

Knitting 101

Session One

In today's lesson, teach the class how to cast on and knit. Get them started on the seaman's scarf. For homework, have the group work the first 14" of the scarf pattern. Give them two weeks to work on it before your next class.

Here's the story behind the scarf:

"One hundred years ago, during the Spanish-American War, a wonderful tradition was born. Through the efforts of a concerned citizen and a military chaplain, a program which now involves more than 3,000 knitters and serves more than 13,000 seamen began.

"The Reverend Walter A. A. Gardner, chaplain of the North River Station (located in what is now downtown Manhattan, New York), noted in his annual report of 1898 that a Mrs. E. A. Gardner "conceived the idea of supplying 'our' warship with 'just what they needed'." As a result, "Noble-hearted friends came to her assistance. The New York Herald and the Associated Press took it up, and thousands of (comfort) bags, medical supplies, delicacies, Bible prayer books, testaments, and many cases of literature were sent to our men." The seeds of the current "Christmas-at-Sea Program" were planted, and soon the Seamen's Benefit Society, a ladies' auxiliary of the Seamen's Church Institute of New York and New Jersey, was established. One of the many functions of this auxiliary was to provide knitted pieces to the seafarers who stopped at the Institute.

"By 1941, about 2,000 volunteers, including many from churches of all denominations throughout the United States, provided about 5,000 gift boxes containing handknit sweaters, socks, hats, mittens, and scarves. These gifts were distributed by volunteers of the Seamen's Church Institute to the crews of freighters and tankers who spent Christmas Day at sea. In 1996, about 17,000 garments, including 6,000 scarves were knit by nearly 3,000 volunteer knitters and given to merchant mariners who were at sea on Christmas Day.

The Christmas-at-Sea program provides volunteer knitters with patterns for knitting scarves, watch caps, sweaters, and socks.....Your donations may be sent to: Christmas at Sea, the Seamen's Church Institute, 241 Water Street, New York, NY 10038. For more information call Barbara Clausen at (212) 349-9090, ext. 257."

—From Interweave Knits, Fall 1998

For the Bible study, you can either allow the class to keep knitting while you lead the study, or you can have them put down their needles and look at the text together. This week's Bible Study is on Psalm 139:1–18.

1. Read vss. 1–6

- a. How does the Psalmist seem to feel about being known so completely? Threatened? Glad?

- b. “You hem me in.” Our first reaction is to resist boundaries hemming us in. But consider:
What’s the purpose of a play pen?
When the lights go out and you’re in a pitch dark room, what’s the first thing you grope for? (A wall)

2. Read vss. 7–12

- a. What might be threatening about not going anywhere where God is not? What is assuring?
- b. Our answer comes down to what we think of God. Is God an angry judge or a loving parent? If you primarily think of God as an angry judge, then it is scary to think of not being able to be anywhere that God is not. But if you think of God as a loving parent, then it is comforting.
- c. Vs. 12. It sounds like what John said of Jesus (John 1:5) “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

3. Read vss. 13–18 (Here comes the knitting part!)

- a. Knitting patterns can be very simple or be very intricate. For instance, you’ve seen those Norwegian sweaters. They can have very detailed patterns. But can you imagine knitting a Norwegian? (Ha, ha!)
- b. But God knits us together in our mother’s wombs. People *have* babies, but God *knits* them together. A pregnant mother doesn’t say to herself, “Okay, today I’m going to make a liver.” No, the baby just grows. God is doing the knitting.
- c. We know quite a bit about the gestation process now. Has science added or subtracted to the mystery of life?

Psalm 139:1-18

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.

³ You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.

⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

- ⁷ Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
- ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
- ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
- ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
- ¹³ For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.
- ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶ Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written
all the days that were formed for me,
when none of them as yet existed.
- ¹⁷ How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
- ¹⁸ I try to count them__they are more than the sand;
I come to the end__I am still with you.

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Session Two

Today you will teach the class how to purl. Get them started on the ribbed middle of the scarf. Their homework will be to finish the full length of the scarf. Binding off the scarf will come at the beginning of the next session. Give them two weeks to finish the length of the scarf.

For the Bible study, look at Ephesians 4:11–16. Again, you can either let the class “multi task,” or they can put down their needles and follow along with the Bible Study.

1. Paul is using the image of a body to describe the church. The body has many parts, but it’s one body. *Read vss. 11–13.*

- a. Paul says that we’re being built up in the body “to maturity.” How is a child’s body different than an adult’s body?
- b. “To the...full stature.” Standing up to our full height. When we exclude someone as the church, it’s like we’ve cut off a foot. We can’t stand to our full stature in Christ when we exclude others just because they don’t fit our notion of who is legitimately a part of our faith fellowship.

2. *Read vss. 14–16* (Here comes the knitting part!)

- a. Look at the stitches in your work! It takes *all* of them to make a scarf! If you drop just one stitch, it affects the others. You develop a run, and pretty soon your work is in shambles. To lose just one stitch weakens the fabric.
- b. According to Paul, what knits us together as a community of faith? (Jesus). So God is at work knitting us individually together when we are born. But God is a master knitter. And God knits together all the children of God together into a fellowship of believers, into the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:11-16

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ¹⁴ We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, **joined and knit together** by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Session Three

Start off by teaching the class how to cast off the stitches of their scarf. Tell them about weaving in the beginning and ending strands.

Then it's time to begin the Classic Dish Rag. It'll be a good review for them to have to cast on the starting four stitches. This week you'll be teaching them the Yarn Over technique. For next week, have the class knit through the increase pattern. Next week you'll lead them through the decrease half of the dishrag. Let them know that, although this pattern tells them to increase to a certain limit, if they like a bigger dishrag, they can just keep adding rows until they find a size they like. *Let them know they don't have to be slaves to the pattern!* Knitting is about creativity, and if they have a better idea about something, they can feel free to design. Designing can be fun, and if they loosen up about strictly following patterns right from the get-go, they'll be more apt to add their own creative edge in the future.

Today's Bible study looks at Isaiah 41:8–10 and I Peter 5:7.

Today we're casting off and casting on. So let's look at some instances when these terms are used in the Bible.

1. First, the word "cast."

- The disciples did what with their nets? (Cast them) So cast basically means what? (To throw)
- The soldiers at the foot of Jesus' cross were going to divide up his clothes among them. How did they do it? (They cast lots)
- When people were going to make an idol, they would cast it out of bronze.

2. Cast can also be used with other words

Cast *out*:

Jesus *cast out* demons

Perfect love *casts out* fear

Cast *up*

When Israel did war against their enemies, they would *cast up* a siege ramp against the town wall.

Cast *down*

Our souls can be *cast down*. What do we mean when we say that?

3. Casting Off

a. Read Is. 41:8–10

- b. When do you "cast off" on your knitting garment. (when you're done with it. And by that time, you're sick and tired of it, and you toss it in a corner!)

- c. God is promising here that God is not finished with us. God isn't going to toss us in a corner and be done with us.

4. Casting On

- a. When do you "cast on" in a knitting project? (When you're ready to start a project)

- b. Read I Peter 5:7

- c. In knitting we cast the yarn onto the needle. When little kids have something, and they want it, but they don't want to hold it, what do they do with it? (They cast it onto mom or dad: "Here, hold this!")

- d. But when we're adults, we don't have another grown up around on whom we can cast things. So on whom can we cast things onto as an adult, our adult problems?

- e. Onto God! We cast them *off* of ourselves, and we cast them *on* God.

- Imagine our anxieties and burdens look like a tangled pile of yarn. We look at the pile and think "it's a hopeless mess! I can't possibly straighten it out!" But God will take on the project. Cast it onto God.

- He who knit us together in our mother's womb,

- Who knits the church together into himself,

- Who knows what he can transform our tangled ball of anxiety into!

Isaiah 41:8_10

But you, Israel, my servant,

Jacob, whom I have chosen,

the offspring of Abraham, my friend;

⁹ you whom I took from the ends of the earth,

and called from its farthest corners,

saying to you, "You are my servant,

I have chosen you and **not cast you off**";

¹⁰ do not fear, for I am with you,

do not be afraid, for I am your God;

I will strengthen you, I will help you,

I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxiety **on** him, because he cares for you.

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Session Four

This week we begin the decrease pattern of the dishrag. The students learn the classic “knit two together” decrease.

For the Bible Study, look at Ecclesiastes 3:1–8.

You have learned quite a bit in these past few weeks! How to cast on, how to knit and purl, how to cast off, how to read a pattern. And along the way, you’ve made some mistakes, haven’t you! Some mistakes you can ignore, but some you can’t. I’ve never made a sweater that doesn’t have a mistake in it. None of them are perfect.

Some mistakes you can live with. But there are other mistakes you can’t ignore. They adversely affect the whole. This week we look at that familiar passage from Ecclesiastes, and I really want to zero in on Verse seven: A time to tear and a time to sew.

When you discover you’ve made a bad mistake in your knitting, this is when it is “time to tear!” There are times you have to tear out your hard work and get to the root of the problem. **Question:** What do you feel when you see a mistake, and you know it’s a bad one?

Question: What feelings do you experience when you have to rip out your work?

This ripping is symbolic of life. Knitting has become a parable for life for me. I’ve discovered great truths in knitting, and this is one of them. There are times when we are making a mistake in our lives. And we might have put a lot of work into our life design. But the problem is systemic, and it must be addressed.

This realization that something is wrong, and that this wrong thing must be addressed is what we call “repentance.” It’s hard work, but here’s the beauty:

- After you take a big gulp and accept that you’re going to have to rip, you can start over. You can go back to the mistake, you can take it out, and you can *start over*. Your new design might not be the same as the old design, but you can *start over*.
- There’s people around for guidance. You don’t have to go through it alone. People have been there, and they can help you in the ripping and correcting process.
- And in learning from your mistakes, from your own painful ripping, you will someday be able to guide someone else through their rough spots.

Eccles. 3:1_8

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

² a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
³ a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
⁴ a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
⁵ a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
⁶ a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
⁷ **a time to tear, and a time to sew;**
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
⁸ a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.