

LESSON 38

The Death of Christ

MATTHEW 27:32-54



BIBLE TRUTH

THE DEATH OF JESUS BRINGS US LIFE

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

SUPPLIES: large clear cup; water; large bowl; wooden cross that can fit inside the bowl (The cross can be fashioned out of two sticks tied together or even cut out of paper.)

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

SUPPLIES: *The Gospel Story Bible* (story 116)

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 38—one for each child; markers or crayons

The Gospel Again and Again

SUPPLIES: large uppercase letter “G”

A Centurion Believes

SUPPLIES: two old coffee cans or oatmeal boxes

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 Jesus' death on the cross.

For the opening activity gather a large clear cup filled with water, a large bowl, and a wooden cross that can fit into the bowl. If need be make a cross out of two sticks and tie them together or cut a cross out of paper. Before class fill the cup nearly full with water.

In class, gather the children around the bowl in a circle so everyone can see. Put the cross into the bowl. Ask the children if they remember anything about the cross from last week. (They should be able to tell you that Jesus died on the cross. A helper can assist the children in getting the correct answers to your questions by giving them clues.)

Show the children the cup and tell them that it is filled with water but you want them to pretend that it is filled with punishment. Tell the class to imagine that each time we do something wrong it is like adding one small drop of water to the cup. (Dip your finger into the cup and allow a drop to fall back in.)

Explain that over time, if every time we did something wrong a drop was added to the cup, the cup would fill up. Ask the children to raise a hand if they have ever done something wrong. (You can help them here with a couple of suggestions, e.g., has any of them ever hit their brother or sister.)

Continue by saying that each time we do something wrong, we are also sinning against God. But, instead of punishing his children, God the Father stored up the punishment we deserved just like this water in the cup.

Ask, "Instead of pouring his punishment on his children, who do you think God the Father poured out his punishment on?" (At this point, pick up the cross and show it to the children to give them a hint. They should guess Jesus.)

It happened when Jesus died on the cross. (Put the cross back into the bowl.) Not only did men nail him to that cross and laugh at him and say mean things about him, but God the Father didn't help Jesus. Instead, he poured out all the punishment we deserved for our sin upon Jesus. (At this point start to pour the water slowly over the cross.)

In our Bible story today we are going to learn about the three most important words Jesus said on the cross. They have to do with God the Father pouring out his punishment on Jesus for our sins. Listen carefully for those words.

Take time to pray and thank God for the sacrifice of his Son. Pray for the remainder of the class time before moving forward with the lesson.

BIBLE STORY **10 MIN**

Read story 116, "The Death of Christ," 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:

Where Is the Gospel? _____

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

The death of Christ is the heart of the gospel. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus was the Lamb of God who was slain so that we could be forgiven for our sins. Romans 5:8-9 says, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God."

As Jesus was dying, darkness came over the whole land. At the moment of his death, the temple curtain was torn in two. This curtain separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, which blocked men from the presence of God. With Jesus' death, the curtain was torn top to bottom, and the way between man and God was opened. John records that just before Jesus died he said "It is finished" (John 19:30). The wrath of God poured out upon Jesus for all sin was exhausted, and the way to God was opened.

Luke 23:46 records that Jesus cried out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" These words were not just for himself; they were for all those who are "in Christ" through faith in his sacrifice. Jesus died for all of us.

- **What are the three most important words Jesus spoke on the cross before he died?**
(“It is finished.”)
- **What do think Jesus was talking about when he said “It is finished”?**
(Jesus was talking about God’s punishment for our sin. Remind the children about the cup of water from the introduction.)
- **How did the people treat Jesus?**
(They mocked him and made fun of him.)
- **Why did the people mock Jesus?**
(The people thought that if he really were the Son of God, he should be able to perform a miracle and come down from the cross. The nature of sin is to enjoy the suffering of another. God tells us we should cry with those who cry and be careful lest we fall like those who fall, but in our sinful nature we take pleasure when those around us falter.)

SNACK QUESTIONS **10 MIN**

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

- **What did Jesus say to God the Father on the cross?**
(“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”)
- **Why did Jesus say this?**
(Jesus was experiencing God the Father’s holy anger toward sin.)
- **Why is this important for us?**
(All sin must be punished. Jesus took the punishment for our sin so that we do not have to face God’s wrath. Those who trust in Jesus’ atonement have no need to fear the wrath of God.)

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 38—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

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

- Why did Jesus die on the cross?

(Jesus took the punishment for our sins and died in our place so that we can spend eternity with God in heaven. Note: Use this question to help the children understand the gospel message.)

- What did the sign over his head say?

(This is Jesus, King of the Jews.)

- What were Jesus' last words?

(John 19:30 tells us Jesus' last words were "It is finished." This meant that the wrath of God had been completely poured out on Jesus.)

The Gospel Again and Again

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ large uppercase letter "G"

Show the large letter "G" to the children and ask them if they can tell you what letter you are holding in your hand. Then ask them if they know a word that begins with the letter "G." See how many you can list. Then ask them if they can tell you words from the Bible that begin with the letter "G." If they can't think of any, give them the following clues:

He created all things. (God)

The angels sang this at Jesus birth, " _____ to God in the highest." (Glory)

He was killed with a rock and a sling by David. (Goliath)

What is the word we use to describe God's salvation plan to save us from our sins through Jesus? (gospel)

Once you explain the gospel to the children, ask them if they can repeat it back to you. Most will still not give the correct answer to this abstract concept. Help the children with the basic components of the gospel and our response.

- All people are sinners and deserve eternal death.
- Jesus died on the cross, taking the punishment we deserved.
- Jesus rose again, promising new life to all those who trust in him.
- All people are commanded to turn away from their sin and trust in Jesus.

Tell the children that, throughout your lesson, when you hold up the letter “G” you will call on a volunteer to tell you a part of the gospel. Do this several times in the lesson to help them learn the components of the gospel.

A Centurion Believes

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ two empty coffee cans or oatmeal boxes

After Jesus died, all kinds of amazing things happened. When the centurion (a soldier on duty at the cross) saw these things, he was convinced that Jesus really was the Son of God. Have the children act out this part of the story.

Presumably, the centurion was a mocker until that moment when he changed his mind. Have one person play the centurion repeating some of the mocking phrases out loud. Have another person play the role of Jesus with his arms out in a crosslike position. Have the person playing Jesus bow his head to signal his death.

Have two children drum on some old coffee cans or oatmeal boxes to signal the earthquakes. Several other children can play dead and rise up again at the sound of the earth shaking. They should call out, “I’m alive again.” Have other children be rocks and stand in pairs, side by side. When they hear the sound of the earthquake, they should split apart from one another and fall to the ground.

The skit can close with the centurion saying “Surely, he was the Son of God!”

When the skit is done, talk about how God loved even the people who killed his Son. Rather than destroy them, he gave them these amazing events to bring them to faith. (You can repeat the skit several times, switching parts to give more of

the children a chance to participate. Children love to repeat things, and it helps them remember what they learned as well.)

PRAY **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.

SUPPLY ALERT: If you plan to do next week's object lesson "Bringing Back the Dead," purchase a small plant but do not water it. Let it dry out and die.

LESSON 38 - THE DEATH OF CHRIST

