

Leader's Guide for
PEOPLE OF FAITH

Moses

The Old Testament, sometimes called the Hebrew Scriptures, tells the faith stories of men and women called by God to speak and live God's word. In learning the history of these people of faith, we experience a sense of belonging and begin to appreciate the rich heritage and faith tradition that is ours. In hearing their stories, we can begin to tell our own faith stories.

In this *People of Faith* program, the prophet Moses leads the people of Israel from slavery to freedom. As lawgiver and priest, he brings the Ten Commandments, the conditions of the covenant, to the people. We remember the promise that God has made and faithfully keeps with us: "I am your God. You are my people."

OPENING

Have you ever felt restricted, that you couldn't do what you wanted to do or when you wanted to do it? Can you describe something that could enslave you—watching TV, playing video games, eating, giving in to peer pressure, desiring money...?

Have you ever been discouraged by the complaints of others as you tried to help them? What did you do?

STORY

And so we have Moses—prophet, priest, lawgiver, deliverer and covenant maker, a gentle yet strong man we remember for having a deep experience of God in his life and receiving the Ten Commandments.

With faith in God, Moses led the people from slavery to freedom.

- How does this story make you think and feel?
- What is one thing you remember seeing or hearing?
- How is Moses' story like your own Exodus story?

REFLECTING

What is your favorite part of the Exodus story?

With whom do you identify? In which of these events do you recognize yourself?

What were some signs of God's presence as they journeyed across the desert?

What does it mean to you when someone tells you his or her name?

Reflect on what you have personally learned from the story of Moses:

- The thing I grumble and complain about the most is....
- To be like Moses, I would....
- I am in slavery when....
- Freedom is....
- When I think of the promises made to me and the ones I make to others, I....

PRAYING

(Choose and make a symbol that represents Moses. Place this on the prayer table or on a People of Faith banner.)

Gather around a table with a lighted candle, open Bible and a matzo.

Lord, you are our God. You care for us and are present in every event that we live. Like Moses, may we place our faith in you. Our response will be: **YOU ARE OUR GOD. WE ARE YOUR PEOPLE.**

- You call each of us from the slavery in which we live only for ourselves to freedom in which we live for you and for others, and so we proclaim: **RESPONSE**
- You hear our complaints and doubts, you know our discouragements, but you remain faithful to us, and so we proclaim: **RESPONSE**
- You help us understand how to live in relationship with you and with your people through the gift of the Ten Commandments, and so we proclaim: **RESPONSE**
- You teach us to make promises and to keep those promises, and so we proclaim: **RESPONSE**
- (Invite participants to speak their own prayers...**RESPONSE**)

And so, with Moses, our companion in faith, we thank you for your presence in all that we do.

(Have participants share a piece of the matzo as a sign of their willingness to live through difficulties together.)

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Leader's Guide for
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Joseph

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In this *People of Faith* program, Joseph forgives his brothers for selling him into Egyptian slavery and, as an able administrator, saves the people during a famine in Egypt. We remember that, in providing for us, God chooses different people to help and guide us.

OPENING

In your family relations, can you remember a time when there was jealousy? How did you handle it? What was said or done? How did forgiveness come about?

STORY

And so we have Joseph—one of 12 brothers; able to interpret dreams; deeply loved by his father, Jacob; sold into Egyptian slavery by jealous brothers; appointed governor of the land by the Pharaoh. Because of his ability as an administrator, he was able to save the people from famine.

- How does this story make you think and feel?
- What is one thing you remember seeing or hearing?
- How is Joseph's story like your own faith story of forgiveness?

REFLECTING

What was the problem that caused change in this story of Joseph?

Was the change for the better or for worse?

What people were affected?

Name two people who were different at the end compared to the beginning of the story of Joseph?

Reflect on what you have personally learned from this story of Joseph:

- When someone hurts me, I....
- The thing I find most difficult to forgive is....
- I know that God is present in my life when....

PRAYING

(Choose and make a symbol that represents Joseph. Place this on the prayer table or on a People of Faith banner.)

Gather around a table with a lighted candle, open Bible and the printed names of all participants.

Lord, sometimes we do not act as your people. May we return home to you when we have done wrong.

Our response will be: LORD, FORGIVE US.

- Sometimes we are jealous of our friends, or our sister or brother, and we fail to reach out to them, so we pray: RESPONSE
- Sometimes people are sad and lonely, brokenhearted and rejected, and we fail to reach out to them, so we pray: RESPONSE
- Sometimes we lose hope when we have to do difficult things and we fail to use the talents God has given us, so we pray: RESPONSE
- Sometimes we hurt others by ignoring them, by not having a listening heart, by not spending time with them, so we pray: RESPONSE
- (Invite participants to speak their own prayers...RESPONSE)

And so, with Joseph, our companion in faith, we thank you, Lord, for forgiveness and compassion in our lives.

(As a sign of our need for forgiveness in our lives, each participant speaks his or her name.)

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Leader's Guide for
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Jonah

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In this *People of Faith* program, the reluctant prophet Jonah is sent by God to preach penance to the people of Nineveh. We remember that God shows love and mercy to all people.

OPENING

Can you recall a time when you were narrow-minded?

How do you react to the people in your life that you find difficult to like?

How do you change your attitude toward those people?

STORY

And so we have Jonah—a prophet, stubborn, narrow-minded, sent by God to preach penance, refusing to go, fleeing on a ship, thrown overboard during a storm, swallowed by a big fish, finally accepting a mission ever so reluctantly, becoming angry when his preaching is accepted. Jonah is slow to understand that the mercy of God reaches out to all people of the earth, even to the pagan Ninevites.

- How does this story make you think and feel?
- What is one thing you remember seeing or hearing?
- How is the faith story of Jonah like your own story?

REFLECTING

Have you experienced feelings similar to Jonah—reluctance, rejection, ridicule, anger, loss of friends...another feeling?

Name and give meaning to some of these symbols in the story of Jonah.

How can we reach out to people we do not like and forgive those we do not want to forgive?

Reflect on what you have personally learned from this story of Jonah:

- When I am stubborn, I...

- The thing I dislike doing most is....
- To have a change of heart, I would need to....
- I am like Jonah when....

PRAYING

(Choose and make a symbol that represents Joseph. Place this on the prayer table or on a People of Faith banner.)

Gather around a table with a lighted candle, open Bible and a container of ashes.

Lord, help us to be like Jonah and the people of Nineveh and turn to you. Let us see that your mercy is for *all* people for they are *your* people. Our response will be: **HELP US CHANGE OUR HEARTS.**

- When we are stubborn and want things our way, may we be sorry and say: **RESPONSE**
- When we are selfish, may we be sorry and say: **RESPONSE**
- When we are mean, when we lie or cheat, when we talk unkindly about others because they are not like us, may we be sorry and say: **RESPONSE**
- When we refuse to listen and accept God's will in our lives, may we be sorry and say: **RESPONSE**
- When we do not reflect God's mercy and goodness to others, when we do not show joy in our relationships with others, may we be sorry and say: **RESPONSE**
- (Invite participants to speak their own prayers...**RESPONSE**)

And so, with Jonah, our companion in faith, we thank you, God, for your love and concern.

(Participants are signed with ashes to show their willingness to change their hearts.)

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Leader's Guide for
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Ruth

The Old Testament, sometimes called the Hebrew Scriptures, tells the faith stories of men and women called by God to speak and live God's word. In learning the history of these people of faith, we experience a sense of belonging and begin to appreciate the rich heritage and faith tradition that is ours. In hearing their stories, we can begin to tell our own faith stories.

In this *People of Faith* program, the generous and devoted Ruth leaves her homeland and journeys with her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Bethlehem where she accepts Yahweh as her God. We remember to be faithful as parents and children to one another and to God.

OPENING

Are you someone who can be counted on?

Have you ever listened to someone in your family who had a problem?

Have you ever affirmed someone, given a compliment to a brother, sister or parent?

What is most difficult for you in being faithful to family living?

STORY

And so we have Ruth—a foreigner, a wife, a mother, a devoted daughter-in-law, a woman not afraid to travel to a new land and accept God as her God. We remember to be faithful as parents and children to one another and to God.

- How does this story make you think and feel?
- What is one thing you remember seeing or hearing?
- How is Ruth's story like your own story of faithfulness?

REFLECTING

Why do you think this story of Ruth was told?

Would you have chosen to go with Naomi?

Can you think of situations in which people were rejected, made fun of or kept out of a group because they were different from you?

Reflect on what you have personally learned from this story of Ruth:

- When I think of family, I....
- The best way to show kindness is to....
- I help my brothers or sisters by....
- To show my love to my mother and father, I....
- With my family, I....

PRAYING

(Choose and make a symbol that represents Ruth. Place this on the prayer table or on a People of Faith banner.)

Gather around a table with a lighted candle, open Bible and sheaves of wheat.

Lord, you have called us to live as your family. Help us to see your people as our brothers and sisters.

Our response will be: HELP US TO LIVE AS A FAMILY.

- When we are loyal and faithful to our brothers and sisters, our mothers and fathers, we grow in love, and so we pray: RESPONSE
- When we listen to the problems of others, when we are sensitive to their needs, we grow in kindness, and so we pray: RESPONSE
- When we say we are sorry, when we ask forgiveness for what we have done or failed to do, we grow in love, and so we pray: RESPONSE
- When we encourage others, when we give compliments, when we support and affirm others in what they are doing, we grow in hope, and so we pray: RESPONSE
- When we are willing to work hard and complete what we begin, when we do for others and not just for ourselves, we grow in responsibility, and so we pray: RESPONSE
- (Invite participants to speak their own prayers...RESPONSE)

And so, with Ruth, our companion in faith, Lord, help us to see your people everywhere as our brothers and sisters in your one family.

(Give participants a stalk of wheat to place in their homes as a sign of faithfulness.)

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Leader's Guide for
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Abraham and Sarah

The Old Testament, sometimes called the Hebrew Scriptures, tells the faith stories of men and women called by God to speak and live God's word. In learning the history of these people of faith, we experience a sense of belonging and begin to appreciate the rich heritage and faith tradition that is ours. In hearing their stories, we can begin to tell our own faith stories.

In this *People of Faith* program, Abraham and Sarah journey to an unknown land to accept Yahweh as their God and to receive the blessing of God in the promise. We remember that God has called us to live in friendship.

OPENING

How do you think your ancestors experienced the journey of coming to this country?

Think of yourself moving from one city or neighborhood to another. How did that feel?

What are some journeys that you have taken that have been exciting? Those that were scary?

STORY

And so we have Abraham and Sarah—father and mother of all believers, trusting God's call to journey to a new land, receiving God's promise and blessing that their descendants would be as countless as the stars in the sky and the grains of sand along the seashore, willing to sacrifice their son Isaac if God wills. Through Abraham and Sarah, we are one as a people of faith.

- How does this story make you think and feel?
- What is one thing you remember seeing or hearing?
- How is Abraham and Sarah's journey of faith story like your own?

REFLECTING

What impressed you most in the life of Sarah and Abraham?

What would you think about a person who waited almost a whole lifetime to have a promise fulfilled?

Whom do you know who believes that God acts lovingly and personally in his or her life, like Abraham and Sarah did?

Is there someone in your life who has been with you through difficult times? Who was it? What was the situation?

Reflect on what you have personally learned from the story of Abraham and Sarah:

- To be a friend of God, I would....
- For me, a promise says....
- The person I trust most in my life, who I can count on, is...because....

PRAYING

(Choose and make a symbol that represents Abraham and Sarah. Place this on the prayer table or on a People of Faith banner.)

Gather around a table with a lighted candle, open Bible and a bowl of sand.

We thank you, Lord, for telling us the faith story of Abraham and Sarah. Through them we have become your people. Our response will be: LORD, WE THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF FAITH.

- In the promise you make to be with us in all that we do, we pray: RESPONSE
- In the friendship that you offer and in our struggle to be loyal and trusting friends, we pray: RESPONSE
- In the faith journey that you ask each of us to make, the journey through hopes and fears, dreams and disappointments, we pray: RESPONSE
- In the life that you ask us to live, a life turned toward you in praise and toward your people in care, we pray: RESPONSE
- (Invite participants to speak their own prayers...RESPONSE)

And so, with Abraham and Sarah, our companions in faith, we continue this journey of faith together.

Remember always that God walks with us.

(Pass bowl of sand. Each participant feels the sand as they remember their ancestors as countless as the grains of sand along the seashore.)

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David

The Old Testament, sometimes called the Hebrew Scriptures, tells the faith stories of men and women called by God to speak and live God's word. In learning the history of these people of faith, we experience a sense of belonging and begin to appreciate the rich heritage and faith tradition that is ours. In hearing their stories, we can begin to tell our own faith stories.

In this *People of Faith* program, the shepherd, musician, warrior—David—is anointed king of Israel. We remember to express joy and gladness before God, to have friendships and to call upon God to heal our broken hearts. Discussion questions follow the three-part structure of the program.

OPENING

Who are some of your heroes and heroines or some important people you admire in your family, community or country?

What are some of their qualities, e.g., respectful, loyal, brave, fair, faithful...?

Why do we tell stories of important and loved people in our families?

STORY

And so we have David—a shepherd, musician, son of Jesse, a warrior, a friend, anointed by the prophet Samuel as king of Israel, expressing sorrow for sin he committed, dancing and singing before the Ark of the Covenant. Because of his courage and goodness, David was deeply loved by the people.

- How does this story make you think and feel?
- What is one thing you remember seeing or hearing?
- How is David's story like your own story?

REFLECTING

What words describe the qualities of David for you?

Do you know someone who reminds you of David?

Reflect on what you have personally learned from the story of David:

- For me, a friend is....
- When I have done something wrong, I....
- Sometimes when I am jealous, I....
- It takes courage to....
- To express my joy, I....

PRAYING

(Choose and make a symbol that represents David. Place this on the prayer table or on a People of Faith banner.)

Gather around a table with a lighted candle, open Bible and a container of grape juice.

Lord, you are our shepherd and you invite us to follow you. Like David, may we place our trust in you in all that we do. Our response will be: THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD.

- When we are sad and discouraged and we feel there is no place to turn, let us say: RESPONSE
- When we lose courage to do what we should be doing, or we fear to dream the impossible dream, let us say: RESPONSE
- When we feel we have no friends, let us say: RESPONSE
- When we forget to sing and dance in praise of God, when we are afraid to show our feelings of gratitude, let us say: RESPONSE
- (Invite participants to speak their own prayers...RESPONSE)

And so, with David, our companion in faith, we thank you, Lord, for being our shepherd.

(Pass the cup of juice for everyone to share as a sign of gladness.)

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Jeremiah

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In this *People of Faith* program, the prophet Jeremiah speaks in God's name for 40 years, warning the people to live the covenant and prophesying the 70 years of Babylonian exile. We remember to be patient through ridicule and suffering, to persevere in speaking God's word and to be cautious of following false prophets.

OPENING

How do you feel when you are corrected?

How do you feel when you are laughed at or ridiculed?

Have you ever had the courage to stand up for someone who was being picked on by others?

Have you ever lost friends by doing this?

STORY

And so we have Jeremiah—called at 12 years old to be a prophet, speaking for 40 years in God's name, telling the people what they didn't want to hear, a person of deep faith and sensitivity, a persistent speaker, a writer of many letters of hope and encouragement to the exiled people in Babylon. Through ridicule, rejection, loss of friends, suffering, arrest and imprisonment, he reminds the people that they are clay in the hands of God, the potter.

- How does this story make you think and feel?
- What is one thing you remember seeing or hearing?
- How is Jeremiah's story like your own story of hope and faithfulness?

REFLECTING

What is a prophet?

If you had lived in Judah, would you have listened to Jeremiah?

When have you felt broken inside and experienced God in your brokenness?

Like the people held captive in Babylon, have you ever felt like you were part of a remnant as you try to live as a follower of Jesus in our culture today?

Reflect on what you have personally learned from the story of Jeremiah:

- When I am ridiculed, I....
- When I fail, I....
- The thing I find most difficult to change in myself is....

PRAYING

(Choose and make a symbol that represents Jeremiah. Place this on the prayer table or on a People of Faith banner.)

Gather around a table with a lighted candle, open Bible and a construction-paper heart.

Lord, you sent your prophets to help us remember our promise to be your people. Our response will be:
LORD, WRITE YOUR WORD UPON OUR HEARTS.

- Like Jeremiah, we do not understand why there is suffering, so we pray: RESPONSE
- We do not know why people laugh at us, so we pray: RESPONSE
- We do not know why we do not speak up when we see cheating and stealing, so we pray:
RESPONSE
- We do not know why we are stubborn with hard hearts toward others, so we pray: RESPONSE
- We do not know why we lack understanding of your deep love for us and your call to be your friends, so we pray: RESPONSE
- (Invite participants to speak their own prayers...RESPONSE)

And so, with Jeremiah, our companion in faith, we thank you, Lord, for writing your love in our hearts.
(Hold the heart as each participant silently gives thanks for the love of God deep inside.)

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Leader's Guide for
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Deborah

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In this *People of Faith* program, the prophetess and judge Deborah, "Mother of Israel," gathers the tribes of Israel and leads the people in victory against the Canaanites. We remember that we are called to stand against injustice and to stand up for the rights of others.

OPENING

Who are the people that lead you when you seem to have lost your way?

Who gives you good example by the way they live?

Who are the people that you lead?

How can you be a leader as well as a follower?

What words and actions show others what you believe?

STORY

And so we have Deborah— judge, prophet, woman, wife, charismatic leader, advisor, decision maker, the one who called the tribes of Israel to battle. This battler is recorded in one of the oldest passages of poetry and songs and shows the close relationship of God and the people.

- How does this story make you think and feel?
- What is one thing you remember seeing or hearing?
- How is Deborah's story like your own story?

REFLECTING

What poetry or song helps you to speak from your heart as Deborah did?

Do you sometimes have a need for someone to listen, guide and help you in solving a problem? What advice did you seek?

Like the storm, what signs remind you of God in your life?

In what area(s) do you stand against injustice and stand up for the rights of others?

Reflect on what you have personally learned from the story of Deborah:

- For me, the injustice that bothers me the most is....
- When I am asked to lead, I....
- When people follow me, I feel....
- When people turn to me for help, I....

PRAYING

(Choose and make a symbol that represents Deborah. Place this on the prayer table or on a People of Faith banner.)

Gather around a table with a lighted candle, open Bible and paper palm fronds.

Lord, like Deborah, each of us has a story to tell. Help us, Lord, to tell the story in your presence and to speak a new song of justice for all. Our response will be: I WILL SING MY SONG TO THE LORD.

- Sometimes we turn away from you and forget you are with us. In remembering you, we pray:
RESPONSE
- Help us to live as your children, as brothers and sisters who build the earth in peace and justice. In answering you, we pray: RESPONSE
- When we hurt one another, become angry, when we are in need of forgiveness, welcome us home to you. In receiving you, we pray: RESPONSE
- When we work for peace and justice, give us strength to protect the rights of the poor, the lonely, the unwanted, the neglected. In loving you, we pray: RESPONSE
- (Invite participants to speak their own prayers...RESPONSE)

And so, with Deborah, our companion in faith, we sit under our own palm trees in our lives and listen to the poor and try to reach out to them.

(Offer a palm frond as a sign of our willingness to stop and listen to others.)

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