

KIDS of INTEGRITY

Easter



**SPECIAL
SEASONAL LESSON**

In this Easter lesson, you'll gather your kids for a daily "picnic with Jesus." Whether you have your picnics indoors or out, the idea is to invite your kids to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to Him teach, as His followers did so many years ago. You'll enjoy nine "Bible story picnics," each one exploring a different part of the Easter story and a relevant beatitude from the Sermon on the Mount.

Through nine "Bible story picnics" and fun optional activities, this lesson will help kids understand:

- "Blessed are the meek" – in Gethsemane, Jesus showed meek obedience
- "Blessed are the persecuted" – Peter's fear of persecution lead to his denial of Jesus
- "Blessed are the merciful" – Pilate wasn't merciful to Jesus, but we can be merciful
- "Blessed are those who mourn" – our sin hurt Jesus; we need to mourn our sin and repent
- "Blessed are the peacemakers" . . . plus four more beatitudes

In addition, kids will learn the value of "yearning for righteousness" and cooperating with others, how to be freed from guilt and shame, and how the Holy Spirit helps us live as Jesus wants us to.

This is a more advanced lesson, so for ages three to five we recommend instead the Bible story entitled "the story of Jesus and forgiveness" found in the **forgiveness** lesson.

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Parents' prayer

Although we can try to develop character in our children through various methods and programs, only God can bring about permanent change in a child's heart. Before you begin leading your children through this Easter lesson, spend time alone with God interceding for His help. If you wish, you can use the following prayer.

Sample prayer

Lord Jesus, I bring my children to You. Please welcome them as You did the children in the New Testament saying, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14). I ask You to call them by name, inviting them to follow You. You praised Your Father, because He hid truths from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children (Matthew 11:25). Remove any hindrances that are preventing _____ and _____ (name each of your children) from drawing close to You and teach them Your truth as You did Your first disciples. When I tell my children the wonderful news of the Easter story, may they be eager to hear from You, as people were when You taught them on the mountainside so many years ago.

May _____ and _____ hunger and thirst for You and Your righteousness more than they crave the pleasures this world has to offer. I ask You to satisfy them with the peace and joy of Your nearness so that they are "filled" (Matthew 5:6).

Please teach my children to be "poor in spirit" – quick to recognize the sin in their lives and their own inability to get rid of it (Matthew 5:3,6). Let them see how much their sin hurts You and

others and give them the humility they need to be truly sorry about their wrongdoings. May they be eager to have You wash away their sin. I want them to experience the blessing of those who are pure in heart – the joy of being forgiven so they can be close enough to You to “see” You (Matthew 5:8).

I pray that _____ and _____ will choose to be peacekeepers so they can be called Your sons and daughters (Matthew 5:9). May they be meek – willing to give up having their own way to follow Your way instead. As they do, I ask You to bless them with the peace that accompanies living in right relationship with You and with others (Matthew 5:5).

May my children recognize that it is an honour to suffer for their faith in You and may they take joy in any insults or persecution they face for choosing to live righteously. And finally, I pray that _____’s and _____’s righteousness will shine gently and brightly, bringing praise to You and their Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16). Amen.

Kids talk with God

These sample prayers will help your children talk to God about the truths in this Easter lesson.

Sample prayers

Dear Jesus, in John 18:37 it says that everyone on the side of truth listens to You. I am on the side of truth and I want to listen to You! Amen.

Dear God, I want to stop doing wrong, and learn to do right! Please forgive me for sinning and teach me to be like Jesus. The Bible says, even though my sins are red like the blood Jesus shed on the cross, they will be white like snow (Isaiah 1:17-18). Thank you for taking away my sin and washing my heart clean. Amen.

Dear Jesus, it’s Easter and everyone says “Happy Easter,” but I don’t feel happy because it hurt You so much to die on the cross. I know the Easter story has a happy ending, but I still feel sad knowing You had to go through all that pain because of my sins. Thank you Jesus. I love You. Amen.

Dear Jesus, please send Your Holy Spirit to teach me how wide and long and high and deep Your love is (Ephesians 3:18). Amen.

Dear Jesus, You know what is best for me. I want to pay attention to what You want to teach me so that my peace will be like a river and my righteousness like the waves of the sea (Isaiah 48:17-18). Amen.

Dear God, it’s so nice to know that You want to enjoy my company. Thank you for sending Jesus to die in my place so that my sins can be forgiven and I can have a friendship with You. Amen.

Dear God, thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to be my teacher and to remind me of everything Jesus said (John 14:26). Amen.

Lord Jesus, I want to obey You to show You that I love You. Thank you for promising to love me and to show Yourself to me (John 14:21). Amen.

Speak a blessing

Affirmation is so important for learning! Here are some ways you can compliment your children when you notice them practicing what they are learning from this Easter lesson.

- What attentive ears you have! They’re perky like _____ (a cautious coyote, an obedient dog, a curious kitten, etc.). Jesus is pleased when we are interested in hearing the things He wants to teach us.
- _____, I can see that you are an eager student of Jesus.
- Thank you for keeping the peace. The Bible tells us that peacekeepers will be called “children of God.”
- Wow! How brightly your light shines for Jesus when you _____. (Describe your child’s Christlike behaviour.)
- Right now you are really shining for Jesus!

Memory verses

Choose a verse, or part of a verse, that your kids can learn during your Easter study. Aim to review the verse at least once a day.

Isaiah 48:17-18 “This is what the Lord says – your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to My commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.’”

Psalms 143:10 “Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; may Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.”

John 14:6 “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”

John 14:26 “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

John 18:37b “Jesus answered, ‘. . . Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me.’”

Kick-off craft

In this kick-off craft, you’ll help your children make a fleece picnic blanket so you have something to sit on each time you do one of the Bible story picnics in this lesson and “meet with Jesus on the hillside.” You’ll also be packing a picnic basket or tote.

If you’re short on time, skip this craft and use a blanket you already own. But don’t forget to prepare your picnic basket, as you will need it for all the Bible story picnics in this Easter lesson.

Make a picnic blanket and pack a picnic basket

Directions

You’ll need the following supplies:

- fleece fabric to make your blanket(s)
- sharp scissors
- a large basket, a cloth grocery bag or a tote box to serve as your picnic basket.

You’ll also need these items to pack in your picnic basket:

- a large ladle or serving spoon
- a flashlight
- a cross
- an empty water bottle
- a stuffed animal
- a first aid kit with some adhesive bandages
- antibacterial wipes or hand sanitizer
- a box of disposable tissues
- a candle.

1 Work together on a family-size blanket, or have each of your children make a smaller personal blanket. Cut the fleece fabric to your desired size(s), then help your kids cut fringed edges. A wide-tooth comb can serve as a template, or you can make a similarly shaped cardboard cutting guide.

2 Ask your kids to help you collect the items listed above and pack them in your picnic basket or tote.

If your kids want to get started as soon as the blanket and picnic basket are ready, go ahead and read the first Bible story (“a Passover picnic”). For maximum effectiveness, ensure your children are getting hungry by the time you read the story.

Bible stories

This Easter lesson is structured a little differently from most of the other Kids of Integrity lessons. With this lesson, you should try to do all nine Bible stories, perhaps one each day, so your children can gain a complete picture of the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection.

For each Bible story, lay out the blanket(s) you made in the **kick-off craft** and enjoy an indoor or outdoor "picnic" as you listen to the story.

1. A Passover picnic

Biblical event: Jesus' disciples prepare the Passover

Beatitudes theme for this lesson: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Matthew 5:6)

This Bible story picnic introduces the Passover dinner Jesus shared with His disciples. Ideally your children will be getting hungry around the time you read this story and have your picnic.

Prepare ahead by packing these items in the picnic basket that you prepared in the **kick-off craft**: a large serving spoon, a snack or meal, and an appealing dessert or treat. Your food can be as simple or as elaborate as you like, i.e. cheese, crackers, veggie sticks and a cookie – or a full-fledged picnic.

Begin by gathering together on the picnic blanket(s) you made in the **kick-off craft**. Thank the Lord for your food, then let your children begin eating while you start the discussion with the questions that follow.

Questions for discussion

1. How can you tell if you are hungry?
2. If you never got hungry, would you remember to eat?
3. How hungry are you right now? Are you so hungry you would eat _____? (Name a food your children dislike.) Or are you not very hungry – only hungry enough to eat a _____? (Name a treat your children like.)
4. Have you ever been super thirsty?

5. Would you ever want to go a whole day without eating or drinking anything?
6. If we were having ice-cream cones for dessert, would you ask for one, two or three scoops?

Now introduce the Bible story with the following prayer (or a similar version of your own):

Dear Jesus, You tell us that when we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we will be filled (Matthew 5:6). We are hungry to hear what You want to teach us! Thank you for our full tummies. We look forward to having full hearts too. Amen.

Read Luke 22:7-16.

7. Why do you like to spend time with your friends?
8. Do you think the disciples were looking forward to the Passover dinner with Jesus?
9. What would you say if Jesus asked our family to join Him for dinner?

Read Matthew 5:6 and Psalm 119:103.

10. Who would like to have some dessert now?
11. Would you like to have a little or a lot?
12. What do we do to feed our hungry stomachs?
13. How can we feed our hungry hearts?

Key concepts

We get excited about eating when we are hungry! God made us this way! The hunger in our stomachs tell us when we need to eat. God also gave us "heart hunger." Inside every person, He put an emptiness that can only be filled by spending time with Him. Just like we wouldn't want to go a day without eating or drinking, neither should we go a day without taking time to learn from the Bible and listen to Jesus. The disciples gathered for the Passover dinner to eat *and* so that they could continue to learn all that Jesus wanted to teach them. Just as the disciples did, we too can spend time each day listening to Jesus. This feeds our hungry hearts.

Jesus told the people that they would be blessed by God if they dug into learning about Him with as much enthusiasm as they dug into delicious food – as though they were really hungry for it!

There's an object in our picnic basket that will help us remember to "hunger after righteousness." Can you guess what it is? (*The large spoon or ladle.*) If we are "hungry for righteousness," it means that we want to spend time with Jesus so we can learn to obey Him, as His disciples did.

End your picnic in prayer, asking God to give you hungry hearts to know Him better, and a desire to read His Word and obey it. Use this sample prayer, if you wish:

Dear Jesus, we want to have hearts that are hungry to know You better! Like it says in Psalm 119, we want to have a "sweet tooth" for the Bible and for the things You want to teach us. We want to be eager to please You – not ourselves. Amen.

Make it real

During the Easter season, when you notice your kids hungering after seasonal sweets, use it as an opportunity to review the idea that God wants us to be as eager to obey Him as we are to eat a treat. Every time your child eats a chocolate egg or a holiday treat, use it as a reminder to pray and ask God to give you hungry hearts to know Him better.

Other ideas

Explore the historical significance of the Passover meal that Jesus shared with His disciples by hosting your own family Seder or Passover meal. Instructions for a simple Seder are available online at Thrivingfamily.ca. Look for the article entitled "From the Passover Lamb to the Lamb of God."

Relevant Scripture

Matthew 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

Psalm 119:103 "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

John 4:34 " 'My food', said Jesus, 'is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work.' "

2. A sad day for Jesus

Biblical event: The Passover dinner and Jesus' betrayal

Beatitudes theme for this lesson: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." (Matthew 5:8)

Prepare ahead by packing a bag of cookies and a flashlight in your picnic basket.

Today's story takes place during the Passover dinner, when Jesus tells His disciples that one of them will betray Him. For this storytime picnic, you will need to gather together on your picnic blanket(s) in a room that can be darkened by turning out the lights.

Thank the Lord for your food, then give each child a cookie to nibble on as you ask the discussion questions.

Questions for discussion

1. How does your cookie taste?
2. Imagine that some cookies have been left on the kitchen counter. It's right before supper and you know you are not allowed sweets before a meal, but you decide to sneak one anyway. Would you enjoy eating it as much as the one you are eating now? Why not?
3. Now, let's imagine that a friend of yours is holding a bag of cookies and handing them out. Just as you are about to reach into the bag and have one, the friend pulls it away and says, "You're not my friend. You can't have a cookie." How would you feel then?

Key concepts

Guilt is the feeling we get when we do something we know is wrong. Guilt is the reason that eating a stolen cookie isn't enjoyable. Rejected or hurt is how we feel when someone leaves us out, refuses to share with us, or is unkind. Today's story is about a time when Jesus was rejected by one of His close friends named Judas. Judas felt so guilty about hurting Jesus that he couldn't enjoy being around Jesus anymore.

Read Matthew 26:14-16 and John 13:1-5, 15-30.

At the last verse, when you read “And it was night,” turn out the lights in the room. Use these questions to guide your discussion:

Questions for discussion

4. Why are people afraid of the dark?
5. If there were an insect or spider crawling around on the floor in this room, would it be easier to find it with the lights off or on?
6. What happens to the darkness when we turn a light on?

Turn the lights back on and continue asking questions.

7. The Bible says that Jesus was “troubled in spirit.” What do you think this means?
8. Why do you think Jesus was so sad?
9. Has a friend ever done something to make you sad?
10. What did Jesus say Judas was going to do?
11. What does the word “betray” mean?
12. Why was Judas willing to betray a good friend like Jesus?
13. After Judas found out that Jesus knew he was going to betray Him, why do you think Judas left?
14. Did any of the other disciples leave the Passover dinner?

Read John 8:12, Ephesians 5:8-10 and 1 John 1:5-9.

15. Did Judas have darkness or light in his heart?
16. What do followers of Jesus have in their hearts?
17. If the fruit of the light is goodness, righteousness and truth, what would the fruit of the darkness be?

18. How can we get rid of the darkness in our hearts?

Key concepts

Jesus was “troubled in spirit” or hurting deeply in His heart because He knew one of His special friends was going to betray Him. A betrayal is much worse than saying, “I don’t want to be your friend anymore,” or “I won’t share my treats with you.” To betray a friend means that your actions show that you have become an enemy instead of a friend. Judas knew what he had done was wrong. He was so ashamed of his sin that he left the dinner. But the disciples who had no reason to feel guilty stayed with Jesus at the Passover dinner.

Kids who sneak cookies do not want to be around their parents. People who keep darkness in their hearts cannot be close to God because of their sin. The Bible tells us that if we follow Jesus we will have light instead of darkness in our hearts. When we have light in our hearts, we will want to please God by being honest and making righteous choices. And just like the disciples who stayed with Jesus at the Passover dinner, when we do what is right, we stay in close friendship with Jesus. Jesus reminded us of this at the Sermon on the Mount when He said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8).

The opposite of the “fruit of the light” is the “fruit of darkness.” A person with darkness in their heart will live to please themselves. They will be dishonest or lie, and make unrighteous or sinful choices. The good news is that if we tell God we are sorry about our sin, and ask Him to get rid of the sin and selfishness in our hearts and give us clean hearts instead, He will.

Can you find something in our picnic basket that will help us remember today’s lesson? (*The flashlight.*)

Close your time together in prayer, asking God to shine His light into your hearts to show you if there is any sin there. Invite Him to wash your hearts clean. Use this sample prayer or your own version of it:

Dear Jesus, the Bible tells us that You are the light of the world (John 8:12). We invite You to shine Your light into

our lives today. Please show us if there is any darkness in our hearts so that we can ask You to wash it away. We want to stay in close friendship with You, Jesus. Amen.

Make it real

To establish a habit of personal confession of sin, when you turn lights on in the morning or at night, invite Jesus to shine His light in your hearts to show you if there is any sin there that needs to be cleaned out.

Other ideas

Play tag on a dark night or in a darkened play area. Use a flashlight to create a circle of light to serve as “home free.” Remind your children that God’s Word says He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness by forgiving our sins and has made us part of Jesus’ kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13).

Relevant Scripture

Matthew 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

John 8:12 “When Jesus spoke again to the people He said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

Ephesians 5:8-10 “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.”

1 John 1:5-9 “This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Colossians 1:11b-14 “and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For

He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Psalm 24:3 “Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.”

3. Meek doesn’t mean weak!

Biblical event: In the Garden of Gethsemane

Beatitudes theme for this lesson: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5)

Extra supplies needed: Cookie cutters, playdough, plastic glasses to serve as rolling pins, and a cross (packed in your picnic basket, along with a snack to enjoy during your picnic)

To begin this Bible story and picnic, have your kids take turns teaching everyone else how to make pretend playdough cookies. You can participate as well, but make sure that the other participants are following the leader’s instructions. Make comments such as, “This isn’t the way I usually make cookies, but I’ll do it your way this time.” The purpose of this activity is to illustrate how hard it is to say, “Let’s do it your way, instead of my way.”

To create a garden-like atmosphere, invite your kids to spread their blankets near some plants for their Bible story and “picnic with Jesus.”

Prior to reading the Bible story, pray and let God know that you are ready to learn about doing things His way. Use this sample prayer if you wish:

Jesus, we are here with open ears. We want to learn what it means to do things Your way. Amen.

Questions for discussion

1. Did you prefer making playdough cookies your way, or making them someone else’s way?
2. How did you feel when someone told you to make playdough cookies in a way that seemed odd to you?

3. Is it easier to say, “Let’s do it my way,” or “Let’s do it your way”?
4. What can happen when two people disagree about how things should be done?

Key concepts

It’s often hard to do things the way another person wants to do them. We usually prefer to do things our own way. When we choose to let another person have things their way instead of insisting on having things the way we want them, we experience peace. However, when two people both insist on having things their way, the result is conflict, and they may even begin fighting.

Read Luke 22:39-46.

Questions for discussion

5. When He was praying, what did Jesus ask God?
6. Was He bossing God around or was He willing to do things God’s way?
7. What did Jesus ask His disciples to do?
8. Why do you think the disciples slept instead of staying awake to pray with Jesus?
9. The Bible tells us that later, when Jesus was hanging on the cross, people made fun of Him saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is Christ of God, the Chosen One.” How do you think Jesus felt when He heard those comments?
10. Do you think it might have been tempting for Jesus to prove to them that He really was God?
11. Do you think Jesus wanted to die?
12. When Jesus died on the cross, was He doing things God’s way or His own way?
13. How do we know this pleased God?
14. Are there any times you find it hard to obey God?

Key concepts

When Jesus prayed, He asked God if there was any way God could change His plan to have Jesus die on the cross. Jesus didn’t threaten God in order to try and get His own way. Instead, Jesus prayed, “Not My will, but Yours” (Matthew 26:39,42). Or, in other words, Jesus was saying, “Father, do things Your way, not Mine.”

The disciples fell asleep, even though Jesus asked them to pray. It was much easier to go to sleep than it was to stay up during the night to pray. Sometimes it can be very hard to do what God asks us to do.

It wasn’t easy for Jesus to die on the cross. From what Jesus prayed in the garden, we know that He didn’t want to die, but He willingly died on the cross because He knew that God wanted Him to. He did things God’s way, not His own way.

On the cross, Jesus heard the people making fun of Him, saying that He wasn’t really God. We can guess that it might have been tempting for Jesus to come off the cross to prove to these people that He was the Son of God. Jesus could have broken free of the nails and come down off the cross, but He chose to die instead.

Jesus wasn’t weak; He was being meek. He was willing to do what God wanted instead of what He wanted. We are being meek, like Jesus, when we are willing to do things God’s way instead of our own way.

The Bible says Jesus was “obedient to death on the cross.” God was very pleased with Jesus for being willing to take the punishment for everyone else’s sins, when Jesus had not sinned Himself. God rewarded Jesus for being meek and gave Him a great honour: one day everyone in heaven and on earth and under the earth will bow down before Jesus. If Jesus had not been willing to do things God’s way, God would not have been able to give Jesus the honour of being “Lord of All” (Philippians 2:8-11).

Every day we end up in situations where we have to choose to be meek or not. It is often harder to do what God wants us to do than it is to do what we want. We can insist on doing things our own way, or

we can let God know that we are willing to do things His way.

If we do not invite God to teach us to do things His way, it is as though we are telling God, “I want to be the boss.” If we keep doing things our own way, instead of obeying God, we are not Jesus’ followers and He cannot give us the honour of ruling the earth with Him when He returns (Revelation 5:9-10).

Search through our picnic basket and see if you can guess which object connects with today’s lesson.
(The cross.)

Pray together, indicating a willingness to do things God’s way, instead of your own way. Here’s a sample prayer to guide you:

Jesus, please help us to be willing to do things Your way instead of our way. We want to be meek so we are going to pray like You did Jesus, “Father God, I’ll do whatever You want me to do. You lead, I’ll follow.” Amen.

Make it real

During the Easter season, when you see one of your kids insisting on having his / her own way, encourage him / her to visit the cross found in your picnic basket. Remind your child that Jesus did not want to die on the cross, but He prayed and told God that He was willing to do what God wanted instead of what He wanted. Pray with your child, and encourage him / her to ask God to give him / her the strength to be meek, like Jesus – willing to do things God’s way instead of his / her own way.

Other ideas

If you wish, you could extend your activity time by making real cookie-cutter cookies instead of pretend playdough cookies.

Relevant Scripture

1 Peter 2:23 “When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.”

Philippians 2:8-11 “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God

exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Psalm 37:1, 10-11, 34a “Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong . . . A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace. . . . Wait for the Lord and keep His way.”

4. The battle in our hearts

Biblical event: Jesus is arrested

Beatitudes theme for this lesson: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9)

Extra supplies needed: Along with a picnic snack each and an empty bottle (packed in your picnic basket), you’ll also need supplies for making pinwheels, i.e., felt markers, cardstock, and for each child, a pencil with an eraser, a tack and some beads.

During this Bible story picnic, you’ll make paper pinwheels and discuss the Biblical account of Jesus’ arrest. If you prefer, you can purchase pinwheels at a dollar store.

To make the paper pinwheels, search the Internet for instructions using the search terms “easy instructions,” “paper pinwheel” and “beads.” (Pinwheels spin better if the paper is separated from the stick by a few beads.)

After each child has made a pinwheel, invite everyone to gather on your blanket(s) to have a snack. Pray and thank God for your food and for another chance to have a picnic with Jesus.

Read Luke 22:47-53.

Questions for discussion

1. Who was leading the crowd of people who came looking for Jesus?

2. How do we know that Jesus' disciples were willing to protect him?
3. What did one of them do with his sword?
4. How did Jesus respond?
5. What would have happened if Jesus had said, "Yes! Bring out your swords!"
6. Instead, what did Jesus do to keep the peace?

Key concepts

When Judas arrived to betray Him, Jesus already knew that the soldiers were going to take Him away and that He was going to die on the cross. Instead of fighting for His life, Jesus healed the soldier's ear. Jesus cared more about saving us than He did about saving His own life. It was honourable that Jesus' disciples were willing to protect Jesus, but when Jesus healed the ear of the wounded soldier, Jesus chose to keep the peace.

Read Matthew 5:9, Galatians 4:6 and Galatians 5:22-26.

Questions for discussion

7. Has someone ever done something to upset you enough that you wanted to hurt them?
8. Is it easy for people to live at peace with each other?
9. What usually causes people to get upset with each other?
10. What makes the pinwheels spin?
11. If we are like the pinwheels, how is air like the Holy Spirit?
12. What does God send into the hearts of His "sons and daughters"?
13. What can you do to be a peacemaker?
14. Who can help you?

Key concepts

God gives us the Holy Spirit to live in us to help us live at peace with others. The Bible tells us that when we are sons and daughters of God, He gives us His Spirit to live in us. When God's Spirit is inside of us, we are loving, joyful, kind, patient, and we live at peace with others. Even though we are children of God, we can still be tempted to get angry. No matter what has happened to upset us, we know that Jesus prefers to see people living at peace with each other rather than fighting. The Bible says that people who are peacemakers will be blessed by being called "children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

It's time to search through the picnic basket! What item reminds you of today's lesson? (*The empty bottle, containing nothing but air.*) We cannot see air and we cannot see God's Spirit, but just as the air causes the pinwheel to spin, God's Spirit in us can help us live at peace with others.

Close with this prayer, or one like it:

Dear God, we know that fighting doesn't make You happy, but it can be hard to keep the peace sometimes. Please send Your Spirit to live in each one of us so we can be like Jesus. We each want to be a peacemaker so we can be called a son or daughter of Yours! Amen.

Make it real

Throughout the Easter season, if tempers get hot or a fight starts brewing, encourage your kids to keep the peace like Jesus did. Affirm those who are living at peace in your home by calling them sons and daughters of God and referring to Matthew 5:9. You can also use the spring winds as a reminder to invite the Holy Spirit into your lives to help you to live as peacemakers.

Other ideas

If you'd prefer, you can make a water wheel rather than a pinwheel, and compare the Holy Spirit to water instead of air. You'll find instructions at Focusonthefamily.ca/parenting in the article entitled "Busy With Christmas Preparations?"

Relevant Scripture

Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

Romans 8:14 “. . . those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

Galatians 4:6 “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba,’ Father.”

Galatians 5:22-25 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

1 John 3:16, 23-24 “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. . . . And this is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us. Those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us.”

5. Hurting with Jesus

Biblical event: Peter’s denial of Jesus

Beatitudes theme for this lesson: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:10-12)

As you read today’s story of Peter’s denial, your children will learn that the Bible says it’s an honour to be mistreated as followers of Jesus.

Make this picnic special by allowing your children to bring stuffed animals with them. (Make sure you have packed a stuffed animal in your picnic basket too.) Before you eat, thank God for your food and invite Jesus

to join you. Use this prayer, come up with your own, or invite your children to pray:

Jesus, thank you for our picnic breakfast / lunch / supper. We’re happy You are here with us and we are excited to hear what You are going to teach us today. Amen.

Read Luke 22:54-62.

Questions for discussion

1. Why did Peter say that he didn’t know Jesus?
2. What did Peter do after he realized what he had done?
3. If you thought that people might hurt you or make fun of you for being a follower of Jesus, would you still tell them that you love Jesus?
4. When you are scared, do you prefer to be alone or to have some company?
5. Who comforts you when you are scared?
6. Even when you don’t have a stuffed animal to comfort you, or a parent with you, who is always with you?

Key concepts

We can imagine how badly Peter felt when the rooster crowed and Peter realized that he said, three times over, that he didn’t know Jesus. It’s easy to think that Peter was not a very good friend for being afraid to tell people that he was one of Jesus’ followers. But before we judge Peter for being scared, we need to consider what we would have done if we had been Peter.

Peter said that he didn’t know Jesus because he was afraid of what people might do to him if they knew he was one of Jesus’ followers. It’s easy to be afraid of what others might say about us or what they might do to us when we let them know we love Jesus, but the Bible says that when others are cruel to us because we love Jesus, we are to be full of joy and consider it an honour to suffer like Jesus did.

Having a stuffed animal or a parent beside us can help us feel less afraid, but God can provide

comfort and courage for us anytime and anywhere. The Bible tells us that God will never leave us (Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5). This is a wonderful promise!

There's something in the picnic basket to remind us that, when we feel afraid, God is always with us. Can you guess what the object is? (*A stuffed animal.*)

Close by praying this sample prayer, or pray the words God puts on your heart.

Jesus, when others treat us badly because we are Your followers, please fill us with joy and remind us that You are always with us so that we don't get scared like Peter did. If we feel scared, please give us courage and fill us with joy. Amen.

Make it real

When you tuck your kids in at night, pray with them and encourage them to cuddle close to their stuffed animal as a reminder that Jesus is with them to give them comfort and the courage they need to tell others that they are His followers.

Other ideas

Do some research on persecution of believers in other countries and, as appropriate, discuss forms of persecution with your children. Or find a picture of a missionary who serves in a country where they risk being persecuted for their faith. Pray for this missionary and ask God to give them comfort, courage and protection. Work with your kids to make a prayer reminder card. Use it as a Bible bookmark or post it in a visible location.

Relevant Scripture

Matthew 5:10-12 *“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

John 15:18-20 *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong*

to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: “No servant is greater than his master.” If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed My teaching, they will obey yours also.’”

6. Bullies in the Bible

Biblical event: Jesus' trial

Beatitudes theme for this lesson: *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”*

(Matthew 5:7)

This teaching time begins with some fun arm wrestling. Then you'll settle down on your picnic blanket(s) to hear what happened when Jesus was brought before the Sanhedrin, and then before Pilate and Herod.

Here's how to structure your arm wrestling matches to make a connection with the lesson concepts later:

Before you play, pray for safety and good attitudes! Begin by pitting the smallest or youngest family member against one of the largest. The other family members have the job of cheering on the little one! After a valiant, but less than 100 per cent effort, the larger person should allow the victory to go to “the underdog.”

Switch roles and play some more, giving each child a chance to be the “winner.”

When you have finished playing, gather everyone on your picnic blanket for your snack and Bible story. For this teaching time, you'll need a first aid kit (including some adhesive bandages) in your picnic basket.

Use this sample prayer or one of your own as a lead-in to your storytime:

Dear Jesus, thank you for our snack / picnic. Please come and be our teacher today as we learn about mercy. We are eager to learn all that You want to teach us. Amen.

Questions for discussion

1. In real life, who are the people most likely to win contests? (*Think stronger, bigger, faster, more talented athletically, artistically, musically etc.*)

2. Why are some people called “underdogs”?
3. Are you someone who often wins, or are you more likely to be an underdog?
4. How did you feel when you were the underdog and the others were cheering you on?
5. How can you encourage people who are weaker, slower, smaller or less talented?

Key concepts

In life, there are people who seem to have an advantage. They are considered fortunate because they have more of something than others do. They might be stronger, bigger, faster, smarter, more talented artistically or musically. Others are not so fortunate. They are weaker, slower, smaller or less talented.

If we are a person who has the more ideal circumstances, we should make sure we don't flaunt it or “lord it over others” by making them feel badly. To show mercy to those who have less in terms of food, money or possessions, we can share what we have, or find another way to encourage them.

At a hillside picnic recorded in the Bible, Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:7). God is pleased when we are considerate and kind towards those who are less fortunate than we are. He wants us to use our strength to protect those who are weak. He is happy when we use our brains or quick wit to defend those who are being made fun of by others. If we have a lot of food, God is pleased when we share it with those who have none.

Read Luke 22:63-71; 23:1-27.

Questions for discussion

6. What are some of the mean things people did to Jesus?
7. Was there anyone in the crowd who stood up and defended Jesus? (*We don't know for certain if anyone did.*)
8. What did the people accuse Jesus of?

9. What did Pilate say about Jesus?
10. Who did the people ask Pilate to set free instead of Jesus?
11. Who did Pilate listen to?
12. Why do you think Pilate did what the crowd wanted instead of letting Jesus go?

Key concepts

When the religious leaders brought Jesus to trial before Pilate, they told lies about Him. They accused Jesus of opposing payment of taxes to Caesar, and claiming to be Christ, a king. Pilate had the authority to decide if someone was guilty of a sin that deserved the death penalty. After listening to the crowd, Pilate said he saw no reason why Jesus deserved to die. When the people kept insisting that Jesus *did* deserve to die, Pilate consulted with another leader (Herod), who too thought that Jesus had done nothing wrong.

Even though both leaders said that Jesus did not deserve to die, the people kept shouting that they wanted Jesus crucified. The tradition at that time of year was to set a prisoner free. Pilate suggested that Jesus be set free, but the people asked that a criminal named Barabbas (who had done many bad things) be set free instead of Jesus. To please the crowds, that's what Pilate decided to do. He let Barabbas go free and let the people take Jesus away to crucify Him.

Pilate chose to be a crowd pleaser. Pilate showed mercy to Barabbas (offering him undeserved forgiveness), but Pilate was not merciful toward Jesus when he turned Jesus over to the crowd to be killed.

Questions for discussion

13. How do you think it made Jesus feel to hear people crying for Him?
14. Can you tell me about a time when you felt really sad or disappointed about something?
15. Did anyone help you feel better?

16. How can you be merciful when you see someone who is hurting or sad?
17. Have you ever stood up for someone who was feeling embarrassed or left out?
18. Have you ever stood up for someone who was being picked on or bullied?
19. If you see someone being bullied, what can you do to be merciful?
20. Do you think you would have had the courage to stand up for Jesus when He was being bullied?

Key concepts

When Jesus was being taken away to be crucified, the Bible says that people followed Him, weeping and mourning for Him. We can guess that those people encouraged Jesus by sharing His pain.

Being merciful means caring about someone's pain enough to be willing to help them. When we see people who are disadvantaged or hurting, there are several things we can do to show mercy. The first is to step up and stand beside them so they don't feel so alone. We can let them know we share in their sadness or pain, and we can pray for them and ask God to help them. When someone is being bullied, we can speak in their defence and tell those who are bullying them to stop. (If the bully may hurt you or someone else, it's a good idea to get an adult to go along with you). When you come to the defence of someone who is being teased or bullied, you are being a God pleaser, not a crowd pleaser. Matthew 5:7 says that those who show mercy to others will be shown mercy themselves.

Can you find an object in our picnic basket that might relate to today's lesson? (*The first aid kit.*)

Think of someone you know who is hurting, and write their name on an adhesive bandage. Post the bandage in a visible location as a reminder to pray for them.

Close your picnic with this prayer, or with a prayer of your own:

Dear Jesus, we know that You want us to be merciful. Please help us to notice people who need our help and compassion and show us how we can share Your love with them. Amen.

Make it real

Use daily "owies" as a reminder to pray for others who are hurting. Take notice of those who are less fortunate, pray for them, and if you can, do something to show you care.

Other ideas

Give your child an opportunity to go shoeless outdoors so they can feel empathy and compassion for those who don't own a pair of shoes.

Relevant Scripture

Matthew 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy."

Psalm 10:17-18 "You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; You encourage them, and You listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more."

Psalm 41:1 "Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the Lord delivers him in times of trouble."

Galatians 1:10 "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

James 4:17 "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."

7. Thief one, thief two – how about you?

Biblical event: Jesus' crucifixion

Beatitudes theme for this lesson: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

Extra supplies needed: A blindfold for each child, plus a pack of anti-bacterial wipes or hand sanitizer (packed in your picnic basket along with your picnic snack)

In this lesson, you'll help your kids compare sin to germs through a simple hand washing exercise, and help your kids see that they cannot get rid of their sin on their own.

The Bible story will focus on the attitudes of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. One was "poor in spirit" and recognized his sinfulness, but the second thief did not.

Begin by explaining that you have a snack packed in the picnic basket, but first the children must wash their hands before eating.

After giving everyone's hands a good washing, thank God for your food, then work through the discussion questions to get your kids thinking and talking while they eat their snack.

Pray your own prayer of thanks, or if you'd rather, use this sample:

Jesus, we are sitting here, eager to listen to You. We are excited to be Your students today. We look forward to learning what You want to teach us. Thank you for washing our sins away. And thank you for our snack. Amen.

Questions for discussion

1. What should we always do before we eat?
2. Why do we wash our hands before we eat?
3. What do we use to get rid of the germs that are on our hands?
4. What would you think if I told you to lick the germs off your hands instead of using soap and water to clean them?
5. If you licked your hands, where would all the germs go?
6. Could those germs still make you sick?

7. How are germs like sin?

8. We can get rid of the dirt on our hands, but can we get rid of our sin?

Key concepts

Just as germs make our bodies sick, sin makes our hearts sick. In order to stay healthy, we need soap and water to wash the germs off our hands. But we need Jesus to wash the sin out of our hearts.

Only God can forgive our sins. The Bible tells us that when we confess our sins, God will clean the sin out of us (1 John 1:9). During the hillside talk that we call The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). He was telling the people that when they got the sin cleaned out of their hearts, they could enjoy being close to God. We learned about this in our second Bible story picnic.

Read Luke 23:26-43.

Questions for discussion

9. What did the first thief say?
10. Did he think that he was any different than Jesus?
11. What did the second thief say?
12. Did he notice that he was different than Jesus? In what way?
13. What did Jesus promise the second thief?

Key concepts

The first thief did not see Jesus as special; he considered himself no different from Jesus. The second thief, on the other hand, defended Jesus saying, "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41).

The second thief saw the difference between himself and Jesus. He humbly admitted that he was sinful, but Jesus was sinless! He realized that he deserved punishment and Jesus did not. The second thief was

“poor in spirit” because he noticed his own sinfulness in comparison to Jesus’ sin-less-ness (or holiness).

Jesus told the second thief, “Today you will be with Me in paradise!” When Jesus was teaching the people on the hillside He said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). In other words, Jesus was telling the people the same thing that He told the second thief: those who recognize how sinful they are and are sorry about their sin will get to share in His kingdom in heaven.

If we are like the second thief and we let Jesus know we are sorry about our sin, we too can be with Jesus in heaven someday. The Bible tells us that when we confess our sins, God will forgive our sins and wash them right out of us (1 John 1:9). That’s because, through Jesus’ death on the cross, the penalty for our sins has been paid (2 Corinthians 5:21).

After God washes the sin out of our hearts, God doesn’t see us as sinful any more. Instead, He sees us as pure and clean (Colossians 1:22). How wonderful it is to know that when we are sorry for doing wrong and ask God to get rid of our sins, He does! Not only do we have a “forever paradise” called heaven to look forward to, we can also have a close friendship with Jesus and enjoy His presence in our lives every day!

Now it’s time to search for the item that connects with today’s lesson. But this time, you’ll have to search through the picnic basket while wearing a blindfold!

Let your children search awhile, then remove the blindfolds so they can see what they came up with. Once the antibacterial wipes have been identified, tell your kids that licking the germs off their hands prior to eating is as foolish as being “blind” to their sin (ignoring it or refusing to admit it), or thinking that they can get rid of their sin on their own.

Close in prayer using this sample prayer, or use your own words. Ask your kids if they have any “heart germs” that they would like to ask God to wash away. Give them an opportunity to pray, too.

Jesus, You see the sin in our hearts and we know it is there too. There is nothing we can do to get rid of our own sin. Please give our hearts a good scrubbing to wash all the sin out of us! We want our hearts to be pure so that You are comfortable being there. Amen.

Make it real

For the remainder of the Easter season, whenever you wash your hands or use hand sanitizer, use it as a reminder to talk about the attitudes of the two thieves. While you are washing your hands, ask God to show you your sins so you can confess them. As you do, thank God for washing away your sins.

Other ideas

Purchase some Glo Germ™ to serve as a very visual illustration of the way germs hide, yet can be washed away effectively. See the **hands-on options** section of this lesson for more details.

Relevant Scripture

Matthew 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Proverbs 20:11 “Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.”

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Psalms 51:1-2 “Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

Psalms 51:10-11 “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me.”

Jeremiah 23:6 “In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which He will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”

1 Peter 2:24 “He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.”

8. Sad isn't bad

Biblical event: Jesus' death and burial

Beatitudes theme for this lesson: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

(Matthew 5:4)

Extra supplies needed: A tissue box, plus stickers and felt-tip markers to decorate it with; a nail and / or a wooden kebab skewer for each child, plus a second box of tissues (packed in your picnic basket, along with a snack to enjoy during your picnic)

In this lesson, children will learn that even though Easter is a happy celebration, it honours God when we are sad about how much our sin hurts Him.

Begin your lesson by working with your children to decorate the outside of a box of tissues using stickers and felt-tip markers. Have your children select colours, pictures and items that are reminders of God's love and comfort.

As you gather for your storytime, tell your kids that they may need a tissue because the story might make them cry.

Begin your storytime picnic by praying this prayer, or one of your own:

Jesus, thank you for our food. Thank you for another chance to have a picnic with You. Even though it is going to be a sad story, we are willing to hear what You are going to say to us today. Amen.

Read Genesis 6:5-6 and Matthew 5:4.

Questions for discussion

1. What makes you sad?
2. What do you think makes God sad?
3. What does the Bible say filled God's heart with pain?

4. Do you think it hurts God when we sin too?
5. What does the word “mourn” mean?
6. Have you ever been so sad that you have mourned?

Key concepts

One of the things that Jesus said to the people who gathered to listen to Him teach was, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). The Bible tells us that sin causes God great pain. God wants us to feel sad about our sins, but He also tells us that He will comfort us. As we read today's story, we can remember that it was because of our sin that Jesus had to die.

As you continue with today's story, allow each of your children to hold a nail in their hands. (If you wish, you can also show them some wooden kebab skewers to illustrate the cruel sharpness of the thorns.)

Read Luke 23:44-56.

Questions for discussion

7. How much do you think it would hurt to have nails pounded through your hands and feet?
8. What would it have been like for Jesus to wear a crown made out of thorns?
9. Which do you think hurt Jesus more, the beatings and getting nailed to the cross, or the people making fun of Him?
10. How do you think God wants us to feel when we think of Jesus dying because of our sins?
11. Should we be just a little bit sad about our sins, or sad enough to cry?
12. Does God love us, even though we sin?
13. How do you know that God loves you?

Key concepts

Being beaten and whipped causes your body to hurt and being made fun of makes your heart hurt. Jesus had both kinds of pain. Although we don't like to

think about how much Jesus hurt when He was on the cross, it is good to remember the pain Jesus went through so that we remember how much our sin hurts Him. Even though God hates sin, He still loves us! God loves us so much that He was willing to send His son to die for our sins so that we can be forgiven.

In order to be forgiven, a person needs to see their sin and be sad about it, then they need to confess it. When we “mourn,” or are greatly saddened by our sin, our attitude (of repentance) pleases God and He forgives us. After our sins are forgiven, we experience the comfort of God’s presence in our lives every day and we can look forward to heaven where “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:4).

I wonder which item in our picnic basket connects with today’s lesson. Would you like to guess? (*The box of tissues – a reminder of God’s love and His promised blessing of comfort for those who are saddened by their sin.*)

Pray to close your picnic. Use this sample prayer, or pray as God leads:

Jesus, we are sorry that You had to die so that our sins can be forgiven. It makes us sad to know how much it hurts You when we sin. Thank you for forgiving us and for comforting us. Amen.

Make it real

During the Easter season, ask your kids to watch for crosses on cards, signs and jewelry. Whenever they see a cross, repeat aloud Romans 8:38-39: “**For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”

Then take a moment to thank God for Jesus, His death and for forgiveness of sin.

Other ideas

If you prefer a more durable craft, you can use fabric markers or fabric paints to decorate an “Easter” handkerchief or bandana.

Relevant Scripture

Matthew 5:4 “**Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.**”

Genesis 6:5-6 “**The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that He had made man on the earth, and His heart was filled with pain.**”

John 3:16-21 “**For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.**”

John 15:11 “**I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.**”

Revelation 21:4 “**He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.**”

9. Shining like Jesus

Biblical event: Jesus’ resurrection

Beatitudes theme for this lesson: “**You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**” (Matthew 5:14-16)

Extra supplies needed: 3-4 glow sticks or battery-powered tea lights per child, plus a candle (packed in your picnic basket, along with your picnic food)

In this Bible story picnic, as you rejoice over Jesus’ resurrection, you’ll also be talking about how believers can be the “light of the world” by sharing the good news of Jesus with others.

Prepare beforehand by hiding some glow sticks or battery-powered tea lights near where you plan to eat your picnic (three to four lights per child is sufficient). You’ll be having a “light hunt” instead of an egg hunt!

Begin by thanking God for your picnic snack.

Read Matthew 5:14-16.

1. How are people like glow sticks / tea lights?
2. Do we always shine like we should?
3. Are there times when our batteries are burned out or our glow juice isn't glowing?

Key concepts

When we sin, our light doesn't shine like it's supposed to. Our sin causes us to hurt each other and it also makes God sad. We all have sinned and end up like a tea light with a worn-out battery or a glow stick with no glow juice in it. We can't shine like God made us to shine. We can't do anything to fix our brokenness either. The wonderful news is that God can make us shine again. That's what our Bible story is about today.

Read Matthew 28:1-10 and John 20:19-23.

Questions for discussion

4. Have you ever seen lightning?
5. How did the angel look?
6. What did the angel tell the ladies who were visiting the tomb?
7. Whose power caused Jesus to rise from the dead?
8. What did the women do when they saw Jesus?
9. What would you have done if you saw Jesus?
10. Did Jesus want to keep it a secret that He was alive again?
11. What did Jesus tell the women to do?
12. What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you" (John 20:21)?
13. What did Jesus tell the disciples to receive?

Key concepts

Like the people in today's story, we can imagine that we, too, would have been full of joy upon seeing Jesus alive again. Jesus didn't want it to be kept a secret that He was alive. He told Mary to tell the disciples.

Later Jesus told His disciples that just as God had sent Him to tell them about the kingdom of heaven, Jesus was sending them to tell others! The "job" Jesus was giving His followers was to go and teach others everything He had taught them (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus knew He was not going to be staying with them and He knew the disciples could not do the job without His help, so Jesus gave them His Holy Spirit to be their helper.

A shining light is hard to miss – kind of like the angel at the tomb! Just like it is hard to hide a bright light, it is difficult to stay quiet when we have an exciting secret. The Easter story is wonderful news! God wants us to share the story of Jesus with everyone too.

The news we are to share with others is that God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to earth to tell people about His Father, God. God sent Jesus to die on the cross to take the punishment for our sins, so that we can be forgiven! If a person's sins are not forgiven, God cannot allow that person to be in heaven. Instead God must send those who do evil to hell where they will be punished for their sins (Matthew 13:36-43, Matthew 25:46). God wants us to "shine" so that others see our lives and decide that they want to be followers of Jesus too!

Invite your kids to go on a "light hunt," searching for the hidden lights. Ask them not to turn them on (or break them open) until you have gathered back together at the end of the hunt. When all the lights have been found, ask your children to list ways that they can "shine" for Jesus. With each "shining" idea they share, they get to turn on a tea light or crack a glow stick. Place your lights around your picnic area.

Questions for discussion

14. Can you pick up one of these lights and hide it?
15. If the power went out and we were using a candle to guide our way in the dark, what would you say if someone covered up the candle or blew it out?
16. In life, how do we hide our light?
17. Do you think God is pleased when we hide our lights?
18. Why do you think God wants us to shine?

Key concepts

In our story today we heard that after Jesus died, He rose again. In Romans 8:11 it says, “**And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.**”

We need Jesus’ help in order to do the things He asks us to do. We can’t do it on our own, even if we try really hard. That is why Jesus gave His disciples His Holy Spirit. He gives us His Holy Spirit to live in us so we can shine for Him. The Bible says that the *same* Spirit who raised Christ from the dead lives in us! God’s Holy Spirit brought Jesus back to life and that *same* Spirit lives in us to help us shine like Jesus.

Even a brand new tea light does not shine if it doesn’t have a battery as a power source. And glow sticks don’t glow unless their glow juice gets shaken up. When we have the Holy Spirit in us, we can shine for Jesus because His Holy Spirit is our power source. We can’t do it on our own, no matter how hard we try. But with God’s help, we can! When the Holy Spirit lives in us, we become filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

When Jesus was teaching the people on the hillside, He talked to the people about shining like lights. He said, “**You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they**

may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

Just as people are attracted to a shining light, God wants people to be attracted to us. When we are kind, gentle, courteous, respectful, joyful and considerate it makes other people want to be around us and want to be like us. The Bible says that when people see our good deeds they will praise God! Jesus told His followers to shine because Jesus knows that this is the best way to help people who don’t know Him to find Him! In the same way, God wants all of His children to be like candles on a dark night – candles that light the way and lead others to Jesus!

Can you find an item in our picnic basket that reminds you of today’s lesson? (*The candle.*) Review the idea that our “lights” are turned on when we are full of the Holy Spirit and when we love others like Jesus does.

In closing, gather together in a darkened room and light the candle. Read John 3:16-21 and then pray together. You can use this sample prayer or invite your kids to pray:

Jesus, thank you for suffering on the cross and taking the punishment for our sins. We love You, and we want to obey You. Please forgive our sins, wash our hearts clean, and fill us with Your Holy Spirit so we can shine and tell others about You, Jesus. Amen.

Make it real

In the future, whenever you hum the tune *This Little Light of Mine*, have your kids guess how they are shining for Jesus. You can also affirm your children who are displaying godly character by giving them shiny objects. Perhaps they can collect coins or beads to make a necklace or bracelet.

Alternatively, when a child is clearly sinning, remind the transgressor that when we are not obeying God, our lights do not shine. In order to “shine” for Jesus, we need His Spirit in our hearts, filling us with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control. Pray with the child who is struggling with sin, and ask God to send His Holy Spirit to help them shine.

Other ideas

Follow the instructions for the **hands-on option** in the **obedience lesson** that's entitled "shining for Jesus." This object lesson involves cleaning some dirty pennies with vinegar to illustrate how the Holy Spirit living in us enables us to shine like Jesus.

Relevant Scripture

Matthew 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

1 John 3:24 "Those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us."

Hands-on options

These simple activity ideas will help you create "memorable moments" that reinforce the messages you've shared with your children during your Bible story picnics. There's no need to do all these activities. Choose as few or as many as you like. You can do them in conjunction with your Bible story picnic, or at a different time of the day – whatever suits you best.

"I love you this much" game

any time

Use this fun, creative exercise to assure your children of your love for them. Add an Easter theme to the game by talking about God's vast love for your children. To play, follow the example below, taking turns coming up with words ending in "er" to explain the magnitude of your love.

Here's an example showing how to use the game to emphasize Jesus' love for your child:

Mariah: Do you know how much I love you?

Mommy: No.

Mariah: I love you bigger than an elephant. I love you cuter than a little puppy. I love you taller than the tallest mountain. I love you more green than spring grass. And I love you whiter than the snow. Now do you know how much I love you?

Mommy: Oh, yes! Do you know how much I love you?

Mariah: No.

Mommy: I love you faster than a galloping horse. I love you blue-er than your eyes. I love you more tumbly than when you do cartwheels. I love you more beautiful than sunrises, sunsets and rainbows. I love you squishier than our rubber animals. Now do you know how much I love you?

Mariah: Yes!

Mommy: Do you know how much Jesus loves you?

Mariah: No.

Mommy: This is how much Jesus loves you: He says, "I love you higher than the sky and as deep as the sea. I love you longer than the longest car ride you have ever been on! I love you with love wider than the ocean (extend your arms as though your hands are nailed to a cross). I love you so much that I died on the cross so that you could be My child." Now do you know how much Jesus loves you?

Mariah: Yes! He loves me a lot!

Relevant Scripture

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Ephesians 3:16-19 "I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

Plan an egg hunt

physical activity

Pack some “Easter story eggs” in a picnic basket, then hide them outdoors or around your home. To make your Easter story eggs, follow the instructions in the Bible story “the story of Jesus and forgiveness” from the *Kids of Integrity* lesson on **forgiveness**.

Play jail-bird tag

physical activity

To illustrate what an encumbrance sin is, have your kids play tag, but outfit each child with a liability of some sort. For example, one child could wear work boots, another a heavy backpack, and another could have their legs loosely tied together with a nylon stocking. Pray before you play to encourage good sportsmanship. For the first round, you will be “it.” Chase your kids around until you have caught them all. Each time all the players have been tagged, switch roles.

Relevant Scripture

John 8:36 “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

Hebrews 12:1 “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Read a beary fun story

any time

The Berenstain Bears and the Easter Story is a wonderful story to read to your children as a tie-in to this Easter lesson. In their traditional, kid-friendly style, the authors use Papa Bear’s Easter-time candy cravings as a springboard to discuss Jesus’ resurrection. The bear cubs learn that salvation is much sweeter than candy or chocolate.

Talk about tears

science with a twist

Make a raw egg float in salt water to illustrate how much God cares about our tears and sorrows, and discuss how Jesus’ death on the cross made Him familiar with sorrow and pain.

You will need a large bowl, four cups of water, plastic drinking cups, one raw egg for each child, stickers or permanent markers, tablespoons and 10 tablespoons of salt.

- 1 Have each child decorate a raw egg with stickers or markers to represent himself or herself.
- 2 Place the eggs in the bottom of a plastic bowl, then have your children take turns pouring in a cup of water at a time (four cups of water in total). As each cup of water is poured in, ask your children to list things that make people cry.
- 3 Observe the egg sitting on the bottom of the bowl, and explain that sometimes someone who is very sad says they feel as though they are “drowning in sorrow.” Mention that, just as we can’t breathe under water, sometimes our sorrows feel so heavy that we feel we can’t handle it.
- 4 Read Psalm 116:1-5, then have your children begin adding salt by the tablespoonful. Be sure each spoonful is stirred and dissolved before the next one is added. As you add the salt, work through the discussion questions below.

Questions for discussion

1. What do people do when they are sad?
2. How are tears different from drops of rain?
3. Have you ever cried so hard you felt like you were going to stop breathing?
4. Do you think God sees your tears?
5. When we feel dreadfully sad, who promises to care for us?

6. If a friend is sad, how can you encourage them?

Key concepts

God gave us tears as a way to help us cope with our sadness. Tears taste salty and they contain special chemicals that are released by our bodies to help us feel better.

Even when our grief is so overwhelming that we feel we cannot bear it, we can be sure that Jesus sees our tears, and that He understands and cares. Jesus' death on the cross made Him familiar with sorrow and pain. He knows what it is like to be made fun of, hurt, and even betrayed by a friend.

Jesus is like the salt that "lifted up" the egg. He is very good at comforting us when we experience sorrow and difficulties. He will always be with us and "carry us" through our trials and difficult days.

When we cry and taste our salt tears, we can use it as a reminder of Jesus' care for us. If a friend or family member is experiencing sadness, we can remind them that Jesus cares about and understands their sorrow.

(To enrich your children's understanding of the fascinating way God made our bodies, especially tears, you may want to do a little research on the Internet, or look through a children's physiology book.)

Relevant Scripture

Psalm 116:1-5 "I love the Lord, for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy. Because He turned His ear to me, I will call on Him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: 'O Lord, save me!' The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion."

The laundry sniff test

other

Hide dirty laundry, then have your kids try to find it by "sniffing it out." Then use the discussion questions from the **hands-on option** "we must confess, dirty clothes make a mess!" in the **righteousness** lesson. Point out that, just as dirty

laundry smells bad, our sin "stinks" to God. We stay clean by regularly confessing our sins.

Relevant Scripture

Isaiah 1:16-18 "... wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of My sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.'

Proverbs 28:13 "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."

Lesson in a light bulb

other

For this activity, you'll need two light bulbs and a light socket (a trouble light or a table lamp with the shade removed). Begin by showing your children an ordinary (unlit) light bulb. As you do, ask the questions provided.

Questions for discussion

1. Can you tell me what this is this?
2. What is a light bulb supposed to do?
3. Who wants to see if this one will do what it's supposed to?

Screw the bulb into the socket. When the bulb lights up, you can all cheer.

Read Matthew 5:14-16.

4. How are people like light bulbs?
5. Do we always shine like we should?
6. Are there times when our lights are turned off?

Unscrew the light bulb and put it in a zip-seal plastic bag. Place the bag on a firm surface, and without fanfare or explanation, crush it with something heavy. If you have stiff-soled shoes on, you can even step on it. Leave a

short pause for effect and hold up the bag of bulb pieces.
Take a minute to ask more questions.

7. Can this light shine anymore?
8. Is it still useful?
9. Can we put it back together and make it work again?

Next, bring out a new light bulb. Hold it up so your kids can see that it is completely whole.

10. Can this light bulb shine just by trying really, really hard?
11. Is the light bulb shining yet?
12. How can we make it shine?

Your children will likely tell you to plug it in or to turn it on, so do so.

13. What is the power source that makes the light shine?
14. What is the power source that makes us shine?

Key concepts

Broken light bulb: When we sin, our light doesn't shine like it's supposed to. Without Jesus, we are all like broken light bulbs. When we sin, we break ourselves, we damage our connection with God, we hurt each other, and we hurt God. We have all sinned and we are all like the broken bulb – we can't shine like God made us to shine anymore. We can't do anything to fix our broken-ness either. Only God can.

New (not plugged in) light bulb: The wonderful news is that God makes broken people whole again. When we ask God to forgive our sins and tell Him that we want to obey Him and have Him be the leader of our lives, He takes all the broken pieces of our lives and makes us new again – just like the new light bulb.

Plugged-in light bulb: Even a brand new light bulb does not shine if it is not connected to the power source. Just like a light bulb that is not plugged in to

a socket, we can't shine on our own, no matter how hard we try! The good news is that when we have the Holy Spirit in us, we can shine brightly for Jesus because His Holy Spirit is the power source.

Jesus gives us His Holy Spirit to live in us so we can do the things He asks us to do – obey our parents, be kind to each other, share with others, tell the truth, and be patient. The Bible says that the *same* Spirit who raised Christ from the dead lives *in us!* (Romans 8:11) God's Holy Spirit brought Jesus back to life and that *same* Spirit lives in us to help us shine like Jesus. When the Holy Spirit lives in us, we become full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

If you wish, continue by reading John 20:1-22, the account of the disciples discovering that God had raised Jesus from the dead.

Relevant Scripture

Matthew 5:14-16 “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

Romans 8: 11 “And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.”

1 John 3:24 “Those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know it by the Spirit He gave us.”

Pray a Psalm

any time

Use the following prayer based on Psalm 24 as your family's Easter prayer, or write a family prayer based on any of the relevant Scripture verses in this lesson.

Lord, the earth is Yours, along with everything in it, the world, and all who live in it! And that includes us! We are so glad that we are Your children, Jesus! You created

the earth and placed it upon the seas. Lord Jesus, we want to enjoy Your presence, but we know that we need to have clean hearts before we can be close to You. Please forgive us for _____
(Observe a quiet time of personal confession here).

We want to love You more than we love anything else, and we want to tell the truth. Thank you for the gift of forgiveness. When we confess our sins, You take away our guilt and shame. How amazing it is that we can be close to You when we have had our hearts washed clean. You are God our Saviour! We are a family of God-seekers. We want to know You better and better each day. Amen.

Fun with Glo Germ™

science with a twist

Order some Glo Germ online. It's a fascinating educational product that visually demonstrates how many germs are present on a surface – and it can teach spiritual truth too! You can use it as an object lesson on the importance of seeking God's forgiveness.

Some good concepts to cover with your children include the idea that sin makes our hearts sick, much like germs make our bodies sick. We can use soap and water to wash away germs, but we need Jesus to wash the sin out of hearts. Germs can hide, and so can sin! Just as Glo Germ illuminates germs, the Holy Spirit shows us our sin.

Relevant Scripture

Psalm 51:1-2 “Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

Psalm 51:10-11 “Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me.”

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Recommended resources

For a list of children's stories that reinforce the theme of this lesson, consult the home page for the **Easter** lesson at Kidsofintegrity.com.

