

Acts 1:15–17, 21–26

Ps. 1

1 John 5:9–13

John 17:6–19

Chosen as a Disciple

Goal for the Session

Tweens will encounter the story of Matthias and investigate how they are called with other Christians to spread the gospel.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Acts 1:15–17, 21–26

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” A. Katherine Grieb

After the resurrection of Jesus, the succession puzzles continue. There seems to have been no expectation that any one disciple or family member should succeed Jesus as Messiah designate. No dynasty seems to have been either intended or suggested, whether by relation, descent, or appointment. Instead, we have Luke’s intriguing account in Acts 1:15–26, of the early church’s pressing concern to replace the apostate disciple Judas with another who would bring their number back up to twelve. Indeed, so urgent is this concern that, along with the ministry of prayer, it dominates the activity of the Jesus community waiting in Jerusalem during the ten days between the ascension of Jesus and Pentecost.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Noel Leo Erskine

The challenge facing the church today is to be careful not to place issues of structure above the mission of the church. “Does that remind us of many elections that take place in our churches? Rather than asking ourselves who can make a better contribution to the mission in an ever-changing world, we seek someone who can continue what has been done previously. . . . The very fact that Matthias is never again mentioned should serve as a warning: do not try to force the Spirit to act according to our own purposes.”

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Jeffrey D. Peterson-Davis

This story of the selection of Matthias pushes us to ask questions about how we discern the will of God and the confidence we place in systems we employ. While casting lots seems primitive and out of step with reason, could we trust that God might reveal the divine will in such a simple and definitive way? To what extent do the methods we employ in discernment get tangled up in our own need to control circumstances and outcomes? How do we see the community of the early followers of Jesus engaging in discernment? How does prayer influence our decision making?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Barbara K. Lundblad

We can be grateful for the witness of those who are so little known. The sermon can be a time to acknowledge and celebrate the ordinary people who have carried the extraordinary gospel from one generation to the next. Who is Justus in your faith journey? There is the Sunday school teacher who taught for over forty years, never eligible for a church board because women were not even allowed to vote. There is a man whose name you cannot remember who told you that Jesus held him through the weeks and months after his wife died. And there is every person sitting in the sanctuary. Thanks be to God!

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Acts 1:15–17, 21–26

YOU WILL NEED

- white cloth
- gold or yellow streamers or ribbons
- Christ candle, matches
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player
- Bibles
- Internet-connected device (optional)
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- pencils
- Color Pack 22, 23, 30, 33
- newsprint or markerboard
- markers
- fine-tipped permanent marker

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, colorful copier paper, pens, fine-tipped markers
- option 2: 7 craft sticks per learner, fine-tipped markers, paper lunch bags

Alleluia! Allelu!

Alleluia! Allelu! Jesus has been raised!
Alleluia! Allelu! Let his name be praised!
The angel at the break of day
Rolled the giant stone away.
Alleluia! Allelu! Jesus has been raised!

Focus on Your Teaching

Fairness is important to tweens, especially when it comes to how they are chosen or not chosen to be included in a particular group or how they are asked to do something. They have experienced being chosen in many ways. Some will be troubled by the story of Matthias and wonder why God would choose to work through such a seemingly random process. When wondering about being chosen to be Jesus' follower, it is important for tweens to know they are included not by chance, but by the call of the Christ.

Powerful God, the great value you place on my life is humbling and reassuring. Empower me to reach out with the news of your love, through Christ. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, if you are using option 1 in Responding, arrange to visit a younger class to give them paper airplanes. Plan for tweens to make enough planes for each of the younger children to receive one. If you are using option 3, invite a member of your church's mission or evangelism committee to talk with learners about the ways your church reaches out with the gospel.

Welcome tweens by name. Ask volunteers to spread the white cloth in the center of your meeting space, arrange gold or yellow streamers or ribbons on it, and place the Christ candle on it. Gather around the Christ candle and light it. Announce that this is the seventh and final Sunday of the Easter season. Invite tweens to tell what they have liked best about the Easter season this year. Sing "Alleluia! Allelu!" (Color Pack 33; track 1 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021).

Review the "All" response, and then lead the following litany:

Leader: Jesus Christ was dead, but he now lives forever and ever!

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Leader: Because Jesus lives, we also will live abundantly and eternally!

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus, and teach us how to spread the good news about you.

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Extinguish the candle.

Form pairs and invite them to play a few games of Rock, Paper, Scissors. (See www.wikihow.com/Play-Rock,-Paper,-Scissors for instructions, if needed.) Afterward, discuss:

- ✧ When have you used Rock, Paper, Scissors to decide who gets to do something?
- ✧ What are some other ways to decide between two choices or to choose who gets to do something? (For example, flipping a coin, drawing straws, or drawing names from a hat.)
- ✧ When are these good ways to choose? When are they not so good?

Say that today's Bible story is about choosing.

EXPLORING

Show Color Pack 22 and say this is an illustration of casting lots, something that is done in today's Bible story. Explain that casting lots was a way that people in Bible times made some choices and decisions. Casting lots was like throwing dice or tossing a coin. The "lots" used in the Bible could be polished stones or sticks, dice, coins, or carved bones. When a decision was made by casting lots, it was believed God's Spirit was doing the deciding, not humans. Option: Go to www.fowlerbiblecollection.com/casting-of-lots.html for more information about casting lots and photos.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Choosing Matthias), Bibles, and pencils. Point out that some of the lines for each group need to be finished. Form two groups and ask them to use their Bibles to help them write what they will say. Emphasize that they need not copy the words from their Bibles—they can use their own words to summarize what to say. After groups have finished, perform the choral reading.

Discuss the story, referring tweens to the resource sheet and their Bibles as needed:

- ✧ Why did the apostles feel they needed to choose another disciple?
- ✧ Do you agree that the new apostle needed to be someone who had been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry? Why or why not?
- ✧ What did they want this new disciple to do?
- ✧ Why do you think the group prayed before casting lots?
- ✧ What do you think of the method they used to choose Matthias?
- ✧ What do you think Justus did after this meeting?

Place Color Pack 23 in the center of the group. Ask a volunteer to point to the area around Israel. Recall Jesus' command to the disciples to spread the good news of God's love and forgiveness "to the ends of the earth." For them, that meant the area around the Mediterranean Sea, though some say Thomas made it all the way to India. Use a fine-tipped permanent marker to sign your name near a country or region where you would like to be part of God's mission in some way. Invite learners to sign their names near the countries they choose. Wonder together about how you might help to spread the gospel in your community as well as in these places. Write the learners' ideas on newsprint or markerboard. Display this poster in your learning space as a reminder to spread the gospel.

Some ways to spread the good news: pray for others; invite friends to church activities; be ready to explain why Jesus is important to you; explain to friends why you worship or celebrate church holidays; collect supplies or money for organizations that help people; send encouraging messages to missionaries and church leaders; be kind to people you meet; listen to a friend's troubles and offer to pray for him or her; visit someone who is lonely; read Bible stories to younger children; work on a mission project with others in your church.

EASY
PREP

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Air Mail Gospel** Learners will make paper airplanes to deliver the good news of the gospel to younger children. Tell learners about the class you will visit to deliver the planes. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Airmail Gospel), colorful copier paper, pens, and markers. Assist tweens as needed to follow the directions on the sheet. Plan to make enough planes for each of the younger children to receive one. Take the finished planes to the younger group. One at a time, have the tween call out the message he or she wrote and then sail the plane to a younger child. Encourage the younger children to sail the planes to family members and friends at home.
- 2. Good News Sticks** Learners will create a tool to help them be faithful in spreading the gospel. Refer to the list of ways to spread the gospel made during Exploring. Invite learners to add other ideas. Set out craft sticks and markers. Have each tween take seven craft sticks and write a way on each stick to spread the gospel. Give each one a paper lunch bag. Have them write “Spreading Good News” on the bag and decorate it, if desired. Talk with tweens about where they might put these bags at home so they will remember to draw one stick each day and find a way to do what it says. How might they involve their families in this activity?
- 3. Spreading the News** Learners will learn more about how your church spreads the gospel. Introduce your visitor from the evangelism or mission committee and invite him or her to tell about the different ways your church reaches out with the good news of God’s love and invites others to be Jesus’ followers. Allow time for learners to ask questions. Encourage your guest to offer ideas about how tweens can be part of these ministries.

CLOSING

Gather with learners around the Christ candle and light it. Sing “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (Color Pack 30; track 9 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Invite them to say one thing they will remember from the Bible story today.

Offer a call-and-response blessing. Begin by saying to the person on your right: “(Name), God has blessed you to tell the story of Jesus.” The group responds: “(Name), be bold and spread the good news.” Repeat until each person has received the blessing.

Invite learners to exchange gestures and words of peace with one another. Say good-bye to learners by name, saying you hope to see them next week.

I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

*I’m gonna live so God can
use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!*
*I’m gonna live so God can
use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

*I’m gonna work so God can
use me . . .*

*I’m gonna share so God can
use me . . .*

*I’m gonna care so God can
use me . . .*

Choosing Matthias

(Based on Acts 1:2–9, 15–17, 21–26, CEB)



Group 1: Before he was taken up, working in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus instructed the apostles he had chosen . . . (v. 2)



Group 2: He appeared to them over a period of forty days, speaking to them about God's kingdom. (v. 3)



Group 1: He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. (v. 4)



Group 2: Jesus said, " _____
_____. " (Summarize Acts 1:4, 8)



Group 1: After Jesus said these things, as they were watching, _____
_____. (Summarize Acts 1:9.)



Group 2: They returned to Jerusalem and went to the upstairs room where they were staying. (vv. 12, 13)



Group 1: Peter, John, James, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James, Alphaeus's son; Simon the Zealot; and Judas, James's son (v. 13)



Group 2: All were united in their devotion to prayer, along with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. (v. 14)



Group 1: Peter said: _____
_____. (Summarize Acts 1:21–22.)



Group 2: So they _____
_____. (Summarize Acts 1:23.)



Group 1: They prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's deepest thoughts and desires. Show us clearly which one you have chosen from among these two to take the place of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas turned away to go to his own place." (vv. 24–25)



Group 2: When they cast lots, the lot fell on Matthias. He was added to the eleven apostles. (v. 26)

AirMail GOSPEL

Directions: Make a paper airplane, following the instructions below. Think of a message about God's love or the good news of Jesus Christ for younger children and write one message on each wing. Decorate the plane with Christian symbols, such as crosses.

