

God Doesn't Play Favorites

Bible Lesson: Matthew 8:5-13; Acts 10:1-48

PREPARATION

Objective

Students will understand that Jesus is God's way for all people to know him.

Outcomes

1. Students will understand how and why God blessed the nation of Israel.
2. Students will name ways Jesus showed God's love to all people, not just to the Jews.

Memory Verse

1 John 4:9 "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him."

Directions

1. Review verses for the "Bible Drill Challenge." Consider how you will relate each to today's theme.
2. Review the "Key Word Wheel" poster. Integrate these words as you notice them in any and all sections of today's lesson. Suggested: "Purpose," "Power," "People Moving," and "Proclamation."
3. Read the Bible story references. Pray that God will guide you as you teach and apply this lesson to your unique group of students.
4. Find and cut out photos of a five or six currently famous people (movie stars, musicians, athletes, government leaders).



PREPARATION: 10 min.

TEACHING: 35 min.

Materials

- Bibles
- "Key Word Wheel" poster (Introduction p. 6)
- "Key Word Cards" (Introduction pp. 7-8)
- variety of sports, news, and movie star magazines

TEACHING (CORE)

PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY: WHAT DO THEY STAND FOR?

Directions

1. Warmly welcome students to your time of discovering God's purpose together.
2. Invite students to help you with a "People Quiz." Say, *"I will show you a picture. Tell us who the person is and explain why this person is famous. Also tell us what that person stands for, in one word or short phrase."* Realize there is no right answer. Students may differ in their opinion of what some of these people "stand for."
3. As an example, talk about George Washington. He was the first president of the United States and also the American general in the Revolutionary War. He stands for freedom, fighting for a cause you believe in, or the birth of a new nation. Then show your pictures and follow the same pattern.
4. After the discussion, ask, *"How do we come to decide what these people stand for?"* Allow responses. Then say, *"We can infer what people stand for by observing their words and their actions."*
5. Say, *"Jesus was the most famous man who ever lived in history."* Ask, *"What did he stand for? How do we know?"* (We know by his words and actions that he stood for God's love, above all.) Say, *"Today, we will talk about Jesus."*

BIBLE DRILL CHALLENGE

1 John 4:9 "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him."

Directions

1. Give each student a Bible. Invite students to participate in a Bible drill. Say, *"Since the Bible has such an important purpose, we want to get more acquainted with the Bible itself. Today, and over the next several weeks, we will practice finding verses and stories in the Bible that help us understand God's purpose."* (Optional: *"We will also be practicing to challenge our parents to a 'Bible Drill Challenge' on the last week of our quarter."*)
2. Instruct students to hold their Bibles in a ready position, Bibles closed and above their heads. Invite students to work in pairs if they are less familiar with their Bibles. Let students warm up for a speed competition by first looking for each item below, one at a time. As you name the item, adding theme-related questions or comments, students will lower their Bibles and quickly try to find what you have named. Say, "Ready, begin" after introducing each item.
 - Malachi 1:11 – "What is God's purpose?" (review verse from Lesson 1)
 - Isaiah 45:22 – "What does God want for all people?" (review verse from Lesson 2)

Materials

- five or six photos of famous people

Materials

- Bibles

- Psalm 67:1-2 – “*Why does God bless his people?*” (review verse from Lesson 3)
 - 1 Samuel 17:45 – “*How did God reveal himself through David?*” (gave David the power to defeat a giant)
 - Exodus 9:16 – “*What did God do through Moses?*” (review verse from Lesson 4)
 - 1 John 4:9 – “*Today’s verse is about Jesus.*”
3. After reading the final verse aloud, discuss its meaning together. Explain that in the Old Testament we saw that God made himself known with power.
 4. Say, “*Here we read that God wants to reveal another part of his character to us – his love. How did he do it?*” (He sent Jesus.) Teach, “*Jesus is God’s one and only Son. Jesus reflects the characteristics of his father, God. Through Jesus, God showed us the greatness of his love for us, making a way for us to know him forever.*”
 5. “*When Jesus lived on earth, he showed God’s love to people in many different ways.*” Ask, “*Can you give an example of a way in which Jesus showed love to people?*” Allow several examples.

BIBLE LESSON: JESUS AND THE CENTURION; PETER AND CORNELIUS

Directions

1. Say, “*The Old Testament is filled with stories about the nation of Israel. These are the people who descended from Abraham. They came to be called ‘God’s chosen people.’ Just like God chose to bless Abraham, so that all nations would be blessed through him, God also chose to bless the people of Israel with several important things that would help peoples living around them come to know him.*”
2. “*They were blessed with God’s laws, the commandments given to Moses.*”
3. “*They were blessed with prophets who preached about God’s purposes and plan to save the earth through the Messiah, Jesus Christ.*”
4. “*They were blessed with story after story of God’s love, work, help, and salvation. These stories are examples for all the people of the earth.*”
5. “*Finally, Israel was blessed with the messiah, Jesus. He was born in the nation of Israel, a descendant of Abraham. But he came to save all the people of the earth.*”
6. Teach, “*All along, God planned for everyone to be blessed and to know and honor him, but the people of Israel did not always understand God’s plan. Some thought they were so special, that they were the only ones chosen to know God. In most cases, the Jews kept their blessings to themselves instead of passing them on.*”
7. Have the students turn in their Bibles to Matthew 8. Together, read verses 5-13, the story of Jesus and the Centurion. Say, “*The Centurion was a leader in the army. He was in charge of 100 of the toughest soldiers on*

Materials

- Bible
- “Key Word Wheel” poster (Introduction p. 6)

the planet at that time. He was a Roman soldier, not part of the people of Israel.”

8. Ask, *“When he asked Jesus for help, did Jesus turn him away? Did Jesus say, ‘Sorry, you’re not Jewish.’”* (No! He helped him.) *“What does this tell us about Jesus love for people?”* (not limited, is for all)
9. Ask, *“What did Jesus notice about the man?”* (He had great faith. It was greater than that of many in Israel.) Discuss, *“How would someone from Israel feel upon hearing this?”* Allow responses.
10. Read Matthew 8:11 again. Say, *“This Bible verse helps us understand that Jesus was inviting people from all nations (east and west) to be part of God’s kingdom in heaven, not just the Jewish people.”*
11. Say, *“There is another example of how God feels about non-Jews in Acts 10.”* Allow students to locate Acts 10 in their Bibles. Then briefly discuss the story of Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48). Say, *“Cornelius was also a centurion, a man who gave generously to those in need and who prayed to God. He and his family were called God-fearers. They knew about the God of Israel, but being Italian, they were not part of the nation of Israel.”*
12. Continue, *“Peter, one of the Jesus’ disciples, had become a key leader in the church after Jesus returned to heaven. Even Peter did not fully understand God’s purpose to make himself known to all peoples.”*
13. *“To teach Peter more about his purpose, God gave him a vision, similar to a dream. In this vision, Peter saw ‘unclean animals.’ These were animals that Jewish people had been taught never to eat (especially pork). God’s voice told Peter to eat these ‘unclean’ animals.”*
14. *“Meanwhile, Cornelius had a dream of his own. God instructed him to find Peter to find out more about the true God. As they met, Peter began to understand God’s plan.”* Read Acts 10:34-35: *“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.”* Explain that God does not play favorites. His purpose is for all people to know him.
15. Say, *“Here is what Peter told Cornelius about Jesus.”* Read Acts 10:38 and 43: *“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power ... he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him ... All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”*
16. Using the “Key Word Wheel” poster, point out “Key Words” that are part of these stories (“Power” – healing and the visions; “People Moving” – centurions and Peter traveled; and “Proclamation” – by Jesus and Peter).

IN CLOSING: PRAYER

Directions

1. Summarize, *“Jesus was sent by God to forgive the sins of anyone who believes in him. The two stories we heard today are good news for us. They*

help us understand that we can know God, we can be forgiven by Jesus, and we can be part of God's kingdom. This is not exclusively for people who are descended from Abraham, the Jewish people."

2. Spend some time thanking God for sending Jesus and including all peoples in his plan.



PRAYER ACTIVITY: LOVE LIST CONTEST

Before the Activity Directions

1. Optional: Locate a copy of the song “What Would Jesus Do?” by Big Tent Revival. This song is on the “WWJD: What Would Jesus Do” CD, released in 1997. It is also available on audio cassette.

Directions

1. Challenge your students to a contest. Say, *“We are going to find examples of Jesus showing his love to people. What are the four books of the Bible that record Jesus’ life here on earth? They are often referred to as the gospels.”* (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)
2. Divide the students into teams of three or four. Give each team a piece of paper, a Bible, and pen or pencil.
3. Say, *“Each team will be making a ‘Love List.’ On my cue, you will look in the Bible to see how many stories you can find in which Jesus showed love to people in one way or another. They can be examples of his care for Jews or other groups of people. You will have six minutes to work. When I say stop, you must finish the idea you are writing and stop. Then we’ll see which team found the most examples. Ready, set, go!”*
4. Stop students after six minutes. Count to see who has listed the most examples in the time given. There may be no duplicate stories on each team’s list. (Optional: offer prizes to the winning team.)
5. Listen to the song, “What Would Jesus Do?” (optional). Then, orally construct your own group “Love List.” Think of ways in which students can follow Christ’s example and show God’s love to others.
6. Let students get back in their teams and pray for some of the things listed.
7. After a few minutes, call the group back together. Pray that the love of Christ would shine brightly in your students’ lives.



PREPARATION: 5 min.

TEACHING: 15 min.

Materials

- Bibles
- lined paper
- pencils or pens
- timer
- prizes for the winning team (optional)
- “What Would Jesus Do?” song (optional)
- CD player