

LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

1 Corinthians 1:1-25

Proverbs 1:2-7

Session Theme:

Conflict

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. Icebreaker: Get Grounded

Ask kids what they do when they feel really frustrated or angry. Explain that one way to deal with strong negative feelings without losing your temper is to "get grounded." How? Have them practice bringing their attention to their feet and imagine being rooted to the ground like a tree. When they feel strong feelings, they can focus on their feet and imagine the strong feelings blowing past like wind through the leaves. In a real situation where they are feeling frustrated, kids can utilize this technique and say a prayer to help calm down.

Today's Bible story is about people disagreeing and getting angry. How did they handle this? Did Paul have any advice for them? Let's get started and find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Lord God, help us treat each other lovingly even when we disagree. Keep us focused on you, rather than our differences. In Jesus' 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:

- *"This is My Commandment" (children's song)*
- *"'Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (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: Churches

The first apostles sent letters to believers in various towns and regions. The majority of these letters were written by the Apostle Paul to congregations he helped start. Eventually, these writings were collected and became part of the New Testament.

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

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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: 1 Corinthians 1:1-25

1. Scholars suggest that Paul wrote his letter from Ephesus, in Asia Minor. From what you read in 1 Corinthians 1, how did it appear that Paul learned of what was going on back in Corinth, Greece?

   In verse 11, Paul says, "It has been reported to me by Chloe's people ...". Clearly, Paul was still in touch with people from Corinth. Sending letters back and forth would have been a common practice. But remember, in those days, there was no public mail service. Letters were actually carried by couriers, who served as messengers to verbally fill in the blanks of the written letter.

2. Read Acts 18:1-11, where Paul's initial visit to Corinth is described. Who are some of the people Paul met there? Do you get the impression that there were few or many believers in that city?

   Paul had a generally positive experience in Corinth (at least at first). It was there he met the husband-and-wife team of Priscilla and Aquila, who later became important leaders in the church and supporters of Paul's ministry. It was also very helpful that Crispus, the leader of the synagogue there, was also a supporter and also became a believer in Christ. This would no doubt influence many other Jews in the city.

3. How would you describe the way Paul begins his letter to the Corinthians? Do they appear to have a good relationship? Why do you think they brought their questions to Paul, so far away?

   Paul emphasizes their togetherness in Jesus, and the unity they have with him in faith. He also expresses his thanks to God for their knowledge and speech (i.e., their solid doctrine). It is clear that Paul still had concern for them and cared about what was happening among them. In the same respect, for the Corinthians to reach out to Paul with their questions shows that they highly regarded him as a pastor and teacher.

4. Why does Paul say (v. 14) that he's glad he didn't do many baptisms in Corinth? Does this mean Paul was against baptism? What point is Paul making here?

   Paul was not against baptism in any way. His point here is to say that the people's faith and loyalty was not based in a person, but in God alone. Human beings are merely instruments used by God. The person who delivers the message (or who performs a baptism) is not important; it is the Word of God and the action of the Spirit that creates faith. Paul didn't want people following him, he wanted people following the Lord.

5. In Galatians 5:20, Paul refers to factions (rivalries, dissensions, divisions) as evidence of human sin. What causes people to break up into groups or opposing parties? Why does this happen even in the Church?

   Paul lists among many examples of sin our human tendency to break into groups. Humans have a tribal nature, and we all tend to think that our own group is the best. But this is usually evidence of our pride and selfishness getting the better of us. Instead of honoring everyone's dignity and value, we compete with one another and show preferential treatment to people on "our side."

   On the other hand, Paul does say that clarifying differences can help reveal right from wrong. In 1 Corinthians 11:19 he says, "There must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized."

6. In verses 16-17, Paul transitions from talking about disagreements to the subject of wisdom and the "foolishness" of the Gospel. What do these things have to do with each other? What is Paul getting at?

   In a manner of speaking, Paul is telling them that we can't argue ourselves into heaven. Salvation is not something we "win" by being smarter or better than others. Faith is not a competition. By creating faith through a simple Word (the promise of Christ), God puts us all on the same level: sinners in need of grace.

7. In what sense is the word of the cross "folly"? Why would Paul say this? What is he telling us about ourselves? What is he saying about the way God works among us?

   The cross of Jesus does not look like a victory; it looks like a defeat. To say our Lord died a criminal's death is not something you would expect people would brag about or rest their hope in. But as Luther once said, "God works under the form of opposites." God deliberately chooses what is unexpected and paradoxical so that faith is not the result of human effort, but is always dependent upon his grace. Faith is trust in God!

8. Read Proverbs 1:2-7. The psalmist says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." How would you argue that we can't have true wisdom apart from faith?

   The term "fear of the Lord" is a biblical expression for recognizing the power and greatness of God, and respecting him as our God above all things. It is another way to describe faith. Only God can reveal the truth about himself (John 1:18). True wisdom comes from him.

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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: Who to Follow?

(for all children)



Materials Needed:

- Large area to play a game
- Music from phone or CD player

Instructions:

In today's story, people started quarreling because they were following different leaders. The confusion had caused conflict. So, Paul addressed the situation in his letter and reminded them that Christ was the one true leader of them all.

For this activity, choose two or three students to be leaders.

Tell the leaders to each come up with a few funny dance moves. These can be simple or complex as long as they can be performed by one person (no dance moves involving a partner).

Explain to the leaders that when you play music, they will do their moves randomly, without working together. When the music stops, leaders will freeze in place.

Tell the rest of the students that when the music starts and the leaders begin to dance, the rest of them will be followers and will copy the moves of only one leader. They can follow whichever leader is closest to them.

Start playing music, and allow it to go on for a minute or so. Then, stop it and have students freeze in place.

Each follower should be in the same dance position as one leader. If you see any followers who are in a vastly different position from their closest leader, tap them on the shoulder and have them sit down in place as the "audience."

Then, begin the music again. Those who are still standing will continue the game. Keep going like this, stopping the music randomly and tapping those who are not following their leaders closely. Play until one follower is left standing.

How was your experience a bit like today's Bible story? Do you think it is more difficult to follow when several people are trying to lead something? Why or why not?

Activity 2: Letter to My Generation Activity

(for all children)



Materials Needed:

- White paper
- Black pens
- Jute string or yarn
- Scissors

Instructions:

Like so many of Paul's teachings, today's lesson came to the people of Corinth in the form of a letter. Yet letters in Paul's day looked very different. They weren't texted, emailed, or even mailed in an envelope. Instead, they would have been written on papyrus scrolls and hand delivered.

For this activity, kids will write a letter to their own generation, giving directions on how to live good Christian lives. They can choose a topic that matters to them in the current times, but will follow Paul's general pattern of letter writing. To do this, invite kids to follow these directions:

Think about something you would like to tell other kids your age. It should be something that you think is important and could be done better. Topics might include: how to live faithful Christian lives; responsible use of technology; treating other kids well; defending the defenseless; stopping gossip before it starts; etc.

After choosing your topic, write a letter to your generation. Set it up just as Paul did, in the following way: Start with a greeting, which includes your name and the title of the recipients (like "I, Sarah, to the kids of my generation"); give thanks for those who are receiving the letter; give ethical instructions in the main body; finish with good wishes and a farewell; then sign the letter.

Roll up the letter like a scroll, and tie it with a piece of jute string or yarn.

When everyone has finished, invite kids to talk about what they wrote and why, or to read their actual letters to the class if they would like. Discuss the various topics together.

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Worksheet Answer Key

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



How many words can you make from the letters: I S T H M U S ? Here are some examples:

is	mist	must	shidt	sits
it	sit	mush	hums	sushi
his	mit	shut	hiss	sis
this	hit	shim	hits	us
hut	sis	sim	huts	tush
mut	sum	smith	thus	mists
sith	hum	smiths	suit	smush

Map Answer Key

Consult the map above:

a) Paul was originally from the city of Tarsus, on the southeastern side of Asia Minor.

b) Corinth, the city Paul was writing to, was in central Greece.

c) Ephesus, the city Paul was writing from, was on the western side of Asia Minor.

d) Between Ephesus and Corinth lies the Aegean Sea.

Vocabulary Word for the Week

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

Conflict

arguing, fighting, not getting along

Most people don't like conflict. But even people in the Bible argued with each other sometimes and needed to say they were sorry.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

Arguing is rarely, if ever, pleasant. It feels even worse when that argument is with a friend, family member, or a group we know well.

People are often surprised if members of a church disagree or argue with each other. Yet as the Bible tells us, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).



Sometimes, even faithful Christians will have trouble getting along with one another. And when that's the case, we need to listen to Paul's words from today, not gang up on others maliciously. We want to remember to put Jesus Christ first in all we say and do.

Talk to one another about these questions:

Think of a time when you argued with someone. How did you resolve it?

How can your faith in Jesus help you to treat someone well even while disagreeing with them?

What role does forgiveness play in disputes?

When have you had to ask for or give forgiveness?

The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer to God asking him to guide your life through his holy word. Ask him to reveal his promises to you and show you his love and mercy.

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

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