from right to left.

Shalom (peace)

שָׁלוֹם

Psalm 100:3

It is he who made us...

הוּא עָשָׂנוּ

and we are his.

וְאֵנּוּ הוּא



# Weaving God's Promises

## CLAY PENDANTS for Elementary, Intermediate

Children shape clay into pendants and carve designs on the surfaces with toothpicks.

### Materials:

- 1 cup cornstarch
- 2 cups baking soda
- 1 ½ cups water
- toothpicks
- cord or yarn, at least 24" per child
- scissors

### Preparation:

Before class, make cornstarch clay by mixing the cornstarch, baking soda and water in a saucepan. Bring to bubbling stage over medium heat. Cook and stir until it thickens. It will look like mashed potatoes. Allow to cool slightly, then knead.

### Directions:

Distribute lumps of clay and invite each child to make a clay pendant. Give the children these directions:

1. Flatten your lump of clay and shape it into a pendant that you can wear around your neck. You may make a round disk, a rectangular shape, a knotted shape—or any other shape that can be decorated. Use your imagination and ideas!
2. On the pendant, carve designs with a toothpick. Some ideas for carving are: cross, heart, words.
3. Use a toothpick to carve your initials on the back of the pendant.
4. Carefully make a hole at the top of the pendant, using a toothpick.
5. Wait until the clay is dry, then attach a cord.





# Weaving God's Promises

## SAND PAINTINGS for Elementary, Intermediate

Children use colored sand to make simple pictures from today's story.

### Materials:

- dark construction paper
- colored sand (or color it yourself: see below)
- liquid glue
- paintbrushes
- pencils
- newspaper or box lids to put the paper on while pouring sand
- box lids or trays for pouring leftover sand (1 tray per color)

### Preparation:

To make colored sand, place white sand and food coloring in a jar. Shake the sand until it is evenly dyed. Spread it out on paper toweling and allow to dry before using. Make several colors.

### Directions:

Invite each child to make a sand painting. Give the children these directions:

1. Draw a *simple* picture from today's story on a piece of construction paper. It could be a fallen building, a soldier's helmet, a king, a desolate landscape.
2. Put the picture on a large sheet of newspaper or in a box lid.
3. Use a paintbrush to spread glue on one section of the picture. Do only sections that use the same color of sand. It would be wise to spread the glue from the top down or from the bottom up so the sand doesn't mix when you pour the leftover off.
4. Pour sand on the glued area so that it covers all the glue.
5. Pick up the picture and gently shake off the excess sand into a leftover-sand tray.
6. Do this with other sections of your picture and other colors of sand.
7. Let the picture dry thoroughly before it taking home.



# Weaving God's Promises

## SANDSCAPES for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make sandscapes in baby food jars.

### Materials:

small jars such as a baby food jars, with lids  
colored sand (buy, or make your own; see below)  
toothpicks  
*optional:* food coloring, jars, paper towels

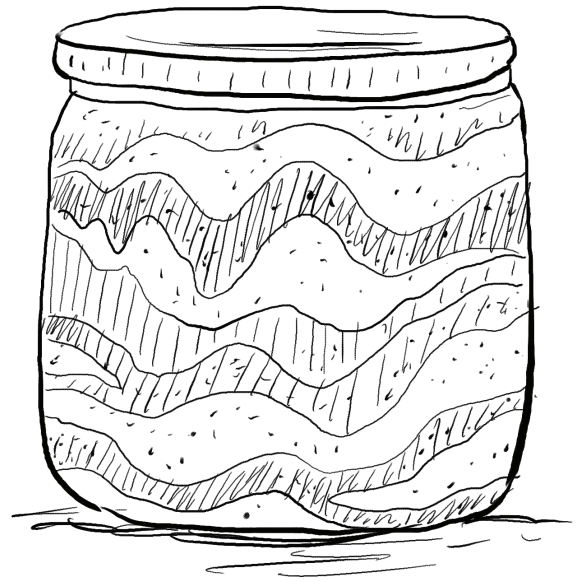
### Preparation:

To make colored sand, place white sand and food coloring in a jar. Shake the sand until it is evenly dyed. Spread it out on paper towels and allow to dry before using. Make several colors.

### Directions:

Hand out the jars and invite each child to make a sandscape. *Directions:*

1. Pour a thin layer of colored sand into the jar.
2. Add layers of different colored sand at varying heights to make a landscape. If you tip the jar, you can make interesting formations.
3. To make spiked sand designs, poke a toothpick into the sand along the side of the jar. Poke several times.
4. Fill the jar to the top and screw on the lid tightly.







# Weaving God's Promises

## I BELONG TO GOD WRISTBANDS for Preschool, Primary

Children help make wristbands that they can wear to remind themselves that they belong to God.

### Materials:

- $\frac{7}{8}$ " ribbon
- $\frac{3}{4}$ " velcro with adhesive backing
- scissors
- fabric pens

### Directions:

Invite each child to make a wristband:

1. Wrap a ribbon around each child's wrist and cut the ribbon 1" longer than the circumference of the child's wrist.
2. Use a fabric pen to write the words *I belong to God* on the ribbons. Ask each child to add his or her name.
3. Cut a 1" length of Velcro. Have the children press the rough surface onto one end of their ribbons and the furry surface onto the other end.
4. Invite the children to wear their wristbands. Say to them:  
— Wear this wristband to remind yourself whose you are, if you are feeling alone. Remember that when you belong to God, God will never leave you.





# Weaving God's Promises

## GOD'S EYES TO WATCH OVER US for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make this traditional Hispanic craft, a reminder that God is watching over us. As the Psalm says, "O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away... Your eyes beheld my unformed substance" (Psalm 139:1-2, 16a).

### Materials:

- various colors of yarn
- craft sticks or natural sticks 6" long, 2 per child
- glue
- scissors

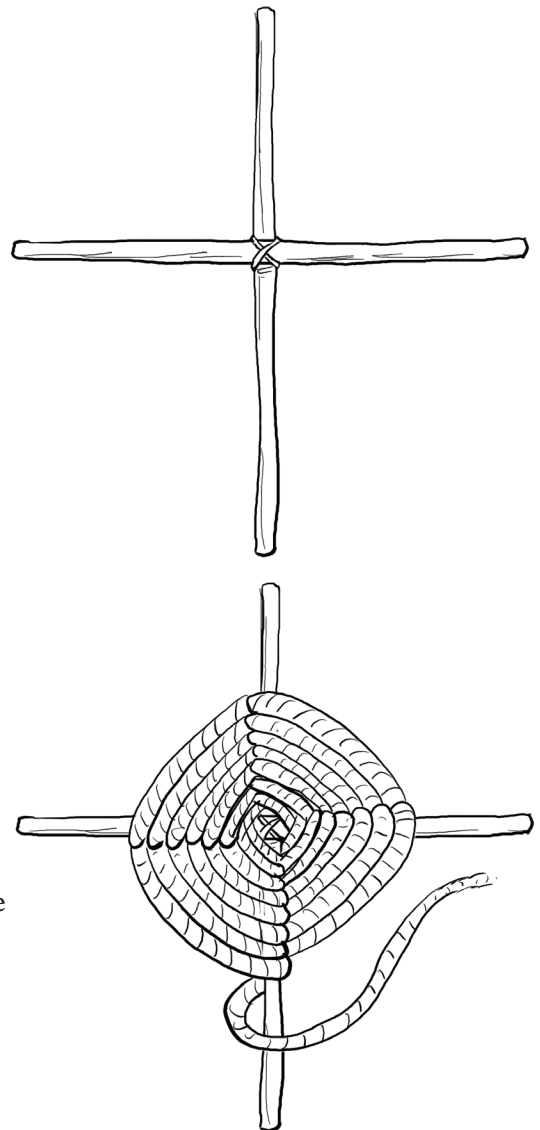
### Directions:

Invite each child to make a God's eye. Give the children these directions:

1. Hold two sticks together in a cross shape.
2. Wind the yarn diagonally around the intersection of the sticks, first one direction then the other, until you have the center of the sticks covered.
3. Then begin weaving. Wind the yarn around a stick with the yarn going *behind* the stick and back over the top, then behind the next stick and back *over* the top of that stick, all the way around the intersection.
4. When you have wound the yarn all the way around the sticks, push the yarn toward the center and tighten.
5. When you have done  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to  $\frac{3}{4}$ " of weaving, you can cut the yarn and begin a new color. Tie the second piece of yarn to the end of the first to prevent unwinding.
6. When you have reached the end of the sticks, wrap the end of the yarn around the last stick an extra time, then cut and glue.

### Variation:

Use three sticks for a different shape.





# Weaving God's Promises

## HURRY TO BABYLON RELAY for Primary, Elementary

The Babylonian Army is here, Jerusalem is being destroyed and the army is rounding everyone up to take them to Babylonia.

Children hurry to put on their clothes for the journey in this relay race.

### Materials:

- 2 large boxes
- masking tape
- 2 hats
- 2 pair of gloves
- 2 pair of large boots
- 2 sets of outerwear (t-shirts, vests, jackets, etc.)

You'll need as many items of clothing as there are children on each team.

### Directions:

Invite the children to join the Hurry to Babylon relay race:

1. Mark off a starting line at one end of the room. Put clothing items in the boxes and place them at the opposite end of the room.
2. Divide the class into two equal teams. If there are an odd number of children, have the first child on the short team go twice.
3. Teams line up, one player behind the other, behind the starting line, opposite the boxes.
4. At your signal, the first player of each team runs to the box, puts on one item of clothing, runs back to the starting line, takes off the piece of clothing and hands it to the next player in line.
5. The second player puts on the item of clothing, runs to the box and puts on another item of clothing. The player then runs back to the starting line, takes off the two items of clothing and hands them to the next player in line.
6. Continue until all items are being worn or until everyone has had a chance to run.



# Weaving God's Promises

## STARS OF HOPE for Preschool, Primary

Our God is a God of hope, even when things go wrong. Maybe the people being deported to Babylon were able to look up, see the stars that God had made and know that God was still there with them.

Children make stars to remind them that God is always with them, no matter what.

### Materials:

- construction paper
- balloon sticks or thin dowels
- pencils
- glue
- transparent tape
- scissors
- streamers or ribbons
- markers
- glitter or glitter glue, or other decorative items

### Preparation:

Draw two identical stars on construction paper and cut them out; cut out one set for each child. The stars can be different colors or the same color. Older children may be able to cut out their own stars.

Cut the streamers or ribbon into 12" lengths.

### Directions:

Give each child two stars and invite the children to make stars of hope. Help the younger children as needed. Give the children these directions:

1. Tape one of the stars to the end of a dowel, then tape or glue streamers to the bottom of the star.
2. Put glue on the back of the star that is stuck to the dowel, then place the second star on top of it with the dowel in between.
3. Write on one side of your star the words *God of Hope*.
4. Decorate your star with glitter, markers and other decorations.





# Weaving God's Promises

## GOD WITH ME ALWAYS NECKLACE for Preschool

Children make necklaces to remind them that God is with them wherever they go.

### Materials:

*Circle Patterns* (p. 22)

crayons

hole punch

clear adhesive shelf paper

scissors

colorful ribbon

### Preparation:

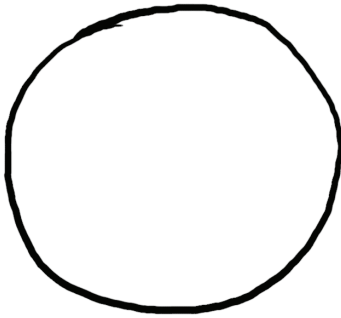
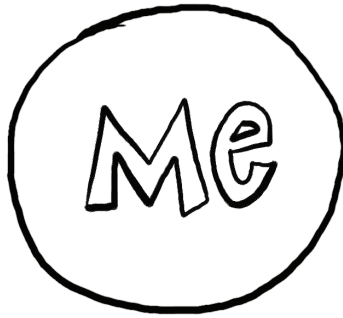
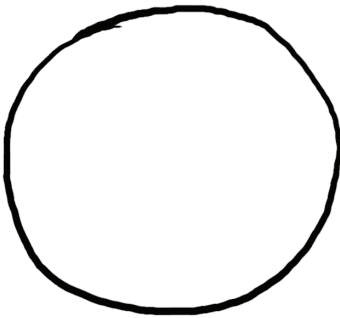
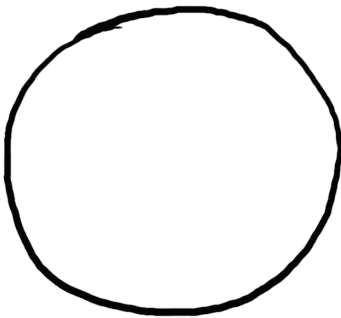
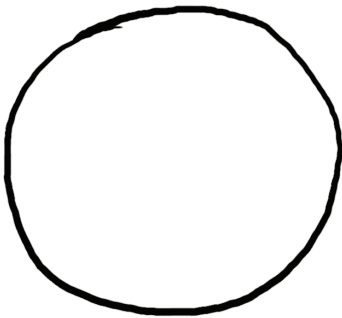
Make copies of the *Circle Patterns*, one for each child. Cut the shelf paper into pieces about the same size as the page of circle patterns. Cut a length of ribbon about 24" long for each child.

### Directions:

Hand out the *Circle Patterns* and invite each child to make a God with me always necklace:

1. Have the children use crayons to draw pretty designs or pictures on their blank circles and color the circles that have words.
2. For each child, lay a piece of adhesive paper on the table, remove the paper backing, then place the child's page of colored circles on the adhesive. Remove the backing from a second piece of adhesive paper and place it on top of the first one, with the circles sandwiched in between. Be careful not to wrinkle the papers.
4. Help the children cut out their circles.
5. Punch a hole at the top of every circle.
6. Have each child thread a ribbon through his or her circles, alternating circles with words and those with pictures. The first circle should be the *GOD* circle.
7. Tie together the ends of each child's ribbon to make a necklace.

# CIRCLE PATTERNS





# Weaving God's Promises

## THE FALL OF JERUSALEM for Elementary, Intermediate

This story about the fall of Jerusalem is a long and complicated story with a large cast of characters whose names we have trouble pronouncing or remembering—perfect for a clothesline drama!

As you read the story, children jump up and run to stand behind their assigned costumes hanging on the clothesline. Meanwhile, the rest of the class—the audience—boos and cheers.

### Materials:

- props and costumes
- clothesline and clothespins
- duct tape for hanging the line
- Bible story

### Preparation:

Hang up the clothesline at the height of the average child in your class, or a bit lower. Use duct tape if necessary. Make sure that there is enough room *behind* the clothesline for children to run back and forth. Put props to the side. Hang up the costumes on the clothesline.

### Directions:

Invite the children to participate in this clothesline drama:

1. Assign a character to each child and then assign each character to a costume. You may have more than one character to a costume.
2. Read the story. (*As the reader, you need to practice the names of the characters beforehand!*) As you read, have each child whose character you name grab the appropriate props and stand behind his or her costume hanging on the clothesline. The children can move their arms with the sleeves of the costumes if they want.
3. Tell the class to cheer the heroes and boo the villains. The villains are fairly easy to recognize.

### Variation on this skit:

Hang up contemporary clothes rather than biblical clothes. You can even make a 1930's-style gangster set-up!

### Party Time!

Invite other church school classes to your production! They, too, can boo and cheer the actors!

General idea from Carol Mader, *Crazy Clothesline Characters* (Loveland, CO: Group 2000), pp. 71-73





# Weaving God's Promises

## CLAY BOWLS for Preschool, Primary

Children make clay bowls like the Israelites might have taken with them in exile.

### **Materials:**

air-drying or self-hardening modeling clay or other clays of various colors

### **Directions:**

Give each of the children a lump of clay. If you have different colors, you can give each child several small lumps in a variety of colors. Mixed together, this will make an interesting design. Then invite each child to make a clay bowl. Help the younger children as needed.

Give the children these directions:

1. Roll the clay into a ball.
2. Hold the ball of clay in one hand—or put it on the table and keep it steady with one hand—then stick your thumb from the other hand into the center to make a hole. Gradually enlarge the hole until you have a small bowl shape.
3. Gently pinch the edges of your bowl with your fingers to finish the edges.



# LESSON 11: GOD'S PEOPLE IN EXILE



## We Believe . . .

The theme of repentance and return, present in today's story of the exile, is pervasive in Anglican thought and worship life. For example, the Eucharistic Prayers all acknowledge that our sins alienate us from God and "again and again, you called us to return" (Eucharistic Prayer C, *BCP*, p. 370). The Church takes for granted that, even when we try, we will sin, so one promise asked of us in the Baptismal Covenant is: "Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?" (*BCP*, p. 304).

## Today's Story:



### 2 Kings 24-25

The stories of exile in the Bible are really about our separation from God. Here it is good to remember that these separations are caused by us. God never abandons us. The physical separation is, for the biblical writer, an outward expression of their inward separation from God. The people have abandoned God by worshiping other idols, by failing to keep God's commandments or by doing injustice to the poor.

The writers explain that Israel and Judah were guilty of infidelities to God so numerous and terrible that destruction was the only fit punishment, yet God still calls them to return. It is the role of the prophet to confront the people who have wandered away from God and to bring them back to God's ways.

We often stray from faithful living—not always "loving God with all our hearts" or "loving our neighbor as ourselves." We often let other values or things get in the way of our relationship with God. It may be when we decide to sleep late rather than go to church, when we are too busy to pray regularly, or when we let our anger seethe rather than seek reconciliation. But God still waits for us and still seeks us.



## Words of Faith

*Exile*—being forced to move away from what you know and love; for ancient Israel, their time away from home in Babylonia

*Prophets*—those who bring God's word; God's spokespeople

*Israel and Judah*—the two parts of Israel, once the nation split; the new Israel consisted of 10 of the 12 tribes, while Judah was made up of the remaining two

*God's faithfulness*—the fact that God is always there for us, no matter what happens, no matter what we do

**Once again, we hear the clear message: God stays with us, no matter what.**



## Sharing

2 Kings

24-25 tells of the end of the state of Judah, of the capture of Jerusalem and of the fall and captivity of Judah. If this account is in your children's Bible, read it; if not, tell the story in your own words.

With this story, we suggest that you use a story aid, such as a set of building blocks or other construction toys that can be easily knocked down at the appropriate point in the story. These aids will make visually clear the reality of the destruction.

You may want to end this story by asking the question, "Where is God in all of this?"



# Weaving God's Promises

## This Week at Home



- **Make up a story about your family being exiled.** First, think of the basic story line. Write it down. For example, the governor of our state decides that everyone who belongs to an Episcopal church must leave the state. You have only one hour to pack up what you can take, and it all has to fit in one car. You are escorted out of town and told to keep driving until you're across the state line. Now start telling the story, from the beginning: each household member spontaneously makes up one bit of the story (a paragraph or so). The next person must add the next part of the story, playing off what came before. Make sure your story takes into account how you feel and what you're thinking as this is happening. Also include what you pack in the car, who you have time to say goodbye to, where you end up, etc. Continue as long as you wish, but the point is to explore what this experience might feel like and how you would cope.
- **Research where in the world we find exiles today.** Look up this information in Wikipedia under "exile" or "refugee." Who is helping today's exiles? Is there a way you and your household could help these helpers? Do you have any refugee groups or families in your community or city? You will find practical ways to help from *Episcopal Relief and Development* at <https://www.episcopalrelief.org/>.
- **Play the game of Risk, by Parker Brothers.** As you play, keep your laptop or tablet computer nearby (or a smartphone). As action takes place in different parts of your Risk "world," see if you can find out who in those areas really is experiencing exile.
- **Write prayers thanking God** for having a home, a place, a family, a city/town that is truly yours, where you can live in freedom. Thank God for belonging. You could write your prayers as two acrostic poems, one using the word *EXILE* and the other the word *HOME*. In an acrostic poem, you write the letters of your chosen word down the left side of your paper, then write a word, phrase or sentence that begins with each of those letters.



## Household Prayer

God, today we pray for people who have no home to go to, no shelter to sleep in, no place to settle. We thank you for what we have that we so often take for granted. Give hope to those who mourn and help to those who have no place to go. And help us all to find our rest in you. *Amen.*

