

LESSON 46

New Believers

ACTS 2:42-47



BIBLE TRUTH

THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL IS EFFECTIVE TO
SAVE AND CHANGE SINFUL HEARTS

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Acts 2:36–47 from the Scriptures or read story 124, “New Believers,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

Cut to the Heart

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ red and white construction paper
- ✓ scissors
- ✓ glue and tape

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

Transformed by the Gospel

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ pretzels
- ✓ apple juice (enough for your class)
- ✓ cups
- ✓ napkins

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 46—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

LESSON SNAPSHOT

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 10 MIN

The Early Church Backwards

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ two actors
- ✓ a wallet
- ✓ twelve one-dollar bills
- ✓ a bag of apples
- ✓ two pens
- ✓ an obviously used newspaper

TOTAL 80 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

The Spirit is a gift for all generations—Peter’s audience was undone by the message of the gospel. They asked Peter, “What shall we do?” Peter told them to repent of their sins. He told them that the promised Holy Spirit was for them too. Peter continued by explaining that the promise now extended to them, their children, and “all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:39). We fall into the category of all who are far off. What a blessing to know that we too can be transformed and receive the Holy Spirit just as these early believers did.

The gospel reaps a harvest—Jesus told the disciples that they would do greater things than he did (John 14:12). When we read these words, our minds may first think about more incredible miracles. What Jesus meant, however, is that after he ascended, the Holy Spirit would work through the disciples to gather in the greater harvest. Jesus preached to the multitude, but never saw 3,000 converts! In fact, after all the miracles of Jesus, there were only about 120 believers who waited in the upper room for the promised Holy Spirit. Peter preached the gospel and 3,000 believed in just one day.

The gospel brings change—The 3,000 converts were added to the initial 120 believers, and together they were the first local church. Immediately we see the fruit of the Spirit at work in their lives. They willingly shared what they had, regularly praised God, were devoted to the preached word by the apostles, and continued to add more and more people to their number.

Where Is the Gospel?

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

The behavior of the very first converts in the book of Acts shows us the fruit of the gospel through the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. These people were transformed from being mockers of Christ. In fact, some of them were probably in the crowd who had demanded that Jesus be crucified. Yet now, we see them selling their possessions to share with other Christians who had need. Peter, affected by this first dramatic gospel transformation, went on to exhort all new believers to reject their sinful past and live holy, upright lives (see 1 Peter 1:14–15).

The gospel takes someone's worldly self-focus and turns their heart heavenward. The first converts went from hating Jesus to loving him. They served others and worshiped God through Christ. Only the Spirit of God can change hearts this way. The gospel continued to transform lives as more new converts were added each day.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW **5 MIN**

Use last week's lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY **10 MIN**

Read Acts 2:36–47 from the Scriptures or read story 124, "New Believers," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 **10 MIN**

Cut to the Heart

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ red and white construction paper

- ✓ scissors
- ✓ glue and tape

After Peter’s sermon, his hearers were cut to the heart and asked what they should do. Use the following exercise as an object lesson to show how the Spirit of God is the one who actually anointed Peter’s words and brought conviction to the people.

To prepare for class cut out two identical red construction paper hearts. Cut out from white paper the initials “H” and “S” (to stand for Holy Spirit) to fit on one of the hearts. Tape or glue them into place. Take the second heart and cut it in half straight down the middle leaving two identical pieces. Lay the two halves on top of the first heart to cover it and place strips of tape on both outer curved sides. The tape strips will act like hinges. The idea is that the second heart covers the first and acts like a door that can be opened to reveal the initials inside.

In class, ask the children to tell you all the Holy Spirit did in the beginning of Acts. They will likely tell you about the fiery tongues but not mention the change in the people. Often people look at the response of the new believers in Acts 2:42–47 and use it to exhort other Christians to behave similarly. Although we do want to follow their example, it is important to know that their behavior was fueled by the Holy Spirit’s cutting of their hearts (Acts 2:37).

Open the heart to reveal the Holy Spirit’s initials and tell the class that the greatest miracle of Pentecost was not the appearance of the fiery tongues but the Holy Spirit’s work on the hearts of people from every tribe and nation, bringing salvation and changed lives.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION **10 MIN**

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESSON 2 **15 MIN**

Transformed by the Gospel

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ pretzels
- ✓ apple juice (enough for your class)
- ✓ cups
- ✓ napkins

Divide the class into four teams. Give the first team the apple juice; the second team, the napkins and pretzels; the third, the cups; and the fourth, nothing.

Read today's Bible story about how the people in the early church were transformed by the gospel and how they shared all they had with one another. Ask the kids if they have everything they need for snack. Then ask the teams how they can share what they have been given in a way that will bless the whole class. Allow the class to share what they have so everyone has a snack.

Talk to the class about how this passage should affect our lives. We are not simply to indiscriminately give away all we have, but to actively look for those in need so we can share what we have. We have a tendency to give only when we are asked. It's better to look for opportunities to give.

Talk about how the power of the gospel changed the early Christians.

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Color a Picture

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 46—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- **Why were the people so happy?**
(The people were filled with joy because they finally believed in Jesus and realized their sins were forgiven.)
- **What did the people do for each other?**
(They shared their things, prayed, and worshiped the Lord together.)
- **Was anything more important than Jesus and the church to them?**
(No, in the early days of their new life in Christ, nothing was more important than Jesus and his church.)

CLOSING PRAYER **5 MIN**

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON **10 MIN**

The Early Church Backwards

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ two actors
- ✓ a wallet
- ✓ twelve one-dollar bills
- ✓ a bag of apples
- ✓ two pens
- ✓ an obviously used newspaper

This short skit is meant to demonstrate that we don't become Christians in order to get others to share with us. Perform the skit and then talk to the children about how Ed's behavior is different from that of the early Christians.

SET UP: Christian has a wallet with ten one-dollar bills, a bag of apples, and two pens in his shirt pocket. Ed has two one-dollar bills and an obviously used newspaper that he has already read.

CHRISTIAN: Hey Ed, how're you doing? Have you thought about what I said?

ED: Hi Christian. I've given it a lot of thought. I read the Bible—well, not all of it, but Peter's speech to the first believers really affected me. I didn't realize Jesus had so much to offer.

CHRISTIAN: Wow Ed, you are a Christian now?

ED: Yup, I was affected by what I read. Those early Christians shared everything—that's amazing!

CHRISTIAN: It is amazing, Ed. Perhaps we could...

ED: *(interrupting)* What do you have in the bag? *(He grabs the bag from Christian, sees the apples, takes one out, and starts to eat it. Then he looks at Christian.)* Thanks.

CHRISTIAN: *(looking confused)* Apples....Sure, you can have one.

ED: *(grabbing one of Christian's pens)* Hey, I need a pen. I'm going to fill out a job application downtown. Glad I ran into a Christian!

CHRISTIAN: Say, Ed, I was going to say that it might be nice if you could come...

ED: *(interrupting again)* How much do you have on you?

CHRISTIAN: How much what?

ED: Money, of course.

CHRISTIAN: *(pulling out his wallet, taking out the dollar bills, and counting them)* I have ten dollars. Why?

ED: Here, let me see that. *(He grabs Christian's ten dollars and brings out two of his own and counts and thinks out loud.)* Let me see, your ten plus my two is twelve. Divide twelve by two is six. Great! Here is your six back. I'm so glad I met you now. I forgot all about my application till just a moment ago. I didn't have a pen or enough cab fare and certainly no time for lunch. This Christianity stuff is going to work out just fine. I guess I'll see you later.

CHRISTIAN: *(stunned)* See ya.

ED: *(looking at his paper)* Oh, how silly of me. I already read this. Here, you take it. *(He hands the paper to Christian.)* You know, share and share alike. *(Exits.)*

Ask the class what is backwards about the skit. (Christians are supposed to help others by sharing what they have, not help themselves to what others have.)

How were the new converts in the early church different? (They were sharing their things with those in need, not taking what they needed or wanted.)

