



## - WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THE BUNDLE -

1. **UNRAVELED STUDY JOURNAL** *(A printable study journal for members to explore these stories individually or together in small groups)*
2. **SERMON PLANNING GUIDE** *(Offering insights, inspiration, and theme connections for each of the scripture texts in the series)*
3. **UNRAVELED WORDS FOR WORSHIP** *(Plug-in written liturgy inspired by the theme and each story in the series)*
4. **UNRAVELED ART CURRICULUM** *(To guide you in creating a simple art installation to bring the theme to life)*
5. **12 NEW VISUALS WITH ARTIST STATEMENTS** *(Illuminating each scripture in the series)*
6. **UNRAVELED BRANDING BUNDLE** *(Logo files and graphic templates to help you share this theme on and offline)*

## - ABOUT THE LOGO -

The logo is meant to image the feeling one might have when things fall apart. For me, the word “unraveled” holds a lot of anxious, exhausted energy. It reminds me of someone trying desperately to hold everything together on their own while threads begin to wear and break. The stitches zigzag while the thread frenetically takes the shape of each letter. As the word comes to an end, the thread begins to unravel, losing its tightly woven, bound shape.

—LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN, DIRECTOR OF BRANDING

## ≡ ABOUT THE THEME ≡

What happens when our world falls apart? How do we press onward when our tightly-knit plans unravel into loose threads? What do we become when our identity—or the path we’re on—comes undone? What if all of this is not the end we fear it will be?

In our unraveling, sometimes life surprises us with unexpected joy, love, and hope—with a new beginning we couldn’t have imagined. Sometimes we need God to unravel us, for we long to be changed. This worship series explores 12 stories of unraveled shame, identity, fear, grief, dreams, and expectations. These are stories where God meets us in the spiraling, unraveling our plans—and us—into something new.

We invite you to customize this series and make it your own, structuring the stories in the order and duration that works best for your context. Use this series throughout the summer, fall, or anytime during the liturgical year.

## - FOCAL SCRIPTURES -

1. **GENESIS 18: 1-15; 21:1-7** || **Sarah Laughs** *(Unexpected Joy and Surprise)*
2. **MATTHEW 14: 22-33** || **Peter Sinks in the Water** *(Unraveled by Uncertainty)*
3. **2 SAMUEL 3:7; 21:1-14** || **Rizpah Mourns Her Sons** *(Public Grief That Inspires Action)*
4. **LUKE 19: 1-10** || **Zacchaeus the Wealthy Tax Collector** *(Radical Unraveling of Vocation)*
5. **EXODUS 7: 8-23** || **Pharaoh Hardens His Heart to Moses’ Requests** *(When Humans Unravel God’s Plans for Justice)*
6. **ACTS 9: 1-20** || **The Conversion of Saul to Paul** *(Discovering a New Path)*
7. **JEREMIAH 29:1-7** || **Encouraging the Israelites in Exile to Plant Gardens & Build Houses** *(When Dreams Unravel)*
8. **JOHN 4:1-29** || **The Samaritan Woman at the Well** *(Unraveled Shame)*
9. **JOHN 20:19-29** || **Doubting Thomas** *(When the Unimaginable Has Happened)*
10. **EXODUS 1:22, 2:1-10** || **Moses’ Mother Gives Moses Up So He Can Live** *(When Our Plans for Our Children Unravel)*
11. **JOB 28:12-28** || **Job’s Lament and Loss** *(Seeking Understanding When Everything Has Fallen Apart)*
12. **MARK 5:1-20** || **Jesus Heals Legion, a Man Possessed by Demons** *(The Unraveling of the Mind)*



## THEME REFLECTIONS FROM THE SANCTIFIED ART TEAM

Unraveling is not always the end we fear it will be. When the worst has happened, when death or tragedy has undone us and the vision we had for our lives tears apart, we come to an end, but it is not *the* end. Our story continues. Sometimes unraveling becomes an opportunity—to untangle ourselves from broken patterns or toxic situations, or to become unwound from a path or identity that no longer serves us. One of my favorite stories in this series is Saul’s conversion to Paul. A blinded Saul must stumble into the heart of an unknown city to humble himself before Ananias, a stranger and enemy. Paul was on a path to persecute Ananias, and yet, in his unraveling, he becomes dependent on him for his healing. Coming close, Ananias places his hands on Saul’s eyes. Scales fall as Saul sheds his old life to see the world anew as Paul. In this moment of vulnerable connection, God transforms them both, weaving them together like brothers. In our unraveling, God knits us together with others, sometimes with those we least expect.

—LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

I most identify with ‘unraveled’ as a state of being. ‘Unraveled’ suggests that at one point the subject was together or whole, but now is undone. As someone who likes to have things together and to maintain control, ‘unraveled’ feels like a negative word. I connect it to feelings of anxiety, confusion, exhaustion, and fear. If I’m honest with myself, however, I think the notion that I’ve ever really had anything truly together, much less myself, is an illusion. When I frame things this way, then being unraveled, or coming undone, could be a practice in trust and a much needed release. It’s possible that when we are unraveled, we recognize our own humanity and utter dependence on God, the great Sewist. Sometimes we are wound too tightly, bound by our preconceived notions and narrow ideas, and we need to be undone in order to be woven back together into the shape we were created to take.

—LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

Each day, I become more aware of how tightly interwoven our lives are with the people with whom we overlap. Whether in person or online, we are dependent and interdependent on the health, wellness, kindness, joy, stability, self-confidence, and selflessness of those around us. I have recently curtailed the amount of news and social media with which I allow myself to interact. The constant feed of news and opinion often leans to the negative. For-profit information machines know that the ‘can you believe this?’ factor is paramount to surviving the pace of trending stories and viral videos. Negativity catches people’s attention more quickly. But, negativity is what tears us apart. I am excited to explore this Unraveled theme because it feels so closely tied to the disconnect I see between the world of hate and anger that is portrayed online, and the hundreds of kind, generous, and joyful people that I meet on a daily basis, people who regularly overcome adversity with an insatiable wealth of positivity. The sense of fabric and weaving, the tangible idea of strings overlapping one another, draw me into the strength depicted in the biblical texts for this bundle. I cannot wait to dive in and see how these ideas resonate.

—HANNAH GARRITY

We don’t have to dig deep to think of moments when our life hasn’t gone as planned. One day we’re moving through the world with hopes and dreams on our sleeves. The next, we’re laughing out loud, or are lost in a wave of grief, for the way life has unfolded around us. Knowing the messy reality of this truth, my hope is that this theme will create space for people to explore the holy and surprising ways God moves in and around us in those moments—weaving together the loose ends of grief, isolation, or loss in our life, while also unraveling prejudice, injustice, and suffering. Things don’t always go as planned—sometimes that’s good, and sometimes that’s painful. Either way, the Holy Spirit is always working to hem us in before and behind, and that is worth paying attention to.

—SARAH ARE



## IDEAS FOR WORSHIP & PROGRAMMING

- Use our art curriculum to create an art installation to bring the *Unraveled* theme to life throughout the series.
- Use our study journal to form small groups to study these stories together. If you follow this series over the summer, encourage members to take their study journals with them during summer travels. Consider forming a group on Facebook for members to discuss the stories online.
- For worship, engage the Jewish tradition of Midrash, crafting first-person narratives for each story in the series. Select a character from each scripture and imagine their experience of unraveling, telling the story through their perspective. Share these “Unraveling Stories” as part of the sermon or Time with Children in worship.
- Form a study group using Kate Bowler’s Book, [Everything Happens for a Reason \(and Other Lies I’ve Loved\)](#), to discern how we make sense of what happens to us.

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## IDEAS FOR MUSIC

- “**COME AND FIND THE QUIET CENTER,**” Shirley Erena Murray, 2003.
  - Note verse 3: “In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other’s pain, let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain . . .”
- “**BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS,**” John Fawcett, 1782.
- “**WEAVE,**” Rosemary Crow, 1979.
- “**COME TO ME, O WEARY TRAVELER,**” Sylvia G. Dunstan, 1993.
- “**O, LORD, HEAR MY PRAYER,**” Taizé Community, 1982.