

Chapter 4

The Prophets and the Hope for a Messiah

KEY WORD

prophet

We all get on the wrong path of life sometimes. For some people, the wrong path means holding on to anger and resentment. For other people, the wrong path could mean telling little lies that turn into bigger and bigger lies. And for others, the wrong path could be as serious as underage drinking, illegal use of drugs, cheating on exams, or inappropriate use of social media.

What kind of friend would you want to have if you start going down a wrong path of life? A friend who is brave and honest enough to tell you that what you are doing is wrong and that you need to change? Or a friend who pretends that everything is okay? The friend who is honest enough to tell you that you need to change is a true friend indeed. That friend loves you so much that they are willing to risk your friendship by telling you a truth that you need to hear, even if you do not want to hear it.

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CONNECT with GOD

Lord, help me go into the world to care for those who are oppressed and needy, to speak out against injustice, and to proclaim the Good News. Grant me the gifts of the prophets who have gone before me.

Grant me courage.
Moses, pray for me.

Grant me humility.
Jeremiah, pray for me.

Grant me trust.
Isaiah, pray for me.

All you holy people, pray for me! Amen.

The prophets were the true friends of the Chosen People, the people with whom God made a special agreement with in the Old Testament. When God called the prophets to tell the Israelites to change their lives, they bravely spoke the truth. Many times this caused trouble for the prophets because the kings and the people did not want to change. The prophets were ridiculed and imprisoned. Some even had their lives threatened. Yet they were faithful in speaking God's Word because of their great love for God and his people.

The Non-Writing Prophets

A **prophet** is someone who speaks for God. In the earliest record of our faith, there was no need for prophets because God spoke directly to people like Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham. But as history progressed, God spoke directly to special individuals only—the prophets, who then carried his message to his people. Moses was the first of these special people. Joshua was another, followed by the judges. All these people can be considered prophets.

When Israel was ruled by kings, the prophets were an important part of history. It seemed that the more the kings focused on the things that kings do—fighting wars, building forts and cities, making laws—the more they forgot their covenant, or agreement with God. So God kept sending prophets to remind the kings to keep their promises to him. Today we can read the words of some of these prophets in their books, found in the fourth section of the Old Testament. But some prophets who preached during the time of the kings do not have their own books. We learn about them in the historical books of the Old Testament. Those prophets are called the non-writing prophets. Let's take a closer look at the most famous non-writing prophets, Elijah and Elisha.



prophet ➡ A person God chooses to speak his message of salvation. In the Bible, primarily a communicator of a divine message of repentance and hope to the Chosen People.

We read about Elijah in the First Book of Kings. God sent Elijah to speak to King Ahab. Ahab was a king of Israel, the northern kingdom. He was one of the worst kings we learn about in the Bible. Ahab married a foreign woman, Jezebel, who became queen. Ahab and Jezebel worshipped Baal and Asherah, a false god and goddess (see 1 Kings 16:29–33). This is what the Bible says about Ahab: “Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than any of the kings of Israel before him” (1 Kings 16:33). So God sent Elijah to confront this evil king and queen.

To prove to Ahab, Jezebel, and the people that the Lord is the true God, Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest (see 1 Kings, chapter 18). In the contest, Elijah and the prophets of Baal each made altars and piled them with wood and a sacrifice. Then they each prayed to their god to light the fire. The prophets of Baal prayed and prayed, but nothing happened. Then Elijah prayed, and the Lord incinerated the sacrifice, the wood, and the stones of the altar! No one could doubt whose god was real. Elijah also performed several miracles, including bringing a boy back to life. You can read about Elijah in 1 Kings, chapters 17–19, and 2 Kings, chapters 1–2.

Elijah recruited Elisha to be his helper (see 1 Kings 19:19–21). At the end of his life, Elijah was taken into Heaven in a chariot of fire. Then Elisha took Elijah’s cloak to wear (see 2 Kings 2:1–8), symbolizing that Elijah’s role as prophet passed to Elisha. So Elisha became a mighty prophet who performed many miracles.

Through the power of God, Elisha multiplied olive oil for a poor widow, multiplied loaves of bread to feed hungry prophets, and brought a dead boy back to life. (Elisha’s miracles may remind you of Jesus’



good
to KNOW

The most reluctant prophet in the Bible is Jonah. When God called him to go to Nineveh with his message, Jonah ran in the opposite direction!

miracles.) You can read about Elisha in 2 Kings, chapters 2–8. Through the words and actions of Elijah and Elisha, we learn that God punishes evil people and takes care of those who are poor and suffering.

The Classical Prophets

In the Old Testament, the words and actions of sixteen prophets are recorded in sixteen books named after them. These prophets are sometimes called the classical prophets or the writing prophets. Let's look at one minor prophet, Amos, and one major prophet, Ezekiel. (See “Check This Out!” for an explanation of these terms.)

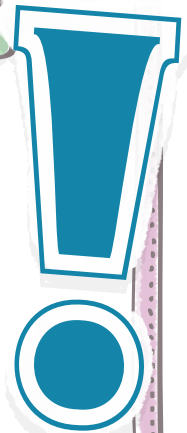
Amos was the first of the classical prophets. He prophesied in Israel almost eight hundred years before the birth of Christ. We know little about the life of Amos. He was not a full-time prophet; rather, he was a shepherd and tree pruner (see Amos 7:14–15).

God called Amos from his simple life to challenge the injustice in Israelite society. During this time, both wealthy and poor people lived in Israel. But the wealthy were not sharing their abundance with the poor. On the contrary, they were cheating the poor of what little they had. When the rich grew richer and the poor grew poorer, this created a social and economic gap. This gap was a source of scandal and

CHECK *this* OUT

Major Prophets and Minor Prophets

The Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are quite long, so these three prophets are called the major prophets. The other prophets, whose books are shorter, are called the minor prophets. These labels do not mean that the major prophets are more important than the minor prophets. They only describe the length of the books of the prophets.



worked against social justice, equality, human dignity, and peace. It was an injustice that went against God's covenant with his Chosen People.

Amos was a clever preacher. In chapter 1 of the Book of Amos, we read how he condemned the sinfulness of foreign nations. So his listeners might have been thinking, Oh good, he's not talking about us. But by chapter 2, we can see that Amos began to condemn the sins of the people of Israel. He did not hold back at all:

Thus says the LORD:
For three crimes of Israel, and now four—
I will not take it back—
Because they hand over the just for silver,
and the poor for a pair of sandals;
They trample the heads of the destitute
into the dust of the earth,
and force the lowly out of the way.

(Verses 6–7)

As terrible as the sins of the other nations were, God considered the sins of Israel even worse because they had the advantage of their covenant relationship with him. Amos continued his prophecies, predicting the destruction of Israel (see Amos, chapter 6). His words were mostly words of condemnation and doom. But his book concludes with hope-filled words, saying that God would rebuild the nation after its destruction (see Amos 9:11–15).



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The biblical prophets called the people to return to God when they began to worship false gods and disobey God's Law. Then during the Exile, the prophets also reassured the people that God had not abandoned them. If the prophets were alive today, what societal situations do you think God would call them to address? What false idols would God tell them to warn us against?

Ezekiel lived about two hundred years after Amos. He was a priest in the first group of people taken to Babylon during the Exile. He did all his prophesying from this foreign country. Jerusalem and the Temple had not yet been destroyed, so Ezekiel's early preaching was a warning that the final end of the kingdom was coming. To get his point across, God had Ezekiel perform symbolic acts. Ezekiel had to lay on his side for 430 days to symbolize the number of years the people of Israel and Judah would be punished. He had to bake his food on cow dung to symbolize that the Israelites would eat unclean food during the Exile (see Ezekiel 4:4–15). He even had to cut off all the hair on his head and then burn a third of it, chop up a third, and scatter a third in the wind. This symbolized how the Chosen People would be killed and scattered by the Babylonians (see 5:1–12).

The Book of Ezekiel isn't all doom and gloom though. The last third of the book contains many hopeful prophecies that God would rescue his people after their punishment. Ezekiel described God as the Good Shepherd who would rescue his sheep after the destruction (see



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Ezekiel 34:11–31). In another famous prophecy, Ezekiel saw dry bones coming back to life:

[God] said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel! They are saying, ‘Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off.’ . . . You shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and make you come up out of them, my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may come to life, and I will settle you in your land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.” (37:11,13-14)

As a priest, Ezekiel was very interested in the Temple in Jerusalem. The last chapters of his book describe a vision that the Temple will be rebuilt. Because the Temple is a symbol of God’s presence with his Chosen People, this vision is a promise that God has not abandoned his people.



PRAYING TOGETHER

The Prophets Today

In our liturgy, the prophets still speak the Word of God to us today. During Advent, we often read the beautiful messianic prophecies of the prophet Isaiah. Other prophets we hear during Advent include Jeremiah, Baruch, and Micah. During the Sundays of Lent, we hear the words of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and, during the Easter Vigil, the six readings include the words of three prophets: Isaiah, Baruch, and Ezekiel. During Ordinary Time, we read many different sections of the Old Testament, including the prophets.

The only time we do not read from the Old Testament at Mass is during the Easter season. At that time, the first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles, which recounts how the Apostles spread the Good News of Christ’s Resurrection, which was the fulfillment of the hopes of all the prophets.

LIVING the GOSPEL

Live the Prophetic Mission

Whom does God call to be a prophet today? You! By virtue of your Baptism, you are called to participate in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly ministry of Christ. That means you don't need to be an ordained priest to share the Good News with the world. You can witness to Christ through every word and action, in every circumstance in which you find yourself.

How can you be a prophet to your community today? What messages about faithfulness to God's Law do your friends, family, or school need to hear? What social causes need you to speak out? Whom can you reassure about God's love amid suffering? Take some time today to pray for the courage to live your faith publicly and to share your faith with others.

The Hope for a Messiah

Through their words and actions, the prophets prepared the Chosen People for the coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. They reminded the people to show their faith in God by following the Law and the covenant. They told the people about God's love and forgiveness. They urged the people to take responsibility for their actions and to ask God to forgive their sins. These are teachings that Jesus Christ emphasized and fulfilled. But the most important way the prophets prepared people for the coming of Christ was by telling them that God would send a savior, who would also be called the Messiah. *Messiah* is a Hebrew word that means "anointed one" (the Greek word *Christ* means the same thing).

Let's look at one prophet, the prophet Isaiah, to see what he revealed about the Messiah. Isaiah was a famous writing prophet who lived during the period when the Assyrians were invading Israel and Judah. Isaiah offered many prophecies that were fulfilled in the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. For example, the Book of Isaiah foretold that a virgin would give birth to a child named Emmanuel, meaning "God is with us" (see Isaiah 7:14). Isaiah also explained that the Messiah would be filled with the Lord's Spirit for his public ministry: "To bring good news to the afflicted, / to bind up the brokenhearted, / To proclaim liberty to the captives, / . . . To comfort all who mourn" (Isaiah 61:1–2). And several passages in Isaiah describe a servant who would be beaten, insulted, and finally put to death for the forgiveness of our sins (see 50:4–9, 52:13–53:12).

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As we know, all these prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He was the Son of God who became man and was born of a virgin, Mary. The angel Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would be called Emmanuel (the Son of God) (see Luke 1:34–38). The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus at his Baptism (see Mark 1:10). In fact, Jesus began his public ministry by reading that same passage of Isaiah 61:1–2 in the synagogue, concluding, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). And we now understand that Jesus was the Suffering Servant described in Isaiah—the servant who was beaten, insulted, and crucified for the forgiveness of our sins (see Mark 15:16–20, Matthew 26:26–28, Luke 24:44–47).

It is amazing to see how prophetic books like Isaiah clearly described Jesus and his mission. Through them, God prepared the Chosen People for the completion of his plan of salvation, through the life, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ.



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roots of faith

Prophetic Missionaries and Saints in Latin America

Beginning in the 1500s, Europeans sailed to Latin America to colonize the lands and conquer the Indigenous peoples. They were accompanied by missionaries who sought to share the Gospel of Christ with the Indigenous peoples. Many missionaries cared for the poor and sick, and they worked to defend and protect the Indigenous peoples as well as the African slaves the Europeans were transporting to the New World.

Saint Martin de Porres, the illegitimate son of a freed slave and a Spanish noble, personally experienced the cruel treatment of the lower classes in his native Peru. He dedicated his life to caring for people who were poor and mistreated in Peru. Saint Peter Claver, a Spanish missionary working in Colombia, was horrified by the plight of African slaves who were brought to Cartagena in unspeakable conditions. He tended to their physical needs, but he also actively and publicly defended their rights. And Bartolomé de las Casas, another Dominican friar and Spanish missionary, was an outspoken defender of the Indigenous peoples who were suffering at the hands of European colonizers. His message was simple: You will win over many more converts to Christ if you treat them with respect and dignity.

Can you think of other saints and holy people who, like the prophets, called for justice in their societies?

Chapter 4

The Prophets and the Hope for a Messiah

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the students identify the role of the prophets in salvation history. The prophets can be grouped into two categories: the writing prophets and the non-writing prophets. The prophetic mission is to speak for God, calling God's people to be faithful to their covenant with him. The prophets reminded God's people that faithfulness brings restoration, redemption, and salvation—a promise that was ultimately completely fulfilled through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Background for the Teacher

What is your understanding of a prophet? Is a prophet equivalent to a sort of fortune-teller for God? Do you think a prophet primarily points to the future or to the past? The answer is somewhere in between.

God's people entered into a covenant with him in which he agreed to be their God and they agreed to be his people. God promised that if his people obeyed the law of the covenant, they would be greatly blessed and prosperous. However, if they disobeyed his covenant, they would most certainly encounter suffering, difficulty, and trial. So when the Israelites found themselves on the brink of civil war, attacked by other nations, or in exile in a foreign land, the prophets reminded them that they must repent, turn back to God, and obey God's commandments. In this regard, the prophets pointed backward. They pointed back to the commandments and the requirements of the covenant.

The good news for those who did these things was the certain hope for God's deliverance. The prophets reminded the people that God is always faithful and would restore his people, regardless of how far they had fallen away. Some prophets promised a future redeemer, and the Israelites began looking forward to the day that God's promises would be completely fulfilled. In this regard, the prophets point toward the future—a future that we are now living in!

Teacher's Prayer

Lord, give me the courage I need to speak what is true in the varying circumstances of my day. Help me speak this truth with gentleness, compassion, hope, and creativity so that the students might hear the voice of God through the words you have given to me. Grant this request through Christ Jesus, the Lord. Amen.

Teaching Tip

To bring your study of the prophets into the present, help the students see that through Baptism, we share in the prophetic ministry of Christ, calling others back into a relationship with God through our words and actions. We challenge others to avoid sin and encourage them to have hope in the saving power of God. Like the prophet Jeremiah, the students might protest that they are too young. Gently encourage them to have faith in God and to share their faith with others.

Chapter at a Glance

Core Text: Student Book

Core Understandings

1. As salvation history progressed, God spoke directly to special individuals—the prophets—who carried his message to his people.
2. Amos was the first classical prophet, and he preached against injustice.
3. Ezekiel was a prophet and a priest who used symbolic actions to get his prophetic message across.
4. Through their words and actions, the prophets prepared the Chosen People for the coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Catechism Pillar

- The Creed

Catechism Connection

- Paragraphs 64, 201, 218, 522, 762, 1964, 2581, 2595
(Role and Mission of Prophets in Israel)
- Paragraphs 522, 555, 702
(Announcing the Messiah)

Key Scripture Passages

- 1 Kings, chapters 2, 17–19
(excerpts)
- Isaiah, chapters 7, 50, 52, 61
(excerpts); excerpts from the four Gospels
- Ezekiel 37:11, 13–14

- Amos 2:6–7
- Luke 4:21
- Luke 24:44–47

Key Word

- prophet

Chapter Project

- “Life-Size Prophets,” page 249

Test

- “Chapters B–4 Test,” pages 256–258

Prayer Suggestions

- **Prayer:** God, you called the prophets to boldly speak the truth to people who did not always want to hear it. Give me the strength, Lord, to say what is true and act on it. Prepare the hearts of those to whom you send me that they might hear your word and be transformed with renewed faith in you. Amen.
- **Scripture Reading:** Luke 4:16–21
- **Student Book:** “Connect with God,” page 263
- **Music:** “Word of God Speak,” by Mercy Me, available on YouTube

DAY 1

Student Book

Introduction and “The Non-Writing Prophets,” pages 263–266

Core Understanding

As salvation history progressed, God spoke directly to special individuals—the prophets—who carried his message to his people.

Materials Needed

- two sheets of poster board
- two markers
- copies of the handout “Chapter 4 Reading Guide,” pages 250–251, one for each student
- Bibles, one for each student
- art paper and markers (*optional*)
- digital presentation tools (*optional*)

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin with this prayer, or choose from among the prayer suggestions on page 232:

- God, you call all people to hear your voice, transform their lives, and bravely tell others about you. Help me hear your voice, Lord, and speak your truth in a way that others can hear and understand. Help me be the courageous prophet our school and world needs. Amen.

Engage Activity (5 minutes)

1. **Engage** the students’ experience with this challenge. Arrange the students into two groups, one on each side of the room. Give each group a sheet of poster board and a marker, and be sure that one group cannot see the other’s poster board. Explain in these or similar words:
 - I want each group to list as many prophets from the Old Testament of the Bible as you remember. You must take turns, and each person can only write down one name. When everyone has written one name, you can start over. At the end of 2 minutes, we will see which group has the most names.
2. **Count** the number of correct names for each group after 2 minutes to determine the winning group. Continue to explore the students’ knowledge with questions like these:
 - What is the main job or mission of a biblical prophet?
 - Why did God need to send prophets?
 - What were the main messages the Old Testament prophets gave to the Chosen People?

Teaching Tip

Depending on the students' biblical knowledge, you may wish to allow them to use their Bibles to search for prophets' names.

Core Content (10 minutes)



Review pages 263–266 in the student book, using one of the following options or another one of your choosing:

- **Reading Guide Option:** Ask the students to read the student book pages and to complete the section “Introduction and The Non-Writing Prophets” on the handout “Chapter 4 Reading Guide,” or use the handout as a homework assignment or as a review at the end of the week. Collect and grade the handout at the end of the week.
- **Presentation Option:** Give a short presentation covering the following key points:
 1. A prophet is someone who speaks for God.
 2. When God called the prophets to carry his message to the Israelites, they bravely responded and spoke the truth even when it was not popular.
 3. God spoke directly to special individuals only, the prophets, who then carried his message to his people.
 4. God sent prophets to remind the kings of Israel to keep their covenant with him.
 5. Moses, Joshua, the Judges, and Elijah and Elisha were all prophets of Israel.

Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

The Life of Elijah

Objective: To learn about the life of the Elijah, one of the non-writing prophets.

1. **Explain** in these or similar words:
 - Elijah was a famous prophet in Israel, and he courageously confronted those who did wrong. We're going to investigate firsthand some of his activities as he served God.
2. **Distribute** the Bibles, and arrange the students into small groups of three or four. Assign each group one of the following passages:
 - **1 Kings 17:1–7:** Elijah and the drought
 - **1 Kings 17:8–16:** Elijah and the widow in Zarephath, part A
 - **1 Kings 17:17–24:** Elijah and the widow in Zarephath, part B
 - **1 Kings 18:17–40:** Elijah and the prophets of Baal (Two groups of students could be combined for this, as there are many parts.)
 - **1 Kings 19:1–18:** Elijah on Mount Sinai
 - **1 Kings 19:19–21:** The call of Elisha
 - **2 Kings 2:1–18:** Elijah is taken up to Heaven

3. **Instruct** the groups that they are to read their passages entirely and then work on a way to teach the class what they learned about Elijah. They may act it out, give a report, or illustrate it. But each member of the group must participate in whatever presentation method they choose.
4. **Direct** the groups in giving their presentations after adequate preparation time. Encourage the class to ask questions about things they do not understand. Gently correct anything that may be inaccurately presented. Be sure to affirm sincere efforts.
5. **Conclude** by asking the students what they found interesting, inspiring, or strange about Elijah's life. Remind them that all these stories about Elijah's faithfulness and courage were written many years after the events. Ask them what stories will be told and written about them as they do great deeds in our world.



Digital Option: Have the students present their passages by creating a short digital presentation.

Optional Activity: "Schoolhouse Prophet" (20 minutes), page 245

Comprehension Checkpoint (5 minutes)

Ask the students to each write a short answer to the following questions:

- What is a prophet?
- What does a prophet do?
- Who were some famous prophets mentioned in the student book?



Assessment Opportunity: Collect the papers for credit or grading.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Close with a prayer, choosing from among the prayer suggestions on page 232.

DAY 2

Student Book

“The Classical Prophets” (first five paragraphs), pages 266–267

Core Understanding

Amos was the first classical prophet, and he preached against injustice.

Materials Needed

- “Chapter 4 Reading Guide” handouts *(optional)*
- Bibles, one for each student
- a digital meme app *(optional)*
- internet access *(optional)*

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin with the Prayer of Saint Francis from “Appendix A: Catholic Prayers” in the student book, or choose from among the prayer suggestions on page 232.

Engage Activity (5 minutes)

Engage the students’ experience by asking the following questions:

- Who can name some of the prophets that have books of the Bible named after them? (*Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*)
- Sometimes we read from the books of one of these prophets at Mass. Which reading would that be? (*the first reading*)
- Which of these prophets’ books comes first? (*Isaiah*)
- Which comes last? (*Malachi*)
- Who can guess which of these prophets’ books is the longest? (*Isaiah*)
- Which prophet’s book is the shortest? (*Obadiah*)

Teaching Tip

You may wish to allow the students to use their Bibles to search for answers to these questions.

Core Content (10 minutes)

Review pages 266–267 in the student book, using one of the following options or another one of your choosing:

- **Reading Guide Option:** Ask the students to read the student book pages and to complete the section “The Classical Prophets (first five paragraphs)” on the handout “Chapter 4 Reading Guide.”
- **Presentation Option:** Give a short presentation covering the following points:
 1. In the Old Testament, the words and actions of sixteen prophets are recorded in sixteen books named after them.
 2. Amos was the first of the classical prophets and prophesied almost eight hundred years before Jesus’ birth.
 3. Amos is one of the minor prophets, because his book is short.
 4. Amos’s words are mostly condemnation and doom, but his book concludes with hope-filled words, saying that God would rebuild the nation after its destruction.

Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

A Day in the Life of a Prophet

Objective: To read about the life of an Old Testament prophet.

1. **Explain** in these or similar words:
 - The Old Testament is filled with stories about how God’s children are always acting up! God calls and sends prophets to his people to get them to change their ways. In this assignment, you’re going to learn about an Old Testament writing prophet.
 - In a moment, I will pair you with a partner and assign you one of the writing prophets to study. You do not need to become an expert on that prophet or read their entire book. Skim through the book, noting the headings in larger print and finding passages that attract your attention. Make notes together about what you find. After 15 minutes, you will tell the class what you found out about your prophet.
2. **Distribute** the Bibles, and arrange the students in pairs. Assign a prophet to each pair to study.

Teaching Tip

The books of the major prophets are much longer works and can be given to your more advanced students. The major prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The minor prophets are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. You can find this list in the Bible’s table of contents.

3. **Conclude** with the student presentations. Fill in with your own knowledge, and mention passages from each prophet's book that the students may have missed in their overview. After the presentations, ask the class what similarities they noticed in the prophets presented. What differences did they notice?



Cross-Curricular Opportunity: This assignment could be expanded and assigned as a language arts research paper.



Digital Option: Ask the students to create a meme for their prophet using a digital meme app and an image of the prophet they found online.

Optional Activity: "The Lord Says . . ." (20 minutes), page 246

Comprehension Checkpoint (5 minutes)

1. **Ask** the students to join with a partner. Direct the partners to discuss these questions:
 - What is a classical prophet?
 - What was the prophet Amos's main message?
2. **Circulate** among the students, and conclude by asking volunteers to share their responses.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Close with a prayer, choosing from among the prayer suggestions on page 232.

DAY 3

Student Book

“The Classical Prophets” (sixth paragraph to the end), pages 268–269

Core Understanding

Ezekiel was a prophet and a priest who used symbolic actions to get his prophetic message across.

Materials Needed

- a digital student response system *(optional)*
- “Chapter 4 Reading Guide” handouts *(optional)*
- Bibles, one for each student
- copies of the handout “Popular Bible Stories,” page 252, one for each student

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin with a prayer, choosing from among the prayer suggestions on page 232.

Engage Activity (5 minutes)

1. **Direct** the students to open their student books to page 268 and look at the picture of the shepherd.
2. **Instruct** them to write five words that come to mind when they observe the image of this shepherd.
3. **Direct** the students to share their words with the class.
4. **Ask** the following questions:
 - Who are modern-day shepherds who take care of us? How do some of these words apply to them? (*parents, teachers, public safety personnel, neighbors, friends*)
 - How do some of these words apply to Jesus? (*Jesus cares for us, watches over us, keeps us from harm, helps us when we need help.*)



Digital Option: Use your digital student response system to have the students post their words for the whole class to see.

Core Content (10 minutes)

Review pages 268–269 in the student book, using one of the following options or another one of your choosing:

- **Reading Guide Option:** Ask the students to read the student book pages and to complete the section “The Classical Prophets (sixth paragraph to the end)” on the handout “Chapter 4 Reading Guide.”
- **Presentation Option:** Give a short presentation covering the following key points:
 1. Ezekiel lived about two hundred years after Amos.
 2. Ezekiel is a major prophet because his book in the Bible has many chapters.
 3. Ezekiel was a priest who was deported to a foreign land from which he did all his prophesying.
 4. Ezekiel used symbolic actions to get across his warnings that the kingdom of Judah was coming to an end.

Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Don't Say a Word!

Objective: To show the importance of symbolic action in communicating.

1. **Explain** in these or similar words:
 - The prophet Ezekiel used a variety of symbolic actions to teach the Israelites about God's Kingdom coming to an end at the hands of the Babylonians. Interpreting symbolic actions, however, is not always an easy task! For this assignment, you'll have to do the hard work of interpreting the symbolic actions of your teammates.
2. **Arrange** the students into two or more teams. Distribute the handout “Popular Bible Stories.” Explain that this activity is similar to the game charades. There are two teams. Each team takes turns sending someone out of the room for 2 minutes. While the person is out of the room, the team must decide on a biblical story (either listed on the handout or another one they choose) and how to present that story symbolically. They can present it however they like, but they must do it without words. After 2 minutes, bring the person back into the room, and have the team start its symbolic presentation of the story. (Remind the group that the story may or may not be on the handout list.) If the person cannot guess the story in 1 minute, the other team has a chance to guess and steal the point.
3. **Conclude** with these or similar words:
 - God speaks to us in a variety of ways through a variety of people. Sometimes God's message is easily understood. Sometimes it is not so easy, and there is room for disagreement, discussion, and discernment.
 - Keep your eyes and ears open to how God might be giving you an important message from teachers, parents, friends, or nature. God is always speaking. Are you always listening?



Optional Activity: “Prophetic Encouragement” (15 minutes), page 247

Comprehension Checkpoint (5 minutes)

Ask the students to take out a sheet of paper and a pencil for a 3-2-1 activity. Direct them to write down the following:

- three things they learned about Ezekiel
- two ways he communicated God's message to the people
- one question they have about Ezekiel's book



Assessment Opportunity: Collect the papers for credit or grading.

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Close with a prayer, choosing from among the prayer suggestions on page 232.

DAY 4

Student Book

"The Hope for a Messiah" to end of chapter, pages 270–273

Core Understanding

Through their words and actions, the prophets prepared the Chosen People for the coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Materials Needed

- the song/video "Where Is the Love?," by the Black-Eyed Peas, available on YouTube (*optional*)
- Bibles, one for each student
- copies of the handout "Chapter 4 Quiz," pages 253–254, one for each student
- copies of the handout "Chapters B–4 Test," pages 256–258, one for each student

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)



Begin with the song/video "Where Is the Love?," or choose from among the prayer suggestions on page 232.

Engage Activity (5 minutes)

1. **Engage** the students' experience by asking them to turn to a neighbor and discuss all they know about what the prophets of the Old Testament have to do with Jesus.
2. **Ask** each pair to share one thing they discussed.
Answers could include the following:
 - The prophets predicted a Messiah would come.
 - They taught the people to turn away from sin.
 - Some performed miracles like Jesus would.
 - They taught people God's Laws like Jesus would do.
 - They prophesied that the Messiah would suffer for the people.

Core Content (10 minutes)



Review pages 270–273 in the student book, using one of the following options or another one of your choosing:

- **Reading Guide Option:** Ask the students to read the student book pages and to complete the section “The Hope for a Messiah” on the handout “Chapter 4 Reading Guide.” When the students finish, collect and grade the handout.
- **Presentation Option:** Give a short presentation covering the following key points:
 1. The most important way the prophets prepared people for the coming of Christ was by telling them that God would send a savior, who would also be called the Messiah.
 2. Isaiah was a famous writing prophet who lived during the period when Israel and Judah were being invaded by the Assyrians.
 3. The Book of Isaiah has many prophecies that were fulfilled in the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Core Learning Activity (20 minutes)

It Was Foretold

Objective: To discover some Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ.

1. **Post** the following Scripture verses so the students can see them:
 - Isaiah 7:14
 - Isaiah 50:4–9
 - Isaiah 52:13–53:12
 - Isaiah 61:1–2
 - Matthew 12:15–21
 - Matthew 26:31
 - Mark 1:1–3
 - Luke 4:18–21
 - John 19:23–24
 - John 19:31–37
2. **Arrange** the students into small groups of three or four. Distribute the Bibles. Tell the students that some of the posted Scripture passages are from the Book of Isaiah. The other passages are from the Gospels, which are quoting Old Testament prophets.
3. **Direct** the groups to look up the posted Scripture passages and to read them together. If the verse is from Isaiah, they should discuss how it relates to Jesus’ life. If it is from a New Testament Gospel, they should discuss why the Gospel author applied this quote from an Old Testament prophet to Jesus. They should take notes on each passage. After they have discussed all the passages, they are to decide which passage provides the most convincing evidence for them that Jesus is the Messiah foretold by Isaiah and other Old Testament prophets.

4. **Ask** each group to share the passage they chose and explain why they chose it. Conclude by reading Luke 24:44–47, in which Jesus explains how the prophecies of the Old Testament had come true in his life. Make the point that through these amazing prophecies, God was preparing his Chosen People for the coming of Jesus Christ. These prophecies helped them better understand Jesus' saving mission and purpose.

Optional Activity: "God's Truth Is Sweet" (10 minutes), page 248



Comprehension Checkpoint (5 minutes)

1. **Distribute** the handout "Chapter 4 Quiz," and allow the students time to complete it.
2. **Collect** the quizzes for grading.



Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Close with a prayer, choosing from among the prayer suggestions on page 232.

Optional Activities

DAY 1

Materials Needed

- poster board, one sheet for each small group of three or four
- sets of markers, one for each small group of three or four

Schoolhouse Prophet (20 minutes)

Objective: To enable the students to identify with the role of the prophet.

1. **Explain** in these or similar words:
 - The word *prophet* comes from a word that means “a mouthpiece” for God! God uses the mind and the mouth of the prophet to speak what God wants his people to hear—and often these messages are things that many people do not really want to hear. God speaks powerfully through young people as he calls them to be his prophets too. Let’s see if you’re willing to be a prophet!
2. **Arrange** the students into small groups of three or four. Give each group a sheet of poster board and a set of markers.
3. **Instruct** the students to imagine that they are a group of prophets evaluating some aspect of their world—maybe their schools, their towns, their churches, or the country as a whole. They are to see their world through God’s eyes and allow God to speak through them with words of challenge, mercy, and love. On their posters, they are to write down three things:
 - **A problem they see.** This problem should be something happening that is not in keeping with the will or the Law of God.
 - **God’s response to the problem.** What do they imagine God would say to people about how they need to change to address the problem?
 - **God’s promise for obedience.** What good would happen if people changed their ways in response to God’s command?
4. **Conclude** by asking the groups to share their prophetic statements. If there are injustices that you, as their teacher, are able to bring to the attention of administrators for positive change, then do it! The students will truly appreciate the value in the prophetic voice.

DAY 2**The Lord Says . . . (20 minutes)**

Objective: To help the students identify and exercise their own roles as prophets in their communities, families, classrooms, and schools.

1. **Ask** the students if there has ever been a time in their lives when they saw someone doing something wrong to another person and thought, “That’s wrong!” Or maybe it was the way someone was treating an animal or even the environment.
2. **Invite** the students to consider the various ways they have done wrong to others and would be rightfully condemned by a prophet who was watching.
3. **Arrange** the students into pairs. Instruct them to brainstorm the things in families, school, friendships, and maybe even in their church or community that are wrong. The students are to play the role of the prophet and write a prophetic condemnation of one wrong they identified. They can follow the example from the Book of Amos found on page 267 in the student book.
4. **Tell** the students that it is easy to condemn and that the prophets also brought hope. So their message should end with hope-filled words giving God’s promise never to abandon his people if they turn from their wicked ways.
5. **Direct** the students to present their messages to the class.



Assessment Opportunity: Create a rubric to assess the presentations for credit or grading.

DAY 3**Materials Needed**

- index cards, three for each student

Prophetic Encouragement (15 minutes)

Objective: To participate in the prophetic work of offering words of consolation and encouragement to those who need them.

1. **Ask** the students to read “Living the Gospel” on page 270 in the student book. Remind them that prophets didn’t speak just doom and gloom but also offered hope and reassurance to God’s people about God’s faithfulness and love amid their suffering.
2. **Explain** in these or similar words:
 - Prophets speak the words of God—and not just warnings but also words of help, hope, and reassurance. God also calls us to speak his words to others in need. Everywhere we look—globally, nationally, locally, and even at this school and in your families—there are people who need words of hope and encouragement. Today, we are going to think about someone we know who is in need of these words.
3. **Distribute** three index cards to each student, and ask the students to think about two or three people they know who could really use some words of encouragement today. They may write to friends, family, school personnel, or others. The people do not need to be close friends. On their index cards, the students are to write encouraging messages to the people they have thought of.
4. **Set** the tone for thoughtful reflection, and encourage the students to speak from the heart to those they love.
5. **Collect** the cards at the end of the class period for review if you wish, and then return them when finished. Encourage the students to deliver their messages to the people in need of God’s consolation.

DAY 4

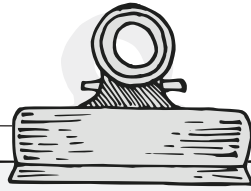
God's Truth Is Sweet (10 minutes)

Objective: To allow the students an opportunity to be the prophetic voice of truth at school.

Materials Needed

- sticky notes, three for each student
- wrapped candies, three pieces for each student

1. **Distribute** three sticky notes to each student. Direct the students to write a short piece of prophetic wisdom—words of warning, encouragement, or blessing—on each note.
2. **Give** each student three pieces of wrapped candy. Encourage them to randomly deliver each prophetic note with a piece of candy to other students, teachers, and staff.
3. **Conclude** the activity by having the students write about, or share aloud, their experiences of sharing the wisdom and candy.



Chapter Project

Life-Size Prophets (20 minutes)

Materials Needed

- large sheets of newsprint (6 feet long), one for each individual or small group of three or four
- sets of markers, one for each individual or small group of three or four
- internet access (*optional*)

Objective: To encourage the students to integrate the words of a particular prophet with a visual representation of that same prophet, thus making the message of that prophet more visually accessible.

1. **Ask** the students to choose (or you may assign) a biblical prophet to draw life-size on a 6-foot piece of newsprint. The figure of the prophet should fill the entire paper. Help the students decide whether they would like to work alone or in a small group. Explain that the goal is to create a wall of prophets.
2. **Arrange** small groups of three or four students for those who do not want to work individually.
3. **Remind** the students to look in the prophet's biblical book to find inspiring verses to write in word bubbles coming from the prophet's mouth.
4. **Distribute** the newsprint and sets of markers.
5. **Decorate** the walls, hallways, and even ceilings with these life-size prophets!



Digital Option: Encourage the students to look online for artistic inspiration before they begin drawing.

Name _____

Chapter 4 Reading Guide

Introduction and The Non-Writing Prophets

Match each person in the word bank with the correct description.

- _____ 1. The prophet who was taken into Heaven in a chariot of fire.
- _____ 2. He is considered the first prophet.
- _____ 3. This prophet's miracles are similar to Jesus' miracles.
- _____ 4. The king of Israel (the northern kingdom), one of the worst kings in the Bible.
- _____ 5. A false god worshipped by the Israelite king.

- a. Moses
b. Baal
c. Elijah
d. Elisha
e. Ahab

The Classical Prophets (first five paragraphs)

Complete the sentences.

1. In the Old Testament, the _____ and actions of sixteen _____ are recorded in sixteen books named after them.
2. _____ was the first of the classical prophets.
3. Amos was a _____ and a tree _____ .
4. God considered the sins of Israel even worse than the sins of other nations, because they had the _____ of their _____ with him.
5. Amos's words were mostly words of _____ and _____ .

The Classical Prophets (sixth paragraph to the end)

Complete the sentences.

1. _____ lived about two hundred years after Amos.
2. Ezekiel did all his prophesying from a _____ .
3. God had Ezekiel perform _____ to get his point across that the end of the kingdom was coming.



Chapter 4 Reading Guide

4. The last third of the Book of Ezekiel contains many _____ prophecies that God would _____ his people.
5. In another famous prophecy, Ezekiel saw _____ come back to life.

The Hope for a Messiah

Complete the sentences.

1. Prophets reminded the people to show their faith in God by following the _____ and the _____.
2. The most important way the prophets prepared the people for the coming of Christ was by telling them that God would send a _____, or the _____.
3. *Messiah* is a Hebrew word that means “_____.”
4. The prophet Isaiah lived during the period when the Assyrians were invading _____ and _____.
5. The Book of Isaiah offered many prophecies that were fulfilled in the _____, _____, and _____ of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.



Popular Bible Stories

The following are some popular Bible stories that can be easily acted out or used for Bible charades or Bible Pictionary. The handout can be used as is, or you can cut it apart and hand out each story individually.



The snake convinces Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1–7).	Noah loads the animals onto the ark (Genesis 7:1–9).
Moses parts the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21–25).	Joshua leads the Israelites around Jericho, and the city walls collapse (Joshua 6:1–20).
Samson topples the pillars of the house (Judges 16:23–31).	Ezekiel prophesies about dry bones coming to life (Ezekiel, chapter 37).
Daniel is put in a lion's den (Daniel, chapter 6).	Jonah is swallowed by a great fish (Jonah 1:17).
Three Wise Men visit Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:7–12).	Jesus calms the raging storm (Mark 4:35–41).
Jesus feeds five thousand with a few fish and five loaves of bread (Luke 9:10–17).	Jesus raises Lazarus (John, chapter 11).
Jesus drives the moneychangers and animals from the Temple (Matthew 21:12–17).	The women discover the empty tomb (Mark 16:1–8).
Saul (Paul) is blinded by the bright light and hears the voice of Jesus (Acts of the Apostles 9:1–9).	



Name _____

Chapter 4 Quiz

Multiple Choice

Write the letter of the best answer in the space provided before each number.

- _____ 1. In the Old Testament, the words and actions of _____ prophets are recorded in books named after them.
- ten
 - twenty
 - sixteen
- _____ 2. _____ is the first of the prophets.
- Ezekiel
 - Moses
 - David
- _____ 3. Amos's words were mostly _____ and _____ .
- spirit, life
 - condemnation, doom
 - truth, justice
- _____ 4. Ezekiel saw _____ come back to life.
- Jesus
 - a young boy
 - dry bones
- _____ 5. Through the _____ , God prepared the Chosen People for his plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- Apostles
 - prophets
 - evangelists



Fill in the Blank

Read the names in the word bank. Write the letter of the name that completes each sentence in the space provided before each number.

- _____ 6. The Book of _____ offered many prophecies that were fulfilled in the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- _____ 7. In the Book of Isaiah, we read that the _____ would be filled with the Lord's Spirit for his public ministry.
- _____ 8. The prophet _____ was taken up to Heaven in a fiery chariot.
- _____ 9. A follower of Elijah, named _____, was given Elijah's cloak to wear.
- _____ 10. _____ was the prophet who performed many symbolic acts to get God's message across to the people.

- a. Ezekiel
- b. Isaiah
- c. Messiah
- d. Elijah
- e. Elisha



Chapter 4 Answer Keys

Chapter 4 Reading Guide

The Non-Writing Prophets

1. c
2. a
3. d
4. e
5. b

The Classical Prophets (first five paragraphs)

1. words, prophets
2. Amos
3. shepherd, pruner
4. advantage, covenant relationship
5. condemnation, doom

The Classical Prophets (sixth paragraph to the end)

1. Ezekiel
2. foreign country
3. symbolic acts
4. hopeful, rescue
5. dry bones

The Hope for a Messiah

1. Law, covenant
2. savior, Messiah
3. anointed one
4. Israel, Judah
5. life, death, Resurrection

Chapter 4 Quiz

Multiple Choice

1. c
2. b
3. b
4. c
5. b

Fill in the Blank

6. b
7. c
8. d
9. e
10. a



Name _____

Chapters B–4 Test

Multiple Choice

Write the letter of the best answer in the space provided before each number.

- _____ 1. The event that led Pharaoh to release the Jewish people from captivity in Egypt was _____ .
 a. the Exodus
 b. Passover
 c. the Decalogue
- _____ 2. Another name for the Ten Commandments is the _____ .
 a. Decalogue
 b. Pentateuch
 c. Octalogue
- _____ 3. The person who brought down the walls of Jericho to conquer the land of Canaan was _____ .
 a. Joseph
 b. Joshua
 c. Jethro
- _____ 4. _____ tricked Samson into revealing the secret of his strength.
 a. Deborah
 b. Tabitha
 c. Delilah
- _____ 5. Because they wanted to be like other nations, the Israelites demanded a _____ .
 a. king
 b. shepherd
 c. president
- _____ 6. Solomon was known for his _____ .
 a. strength
 b. handsome appearance
 c. wisdom
- _____ 7. The Gentile woman who refused to leave her mother-in-law and went with her back to Israel was _____ .
 a. Judith
 b. Ruth
 c. Deborah



Chapters B–4 Test

- _____ 8. The woman who favored her younger son and helped him win his father's blessing by trickery was _____ .
- Rebecca
 - Judith
 - Esther
- _____ 9. Through the _____ , God prepared the Chosen People for his plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.
- Apostles
 - prophets
 - evangelists
- _____ 10. The prophet _____ was taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot.
- Amos
 - Elijah
 - Jonah

Fill in the Blank

Read the words in the word bank. Write the letter of the word or phrase that completes each sentence in the space provided before each number.

- _____ 11. The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses as a _____ coming from the middle of a bush.
- _____ 12. _____ said that he and his family would choose to serve the Lord.
- _____ 13. Samuel noticed that one of Jesse's sons was missing and asked for _____ to come in from shepherding the flock.
- _____ 14. _____ chopped off the head of Holofernes.
- _____ 15. The prophets prepared God's people for the _____ .

- a. David
b. Judith
c. flame
d. Joshua
e. Messiah



Matching

Match each word in the word bank with its definition.

- _____ 16. Knowing how to live what is true, right, and just.
- _____ 17. The state of a person who is the property of and wholly subject to another person.
- _____ 18. To deliver or expose to an enemy by treachery or disloyalty.
- _____ 19. Hebrew word for “anointed one.”
- _____ 20. To be faithful and consistent in living out your beliefs and moral principles.
- _____ 21. A person from whom one is descended.
- _____ 22. A close relationship or unity with others.
- _____ 23. Coming from another district or nation.
- _____ 24. To dedicate to the service of God.
- _____ 25. A political system in which supreme power or sovereignty is held by a single person.

- a. slavery
- b. ancestor
- c. foreign
- d. betray
- e. monarchy
- f. anoint
- g. wisdom
- h. integrity
- i. solidarity
- j. Messiah



Answer Key: Chapters B–4 Test

Multiple Choice

1. b
2. a
3. b
4. c
5. a
6. c
7. b
8. a
9. b
10. b

Fill in the Blank

11. c
12. d
13. a
14. b
15. e

Matching

16. g
17. a
18. d
19. j
20. h
21. b
22. i
23. c
24. f
25. e

