

GOD CARES WHEN CHILDREN ARE SAD

SAMPLE LESSON

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Introduction

These Bible lessons have been written to teach children about God's love and care for them, especially as they face difficult situations.

Applications

Applications have been made for

- ◆ children who face divisions in the family.
- ◆ children who are rejected because of some perceived difference to other children.
- ◆ children who face great peer pressure to do wrong - for example, steal, take alcoholic drinks, look at "dirty" pictures or videos.
- ◆ children who have been hurt by others and need to learn to forgive.

The Bible lessons have applications for both saved and unsaved children.

Objective

An objective is given for each lesson to try to help you think out what you want to see happen, by God's grace, in the life of the children. The objective expresses the desire and goal of the teacher. It does not guarantee that this will happen automatically. For example, if the objective for a lesson is expressed as "The children will trust in Christ for salvation", that is the teacher's prayer, desire and objective - but only the Holy Spirit can make that a reality in the life of the child.

Teaching Bible truths

We fall short of our responsibility as teachers if we only tell children Bible stories. It is essential that children learn the truths those stories were written down to teach us, and that we then take them a step further to show what that truth means to them in their daily lives. Of course, we cannot in one lesson cover all the teaching any particular story would provide, so in each of these lessons one central truth has been chosen. The teaching of the central truth has been woven throughout the narrative, but to help you in your preparation the teaching sections have been marked "CT". These are also marked out in the lesson plan.

You will notice that the central truths are marked with a "U" or an "S" to show the kind of children the truth is applied to - unsaved or saved. This is also made clear in the text by using phrases such as, "If you have not trusted the Lord Jesus to forgive your sin ..." or, "Christian, you ...".

The application of the truth has been highlighted with a line beside the text. You may feel it necessary to adapt the applications to better suit the children you teach. For example, the application may use a boy's name, yet you have only girls present. It could be that the application given is more applicable to older children, while yours are very young. Make the changes you feel are necessary. The important thing is that the Word of God is applied to their lives.

Make yourself available for counselling

When you present the Gospel message, there will be children who will respond to it independently. They may or may not at a later date tell you that they have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. There will, however, be others who would like some help. They may have questions to ask; they may need help or encouragement in knowing what to say.

As you teach the saved children, there may be times when they would like advice in a difficult situation; they may need clarification on how a particular lesson applies to their daily lives; they may find themselves in a situation where they do not know what the Bible says they should do; they may want to share a difficulty so that you can pray for them, especially if you are the only Christian support they have.

For these reasons it is important that the children know you are available to talk. It is also important that they know when and where to go when they want to talk to you. Finally, it is essential that unsaved children do not confuse coming to the Lord Jesus with coming to you.

In all cases you should not make yourself available at the same time as giving the Gospel invitation, so that the children never get the impression that they cannot come to Christ without coming through you, or that they are saved simply by waiting to speak to you.

An example for use with the unsaved child

“Do you really want to live for the Lord Jesus, but don’t know how to come to Him? I will be glad to explain it from the Bible; come and see me. I’ll be standing by that tree when the meeting is over. Remember, I can’t take away your sin - only the Lord Jesus can do that - but I will be glad to help you understand better how you can come to Him. Just come and sit with me under that tree.”

An example for use with the saved child

“If you have trusted the Lord Jesus as your Saviour and you have never told me about it, please let me know. I’ll be standing beside the piano after the meeting is finished. I would like to know if you too have trusted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, so that I can pray for you and perhaps help you.”

Teaching methods

Often children who are living in these difficult circumstances are rebellious and difficult to control in class. For this reason, a variety of methods of teaching have been used to involve the children, hold their attention and reinforce the learning process. Methods include narrative, questions, interviews, group study, object lessons, role play, etc. Teachers need to prepare the lessons well in advance, as sometimes they will need the cooperation of other helpers, for example in the acting out of a Biblical scene or role play.

Memory verses

A Scripture verse to teach the children is suggested for each lesson. If you are teaching the lessons as a series over five weeks it would be advisable to choose two or three verses to teach well, which the children will then remember. If you try to teach all five, the children may not really know any of them well.

Extra visual aids

On a piece of card print out the words of the central truth for each lesson; back it with pieces of flocked paper. (Use lower case letters, so that even the younger ones can read the words easily.) Put this card on the board at the beginning of the class or when you first teach the central truth in the lesson.

Additional helps

Along the left and right margins additional helps are provided, giving background information and optional ideas on how to add interest to your lesson.

These ideas are designed to incorporate different learning styles. For effective learning, some children need to see or write, others need to hear or speak, others need to touch or handle, and still others need active participation.

You can use these ideas as time allows.

Review questions

For each lesson some review questions are given. These can be used after the lesson or the following week, before teaching the new lesson.

Review time, if conducted in an orderly way, can be an ideal opportunity to reinforce what you have taught, while still being fun for the children. You can use this time ...

- 1 to find out how much the children are understanding and remembering.
- 2 to help you as a teacher to know what you need to emphasise more so that the children will remember better.
- 3 to provide a time of fun in the class. The children like competition and look forward to this part of the programme. But it is more than just a game: it is a time of learning.

In this textbook only questions on the lesson are included. It would be profitable to include questions also on the songs, verse and whatever else you teach. In this way the children realise that every part of the programme is important.

Carry-over activities

Ideas for carry-over activities have been supplied for some lessons. You do not necessarily need a carry-over activity each week.

Overview

Lesson	Central truth	Application	Memory verse
The outcast who was accepted by God (Jephthah) Judges 11:1-12:7 Hebrews 11:32	God receives and uses those who trust in Him	Unsaved: Trust in the Lord to save you from the punishment for your sins Saved: Trust in God in all your troubles and let Him use you to help others in trouble	"... Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful ..." Joel 2:13
The stranger welcomed (Ruth) Ruth (the whole book)	God loves and values all kinds of people	Unsaved: Trust God for forgiveness and cleansing Saved: Trust in God when others reject you	Review Joel 2:13
Clean in a dirty world (Samuel) 1 Samuel 2:12-26 1 Samuel 3:1-21	God can make clean and keep clean those who trust in Him	Unsaved: Trust in God to make you clean from sin Saved: Trust in God to keep you clean	"... Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" Psalm 51:7
Learning to forgive others (Peter) Matthew 18:21-35	God offers forgiveness to all	Unsaved: Accept God's forgiveness as a first step to forgiving others Saved: Forgive those who have hurt you	"Be kind ... forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" Ephesians 4:32
Despised by others, forgiven by God (Matthew) Luke 5:27-32	God is willing and able to forgive sin and change lives	Unsaved: Call on God to forgive you Saved: Thank God for having forgiven you - go on to serve Him	Review Ephesians 4:32

Lesson 1

The outcast who was accepted by God (Jephthah)

Scripture for teachers

Judges 11:1-12:7

Hebrews 11:32

Central truth

God receives and uses those who trust in Him

Application

Unsaved: Trust in the Lord to save you from the punishment for your sins

Saved: Trust in God in all your troubles and let Him use you to help others in trouble

Objective

The lesson is written thinking particularly of children who feel rejected by their families. The aim is to lead them to trust in the Lord Who loves them. He wants to receive them as His children and help them in all their troubles.

Where to use

It is especially suitable in outreach to children from non-Christian homes and particularly dysfunctional homes; possibly orphanages or juvenile detention centres

Memory verse

“... Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful ...” Joel 2:13

Visual aids

- ◆ Flashcards: 1-1, 1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 1-5 and 1-6
- ◆ Visualise the central truth on an outline of welcoming hands (see page 40)
- ◆ Map of Palestine at the time of Joshua/Judges

Teaching methods

- ◆ At one point in the lesson, the children can participate in group discussion. You need to have copies made of the four questions provided. Give a copy to each of your helpers who will lead a very brief (3-4 minute) discussion.
- ◆ Be sure to read short sentences of key verses from the passage as you teach. For example:

Judges 11:11a, 11:29a; 11:32b. Better still, have a helper or an older child (prepared beforehand) read out these short sentences.

Lesson outline

Introduction

“Home was not a happy place” **CT**

Progression of events

- 1 Jephthah is expelled from his family and country **CTU**
- 2 He gathers a band of outlaws around him
- 3 The Ammonites declare war on Israel
- 4 The Israelite leaders invite Jephthah to be general of their army **CTS**
- 5 Jephthah unsuccessfully tries to negotiate peace with the Ammonites
- 6 The Holy Spirit gives power to Jephthah to defeat the Ammonites **CTS**
- 7 He is judge in Israel for six years
- 8 He is mentioned in the list of men of faith in Hebrews 11 **CTU**

Lesson

Flashcard 1-1

Home was not a happy place for Jephthah. His younger brothers did not want him to live in the house at all. Actually, they were not his brothers - they were half-brothers. Jephthah and the other boys had the same Dad, called Gilead, but Jephthah's mother was another woman. That's where the trouble had really started. Jephthah's father and the other woman, whom he had not married, had been together and had had a baby. That was how Jephthah was born. Then Gilead married and had several other sons. These sons hated Jephthah their half-brother.

"Why is this fellow living in our home?" they said to themselves. "He is not really part of the family. Our mother is not his mother. The problem is, he is the oldest and maybe when Gilead our father grows old and dies, Jephthah will get most of the family money. We can't let that happen! Let's throw him out!"

Every time his half-brothers looked at him, Jephthah could see their eyes flashing with hate. He must have wondered, "Why are they so angry with me? Why do they treat me so badly? It's not my fault that my father went off with that other woman, that she got pregnant and that I was born that way. It was my father's bad conduct - not mine! What are those fellows planning? What will they do to me? Will they try to hurt me or get rid of me? I am afraid that something terrible is going to happen one of these days."

CT

Maybe you feel a bit like Jephthah. Maybe some of you have brothers or sisters (or half-brothers or -sisters) who can't accept you. You feel that you don't fit into the family and maybe you even feel that you are not wanted at all. Or maybe your friends at school or in your street make you feel unwanted and unappreciated. That is very hard for you and it must make you sad sometimes, but there is Someone Who does love you completely - He is God. He tells us in His Word, the Bible, that He loves you and me much, much more than any human person can love (John 3:16). And God loved Jephthah too in his unhappy home.

Flashcard 1-2

One day there was a terrible row. What do you think Jephthah's half-brothers roared at him? Let's read from the Bible.

"You are not going to get any inheritance in our family because you are the son of another woman" (from Judges 11:2b).

They were telling him that he did not belong in that family and that they did not want him there. Poor Jephthah! He must have wondered, "Will they really throw me out of the house?" When he looked at their scowling faces, he knew that there was going to be trouble. Do

Read (or have an older child read) the verse from your Bible.

you believe that his brothers would really throw him out? Let's look at the story in the Bible for the answer.

"Then Jephthah fled from his brothers" (Judges 11:3a).

There was nothing he could do when all his half-brothers were against him, so he had to run away before they put him out. He ran from his family and from his home and even left his country to get away as far as possible from that terrible situation. Poor Jephthah!

Do you, like Jephthah, sometimes feel that you are not wanted or loved? Well, God loves you so much. He loves you, but it is not because you are good - all of us have done wrong and have displeased Him.

You too have done wrong things that God has told us clearly not to do. In your heart, have you had bitter, angry, hateful thoughts, just as Jephthah's brothers had? What about your words? Have you used bad language or dirty words? Have you told lies? If so, you have disobeyed God. He commands in the Bible, "speak truthfully" (Ephesians 4:25 NIV). Have you shouted angrily at others? What about your actions? Have you hurt others or cheated or taken things that are not yours? If so, you have disobeyed God Who commands, "You shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15). You do all these wrong things because inside you have a sinful nature, but God loves you very much in spite of the wrong way that you are living. You deserve to be punished, but God punished His own Son the Lord Jesus instead of you, so that He could forgive you.

Jesus suffered a cruel death on the cross. He never did anything wrong. He was perfect. But He died for the wrong things that we have done, disobeying God's laws. Jesus died, but He did not stay dead and now He is alive for evermore. He wants you to come to Him. If you do, He will certainly accept you as His child. He will become your loving Heavenly Father. Come to Him today. Ask Him to forgive all your sins. Ask Him to accept you as His child. He promises to do so.

Let's repeat the words of our memory verse again. "Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful" (Joel 2:13). The Lord is gracious and merciful. In other words, He is loving and kind. He wants to forgive you and accept you, even though you don't deserve it. God will receive you if you turn to Him.

If you are not quite sure how to turn to God, come to me after the class. I'll be glad to talk to you personally and explain more about how you can take this most important step. God wants to forgive you and help you. Do you think God would also help Jephthah? ... Yes, He did.

After Jephthah escaped from his home and his country, he went to live in another land. We don't have all the details of what he did there, but the Bible does tell us a little.

Read verse from your Bible.

CTU

Make yourself available for counselling.

Tob (Judges 11:3) was the name of an Aramean principality situated to the East of Jordan, north of Gilead. You might like to have an older child, whom you have prepared, point this out on a map showing Palestine at the time of Joshua/Judges.

Show Ammon on the map.

Teaching method:
Discussion groups.

Read (or have a helper/ older child read) the verse from your Bible.

Read Judges 11:3b from your Bible.

“Worthless men banded together with Jephthah and went out raiding with him.”

They probably lived by attacking enemy cities and carrying off the food and valuables. One of the enemies of God’s special people, the Jews, was the nation of the Ammonites. The people back in Israel began to hear the news of this courageous band of outlaws who were winning battles against their enemies.

Then one day the Ammonites decided to declare war on the people of Israel. They were a powerful enemy. The leaders of Israel thought, “We need someone to be our general if this war starts. Who would make an able general?” Whom do you think they chose? Yes, Jephthah.

Flashcard 1-3

The people sent messengers to Jephthah saying, “Come back to Israel. We want you to be our general in this war. After you win the war, you can be our judge or national leader” (like a president today). Would Jephthah come back to help the people who had driven him out of his home and away from his country? Before we find the answer, here are some questions I want you to think about.

If you have good helpers, you could divide the children into two or three groups. Your helpers would lead a brief discussion, not more than 3-4 minutes. Make sure that each group has some older children.

- 1 After the way they had treated him, how might Jephthah have felt about the people who were now asking for his help?
- 2 If God had not helped him - how might he have reacted?
- 3 With God’s help, how should he have reacted?
- 4 If you have been hurt by other people’s reactions to you, how could God help you to react, if you trust in Him?

CTS

After the groups come back together again, briefly answer the questions with the children’s help.

Well, let’s see what happened.

God’s Word says, “Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead [the leaders], and the people made him head and commander over them” (Judges 11:11a).

Flashcard 1-4

What a change for Jephthah! From being an outcast and an outlaw, far from his country, he suddenly becomes the general of the army. God did this miracle.

Jephthah tried to talk to the Ammonites so that there would be no war, but they were determined to fight and so a great battle took place. We read something very important in God’s Word.

Read *Judges 11:29*.

“The Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah.” That means that God the Holy Spirit gave Jephthah special help and strength for the job ahead of him. God helped Jephthah as he went out to battle against the Ammonites. Let’s read what happened. “The Lord delivered them into his hands” (*Judges 11:32*). Yes, Jephthah defeated the enemy army. There was peace in the land again. Jephthah became the judge (like a president) and he ruled in the land for six years.

Flashcard 1-5

Isn’t it wonderful how God accepts and loves every person even though some other people think they are no good?

If you have already asked the Lord Jesus to be your Saviour, remember that He loves you so much. You are precious to Him. He knows about the hurt feelings in your heart. He understands and cares for you. When you feel rejected like Jephthah was, or lonely or unwanted, trust in God in all your troubles. Talk to the Lord in prayer. Quietly thank Him that He loves you.

He loved you so much that He died on the cross so that you could be forgiven and become a member of His family. Thank Him that He is with you and you can trust Him in every trouble. He does not despise you even if others do. If you are His child He wants to use you too, just as He used Jephthah.

Flashcard 1-6

Just as God used Jephthah, He can use you too if you are in His family. Once God has received you as His child, you are no longer an outcast. You don’t need to feel rejected and useless, and you certainly do not need to run away from home as Jephthah did. God has something for you to do, right where you are.

He could use you right there in your family to be a peace-maker. He can help you to be kind and gentle to others. He could use you to bring other boys and girls to Good News Club® to hear the wonderful news of God’s love.

If you have received the comfort of God’s love for you, God could use you to explain the Bible verse that we learned today to some other boy or girl who needs to hear and understand these lovely words. You can be a help to others just as Jephthah was.

In the New Testament in the book of Hebrews there is a list of famous men and women who trusted in God and by God’s strength won great battles. Do you know whose name is there too? Jephthah’s!

Just as God helped Jephthah in his battle, He can help you too. If you have not yet done so, you need to come to the Lord Jesus and ask for His forgiveness for your sins. Turn from your sins today and

Read (or have a helper/ older child read) the verse from your Bible.

CTS

Show card with central truth.

CTU

turn to the Lord for “He is gracious and merciful” (Joel 2:13). He loves you and wants to forgive you and receive you into His family.

Review questions

- 1 Why was Jephthah thrown out of his home? (Jephthah’s mother was not the same person as the mother of the other children in the family - his half-brothers would not accept him.)
- 2 Where did he go and what did he do? (He went to another land and gathered a group of adventurers around him.)
- 3 Why did the people of Israel call Jephthah back? (Because an enemy, the Ammonites, declared war on them.)
- 4 With God’s help, how did Jephthah react? (He was prepared to help his people.)
- 5 How did Jephthah try to avoid war? (He tried to talk to the Ammonites and make peace.)
- 6 From whom did Jephthah receive special power for the battle? (From the Holy Spirit.)
- 7 God loved Jephthah and He loves you also. In what wonderful way did God show His love for you and me? (God sent His only Son to earth to die for us on the cross.)
- 8 Why is it so surprising that God loves us? (Because we have done so many wrong things against Him.)
- 9 God used Jephthah. If you have trusted in the Lord Jesus and been accepted into God’s family, in what ways could God use you? Give me two ways. (God could use you to be a peace-maker in your family; to explain a Bible verse to another child.)
- 10 Can you repeat the Bible verse for today? (“Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful” Joel 2:13.)

Carry-over activity

God loves you

Make photocopies (if possible on fine card) of the template on page 41 and have them available for children who want to pick one up after class.

Explain what is to be done. Bend backwards across the dotted line and set up the face in your room. It will help you to remember that God loves you.

God receives and uses those who trust in Him

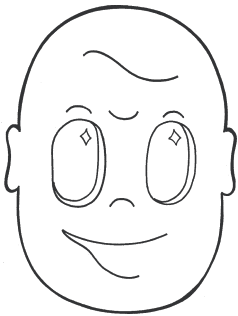
Central truth - lesson 1



God loves you

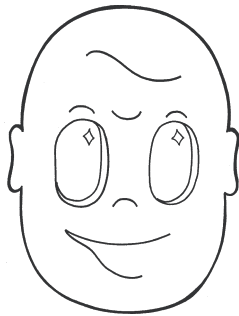
Carry-over activity - lesson 1

Don't be sad!



Remember God loves you.

Don't be sad!



Remember God loves you.

Copy, cut out and keep in your Bible



Summary of steps for counselling the child who wants to come to Christ

Make sure the child understands about

God

Who is God?
God made us. He speaks to us through the Bible.
God is holy and pure. He loves us.

Sin

What is sin?
Sin is disobeying God's commands. It is against God.
Speak about specific sins.
The child is a sinner by nature and act. (We sin because we are sinners.)
Sin deserves punishment.

The Saviour

Who alone can take away your sin?
God the Son died on the cross for sinners.
The Lord Jesus rose again from the dead.
He is Lord of all.

Explain how to be saved

Explain what the Lord wants us to do, and what He will do.
Use a Bible verse (*John 1:12; 3:16; 6:37; Acts 16:31; Romans 6:23 or 10:13*).
What does the Lord want you to do?
What will the Lord do?
Warn about difficulties.
Ask: "Do you want to trust Christ, or would you rather wait?"
Encourage the child to pray audibly (if ready).

Speak about assurance of salvation

Go back to the Bible verse you used.
Speak about a changed life.
Tell him what the person who is truly trusting in Christ can know.

Give (later) some advice about the Christian life

Read and obey your Bible.
Talk to God, our heavenly Father.
Tell others what the Lord has done for you.
Ask God to forgive you when you sin.
Meet with other Christians.
Remember the Lord promises: "*I will never leave you*" (*Heb 13:5*).