

ROOTS

SUNDAY TOOLKIT



VALUES
PARTNERSHIPS



01

Introduction

The miniseries ROOTS first aired in 1977, and immediately shook the world. As we approach the 40th anniversary of the original series, an amazing cast and crew is joining with HISTORY® to reimagine ROOTS for a new generation – the new ROOTS will air on HISTORY for 4 nights beginning Monday, May 30th, 2016!

This ROOTS Sunday Toolkit will help churches and faith groups around the country preach and teach about the history and identity of the ROOTS series for “ROOTS Sunday,” a nationwide movement on Sunday, May 29th, before ROOTS airs on May 30th.

In this toolkit you will find:

- Background on the 1977 ROOTS and the 2016 ROOTS
- Suggestions for your ROOTS Sunday programming on Sunday, May 29th
- Scripture and message points for ROOTS Sunday
- Photos, links and other resources about ROOTS – including videos and certificates for your congregation



Background on ROOTS (1977)

ROOTS (1977)

When ROOTS aired in 1977, it took the country by storm. Alex Haley's seminal novel, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, was brought to life by LeVar Burton, John Amos, Cicely Tyson, Lou Gossett Jr. and other iconic actors, and was produced by the legendary David Wolper.

ROOTS told the story of Kunta Kinte, an African who is abducted from his village, sold into slavery, and taken to America. Through several generations of American history, the series follows Kunta Kinte and his family's struggle for freedom.

Over 130 million viewers watched over the course of 8 consecutive nights, nearly half of the U.S. population at the time. It was a seminal moment in American history. It was the first time that a television series started a conversation about slavery, race, identity, family, and freedom.

ROOTS (2016)

On May 30, 2016, ROOTS will shock the world again. Will Packer, LeVar Burton and Mark Wolper – the son of original producer David Wolper – have teamed up with an amazing cast and crew – including Laurence Fishburne, Forest Whitaker, Anika Noni Rose, Mario Van Peebles, Thomas Carter and the new Kunta Kinte, Malachi Kirby – to produce a reimagined ROOTS for a new generation of viewers.

The new ROOTS from A+E Studios has benefited from rich new scholarship about life in The Gambia and on American plantations during the 18th and 19th centuries. From musical supervision by Questlove to stunning costume designs by the legendary Ruth Carter, the 2016 ROOTS miniseries will breathe vibrant life into Kunta Kinte, Kizzy, Chicken George and the rest of their family's breathtaking journeys. Viewers will be able to watch the new ROOTS on HISTORY over four consecutive nights beginning Memorial Day, May 30, 2016.



Key Questions to Explore on ROOTS Sunday

On “ROOTS Sunday,” Sunday, May 29, 2016, congregations around the country will preach and teach about history, identity, and ROOTS. Now more than ever, it is critically important for us, especially our young people, to know **where they came from** in order to **shape where we are going**.

Congregations will explore questions including:

- Why is it important to know our ROOTS?
- What do we know about African ROOTS before slavery? What more should we know?
- How does the experience of African Americans in slavery impact the Black community today?
- How did ROOTS impact other communities outside of the African American community?
- Do we know our family trees? Who is our oldest living relative? Who is the most distant relative anyone in our family can still remember?
- How can a better knowledge of our ROOTS shape how we see ourselves today, and how can this knowledge shape our future?



ROOTS Sunday – What YOU Can DO!

On Sunday, May 29th your congregation can take a number of steps to celebrate ROOTS Sunday:

NO. 1

Devote your Sunday School lesson that day to ROOTS and questions of history and identity.

NO. 2

Provide a **“ROOTS Award”** to the eldest member of the congregation, honoring them for their commitment to congregational life.

NO. 3

Play the trailer for the new 2016 ROOTS in Sunday services – see the RESOURCES section for more information.

NO. 4

Participate in the Roots Sunday Student Essay Contest by having students in your congregation write about why their roots are important to them. For details, see page 6 or go to www.rootssunday.com/essay contest. The winning essay will receive \$1,000. Have students from your congregation read their essay before, during or after the service.

NO. 5

Preach and teach on the importance of ROOTS – see scripture below.

NO. 6

Encourage congregation members to host **ROOTS Watch Parties and discussions** all 4 nights of the series, beginning Monday, May 30th on HISTORY.





ROOTS Sunday Essay Contest

The ROOTS Sunday Essay Contest invites all students who attend a Roots Sunday congregation to submit an essay on the topic, “Why my roots are important to me.” A “Roots Sunday” essay will reference an older member of the contestants’ family. The contest challenges contestants to research their family’s roots, and to discover and write about how their history has shaped their own life today.

The contest is open to United States students under the age of 18 and who attend a house of worship that is participating in the Roots Sunday program, a free program tied to the upcoming release of the new imagined miniseries, Roots. A congregation can sign up to participate in Roots Sunday here www.rootssunday.com/signup.

All essays will be published on the Roots Sunday webpage www.rootssunday.com/studentessays, and the top three essays will be awarded a cash prize.

- First place will receive \$1,000.
- Second place will receive \$500.
- Third place will receive \$250.

Topic:

Contestants will write an essay on the topic, “Why my roots are important to me.” Essays must reference an older member of their family (living or deceased) who has shaped the contestant’s life in some way.

Requirements:

- The 2016 contest deadline is Thursday, May 26, 2016. Any essay submitted after the deadline will not be considered for the cash awards, but will be posted on the Roots Sunday webpage and should be read by during a service by their congregation.
- Essays must be the original work of the student.
- Essays can be no more than 1,000 words but must be a minimum of 700 words.
- Your essay must be typed and double-spaced.



Registration and Submission:

- Contestants have the choice of either submitting their essay online (preferred) via email or by mailing their essay.
- All contestants must complete and submit a registration form online with their essay.

If sending my mail,

- Essays must be postmarked by Thursday, May 26, 2016.
- Print out the completed online registration form along with two hard copies of your essay. Your essay must be typed, double-spaced, and printed only on one side of the paper.
- Attach your registration form to only one copy of your essay. Your second copy should contain no personal identification information.

Please mail to:

Roots Sunday Essay Contest
c/o Values Partnerships
725 8th St. SE, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20003



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Resources

Trailer and Video:

Play the ROOTS trailer and other videos in your Sunday service!

Find the ROOTS trailer here: [DOWNLOAD](#)

View and Download The Power of Identity video here: [DOWNLOAD](#)

Find videos with background on ROOTS at: roots.history.com

ROOTS Watch Party Guide

Download a Watch Party guide here! roots.history.com

ROOTS Award Certificate

Request a ROOTS Award certificate for the eldest member of your congregation, signed by LeVar Burton, by emailing:

amy@valuespartnerships.com.





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Scripture and Sermon Points

Message One:

**God Knows Us, and Wants Us to Know the Full Story of Ourselves,
Our History and Our Purpose**

Summary:

Much of the content of ROOTS is based around the question of identity. The people who enslaved Kunta Kinte sought to take his identity away from him – and even his name, calling him, “Toby.”

It was very important for Kunta Kinte to know at a deep level who he truly was – who God made him – and hold on to that knowledge with all his might, even in the face of the horrors of slavery. Kunta had to know what his family, his self, and God said about him – not what the slavers thought of him.

What does God say about us? What does God know about us? And how can the knowledge of that identity shape who we are today?

Scripture Suggestions:

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

--Jeremiah 1:5

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

--John 1:12-13

"For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be."

--Psalm 139:13-16



Message Two:

Family Legacy is Important to God

Summary:

God's faithfulness is demonstrated generation to generation. He doesn't just speak in one generation and leave the remaining generations to piece it together. At the same time, He works through generations. While we are like wisps in the wind, the Lord and His faithfulness is not bound by time or history. The same God who was at work in prior generations is at work today.

However, the Atlantic slave trade separated generations from one another. Families were divided by traffickers in Africa, and by slave auctions in America. Somehow, the resilience of enslaved people – and the power of God – rippled throughout generations, even in the face of unimaginable pain. Learn and remember the ways the Lord worked to set our families free from the bondage of slavery – and the bondage of hatred that ensnared slave-owning families as well.

If you are older, share your story with the generation coming up behind you. Push past their eye roll. Make time for it. Don't be ashamed or sheepish. Instead, stand and speak in the power and mighty name of Christ Jesus who set you free and is continuing to set you free, so that the generations to come may know and trust in God.

Scripture Suggestions:

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."

--Exodus 20:12

"One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts."

--Psalm 145:4

"The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

--Exodus 34:6-7

"We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done."

--Psalm 78:4



Message Three:

Even Though We've Been Through Tough Times, We Are Ordained for Greatness

Summary:

One of the common themes of Scripture is God's unrelenting mission to deliver us from slavery and bondage (both externally and internally) and lead us to freedom. Just like the Israelites, we all have experienced slavery. But that's not where the story begins. The Story begins in the garden. And slavery is not how the Story ends. It ends in glory.

It doesn't mean that it isn't a long story, and it doesn't mean that it is an easy story. But it is a clear story. With God, you are set free, redeemed, and restored to be who God created you to be in the beginning. You are ordained for greatness. He who begins a work in you will be faithful to bring it through to completion.

In the moments that are incomplete. Remember the promise. Have courage. Take hope. With holy defiance, remember Who created you. Remember Who delivers you. Remember Who goes with you. You are not alone on the journey, and the destination is sweet. Don't give up.

Scripture Suggestions:

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

--1 Peter 2:9

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

--Jeremiah 29:11

"4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. 5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

-- Phillipians 4: 4-9

CONTACT

Questions about ROOTS Sunday, ROOTS the series, and how you can engage? Contact Etoy Ridgnal, etoy@valuespartnerships.com!

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