

Breath of Hope

Focus Scripture

**Ezekiel 1:1–3,
28c–2:5**

PURPOSE

To learn what we can do when hope is lost.

Lesson Preparation

- ❑ Read Ezekiel 1:1–3, 28c–2:5 and 37:1–14, and biblical background for March 29.
- ❑ Set up worship table with a purple cloth, bible, Lenten candle, offering basket and Unit 5 logo.
- ❑ Bring Bibles.
- ❑ Write opening and closing prayers on newsprint.
- ❑ **Option A: (Introducing)** Bring a piece of construction paper on which you have written the word “HOPE” in big letters. Bring pictures of things that might seem hopeless (e.g. polluted beach, war scene, hungry and homeless people, refugees, person crying, etc.).
- ❑ Bring plastic glasses, timeline from past weeks, construction paper, and dried chicken bones. *Option:* (for the adventurous)

Bring the bones of a whole roasted chicken. Boil in salt water for 30 minutes. Remove remaining meat and sinew. Dry bones in a 200°F (100°C) oven for 20-30 min. Become familiar enough with stories on resource sheet “Acting in the Face of Hopelessness” to tell them from memory.

- ❑ Choose the option(s) you wish to use for Integrating the Theme and bring the necessary materials.
- ❑ Scroll down to see the *Junior Teacher’s Resource Sheet* for outreach ideas.
- ❑ Check the birthday list.
- ❑ What do you do when hope seems lost in your life? Pray that you convey hope in your class.

1

Opening

Greet the class, acknowledge birthdays and receive the offering.



Today is the fifth Sunday of Lent. (*Have volunteer light Lenten candle.*) Invite students to be quiet and think of one thing they can do better to live in God’s Way this week.

Prayer:

O God, when things go wrong and situations seem hopeless, help us to trust in your promise to be with us always. Be with us now as we learn more about you. Amen.
(Extinguish the candle.)



2

Introducing the Theme

Option A: Hope Poster

(*Set out “Hope” poster.*) Invite students to choose from the pictures provided something that makes them feel hopeless. As each explains their choice, tape it to the paper, so the word “hope” is slowly covered up. Have you ever been in a situation that felt hopeless? Everyone feels this way sometimes. Share a brief story from your life and tell how you regained your feeling of hopefulness.

Option B: A Hopeless Story

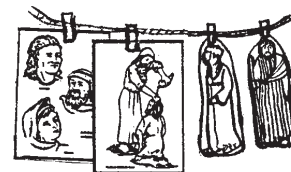
Suggest a situation, e.g. “I remembered as I arrived at school that I hadn’t done my homework.” Invite someone to add a sentence to make the situation seem more hopeless, e.g. “I didn’t even have my books.” Ask the next person to make an addition to make the situation even worse. Give everyone a turn. Have you ever been in a situation that felt hopeless? What helped you?

3

Introducing the Theme

Timeline Review

(*Look together at the Timeline you have been building over the last 4 weeks.*) Have the students name the main characters on the timeline. What happened in last week’s story?



From David to Ezekiel

The people of Israel had been a strong, happy nation. Their second king, David, had been just a shepherd boy when God’s prophet Samuel anointed him. David, and his son Solomon, who was king after David, were wise kings. Their kingdom was a good, peaceful place. Solomon built a magnificent Temple in the capital city of Jerusalem. People from all over the land came there to worship God and give thanks for their many blessings. These kings had listened carefully to the prophets, knowing that God gave messages through them.

But as the years went by, other kings reigned who no longer listened to the prophets. Many people stopped worshipping God. Soon wars began to happen and the kingdom started to fall apart. For many years different prophets warned everyone that disaster would come if they didn’t return to living as God wanted, but no one seemed to care.

Then disaster struck. A powerful nation attacked their country and the city of Jerusalem was captured. Some of the leading citizens were forced out of their homes and off their lands to be taken away as prisoners. One of those taken to Babylon was a young man named Ezekiel.

Ezekiel the Prophet

(Ask someone to read *Ezekiel 1:1- 3, 28c-2:5.*) Who is Ezekiel? Where is he? Why? What has happened? Ezekiel communicated with the people still living in Jerusalem and warned them not to rebel against their foreign rulers or even worse things would happen. They didn’t listen to him and tried to overthrow their captors. The result was that their city was destroyed, the temple was left in complete ruins, and even more people were taken into captivity in Babylon. The people now felt hopeless and miserable. All that they treasured was gone and so was God (or so it seemed

to them). Now God had a new message for Ezekiel to give to the people.

Ezekiel’s Vision of Bones

(Show the group the bones you brought. If you brought a complete set of chicken bones, have the group try and put them together.) Do you think this bone(s) could ever become a real live chicken again? In today’s story about Ezekiel’s vision, the dry bones remind Ezekiel that even though things seem hopeless, God brings hope. (Divide the class into 2 groups. Give one group bones to tap together every time they hear the word “bones.” Ask the other group to blow like the wind every time they hear the word “breathe” as you read. (Hand out glasses to blow across. Read *Ezekiel 37:1-14* pausing for sound effects.) What did Ezekiel see in his vision? What did God ask Ezekiel to tell the people? How do you think people felt hearing this vision? (Tape a bone to a piece of construction paper and add it to the Timeline in front of Ezekiel.)



Acting in the Face of Hopelessness

Tell the story of Caralynn Fejka and /or the Aliyaks. (See resource below “Acting in the Face of Hopelessness.”) In situations that might have seemed hopeless, these people took action. What did they do? How was this like the story of Ezekiel? How might their actions help other people feel more hopeful? When you are feeling hopeless, what kinds of things might you do to help yourself or others feel more hopeful?

This is very important to explore with young people. Try to draw out a variety of ideas such as: talking to a close friend, playing some soothing or inspiring music, doing some hard physical exercise, taking a warm bath, talking to a minister or counsellor, doing something for someone else, praying, phoning Kids’ Help Line, etc.

4

Integrating the Theme

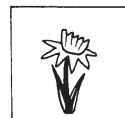
Option A: Map the Story

Materials: map begun March 1, construction paper, yarn
After the reign of King David, Canaan was divided in two. Label the north “Israel” and the south “Judah.” (See illus.) On the map locate the city of Jerusalem. Ezekiel was probably born near there. Then locate Nippur (along the Tigris River) where Ezekiel was taken in exile and add a construction paper label with yarn attached. This is the last week of the map. How will you share it with others?



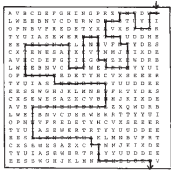
Option B: Lenten Triptych

Materials: quarter sheets of white paper, construction paper
Hand out quarter sheets of white paper. For this week’s insert, invite participants to make an image of something that represents hope for them. During their prayer and reflection this week, they might think of ways God offers us hope, even when things seem hopeless.



Option C: Breath of Hope Activity Sheet

In advance: Make copies of the activity sheet “Breath of Hope.”



Hand out activity sheet. When students have completed the maze, encourage them to try a diamante poem on the back of the sheet. (They might like to work in pairs.) Share poems. (Note: If you do not have access to the Good News Bible, Ezekiel 37:14 reads “I will put my breath in them, bring them back to life, and let them live in their own land. Then they will know that I am the Lord.”

Option D: A Hopeful Plan

Think of activities the class might plan to bring hope or be a sign of hope.

Plan to do something as a group that might be a sign of hope for others. You might plan to plant a tree, for example, as a sign of hope in the future, or do an outreach project together that might bring hope into someone’s life. (Scroll down to the *Junior Teacher’s Resource Sheet* for ideas.)

5

Closing

Prayer: O God, when things go wrong and situations seem hopeless,
help us to know that you are near.
Help us not to be afraid. Help us not to give up hope.
Help us trust in your promises. Amen.

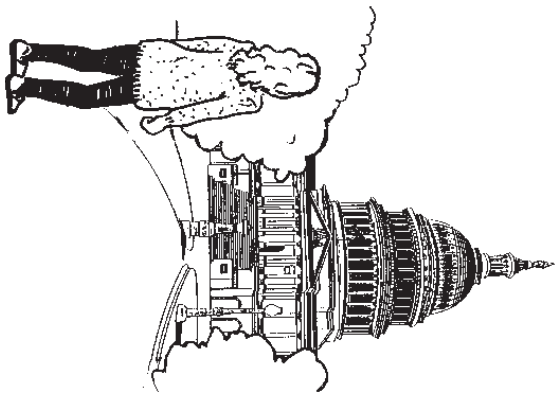
Acting in the Face of Hopelessness

Caralynn Fejka

Cara was ten years old when she was told that she had lymphoma, a form of cancer that can be life-threatening. That might have been enough for one person to worry about, but she was also very concerned about the destruction of the earth's ozone layer – a problem that could be life-threatening for the whole planet.

Either one of these problems alone could seem hopeless. But Cara decided not to let go of hope and to take action. “Maybe all these problems sound scary to you,” she said, “but I decided not to be afraid.”

Cara makes presentations to schools about the bad things people do to the environment, and ways to make a difference. “I recommend that you check your refrigerators, air conditioners, and dehumidifiers,” she advises, “because leaks from old appliances can destroy our ozone.”



Cara took her message to the capital of the United States, thanks to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which makes dreams come true for children with life-threatening diseases. She visited the vice president and several members of congress, explaining her concerns about the environment and encouraging them to take action. Her message concluded, “You can make a difference.”

Moses Aliyak

Rankin Inlet Elder Moses Aliyak went out to collect eggs in July with his wife Simona and grandson Kuuk. But he had an encounter with a polar bear instead. The bear approached their camp because it was attracted to a pot of caribou stew. When the bear saw Simona she charged at her. Simona ran from the bear toward their cabin. Next the bear went after Moses. The bear shoved Moses to his knees. When Moses got back on his feet, the bear started grappling with him.

Simona had her rifle ready to shoot at the bear, but because the bear and Moses were wrestling, she couldn't get a clear shot at the bear. So instead of shooting she prayed to give Moses strength to conquer the mother bear. “Someone was listening,” she says, because Moses gave the bear a mighty shove which knocked the bear on her back. The bear then turned around and ran back to her cubs.



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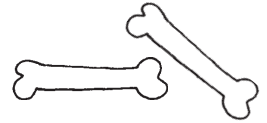
Breath of Hope

There are two activities on this page. Choose which one you want to do first.

1. Maze

You will need a *Good News Bible* to do this. Begin at Start and trace the words of Ezekiel 37:14 throughout this maze. The verse will end at the finish. We have started it for you.

A	V	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	N	G	P	R	Z	Y	M	T	D	W	I
L	W	E	E	B	N	V	C	D	E	R	W	D	E	R	B	T	U	Y	I	I
O	P	N	B	V	F	R	E	D	E	T	Y	X	A	V	X	S	P	L	L	R
T	Y	U	I	A	S	E	W	E	R	B	M	E	T	H	I	U	D	D	H	E
E	E	T	E	L	D	N	A	E	L	A	N	H	V	F	N	T	Y	D	E	S
C	X	T	E	W	E	S	A	F	X	C	V	T	N	M	J	H	I	X	D	E
A	V	H	C	D	E	F	G	I	I	K	G	G	N	Z	X	E	W	D	R	B
L	W	E	E	B	N	V	C	L	O	T	W	E	I	R	B	M	Y	Y	U	I
O	P	M	L	I	V	E	E	D	E	T	Y	H	C	V	X	S	E	E	E	R
T	Y	U	I	A	S	I	N	T	H	E	I	R	O	Y	U	U	D	D	E	E
E	E	S	S	W	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	B	W	F	R	T	Y	D	E	S
C	X	S	E	W	E	S	A	Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	J	K	I	X	D	E
A	V	B	E	H	T	N	E	H	T	D	N	A	L	Z	X	Q	W	D	R	B
L	W	E	Y	B	N	V	C	D	E	R	W	E	R	R	T	T	Y	Y	U	I
O	P	N	W	V	F	R	E	D	E	T	Y	H	C	V	X	S	E	E	E	R
T	Y	U	I	A	S	E	W	E	R	T	R	T	Y	Y	U	U	D	D	E	E
E	E	S	L	L	K	N	O	W	T	H	A	K	L	M	N	B	V	F	R	T
C	X	S	E	W	E	S	A	Z	X	C	T	I	N	M	J	K	I	X	D	E
T	Y	U	I	A	S	E	W	E	R	T	R	A	Y	Y	U	U	D	D	E	E
E	E	S	S	W	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	M	T	H	E	L	O	R	D	V



2. Make a Diamante Poem

A diamante is a diamond-shaped poem that tells about opposites. Start with a pair of opposites such as hope and hopelessness. Lines 1 and 7 name the opposites. Lines 2 and 6 each give two words describing the closest opposite. Lines 3 and 5 give three participles (ing words) that describe the nearest opposite. Line 4 is in the middle. It changes from the first idea to the opposite by giving two nouns for each.

Here's a sample. Create your own. Choose any pair of opposites that today's lesson makes you think of.

HOPELESSNESS
 SAD, LONELY
 CRYING, SIGHING, WONDERING
 DESPAIR, LONELINESS, EXPECTATION, JOY
 REMEMBERING, SMILING, SINGING
 SECURE, CONFIDENT
 HOPEFUL

Outreach Ideas

Share the following possibilities with your class, and encourage them to add their own ideas:

- Offer to assist your clergy when they go to lead worship at a nursing home. Make friendship cards to take to the seniors. Perhaps include a picture of your group. Sing some friendship songs.
- Collect donations or help out at a local drop-in center, soup kitchen, meals-on-wheels program or food bank.
- Make get well cards and “Thinking of You” cards that can be sent out as needed by the congregational card secretary or delivered by pastoral care visitors.
- Do a neighbourhood (or local park) garbage hunt – return bottles, donate money to world development.
- Plant a tree.
- Send a secret note of appreciation and greeting to someone in your church or community who works on behalf of others.
- Make “hug” or chore coupons (good for one hug, good for one “wash dishes”) for your family.
- Write a letter together to your local newspaper about community issues (e.g. a river that is polluted, a subway inaccessible to people in wheelchairs, etc.).
- Make an awareness poster about something that concerns you (e.g. Racism hurts everyone! Love this planet!, etc.).
- Sponsor a clothing or toy exchange – encourage people to donate the money they didn't have to spend, to a mission or outreach project.
- Ask a member of your congregational outreach committee to visit your class to share their concerns and projects and talk about how your class might help.



Community Caring

The class asks to be given names of people in the congregation who need special help – e.g. an older person who is moving, someone who needs help with yard work, someone who has just had a baby and needs a few casseroles, etc. The class then arranges a group “faith-in-action day” to respond to the need.