

“Shrek the Sheep and Obedience”

A Lesson about Fear and Obedience
For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta
By Katie McRee

Key verses:

Isaiah 41:10

Objectives:

- Understanding that we can trust God, even when he asks us to do something that is scary/uncomfortable.
- Our lives are (usually) easier if we approach our fears head on when God asks us to, instead of avoiding them. Obedience has its benefits!
- God is with us and will accomplish His plan though us.

The Set up: Minimal

The Plan:

- Hook: **Shrek the Sheep**: (5-10 mins) Telling the story of a sheep who hid for six years because he was afraid to be sheared.
- Book: **Jonah and Ananias**: (15 mins) Comparing the stories of two people who were both asked to do scary things, but responded very differently.
- Look: **Blind Fear**: (5-10 mins) Watching a funny clip from the show “Total Blackout”
- Tool: **Blindfold Prayers**: (10 mins) Discussing why we know we can trust God even when we are scared and can’t see what is coming next.

The Supplies:

- Copy of lesson
- Copies of pictures of Shrek the Sheep (end of lesson), or a way to project them
- Copies of the Jonah and Ananias stories (1 per student- end of lesson)
- Pencils/pens
- White board/Marker
- AV equipment to show the “Total Blackout” clip
- Blindfolds, 1 per student
- Permanent Markers

(Open in prayer, announcements, and any other start of gathering traditions)

Shrek the Sheep (Hook, 5-10 mins)

Telling the story of a sheep who hid in a cave for six years so that he wouldn't have to be sheared.

You may have heard of Shrek the Sheep, as he got a lot of media attention several years back. A simple Google search will tell you everything you need to know, but below are the main points of his story. There are also several pictures of him at the back of the lesson for you to use as a visual aid:

- Shrek was a Merino sheep, which is a breed that does NOT shed and must be sheared annually to keep the coat from growing out of control.
- Most Merino sheep get used to the shearing process (which takes about 5 minutes... maybe 10 if things get crazy) at a young age, but Shrek hated it.
- He lived in New Zealand on a wool farm with 17,000 sheep and every year they were herded by helicopters. When the helicopters came though, all the sheep ran towards shearing barn, but Shrek ran and hid in caves. This may have been because he was afraid of the helicopters, or maybe he didn't like the clippers.
- This went on for 6 years and when they finally discovered him, the shepherds said they couldn't even tell he was a sheep.
- In those six years, his coat had grown out of control and weighed in at 60 pounds-enough to make 20 men's suits!
- His coat was so massive, that it caused some serious health and safety concerns... he had sores on his skin, he couldn't see (his wool had grown over his eyes), he struggled to carry around the weight of the coat, and there was also the chance of him falling or drowning, as he could have easily been toppled over by the weight and fallen to his death.
- He literally could have died because he ran off when it was time for the annual shearing... a process that likely would have taken about 5 minutes.

Discussion questions

- What about Shrek's story sticks out most to you?
- Why do you think that Shrek avoided the shearing process? (He was scared!)
- How would Shrek's life have been different if he were willing to spend 5-10 minutes a year doing something that was uncomfortable/scary?
- What are some things in your life that you put off because you are scared or don't like the process? (studying for a test, going to the dentist, taking your driver's test, etc.)

Jonah and Ananias (Book, 15 mins)

In this section, we comparing two stories of people that were asked to do something scary but responded in very different ways.

- Pass out pens and the copies of the stories of Jonah and Ananias, located at the end of the lesson. They should have one per student.
- Make sure they understand the instructions at the top of the page.
- Read though the two passages as a group, but allow them to make the marks on their page as they go, as indicated at the top of the worksheet. Make sure they understand how they should be marking things before you start reading.
- After you have read both stories, let everyone share their answers and record them on a whiteboard so everyone can be tracking. When you are done, your board will look something like this:

	Jonah	Ananias
God's Instruction ○	Go to Nineveh	Go to Saul
How they felt	Scared	Scared
The response	Ran in the opposite direction	Questioned God, but ultimately went to Saul
<u>The result</u>	Ended up in the belly of a whale	Helped Saul become well

Discussion points after completing the chart

- Did Jonah and Ananias have good reason to be scared when God asked them to go to Nineveh/Saul? (ABSOLUTELY!)
- Why do you think that one of them was obedient but the other wasn't?
- Make sure that they understand the continuation of both of these stories:
 - Jonah repents and goes to Nineveh and the city repents, even if Jonah was complaining and horrible every step of the way.
 - Ananias' obedience led to the start of Saul's (later Paul) ministry. His story is shorter and much less eventful than Jonah's!
- What can we learn from these passages about why God asks us to do scary things?
- Which of these two individuals had an easier path? Why?
- Which of these remind you more of Shrek the Sheep? Why?
- How did Jonah's fear and disobedience end up harming him?

Transitional Statement: say something like:

These stories are different for many reasons, but one thing that was similar was that at the very beginning, they were both asked to do something that was scary and dangerous. The way they responded to God's instruction was completely different, which resulted in very different paths for each of them. Either way, God's will was done, but because one of them (Jonah) trusted his fear more than he trusted God, he had a really rough time of it!

Blind Fear (Look, 5-10 mins)

Watching a clip from the show “total blackout” and thinking about how we sometimes respond to the unknown the same way.

- Before showing a clip, please be sure to preview them. There are two options. The first is safe and should be fine to show your students. The second has some cursing, although it is bleeped out... the only reason the second option is provided is because it is MUCH funnier! Use your best judgment of what works for your group:
 - Option 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lifT62PL50U>
 - Option 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhIC8XTcr9g>
- Also before showing the clip, explain that it is from a show called “Total Blackout,” where people compete in different things in pitch-black rooms. They have to do things like identifying items and pulling rings out of tanks filled with unknown items.
- Show the clip(s)

Discussion questions

- Why were these people so scared?
- Were these people ever in danger?
- How do they compare to Shrek the Sheep? Jonah? Ananias?
- How do you compare to these “Total Blackout” people when you are scared?

Transitional Statement: say something like:

These clips are pretty funny, mainly because we can see exactly what they are encountering. It's not surprising that they are so scared- they can't see what they are touching! In some ways, this is a lot like how we exist with God. Sometimes we are in situations that seem terrifying, but ultimately God is in control and can see the entire picture, even if you are in the dark. One thing about these clips that are NOT like God is that he doesn't put us in scary situations for his personal amusement... he allows us to be in scary situations because we have been invited to help him with the work of redeeming the world to him!

Blindfold Prayers (Took, 10 mins)

Sharing our fears in small groups and praying that God would help us to trust in the truth that we can depend on him even during our scary times.

- Have the students break into groups of 2 to 4 students- they should match up with people that they feel fairly close to.
- Give each student a blindfold and permanent markers (they can make their own if they need to, but they each need their own blindfold)
- Have them spend a few minutes individually thinking about the things in their life that they are nervous about or causing fear... the things that they are avoiding.... the things that they are afraid of because they can't see what is coming next.
- As they think of things, they can write words, phrases, or symbols on the OUTER EDGES of their blindfolds to represent these fears.
- ** While they are doing this, write Isaiah 41:10 on the board:
Don't be afraid, for I am with you.
Don't be discouraged, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you.
I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.
- When they are done, give them just a few minutes to share about their fears in their groups.
- Now, draw their attention to the verse you wrote on the board. How does this verse speak to the fears that they just discussed?
- Have them write the entire verse or part of the verse in the MIDDLE of their blindfolds as a reminder that they can trust God with their fears.
- **Have them put on their blindfolds and close in prayer:**
 - ASKING God to help us be obedient when he asks us to do something...
 - GIVING us strength to trust his will...
 - THANKING Him for allowing us to be part of his plan.
- They can then take home the blindfolds as a reminder that even though they can't always see what will happen when they are obedient, they can still trust God to see the whole picture.



Shrek when he was first discovered.



Shrek before his haircut



Being sheared



Shrek without the weight of his pelt!

A request of Jonah, JONAH 1:1-17

Circle what God asked Jonah to do

Underline why Jonah may have been scared

Put stars around how Jonah responded to God's request

Double underline what happened as a result of Jonah's actions

1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: ² "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me."

³ But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

⁴ Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up. ⁵ All the sailors were afraid and each cried out to his own god. And they threw the cargo into the sea to lighten the ship.

But Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep. ⁶ The captain went to him and said, "How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god! Maybe he will take notice of us so that we will not perish."

⁷ Then the sailors said to each other, "Come, let us cast lots to find out who is responsible for this calamity." They cast lots and the lot fell on Jonah. ⁸ So they asked him, "Tell us, who is responsible for making all this trouble for us? What kind of work do you do? Where do you come from? What is your country? From what people are you?"

⁹ He answered, "I am a Hebrew and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

¹⁰ This terrified them and they asked, "What have you done?" (They knew he was running away from the LORD, because he had already told them so.)

¹¹ The sea was getting rougher and rougher. So they asked him, "What should we do to you to make the sea calm down for us?"

¹² "Pick me up and throw me into the sea," he replied, "and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you."

¹³ Instead, the men did their best to row back to land. But they could not, for the sea grew even wilder than before. ¹⁴ Then they cried out to the LORD, "Please, LORD, do not let us die for taking this man's life. Do not hold us accountable for killing an innocent man, for you, LORD, have done as you pleased." ¹⁵ Then they took Jonah and threw him overboard, and the raging sea grew calm. ¹⁶ At this the men greatly feared the LORD, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows to him.

¹⁷ Now the LORD provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

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A request of Ananias, ACTS 9:1-19

Circle what God asked Ananias to do

Underline why Ananias may have been scared

Put stars around how Ananias responded to God's request

Double underline what happened as a result of Ananias' actions

9 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!"

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.