

LESSON 37

The Crucifixion & the Criminals

LUKE 23:42-43



BIBLE TRUTH

GOD'S FORGIVENESS IS AVAILABLE EVEN TO THE WORST SINNERS

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

SUPPLIES: whiteboard and dry-erase markers and eraser; puppet (optional)

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

SUPPLIES: *The Gospel Story Bible* (story 115)

3. BIBLE STORY DISCUSSION 5 MIN

Where Is the Gospel?

SUPPLIES: Bible (ESV preferred); Review “Where Is the Gospel?” to prepare

4. SNACK QUESTIONS 10 MIN

SUPPLIES: snack food and beverage

5. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5–10 MIN

6. ACTIVITIES AND OBJECT LESSONS (CHOOSE ONE OR MORE) 20–30 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES: coloring page for NT Lesson 37—one for each child; markers or crayons

People Like Me

SUPPLIES: felt board including characters to depict the the robbers and the soldiers; extra felt scraps to use as clothes; straws (one per student), one cut shorter than the rest

Share your Testimony

7. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

TOTAL 60–75 MIN

THE LESSON

OPENING ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

In today's lesson the children will learn about the men crucified with Jesus.

For this opening activity you will need a whiteboard and dry-erase marker and eraser. Use a puppet or substitute a helper for the puppet.

When the class starts draw three identical crosses on the board. Ask the children to help you count the crosses. (One-two-three)

TEACHER: Does anyone know why there are three crosses here?

PUPPET: (*jumping in with silly answers*) You like the number three.

TEACHER: Class, can you help Puppet out? Does anyone remember what has been happening to Jesus in the Bible stories we have been reading?

PUPPET: (*If the children don't guess correctly*) I remember. Jesus died on a cross. I'll bet the three crosses have to do with that!

TEACHER: Good job, puppet. In today's lesson we are going to learn that when Jesus died on the cross two robbers died on crosses with him.

PUPPET: What did the robbers do wrong?

TEACHER: Class, can you help Puppet out? Does anyone know what a robber does to get his name? (*Draw the class out and give them clues.*)

PUPPET: I had a friend once named Robert. We called him Rob. Is that the same thing?

TEACHER: No, Puppet. The men who were crucified on crosses with Jesus were called robbers because they robbed people; they were thieves who stole from others.

PUPPET: Did the robbers know who Jesus was and that he could save them from their sin?

TEACHER: Well, Puppet, that is a great question. How about if we read our Bible story and you pay close attention to see if it gives us the answer to that question.

Pray for the remainder of the class time before moving forward with the lesson.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read story 115, "The Crucifixion & the Criminals," from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

BIBLE STORY DISCUSSION **5 MIN**

After reading the story, use the following questions to involve the children in a discussion:

- **Did the two robbers know who Jesus was?**
(Yes, they did. But only one of the robbers believed Jesus could save him.)

- **What were the other people saying to Jesus on the cross?**
(The rulers and soldiers scoffed and mocked him. Explain to the children that mocking means to make fun of someone. Explain that it would be very cruel to mock someone who was in terrible pain.)

- **What did Jesus say about the people who crucified him?**
(Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.")

- **What was it that the people didn't know?**
(They didn't know that he was God the Son, dying for their sin on the cross. Even in Jesus' death he was thinking of others.)

Where Is the Gospel?

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

Along with the unrepentant thief, the chief priests, and teachers of the law, Mark tells us that even those people passing by joined in the mocking of Jesus. They challenged Jesus to save himself and came down from the cross. They repeated Jesus' claim to rebuild the temple in three days and jeered.

Jesus would in three days rebuild the temple—the temple of his body. Three days after his death, Jesus would rise again. The mockers called out for Jesus to save himself. Little did they realize that if Jesus had listened to their mocking, no one would be saved. But by dying on the cross, Jesus made it possible for even the mockers to be saved.

SNACK QUESTIONS **10 MIN**

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

- **What was the difference between the two robbers?**
(One of the robbers joined in the mocking and one did not.)

- **What did the robber with the changed heart do about the mocking?**
(The robber with the changed heart defended Jesus and told the mocking robber that Jesus did not do anything wrong and that they should fear God because they were sinners.)

- **How are we like the robbers?**
(We are all sinners, just like the robbers. If we trust in Jesus and turn from our sin, we are like the robber who repented. If we continue in our sin and do not trust Jesus, we are like the robber who mocked Jesus. But the robbers were both sinners guilty of death. One went to heaven; the other died in his sin.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY **5-10 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.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECT LESSONS **20-30 MIN**

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 37—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

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

- **What did the robber who was sorry for what he had done ask Jesus to do for him?**
(He asked Jesus to remember him in heaven.)

- **What did Jesus tell him?**
(Jesus told the robber, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” Jesus forgave the robber his sin and promised him heaven. The robber trusted and put his faith in

Jesus. The robber did not understand all that was taking place—Jesus dying for his sins—but he did understand that he was a sinner deserving of punishment and that sinless Jesus was the Messiah.)

■ **How can we follow the robber's example?**

(We can believe that Jesus is the Savior and call out to him to change our hearts just like he changed the heart of the robber.)

People Like Me

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ felt board including characters to depict the the robbers and the soldiers
- ✓ extra felt scraps to use as clothes
- ✓ straws (one per student), one cut shorter than the rest

This is a great story to tell using the felt board because there are so many interesting characters.

As you tell the story ask the children how we are like the different characters in the story.

Pretend the children are soldiers and you are the lead soldier casting lots for Jesus' extra clothing (represented by the felt scraps). Tell the children that the one who picks the short straw is the winner. Hide the straw ends in your hand and allow each child to pick a straw. Give a scrap of felt to the child who picks the shorter straw.

Then talk about the soldiers and others who did not believe Jesus was the Savior. The idea is to try to help the class see that we sin like each of the characters in the story. Ask about the repentant robber last. Then share the gospel and how that sinner could be saved. The Bible tells us the way to eternal life is narrow and few find it, but the way to destruction is wide and many find it (Matthew 7:13).

Share Your Testimony

Whether you were a flagrant sinner or grew up in a Christian home, we all started like the mocking robber and it took saving grace for us to repent like the other thief on the cross.

Use these two robbers in your testimony, saying something like, "Once I was like the unrepentant thief...but then God touched my heart and gave me faith to

believe like the repentant thief.” Your helpers might want to share their testimonies using the same format. Note: when sharing your testimony, be careful to avoid details that would not be appropriate for young children.

Help the children understand that they can ask God to change their hearts as well.

CLOSING PRAYER **5 MIN**

Take time at the end of class to thank God for what you learned today. Include parts of your Bible lesson in your prayer as a way for the children to remember today’s lesson.

