



LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Matthew 27:11-26

Psalms 94:14-22

Session Theme:

Injustice

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: “Washing My Hands”

Bring a basin of water and a hand towel with you to class. Wash your hands in the water, and dry them.

Ask kids if they have ever heard the phrase, “I’ve washed my hands of that.” What do they think that means? (Generally, this is a saying that means a person is done with a situation, “washing their hands of it,” and isn’t going to take responsibility for it.)

In today’s story, a leader let a crowd make a decision, and he “washed his hands of it.” He wanted no responsibility for what they were doing, even though he was allowing it. What was going on? What was the decision? Let’s begin our lesson and find out.

c. Opening Prayer

Jesus, you were judged unfairly by a crowd. Yet despite this, you stayed faithful and strong. Please forgive us for the times when we turn our backs on you. Help us to stand up for our Christian faith when times call for it. 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:

- “Fairest Lord Jesus (hymn)
- “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus” (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: 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:

Children: Read aloud the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read aloud Scripture from the Bible

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

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

Pre-Readers: Coloring Page and Activity

Elementary: Children’s Pages (Worksheet and Drama)

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, and Questions)

Adults: Bible Study (Large or Small Group 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. Use the Bible Rhyme as a short review, or simply ask questions to help the students recall the events of the story.

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

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Pre-Readers: Teacher leads a simple prayer

Children: 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: Matthew 27:11-26

1. The chief priests had already decided to kill Jesus (Matthew 26:66); why did they need to take him to Pontius Pilate? (See John 18:31-32 for a hint.)

While there were many Jewish laws that carried the penalty of death, the conquering Roman authorities did not allow them to carry out capital punishment. This is why the Jewish chief priests had to go to the governor to put someone to death under Roman law. They were required to ask the Roman governor for his approval of their sentence.

2. When asked by Pilate, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus responded, "You have said so." What did Jesus mean by this? How did Pilate's own words here hold him accountable for what he was about to do?

Jesus words, "You have said so.", can also be translated, "It is as you say." He is saying that, yes, he is the king of the Jews, and now that Pilate knows, he is required to act accordingly. Because Pilate knows, he will be held to account for his approval of Jesus crucifixion.

3. The Passover festival was the most important holiday of the year for the Jewish people. Why do you think it was a custom for the Roman Governor to release a prisoner at this festival?

Releasing a prisoner during the Passover festival was a way that the Roman governor attempted to win the favor of the Jewish people. Whether they were conscious of it or not, the release of a prisoner during the Passover pointed to the release of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

4. The Bible says that Barabbas was a murderer (Luke 23:19) and a "robber" (John 18:40). This biblical word actually means "rebel" or "insurrectionist." How were his actual crimes similar to what Jesus was being falsely charged with?

Barabbas had actually fought against the Roman authorities with violence and bloodshed. He was hated (and feared) by the Romans for trying to overthrow their rule. The irony here is that Barabbas had actually committed the crimes of which Jesus was falsely accused.

5. What message did Pilate's wife send to her husband? Have you ever had a dream that you understood to be a

warning? Can God use dreams to send us a messages like this?

She told him to have nothing to do with Jesus, because he was a righteous man. Think about dreams you may have had. God can use dreams to give us messages, but we must always test the dreams against the Bible to make sure it is God who is speaking to us, because God will never tell us to disobey his Word.

6. Why do you think there were so many in the crowd who wanted Jesus to be crucified? How much did the chief priest have to do with that? When have you seen mobs stirred up against someone falsely? Why does this happen especially online?

There were many who had seen Jesus' miracles, and who had received the benefits of them with free food and healings, and they hoped he would defeat the Romans. But Jesus was not turning out to be the Messiah they wanted him to be. The chief priests aroused that dissatisfaction with Jesus and turned it to their advantage; if Jesus was not going to free them from the Roman tyranny, then he might as well die. Think about when you have seen mobs stirred up based on false accusations. This can happen especially online because of the anonymous nature of computer interaction. People can say all sorts of false things without any repercussions.

7. When a person says, "I wash my hands of this" — it means they no longer want anything to do with it and refuse to take blame. To what degree does Pilate deserve the blame for Jesus' death? How do we all?

Pilate deserves the blame for Jesus' death in that he knew that Jesus had done nothing deserving of death, and yet he condemned him anyway. Even though we are tempted or pressured by others, we still bear responsibility for our sins. In this sense, we all deserve the blame for Jesus' death because it is on our behalf that he died. It is our sin which nailed him to the cross.

8. Read Psalm 94:14-22. In times when it seems that everyone has turned against us, what promise do we have in the Lord? How does faith in God give us confidence in the face of hate from the crowd?

God promises that our final judgment will be fair and based on righteousness. We will not be sentenced to our eternal fate based on false accusations. We have confidence to face hate from the crowd because we know that God is just and vengeance is his; those who torment and persecute us will face a righteous judgment from God and we will rest secure in Christ.

Classroom Craft and Activity Page

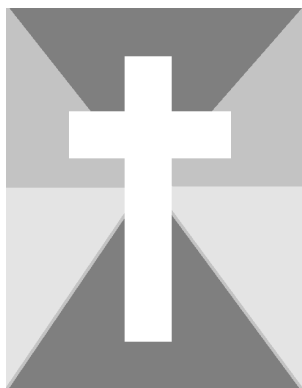
Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: "Negative Space Cross Craft"

(for all children)

Materials Needed:

- Card stock
- Blue painter's tape
- Scissors
- Paint brushes
- Non toxic watercolor or acrylic paints
- Cups of water



Instructions:

In this project, kids will use "negative space" to make their artwork. The cross will stand, white and pure, in the middle. This is not unlike the way the people behaved towards Jesus in today's story. The crowd was in a negative mood, unwilling to listen, as they sent an innocent man to the cross.

- Have kids put their card stock on the table, vertically.
- Take the painter's tape and cut a long piece and a short piece for each student. The long piece should be almost the length of the card stock; the short piece should be almost the width of the card stock.
- Invite the kids to press the painter's tape in the middle of the cardstock, making a cross shape.
- Next, give everyone a paintbrush, a cup of water, and paints. Invite kids to paint in shades of blue and purple all over the paper. They can go right over the painter's tape and should fill the whole page with color.
- Let the paint dry. Then, invite kids to gently lift up the tape. If they do it too quickly, the tape can rip the paper. Be ready to help younger kids with this step.
- After the tape is removed, kids will have what is called a "resist picture" using negative space to form a cross.

Even with all that the people said and did against Jesus, he still stayed pure and holy, good and true, just like that white cross in the middle of the picture. The negative crowd didn't accept who he was, but they could not change who he was, either. Jesus was, and is, the Messiah.

Activity 2: "To Tell the Truth" Game

(for all children)

Materials Needed:

- Index cards
- Pens or pencils

Instructions:

Choose three students to be contestants on a game show. Quietly assign each of them a secret identity--one will be "Jesus," another one "Barabbas," and the third one "Pilate."

The other students will be the panelists, whose job it is to listen and ask questions in order to figure out which of the three people is the real Messiah. Give each of the panelists an index card and a pen or pencil.

- You, as the "host," will ask all three contestants to stand up in front of the class. Each contestant, in turn, will say, "I am the Messiah."
- You will then read the following description of the Messiah out loud. "I am the Son of God, whom some have called, 'The King of the Jews.' I have healed many sick people, preached and taught crowds, and have come to save the world."
- The panelists (the other students) will take turns asking questions of the contestants. Panelists will call on the contestants as "Number 1," "Number 2" or "Number 3."
- When questioned, the one who is Jesus will answer truthfully (in character as Jesus). The other two can lie, while still acting in character (Barabbas is a tough guy, Pilate is refined). All three are trying to convince the crowd they are the Messiah.
- Afterwards, each panelist will vote on which person they believe is the Messiah by writing that person's number down on their index card and holding it up.
- When everyone has voted, you can ask, "Will the real Messiah please stand up?" Only "Jesus" will stand, while the other two will sit or remain sitting.
- After this, the two "imposters" will admit to being Barabbas and Pilate and say a bit about who their characters really are. (Barabbas was a notorious criminal who was freed by the crowds, and Pilate was a Roman governor who kept Jesus as a prisoner.)

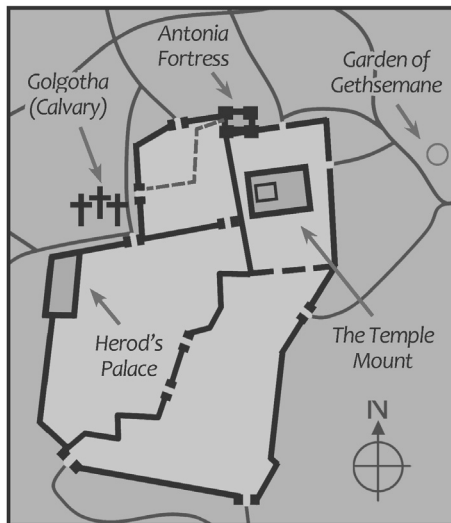
**Contestant
Number 1**

Worksheet Answer Key

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

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| a) Verse 11 | For the first time, Pilate asked the assembled crowd if they would rather have him release Jesus or Barabbas. |
| b) Verse 12-13 | Jesus was brought before the governor, Pontius Pilate, who asked Jesus if he was the King of the Jews. |
| c) Verse 14 | Jesus was accused by the chief priests and elders, who made many charges against him. |
| d) Verse 15-16 | Pilate remembered that in honor of the Passover, the governor had the custom of releasing one prisoner for the crowd. |
| e) Verses 17-18 | Pilate asked the crowd what he should do with Jesus, the Christ. The crowd shouted for Jesus to be killed on a cross. |
| f) Verse 19 | Jesus stayed silent and gave no answer to the charges against him, which amazed the governor. |
| g) Verse 20 | Because of a dream she had, Pilate's wife sent a message to her husband, telling him to have nothing to do with Jesus. |
| h) Verse 21 | The chief priests and the elders stirred up the crowd against Jesus and encouraged the people to vote for Barabbas. |
| i) Verse 22-23 | Pilate released the prisoner Barabbas, giving the order for Jesus to be whipped, and then taken out to be crucified. |
| j) Verse 24-25 | For the second time, Pilate asked the crowd which of the two men to release; the crowd asked for Barabbas to be set free. |
| k) Verse 26 | Pilate washed his hands saying that he was not to blame for Jesus' death; instead, the crowd accepted the blame. |

The City of Jerusalem during Holy Week



Map and Answer Key

- The Roman Governor was headquartered on the north side of the city in a stronghold known as **Antonia** Fortress.
- The Garden of Gethsemane was located beyond the walls on the **East** side of the city, overlooking the **Temple Mount**.
- The place where Jesus was taken out to be crucified was on the **West** side of the city.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

In this week's Bible story, the governor Pilate "washed his hands" of responsibility. He let the crowd decide to release the criminal Barabbas instead of Jesus, even though Pilate appears to have felt their decision was unjust.



It can be easy to give in to a crowd under pressure, and to agree to things we really don't believe are right. Because other people are louder or more insistent, we "go along to get along," too.

How can we, as Christians, stay true to our faith, especially when it comes under fire? How can we keep ourselves from being influenced by things that are not of God? What role might the Bible and church play in this?

This week, talk about a time when you felt pressured to go along with a crowd and against your values, and yet resisted. What helped you to stand up? What role might faith play in an experience like that?

The Practice of Prayer

On the lines below, 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.

A: _____

D: _____

T: _____

R: _____

C: _____