

LESSON SNAPSHOT

BOTTOM LINE:

We can face hard times knowing our reward is in Heaven.

OBJECTIVE:

Kids will learn that no matter what danger or trouble we face in this life, we can have joy knowing our reward is life with Jesus forever.

KEY PASSAGE:

Acts 7:54-60, The Stoning of Stephen

MEMORY VERSE:

"Guide me in your truth. Teach me. You are God my Savior. I put my hope in you all day long." Psalm 25:5 (NirV)

SUMMARY:

There are many dangers in the jungle – including the rocky cliffs. The life of a Christian is not always easy. Stephen was killed for telling people about Jesus, but in the end he received a heavenly reward that lasts forever.

SIMPLE PRAYER:

Dear God,

Thank you for the promise of Heaven.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen*

MEMORY VERSE

"Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long." Psalm 25:5 (NIV)

"Guide me in your truth. Teach me. You are God my Savior. I put my hope in you all day long." Psalm 25:5 (NirV)

LARGE GROUP:

Bring as many adult leaders up on stage as possible. Let the adults go first, reciting the memory verse from memory, then let the kids go. Who does the best job?

SMALL GROUP:

Have the kids practice saying their memory verse, and then see who can say it backwards.

SKIT

ON THE LEDGE

ITEMS NEEDED:

Two jungle explorer outfits

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN:

2M

CHARACTERS:

Gibert - An experienced explorer

Austin - A reluctant explorer

Gilbert and Austin enter, inching along the edge of the stage as if walking along the edge of a cliff.

AUSTIN: I wanna go home.

GILBERT: I know.

AUSTIN: I wanna watch Netflix.

GILBERT: I know.

AUSTIN: I hear there's a wonderful new movie starring Adam Sandler premiering tomorrow night.

GILBERT: Will you relax and just enjoy? This adventure is close to over?

AUSTIN: It's too close, and I am too close to this cliff.

GILBERT: I never said this trip would be easy.

AUSTIN: You didn't mention cliffs either! That's a long, long way down if I slip!

GILBERT: If you slip? What if I slip? I will be gone, and you will be hopelessly lost!

AUSTIN: Is that supposed to make me feel better?

SKIT

GILBERT: No, but it should make you realize things could always be worse. I mean maybe there's a jaguar waiting at the end of this cliff.

AUSTIN: Stop trying to make me feel better!

GILBERT: You know, this dangerous predicament we are in reminds me of something.

AUSTIN: Oh here we go. You're going to make another lesson out of this, aren't you?

GILBERT: What do you mean?

AUSTIN: Every week we've been on this trip in this unexplored jungle, you've taught me a lesson about faith.

GILBERT: Really?

AUSTIN: Yeah! Like how being on this dangerous cliff is a reminder of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Stephen died not doing wrong, but serving Jesus. His life is a reminder that serving Jesus comes with risks, but the reward of Heaven is worth all that risk.

GILBERT: Wow, I never thought of that. What an interesting lesson.

AUSTIN: You mean you weren't thinking the same thing?

GILBERT: No! I was thinking about the time I fell off Mount Kilimanjaro. Broke every bone in my body. But I think the same lesson applies. There are risks to following Jesus, but the rewards are so much greater.

AUSTIN: What was your reward for falling off Mount Kilimanjaro?

GILBERT: I'm in the Guinness Book of World Records for most bones broken without dying.

AUSTIN: I wanna go home!

GILBERT: Keep moving, Austin, we're almost there. And watch out for the jaguar!

AUSTIN: Stop it!

OBJECT LESSON OR KIDS SERMON

ITEMS NEEDED:

Shin guards

How many of you know what these are? For a lot of you, this was the first piece of protective, athletic gear you ever wore. Before you can play soccer, even in preschool, you have to buy shin guards. These are designed to protect your legs from getting hurt if you get kicked. It's a reminder that when you play soccer, there's a great risk of getting injured, but there's a great reward for those who play it well!

Being a Christian isn't easy, and it's not always safe, but the reward of Heaven is so much greater than any danger we face. We can endure hard times, persecution, ridicule, and rejection because we know God has promised us eternal life in Heaven. Just as Stephen looked to Heaven in the last moments of his life, we can look to Heaven and face any hardship with grace and peace.

Keep your eyes on the prize. Stay focused on Jesus. Yes, there is risk in being a Christian, but great is your reward in Heaven.

LARGE GROUP GAME

MONKEY CHAINS

ITEMS NEEDED:

Two Barrel of Monkey games

INSTRUCTIONS:

Choose two players for this game. Spill out two Barrel of Monkey games on the table. The players will pick up one monkey and race to see who can create the longest chain of monkeys in 60 seconds. Players cannot touch any monkeys but the first one in their chain. They must maneuver their monkeys to pick up other monkeys one at a time. Longest chain of monkeys wins.

VARIATION:

This can also be a one-person challenge, with the player trying to collect all the monkeys in 60 seconds.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

In good times and bad, even when barely holding on like our monkeys, we can trust the Lord.

LARGE GROUP LESSON

BOTTOM LINE:

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OBJECTIVE:

Kids will learn that no matter what danger or trouble we face in this life, we can have joy knowing our reward is life with Jesus forever.

KEY PASSAGE:

Acts 7:54-60, The Stoning of Stephen

INTRO:

Imagine you're in the jungle. The vines are thick, the trees are dense. There's noise all around you. Your compass says you're headed in the right direction, but all of a sudden, you hack away a tree branch and find yourself standing at the edge of a cliff! The good news is, you can see the edge of the jungle from here. It's straight ahead. The bad news is, you can't keep going straight. You're going to have to find a safe way down first.

Things could always be worse, of course. You could have missed seeing the cliff and walked right over the edge. If you could crawl down that cliff face, you'd probably find the bones of some animals and maybe even some explorers who never saw the cliff coming. It's yet another harrowing reminder that the jungle is a dangerous place. There are all sorts of pitfalls in the jungle, from cliffs to holes in the ground. And let's not forget about all those big animals that want to eat you!

So why take the risk? Why explore the jungle at all? Because for those who love the jungle, the reward outweighs the risk! Sure, you could tumble over a cliff. Or you could discover a new species. Maybe you'll find a lost, secret ruins of a past civilization. Maybe you'll find treasure. Some do it for science. Some do it for fortune and glory. They all do it because to them, the reward is greater than the risk.

Some people have the mistaken idea that when you become a Christian, life becomes awesome. They think that God will bless them with good health and even wealth. They believe that God will make everything perfect. The truth is following Jesus comes with risk, just like walking in the jungle. We live in a world that rejected God, and we live in a country that is constantly moving away from God.

LARGE GROUP LESSON

We live in a jungle that is filled with risk and even danger, but we also know that the reward for our faithfulness is eternal life in Heaven!

Today's Bible story is tale of a young man who valued the gift of Heaven more than his own life. His name was Stephen, and he is the first recorded Christian to die for his faith. Stephen's story is a sad one, but it's a story that has challenged and inspired Christians for over 2000 years to keep their eyes on Jesus even in the face of danger.

READ ACTS 7:54-60

MAIN POINT:

Stephen was not a criminal. He was a good man who had just been appointed a leader in the new Christian church to serve and meet the needs of the less fortunate. Stephen knew when he was arrested, the men who seized him had murder on their minds. They wanted to make an example of Stephen, and they thought by killing him, they could stop the spread of Christianity.

Stephen's death had the opposite effect. Some people became believers because of Stephen's courage. They knew that a man would not die for a lie, and they wanted to receive the same promise of eternal life that gave Stephen his courage. Stephen also set an example for his fellow believers. He showed them that if they kept their eyes on Heaven, they would be able to stand up against any form of persecution and stand strong for Jesus.

There is great risk in following Jesus, but the reward is so much greater. If we trust in Jesus and stand with Him, we will receive Heaven. We will one day stand with Stephen and worship Jesus with him in Heaven.

DRIVE IT HOME:

While our country continues to move away from God and the Bible, we are fortunate to live in a country that still values freedom of religion. There are places in this world even today where our fellow Christians face persecution even worse than Stephen. Owning a Bible is illegal. Going to church is illegal. Anyone who proclaims themselves to be a Christian can be imprisoned or in some places, put to death.

Just like the men who killed Stephen, the governments who create and enforce these laws are trying to stop the spread of Christianity. They think Christians are a threat to their power or their own beliefs, and they want to destroy the churches inside their borders. The more they try to destroy our faith, the more it grows. Christians are not discouraged by persecution. They are strengthened by it. They count themselves blessed to suffer persecution, just like Stephen and the apostles. They keep their eyes on the reward of Heaven, and they refuse to let anyone scare them into silence.

LARGE GROUP LESSON

If our fellow believers, who are put in jail for owning a Bible, can still stand up for Jesus, we have no excuse for not openly sharing our faith where we still have the freedom to do so. Let's be bold and tell everyone we know about Jesus. Let's be risk takers who aren't afraid to be called names. Let's be brave enough to share the good news our friends so desperately need to hear.

Stephen kept his eyes on Heaven. The reward was greater than the risk, and because of brave Christians like him, we are here today praising Jesus. Being a Christian won't make life easy, but it carries the promise of eternal life. Let's be bold. Let's take risks. Let's embrace the adventure knowing that a reward greater than any hidden treasure awaits us in Heaven!

CLOSE WITH A SIMPLE PRAYER:

Dear God,

Thank you for the promise of Heaven.

*In Jesus' name,
Amen*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (K-2ND)

ICEBREAKER:

Have you ever tried climbing a big rock, a tree, or a rock wall?

MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITY:

Psalms 25:5

Have the kids practice saying their memory verse, and then see who can say it backwards.

SMALL GROUP GAME/ACTIVITY:

Play a game of musical chairs, and see who can survive the longest.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read Acts 7:54-60

Who was Stephen?

What crime did Stephen commit?

Why did the Sanhedrin kill him?

How did Stephen remain peaceful even as he was dying?

Whom can we trust to keep us in His care, even in bad times?

SIMPLE PRAYER:

Dear God,

Help us to focus on Heaven in good times and bad.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION (3-5TH)

ICEBREAKER:

Have you ever tried climbing a big rock, a tree, or a rock wall?

MEMORY VERSE ACTIVITY:

Psalms 25:5

Have the kids practice saying their memory verse, and then see who can say it backwards.

SMALL GROUP GAME/ACTIVITY:

Play a game of musical chairs, and see who can survive the longest.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read Acts 7:54-60

Why did the Sanhedrin kill him?

How did Stephen remain peaceful even as he was dying?

Why are Christians sometimes persecuted?

How do we know we can trust God even in those hard times?

How can we strengthen our faith so we can be as bold as Stephen was?

SIMPLE PRAYER:

Dear God,

Help us to focus on Heaven in good times and bad.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

POWERPOINT REVIEW GAME

TRUE OR FALSE

Stephen was accused of committing murder.

FALSE

The Sanhedrin wanted Stephen to stop telling others about Jesus.

TRUE

Stephen begged for his life.

FALSE

Stephen kept his eyes on Jesus, even as he died.

TRUE

God can give us the strength to stand up even when we are persecuted.

TRUE



MAKE IT STICK

5 Simple Ways You Can Make This Lesson Stick With your Kids

Unexplored Bible Stories Lesson 7

THIS WEEK'S LESSON: ROCKY CLIFFS



IN THE CAR:

Ask your child what they learned about this week on the drive home:

There are many dangers in the jungle – including the rocky cliffs. The life of a Christian is not always easy. Stephen was killed for telling people about Jesus, but in the end he received a heavenly reward that lasts forever. Acts 7:54-60, The Stoning of Stephen



HANGING OUT:

Make this week's lesson real:

Take some time this week to pray for believers in other countries who are in prison or being persecuted for their faith. If you can, Google some stories about the persecuted church. Pray for anyone you read about specifically by name.



AT DINNER:

Here are some great discussion starters:

- Why was Stephen put to death?
- Why wasn't Stephen afraid to die?
- How can God make us strong when we face persecution?



AT BEDTIME:

Quiz your child on this week's memory verse:

"Guide me in your truth. Teach me. You are God my Savior. I put my hope in you all day long." Psalm 25:5 (NirV)



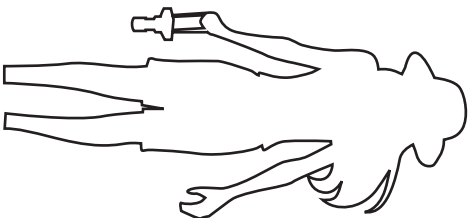
PARENT TIME:

What you need to know:

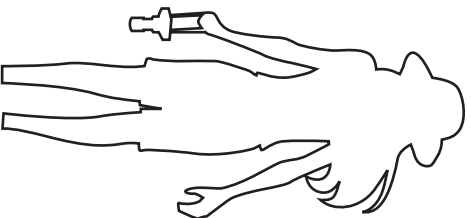
Take some time this week to pray for our country and our children's future. Pray that God would help us preserve our religious freedom, and pray that no matter what happens, our children will grow up strong in faith.

CRAFT ACTIVITY

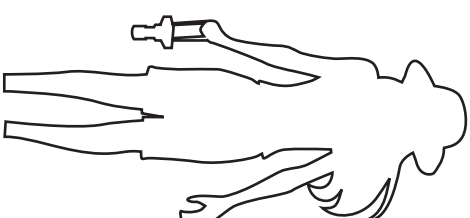
Have the kids make shields this week to represent the faith they will need to guard against persecution. You can make the shields look tribal, like you might find in the jungle, or tie them in with the Armor of God and the shield of faith.



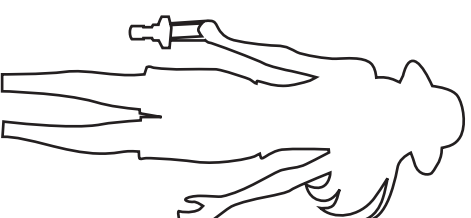
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