

# I Am: The Greatest Battle

## Unit I: Into the Cave

### Lesson 1: The Beginning of Wisdom – Course Overview

We begin this course at the beginning of God's Dream for Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 1:5:

***<sup>5</sup> "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."<sup>1</sup>***



This verse gives us an insight into the mind of God for us. Jeremiah was not an accident of nature and neither are we. God formed us and had a plan for us in his mind before he created us. God's "Dream" for Jeremiah was for him to be a "prophet to the nations". We are not all set aside to be prophets, but as Christians, we are all set aside to share the Good News. As parents, we all have a dream of what our children might become or do in life. But God's Dream for each child is to be sought after above all else. During this course we will encounter many characters. These individuals were also created by God with a Dream for each. But God gave each of them the power of choice. Many chose to follow the dream of the world, not the Dream of God.

The battle to follow the path to God's Dream for each of us is the greatest battle of our lives. God places many "signposts" along our path of life to help guide us. But if we are not looking or are distracted by the world, these signposts can go unnoticed. We can turn down a dark road away from God. Middle School students have much to distract them from these signposts. They love sports, want to be noticed, and have begun to notice the opposite sex (another reason for "showing off" behavior), and bore very easily. Life is moving quickly at this age. Knowledge is growing geometrically. If one of these young people just happens to be your child, then you probably have already learned that he/she is the smartest person in the world (at least in their mind)! And you are "out of date" and don't know as much.

Given the audience we have to deal with, I have chosen not to resist them, but to provide a learning experience in the style which they want to behave: wild. “If you can’t beat them, join them!” Now I warn you, there will be times when you will throw up your hands in total frustration and exasperation. My wife and I have been there many times as we taught this course. Just keep reminding yourself that this age group learns in odd ways and it is a worthy mission you are undertaking: a changed life! And continue to pray for God’s strength to continue until the “intervention” happens and you see a change in their behavior toward God. I recommend one male and one female teacher be used to lead this course. Many of the characters studied are male, so this teacher will play that character. Use the female leader as the “Spirit Woman” to conduct the cave opening.

We need to teach this age group the “Beginning of Wisdom” to see the dark side and the light side of choices they will need to make. Show the video “The Beginning of Wisdom – Kung Fu”.

We believe that the "fear of God" is the beginning of Wisdom. But as the master says in the beginning of this clip, being “puzzled” is also a good start to finding the beginning of wisdom. When we are puzzled, we are more open to new learning’s. We hope the students in this class will become more puzzled for God and seek to learn more of His dream for them. Pay attention to the last part of the video ... good and bad grow up together. In this course, we will attempt to show youth some of the situations they will face as they grow into adulthood.

Each lesson is divided into four parts of approximately fifteen minutes each for a one hour lesson: The Cave of Wisdom; The Circle of Fire Lesson; Craft Activity; and Recreation Activity: The Journey of Life.

### **The Cave of Wisdom**

The learning environment is critical for this course to succeed with the target age group. In fact, it is the key to causing an intervention, or life change to occur. Each lesson is a “shock treatment” format and the setting establishes the attention needed. Like, “Now that I have your



attention, here is what I want you to know!” With 11-13 year olds, if you can grab their attention, you are half –way to a touchdown. The environment to create is “darkness”. Nothing grabs our attention more than our fear of the unknown of darkness.

Select a room with no windows, if possible, or place dark curtains over any to create a cave environment. When you close the door, you should almost feel the darkness like a thick soup. Name this room “Elijah’s Cave of Wisdom”. It was to a cave that Elijah fled in fear of Jezebel’s wrath. So afraid was Elijah that even a dark cave felt safer!

Personally, I hate dark caves, and bats, and bugs, and snakes! But in this dark cave of fear, God would teach Elijah the “Dream” for his life. During this course, it is our hope and prayer that God will reveal his Dream to each student or they will at least begin looking for that Dream.

On one side of the room place a tall tree made of wire covered with brown paper and lit by a black light. Use glow in the dark paint to draw snakes or worms on the tree limbs. On the opposite side, place a small table and medium sized shrub in a pot. Inside the shrub branches, put a Flame Light <sup>a</sup> pot to create the burning bush. In the center of the room, place a small circle of stones with another Flame Light <sup>a</sup> pot in the middle to create the campfire. Use table place mats to mark locations for class members to be seated around the campfire. Decorate walls to appear as the inside of a cave with wall drawings.

On the outside of the door leading into the room, decorate it to appear as a stone door opening into a mountain wall. Position a DVD/TV player to one side of the room adjacent to the Burning Bush so it will be visible to all students. Teachers (two are recommended, a man and a woman) should be seated to each side of the “Burning Bush”. The “Burning Bush”, the tree black light, and the “campfire” provide the only light in the cave, so to read material, the teachers will need a small flashlight.

## **The Cave Opening**

Each unit begins with the cave opening. During this part of each lesson, we will present the learning objective for the session. The leader, or “Spirit Woman”, will say, “Welcome to the cave of (fear, etc.).” Each lesson deals with a dark side of the Cave; for example “fear and doubt”. So for one lesson the leader says: “Welcome to the Cave of Fear”.



In this section, the “mystery” of God’s Dream for us and the enemies against it are presented. Use this section to gain control and attention of the group and set the stage for the “intervention” or “shock treatment” to be encountered during the mini-drama section. We follow the format, “tell them what you are going to teach them; teach them; tell them what you taught them” in various methods.

Remember, with this age group, surprise is a good teaching method as it keeps their attention on the lesson. Read the scripture verses for the lesson. Introduce the character for the lesson.

## **The Circle of Fire: Unit and Lesson**

The course is divided into seven units, each with a basic intervention theme. Lessons are taught around the “campfire” setting called the “Circle of Fire”. Class members are to be seated on the floor around the artificial campfire (see Appendix 1 for props.) The “Burning Bush” is on one side of the room and “The Tree of Knowledge” is on the opposite side. Bad guys/gals appear in front of the tree for acting parts. Good guys/gals appear in front of the “Burning Bush”.



**Scripture:** Each lesson in a unit contains a scripture reference, a Biblical Character, a Modern Character, and “The Tribe” summary. Get out your acting skills! This is a time for some real fun and if the students aren’t careful, they may just learn something! The cave is the place we meet the dark side of the world and seek to win over it. The Biblical Character could be a light or dark side person, like Moses or Jezebel. Dress and act the part of each character as described in the lesson. Then show the video suggested for the Biblical Character. Discuss the dark force impact on lives. The Modern Character typically represents one of the forces of light. Show the video of the Modern Character selected as the “light in the cave”. Discuss this example of the right path to God’s Dream for us. Unless otherwise stated, The New International Version of the Holy Bible <sup>1</sup> is used.



### ***Craft Activity: Helpful Hands***

Where used, a craft is designed to reinforce the learning objective of the lesson. Students are encouraged to take the craft home as a remembrance of the lesson. A second room is recommended for this activity with tables and lighting. This maintains the “dark mystery” of the cave and provides more space for group work. The cost per student is targeted to be approximately \$2 -\$4. A project doesn’t have to be expensive to drive home the point of the lesson. An alternative to the individual Craft Activity is to select a group project for the unit and work on it throughout the unit. This could be an opportunity, for example, to make something for a homebound person. (Note: Based on our learning’s from teaching this course, we recommend one craft per unit. While a craft per lesson can be done, it is difficult to accomplish much in 15 minutes allocated. So, work a little each lesson on one project.)



## **Recreation Activity: The Journey of Life**

These activities have been selected to provide a fun learning environment and to encourage group bonding. The group becomes a tribe in the beginning of the course, the “I AM Tribe”. But until bonding occurs, they are only a group (a wild group) of students. During the “Journey of Life”, each person will need the support of others to get through difficult situations. The selected activities provide situations that require working together to succeed.



Generally, the activities divide the class into two teams of the tribe to encourage competition. Reward the winning team with a treat and the entire tribe with candy or a healthy snack item. It will be difficult to accomplish, but very helpful, to have each member wear the headband with the “Circle of Fire” logo and the T-Shirt with the “I AM Tribe” logo to each class meeting. T-Shirts and headbands may be made by printing or color copying iron-on transfer labels using the logo provided in Appendix 8: Craft section of this manual.

Depending on the behavior of the students, the time required for each lesson section could vary greatly! So be prepared to omit Craft time.

### **The Circle of Fire: Jeremiah’s Story – The Dream**

***Scripture reference:*** Jeremiah 1:5:

<sup>5</sup> *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."*<sup>1</sup>

### **Biblical Character: Jeremiah – The Prophet of Doom**

Show the video in Appendix 6 “Jeremiah Receives The Dream” under this lesson.

**Modern Character: Nelson Mandela**

Show the video in Appendix 6 “Nelson Mandela’s Dream” under this lesson. Explain to the students that God’s Dream for us can take many years to achieve, but if you stay true to the dream, God will help you achieve the dream for you.

Craft: Circle of Fire Headband – Pass out the headbands made in advance. Have the students write their initial on their headband.

Recreation: No time allocated for recreation in the first lesson. The entry into the cave opening is considered recreation.