



All Christians' Fellowship International

INTERACTIVE SUNDAY SCHOOL OUTLINE FOR YOUTHS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Foundations God of the Real World

Overview

Summary

Through the Foundations series and sermons, you will go through some of the core beliefs of the Christian faith. Today, you will be introduced to Plato's Cave Allegory (which is a key image throughout this eight-week series) to talk about how God's truth calls us into the light of the real world, away from the sin that keeps us chained from living the good life. Jesus is the light of the world by which we can see things as they truly are, including that we are loved by God and can walk in freedom. We don't have to do this on our own as it is Jesus whose resurrection sets us free to be God's children. God is stronger than our captors, and Jesus is not afraid of caves.

Key Takeaways

1. We're all chained.
2. We can all be set free.
3. God is bigger than our chains.

Scriptures

1 Peter 2:9 / 2 Corinthians 4:5 / John 8:28 / Acts 17:24-25

Lesson 1 Script

Introduction

To start off tonight, watch this video clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69F7GhASOdM>
Let's imagine something wild. I want you to picture yourself as born and as living your whole life up until now in a cave. Not only do you live in a cave, but you are also chained in this cave, staring at a nearby wall. In the darkness and in your chains, you can see nothing but this wall and some images that appear on it. Because these images are all you've ever seen, you believe they are reality.

What you don't recognize at this point is that what you are seeing are only shadows. Your captors have been behind you this whole time, casting shadows on the cave wall with mere objects from the dim glow of a fire. What you thought was real was a facade.

But one day, keep imagining, everything changes. You are miraculously set free from your chains, and when you turn around you realize that there is an opening to the world outside of the cave. You move toward the brightness, which is harsh at first, but then you find a whole new world that you can live freely in. It's true reality.

You can now see what is real by the light of the sun. It was disorienting at first, but now you see people, trees, animals, everything. The old cave was just counterfeiting the truth. You might have been fooled then, but now you know. And suddenly you realize: There are still other people in the cave! You've got to tell them the good news and help them get free!

So, you run back inside, only now it's the cave that disorients you. Since your eyes have adjusted to the sun, you're not able to see inside the cave anymore. You grope around until you find the prisoners, and, when you do, you tell everyone the truth about the world outside. You're so excited... but they just think you're crazy. It sounds unbelievable. "Another way to live? A sun? Nothing over your head? Impossible! You should just settle back into the familiar chains, they tell you. Wouldn't that be so frustrating?"

This cave scenario was imagined by the ancient Greek philosopher, Plato, over 2,000 years ago, but it's still relevant today. In our case, the evil and sin of the world keep us chained in darkness, believing only in shadows and lies. But God sets us free and allows us to live in his marvelous light! The difference between these two worlds is startling at first, but the Christian faith teaches us how Jesus helps us live a true life in the light of God's goodness.

Transition

Over the next few weeks, we get to dive in and explore the foundations of the Christian faith.

Everyone believes in something, whether it's religion, spirituality, or just ideas about how the world should be. And for each of us, what we think about God is the most important thing about us. What a person believes about God, even for those who say they do not believe, determines most everything else in their lives. What we believe about God determines how we see the world and how we see ourselves.

Not all Christians believe exactly the same about everything. On some points, there is room to agree or disagree. But we all hold the main beliefs and practices in common. Have you ever wondered what Christianity teaches about something, and when you asked someone your question, they told you we couldn't or shouldn't ask, and you should just have faith? That can be really frustrating and disappointing.

As Christians, we don't have an explanation for or understanding of every single thing, but we do have reasons for what we believe. We aren't just making up what sounds good and hoping for the best. We have rational responses for what we claim. Christianity is like a river that we get to jump into, but it has been rushing along before we ever got here. We have not only our experiences to learn from, but we receive the heritage of those who came before us and lived in the knowledge of God. We call this knowledge 'revelation.'

Today, we get to talk about this God and what this revelation is like. Getting to know God changes everything. So, let's get into it...

Point #1: We're all chained.

Let's return for a moment to Plato's cave allegory. No matter how familiar you are with the darkness of this world, we all can relate to Plato's cave. We may not have physical chains or actual captors, but we all experience the lies of the world that want to hold us prisoner and

keep us from living in the freedom God has for us. Some people are bound by addictions; some are bound by unhealthy relationships. Some of us are weighed down by our own actions of the past or by hurtful words that others have said.

Most of us at one time or another struggle with believing we aren't something enough. You can fill in the blank. We're held back by believing we're not good enough, smart enough, good-looking enough. All these things make us feel like we can't be loved enough, by God or the people we want to love us. Everyone, in some way or another, experiences the lie that freedom is not for you. We all know the voice, whether it shouts or whispers, that says we belong in the shadows.

Consider for a moment: What are you willingly serving, or what are you chained by? Is there anything, big or small, that you recognize holds you back from living an authentic life in the reality of God's love? Is there something shadowy that keeps you confused, dissatisfied, or unfulfilled?

It certainly doesn't feel good to think about, but let's remember that we are talking about the reality of the shadows because we know about the reality of the light.

So don't worry... There is good news...

Point #2: The good news is we can all be set free.

We know that darkness is real, but so is God's light that expels the darkness. The lies we have been captive to do not have to hold us forever. God's love is stronger than the shadowy lies to which we have fallen prey. Our God is a rescuer. He isn't afraid of the dark. In fact, God sent his Son Jesus to come into our cave, break the chains that bind us, and beckon us into the reality of God's love.

1 Peter 2:9 tells us, "...you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light."

Once we experience life out of the shadows in the goodness of God, we realize that our old life wasn't good, no matter how good the promises were. And now we want everyone to know the glorious life of living in God's light. We were all chained, but we all can be changed. Christ's light doesn't just shine around us; it shines into our heart. It's not just what we can see that is changed, but we who are changed! God's love transforms our hearts and our minds.

Have you ever experienced something so great that you wanted everyone else to love it as much as you did? Maybe it was a song, food, or a TV show. [Insert a brief anecdotal example here.] You understand how great it is, so you need to convince others how great it is. And if they don't understand or believe you, it can be really frustrating! You might want to shout, trust me! I'm telling the truth! You've got to see for yourself!

Sometimes it's tough to be the freed one, who knows the truth and wants so badly for everyone else to 'get it'. This is like in **2 Corinthians 4:5**. Paul says to the people, "You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake." Once you experience the reality of Jesus, the shadows no longer satisfy. We will willingly serve Jesus instead of being enslaved to things that are self-serving and unfulfilling.

Sometimes the way offered by God sounds unbelievable. Freedom sounds too free; it's scary to step out of the shadows, into light that can be blinding and disorienting at first. We get used to

our dark caves, and our captors give us fake security because of familiarity. The light of truth feels like exposure, and that can be unsettling. But you don't have to do it yourself. Jesus himself defeated our captors while living on this earth; so he is not afraid of what binds you. The good news is he never shames us for our chains, and he knows what to do with them.

This leads to the best news....

Point #3: God is bigger and better than our chains.

God is bigger, better, and stronger than our captors and caves. God is the most high, the most holy, the most righteous, so he has no need to chain us. As **Acts 17: 24–25** says, **He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.** When we see God for who he is, we are drawn to him and only satisfied by him. God is more beautiful, more glorious, more desirable than anything this world has to offer. God beckons us, invites us, by the light of his Son, Jesus. Because of Jesus, we can see the real world clearly.

Through Christ we learn that the light overcomes the darkness. Even Jesus himself experienced the darkness of this world. The darkness of death put him in a cave: the tomb that was his grave. But it could not defeat him. Jesus conquered death and darkness, and his tomb is empty today so that he can empty the caves of this world. We know truth and lies for what they are because of what we know about God through Christ. Jesus said, **“I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness because you will have the light that leads to life.”** **John 8:28**

Remember how we said walking in the light could feel unsettling, like exposure? Well, in our freedom, we don't just drift alone, floating without any anchor. Faith and worship do bind us to God but not like shackles from a captor. God's love secures us like an embrace, like when a mother wraps a baby close to her body. We also have the faith and family of the Church to keep us from walking blindly through life. We never have to be alone.

Doesn't that sound like a good life?

Closing

It's not too good to be true, but you might have to see it to believe it. Living a light-filled life is something you have to experience for yourself!

Have you ever walked into a dark room and couldn't see anything? But then, you wait for a second, and your eyes adjust, and you can see a little better? You don't have to settle for this in life. Don't get used to the darkness. We can walk in clarity by the light that is Jesus.

This week we've talked about God, and next week we get to talk about what it means to be human. This is what happens when you talk about God... you get to talk about everything. Because everything is connected to God! So if we're going to be people who live in the light of God's amazing love, what do we do with ourselves, then, when we are no longer prisoners to sin? What is our purpose, and what is a good life? How do we live as **“a chosen people, royal priests, a holy nation?”**

These are all identity questions we can tackle now that we know we don't have to grasp at shadows any longer. The world of God's truth is available to you. It's not just about knowing all the right things to say and playing by unnecessary rules you don't understand. This is about being transformed and living the satisfying life you were made for... about knowing the God who knows you better than you know yourself.

Are you ready to step into the glorious light?

Discussion Questions

1. In Plato's cave story, what do you think the cave symbolizes? What are the shadows?
2. Why do you think stepping into the light can feel scary? Why might it be worth the risk?
3. What do you learn about God from **Acts 17:22-31**?
4. What big questions do you have about God?
5. What role does faith play in our lives?
6. What does it mean to "live and move and exist" in God?