



Shuri's Journey in the Ancestral Plane

Purpose:

To use John 3:17-21 in comparison with Shuri's journey to the Ancestral Plane to talk about the importance of Faith in keeping us on the path God has laid out for us, for both this life and the next.

Scriptural Example:

John 3:17-21

- Jesus discusses with Nicodemus who those who believe are saved and those who do not are condemned.

Supplies:

- + Television or Computer to show the movie on
- + Projector and speakers (if using a computer to watch)
- + Copy of *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*

Note: if you have younger viewers, make sure you get signed permission from parents. This film has a PG-13 rating.

Procedure:

1. Watch the clip where Shuri takes the Heart-Shaped Herb and goes into the Ancestral Plane, meeting Killmonger there before she wakes back up in the physical world.
2. Ask participants if what happened is what they expected. Then ask why or why not.
3. Either read or have someone else read through John 3:17-21.



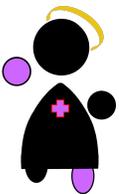


4. Pause for a discussion on the passage. If helpful, point out that this follows John 3:16, one of the most famous verses in Scripture.
5. After or during discussion, point out that Shuri has not been a believer throughout the film. Her focus has been on the science. Killmonger even points this out. Point out the connection with Shuri's disbelief and what we see in the passage from John.
6. Also point out that, as Killmonger has also noted, Shuri has come into the Ancestral Plane "the wrong way", that is with the wrong intentions.
7. At this point in the session, you can break down the scene as follows (time permitting of course. You can also break this lesson up into multiple sessions):

- i. **Shuri finds Killmonger in the Palace.**

Point out that when we've seen the Ancestral Plane before, it has been like the wide-open fields of Wakanda with all the Black Panthers gathered around a tree. We also saw a part of the Ancestral Plane that was cut off from the rest where Killmonger saw the spirit of his father.

Compare what Killmonger has done to having someone cut themselves off from the rest of Heaven. This connects with the passage from John. It also connects to C.S. Lewis' vision of Heaven and Hell in *The Great Divorce*. If you have a group that





has read/discussed this book, please feel free to bring it up here.

Point out that Shuri thinks Killmonger is her brother at first from behind. This is because she expects this is what the Plane would look like. Remind participants that God doesn't often appear as we would expect. We see this in Elijah's encounter with God in the "sound of sheer silence" in 1 Kings 19:12. We also see it in Jesus' description of the lilies as arrayed more finely than even Solomon in his glory, as he states in Matthew 6:28-29.

ii. **Shuri doesn't believe.**

As mentioned before, Shuri doesn't believe the faith of Wakanda. She believes in reason and in science. She did not expect to be here thus she does not know the way.

In John 14:6, Jesus tells us, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Time permitting, you can mention the verses before this session's passage from John, mainly John 3:14 where Jesus compares himself to the Bronze Serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness. This serpent was meant to be looked at by those who suffered venomous snake bites. Those who gazed on it were healed. Jesus provides healing for our souls, and His being lifted up points the way for others to follow him.





Continue by telling participants that without the knowledge needed, Shuri cannot navigate her path in the Ancestral Plane. So too, we need God to guide us.

iii. **Shuri is there for the wrong reasons.**

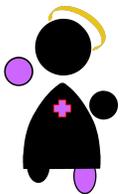
Shuri comes to the Ancestral Plane on accident. She was looking for the power of the Black Panther so that she can defeat Namor and get revenge.

Jesus calls us to a different path, one of Love (John 13:34) and Forgiveness (ex. Matthew 5:38-40). We are not called to seek vengeance on others, just as Jesus didn't.

Shuri, by coming for the wrong reasons, finds the wrong path.

This leads to Killmonger instead

8. Point out to participants, in this session or the next, that Killmonger acts like the serpent in Genesis. He is tempting Shuri to follow a darker path. Like Shuri, we have this choice too. We can choose to follow Jesus, though the path is sometimes harder, or we can choose to let anger and vengeance consume us.
9. Finally, you can point out Shuri's fear at the end of the scene. You can even compare this to the fear Yoda warns against in *Empire Strikes Back*. If needed, you can give participants hope that Shuri will choose the right path eventually. It does take time, just as it often takes time for us.





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Lesson Plan Written by The Rev. Trey Kennedy

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