

SUB TOPIC THEME:
WHAT IS A FAMILY: structure and purpose

LESSON OBJECTIVE:
Families are created by God and are the basic unit that he has used for all time to provide the nurture and care we need to develop and thrive as human beings. Families come in many shapes and sizes, and there seems to be something significant about our family name (who we are linked to) that truly helps us belong and grow as a member of a family.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. Computer or internet connection to watch the YouTube video
2. Enough bubble gum for everyone to have a piece
3. Some paper, markers, pens, etc. to make coat of arms
4. Copies of the Student Response sheet (printed below)
5. Bibles so you can look up the Scripture story (or copy the ones below)
6. A passion to see students transformed in their positive influence on friends!

Instructive Prep:

Sometimes kids are not sure what to think of their families. Stress, deployments, and separations are so normal that it's hard to say what the other 'normal' might look like. Military families reflect typical nuclear families, blended families, broken/one parent families, interracial families...the list goes on and on. If the family unit is a primary way that God nurtures and grows us in life, love and worship, and when teens gain a greater understanding of the importance and uniqueness of their family, the more we can celebrate and build strong, resilient families.

This session is designed to look at some of the things we derive from our families. We don't choose the families we were born into, but God uses them (the good and the bad) to shape who we are – everything from physical features and capabilities to character traits and values to our spiritual understanding and growth. The Bible associates our lineage to both blessings

and curses as you'll see in the passages used here. Somehow, in God's design, acknowledging where we come from gives us identity and belonging, both of which are critical to becoming a resilient person.

The progression of these studies is four-fold: *learn, feel, do, and what next*. We want students to learn something new, connect at an emotional level to some degree, and participate in doing something during the study (like making a hand gesture as a weapon). Finally, the *what next* focuses on a change in attitude and/or behavior, which you will find in the challenge of the Life Application section. Remember, we are moving toward spiritual and emotional transformation in kids' lives, so the application section based on God's truth is really the crux of the time together! Have fun and lead well.

INTRO:

In January of 2011 a young woman who was abducted as a baby discovered who she really was. The story unfolded as she began wonder why she had no birth documents, no way to prove she was part of her current family. As she investigated, especially through looking at the physical similarities between herself and possible mother and the lack of similarities with the woman who raised her, then her REAL FAMILY of birth became evident. Now they have reconnected! She changed her name back to the original name she was given at birth and has discovered her true family.

INTRO STORY:

From the online version of the New York Post; Updated: Thu., Jan. 20, 2011, 1:34 PM

(http://www.nypost.com/f/print/news/local/alive_and_well_after_years_csPmfEkVeUXYgRUTbYbyLL)

Woman abducted as an infant from Harlem Hospital reunites with parents

By JAMIE SCHRAM, REUVEN FENTON and BOB FREDERICKS

A woman kidnapped as a baby from Harlem Hospital in 1987 -- abducted at 19 days old by a woman who had been lurking around the hospital for weeks wearing a nurse's uniform -- has been found alive and well.

Some 23 years ago, Carlina White was rushed to the emergency room by her parents, who handed her to the woman they thought was a nurse, only to return later and be told that their daughter had vanished.

Carlina exclusively shared with The Post her emotional roller-coaster ride as Nejdra Nance living in Bridgeport, Conn. -- just 45 miles from her birth parents Joy White and Carl Tyson in The Bronx -- to their long-delayed reunion.

She long harbored doubts about the woman she called mom.

The drug-abusing Agnotta Pettway -- who has several aliases, according to Carlina -- often abused her, once pummeling her with a shoe so hard that it left an imprint on her face.

At 16, Carlina got pregnant and asked her "mother" for a birth certificate so she could get prenatal care. Her mother could not provide one.

When she wanted to get a job and a driver's license, her mother could provide no documentation. She also began noticing more and more that she didn't look like her mother. Carlina confronted the woman, who admitted she wasn't her biological mom.

When Carlina recently moved out on her own to Atlanta, Ga., she was determined to find her real parents and called the Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Center investigators showed her a baby photo of a Carlina Renae White from their archives, which she compared to photos of herself as a baby taken by her Connecticut "family." There was no denying it: She was the kidnapped girl.

The center then contacted her birth mother, Joy White. "We may have found your daughter," Joy White said the caller told her and e-mailed photos.

"I knew right away it was her. I was at work. I screamed and cried and ran downstairs. After that, it was just crazy," said White.

A DNA test confirmed what the woman already knew, and they were reunited in New York last Saturday. Carlina said seeing her real mother for the first time "felt like a dream. When I look at her, I can see me. With that other lady, I would always be searching for stuff we had in common, but I had nothing in common with her," she told The Post.

"I'm so happy. At the same time, it's a funny feeling because everything's brand new. It's like being born again," said the woman, now herself a mom of a 6-year-old daughter, Samani.

Carlina's kidnapping was a case that shocked and riveted New Yorkers.

Her dad and then-16-year-old mom brought her to Harlem Hospital with a 104-degree fever early on the morning of Aug. 4, 1987.

A stocky woman dressed as a nurse comforted her and told her everything would be all right. "I was suspicious because she didn't have a name tag, but she gave us directions and we were worried about Carlina," Tyson recalled yesterday.

Joy went home to rest for a few hours after Carlina was admitted.

When she returned later that morning, the baby was gone -- and was believed taken by the phony nurse who'd been skulking around the hospital for weeks.

The city offered a \$10,000 reward and questioned a Baltimore woman who'd been spotted in the hospital but never made an arrest despite several false leads.

"One time a few months later they thought they had found her, but it wasn't her," Tyson said. "That was heartbreaking."

Two weeks ago, the family got the miracle they'd been hoping for.

"I'm sitting here and I'm in a daze, thinking, 'Is this for real?' I missed the last 23 years of her life. I have to take it all in, for now just take it day by day," said White. Carlina's dad, who separated from Joy White years ago and has a family of his own, had contacted the center just a week ago after moving from Jersey City to Queens to routinely report his change of address, unaware of the developments.

"They said they'd been looking for me and that they'd found Carlina," said Tyson, who'd been badly injured in a truck-driving accident in October.

"My mother always told me she could be alive, that whoever took her wanted a child, and that now that she's older she will find you," Tyson said yesterday. "I'm just glad I survived because I got to see my daughter again," he said.

The long-awaited reunion finally took place Saturday at La Guardia Airport, where Carlina's parents and several other relatives and friends greeted her flight from Atlanta.

"When I saw her, my heart just dropped. She said to me 'Dad, don't start crying.' How could I not cry," Tyson said.

"We had a ball," said Joy. "I cooked and invited all the family. We hugged and cried. She wanted to know about everyone." Grandmother Elizabeth White called it a dream come true. "I said maybe one day before I leave this earth she'll come back. And now that day is finally here," she said.

Carlina said, "I just never gave up on finding my real mother. I just kept on pushing." She was missing longer than any kidnap victim not taken by a parent, said officials for the Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which helped reunite the family.

"We think it's extraordinary; we've been searching for little Carlina since 1987," said Ernie Allen, president of the center. Allen said the center and the NYPD investigated and eventually connected the dots, but that Carlina deserves most of the credit for solving the mystery.

"She called our hotline and said 'I don't know who I am,' and she wanted our help," he said. When Joy got the news from the center, she called the NYPD. She spoke to NYPD Detective Martin Brown on Jan. 5. "It was a bolt of lightning," said Brown. "I get a phone call from a woman who was contacted by a woman who claimed to be her daughter. She called the NYPD to get some assistance. She wanted the NYPD to do a DNA test to see if it was a match. I could sense that she was ecstatic."

The US Justice Department will pursue the case against Ann Pettway, a source said, because the feds, unlike the NYPD, have no statute of limitations for kidnapping charges if the victim was under 18 and is still alive.

Carlina's relatives were overjoyed that she's safe. "This is so beautiful. I just can't believe this is happening," said aunt Lisa White-Heatley, 48, a hospital worker at Mt. Sinai. She described a moment of pure joy when their eyes first met. "I cried like a baby when I saw her at the airport. This is the best thing in the whole world. You

just don't know." Joy White said, "It's a wonderful feeling! Now I can sleep. I've been worried for all these years. I never took her picture off my dresser."

Intro Questions:

1. What are some of your first impressions when you heard this story?
2. Identify some things that stood out to you.

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

*Use the bubble gum to determine the order that kids will answer the next questions. Have everybody chew the bubble gum for one minute and then have them all blow a bubble at the same time. The largest bubble goes first (don't tell them that until after the contest), and then go counterclockwise around the circle to answer. Be creative, go with the next largest or who can stretch the gum the farthest without breaking to answer the next and subsequent questions. Remember, the gum is a fun way **to get to the questions!***

1. If you were to give a title to what you think this story is all about, what would that title be?
2. Put yourself in the place of different characters (each person gets to pick who they want to be), and describe what the last 23 years and the reported event feels like to you.
3. Do you think the use of DNA testing is a good or bad thing? How does DNA confirm anything about our membership into a family?
4. Carlina looked hard at her physical features to come to the conclusion that she wasn't the woman's daughter. She also references trying to find things they had in common. What physical or character traits do you possess that are similar to your mom and/or dad? *(use Student response sheet)*
5. Carlina used the phrase, "It's like being born again." What do you think she meant by that?
6. How do you think switching families at age 23 (with a 6-year old child) will change who Carlina and her daughter are? Will their values and character be affected? If so, how?
7. Write your own questions: _____

CENTRAL BIBLE PASSAGES

Below are variety of scripture passages that look at ways that God interacts with families, both specific members of families, and even long family lineages. You can derive from these passages that the family unit has been a primary way that God has interacted with human beings in both blessings and curses. While specific lineage is not as important to us in some American culture today it still remains important to God, because it is a way we are to identify with the world around us and to him. The first set of passages will demonstrate the positive, while the second set focus on the negative impacts.

Micah 5:2

² The LORD says, "Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are one of the smallest towns in Judah, but out of you I will bring a ruler for Israel, whose family line goes back to ancient times."

Ephesians 3:14-15

¹⁴ For this reason I fall on my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name.

1 Samuel 18:18

¹⁸ David answered, "Who am I and what is my family that I should become the king's son-in-law?"

Esther 9:28

²⁸ It was resolved that every Jewish family of every future generation in every province and every city should remember and observe the days of Purim for all time to come.

Mark 5:18-20 (we share good news with our families)

¹⁸ As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had had the demons begged him, "Let me go with you!" ¹⁹ But Jesus would not let him. Instead, he told him, "Go back home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how kind he has been to you." ²⁰ So the man left and went all through the Ten Towns, telling what Jesus had done for him. And all who heard it were amazed.

Jeremiah 30:18

¹⁸ The LORD says, "I will restore my people to their land and have mercy on every family; Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and its palace restored."

1 Chronicles 28:4

⁴ The LORD, the God of Israel, chose me and my descendants to rule Israel forever. He chose the tribe of Judah to provide leadership, and out of Judah he chose my father's family. From all that family it was his pleasure to take me and make me king over all Israel.

Comment: *From describing where every family gets their name through the multiple ways that God has blessed individuals and nations, the family unit is absolutely critical to human life. There is so much that we are 'given' from our families, and the positive needs to be emphasized acknowledged and leveraged for more good.*

1 Kings 15:29, 30

²⁹At once he began killing all the members of Jeroboam's family. In accordance with what the LORD had said through his servant, the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh, all of Jeroboam's family were killed; not one survived. ³⁰This happened because Jeroboam aroused the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, by the sins that he committed and that he caused Israel to commit.

Habakkuk 2:10

¹⁰But your schemes have brought shame on your family; by destroying many nations you have only brought ruin on yourself.

Numbers 8:13-18

¹³ Dedicate the Levites as a special gift to me, and put Aaron and his sons in charge of them. ¹⁴ Separate the Levites in this way from the rest of the Israelites, so that they will belong to me. ¹⁵ After you have purified and dedicated the Levites, they will be qualified to work in the Tent. ¹⁶ I have claimed them in the place of all the first-born sons of the Israelites, and they belong to me alone. ¹⁷ When I killed all the first-born in Egypt, I consecrated as my own the oldest son of each Israelite family and the first-born of every animal. ¹⁸ I am now taking the Levites instead of all the first-born of the Israelites.

Comment: *The first two are examples of how God has punished the men in ways that affected whole families. Not only description of shame is passed on through families. The third passage from Numbers demonstrates both a curse*

by death on the firstborn of Egypt as well as the blessing of the Israelites and the dedication of a whole family and lineage of the Israelites called the Levites.

LIFE APPLICATION:

8. Draw some form of family tree that depicts your biological family. If you are adopted or under the guardianship of others, fill out what you know of the family you are currently a member of. Go as far back as you can and explain what you know to the group. Then take it home and ask a parent for additional info. Try to engage a conversation about the people who make up your family tree [trust me, there will be some stand-outs and some weirdoes] *(use Student response sheet)*
9. Make a family crest like in medieval days that depicts your family strengths. Put as many as you want to and/or draw symbols to represent the values or character traits or whatever kind of strengths you decide on. Have fun with this and use colorful imagery. Don't worry about the way you draw it so much as making it a focus on your family strengths! Prepare to explain it to your group, and you might want to put it on the fridge at home and see if someone asks you about it. *(use Student response sheet)*

10. Write your own challenge: _____

STUDENT RESPONSES:

1. LIST PHYSICAL OR CHARACTER TRAITS YOU POSSESS THAT ARE SIMILAR TO YOUR MOM AND/OR DAD:

2. DRAW A FAMILY TREE AND FILL IN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN (USE THE OTHER SIDE OR A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER):
3. MAKE A FAMILY CREST DEPICTING YOUR FAMILY'S STRENGTHS (USE THE SPACE BELOW OR A SEPARATE PIECE OF PAPER):