

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

by Laura Sweet

**Grades 3-4
Year 1
Quarter 2**

JESUS - THE WORD OF GOD

John 1:1-14

Lesson Aim

To show that Jesus, the “Word of God,” is the eternal God and Creator of the world.

Memory Verse

John 1:1 - “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Lesson Background

When John used the term “the Word” to refer to Christ, he chose a term meaningful to both his Greek and Jewish readers. For Greeks, “the Word” described the rational principle that they believed ruled the universe. Jews used “the Word” to refer to God. Therefore, Christ as “the Word of God” had strong meaning for them both.

For your students, however, “word” is not an abstraction, but a concrete term. Words are the things they speak, the things they read, and the things they try to spell. Our challenge is to show them how Christ truly is the Word of God - the final spokesman for the Father and the perfect expression of His character and deity.

Lesson Procedure

Explain to your students that this quarter you will be studying the Gospel of John, who was a disciple (and later an apostle) of Jesus Christ. Give a summary of John's life, being sure to include the following (verses are listed for your benefit; it isn't necessary to have students look them up since we'll be covering most of these events in this quarter):

- close personal friend of Jesus (John 21:20-24)
- with Christ from His first miracle to His death (John 2:2; 19:26)
- was entrusted with the care of Jesus' mother when Jesus died (John 19:26-27)
- saw the empty tomb and believed (John 20:8)
- saw resurrected Christ on several occasions (John 20:19-31; John 21)
- was an apostle and suffered beatings, imprisonment, and exile for his faith (Acts 5:40-42; Revelation 1:9)

After completing your summary, say to your students, "When John wrote his Gospel, he wrote it as an eyewitness. He wrote it as one of Jesus' closest friends, and he describes himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved.' Do you think that's important? Why is that important?" Lead your students to see that, because John was an eyewitness and close friend, his Gospel is a reliable and trustworthy account of the life of Christ.

1. Jesus as the Word of God

Ask students to name the four Gospels. Then have them turn to John 1. Explain that John begins his Gospel very differently from the other three. "Matthew and Luke begin their Gospels by writing about the things that happened when Jesus was born, and Mark begins with John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' work. But let's read how John begins his Gospel." Then read aloud the first five verses of John 1. "More than anything else, John wants his readers to understand that Jesus was not just another prophet or leader or man. Jesus is God Himself, come to earth as a man. So John begins his Gospel by showing us that Jesus is God the Son."

A. The Word Refers to Jesus

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Explain to students that "the Word" is talking about Jesus. "In John's time, the Jews used the phrase 'the Word' as a way of talking about God. But calling Jesus 'the Word of God' makes sense for other reasons, too. What do we use words for? We use them to explain what we're thinking. We use words to show how we feel. And we use words to show people what we're like inside. Without words, no one would really know what we're like inside, would they? People might guess what we think, or how we feel, or what we're like inside - but they might guess wrong!"

B. Jesus is God's Final Spokesman

Have a student look up Hebrews 1:1. "This verse says that God speaks to us 'through His Son'; that means that Jesus is God's spokesman. And He is not just 'a spokesman'; He is the final spokesman that God is sending us - God's final Word to man. He tells us what God is thinking. He shows us God's will. He is 'the Word of God' because He speaks for God and shows us God's mind."

C. Jesus Shows Us What God is Like

Have a student look up John 14:8-11. “Jesus is also called ‘the Word of God’ because He shows us what God is like. When we learn about Him and what He is like - His goodness, His love, His mercy and His power - we learn what God the Father is like, too. If we want to know about God, we look at the Scriptures, ‘the Word of God’; but we can also look at Jesus, who is the other ‘Word of God.’” Read John 1:1 together as a class, but substitute the name “Jesus” in place of “the Word.” “‘In the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God.’ What do you think it means when it says ‘in the beginning’? Where have you heard those words before [Genesis 1:1]? So did Jesus begin life when He came to Bethlehem as a baby, or did He exist before that?” Show your students that Jesus, as God, has always existed and was with God before the beginning of time. Since Jesus has always lived as God, we know He has no beginning and no ending.

2. Jesus as the Creator

Have your students read the verses from today’s text and discuss them as follows:

verses 2-5 - “Not only was Jesus with God from before the beginning of time, but John says that Jesus is the Creator - the one who made the world and everything in it. He is the One who gave man life. He is the One who brought light into the darkness. And He is still the light and life of all men.”

verses 10-11 - “Don’t you think it’s very strange and very sad that the very people Jesus had created and had come to save didn’t even recognize Him? Even the Jews, His special people, who had all the promises about a coming Savior, didn’t recognize Jesus when He came. They would not receive Him!”

verses 6-8 - “But there were some people who recognized Jesus; there were some people who received Him. John the Baptist knew who Jesus was and he told the people that Jesus was the true light of God. And there were others who believed as well.”

verses 12-13 - “Those who did receive Jesus were given the power to become the children of God!”

verse 14 - “When did Jesus, the Word, become flesh and live with us?” [When He was born as a baby in Bethlehem.] “John says that he and others beheld Jesus’ glory and that it was the glory of ‘the one and only Son.’ He says that Jesus was full of grace and truth. As John lived with Jesus, he saw grace, truth and the glory of God! Do you think that this helped him to believe that Jesus was God the Son?” Help students to see that one of the reasons John is so convinced that Jesus is God Himself is because he lived with Jesus, watched and listened to Jesus, and saw the way He lived. This was how John knew that “anyone who has seen Me (Jesus) has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Conclusion

John wants his readers to understand who Jesus is. He begins his Gospel by showing us that Jesus is God the Son, who has always existed and will always exist, who created the world and all that is in it, and who became a human being like us so He could be the “light and life” of all men.

Worksheet

Send worksheets home with students, or, if you have the time, work on them together as a class. The first part focuses on some of the statements John makes about Jesus and who He is. On the second part, which involves writing a letter to someone who does not know about Jesus, students may have all kinds of ideas about what is important for others to know about Him. Hopefully, some will reflect things you've talked about during this lesson (Jesus is God; He made everything; He has always lived). Some may want to talk about Jesus' death, or about His love, or about our need of a Savior. All of these answers are good as well. If any of the children have friends who don't know Christ, you might encourage them to give them letters such as the ones they've written.

Related Music

“Fairest Lord Jesus” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #170).

STUDENT WORKSHEET

JESUS - THE WORD OF GOD

1. **Fill in the missing letters.** Each of the following sentences is missing one particular letter. Fill in the missing letters to learn what John has to say about Jesus.

Jesus is the Wor__ of Go__.

Jesus is the C__eato__.

Jesus is the __ight and __ife of a__ __ men.

Jesus has lived from the be__innin__.

Jesus can give us p__wer t__ bec__me the children of G__d.

2. John begins his letter, the Gospel of John, by explaining that Jesus is not just a man. He is God the Son. If you were writing a letter to someone who doesn't know Jesus, what do you think would be important for you to tell that person? Write your own ideas in the space below.

Dear _____,

Sincerely, _____

MEMORY VERSE

John 1:1 - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK

John 1:35-2:11

Lesson Aim

To show how Jesus' words and actions in His early ministry proved He was the promised Messiah.

Memory Verse

John 3:3 - "In reply Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.'"

Lesson Background

When you read and study John 1:35-2:11, it is interesting to note how Jesus deals individually with each of the disciples. Philip obeys a simple "Follow me." Andrew and John are convinced after spending an evening with Jesus. Nathanael is tougher to convince, but makes a grand confession when he realizes that Jesus knows all about him. And Jesus has wonderful words of encouragement for Peter, a man who is very much aware of his own sin and shortcomings (see Luke 5:8). Jesus also deals with each of your students as individuals, and we cannot expect them to respond to these lessons in the same way. Even the ones who are the least enthusiastic may be listening carefully. And for some, these lessons may bear fruit only after many years have passed. Let's be thankful for the promise that God's Word is powerful, life-changing, and will not return to Him empty (Isaiah 55:11).

Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by explaining to your students that God had promised to send a Savior - the "Messiah" - to Israel. This promise was made to Moses, David, Isaiah, and many others throughout the years. Israel was waiting for the Promised One to come. Jesus was waiting as well. For about thirty years He had been living the quiet life of a normal man, working as a carpenter. He was waiting for the time to be right to begin His work of preaching, teaching, healing - and later, dying for His people. But now the wait is over. Jesus' work is begun!

1. Jesus' First Disciples.

A. Andrew, John, and Simon Peter

Read John 1:35-40. Explain that when John the Baptist's disciples heard him call Jesus "the Lamb of God," they knew John was saying that Jesus was the Promised One sent from God. These two disciples (believed by most scholars to be Andrew and John) quietly began to follow Jesus. Perhaps they were shy or afraid, but it is Jesus who had to make the first move. He asked them what they wanted and invited them to spend the evening with Him. "We don't know what they talked about, but it must have been quite something, because Andrew, one of the two disciples, left Jesus convinced that He was the promised Savior!" Then read verses 40-42 and discuss how Jesus already knew about Simon, even before He met him, because as God He knows all men. He gave Simon the name "Cephas" or "Peter," which means "rock" or "stone." He knew that one day Simon Peter would become a leader in the church, a true "rock" of faith.

"The Bible says 'the first thing Andrew did' was to find Peter. Do you think he was excited to tell him about Jesus? Why do you think he went to his brother first of all?" Help students to see that the news about Jesus was good news - life-changing news! - and that Andrew wanted to share it with the people he loved.

B. Philip and Nathanael

Next read John 1:44-50. Perhaps Philip learned about Jesus from Andrew and Peter or perhaps he met Him in a different way. He is given a direct call from the Savior to follow Him. Again, he cannot keep the good news to himself; he goes to find Nathanael. "Nathanael at first doesn't seem ready to hear about a Savior from Nazareth. Perhaps he knew that the Savior, according to the prophets, was supposed to come from Bethlehem. Or maybe he just didn't like people from Nazareth! But when he finds out what Jesus knows about him, then he is 'all ears'! What did Jesus know about Nathanael before He even met him? What does Nathanael then say about Jesus? Does he now believe in Jesus? What does Jesus promise him he'll see someday as well?" Nathanael would be witness to Jesus' teaching, miracles, resurrection (John 21:2), and ascension - and of angels, too (Acts 1:10-11).

2. Jesus' First Miracle

A. The Situation

Read John 2:1-5. Jesus and His disciples were invited to a wedding in Galilee. Perhaps it was a relative's wedding, since Mary was there, too. Explain that weddings were quite different in Jesus' time. "The wedding feast was very important; the groom invited his guests to either his home or his parents' home for several days of feasting. Sometimes the feast lasted for a week! To run out of wine during the feast was serious; it meant you were a poor host, and was very embarrassing. Also, there would be nothing else to drink, since all they usually drank was water or wine."

Mary becomes aware of the wine shortage and seems to understand that Jesus can do something about it. She tells her son what has happened, clearly expecting Him to act. Note Jesus' response: "Jesus understands that His mother wants Him to help, but He is gently reminding her that He is not *just* her son. He has a work to do and a time to do it, and she must not interfere with that work. He alone will decide what needs to be done and how to do it." [NOTE: The NIV translates Jesus' response as "dear woman"; others translate it simply "woman." Be sure to let students know this is not a disrespectful term. Perhaps Jesus used this to emphasize His relationship to Mary as her Lord rather than His familial relationship as her son, to bring home the point that she is to let go and allow Him to act on His own.] Mary seems to understand this gentle rebuke, and although she still hopes He will act, she tells the servants to "do whatever He tells you," knowing that Jesus must be allowed total control of the situation.

B. How Jesus Responds

Read verses 6-11. Discuss with your students the quiet nature of this miracle. Jesus could have caused quite a stir by performing this first miracle more publicly. But that, of course, would have drawn attention to the lack of wine - an embarrassment to His host. As it was, only His mother, the servants, and His disciples knew what had happened.

Notice also the banquet master's response [the banquet master was something like a "best man" today and had the responsibility of supervising the wedding feast]: "The master of the banquet says that Jesus' wine - the wine He made out of water - is the best wine of all. Jesus always gives what is best! He gives us eternal life, perfect peace, abundant joy - and so much more! No wonder His wine is the best. He does all things well!"

C. The Effect of the Miracle on His Disciples

Read verse 11 again. The disciples saw His glory in this first miracle and it helped them put their faith and trust completely in Him. "So we see that Jesus' words and actions made the disciples believe that He was truly God's promised Savior. Andrew and John believed that first evening when they heard Jesus speak. Nathanael believed when he found out Jesus knew all about him. And they were all even more convinced when they saw Jesus turn water into wine! This was the one whom Israel was waiting for! This was God's promised Savior!"

“Do you think Jesus chose to turn the water into wine just to prove Himself to His disciples? Or do you think He cared about making the wedding feast a joyful celebration? What does this tell you about Jesus?” Lead your students to see that Jesus cares about people and about bringing them joy. But He wants to bring them true joy - the everlasting joy that comes from knowing Him.

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by reminding the students that Jesus’ words and actions show He is the Savior for whom Israel had been waiting. His disciples saw His glory and their faith in Him was strengthened.

Worksheet

If you have a good-sized class and some extra time, you may wish to play the “Who Am I?” game with the list of people on the worksheet. If necessary, you could add extra names to the list, like John the Baptist and the banquet master. Simply pin or tape one of the names on the back of each student. The student may not see the name on his back, although he can see the names on the others. Take each student in turn and give him three clues, one clue at a time, until he guesses the name on his back. For example, clues for the name “Peter” might be “My brother Andrew brought me to Jesus,” “Jesus gave me a new name,” “My name means ‘rock’ or ‘stone.’” After all the names are guessed, filling out the first part of the worksheet will be easy!

Related Music

“I Will Make You Fishers of Men”; “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #679).

STUDENT WORKSHEET

JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK

1. **Who Am I???** Match the names below to the sentences that describe them.

Mary

Andrew

Servants

Peter

Philip

Nathanael

“My brother Andrew brought me to Jesus.” _____

“I told Jesus that all the wine was gone.” _____

“I told Nathanael that we had found the Promised One.” _____

“We followed Jesus’ directions and turned water into wine.” _____

“I spent an evening with Jesus that changed my life.” _____

“Jesus knew all about me even before we met.” _____

2. **What if . . .** you were one of the servants at the wedding, and Jesus asked you to serve wine out of water jugs; what would you be thinking?

How would you feel after the banquet master said it was the best wine of all?

Would it be hard for you to keep the miracle a secret? _____

MEMORY VERSE

John 3:3 - “In reply Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth; no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.’”

JESUS AND NICODEMUS

John 3:1-21

Lesson Aim

To understand the meaning and necessity of the new birth.

Memory Verse

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

Lesson Background

Nicodemus, a religious leader and teacher of Israel, found it difficult to understand what Jesus was trying to tell him. "How can these things be?" he asked, and we can imagine the bewildered expression on his face. Although we talk about the "simple Gospel," the fact is that no one can understand these truths without the help of the Holy Spirit. "This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Holy Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:13-14). Let's remember to pray for our students that the Holy Spirit will open their spiritual understanding and reveal Himself to them. Only He has the power to save souls and change lives through our teaching.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by setting the scene for today's passage for your students. "Imagine that you are one of Jesus' disciples. It has been a long, busy day, but now the work is over. You are sitting with Jesus on the flat rooftop of a house, enjoying the coolness of the evening. But this evening you have an important guest - one of the most important men in Israel! A man who sits on the Jewish ruling council has come to visit Jesus. His name is Nicodemus, and he is a Pharisee. He has spent his life studying and teaching the Scriptures. But Nicodemus has heard many strange things about Jesus, and he knows that Jesus' words and miracles show the power of God at work. He wants to know who Jesus is and what He teaches, and so he comes to Jesus with many questions. Let's imagine as we read this that we are sitting with Jesus and Nicodemus and listening to them speak."

1. Jesus Tells Nicodemus He Must Be Born Again

Read John 3:1-3. Discuss with students how politely Nicodemus addresses Jesus (as "Rabbi") and how he seems to be impressed by Jesus' words and actions. Also note Jesus' response.

A. The Necessity of the New Birth

Jesus doesn't just want to "chit-chat." He knows what is on Nicodemus' mind. He gets to the most important matter of all. "Nicodemus," he says, "no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "That 'no one' includes a man like Nicodemus - a good man, a religious man, a man who knows all the Scriptures. Even he cannot see the kingdom of God without being born again." Read verse 4. "Does Nicodemus understand what Jesus is saying? What does he think Jesus means by being 'born again'? Do you think that was what Jesus meant?" Show students that this "new birth" is not a physical birth, but a spiritual birth.

B. The Explanation of the New Birth

Read verses 5-7. Explain that Jesus is showing that He is talking about two different kinds of births. The first birth is a physical birth. "Flesh gives birth to flesh," and that is what happened when your mother gave birth to you. That is when your life began. You were a new little person. But being born again is a birth from the Holy Spirit. It happens when God gives you a new life, with a new heart and a new Spirit. When someone is born again he also has a new life. He is also a new person. But now he lives to love and serve the Lord Jesus and to obey His will."

Jesus is telling Nicodemus that everyone who enters God's kingdom must have two births. The first, of course, is his physical birth when he is just a baby. The second birth is from the Holy Spirit, and it happens when the Spirit gives us a new life in Jesus Christ and a new heart to love and serve Him.

Ask your students the following questions: "Did you decide to be born? Who made that decision? [God, your parents] What did you have to do with it? What about the new birth? Who makes that happen?" Lead students to see that their spiritual birth, just like their physical birth, is in the Lord's hands. It is a work of the Spirit of God and has nothing to do with their good works, their merit, or their sincere hearts. Maybe that's why Nicodemus had such a hard time understanding and accepting this teaching.

2. Jesus Tells Nicodemus He Must Believe in the Son of God

Read verses 9-12. Nicodemus still doesn't understand what Jesus is telling him. Jesus reminds him that he is supposed to be Israel's teacher, but his spiritual understanding is faulty because he will not accept Jesus' testimony. "Nicodemus *cannot* understand what Jesus is saying because he will not believe it. He has always believed and always taught that those who follow God's law will go to heaven. But now Jesus is saying that only those who are born again will see the kingdom of God. No wonder he has a hard time believing!"

"Nicodemus' problem is not that he is not smart. It's not that he hasn't studied. Nicodemus' problem is faith - he needs to believe that Jesus is God's Son." Read verse 13-18. Show that Nicodemus should believe in Jesus because:

- He has come from heaven itself (verse 13)
- God the Father has sent Him to save the world from condemnation (verses 16-18)
- Jesus would suffer to save the world from condemnation (verses 14-15)

"What is promised to those who believe in Jesus? Is there another way to have eternal life? What happens to those who do not believe in Jesus?" Show students that only those who believe in Jesus will be saved; all others must perish (verse 18).

3. Jesus Tells Nicodemus He Must Come into the Light

Nicodemus has a problem with unbelief that stems from a sinful heart. Read verses 19-21. "Jesus is showing Nicodemus that his heart is sinful, and that is why he will not believe. He would rather stay in the darkness than come into God's light where his sin can be seen. Poor Nicodemus! He wants to get into heaven his way - by obeying God's law. But Jesus is showing him he can never obey God's law perfectly because he is a sinner. 'Nicodemus,' He is saying, 'you must repent of your sins and come into the light of God's truth. You need to believe I am God's Son. You need to believe I will suffer and die for your sins so that you may have everlasting life. Then you will not be afraid of the light because your sins will be forgiven. Then you will know that you have been born again.'"

"Do you think it would have been easy for a man like Nicodemus to admit he was a sinner? Why or why not? Deep down in his heart, however, do you think he knew it was true?" Show students that we must admit and repent of our sinfulness in order to be saved - otherwise, what would Jesus have to save us from?

Read John 19:38-42. It was difficult for Nicodemus to believe what Jesus had said to him that night, but deep in his heart he knew it was true. He struggled with these things for years, but in the end he too became a follower of Jesus. He and Joseph of Arimathea lovingly prepared Jesus' body for burial. Nicodemus brought seventy-five pounds of a myrrh and aloe mixture - the amount used in royal burials. This was one way that he could declare his love for his Lord and his belief that Jesus truly was "the king of the Jews" and the Son of God.

Conclusion

Stress to your students the importance of the new birth. “Jesus’ talk with Nicodemus shows us that it doesn’t matter how good or religious a person tries to be. We can only enter heaven by being born again. We need to put our trust in Jesus and in what He has done for us through His death and resurrection. We need to repent of our sins and come into the light of truth. Then we can know that the Holy Spirit has given us new life in Christ. Then we will know that we are born again.” Let your students know that you are willing to talk with them after class about any questions they might have about their salvation. Remind them that nothing is as important as making certain that they belong to God.

Worksheet

Part two of the worksheet shows the similarities between our physical births and the new birth. Here are some suggestions of ways that new Christians are like babies: they need to grow, they need to be taught many things, they have a new family, they are beginning new lives, etc.

Related Music

“The Light of the World is Jesus” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #476)

STUDENT WORKSHEET

JESUS AND NICODEMUS

1. **TRUE OR FALSE?** Which of these sentences are true? Put a “T” for “true” in front of the true sentences, and an “F” for “false” in front of the others.

- ___ 1. Nicodemus came to Jesus in the evening.
- ___ 2. Jesus told Nicodemus he was good enough for the kingdom of God.
- ___ 3. Jesus said, “You must be born again.”
- ___ 4. Nicodemus completely understood what Jesus was saying.
- ___ 5. Jesus told Nicodemus to believe in the Son of God.
- ___ 6. Jesus told Nicodemus to repent of his sins and come into the light.
- ___ 7. Nicodemus never became a follower of Jesus.

2. **BABY TALK . . .** When a newborn baby comes into the world, he sees light for the first time. He is a new life - a new member of a family. In what ways is a new Christian just a “baby” in Christ?

Who is his new family? _____

MEMORY VERSE

John 3:16 - “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.”

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

John 4:1-42

Lesson Aim

To see that Jesus loves and cares for sinners and that He reaches out to save them.

Memory Verse

John 4:14 - "But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water, welling up to eternal life."

Lesson Background

In *The Silver Chair* (from *The Chronicles of Narnia*), C.S. Lewis describes the first meeting between Aslan the Lion and a girl named Jill (Aslan symbolizes our Lord, the "Lion of Judah").

"Are you not thirsty?" said the Lion.

"I'm dying of thirst," said Jill.

"Then drink," said the Lion. . .

"Will you promise not to - do anything to me if I do come?" said Jill.

"I make no promise," said the Lion. . .

"I daren't come and drink," said Jill.

"Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion.

"Oh, dear!" said Jill, coming another step nearer. "I suppose I must go and look for another stream then."

"There is no other stream," said the Lion.

Truly there is “no other stream,” and our students will die of thirst unless they drink of Christ, the Living Water. Today’s lesson, like last week’s, provides a wonderful opportunity to present the Gospel. Let’s be certain to let our students know that Christ is just as available, just as willing to save them, as He was willing to save the Samaritan woman.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by asking your students for their definitions of a “snob.” Then ask them how they feel when someone acts snobby toward them. Does it make them feel hurt? angry? less confident? Do they like snobs? “We would probably call the Jews of Jesus’ day ‘snobs.’ The Jewish leaders had added all kinds of traditions to God’s law - traditions that they said must be obeyed even though God never gave them such rules. The Jewish leaders said that Jews should not associate with Samaritans because the Samaritans didn’t worship God the way they should. They said that if a Jew drank from a cup that was touched by a Samaritan, he was unclean! Many of the Jewish leaders also looked down on women. A Jewish religious leader almost never spoke to a woman in public; they thought it was ‘beneath them!’”

“But Jesus was one Jewish teacher who didn’t live by these traditions. He knew these were just man-made rules that had nothing to do with pleasing God. Jesus wasn’t interested in man-made rules; He was interested in people - people who needed to be saved from their sins. Let’s take a look at how Jesus reached out one day to save a woman from her sins.”

1. Jesus Takes Time to Speak with a Samaritan Woman

Read John 4:1-9 as a class. If you have a good map of Palestine in Jesus’ time, you could point out the route of Jesus’ journey from Judea to Galilee and show how Samaria lies between the two areas. Remind your students that good Jews did not have dealings with Samaritans, so many Jews would go out of their way to avoid Samaria by crossing the Jordan and walking on the east side of the river. But Jesus was not averse to walking through Samaria!

As Jesus and His disciples pass through Samaria, Jesus is left alone to rest by the side of a well while His disciples go into the village to buy food. A woman approaches the well and is shocked to hear Jesus address her. “The Samaritan woman is shocked because she can tell (possibly from His dress or even His accent) that Jesus is a Jew. Why would a Jew speak to her? She is a Samaritan. She is a woman. Why would He ask her for a drink if drinking from her vessel would make Him unclean? Shouldn’t He just be ignoring her?”

Read verse 10. Discuss with students that Jesus knows all about this woman and her need of salvation. He has made this stop in Samaria so that He can talk to her, and later, to other Samaritans in the town of Sychar. We see from this passage how much Jesus cares about people - not just large crowds of people that He can teach, but individual people like Nicodemus and like this woman at the well. “Jesus doesn’t care whether a person is male or female, rich or poor, or black or white. He cares about what’s on the inside. How do you think He feels when we judge someone by the color of his skin or the clothes he wears or the way he talks? Do you think that pleases Him?” When we follow Jesus’ example, we will treat all people with love and respect regardless of the ways in which they are different from us.

2. **Jesus Declares that He has “Living Water”**

Read verses 10-14. Jesus begins this conversation by making a statement designed to draw out this woman’s curiosity. He offers the woman “living water.” Like Nicodemus, the woman misunderstands His meaning; how can He give her water when He has no vessel to draw water from the well? But Jesus explains to her that His water isn’t from this well.

In verses 13-14, Jesus explains how His water is different. “People who drink water from this well, or any other kind of water, are going to get thirsty again, aren’t they? But Jesus is talking about a different kind of water - a ‘spiritual’ water that quenches a ‘spiritual’ thirst. The water that Jesus is offering is eternal life - life that only He can give! If this woman came to Him for forgiveness and eternal life, Jesus would fill her soul with this life, satisfying her fully and completely. What a wonderful gift He is offering to her!” The woman is excited by the offer, but she still doesn’t understand. She thinks Jesus is offering her some kind of magic water that will quench all of her physical thirsting (verse 15). Jesus now must show her how great her spiritual need is for “living water” to help her understand.

Read verses 16-18. Discuss with your students how Jesus pinpoints the great sin in this woman’s life and the nature of that sin. “Jesus is showing this woman that she doesn’t need water to quench her physical thirst. She needs ‘living water’ to save her soul. She has sinned against God’s law, and therefore she is under God’s wrath. Jesus is offering her a way to escape that wrath by turning from her sins and trusting in Him. ‘You are on a path that leads to death,’ Jesus is saying. ‘Come to me and I will give you eternal life.’”

“Was Jesus being mean when He brought up the subject of this woman’s sinfulness? Did He do this to hurt the woman’s feelings or did He do it to help her?” Show your students that Jesus needed to show the woman her sinfulness in order for her to understand that her soul was in danger. Even though she probably didn’t want to discuss the subject, it was necessary for the salvation of her soul.

3. **Jesus Proclaims that He is the Messiah**

Read verses 19-26. The woman is clearly impressed by Jesus’ knowledge of her life, but she also clearly does not want to talk about it. She tries to change the subject by arguing with Jesus. Jesus, however, will not argue with her over the proper place of worship, but instead says that true worshipers must now worship God in Spirit and in truth, therefore making the location of worship of no importance.

In verse 26, Jesus proclaims that He is indeed the Messiah, the Promised One who will explain all things. This is the only time other than His trial when Jesus made such a claim. Perhaps because the Samaritans thought of the Messiah as a teacher and not a political deliverer, or because His eventual enemies, the Jewish leaders, stayed far away from Samaria, He was able to reveal His true identity more freely.

Next read verses 27-30 and 39-42. The Samaritan woman realizes that this news is too big for her to keep to herself. She tells the whole town about Jesus, the man who told her “everything I did.” The townspeople come to hear Jesus because of her testimony, but they believe in Jesus when they hear Him for themselves. Although the disciples are puzzled by Jesus’ willingness to speak to the Samaritan woman, they soon see the harvest of souls He has reaped in the town of Sychar. “What is the first thing the woman does when she learns who Jesus is? Who does that

remind you of?” Remind your students that Andrew and Philip also went out to find their friends and tell them about Jesus. This woman was not called to be one of Jesus’ disciples, but she still bore witness for Him in her home town.

Jesus came into the world so that “whoever believed on Him might be saved.” He reaches out to save sinners, offering them eternal life if they repent of their sins and follow Him. Remind your students that He is offering this life to them as well, and let them know that you are available to discuss this further with any one of them if they would like to do so.

Worksheet

In part 2 of the worksheet, help your students to see that “living water” brings eternal life, cleanses us from sin, and satisfies our inner longings for peace with God.

Related Music

“There’s a River of Life” (“I’ve Got a River of Life”); “Nothing But the Blood” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #307)

STUDENT WORKSHEET

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

1. **WHICH CAME FIRST?** The sentences below tell this week's lesson, but in the wrong order. What happened first? Put a "1" by the sentence that shows what happened first. Then number the rest of the sentences 2-8 to put them in the right order.

- ___ Jesus told the woman He had "living water."
- ___ The disciples were surprised to hear Jesus speaking to a Samaritan woman.
- ___ Jesus sat down by the well in a town of Samaria.
- ___ Jesus told the woman about her sinful life.
- ___ A woman was surprised when Jesus spoke to her.
- ___ The woman brought others to hear Jesus speak.
- ___ Jesus told the woman He was the Messiah.
- ___ Many people believed in Jesus after they heard Him speak.

2. **"WATER" WE SAYING???** Water is necessary for life, for washing, and for quenching thirst. Jesus said God's grace could give the Samaritan woman "living water." How could "living water" help this woman? What kind of life could it give her?

What could it wash away? _____

What desires could it "quench?" _____

MEMORY VERSE

John 4:14 - "But whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water, welling up to eternal life."

THE HEALING AT BETHESDA

John 5:1-30

Lesson Aim

To show that Jesus has the power and authority of God.

Memory Verse

John 5:24 - "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

Lesson Background

Talk about your bad days! First Jesus graciously heals an invalid man - a man who doesn't ask for healing and who walks away without bothering to get Jesus' name. Then the Jews miss the point of the miracle altogether and become angry because one of their Sabbath rules is broken. Finally, when Jesus confronts them with the truth, they decide they want to kill Him more than ever! So much for being loved and appreciated!

Sometimes teaching a Sunday School class can be a thankless job. You may wonder if it's worth it to prepare and teach a lesson every week. Take heart - you are probably appreciated more than you know. But even if no one here on earth is noticing your efforts, you can be sure our Lord notices. As our lesson this week reminds us, He will be the one to judge our lives. How wonderful to hear Him say someday, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by discussing with your students the meanings of the words “power” and “authority.” “Today we’re going to talk about power and authority. I’m sure you all know what power is, but what is ‘authority’? Authority is a special kind of power that gives a person the right to judge or command. For example, a police officer has the authority to write a speeding ticket - he has the right to decide if you were going too fast. A judge has the authority to command you to pay your ticket. Parents, teachers, principals, judges, presidents and kings - they all have different kinds of authority. But God has the greatest authority of all, because He judges and commands the whole earth!”

1. Jesus Heals an Invalid at the Pool of Bethesda

A. The Situation at the Pool of Bethesda

Read John 5:1-5. We do not know the exact nature of the invalid man’s condition. We do know it was probably some form of paralysis or lameness that prevented him from getting to the pool quickly.

Although verse 5 is not included in some of the most reliable manuscripts of the Bible, it is believed it was added to the account later to explain why the sick and crippled were gathered at the pool. Certainly verse 7 shows that the invalid man was waiting at the pool to be healed, and that healing took place when the water was stirred, so it seems reasonable to assume that the information in verse 5 is accurate. “There was nothing the doctors could do for this invalid man. There was nothing the religious leaders could do. His only hope was to wait by the pool until the water was stirred and hope for a miracle. But this also seemed hopeless; how could he ever be the first in the water in his condition?” Discuss with your students the fact that a crippled man in these times had no way of earning a living except by begging. He was totally dependent on the charity of others.

B. Jesus Chooses to Heal the Invalid Man

Read verses 6-13. It is interesting to note that the pool was surrounded by blind, lame, and paralyzed people, but Jesus chose to heal this man and only this man. Why this man? Was it because of his great faith? Certainly not, since he didn’t even know who Jesus was (verse 13). Was it because he was such a good man? No again, for Jesus gives him a serious warning to discontinue his sins (verse 14). Jesus’ choice can only be explained as an act of His sovereign will in all such matters.

“Jesus asks the man if he wants to be healed. The man does, but he is looking for healing in the wrong place. In his mind, the only way to be healed was to have someone carry him quickly to the water as soon as it was stirred and set him down into the pool. He didn’t realize the power of the one to whom he was speaking. Jesus only had to speak and the man’s body was totally healed! The man contributed nothing - not even faith. In fact, he didn’t even ask Jesus to heal him! Jesus just chose to do so. Jesus’ words were so powerful - He could heal by speaking, He could control the wind and the waves, He could even raise the dead. In the first chapter of Genesis, we are told about something God did just by speaking. What was it? What does that say about the power that Jesus had?” God

created our universe with the power of His words. In fact, the first chapter of John tells us that Jesus created all things. His words show He has the power of God. As the great Creator of the human body, He was perfectly capable of healing it as well.

2. Jewish Opposition to Jesus

Read verses 9-16 with your students. Remind your students that the Jewish religious leaders had added their own traditions and rules to God's law. They had a special rule about carrying loads on the Sabbath, and the invalid man broke this rule by carrying his mat-bed. "Instead of being happy because this man was finally healed, these religious leaders only cared about their rule being broken. They cared more about their rules than about people. When they discovered that Jesus had healed this man on the Sabbath and had told him to pick up his mat-bed, they were very angry. How did this man dare to break their rules this way?"

Now read verses 17-18. As if the Jews were not already mad enough, Jesus angers them further by stating that "My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working." The Jews rightly recognized that this statement meant that Jesus was claiming to be God's equal. Part of the problem was that Jesus had said "My Father" instead of "our Father," denoting a special relationship between Him and the Father. Because of His statement, the Jews "tried all the harder to kill Him." "Do you think the Jewish leaders missed the point of Jesus' miracle? What should they have been thinking about after He healed this man? What were they thinking instead?" Jesus' miracle clearly showed the power and authority of God, but the Jews missed this point entirely. They found in the miracle only more reason to hate the Lord.

3. Jesus Declares that He Has the Power and Authority of God

Read verses 19-30. Now Jesus begins to show the Jews the extent of His power and authority. He very plainly states that, yes, He is God's equal, by showing that He has the power and authority to do those things that only God can do. In short, He shows them that He is God. In this section of Scripture, Jesus makes four statements that make Him equal with God:

- The Son gives life even as the Father gives life (verses 21, 26)
- The Son is given the power and authority to judge the world (verses 22, 25, 27-30)
- The Son must be honored just as the Father is honored (verse 23)
- The Son has the power to save souls for eternity (verse 24)

The Jews would have found any one of these statements to be blasphemous. Jesus doesn't seem to want to appease them at all! But His words are designed to shake them up. In verse 39 He states, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." These people knew what the Scriptures had to say about the Messiah. They had seen the miracles that testified of Jesus' power and authority. They had heard Him speak. Their eternal souls were at stake, yet they refused to repent of their sins and come to Him. How sad! "Jesus says that He has the power to give life, judge the world, and save souls. He says He has the right to be honored as God. These would be very wicked things for Him to say - unless what? Who is Jesus claiming to be?" Jesus is claiming to have the power and authority of God, and that makes Him no less than God Himself.

Conclusion

Since Jesus has all power and authority, He is the one to whom we must come. If we come to Him for salvation, He has the power to save our souls. If we reject Him, He has the authority to judge us after death. Remind your students of the importance of being certain that they belong to Christ.

Worksheet

If you have a blackboard in your classroom, you might like to write the “secret word” on that. Have a student come up and fill in the letters as they go. The answers to the first part are: pool, walk, name, rules, God. The secret word is “power.”

Related Music

“Rejoice, the Lord is King!” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #310); “Majesty” (“Worship His Majesty”)

STUDENT WORKSHEET

THE HEALING AT BETHESDA

1. **WHAT'S THE SECRET WORD?** Fill in the missing words in the sentences below to retell today's lesson. Then use the numbered letters to find out the secret word!

Jesus saw the invalid at the ₁ of Bethesda.

Jesus made the man able to ₃ .

The invalid didn't know Jesus' ₄.

Jews were angry because Jesus broke one of their ₅ .

Jesus proved He had the power and authority of ₂ .

SECRET WORD:

1 2 3 4 5

2. **POWER PLAYS**

This lesson talks about different kinds of power. Who is the man in this story with little or no power? _____

Who was the man with all the power? _____

Who wanted to have the most power and have all men obey them? _____

Do you think the Jews were angry with Jesus just because He broke their rules, or do you think they were mad because their power and authority were questioned? _____

MEMORY VERSE

John 5:24 - "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

JESUS - THE BREAD OF LIFE

John 6

Lesson Aim

To see that Jesus, as the Bread of Life, is the source of eternal life and satisfaction.

Memory Verse

John 6:35 - "Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.'"

Lesson Background

In *The Maranatha Messenger* Mark Webb writes, "Suppose they had only found four loaves instead of five. Would this have meant that a thousand of those present would have gone unfed? Of course not! It really wouldn't have made any difference whether they scrounged up five loaves . . . or only one loaf. Christ was quite capable of multiplying sufficiently whatever was set before Him. Yet, at the same time, He did demand that they place all they had in His hands! . . . If we would see His mighty power at work, all must be committed to Him" ("New Math," March/April 1992). Let's resolve as Sunday School teachers to give our "all" when it comes to preparing and teaching our classes, and let's also be certain to leave the results in His hands, knowing that He is capable of using what we can give Him for the kingdom's sake.

Lesson Procedure

The miracle of the feeding of the five thousand is recorded in all four Gospels - the only one of Jesus' miracles to appear in all four (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17). The accounts in Matthew and Mark stress that Jesus was teaching the multitude and healing the sick because He "had compassion" on them. Mark writes that "they were like sheep without a shepherd" (6:34). Christ's generous and caring heart is seen in this miracle, as well as His ability to provide for every need.

1. Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

Read John 6:1-11. Luke's account of this miracle tells us that it occurred late in the afternoon. Jesus had been teaching in an isolated place on a mountainside. The people were probably already hungry, and there was no place to get food and no money to buy it. It seemed the people would have to be sent away hungry. But Jesus isn't limited by locations or lack of money. He took what was available - a young boy's lunch of five small barley loaves and two fishes - and fed the hungry multitude. The five thousand people spoken of here is the number of men present; the women and children are not numbered, so we can guess that at least ten thousand probably were fed.

Read verses 12-15. Jesus more than met the needs of the people. The disciples gathered twelve baskets of leftovers just from the five barley loaves (no one would have wanted to save the remaining fish overnight!). "That day, Jesus showed that God had the power to meet the needs of His people. God never stops short. He never 'squeaks by.' He is able to give us 'more than all we ask or imagine' (Ephesians 3:20). Jesus could have sent these people home hungry. Even if they didn't have anything to eat at home, missing one meal probably wouldn't have hurt them. But He cared about their hunger and He cared about their needs. What does that tell you about Jesus? Is He concerned about our daily needs? Can we come to Him with little things as well as big things?" Lead students to see that Jesus wants them to come to Him with their needs. He is not a "fairy godmother" who grants our every wish, but our genuine concerns are His concerns, too, whether they are family problems, problems at school, or material needs.

2. Crowds Follow Jesus for More Bread

After Jesus fed them with bread, the multitude was ready to make Jesus king by force. Then they would never have to worry about going hungry again! Jesus, realizing this, "gave them the slip" by withdrawing to a mountain, and later by crossing the lake without a ship. The next day the crowd searched for Him and figured out He must be in Capernaum, so they looked for Him there.

Read verses 25-29. The multitude was eager to find Jesus - not to hear Him speak or learn more about God's kingdom, but to have their bellies filled with more bread. "Jesus wants the people to understand that there is something more important than just filling their stomachs. He is the Son of Man! He has been sent from God! He can give them eternal life! But all these people can think about is food. Jesus says, 'Do not work for food that spoils.' Bread will last for just a little while, but Jesus can give them eternal life if they believe in Him."

Next read verses 30-34. The crowd grows defensive at Jesus' rebuke. If He wants them to believe that He is the Promised One, then He should give them more bread. After all, Moses gave the Israelites manna from heaven. Isn't the Messiah supposed to be greater than Moses? Again, Jesus tries to turn their attention to more important things. "Jesus reminds the people that God gave

them manna, not Moses. And now God was giving them something else - something much more important than just bread. He was giving them His Son, who would give life to the world. Do you think it would have been hard for Jesus to have given more bread to the people? What did Jesus think was more important - making the people happy or showing them the way to eternal life? What did the people seem to think was more important?" Show your students that Jesus really cared about these people, and He didn't want to mislead them. They needed to be saved, and believing Jesus' message was the only way they could be saved. He was telling them things they needed to hear.

3. Jesus Declares that He is the Bread of Life

Verse 35 contains the first of the seven "I AM" statements that Jesus makes about Himself in the Gospel of John. As the "bread of life" and the "bread from heaven," Jesus will satisfy the spiritual hunger of His people. "Jesus says He is the 'bread of life.' Just as people need food to go on living, people need Jesus for eternal life. Regular bread can keep you alive, but Jesus, the bread of life, does more than that. He gives eternal life to all who believe on Him. And Jesus, as the bread of life, is more satisfying than regular bread. When we believe in Him, He satisfies our longings for God and for salvation. He gives us peace and joy for living."

Read verses 41-51. Like the manna that the Israelites ate in the wilderness, Jesus is from heaven. But there is a big difference between manna and the bread of life. "The people thought that if Jesus was the Messiah, He should be able to feed them manna from heaven like Moses did. But Jesus tells them that He is the bread from heaven. He came down from heaven to offer them eternal life. 'The people who ate manna in the wilderness died,' He reminds them, 'but those who believe in me will have everlasting life!'"

In verses 52-59, Jesus goes on to show the Jews that bringing eternal life to believers was going to cost Him something - His own life. "When Jesus said that His flesh was the bread of life, and that believers must eat His flesh and drink His blood to have life, He was showing them what their salvation would cost. Jesus was going to have to die for the sins of His people. He was going to have to take the punishment for those sins. The people didn't understand Him. They thought He was talking about really eating His body. They didn't understand that He was speaking of His death." This saying was so difficult to accept that many of Jesus' followers left Him after this (verse 66). The twelve He had chosen to be His special companions, however, recognized that Jesus was the only source of truth and life, and followed Him even when others turned away.

Conclusion

Jesus, the bread of life, is the source of eternal satisfaction. He is able to meet our physical needs and our inner, spiritual needs. Encourage your students to take the bread of life by coming to Jesus for salvation.

Worksheet

Part 1 of the worksheet reviews the first six lessons of this quarter. In part 2, students are asked to write down ways in which bread and water are alike (both go into the body, both are necessary for life, our bodies desire both, etc.), and ways in which living water and the bread of life are alike (both are necessary for eternal life, both are given by Jesus, both satisfy our heart's desires, etc.).

Related Music

“Fill My Cup, Lord” (“Like the Woman at the Well”); “Break Thou the Bread of Life” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #146).

STUDENT WORKSHEET

JESUS - THE BREAD OF LIFE

1. REVIEW. Draw a line from the statements at the left to the people they describe on the right.

Came one evening to talk to Jesus	Peter
Was healed by Jesus at the Pool of Bethesda	Jesus
Was brought by his brother to Jesus	Nicodemus
Wants us to know that Jesus is God Himself	Invalid
Jesus offered her living water	John
Said He was the bread of life	Samaritan woman

2. FOOD AND DRINK

Jesus says that He is Living Water and the Bread of Life. What do water and bread have in common? _____

What do you think Living Water and the Bread of Life have in common? _____

MEMORY VERSE

John 6:35 - "Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.'"

JESUS TEACHES AT THE FEAST

John 7-8

Lesson Aim

To examine Jesus' claim to be the Messiah and the Son of God and the Jewish opposition to His message.

Memory Verse

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.'"

Lesson Background

John 7 and 8 show the growing opposition to Jesus and His message. John reminds us at least ten times in these chapters of the threats against Jesus' life (7:1,13,19,25,30,32,44; 8:37,40,59). These two chapters also clearly show us who Jesus claimed to be. His remarkable statement in 8:58, "Before Abraham was born, I am!" is Jesus' affirmation of His deity. He does not say "I was" (which in itself would speak of His pre-existence before birth), but "I am," the name Jehovah gave Himself when speaking to Moses. This shows the oneness of Christ with the Father and His eternal existence. The Jews understood this and sought to stone Him for this "blasphemy." Let's make certain our students understand that Jesus Himself claimed to be God, the light of the world, and our only hope of salvation. These are the things Jesus taught about Himself - not just things men have dreamed up about Him, as some have suggested.

Because this lesson covers two long chapters, we will be hitting only the highlights - especially in chapter eight. Read both chapters together in their entirety so that you will have an understanding of their continuity before you prepare the lesson.

Lesson Procedure

1. Jesus Goes to the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:1-24)

Explain to your students that this particular feast celebrated the harvest and God's goodness to Israel when they wandered in the wilderness. The feast lasted seven days, and the people lived in leafy shelters or "tabernacles" to remind them of the time when Israel lived in tents in the wilderness. It was the most popular and joyous holiday of the year.

A. Jesus Goes to the Feast Secretly (verses 1-13)

Jesus' brothers, who did not as yet believe that Jesus was really the Messiah, urged Him to attend the feast. There He could prove His Messiahship and "show Himself to the world." Whether they were ridiculing Him or actually hoping that public proclamation of His claims would bring an end to what must have been a source of family embarrassment is unclear, but they certainly did not have Jesus' best interests in mind. Jesus, however, chose to remain in Galilee instead of going publicly to the feast. John makes it clear that the Jewish authorities were already plotting to take His life. However, Jesus did go to the feast later in secret and began teaching in the Temple courts about halfway through the feast (verse 14). This is when the largest crowds would be present, and Jesus was popular enough with the crowds that the religious leaders would be unable to move against Him then.

B. Jesus Teaches at the Feast (verses 14-24)

Point out to your students that Jesus' teaching left the people amazed because He had such knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. The question, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?" does not suggest that Jesus was illiterate, but that He had never studied under a recognized Jewish leader (as Paul had studied under Gamaliel). Jesus tells them directly that His teaching comes from God (verse 16). He also tells them He is aware that they are trying to kill Him (verse 19) - a fact they try to deny. Jesus also urges the Jews to make a wise judgment about Him - not one based on appearances, but based upon the Scriptures and His teaching.

Discuss with your students some of the issues raised in this passage. "The Jews accused Jesus of breaking God's commands when He healed on the Sabbath. Jesus said it is not a sin to heal on the Sabbath. But what commands were the Jewish leaders breaking? Is murder a sin? Is lying a sin?" Remind students that, by plotting Jesus' death and by lying about it (verse 20), it is the Jewish leaders who are guilty of breaking God's law. Jesus continually confronts them with their sin so that they might repent and "make a right judgment" (verse 24).

2. Jesus Faces His Opposition (John 7:25-52)

As Jesus continues to teach during the week of the feast, we see a growing division between those in the crowd who believe in Jesus and those who oppose His teaching. It is impossible to remain neutral or indifferent in the light of Christ's teachings.

A. The Pharisees and Chief Priests Send Guards to Arrest Jesus (verses 31-46)

Angered because many in the crowd were beginning to believe in Jesus, the Jewish leaders attempted to have Him arrested. These guards heard Jesus speak and were favorably impressed - so impressed that they disobeyed their orders and refused to arrest Jesus. Although they knew they would be in trouble with the religious leaders, they made no other excuse than to say, "No one ever spoke the way this man does." How true!

B. The Jewish Leaders Refuse to Believe (verses 45-52)

Faced with the guards' refusal to arrest Jesus, the Pharisees became very angry. We see very clearly their arrogance and pride in their retort to the guards. "Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in Him?" they ask the guards, showing their belief that they alone were able to decide if Jesus was the Promised One. They said that the crowds that Jesus had been teaching were ignorant, but that was not really true. In fact, the people in the crowd were asking good questions about Jesus' origin and whether His miracles showed that He was the Christ. Nicodemus, the man who came to talk to Jesus, tried to show them that they were wrong to condemn Jesus without hearing Him first. But they made fun of Nicodemus, and refused to hear him either. These men were filled with pride, arrogance, and hatred. They thought they and they alone had all the answers. Why, God wouldn't dare raise up a prophet who didn't meet with their approval! Surely if the Promised One came, they would be the first to know about it! Their pride had blinded their eyes to the "light of the world," and their hearts were hardened against Jesus' teaching.

Ask your students these questions: "Do you think Nicodemus agreed with the other Pharisees? Why didn't he tell them that he believed in Jesus? Do you think he was afraid?" Although we don't know for certain if Nicodemus was truly a believer at this time, we do know that he was at least willing to consider what Christ had to say. Fear kept him silent - perhaps even until after the crucifixion, when we know that he made his faith public. Remind your students that we must not let fear of what others will say or think of us keep us from telling them of our faith in Christ. Perhaps other Pharisees would have been more willing to listen to Jesus if they had known that Nicodemus took Him seriously.

3. Jesus Proclaims that He is the Light of the World (John 8)

Now the Pharisees challenged Jesus in a face-to-face confrontation. They attacked the validity of Jesus' message (verse 13), they questioned His parentage (verse 41), then they accused Him of being demon-possessed and a Samaritan (verse 48; these were surely the two worst insults they could think of to hurl at their enemy). In verses 48-59, Jesus was quite clear about Who He claimed to be, and the Jews reacted violently against what He said.

A. Jesus Says Plainly that He is God (verses 48-58)

Before you study this passage with your students, have them turn to Exodus 3:13-14. Remind them that "I AM" is the name God gave Himself - the name by which He wanted to be known among the Israelites. Then have them read John 8:48-58. "Jesus was telling the Jewish religious leaders that He is God! If He had said, 'Before Abraham was, I was,' that would only mean He was very, old (very, very, very old!). But by using the name 'I

AM,' the name that God gave Himself, the special name for God that the Israelites used, Jesus is saying that He is God. That is why He knew Abraham. That is why He is the light of the world. That is why anyone who keeps His word will not see death (verse 51).”

B. Jesus Escapes Stoning (verse 59)

It is clear from the Jews’ reaction that they understood perfectly what Jesus was claiming to be - God Himself! This statement was seen as blasphemy, and the penalty for blasphemy was stoning. But it was not yet time for Jesus to die, and so He escaped from their midst and left the Temple grounds. Ask your students, “If Jesus was able to escape the crowd this time, do you think He could have escaped when the soldiers arrested Him and crucified Him? Why didn’t He escape then, too?” Jesus came into the world to die for the sins of His people. It was not yet time for Him to die when He was teaching at the feast; He still had things to teach and people to reach. When the time came for Him to die, He gave His life willingly to redeem sinners. He could have escaped then as well, but He didn’t because of His great love for His own.

Conclusion

Summarize the lesson by reminding your students that despite threats against His life, Jesus taught at the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. He confronted the Jewish religious leaders with their sinfulness and with His claim of deity. The Jews refused to listen and attempted to put Him to death, but He escaped. Death was put off until another time.

Related Music

“The Light of the World is Jesus” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #476); “We Praise Thee, O God” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #179).

STUDENT WORKSHEET

JESUS TEACHES AT THE FEAST

1. **The Names of Jesus** - So far in the Gospel of John, we have learned many of the names of Jesus. Can you find the following names in this word-search puzzle?

Word of God			Lamb of God			Christ			Bread of Life			
			Living Water			Light of World			I AM			
P	L	A	M	B	O	F	G	O	D	H	F	G
C	D	I	B	F	M	S	Q	P	J	K	T	R
S	M	B	V	U	X	A	Z	B	Y	R	M	S
S	T	R	J	I	A	M	Q	L	O	E	R	P
T	B	B	F	M	N	S	C	E	T	S	A	L
W	O	R	D	O	F	G	O	D	R	E	A	D
R	M	E	O	A	G	O	W	D	P	O	I	V
P	H	A	R	F	H	Z	O	A	D	R	S	T
C	H	D	R	P	M	I	A	R	T	L	H	C
B	A	O	F	J	G	L	W	T	U	E	S	T
C	H	F	B	C	H	R	I	S	T	Y	R	E
A	L	L	T	E	D	J	A	E	M	I	N	O
O	L	I	G	H	T	O	F	W	O	R	L	D
P	E	F	C	K	M	O	Y	G	T	S	R	O
M	C	E	E	L	I	V	H	G	O	S	R	S

2. **Fill in the blanks.**

“When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, ‘I am the _____ of the _____ . Whoever _____ me will never walk in _____ , but will have the _____ of _____ .’” (John 8:12)

THE MAN BORN BLIND

John 9

Lesson Aim

To understand what it means to be spiritually blind and how Jesus can heal such blindness.

Memory Verse

John 9:39 - "Jesus said, 'For judgment I am come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.'"

Lesson Background

In Isaiah 42, the great prophetic passage about the Messiah and His work, verse 7 says that He will "open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness." We have more recorded accounts of Jesus opening the eyes of the blind than of any other type of healing, and these provide direct proof that Jesus was really the Christ, God's Promised Savior. The Pharisees should have recognized this, but their hostility and pride made them spiritually blind to the truth. John 9 gives us a classic contrast between belief and unbelief, as the blind man is given both physical and spiritual sight while the ones who claim to see become even more blinded. Truly the man born blind was released from the "dungeon of darkness" to the light of his Savior's grace. May that be our prayer for each of our students this week.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the class by asking for a volunteer who is willing to be blindfolded (preferably someone with a good sense of humor!). Once the student is blindfolded, show a penny to your class. Go around to each of your “sighted” students and say something like this: “Sarah, without telling what it is, can you see what I’m holding?” After all of your sighted students say “Yes,” hold up the coin in front of the blindfolded child. “Jason, what am I holding?” When the child says he doesn’t know, you might add, “But, Jason, I thought you were as smart as Sarah and the others! Why don’t you know what I’m holding?” Of course, he doesn’t know because he can’t see it. Next, hand the penny to your “blind man” and ask him if he can tell from the size and shape what the object is (he will probably be able to guess that it’s a penny, or at least a coin). “So now you understand what I was holding. But can you see the coin? Can you tell if it’s shiny or dirty? Do you know in what year it was made? No, you have some knowledge in your head about this penny, but you still can’t see it.” Have the student remove the blindfold. “You know, the Bible has a lot to say about blindness. There is physical blindness, of course, when people can’t see with their eyes. But there is also another kind of blindness - spiritual blindness - that can keep someone from seeing the truth. It’s not that we’re not smart enough to understand; sometimes we might have some understanding or head knowledge about the truth. But we just don’t see the point. For example, someone might know something about the Bible but think that one religion is as good as another. Or he might think, ‘I don’t need a Savior. God loves everyone. He wouldn’t send anyone to hell.’ He just doesn’t see the truth, does he? Today we’re going to talk about these two kinds of blindness, and at the end of the lesson I want you to tell me which you think is worse - physical blindness or spiritual blindness.”

1. **Jesus and His Disciples Encounter a Blind Man (John 9:1-12)**

Jesus’ comments on the connection of sin and suffering and the manner in which He healed this man make up some of the unique features of this miracle.

A. **The Problem of Sin (verses 1-5)**

The Pharisees taught that all suffering came as a result of individual sin; they even believed that a baby could sin in the womb! This is why the disciples asked Jesus if the man’s parents had sinned or if it was the man’s sin that caused him to be born blind. “Jesus’ answer shows that suffering isn’t always ‘punishment’ for sin. Sometimes God sends suffering for other reasons. In the case of this blind man, he was born blind so that someday ‘the work of God would be displayed in his life.’ He was born blind so that Jesus would heal him and his healing would glorify God. It would show that Jesus was really who He claimed to be - the Christ, the Son of God. His blindness wasn’t punishment; he had been chosen to show the glory of God and Christ!”

B. **Jesus Heals the Blind Man (verses 6-12)**

Jesus healed this man in a unique way by placing mud on the man’s eyes and having him wash in the Pool of Siloam. “Jesus healed in many different ways. Sometimes He merely spoke the healing; sometimes He touched someone; sometimes He healed from a distance (cf. the centurion’s servant in Luke 7). Jesus treats every person in a different way. He knows what we’re like, He knows what we need, and He gives us the special attention that only He can give.” In this case, Jesus avoided another confrontation with the religious leaders by healing the blind man in such a way that he had no idea what Jesus looked like.

Ask your students, “How do you think the blind man felt when he saw the light for the first time? How would this change his life forever?” Point out that in verse 8 we learn that the blind man had been a beggar - about the only way a blind man could survive back then. Now he could earn a living. He wouldn’t need others to lead him and help him. He could enjoy the beauty of the world around him. His whole life had been changed!

2. The Pharisees Investigate the Healing (John 9:13-23)

The Pharisees were quite perplexed when they learned of this healing. They recognized that the Messiah would perform such miracles, but they were not willing to believe that Jesus could be the Messiah. How was it possible for a “sinner” to heal a man born blind? Surely they could find a way to discredit this miracle!

The healed man was brought before the Pharisees to be questioned. When they discovered that he was healed on the Sabbath, some of them felt that this proved Jesus wasn’t from God because He “broke” the Sabbath by healing. Others (verse 16) weren’t convinced. Their only hope was to prove that the man hadn’t really been blind in the first place, so the Pharisees sent for the man’s parents. Point out to your students that the Pharisees were very powerful men and could expel someone from the synagogue. The man’s parents were so fearful of this that they avoided answering the Pharisees directly.

Ask your students if they think the Pharisees really wanted to learn the truth about the healing or if they were just looking for another reason to refuse to believe in Jesus. In fact, the Pharisees were unwilling to believe the word of the healed man and his neighbors, and even after the man’s parents testified that he was their son and had been born blind, they refused to acknowledge that Jesus had done this as God’s Promised Savior (verse 24).

3. The Spiritual Blindness of the Pharisees (John 9:24-41)

Here we see two different responses to Christ’s teaching. On the one hand, we see the healed man grow in his understanding and faith until he comes to the point of worshiping Jesus (verse 38). On the other hand, we see the Pharisees reject all the evidence that points to Christ’s power and authority. We see them become even more hardened in their hearts and in their refusal to acknowledge their own spiritual blindness. So now the one who was blind truly sees, while those who claim to see become more blind (verse 39).

A. The Pharisees Refuse to Believe (verses 24-34)

All the evidence was in - the man who was blind, his neighbors and his acquaintances, and even his parents all testified to the fact that he was born blind but could now see. There was no doubt that Jesus has healed this man. The Pharisees could not disprove the miracle, but they refused to believe in Jesus and His message. “Give God the glory,” they told the healed man. “We know that this man is a sinner.” Even the healed man, and unlearned beggar, could see the fallacy in their argument. When he showed them their unreasonableness, they expelled him from the synagogue (explain to your students that this was a very serious matter; it excluded him from the rest of his community, both religiously and socially). “We can see the great pride of the Pharisees in verse 34. How dare the healed man lecture them! They were the spiritual leaders of Israel! They knew the most! They were the best! But the healed man spoke the truth, and they couldn’t prove

otherwise. There was nothing left for them to do but to use their power to throw him out of the synagogue forever. ‘Because you don’t agree with us,’ they were saying, ‘we won’t allow you to worship here any more.’”

B. The Healed Man Believes (verses 35-41)

The NIV Study Bible shows the healed man’s progression in faith in this way: First he saw Jesus as a man (verse 11), then a prophet (verse 17), then someone who might have disciples (verse 27), then someone from God (verse 33), and finally as someone to be worshiped (verse 38). His willingness in verse 36 to do whatever Jesus tells him to do, and his worship in verse 38, show that this man not only had physical sight; he now could also see the truth that Jesus was the Promised One of God. He was blind no longer!

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by asking your students, “At the end of the story, who were the blind men? Who was the sighted man? Which do you think is worse, physical or spiritual blindness?” Show your students verse 39 and explain to them that the Pharisees were blind because they didn’t see the truth about Jesus. The healed man, however, could see the truth. The spiritual blindness of the Pharisees was much worse than physical blindness, since rejecting Jesus leads to eternal death. Impress upon your students once again their need to come to Jesus for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Warn them about the danger of a hardened heart, which leads to spiritual blindness.

Worksheet

The unscrambled words in part one of the worksheet are: blind, wash, healed, Pharisees, found, Jesus. In part two, help your students to see that the “spiritually blind” need to be told that they are lost, they need Jesus, Jesus is the only way, etc. We can help them find their way to Christ by such things as telling them about Jesus, inviting them to church, and praying for them.

Related Music

“Amazing Grace” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #460).

STUDENT WORKSHEET

THE MAN BORN BLIND

1. Unscramble the words on the left so that the paragraph on the right makes sense.

LIBDN

Jesus and His disciples met a

AWHS

_____ man. Jesus put mud on the
blind man's eyes and told him to _____

DAHELE

in the Pool of Siloam. The blind man

SIRAHEEPS

was _____ - he could see! His

NUDOF

The _____ didn't like what the

JSSUE

healed man said about Jesus. But Jesus

_____ the man, and the man
worshiped _____.

2. **Something to think about.**

Before the blind man was healed, he needed people to lead him around. He needed people to explain where he was, how things looked, and what was happening around him. People who are spiritually blind need "helpers," too. What do Christians need to tell them? _____

How can we help people find their way to Christ? _____

MEMORY VERSE

John 9:39 - "Jesus said, 'For judgment I am come into the world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.'"

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10

Lesson Aim

To show that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows, loves, and keeps His own completely.

Memory Verse

John 10:11 - "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

Lesson Background

The Jews who listened to Jesus refer to Himself as the Good Shepherd were very familiar with the job of a shepherd and what it entailed. They were also aware that God often referred to Himself as the Shepherd of Israel (Psalms 23 and 80; Isaiah 40). Your students need to know the following things about New Testament shepherds:

1. The shepherd was the caretaker of the sheep. He had a close relationship with these sheep; he knew each one by name and watched over them night and day. He protected them from wild animals and other dangers, including thieves. The New Testament shepherd did not drive his sheep before him, but he led the sheep by the sound of his voice. He was personally responsible for the sheep, and if any were stolen he was held accountable to the owner.
2. Sheep were kept in a pen or enclosure made of stone with only one gate. Several flocks of sheep could be kept together, but each sheep knew its shepherd's voice. As the shepherd came to the pen to lead his flock to pasture, his sheep would hear his voice and separate from the other sheep, following him.

3. The sheep were in constant danger from wild beasts or thieves. Because sheep have no way to protect or defend themselves, they were totally dependent on the shepherd for their safety. Good shepherds would defend their sheep even when it put them at some risk, just as David protected his sheep from the lion and the bear (I Samuel 17:34-37).

It might be helpful to have pictures of shepherds from the Middle East to show your students. You can find some in encyclopedias or in reference books such as *Eerdmans Family Encyclopedia of the Bible*. In many countries in the Middle East, very little about shepherding has changed since Jesus' day, so even recent pictures depict what shepherding was like back then.

Lesson Procedure

1. Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-21)

As you read this passage with your class, ask them who they think the “thieves and robbers” in this story might be (we will discuss this later). Jesus begins this parable by describing the close relationship between the shepherd and his sheep. The sheep know his voice, they follow him, and the shepherd knows them by name and leads them. Then Christ describes Himself using two different metaphors related to the picture He has painted.

A. Jesus is the Gate for the Sheep (verses 7-10)

By calling Himself “the gate for the sheep,” Jesus is telling His listeners that they must believe in Him for salvation. Remind your students that the sheepfold had only one entrance; there was no other way to get in or out. The sheep inside the fold were safe from the thieves who wanted to “steal and kill and destroy.” “Jesus is telling us that He is the only way of salvation. He is also telling us to beware of false teachers - the thieves and robbers - who say they are bringing us salvation, but in the end only kill and destroy. ‘My sheep will not listen to such teachers,’ says Jesus. ‘My sheep will find salvation in Me.’”

B. Jesus is the Shepherd Who Gives His Life for the Sheep (verses 11-18)

In these few verses, we discover many wonderful truths about the relationship between Jesus and His own dear sheep.

1. Unlike the hired hand who doesn't own the sheep, Jesus cares deeply for His own. He will not allow a wolf to devour them; they are completely safe in Him.
2. Jesus knows His sheep and His sheep know Him. This thought will be explored more deeply in the next section of the lesson.
3. Jesus speaks of sheep from another “sheep pen.” Jesus is the Good Shepherd, not only of Jewish believers, but of all believers from all nations. Although there were many divisions between Jews and Gentiles when Jesus spoke these words, He predicted that the day would come when all believers would be “one flock [with] one shepherd.”

4. Jesus was going to give His life for His sheep. He would give Himself to be crucified for the sins of His people, but He wouldn't stay dead. In verse 18, He speaks of His authority to lay down His life and take it up again. As the greatest of all shepherds, Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for His sheep.

C. Discussion

“Would the hired hand give his life to protect the sheep? Would the thief or the robber? Would even a very good shepherd of Jesus' day give his life for mere sheep [probably not]? What makes Jesus willing to do this for His own?” Only Jesus' great love can explain His willingness to die for His own. Also remind your students that Jesus knows His own by name; if they belong to Christ, they must realize that He came to die for them personally so that they might live with Him forever.

2. Jesus is Known by His Sheep (John 10:22-42)

In this passage we see the distinction Jesus made between those who are His sheep and those who are not. We also see two different responses to Jesus' teaching. Which group heard the Shepherd's voice and followed Him?

A. Jesus' Sheep Are His Forever (verses 22-30)

This passage has always brought great comfort to Christians, as it shows that believers are kept by the power of Christ. Have your class read verses 27-30 in unison so the words sink in. “Jesus says that the Jews who are questioning Him are not His sheep, and that is why they do not believe His message. ‘My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me,’ says Jesus. If you are Jesus' sheep, there is no way for you to lose your salvation. You will be kept by Jesus' power. You will be kept by the Father's power (verse 29). You do not need to fear death or hell if you belong to Jesus. He is the one who saved you. And if He can save you, He certainly can keep you safe forever.”

“When Jesus says in verse 30, ‘I and the Father are one,’ what is He saying? Who is He claiming to be? Is He answering the Jews' question in verse 24?” By claiming deity in verse 30, Jesus is answering the Jews' question about who He claimed to be without openly declaring Himself to be Christ. And the Jews got the point, as we'll see in the next section.

B. Jesus' Sheep Believe in Him (verses 31-42)

The Jews took up stones to kill Jesus because they understood that He was claiming to be God. Jesus reminded them that Scripture calls earthly judges “gods” in the sense that they are appointed by God to judge. Why shouldn't the One God has sent as the Christ be called “God” (here again, we see a veiled but direct claim to being the Messiah)? This may be a little difficult for your students to understand; what is important for them to see about this passage is that the Jews who are questioning Jesus became violent in their disbelief, even as He tried to reason with them. He reminded them of His miracles and their inability to explain how He could do such works apart from the power of God. They, in turn, attempted to seize Him, either to kill Him or take Him to trial, but He escaped from them again.

Now show your students the contrast between these Jews and the people whom Jesus teaches across the Jordan. These people had been prepared by John the Baptist to look for the coming of the Messiah. They accepted John's testimony about Jesus and were eager to hear Him speak. As they listened and watched Jesus they realized that "all that John said about this man was true." As a result, many people in the area believed in Jesus. Ask your students, "In this chapter of John, who are the people who are Jesus' sheep? How can we tell?" This last group of people are clearly true sheep of the Good Shepherd. They hear His voice; they believe and follow Him. What a contrast to the violent disbelief of the Jews in Jerusalem!

Conclusion

There is a simple test to determine whether one is a sheep of the Good Shepherd. Ask your students to examine their hearts; are they listening to the voice of Jesus? Are they following Him? If so, they can be assured that they are His forever, kept by His power and love. If not, they must be told that Jesus is the "gate"; there is no other way into the sheepfold except through Him. Encourage all your students to make sure they belong to Jesus.

Worksheet

In Part I of the worksheet, the correct words are sheep, wild, life, hear, harm, and love. In Part II, you are looking for responses such as love, trust, gratitude and dependence.

Related Music

"Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #599); "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #184).

STUDENT WORKSHEET

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

- I. Rhyme Time** - There are six mistakes in the paragraph below. In each case, a rhyming word has been substituted for the right word. Circle the six mistakes and write the correct words in the spaces below. Be careful - it's tricky!

The Good Shepherd takes care of His sleep. He keeps them safe from mild animals and other dangers. He even lays down His knife for His sheep! His sheep fear His voice and they follow Him. No farm will come to them because the Good Shepherd shoves them!

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____

Now read the paragraph with the right words inserted!

II. Sheep Thinking.

Jesus tells us how a good shepherd feels about his sheep. A good shepherd loves, protects and cares for the sheep that are his own. How do you think we "sheep" should feel about our shepherd? _____

Is this how you feel about Jesus? _____

MEMORY VERSE

John 10:11 - "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

John 11

Lesson Aim

To communicate to students that Jesus has power over death and that death holds no power over those who believe in Him.

Memory Verse

John 11:25 - "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.'"

Lesson Background

The students in your class will probably have had varying degrees of experience with death and dying. Most will have at least known someone who has died; some will have attended funerals. Some will have lost someone close to them - perhaps a grandparent, parent, or sibling. It will be helpful to you to ask how many of your students have attended funerals, and for whom. Ask them how they felt at the funeral and what the funerals were like; this will help make the lesson material more real to them as they think on how their own lives have been touched by death. It will also help them to understand the wonder of Christ's statement, "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

Lesson Procedure

1. The Death of Lazarus (John 11:1-16)

Jesus had a special relationship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He was a frequent guest in their home in Bethany, and John reminds us on several occasions of Jesus' love for them (verses 3, 5, 36). In this remarkable chapter we see Jesus touched by the death of a close friend; we also see His power to deliver His own from death's grip.

A. Mary and Martha Send for Jesus (verses 1-10)

When Lazarus fell deathly ill, his sisters sent for Jesus, knowing that He was the only hope for Lazarus' recovery. By the time Jesus received their message, Lazarus may or may not have been dead already. [If you wish, explain the chronology of the incident to your students. By the time Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days. If Jesus and His disciples were in Perea, it would have taken one day for the messengers to find Jesus, two days of waiting, then one day for Jesus to get to Bethany; in this case, Lazarus would have died as soon as the messengers left to find Jesus. If, as is more likely, Jesus and His disciples were in Galilee, the trip would have taken two days, and Lazarus would have died about the time the messengers located Jesus.] John makes it very clear that Jesus loved Lazarus, and yet He stayed where He was for two more days. His disciples seemed to think that this was wise, not for Lazarus' sake, but because of the lethal mood of the Jews in Jerusalem, who had tried to kill Jesus a short time before (Bethany was only two miles away from Jerusalem). But Jesus was neither fearful for Lazarus nor afraid of the Jews. As always, the motivation for His actions is purely the glory of God (verse 4).

B. Jesus Reveals Why He Waited Two Days (verses 11-16)

Finally, when the time was right, Jesus told His disciples that He was going to "wake up" Lazarus. The disciples, misunderstanding Him, told Him that a little sleep would do a sick man like Lazarus some good! Jesus then told them plainly that Lazarus was dead, and that one of the reasons He had lingered before going to him was so that they might believe (verse 14). By raising Lazarus from the dead, the disciples' faith would be strengthened and many others would come to believe as well.

Ask your students, "Do you think Jesus knew that Lazarus was sick even before the messengers came? Could He have gone to Lazarus at any time to make him better?" Jesus was very much aware of what was going on in Bethany, as we see by His comments in verses 4, 11, and 14. But it was God's purpose that Lazarus should not be healed of his illness, but rather raised from the dead.

2. Jesus Raises Lazarus from the Dead (John 11:17-44)

John gives a very detailed "eyewitness" account of this miracle that had such a profound effect on many people's lives.

A. Jesus Comforts Mary and Martha (verses 17-32)

Mary and Martha were in mourning for Lazarus, along with many of their friends and family members, when Jesus arrived in Bethany. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she left the house to greet Him while Mary stayed behind. Although Martha is usually criticized because she was “too busy with serving” (Luke 10:40-41), we see evidence here of her strong faith in Jesus (verses 21-27). She stated her belief that Jesus could have healed Lazarus (verse 21), that God would still give Jesus whatever He asked for (verse 22), that Lazarus would someday be resurrected (verse 24), and that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. A powerful confession! Martha’s faith had brought her comfort in a time of grief, and Jesus’ declaration that He was “the resurrection and the life” was spoken to strengthen her even further.

Mary, however, was experiencing grief in her own way. When she met her Lord, she fell at His feet with one simple statement - “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” These were the same words with which Martha greeted Jesus, but they are not followed by Martha’s affirmation of her faith. Mary was hurting; she didn’t understand. In her hurt and confusion, she went to the only one who could help her through her pain.

B. Jesus is Touched by Lazarus’ Death (verses 33-37)

Jesus was deeply moved by Mary’s anguish and the grief He saw all around Him. Here were the consequences of sin in their bitterest form. Is it any wonder that He who loved us enough to come to earth to conquer death would be moved to tears at the death of a friend? He did not attempt to comfort Mary with words; instead, He shared her grief at her brother’s tomb.

C. Jesus Shows His Power Over Death (verses 38-44)

Now the time had come for Jesus to call Lazarus forth from the grave. There was a crowd around the tomb, and Jesus gave directions for the stone to be removed from the cave’s entrance. Jesus’ subsequent prayer was for the benefit of the onlookers, to show them that He was acting with the power and authority of God the Father. Then, with a loud voice, He called forth the dead man; John reports that Lazarus came out still bound with the strips of linen they had used to bury him. Perhaps the crowd was so stunned and frightened that Jesus had to add the practical command, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.” This wasn’t a ghost they were seeing, after all - it was a living, breathing man who needed help to get unwound! Emphasize to your students that Jesus has all power and authority over life and death - He could have called forth any dead man or woman on the planet!

3. Lazarus’ Resurrection Changes Lives (John 11:45-57; 12:9-11, 17-19)

John shows us the powerful influence this miracle had on many lives in this chapter and in chapter twelve.

A. Many Believe on Jesus (11:45; 12:9)

There were many witnesses to the resurrection of Lazarus who saw firsthand the power Jesus exercised over death. How could anyone call forth a dead man unless He were acting with the authority of God? They not only believed in Jesus, but they also spread the word of this incredible miracle to others. And those who heard about the miracle did not have to depend on hearsay; they could talk to the former dead man, Lazarus, themselves! By the time Jesus arrived in Jerusalem for the Passover, enthusiasm was running so high that the Pharisees declared, “The whole world has gone after him” (12:19).

B. Others Plot to Kill Jesus (11:47-57; 12:10-11)

It seems incredible, but there were some who, even after this miracle, could not see beyond their own prejudices about Jesus. Such were the chief priests, Pharisees, and other members of the Sanhedrin. In verse 47, we see that they do not question the miracle; to them, that is inconsequential. Their only concern is how to get rid of Jesus to protect their nation and themselves! Caiaphas, the high priest, admonishes them that it is better for one man to die for the people than for the whole nation to perish; John notes that, unknowingly, he was prophesying that Jesus would die to save His people from eternal death.

Point out to your students how sin grows. In chapter 11, the Jews were only plotting Jesus’ death. In 12:9-11, however, we see them plotting to kill Lazarus, too, since so many people believed in Jesus on his account. Thus while Lazarus’ resurrection brought faith and repentance to some, it brought even greater sin and judgment to others who rejected the truth. Ask your students if, after having healed the lame and the blind, and even raising the dead, there was anything Jesus could have done to convince the Jewish leaders that He was God’s promised Savior. The hearts of these men were so hardened that no miracle would convince them of the truth. Even Jesus’ own death and resurrection would not bring them to faith and repentance (see Matthew 28:11-15).

Conclusion

Remind your students that Jesus came into the world to die for sinners, so that His own would never need to fear death. Those who believe in Jesus will live in eternity with Him, and someday their physical bodies will also be raised and made anew. For those who reject Jesus, however, there is a second death far worse than physical death that they must fear. Appeal to your students to make sure that they belong to Jesus, for He alone has the power to conquer death.

Worksheet

In Part I, the missing words are life, days, Lazarus, Martha, friend, out, and Jesus. The mystery word is Lazarus.

In Part II, have your students discuss the questions before they write the answers. Some might be tempted to say that Christians shouldn't feel sad when another Christian dies. Remind them that Jesus was sad at Lazarus' tomb, even though He knew He would soon raise Lazarus from the dead. Death means separation and loss - and that will always make us sad. But for a Christian, death also unites us with our Lord and removes us from suffering and sin - three very good reasons to rejoice!

Related Music

“Jesus Lives, and So Shall I” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #706).

STUDENT WORKSHEET

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

I. Fill in the blank. Fill in the missing words in the sentences below to retell this week’s lesson. Then use the numbered letters to decode the “Mystery Word.”

Mary and Martha sent for Jesus to save their brother’s _____.

Jesus waited two _____, and then went to them.

When Jesus got to Bethany, _____ was already dead.

_____ greeted Jesus when He arrived.

Jesus wept at the tomb of His _____.

Jesus called Lazarus _____ of the tomb.

Many people believed in _____ when they saw this miracle.

MYSTERY WORD:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

II.

What happens to a Christian when he dies? _____

Do you think Christians should be sad when another Christian dies? _____

Should they be happy, too? Why? _____

MEMORY VERSE

John 11:25 - “Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.’”

THE UPPER ROOM

John 13-14

Lesson Aim

To enable students to see Jesus' love and concern for His own as He prepares to leave them.

Memory Verse

John 14:6 - "Jesus answered, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

Lesson Background

John describes Jesus' last night with His disciples in more detail than the other Gospel writers (although he does not mention the institution of the Lord's Supper). While his account spans chapters 13-17, we will concentrate on the events of chapters 13 and 14.

The NIV Study Bible states that, while the word love is used only six times in chapters 1-12 of John's Gospel, it is used 31 times in chapters 13-17! Surely the overall theme of this night is love: the love Jesus shows to His disciples as He prepares to leave them and the love He admonishes them to have for each other. Let's be sure to emphasize to our students that the words recorded here are not just Jesus' words to His disciples, but in a sense His words to His followers throughout the ages. When He corrects them, He corrects us; when He comforts them, He comforts us as well.

Lesson Procedure

1. Introduction: The Full Extent of His Love (John 13:1)

The time was drawing near for Jesus to die on the cross for His own. John prefaces his account of the events in the upper room by writing, “Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.” Point out to your students that as Jesus’ time to die draws closer, He is thinking about His followers. His overriding concern is that they be prepared for what is going to happen. Now the disciples begin to learn of the full extent of Jesus’ love - a love that will bring Him, in a few short hours, to die on a cross for their own sins. Jesus now has only a limited amount of time left to instruct His disciples, and we see Him using that time to teach them invaluable truths.

2. Jesus Washes the Disciples’ Feet (John 13:1-17)

Jesus began the evening with an object lesson to teach the disciples to serve one another. Let your students know that washing feet was a servant’s job, and probably not a very pleasant one at that.

A. Peter Objects to Having Jesus Wash His Feet (verse 6-11)

When it came time for Jesus to wash Peter’s feet, Peter saw the inappropriateness of having his Lord perform such a menial task. He objected strongly, but Jesus told him it was necessary. “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” Here Jesus was speaking of Peter’s need to be cleansed from sin - something only his Lord could do for him. Peter definitely wanted his part with Jesus, so he asked for a bath (show your students the humor in this - they will appreciate it)! But Peter already belonged to Jesus, so Jesus told him he only needed his feet washed to be clean (in spiritual terms, Peter did not need salvation, but confession and forgiveness).

B. Jesus Explains Why He Washed the Disciples’ Feet (verses 12-17)

Jesus now brought the lesson home by telling His disciples that He had just given them an example that they must follow. They were no longer to argue about who was the greatest among them or strive for the most important jobs. They were to think of themselves as servants - servants to each other and servants to Jesus. They were to be willing to do even the most humble tasks for each other, just as Jesus had been willing to humble Himself to wash their feet.

Ask your students, “What do you think would have happened if, after Jesus died, the disciples had begun fighting among themselves about who should be the leader? Do you think they would have gotten very far with preaching the Gospel? Do you think it was important for them to know how to work together?” As Jesus prepared to leave His disciples, He gave them this “servant” principle so that they could work together effectively for the kingdom of God.

3. Jesus Speaks of His Betrayal and Death (John 13:18-38)

Jesus had many more things to say to His disciples, but first His betrayer had to leave the true followers to commit his treason.

A. Jesus Identifies Judas as the Betrayer (verses 18-30)

Jesus next spoke of His betrayal at the hands of a friend, and the very thought troubled and grieved Him. The disciples were troubled as well; perhaps they thought the betrayal would be involuntary, and it frightened them to think that they might be capable of such an act. Mark records that the disciples asked Jesus one by one, “Surely not I?” when they learned that one of them would betray Him (Mark 14:19). Jesus eventually revealed to “the disciple whom He loved” (probably John) that the betrayer would be Judas. John identifies Judas by his full name, Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, so there would be no doubt as to the identity of the traitor.

B. Jesus Prepares His Disciples for His Death (verses 31-38)

Now that Judas had left, Jesus was free to discuss with His disciples the things that were on His heart. He began by telling them that He would be leaving them soon to return to His Father. This would result in God being glorified in Him and Him being glorified in the Father. Jesus also told them that they could not go with Him when He left. This, too, was distressing news to the disciples. Peter began to argue with Jesus, saying that he would go with his Master even to death itself. Jesus informed Peter that he didn’t know his own heart. Peter would deny Jesus three times before that very night was over - before the rooster crowed in the morning.

Ask your students, “Do you think Peter was lying when he said he would lay down his life for Jesus? Or do you think he just didn’t understand his own weakness and sinfulness?” Peter would learn something that night about his own heart; he thought he was ready to stand courageously by his Lord, but instead he would flee when the soldiers came and deny his Lord three times. We have all been in situations that we thought we could handle by ourselves, only to discover how weak and prone to sin we really are.

4. Jesus Comforts His Disciples (John 14)

The disciples had just learned that one of them would betray Jesus, another would deny Jesus, and Jesus would soon be leaving them to return to the Father. How their heads must have been spinning with this news! Jesus goes on in chapter 14 to comfort them after His heavy words in chapter 13.

A. Jesus Tells Them He is the Way to the Father (verses 1-14)

Jesus told His disciples that they needn’t be troubled if they were trusting in Him. He then explained that His separation from them would only be temporary; they would be with Him in His Father’s house, and He would return to take them there. “You know the way to the place where I am going,” He said.

When Thomas questioned this, Jesus replied, “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). “Jesus was telling the disciples that He is the only way to heaven. He is the only one who could save them from their sins. Trusting in Jesus is the only way to come to the Father. Since the disciples believed in Jesus, they knew the way to heaven, didn’t they?”

B. Jesus Promises to Send the Holy Spirit (verses 15-31)

Jesus next assured the disciples that they did not need to fear being left alone; He would send them another Counselor, or “helper.” This Counselor, the Holy Spirit, would teach the disciples all things and would remind them of everything Christ had taught them (verse 26). Therefore the disciples did not need to be troubled or afraid.

Remind your students that Jesus did send the Holy Spirit to His disciples on the day of Pentecost, after He had ascended to the Father. The Holy Spirit came to them in great power, giving them the ability to preach the Gospel in many languages. Although the disciples probably didn’t totally understand what Jesus was saying at the time, they did know Jesus, and they knew they could trust Him to keep His word. So even in the midst of this difficult night, Jesus could truly tell His friends, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (verse 27).

Ask your students, “When the disciples heard that Jesus would soon be leaving them, what do you think was their greatest fear? How would trusting in Jesus’ words help them with that fear?” The disciples could have feared many things. They may have feared never seeing Jesus again; they may have been afraid of being left alone without His teaching and guidance; they may have been afraid of dealing with the Romans or the Jewish leaders. Jesus’ words would calm those fears if they trusted in Him.

Conclusion

The things that Jesus said to His disciples that night were not said only for their benefit, but for ours as well. Jesus is still the only way to heaven. If we trust Him, we can be sure of living with Him in His Father’s house for all eternity. And we can also be certain of the Holy Spirit’s presence within us, guiding and directing us into the truth. Those words are as much a comfort as ever to the true children of God.

Worksheet

Encourage your students to look beyond the obvious as they describe the tasks done in your church. Ask them if they know who clears the snow out of the parking lot, keeps the bathrooms clean, etc. Also you might make a few suggestions for jobs they can do in Part II, but allow them to be creative - they will probably surprise you!

Related Music

“My Jesus, I Love Thee” (*Trinity Hymnal*, #648).

Footwashers, Inc. Back when Jesus lived, everyone wore sandals and all the roads were dirt roads. So whenever someone traveled, his feet got dirty! It was important back then to have someone wash one's feet before a special dinner or celebration. Do you think it is as important for us today to wash each other's feet? _____

There are, however, other ways we can serve one another.

I. Make a list here of some of the "servant" jobs that people do in your church:

II. Now list some things that you can do to serve others in your church:

MEMORY VERSE

John 14:6 - "Jesus answered, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

JESUS' ARREST AND CRUCIFIXION

John 18-19

Lesson Aim

To teach students that Jesus willingly submitted to His Father's will and gave His life to save sinners.

Memory Verse

John 20:30 - "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book."

Lesson Background

This lesson covers two chapters that narrate the most solemn, momentous event in history. Obviously, there is too much information to do all of it justice, so we will concentrate on just a few key ideas. We want to show Jesus' sovereignty even in His death; He is not a victim, carried off unwillingly to the cross. Instead, He is the victor over death who willingly gives Himself for the sins of His people. We see John bringing this to light as he reports the arrest, the trial before Pilate - and even in the fact that Jesus gives up His own spirit (John 19:30). As you study these chapters, look for the "royalty" theme; Jesus is referred to as King over and over again, and in the end He is buried by His friends in a manner befitting royalty.

Also, we want our students to understand that this is the reason Jesus came into the world; His whole ministry has been building up to the time when He would give His life as "a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). This is not the sad ending of a story, but a new beginning - of new life for believers, and a new relationship with our God.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by taking your students back to John 13:1. Remind them that Jesus was aware of what would happen that night - that He would be betrayed by a friend, arrested, tried and crucified the next day. This is nearly the end of Jesus' earthly ministry - the end for which He had come into the world. He came to die for the sins of His people, and as the time drew nearer, He looked to the "joy set before Him," and endured the cross, "scorning its shame" (Hebrews 12:2). While the passage before us today is very sad and serious, we must remember that only Jesus' death could make us right with God, and we should rejoice in Jesus' willingness to die for His own.

1. Jesus is Arrested in the Olive Garden (John 18:1-13)

Point out to your students that Jesus' power is seen even in the moment in which He is arrested. When Jesus utters the words, "I am he," the soldiers, confronted with His power and majesty, fall backward. He orders Peter not to fight and heals Malchus' ear (Luke 22:51). He also shows His obedience to His Father's will by saying, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" Even as He was led away bound to the trial at Annas' house, He showed that He was totally in control of what was happening to Him.

Ask your students, "Had anyone ever tried to arrest or hurt Jesus before? Were they able to do so? Do you think Jesus could have escaped this time, too?" Remind your students that Jesus had continually escaped the clutches of those who would harm Him because it wasn't His time to die (see John 7:32; 8:59). But now it was time, so Jesus went willingly with His captors.

2. Jesus' Trial Before Pilate (John 18:28-19:16)

Regrettably, because of time constraints, we will have to skip over Jesus' two trials before Annas and Caiaphas and Peter's denial. Explain to your students that Jesus was questioned by the Jewish authorities until dawn. After false witnesses were able to produce a false charge, the Jews took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. Because Israel was under Roman rule, the Jews were not allowed to condemn a prisoner to death. Only the Roman authorities had that power. The Jews wanted nothing less than Jesus' death, and so He had to be brought before Pilate.

A. Pilate is Reluctant to Sentence Jesus (John 18:28-19:9)

Pilate was in a predicament - he knew that Jesus was not guilty of any crime worthy of death, but he also had no wish to irritate the Jews. Read John 18:33-40 together as a class. Point out that Jesus was fairly clear as He spoke to Pilate about Himself. Yes, He says, He is a king, but His kingdom is not an earthly one. That's why His servants put up no fight against the Jews who arrested Him. Pilate recognized that Jesus was not a dangerous criminal nor a threat to Rome. He attempted to release Him, and when that failed, he had Jesus flogged, perhaps hoping that that would satisfy the Jews. The Jews refused to be satisfied with anything less than death; they told Pilate that Jesus had claimed to be the Son of God, and for that reason He had to die. The statement frightened Pilate.

Ask your students, "Why do you think Pilate was frightened when the Jews said Jesus claimed to be the Son of God? Do you think he thought Jesus' claim might be true?" This idea clearly upset Pilate to the point of asking where Jesus came from. Maybe Pilate

was being superstitious, or maybe he saw something in Jesus' manner and bearing that made him think His claim might be true.

B. Jesus is Condemned to Die (John 19:10-16)

To earthly eyes, it would appear that Pilate had the power and authority in this scene while Jesus was a poor victim awaiting His sentence at Pilate's hands. But Jesus made it clear that this was not the case; Pilate's power ultimately came from God, who had put him in his position of authority. Pilate tried one more time to set Jesus free, but the Jews forced him into condemning Jesus by questioning his loyalty to Caesar if he were to let a "rival" king go free. Pilate knew the charge was ridiculous, but the threat to report him to Caesar was very real, so the man with the apparent power and authority saw no recourse but to condemn Jesus to death by crucifixion.

3. The Crucifixion (John 19:17-37)

Have your students listen as you read John 19:17-30 aloud to them. After you have read the passage, point out the following to them:

- Jesus is declared to be the King of the Jews by the notice that Pilate put on the cross. Whether Pilate or the Jews believed it or not, it was certainly the truth, and many of the Jews traveling to and from Jerusalem that day saw it. Ask your students what they think travelers seeing the sign might have said to each other about Jesus. Their responses might have included questions like, "Why is He called the King of the Jews? Why is He dying?"
- Many prophecies from the Old Testament were fulfilled at the cross. Tell your students that many years ago King David, Isaiah, and others had prophesied many of the events that took place at the cross. While you won't have time to look up all of them, you might take them to Psalm 22:18, which John quotes in 19:24, about the soldiers dividing Jesus' garments.
- Point out Jesus' love and concern for His mother even as He was dying on the cross. The disciple whom He loved was John, and He entrusted His mother into John's care. This tells us that John was an eyewitness to the crucifixion; it also tells us something of Jesus' regard for John, since He left His own mother in John's care.
- In 19:30, we read that Jesus gave up His own spirit; it was not taken from Him. Jesus died as the victor over death. He had paid the penalty for the sins of His people. His willingness to die brought salvation and eternal life to all who believe.
- Jesus not only endured the physical suffering of the cross, but the spiritual pain of bearing the sins of His people. For the first time in all eternity, the Son's fellowship with the Father was broken. This is a great mystery, and we will never understand all that Jesus suffered on the cross for His own.

Ask your students, "What would have happened to us if Jesus had decided to get down from the cross and save His own life? Would we have any hope for salvation?" If Jesus had not paid the penalty for our sins, we would still have to pay for our sins ourselves. That means death and everlasting punishment. While reading about Jesus' death makes us sad, we would be much sadder if Jesus hadn't died, for then we'd have no hope.

4. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus Arrange for Jesus' Burial (John 19:38-42)

Ask your students if they remember Nicodemus. Then show them that Nicodemus and another "secret" believer, Joseph of Arimathea, asked for Jesus' body so they could give Jesus a decent burial. Nicodemus then took a mixture of myrrh and aloes (about 75 pounds!) to anoint Jesus' body. This was the amount of burial spices used in the burials of kings. "Nicodemus used the myrrh and aloes that would usually be used to bury a king. Do you think Nicodemus thought Jesus was a king? Do you think he now believed in Jesus?" Nicodemus risked a great deal by asking publicly for Jesus' body. His request, and the mixture he brought for Jesus' burial, point to his own new birth and belief in Jesus.

Conclusion

End the lesson by asking your students, "Is this the end of the story? Did Jesus stay dead?" No, of course not - He arose from the dead and lives forever at the right hand of God the Father. Inform your class that next week we will look at Jesus' resurrection and the hope it brings to all believers.

Worksheet

Be sure to read the sentences in Part I with your students, since some of the words, like "betrayed" and "sentences," may be unfamiliar to them. The correct order for the sentences is: 2, 4, 1, 6, 5, 7, 8, 3. In Part II, the answers are: Pilate, Nicodemus, yes, eight, yes - and probably no.

STUDENT WORKSHEET

JESUS' ARREST AND CRUCIFIXION

I. Number the following events in the order in which they occurred:

- ___ Peter cuts off Malchus' ear.
- ___ Pilate tries to set Jesus free.
- ___ Jesus is betrayed by Judas in the olive grove.
- ___ Jesus is nailed to a cross between two thieves.
- ___ Pilate sentences Jesus to die.
- ___ Jesus asks John to take care of His mother.
- ___ Jesus gives up His spirit and dies.
- ___ Jesus is taken to Pilate for trial.

II. Kingly Count.

Who called Jesus the "King of the Jews?" _____

What man really believed Jesus was a king? _____

Did Jesus ever say He was a king (see John 18:36-37)? _____

How many times can you find the word "king" in John 19:1-21? _____

Was Pilate right in calling Jesus a king? _____

Do you think he really believed it? _____

MEMORY VERSE

John 20:30 - "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book."

THE RESURRECTION

John 20

Lesson Aim

To communicate to students the hope that Jesus' resurrection brings to all believers.

Memory Verse

John 20:31 - "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."

Lesson Background

I recall the first time I saw a popular Hollywood film version of the events that led up to the crucifixion of Christ. I was terribly dismayed to find that the film dealt with Jesus' death - and then ended. "But that's not the end of the story!" I cried. "What happened to the resurrection?" Apparently the writers, directors, and other Hollywood decision-makers didn't feel it was important to include it in the story. They couldn't have been more wrong.

In I Corinthians 15, Paul makes it clear that our hope for both redemption and glorification hinges on the truth of Christ's resurrection. If Christ did not rise, we are still in our sins (I Corinthians 15:17), for the resurrection proved that God was satisfied with Christ's sacrifice. Nor could we hope to be resurrected ourselves if even our Savior and Lord were still rotting in the grave. But Paul assures us that we can be confident of the truth of the resurrection, which had been witnessed by many - including himself. Because of the truth of the resurrection, we can be sure that we will someday see our Savior face to face and that we will be like Him on that day, for "we shall see Him as He is" (I John 3:2). Read I Corinthians 15 and John 20 this week as you prepare this lesson on Christ's resurrection.

Lesson Procedure

In order to realize the great joy that Christ's resurrection brought to His disciples and brings to us today, it is helpful to review the great despair brought about by His death. Begin the lesson by reviewing the events of the crucifixion from last week's lesson, and ask your students how they think the disciples felt when Jesus was arrested and crucified. Were they confused? sorrowful? angry? afraid? Ask them how they think the disciples spent the days leading up to Christ's resurrection. Surely this death made no sense to them despite the fact that Jesus had warned them it was coming, and those three days must have been very difficult to bear.

1. Jesus' Tomb is Found Empty (John 20:1-18)

While John only mentions Mary Magdalene in his account, her "we" in verse 2 indicates that she was with others when she came to the tomb early Sunday morning. The other Gospel writers note that a group of women had come early to anoint Jesus' body with spices (see Mark 16:1). When Mary discovered that the tomb was empty, she ran to Simon Peter and John to tell them that Jesus' body was missing. Obviously she wasn't thinking about the possibility of resurrection, since she wanted to know where the body was taken.

A. Peter and John Investigate (verses 2-9)

Mary's news caused Peter and John to run - not walk - to the tomb to investigate for themselves. What they discovered was not a plundered gravesite, but an orderly, vacant tomb. Since Jesus' body was wrapped with strips of linen, and the linen was still in the tomb, it has been conjectured that perhaps the linen strips lay outlining the form of Christ's body! At any rate, no one had to loose Christ from them, as had been the case with Lazarus. The separate cloth that was used to cover Christ's face was folded and apart from the other linen. No grave robber would have done that. And anyone who was simply moving Christ's body would have taken the linen, too. John records that what he saw in the empty tomb caused him to believe.

Ask your students, "What do you think John believed when he saw the empty tomb? Do you think he believed Jesus was alive again?" Verse 9 shows that at this time the disciples didn't understand the Old Testament prophecies that showed that Jesus had to rise from the dead. But John had heard Christ teach. He had seen Jesus bring several dead people back to life, including Lazarus. The empty tomb opened his eyes to Jesus' own resurrection.

B. Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene (verses 10-18)

John, at least, seemed comforted by the empty tomb, but Mary remained outside the tomb crying. The word translated "crying" here is actually "wailing," and shows the depth of her grief. Perhaps it was for this reason that Jesus appeared to Mary first. In this tender scene of grief, recognition, and then joy, we see Jesus meeting a specific need in a specific way. Peter, John, and the others would wait until evening to see Him, but Mary needed comfort that morning.

Ask your students, "How do we know that Jesus cared that Mary's heart was broken? Can you remember another time when Jesus was touched with the grief that death

brings?” Remind your students that it was another Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who came to Jesus in her deep grief, and that Jesus Himself wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus.

2. Jesus Appears to His Disciples (John 20:19-23)

On the evening of that day the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors “for fear of the Jews.” Perhaps they had been meeting like this since Jesus was crucified, or perhaps they were gathered to discuss the strange events of the day. The other Gospel writers tell us that other women besides Mary had seen the resurrected Christ and had reported this to the disciples (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8). Also, Luke tells us that Jesus met with Peter in Jerusalem that day, and with the two travelers on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32). Excitement, confusion, fear - all of these emotions must have filled the room when the disciples met together. Suddenly, Jesus Himself appeared among them with the words, “Peace be with you.” It was a common Jewish greeting, and yet quite appropriate to say to His frightened, bewildered disciples. To identify Himself to them, Jesus showed them His hands and side. Then, we are told, the disciples were “overjoyed” to see their Lord. Jesus then reminded His disciples of a task they had to do (verse 21). Ask your students what that task was. Make sure your students understand that Jesus sent His disciples to preach the Gospel to all people. It would be their message that would show people the way to forgiveness of sins and everlasting life (see verse 23).

3. Jesus Appears to Thomas (John 20:24-31)

Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus appeared and refused to accept their testimony about His resurrection. “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.” Ask your students why they think Thomas was so skeptical. After all, he had seen Christ perform many miracles, and he really had no reason to doubt the word of his friends and comrades. One can only speculate; perhaps he had been so bitterly disappointed, hurt, and confused by Christ’s crucifixion that he had decided he could no longer believe in the supernatural (this might also explain why he did not meet with the other disciples that night). But whatever his reasoning, Jesus knew his doubts and questions. A week after His first appearance, Jesus met again with His disciples in the same house, and this time Thomas was with them. He offered Thomas the “physical” proof of the resurrection that he had requested. Thomas, confronted by the living Christ, now had no need to touch His wounds, but said, “My Lord and my God!” Thomas recognized Jesus’ divinity - perhaps he was the first disciple to do so. He was no longer a doubter, but a believer whose faith was strong and certain.

Ask your students, “What is our faith based upon? Have we seen Jesus ourselves, or is our faith based upon what others have told us?” Our faith is based on the testimonies and experiences of others. We believe, for example, in what John saw and heard and wrote about in his Gospel. “What does Jesus promise in verse 29 to those who have not seen, but believe?” These words, which apply to us, promise us blessing for believing all the things that are written about Jesus in God’s Word.

Conclusion

As John closes his account of Jesus’ appearance to Thomas, he reminds us of his purpose in writing his Gospel (John 20:30-31). Thomas was able to see the resurrected Christ and believe. John was able to see the resurrected Christ and believe. But there would be many, many others who lived in different places

and at different times who would only hear about Jesus from other sources. So John wrote this account of Jesus' life so that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing we might have life in His name. As we read through this book and the other Gospels, as we look at the things Jesus did and the things He said, and as the Holy Spirit gives us understanding and draws us to faith in Christ, we too will be able to proclaim, "Jesus! He is my Lord and my God!" Those who believe this will have eternal life in Jesus' name; they do not need to fear death because Jesus conquered death when He was resurrected from the grave.

Worksheet

In Part I, encourage your students to pick different characters. Save enough time to share each student's version of what they think Mary, Peter, or Thomas thought and felt when they saw Jesus alive again. Were they just happy, or were they frightened as well? How was it different for each one? Some of your students may have trouble expressing what they are thinking in written form; help them by listening to what they are saying and suggesting possible ways of expressing their thoughts. Example: "You're saying you think Peter might have been afraid to see Jesus because he had denied Him three times? Maybe you can write, 'I was afraid Jesus would be mad at me, but He wasn't.'" In this way, everyone can be satisfied with his or her "creative contribution" when it's time to share their stories.

Related Music

"Because He Lives" (chorus or entire song); "Up From the Grave He Arose!" (*Trinity Hymnal*, #276).

STUDENT WORKSHEET

THE RESURRECTION

I. In Others' Words . . . Pick one of the three names from the list below and describe what happened when that person saw Jesus alive again. How do you think he or she felt? What do you think the person was thinking? Write as if you were the person yourself (Example: "My name is John. I saw the empty tomb, and I knew Jesus was alive again! I couldn't wait to see Him! I was so happy!").

Mary

Peter

Thomas

My name is _____

II. Fill in the blanks. Last week's memory verse and this week's verse go together. Can you fill in the missing words?

"Jesus did many other miraculous _____ in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this _____. But these are written that _____ may believe that Jesus is the _____, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have _____ in His _____." (John 20:30-31)