

Blessed to Be a Blessing

Theme Lesson

PREPARATION

Objective

Students will understand God's plan to bless people so that they will be a blessing to others.

Outcomes

1. Students will understand that God wants to use those he blesses to bless others.
2. Students will consider ways they can be a blessing to others.

Directions

1. Review the Theme Lesson, scripture references, and response. Consider how this lesson will apply to your unique group of students.
2. Review the "Key Word Wheel," definitions, and verses. Consider which words relate to this lesson. Suggested: "Purpose," "People," "Possessions," and "Proclamation."

**PREPARATION: 10 min.****TEACHING: 26 min.**

Materials

- Bibles
- "Key Word Wheel" poster (Introduction p. 6)
- "Key Word Cards" (Introduction pp. 7-8)
- small paper cup for each student
- M&M's® or Skittles®
- watch or timer
- chalkboard or dry erase board
- chalk or dry erase marker
- globe

TEACHING (CORE)

PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY: THE BLESSINGS GAME

Directions

1. Warmly welcome students to your time of discovering more about God's purpose for the people of earth.
2. Give every student a small cup. Instruct students to all close their eyes. Tell them not to peek until you give them permission to open their eyes.
3. As students' eyes are closed, move around the classroom and put candies in each student's cup. Be completely random about the quantities you give to each student. Some will get one or two candies. Others will have a cupful.
4. When you are finished, invite students to open their eyes. Look at your watch or set a timer for two minutes. This gives students time to notice what they have in their cups and decide what they want to do about it.
5. As students discover their lack or abundance, some will choose to hoard their candy supply and some choose to share it. Avoid comment. Simply observe as students discover the unfairness of the amounts given. Watch for the various feelings students may be experiencing.
6. After two minutes, instruct students to be seated. Ask, *"What did you notice about the items you received in your cups?"* Allow responses. (Some noticed they received a lot. Others received little.) Ask, *"How did it feel to have a small amount in your cup?"* Listen to responses. Ask others, *"How did it feel to have a lot in your cup?"* Notice a variety of responses here, also.
7. Ask the group, *"What did you decide to do about it?"* Allow responses.
8. Ask, *"In our world today, why has God blessed some people with more and some with less?"* Listen for student comments. *"We do not understand all God's reasons. But we do know that God blesses his people, so they will bless others. His blessing is not for us to keep to ourselves."*
9. Invite any students who would like more candies to receive them.

THEME LESSON: BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

Directions

1. Ask students, *"What is a 'blessing'?"* Together discover that blessings are good things we have or enjoy. Summarize by listing different kinds of blessings:

They may be practical, items we can touch or feel (food, house, clothes).

They might be an item for enjoyment (money, travel, a trip to a baseball game).

They might be related to relationships (friendship, laughter, hugs).

Some of the best blessings are also spiritual blessings, things we cannot touch (love, joy, forgiveness, and knowledge about Jesus).
2. Ask, *"So why does God bless us?"* Allow responses. Generally, their

Materials

- small paper cup for each student
- M&M's® or Skittles®
- watch or timer

Materials

- Bibles
- globe

answers will be related to the following: God loves us, we have been good, we go to church, we deserve it, etc. Invite students to look in the Bible to understand what God's answer is to this question.

3. Ask a student to read Psalm 67:1-2: *"May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations."* Explain that this verse is a prayer asking for God's blessing. *"See the blessings in verse 1? These are promised blessings from God."*
4. Reread verse 2 and discuss it. *"This verse has to do with our responsibility. God blesses people, SO THAT, his ways will be known on the earth, and his salvation among all nations. God blessed Bible characters like Abraham, SO THAT, all peoples on earth would be blessed through him. God blesses us today SO THAT we will share that blessing with others, including people of other nations."*
5. Ask, *"Does everyone receive the same amount of blessing?"* Allow responses. Say, *"Our beginning activity helped us to understand that everyone does not receive the same amount of blessing. In some places like North America, people have lots and lots of blessings, and lots of help to know about Jesus (the greatest blessing). In other countries, like those located in the 10/40 Window, people have few or no people helping them to know God."* Show students this portion of the globe, between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north of the equator, stretching across North Africa, the Middle East, India, and Asia. *"This is all a part of God's purpose of making his name known among the nations. God blesses us so that we will share about Jesus with those who do not yet have a way to know him."*

IN CLOSING: RESPONSE AND PRAYER

Directions

1. On the board, make four columns. Title each with one of the following headings: practical, enjoyment, relationship, and spiritual.
2. Invite students to help you list a variety of different blessings they have or might experience in each area. Record (or have a volunteer record) answers under each heading.
3. Look closely at the list of spiritual blessings. Ask, *"In what ways can you share these with others? In what way will God's name be known and honored as you share this?"* Listen for student responses.
4. Challenge students to each think of one way that they will share any type of blessing with another person in the coming week.
5. Close in prayer by thanking God for all blessings, especially the blessing of knowing him as God and Savior.

Materials

- chalkboard or dry erase board
- chalk or dry erase marker



HEROES OF HISTORY: CORRIE TEN BOOM

Directions

1. Set the stage for this story. Say, *“The time is 1940. The place is Holland, otherwise known as the Netherlands, where Dutch people live. The armies of Nazi Germany are sweeping across Europe during World War II. Holland is under Nazi control. When the Dutch people protest about the harsh treatment of Jews in their country, they are often put in jail or killed. Many Dutch citizens continue to help their Jewish neighbors in secret. They hide Jews from the Nazi secret police and try to help them escape to other countries where the German armies have not invaded. Corrie ten Boom’s family knows that God loves Jewish people. What will happen to this Christian family when they stand up for what is right?”*
2. Introduce these vocabulary words:
Gestapo: secret police of Nazi Germany
Concentration camps: prisons where Jews, prisoners of war, and other groups of people that the Nazis considered “inferior” humans were sent until the end of World War II. Many people in these camps died of starvation or disease. Others were killed by the Nazis in charge of the camps.
3. Read the story to your group.
4. Discuss the questions together or in small groups.
5. Together, discover the important role this person had in making God’s name known in all the earth.



PREPARATION: 15 min.

TEACHING: 25 min.

Materials

- “Corrie ten Boom” picture (p. 5)
- “Corrie ten Boom Story” (pp. 6-8)
- “Corrie ten Boom Discussion Questions” (p. 9)

Corrie ten Boom



The Hiding Place

HOLLAND AND GERMANY, 1942-1947

“This is a perfect house for a secret room,” said Mr. Smit. The ten Boom home was very old and had lots of rooms with odd angles and nooks. One could easily add a wall and a hidden door, and there would be places for people to hide if the Nazis came. The ten Booms knew better than to be pleased by this information, but they also knew as Christians that they could not look the other way when God’s chosen people, the Jews, were being so openly persecuted. Their consciences gave them no choice but to help. “This is where the false wall will come,” Mr. Smit told them later, standing in Corrie’s room on an upper floor. “I cannot make the secret room any bigger, but several people will be able to get in.”

Over the next week or so several new “customers” came to the ten Booms’ little watch shop carrying lunch sacks or what looked like packages. In these were the tools and materials needed to make the secret room. When it was finished, even the family, who knew the house well, could not tell that the wall was new. The workers had even matched the wallpaper that looked as if it had been 100 years old.

During the following weeks they practiced getting their “guests” into the room quickly if someone came to call. They had to make sure that there was no trace that anyone had been there. If they were eating, everything from the table must disappear so that there was no sign; if they were sleeping, the mattresses must be turned over so that there wasn’t a warm spot for the Gestapo to find. Soon they had four regular guests, and it only took about a minute for any trace of them to disappear from the house.

Soon all the ten Booms created their own code words that they used with others in the underground to funnel people through their hiding place and on to freedom in an Allied country. “We have an old watch, with an unusual face. Do you know someone who would like to buy it?” Or, in other words, “We have an old Jewish man who needs to be hidden who has a face that would immediately give him away. Where can we hide him?”

As time passed, their continual cooperation in

this underground people-smuggling operation became more and more risky. But their consciences would not let them turn anyone away who needed help. They knew sooner or later something would give them away. And by this time their number of regular guests had grown to nine.

Then in early 1944 the inevitable happened. The Gestapo took prisoner one of the couriers who helped them relay messages. They knew he was very young and would not do well under their torturous questioning. Some days later a Dutchman asked Corrie for some money. She did not know him, but he said it was needed urgently to help some Jews. Corrie did not really trust him but gave him the money anyway—how could she refuse if there was even a chance he was telling the truth? It turned out he was a Nazi spy.

The knock on the door came suddenly that afternoon when Corrie had just lain down because she was feeling like she was coming down with the flu. The house was a mad scramble for a bit and then silent. All of the practicing had paid off, as there was no sign of their guests to be found anywhere in the house.

The Gestapo officers and the two Dutch Nazi officials burst through the door and ran about the house, gathering everyone into the front room. They had some guests with them who knew nothing of the Jews upstairs, and Corrie’s brother Willem was in town. The officers began questioning them by taking them one by one into another room. Corrie’s turn came first.

“Where have you hidden the Jews?” the officer demanded.

Corrie was flushed, but she hid it well behind her slight fever. She looked straight into the officer’s face. Growing up, she had been told Christians never lied, but what choice had she? If she told the truth, they would kill all of them. Finally Corrie answered, “Jews? There are no Jews here.”

The officer struck her across the face. “Where are the Jews?”

This time Corrie said nothing.

CORRIE TEN BOOM STORY, CONTINUED

“All right, then, where is the secret room?” He would ask, then hit her, then ask again and then hit her again. It was not long before Corrie had completely lost track of how many times this had happened.

Corrie could taste blood in her mouth and feel it running down her cheek. Still she said nothing. Suddenly she felt even more sick than before and thought she would faint. “Lord Jesus, help me,” she sobbed.

This time the officer hit her with even more vehemence. “If you use that name again, I’ll kill you!” Instead, he had her taken back to the living room, and Corrie’s sister, Betsie, was taken into the back room.

As Betsie was questioned in the same manner, soldiers who had followed the officers were searching the house, smashing whatever was breakable, throwing anything loose across the room, and smashing cupboards and breaking down doors. But they never found what they were looking for, the room was so well hidden.

“Fine, then,” the commanding officer said at last, “take them to the police station and set a guard on the house. If there is anyone hiding in here, they will starve to death.”

For hours the family was left on the floor in a room of the police station. At nine o’clock, Father ten Boom gathered the family together for the devotions that always took place at this time at home. They had no Bible, so he quoted from Psalm 19 from memory, “You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in your word ... Hold me up, and I shall be safe.” Ten days after this, Father ten Boom died in a hospital, but because of their imprisonment it was some time before Corrie and Betsie learned of his death.

The family was soon separated, and Corrie, “the ringleader,” and Betsie were imprisoned to await their hearings. Corrie was taken to the hospital because she was sick, and when she returned to the police station she was put in a cell by herself. She had no idea what had happened to the rest of her family, but she soon received a hidden note in a tin of cookies that told her, “All the watches left in the cupboard are safe.”

Before her hearing, Corrie was to be questioned by another Gestapo officer. After her previous questioning, she feared the worst. “Lord Jesus,” she prayed, “you were once questioned too. Please show me what to do.”

“Miss ten Boom, I would really like to help you. But you must tell me everything,” the officer began in an understanding tone.

Corrie had been trained with the other underground members how to answer questions in a flowing line of conversation that seemed to be of interest, but in the end revealed nothing. For many of the questions, Corrie was grateful that she honestly didn’t know the answers.

Slowly the officer saw this was leading nowhere and decided to change the subject. “And now tell me about your other activities, Miss ten Boom.”

“Other activities? Oh yes, there’s the girls’ clubs and my work for the mentally handicapped ...” This was not what he had wanted to hear, but her enthusiasm in talking about these things caught him off guard. For a short time he listened in astonishment. In the end he said, “But really, all of this is such a waste of time.”

“Oh, no,” Corrie defended, “God loves everyone, even the weak and feeble. You see, the Bible tells us that God looks at things very differently from us.”

“All right, all right,” the officer interrupted, “that will be enough for today.”

In the end, Corrie shared the entire gospel message with the officer, who soon became as much of a friend as he could. He hated his work and listened attentively when she told him about praying for forgiveness. He arranged for Corrie and Betsie to see their family again. Unfortunately he did not have the power to see that they were released. Corrie spent the next four months in this cell alone except when she was permitted out for questioning. She spent time reading and rereading the gospel stories about Jesus.

Though no verdict was ever pronounced, eventually both Corrie and Betsie were sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp. In all, they spent 10 months in prison. At Ravensbruck they spent hours in the cold as the 35 thousand women prisoners were counted and recounted if there was a mistake. In the following months the hard labor took Betsie to the point of death more than once. In the end she went to the infirmary and didn’t come back. Through it all, though, it seemed that it was Betsie’s faith that had helped the rest of them survive.

Three days after her sister’s death, Corrie was

CORRIE TEN BOOM STORY, CONTINUED

called out at the morning head count. “Prisoner ten Boom, report after roll call.”

She was terrified. Was it her turn to be executed? “Father in heaven, please help me now,” she prayed.

But when she reported to the camp administrative offices as ordered, she was handed a card that said “Released” in German. She was given her original clothes back and a railway ticket for Holland. She left immediately. Eventually she learned that her release had been a clerical error. The week after her release, all of the women her age at Ravensbruck were put to death.

After the war ended, Corrie started a life of traveling and telling her story to encourage other Christians. Going back into Germany to minister was the most difficult of all for her, but she felt that she must go wherever God sent her.

In 1947, at a church in Munich, a man walked up to her who looked strangely familiar. As he shook her hand she realized where she knew him from: He had been one of the crueler guards at Ravensbruck! As he realized that she recognized him, he looked at her with watery eyes. “Miss ten Boom, I have become a Christian since the war. I know now in my heart that God has forgiven me, but I must also ask for your forgiveness. Can you forgive me for all of the evil I did to you, your sister, and the others?”

It took some time for Corrie to respond. As she struggled over what she would say, she found that she had many more things than she had realized to release to God about what had happened to her during the war. In the end, though, her response was simple and straightforward: “I forgive you, brother, with all my heart.”

Corrie went on to write a book about her experiences during the Second World War called *The Hiding Place*. Eventually the book was turned into a movie. She returned to Germany several times after the war and took part in a ministry that specifically helped Germans who had been made bitter under Hitler’s reign. Corrie spent the rest of her life preaching about the healing power of God’s forgiveness and about his comfort and presence even in the worst of circumstances. She died in 1983.

You are my hiding place!
You protect me from trouble,
And you put songs in my heart
Because you have saved me.

Psalm 32:7 (CEV)

*Lord Jesus, I offer myself for Your people.
In any way. Any place. Any time.*

Corrie ten Boom

CORRIE TEN BOOM – THE HIDING PLACE

Let's Talk About It

1. What were some blessings in the old house the ten Booms lived in?

Several rooms with odd shaped angles and nooks made it perfect for building “false walls” where the Jews could be hidden.

Because the family ran watch repair shop in their old home, there were often many customers coming and going. No one would suspect some “customers” would be workmen and other would be Jews needing to hide.

2. How was memorizing scripture verses a blessing for the ten Boom family?

When the ten Boom family was left at the police station and it was time for devotions Father ten Boom didn't have his Bible with him but was able to quote scripture from memory and encourage his family members.

3. How was Corrie's four months in a prison cell a blessing?

Corrie was able to tell the Gestapo officer about Jesus on several occasions; ultimately sharing the entire gospel with him. She was even able to share with him about prayer and forgiveness. Her heart and faith were personally being strengthened for her future ordeals by reading the Bible every day. God's Word is strength and light for the soul.

4. How can being obedient be a blessing?

First of all, the ten Boom family was obedient to God when they would not refuse to help any Jews in need ... even though it eventually lead to the family's capture and imprisonment. Their lifestyle reflected Christ and touched others for his glory.

There were many hardships at Ravensbruck, but Corrie did what she was told and was eventually released. She could have chosen to live a quiet life and feel sorry for herself for all that she'd experienced. BUT she chose to follow God's leading by going back to Germany and minister to the people there. She also learned the power of forgiveness through her obedience.

Think of some ways you have been blessed by God. Ask him to show you how to use those blessings to bless others.