



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

John 11:45-57

Acts 4:1-12

Session Theme:

Rejection

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Warm Up: Jesus Understands

Write the word “REJECTION” on the board. Ask kids to define that word as best they can. To be rejected is to have others turn away from you or cast you out of their group. It’s a very painful thing to experience. Tell kids that if they have had this happen in their life, they are not alone — most people go through it at some time or another. But here is the comfort: Jesus understands. He experienced it too; he knows how we feel, and he loves us.

In today’s Bible story, Jesus is rejected by a group of people who were jealous of him. Not only that, but they talked behind his back and plotted against him. What happened next? Let’s begin our lesson to find out.

c. Opening Prayer

Faithful Lord, when we feel most alone, you are there for us. When we are rejected by others, you understand. You are always our friend, and we can count on you. Thank you for loving us, no matter what. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (hymn)
- “His Banner Over Me is Love” (children’s song)

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today’s Lesson is from the New Testament
- Scripture Section: Foreshadow

In the final days of Jesus’ life, he journeyed to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover with his disciples. As Jesus entered the city, the crowds cheered and called out “Hosanna!” in praise. But the religious leaders began to plot against him.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help students think about details of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day’s lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss “Reflection for the Week Ahead”

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord’s Prayer, Luther’s Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format



Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: John 11:45-57

1. What were the two different reactions people had to Jesus' miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead? What do you think made this difference?

Many people who lived in or near Bethany witnessed Jesus' miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. Word was beginning to spread all the way to Jerusalem. Jesus was attracting a lot of attention. However, those who already disliked Jesus felt even more threatened by his popularity. Jerusalem was the capital, and the seat of political and religious power. They worried that he was coming to start a rebellion.

2. Were the chief priests and Pharisees unaware of the power that Jesus possessed and the things he had done? Why do you think they did not accept him?

It is not as though they were unaware of Jesus' power — that's precisely what worried them. They knew the crowds would see it a confirmation of Jesus' divine authority.

As the blind man said to the Pharisees when he was healed: "If anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind" (John 9:31-32). The Pharisees knew the evidence on Jesus' side was too convincing!

3. Do you get the impression that the men of the Jewish council were afraid of the Roman authorities? What could the Romans do to them?

The Sanhedrin (the Jewish high council) was in a tenuous position. They did not like the Roman invaders, but they knew that they held their religious position only because the Romans allowed it. If the Romans decided to crack down on the rebellious citizens of Judea, the Sanhedrin knew the council could be abolished on a whim and its authority taken away.

4. Caiaphas said that it would be better if "one man should die for the people" (v. 50). What did he mean by that? In what way did Jesus fulfill that prophecy — a way Caiaphas did not know or expect?

Caiaphas meant that it would be better to eliminate one troublemaker to preserve the peace and keep the status quo. The most expedient thing to do would be to have Jesus

killed and eliminate any threat of rebellion. Scripture points out the divine irony in Caiaphas' statement: Jesus was the one man who *would* die for the people (to take away our sins). The Holy Spirit was speaking through Caiaphas, but Caiaphas had no idea what his own words meant.

5. How does this story show that God can even use what humans mean for evil to accomplish his divine will? Where else have you seen this in the Bible?

In Genesis 50:20, young Joseph said to his brothers who had sold him into slavery, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

We see this principle throughout Scripture. In Jesus' case, the authorities did mean evil against him by having him killed. But God would use the death of Jesus to save humanity from sin and give us the promise of eternal life.

6. What Jewish holiday was about to take place? Do you know what biblical event is remembered and celebrated on this holiday? In what sense was a similar thing about to happen again in Jesus?

The holiday being celebrated was the Passover, in which the Jews remember how God saved them at the time of Moses. The blood of the Passover lamb was painted on their doorposts, so that God would "pass over" the houses of the Hebrews in Egypt, and they would be spared his wrath. Jesus is our Passover lamb. By shedding his blood for us, he spares us from the wrath of God that we deserve because of our sins.

7. Read Acts 4:1-12, which tells of Peter and John's run-in with the same religious authorities. For what reason were they in trouble? What do you think gave Peter and John the courage to stand up against the authorities?

Peter and John were in trouble because they refused to stop preaching about Jesus and his saving power. Just when the council thought they had done away with Jesus, Peter and John testified that a lame man had been healed "by the name of Jesus." Because the Holy Spirit empowered their witness, the disciples did not back down.

8. In verses 10-12, what did the disciples say about Jesus? Is this something you believe and would be bold enough to say? Why or why not?

They said of Jesus, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). We are saved by Christ alone!

Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

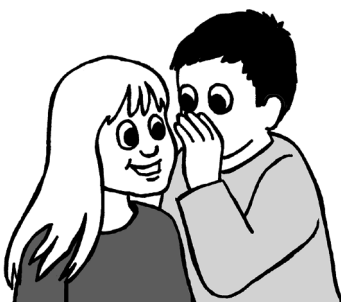
Activity 1: Plotting and Planning Game

Materials Needed:

- Large open space to play a game

Instructions:

Remembering today's Bible story, have kids play a game that recounts the whispering that might have accompanied the council's plot against Jesus.



Explain that this game will be played like Telephone, but with an active twist: Just like the Pharisees acted on their plot in today's story, the last person in line will have to act out what he or she is told to do when a message is relayed down the line.

Invite kids to sit in a long line, side by side. All of the players in this game will be Pharisees.

The person at the front of the line will be the Chief Pharisee.

The Chief Pharisee's job is to come up with a series of directions and whisper them in the ear of the next person in line. To make this more challenging, the Chief Pharisee can write these directions on a paper before whispering them to the next person. This can provide a check when the last person acts them out, and ensure the directions were passed down the line (and followed) correctly.

An example might be, "Go open and shut the door five times, then turn in a circle, sit on the ground, then stand up and jump in the air one time."

The last person in line, rather than repeating what was said, has to get up and do those actions in order.

If the last person does the actions incorrectly, the Chief Pharisee gives a thumbs down and sends a different order down the line for that person to do. If, on the other hand, the last person did the actions correctly, the Chief Pharisee will give a thumbs up and that person will go to the front of the line and become the next Chief Pharisee.

Play as many rounds of the game as desired.

Activity 2: "Gather Them In" Craft

Materials Needed:

- Construction paper (several colors)
- Glue
- Pencils
- Rulers (optional)
- Glitter glue (optional)

Instructions:

Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" over all the earth.

This craft will remind kids of that prophecy and of today's Bible story as they create a mosaic cross from many different colors of paper.

Give each student a piece of construction paper in any color. This will be the background paper. Make sure all students have access to a bottle of glue or glue stick.

Next, pass out at least three other colors of construction paper to each student. Half or quarter sheets of colored paper would work fine for this.

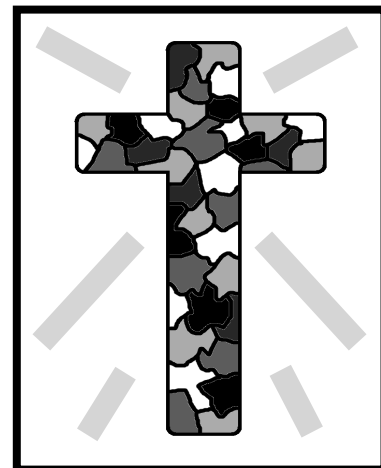
Finally, hand out pencils and rulers to everyone.

Invite kids to draw a large cross shape on the background paper. This should fill up most of the paper.

Have kids tear up the half sheets of paper into pieces. These pieces should be about the size of a quarter. (If they are too small, the craft will take too long to finish.)

Invite kids to glue the torn pieces of paper over or inside the cross shape. Once the shape is covered, kids can continue gluing pieces of paper to the cross to make it thicker. Or, if kids had drawn an open cross shape earlier, they can simply fill in the empty area.

Draw glitter glue rays radiating from the center of the cross (see illustration). Jesus brings people from every culture together and draws us into relationship with God and with each other. Like the paper pieces glued together as a cross, our unity is in Jesus!



Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers and solution to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Unscrambled Groups

- 1) C I R S B E S = SCRIBES
- 2) E S H A R P I S E = PHARISEES
- 3) D A S E D U C E S = SADDUCEES
- 4) S H I G T H E P R I S = HIGH PRIESTS
- 5) D E N N A S H R I = SANHEDRIN
- 6) D O S H E R A N I = HERODIANS
- 7) W A L R E Y S = LAWYERS
- 8) M A S R O N = ROMANS

People who didn't follow the group:

Luke 23:50-51 — Joseph of Arimathea

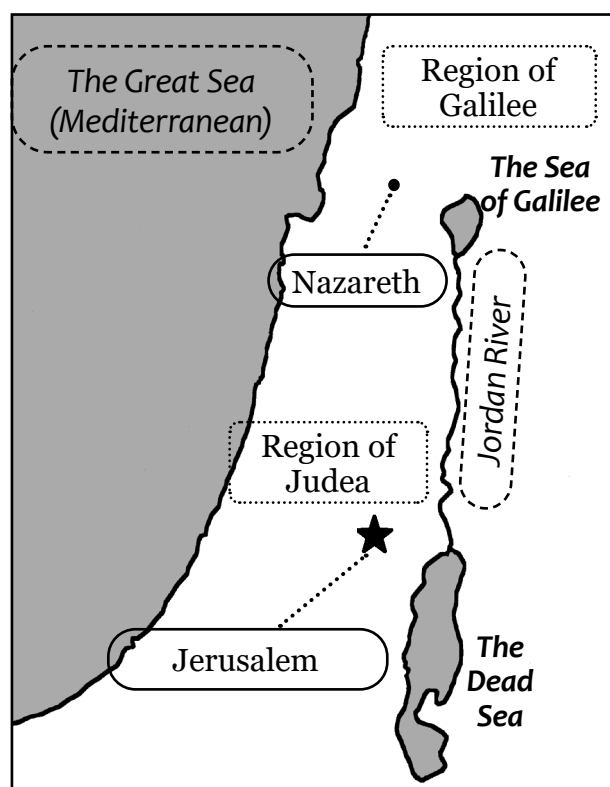
Acts 10:1-2 — Cornelius, the Centurion

John 19:39-40 — Nicodemus, the Pharisee

Luke 8:3 — Joanna, Steward of Herod

Acts 23:6 — Apostle Paul (a.k.a. Saul)

Map Answer Key:



Vocabulary Word for the Week

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary.

Rejection

turning your back
on someone or something

If you ever experience rejection and feel left out, remember that Jesus went through this, too. Jesus understands.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

It feels awful to be rejected by a group. If you've had this happen in your life, you're not alone. Many of us have experienced rejection — even Jesus himself. Many of us have also been in groups that did the rejecting. It's human nature to want to be popular, and in our sinfulness, we might try to keep others out so they don't take what we think is ours.



In today's story, crowds began believing in Jesus and following him. This worried and upset the religious leaders. They were afraid of losing their power and influence. They wanted to be seen as the most important ones. So they did whatever they could to push Jesus away, even plotting to have him unfairly arrested. In the end, what did they gain? Nothing good. Acting out of greed and jealousy never leads to good things.

How can you stand up for someone who is being unfairly treated? What can you do to make any group you are in a better one?

The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer that God would help you see where you have rejected others unfairly, thank him for forgiving you when you mess up, and ask him to help you do better at including others in the future.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.