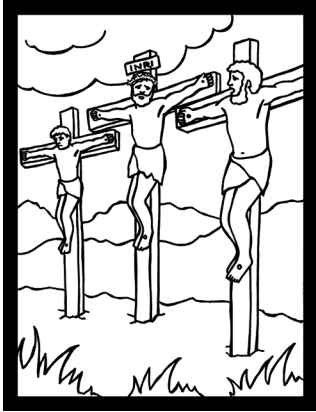




LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Luke 23:32-43

Isaiah 53:3-6

Session Theme:

Contrition

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: Acts of Contrition

Before class, gather some pencils and small pieces of paper. Invite kids to think about something they have said or done that they regret. Ask them to write one word on a scrap of paper that reminds them of that sin. They don't need to share the words or meanings with the class. Together, say a prayer of contrition, asking God to forgive each person and to help them make amends. Have kids rip up their papers and throw them away. Next, ask them to think of one word describing how they can change their behavior in the future. Write it on another paper for kids to carry with them as a reminder.

To be contrite means to be sorry for something. In this activity, we asked God to forgive us and help us do better in the future. But what if it was your last day, and you had no time to make things better? What then? That was the case for a man in today's story.

c. Opening Prayer

Jesus, please forgive us for our sins and lead us forward in faith. 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:

- "Standin' In the Need of Prayer" (gospel hymn)
- "Jesus, Remember Me" (hymn)

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: Crucifixion

When Jesus was put to death on the cross, two criminals were crucified alongside him. One cursed Jesus, but the other had a change of heart. He spoke up for Jesus, and asked Jesus to remember him. Jesus promised they would be in paradise together.

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: Luke 23:32-43

1. Who was the authority figure who sentenced Jesus to death? Who were those who actually carried out the sentence? (See Luke 23:13, 24-25.)

In the verses just prior to our lesson for today, we find that it was the Roman governor Pontius Pilate who condemned Jesus to death (even though he knew Jesus was innocent). Pilate was under pressure from the chief priests, but even more so from the mob who shouted for Jesus' death. In the end, it was the Roman soldiers who put Jesus to death on the cross.

2. As he was being crucified, what did Jesus pray to be done to his persecutors? How was he able to do this?

Rather than shouting or trying to get revenge, Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Though they were deliberate in what they were doing, Jesus knew that his persecutors were blind to who he was and the implications of their actions. This does not mean they were innocent, but that even in their guilt and violence, Jesus was able to grant mercy.

3. What did the sign say that was hanging over Jesus' head? Do you think this was meant seriously by the Romans or not? Ironically, how was this true?

The inscription read, "This is the King of the Jews." Pilate meant this sign to make fun of Jesus and condemn him — and to make a jab at the Jews at the same time, telling them what he thought of their hope for a king to save them. However, in God's irony, we who are Christians know that what the sign said actually was the truth. Christ is our true King.

4. What was the attitude of the criminals that were put to death along with Jesus? Did they both feel bad about their sins?

Two men were crucified, one on each side of Jesus. They're referred to as "thieves" or "robbers" — Scriptures here calls them *kakourgos* (evildoers), which implies were men who used violence to get what they wanted. They were likely rebels and insurrectionists like Barabbas. Matthew 27:44 and Mark 15:32 say that both men reviled Jesus along with the rest of the crowd. But Luke indicates that, faced with

this painful death, one of the criminals had a change of heart.

5. What did the second criminal confess about his own punishment? In what way did he know that Jesus was different? Are we ever so far gone in sin that we cannot be redeemed?

Where the first man yelled at Jesus, telling him to save himself and them, the other feared God, confessing that he deserved his sentence but that Jesus did not. He asked Jesus to remember him. This example shows us the depth of Jesus' mercy, and lets us know that we are never too far gone to be forgiven and brought back by God.

6. In Isaiah 53:3-6, how does the prophet describe what Jesus accomplished for us in this? In what way does the crucifixion show us the depth of God's grace and mercy toward us?

Jesus' words from the cross and his promise to the second criminal are expressions of the greater work that Jesus accomplished for us all on the cross. Isaiah says: "He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." By his atoning sacrifice, Jesus gave his life so that we would be forgiven.

7. The Persian word "paradise" referred to an enclosed garden or park that was found near the palace of a king. Is it significant that Jesus used this word instead of the word "heaven"? Explain.

Many people assume that paradise is heaven, but these are very different words in Scripture. The word "heaven" is used hundreds of times in Scripture to refer to God's dwelling place and headquarters. Many people are surprised to learn that the Bible never says humans "go to heaven" when they die.

The word paradise appears only three times in the Bible, and is a reference to the blissful place where the faithful dead await the resurrection. It is described as "the bosom of Abraham" in Luke 16:22 (NKJV) — a place of comfort and peace.

8. As Christians, does our hope in death rest in a place or a person? Why is the "with me" in Jesus' promise the key to our faith now and in the life to come?

Unfortunately, many popular depictions of the afterlife are like a fantasy island, focusing on the fulfillment of every human desire. However, the Bible emphasizes being in the presence of God (and others whom we love). Read in Revelation 21:3-4 how God comes down to dwell with us!

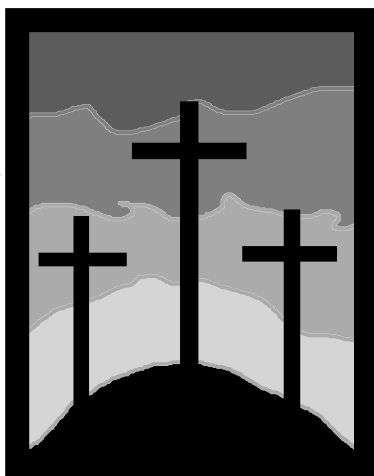
Classroom Craft and Activity Page

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: Cross on a Hill Silhouettes

Materials Needed:

- Black construction paper (two pieces per kid)
- White copy paper
- Crayons and markers (or watercolor paints and painting supplies)
- Scissors
- Pencils
- Glue
- Stapler



Instructions:

Give each person a piece of white copy paper and several crayons or markers (or watercolor paints and supplies).

Invite kids to create a sunset on the entirety of the white paper. If they would like some direction, instruct them to color the bottom of the page yellow, and gradually go up the page with ever-darkening colors (orange, pink, red, blue, purple).

Center the sunset paper on top of a piece of black construction paper. The black paper should be a little larger and act as a frame. Staple the papers together at each corner. Kids will now have a “framed” sunset picture.

Next, give kids the other piece of black construction paper, as well as a pencil and scissors.

Have kids hold the black paper so it is the same direction as the sunset picture. This will be important later, as kids will be adding a silhouette on top of the sunset picture.

Invite kids to draw a hill on the black paper. On top of the hill, have kids draw the outlines of three crosses. The cross in the middle should be the largest and stand up the tallest.

When this step is complete, kids can cut along the outline of their hill and cross drawing, making a shadow silhouette. Have kids center their silhouette on the sunset picture, and glue it in place.

Activity 2: Script or Song Activity

Materials Needed:

- Copy paper
- Construction paper
- Stapler
- Pencils or pens
- Optional: Copies of the alphabet in different scripts (calligraphy, etc.)

Instructions:

In Taizé, France, there is an ecumenical Christian community known for its music and work with youth. One of their songs simply repeats the words, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” These were the words spoken by the thief on the cross in today’s story. Let kids choose one of the projects below to work with those words.



Song Option: For this activity, divide the class into pairs and give each pair a piece of paper and a pencil or pen. Have one of them to write the words “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom,” on the paper.

Then, challenge each pair to come up with their own tune to the words, creating their own version of the song. Invite kids to share their new version of the song with the class if they so choose.

Script Option: For those kids who prefer writing over music, allow them to work with part of the same sentence another way! If possible, print out several copies of the alphabet in calligraphy and/or other font styles before class. Give each child a copy of a calligraphy alphabet.

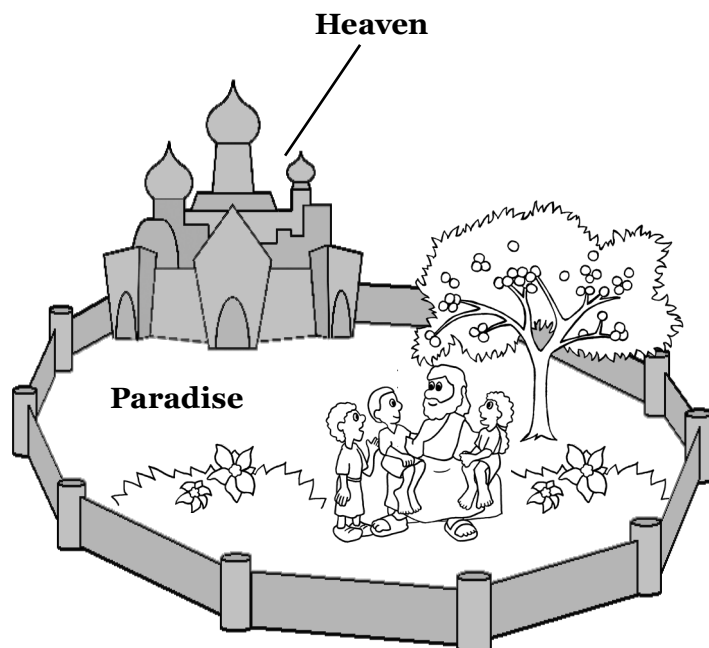
Invite kids to use paper, pencil, and markers to write “Jesus, remember me” in calligraphy (or another stylized font). Decorate around the printed artwork with designs.

When finished, kids can mount their paper on a colored piece of construction paper and staple it in place at each of the four corners.

♪ "Jesus, ♪
remember me,
when you
come into
♪ your ♪
kingdom."

Worksheet Answer Key

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



A Statement of Faith

From Luther's Small Catechism, in his explanation to the second article of the Apostles' Creed.

I believe that Jesus Christ — true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary — is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, and has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil, not with silver and gold, but with his holy and precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I might be his own, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as he is risen from the dead and lives and reigns for all eternity. This is most certainly true!

Timeline and Map Answer Key

The first day of Jesus' death was Friday;
the third day was Easter Sunday.

Jesus was crucified at the Place of the Skull.

Via Dolorosa means The Way of Sorrows.

Vocabulary Word for the Week

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

Contrition

to be sorry for something you have done

The thief on the cross felt contrition over his sins. Jesus saw the man's faith and remorse and told him they would be together that very day in paradise.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

To be contrite means to feel bad about something you said or did, and to say so. In today's story, one thief felt bad about his sins. But he didn't stop there; he trusted Jesus to save him. Jesus not only forgave the thief, he also promised, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Sometimes when we become aware of our sins and failings, we feel terrible about ourselves. Like the thief on the cross, we need to remember to turn to Jesus at that moment. For "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Jesus doesn't want us to live as prisoners to sin and shame forever. He came to set us free.

What does it mean to confess something? How can confessing our sins actually set us free from them?



The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer and thank the Lord for sticking to his mission, even though it meant pain, persecution, and death. Ask the Lord to be with you in times of adversity and suffering. Pray for his courage, comfort, and strength to be with you.

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