



Faith in Action

“Why We Remember”

“These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever” Joshua 4:7b

Lesson: In today’s Hebrew Bible lesson, Joshua instructs each leader from the 12 tribes of Israel to gather a rock to help construct a memorial commemorating God’s deliverance into the promised land. Since Abraham, ancient Jews built rock altars or memorials to serve as a lasting testimony to God’s faithfulness. Their purpose was to remind Jews throughout the ages of God’s steadfast grace, goodness and deliverance which in turn would motivate them to emulate these Divine traits out of extreme gratitude to YHWH. So invaluable was Israel’s history with God, that it shaped the very values and life of her people. So invaluable is our own national history as Americans, that we too are formed by our past, both good and bad. As a nation birthed in liberty and justice for all, yet marred by the sins of systemic racism and injustice, we too stand on the banks of our own promised land; the decision is ours as to what today’s history will look like tomorrow.

This week, put faith in action by...

(Symbols of) Love Conquer (Symbols of) Hate

Television, the internet, newspapers, magazines and even graffiti – you name it! Everywhere you look symbols of hate from the past are (sadly) still making history today. But that doesn’t mean symbols of love aren’t powerful enough to overcome! Use this time of negativity to talk to your child about the history of an everlasting symbol that has been triumphing over dark times for over two-thousand years now, the “Jesus fish,” that is!

Tracing its historical roots back to the days of the Roman Empire, the “Jesus fish” was used to help Christians identify other Christians during the trials and tribulations of persecution. As legend has it, Christians used to trace an arc depicting the top half of the fish in the dirt with their foot when meeting a stranger while traveling. If the stranger was a Christian, they would immediately recognize the symbol and so complete the fish by tracing the bottom arc thereby identifying themselves as a brethren. The symbol comes from an acronym based on the Greek word for fish and means “Jesus Christ God’s Son, Savior.”

Encourage your child to use this piece of early church history to remember love always conquers hate thanks to Jesus! <><

Tracing History

The history that shapes us isn’t just about distant dates, wars, and people whose names you can’t remember! It can also encompass personal traits, traditions, and values handed down to us through past generations – our *family* histories, that is, that also help to form and define who we are.

Tracing your family’s history is an important way to help your child today connect to their past, while also working towards develop their core identity, resilience and even self-worth as a child of an ever-loving, ever-present God. But this work doesn’t stop in the present. By further fostering compassion and empathy from hearing family narratives encompassing struggle, hardship, pain and victory, children are better prepared to make a better tomorrow for the people and world around them.

This week, take a step or two back in time with your child to explore the family influences and factors from the past who have helped to make them (and you) the “you’s” that you are. Journals or scrapbooks can assist in preserving the past for lifetimes to come, from you to your child, to your children’s children and their children’s children, and so on. And then encourage them to start writing the next chapter of your family history!

What Would Jesus Have Done?

The telling of God's history with humanity as recorded in the Bible is divinely inspired (II Timothy 3:16); human history, on the other...not so much! Written by the victor through the perspective of power and domination, our histories can more times than not hide a multitude of sins! Such slanted history can even be used to both justify and perpetuate cultural stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination down through the muddied ages.

This week, you and your child can start to help stop misaligned history from repeating itself by revisiting a chapter (or two) of our past together, only this time around viewing it from the Christ's perspective.

Don't know where to start? The following links offer centuries of American and world history in kid-friendly language for you, your child and the Holy Spirit to start exploring!

<https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/category/discover/history/>

<https://www.ducksters.com/history/>

<https://www.historyforkids.net/>

As you read through its humanity, be sure to ask, "What would Jesus have done?"

Breaking From the Past

Author Erwin McManus once wrote that, "the history of God's people is not a record of God searching for courageous men and women that could handle the task, but God transforming the hearts of cowards and calling them to live courageous lives." We live in a 21st world that takes bravery to stand-up to the historical myths about race that have become embedded in contemporary thought and serve to both legitimize and perpetuate prejudice and discrimination in our society. And it doesn't take a lifetime for those myths to become firmly entrenched. Research in fact shows that by the time a child reaches the critical ages of 4 – 5, bias and its effects are already being felt in White and Black children (pbs.org). The following website offers insight into how to start that tough talk on racism with children early on in their development.

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-honestly-with-children-about-racism>

But it's not just about having the talk about color differences and unfairness with our kids, it's also about opening up our hearts and minds to ask ourselves the tough questions...which means the very last column is an activity for parents only 

Humanizing History

On the Delaware waterfront near the Camden Aquarium there today stands a cast-iron historical marker that bears a chilling reminder of the legacy left behind by our American forefathers and mothers – "Enslaved Africans once sold here." It stands as a painful reminder to the 800 captives, men, women and children, who, by 1766, had been robbed of their lives and dignity as they stood for sale to the highest bidder on the site of this former New Jersey slave auction block.

While conversations about the institution of slavery can be too traumatizing for children under the ages of 1st and 2nd grade, first steps towards better understanding with young children can be taken by beginning to humanize the people behind the institution. Books like *Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad* by Ellen Levine, *Juneteenth for Mazie* by Floyd Cooper and *Before She was Harriet* by Lesa Cline-Ransome are great ways to get the conversation started. The following links provide YouTube videos of each of the above books being read so that you can preview the contents before sharing with your child.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6rf9bxDK1o>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4TvA7lw64Q>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_JZemL5SWI

Stamping Out Racism in Our Lifetime

While it may be a day too late to join Church and Society for their discussion on race, now is the perfect time to learn more about the history of systemic racism in our country and its effect on populations of color. ***Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*** by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi is a great way to start learning. As a young author intent to get the message of racism out to upcoming generations, the book is an easy and informed read that is sure to inform. Copies are even available in the Church library to loan. No time to read? No problem! Jason Reynolds does the job for you with an audiobook.