

Jesus is the Way

Theme Lesson

PREPARATION

Objective

Students will learn that Jesus is God's way to make his name known to all peoples.

Outcomes

1. Students will list ways that Jesus is superior to other religious leaders.
2. Students will recognize that Jesus is the only way that God has provided for people to know him.

Directions

1. Copy and cut one set of the "What's the Big Deal About Jesus?" cards.
2. Find out the population of your town for the pre-lesson activity.
3. Review the Theme Lesson, scripture references, and response. Consider how this lesson will apply to your unique group of students.
4. Review the "Key Word Wheel" and the "Key Word Cards" with definitions and verses. Consider which words relate to this lesson. Suggested: "Purpose," "Power," and "People."

**PREPARATION: 10 min.****TEACHING: 25 min.**

Materials

- Bibles
- "Key Word Wheel" poster (Introduction p. 6)
- "Key Word Cards" (Introduction pp. 8-9)
- "What's the Big Deal About Jesus?" cards (p. 2)
- large road map of your area
- several overhead transparency sheets
- markers
- globe

What's the Big Deal About Jesus?

HE CAME

HE LIVED

HE DIED

HE ROSE

HE RULES

TEACHING (CORE)

PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY: MAP QUEST

Directions

1. Warmly welcome students to your time of discovering more about God's purpose together.
2. Spread the road map out on the table or a large floor area. Invite students to gather around it. Explain the map. Ask, *"Is this a familiar area to you? Which cities, landmarks, and roadways do you recognize?"*
3. Pick two major cities on the map, preferably a great distance from one another. Divide students into teams of two or three. Challenge each group to map a different route to drive between these two cities. Give groups two minutes to come up with a plan.
4. Place an overhead transparency sheet over the map and invite students to use a marker to show their travel plans.
5. Ask, *"How many different routes could we find to get from one city to the other on this map?"* (many, there are lots of roads and routes)
6. Say, *"This is how planning travel works. There are many ways to get to the same destination. But this is not how salvation works. Let's think about it for a moment."*
7. Ask, *"What are some of the ways that people think they can get to heaven?"* Allow responses. (being good, going to church; being nice to others; being better than others; doing less bad than good; God is loving so don't worry about it, everyone will go to heaven; forget about it, there is no such place)
8. Ask, *"What does the Bible say about getting to heaven?"* Read John 14:6, *"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"* Then say, *"There is only one way to heaven: belief in Jesus."* Ask, *"Why did God choose Jesus to be the only route? Let's learn about him."*

THEME LESSON: WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT JESUS?

Directions

1. Tell your students that a lot of people wonder what is so special about Jesus. *"They may say, 'After all, there were many other leaders of other religions, who were good people. So what makes Jesus different?'"*
2. Hold up the "He Came" card. Say, *"To begin with, Jesus' birth was much different from any others."*
 - *"Many years before Jesus was born, prophets predicted his birth. He came in exactly the way they described, into the city they predicted."*
 - *"Jesus came from heaven. He is God's Son. No other religious ruler had these kinds of circumstances surrounding their birth."*
3. Hold up the "He Lived" card. Say, *"He lived in a way that was very different from other religious leaders."*
 - *"Some, like Buddha, were loving or kind or good. Many were very busy*

Materials

- large road map of your area
- several overhead transparency sheets
- markers
- Bible

Materials

- one set of the "What's the Big Deal About Jesus?" cards (p. 2)

doing good deeds. But not one lived a perfect life like Jesus did. He did not sin – never even once.”

- *“Jesus also performed many miracles. He had power over the weather (calming a storm), over sickness (healing the blind), over food (turning five loaves and two fish into a feast for thousands), and even over death (raising Lazarus). Not one of the religious leaders did all these things.”*
 - *“Jesus also showed love to people in amazing ways. He loved many people that others in Israel would not love (the Samaritan woman, lepers, tax collectors, etc.).”* Ask, *“Can you think of ways Jesus showed his love to people? How does he show his love to you?”* Allow responses.
4. Hold up the “He Died” card. Say, *“Jesus died on the cross.”*
 - *“It was a death reserved for criminals. Jesus was not a criminal.”*
 - *“He died there to pay the price for our sins to be forgiven. No other religious leader promises to forgive sin.”*
 5. Hold up the “He Rose” card. Say, *“He rose from the dead. This is the most noticeable difference about Jesus.”*
 - *“We can find graves for Buddha, Mohammed, and others. Even Abraham, Moses, and David died.”*
 - *“Jesus rose from the dead. No one else could do this.”*
 6. Hold up the “He Rules” card. Say, *“Why could Jesus do all these things? He was far more than just a good man. He is God. He rules over the universe in heaven.”*
 7. Continue to discuss Jesus with your students. Ask, *“What do people outside this classroom think about Jesus? Does everyone know these true things about Jesus? How will they hear about him? How will you share the blessing of this knowledge about Jesus with your friends?”*

IN CLOSING: GLOBAL PRAYER

Directions

1. Remind students that Jesus is the only way that God has provided for people to know him.
2. Give different students turns to spin the globe (or toss the globe if it is a beach ball type) and stop it, pointing their finger at one spot.
3. Together, pray for people in a country or city near that spot. Pray they will learn the truth about Jesus so they can know God for themselves.

Materials

- globe



HEROES OF HISTORY: FELICITAS AND SONS

Directions

1. Set the stage for this story. Say, *“The place is Rome, about 160 years after Jesus lived, died, and returned to heaven. Many Christians have been persecuted during the reign of the emperors of Rome. Other Christians have died as martyrs. The current emperor, Antonius, angered that Christians do not worship the Roman gods of the empire, instructs his prefect to try to persuade a Christian family to reject their faith in Jesus.”*
2. Introduce this vocabulary word:
Prefect: in Roman times, a military or government official; in modern times, a police chief, head of police department
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

- “Felicitas” picture (p. 6)
- “Felicitas and Sons Story” (pp. 7-8)
- “Felicitas and Sons Discussion Questions” (p. 9)

Felicitas



If You Only Knew Jesus

ROME, C. A.D. 161

“There are women who blaspheme the gods as well, Emperor,” continued the priest in his plea to resume the persecution of Christians that had ended at Trajan’s death roughly 45 years earlier. “She and her brood of seven boys spread the Christian religion everywhere they go, right under your feet here in Rome! They pull people daily from the worship of the gods. It is a mockery and affront to your eminence!”

Emperor Antonius stirred uneasily at this. The priest saw that he had driven home his point. “Very well, then. I need not be mocked in my very own city. Have the prefect arrest her and threaten her. If she will not return to the worship of the gods, then he can deal with her.”

Publius, the prefect of Rome, was not pleased with his task. Felicitas was well known in the city and well loved. For this reason, he first asked her and her sons to see him in his home secretly that he might question them and dismiss the case without being under the eye of the priests. Though this was in the prefect’s home, it still had an official air as guards stood by them all and around Felicitas as Publius spoke to her. He made the initial plea with soft words and promises, but as she remained resolute in her refusal to denounce Jesus, his tone turned to shouts and threats of the severest tortures.

To both, Felicitas’s words were frank and direct: “You do not move me with either your flattering words and promises nor am I intimidated by your threats; because I have experienced in my own heart the workings of the Holy Spirit who gives me a living power and prepares me for the struggles of torture so that I can endure anything that you might do to me and hold fast to the confession of my faith.”

Seeing that he was wasting his time to push them further at this point Publius then sent them away to think over their decisions. The next morning he summoned them as he sat in the square before the temple of Mars.

From here he took a different tack. “Very well, then, Felicitas, if you are satisfied to die, then die

alone, but have a mother’s pity and compassion on your sons and instruct them at least to save their own lives by sacrificing to the gods.”

Felicitas bristled at this. “Your ‘compassion’ is pure wickedness! And your advice is nothing but cruelty, for if my sons sacrifice to the gods, they will not save their lives but surrender them to the hellish fiends who are your gods! They would become their slaves and be chained in darkness for everlasting fire.” Then she turned to her sons. “Remain steadfast in your faith and in your confession. Jesus and his saints are waiting for you in heaven. Therefore, fight bravely for your souls and show that you are faithful in the love of Christ, the love with which he loves you and you him.”

“Woman! The prefect interrupted. “How dare you defiantly encourage your sons to defy the commands of the emperor under my very nose! Isn’t it better that you instruct them to obedience rather than rebelliousness?”

But Felicitas knew what she was saying and what kind of death would probably result from her boldness. Yet she still persisted. Rather than condemning the prefect, though, she turned to him tenderly and bravely to try to bring him to the Truth. “Prefect, if you only knew our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the power of his divinity and majesty, you would know better than to try to draw us away from him, and you would stop this persecution. You would know that we cannot curse him or turn away from him, for anyone who curses Christ and his faithful ones curses God himself, who by faith lives in our hearts.”

At this the guard that stood by her turned to her and struck her hard with his fist across her mouth, hoping to silence her, but even at this she continued to warn her sons against denying their faith and to fear neither torture nor painful death, as these were nothing compared to an eternity with Jesus in heaven.

Publius had Felicitas and her sons taken away, then brought each of the young men back one by one to question them privately. Yet whatever he promised or threatened, none of them would turn from Jesus.

FELICITAS AND SONS STORY, CONTINUED

Frustrated at his failure, he sent a note to the emperor that they all remained obstinate in their confession of Jesus. The emperor then sentenced them all to die at the hands of different executioners, and that Felicitas would die last of all, after she had watched each of her sons die first. Over the next four months these sentences were carried out.

Januarius, the eldest, went first while the others were forced to watch. He was scourged with a whip made up of cords that had a small ball of lead at the end of each strand. He was beaten with this on the back, neck, sides, and any other fleshy part of the body the torturer could reach with the scourge until he (Jauarius) no longer moved.

Felix and Philippus, the next two oldest, followed. They were beaten to death with rods.

Sylvanus was tossed down from a great height.

The youngest three, Alexander, Vitalus, and Martialis, were each brought before their mother separately and beheaded.

Last of all, with tears glistening in her eyes at both the pain of watching her sons die and the anticipation of soon being with them again before Christ, Felicitas was beheaded with a sword.

Note: Use solemn expression as you sum up this moving true story.

It is one thing to believe in a cause so much that we are willing to die for it, but it is quite another to believe in it so much that we would let others suffer and die for it, especially if they are our own children and family.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

*Jesus
(John 3:16 KJV)*

Felicitas and Sons Discussion Questions

FELICITAS AND SONS – IF YOU ONLY KNEW JESUS

Let's Talk About It

Throughout history, Christians have been persecuted for their belief in the one true and Holy God. Evil men have tried to crush the faith of true Christians for centuries. They may have killed many “bodies” but never the soul and spirit of steadfast Christians.

1. In this story, Felicitas refuses to deny Christ and serve the Roman gods. When she is told to instruct her sons to save their own lives by sacrificing to the gods, what is her response and why?

She is insulted by the request because she knows that if her sons deny Christ so they can spare their lives, they will become slaves to the gods the Romans worship. Separation from God for eternity is not worth the price of an earthly life lived in spiritual darkness.

2. Even when Felicitas knew she was going to die, she had compassion on the prefect and gently but boldly tried to lead him to Christ and away from persecuting Christians. In your own words, what did she say to the prefect?

“... if you only knew our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the power of his divinity and majesty, you would know better than to try to draw us away from him and you would stop this persecution. You would know that we cannot curse him or turn away from him, for anyone who curses Christ and his faithful ones curses God himself, who by faith lives in our hearts.”

3. Many movies, songs, and video games portray violence and death as entertaining and “cool” to watch. How do you think Felicitas felt as she watched the violent deaths of each of her sons?

Answers will vary and hopefully encourage constructive conversation about the types of media we should not be “entertained” with.

4. We always have a choice in our everyday life ... deny or defend our faith. Do you live a life so pleasing to God that you could be punished for your faith?

Answers will vary.