

GRADES 3-6

Gospel Light's

BIG BOOK OF DISCIPLESHIP BASICS

Easy-to-use, popular format
52 small group lessons
Build discipleship into kids' lives
includes weekly "Get Real" page
for kids to connect with God



Reproducible!



Gospel Light

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How to Use This Book

If you are the children's pastor,

1. Look at the Contents to get an idea of the discipleship topics presented in *The Big Book of Discipleship Basics*.
2. Read through any lesson to gain an understanding of the three main components in each lesson: Get Started, Get It Together and Get Going. Note the Get Real student worksheet that can be completed in class or at home.
3. If *The Big Book of Discipleship Basics* will be used as an ongoing discipleship program, you may want to recruit a coordinator several months before the program begins. Provide the coordinator with this book and plan regular check-ins with him or her. Be available for practical support and encouragement.
4. If teachers will use these lessons to supplement an existing curriculum, provide them with copies of each lesson.

Lesson Schedule

Get Started

5-15 minutes

Introduce students to the lesson topic through hands-on activity.

Get Together

20-30 minutes

Lead students in Bible study and discussion that helps them to develop an understanding of the lesson topic.

Get Going

20-30 minutes

Using a student worksheet, guide students to plan and pray about ways to apply the lesson topic in their own lives.

If you are the coordinator,

1. Look at the Contents to get an idea of the discipleship topics presented in *The Big Book of Discipleship Basics*.
2. Read through any lesson to gain an understanding of the three main components in each lesson: Get Started, Get It Together and Get Going. Note the Get Real student worksheet that can be completed in class or at home.
3. In conjunction with the children's pastor, recruit the appropriate number of small-group leaders needed. (One adult for every small group of no more than 10 children is recommended.)
4. Prepare ahead of time the materials needed for the Get Started activities and photocopy the Get Real worksheets for students.

If you are a teacher or small-group leader,

1. Look at the Contents to get an idea of the discipleship topics presented in *The Big Book of Discipleship Basics*.
2. Read through any lesson to gain an understanding of the three main components in each lesson: Get Started, Get It Together and Get Going. Note the Get Real student worksheet that can be completed in class or at home.
3. Prepare and lead lessons to supplement your existing curriculum, or as assigned by program coordinator.

Getting Started with Small Groups

Small Groups Help Preteens Develop Relationships with Their Peers

Relationships are key to long-term spiritual growth and involvement in church life for the emerging adolescent. Kids who do not have friends at church do not enjoy themselves and do not keep coming back.

For preteen ministry to be successful, the ministry leader must account for the socialization needs of the preteen child that are central to this developmental stage. Preteens feel social acceptance is their number one concern. For leaders to accomplish their instructional objectives, the church program must provide for activities that meet students' socialization needs. Because of that socialization need, small groups must be incorporated into the preteen ministry in as many ways as possible. It is through small groups that early adolescents can get to know one another and build the friendships they need.

Small groups are a pivotal point between children's programs and youth programs and an essential ingredient to any complete preteen ministry. Although younger children certainly want to belong and to have friends, the need for relationships becomes central in preteen years. Within a small-group setting, it is much more likely that students will get to know a significant adult and a group of peers. Both are necessary to the healthy development of the preadolescent.

The great news about small groups is that any church can do them. They do not require finances or church facilities. They require only loving adults who are willing to give up a few hours each week to lead preteens.

For the small-group ministry to be healthy, it must be a positive and encouraging environment. The early adolescent longs for a group of peers in which he or she can develop trust and find caring. Where these elements are built, the small group will flourish. Once the relationships and trust are built, then the small group becomes a wonderful environment for teaching biblical truths.

For preteens, small groups are essential for both education and discipleship. Educationally, small groups lend themselves naturally to one of the most effective means of teaching preteens—cooperative

learning. Spiritually, discipleship relationships within the context of the small group allow for several kids to be mentored at once and for deeper relationships than are usually created in the typical Sunday School setting.

Occasionally Mix the Group Members to Maximize the Small-Group Experience

There are several ways to purposefully expose kids to more potential friendships:

- **Have assigned small groups that change quarterly.** Keep track of your students' attendance and evenly distribute regular attenders and infrequent attenders among the various small groups you form. This will help each group have a core of students. Three months will allow your small-group leaders to get to know the group members well enough to give you feedback on who should or should not be grouped together for the next quarter.

- **Each month or so, offer kids an alternative affinity group.** Once each month group students according to their common interests or hobbies. They may choose from computers, service projects, discipleship, art and recreation activities. The leader of each group weaves the Bible study into his or her specialty and the kids get to meet others who are interested in the same topic or activity, but who are not necessarily in their regular small group. Also, have special activities so that kids can choose to do something different once each month or so.

- **Have "upset basket" Sundays when no one is in his or her regular group.** As each preteen arrives, hand him or her a square of colored paper at random. Have each small-group leader dress in that color for the morning or wear a name tag made of paper of the same color. Kids will complain and ask if they can switch, but in the end they will enjoy the experience of working with a new adult and some peers they may not have spent much time with previously.

The Importance of Small-Group "Families"

The most important goal of small groups within your preteen ministry is to establish healthy relationships between students and adults in which mentoring and discipleship can take place. The small-group leader's goals must include helping each early adolescent feel significant and valued as a member of the group.

- **Emphasize the importance of small-group leaders being present to greet each member of the small group as he or she arrives.** Remember

that preteens are very self-conscious. The first minute after they arrive in the room is critical. The more welcome and secure they feel, the better their whole morning will go.

■ **Emphasize the importance of being genuine, real and transparent for the kids.** This may be the most important quality of the preteen small-group leader whose goal is to mentor and disciple their students. Such positive and enriching contact with adults is priceless.

Preteens are in the process of leaving the family and at the same time are desperately looking for another “family” to belong to. They need to build relationships with adults who can help them grow spiritually and help them learn how to live the Christian life. Consistency in both the leadership and membership of small groups is very important for providing an atmosphere in which strong bonds of friendship can be formed.

The adult who wants to disciple a small group of preteens must be willing to invest much of his or her time encouraging them and supporting them.

The leader must invest in genuine, caring relationships with the kids. The leader can build relationships with kids in so many ways. Just do things with the kids that are important to them:

- Attend their sporting events.
- Be there when they receive awards at school or badges in Scouts.
- Let them telephone you to tell you about hurt feelings or bad grades.
- Take them to McDonald’s for sodas when they do well on tests.
- And maybe easiest, but most effective, invite them to hang out with you at your house, doing what you would be doing anyway, seeing you in action with your family, eating your food, watching your TV and learning what differences being a Christian makes in your everyday life.

Of course, in today’s world, the preteen leader must be smart about the ways he or she chooses to spend time with kids. Make sure that you take necessary precautions to keep yourself above reproach. That means, don’t be alone with a child, and avoid being too touchy. While with a group of

kids and adults, just spend some one-on-one time with kids.

Should Small Groups at This Age Be Coed or Single Gender?

Here are the advantages of each approach.

The Advantages of Separating Boys and Girls for Small Groups

- In single-gender small groups, young men or young women are able to develop close relationships with role models of the same gender.
- Preteens have a developmental need to have close friends of the same gender.
- Same-gender groups may initially be easier to bond, since some activities will be natural for each gender.
- Since preteens are only beginning to show interest in the opposite gender and girls generally reach this point earlier than boys, many kids would initially prefer to be with only their own gender.
- Some hot topics can be discussed more appropriately in single-gender groups, like physical changes and sexuality, which are so much on the minds of some early adolescents.

The Advantages of Combining Boys and Girls in Coed Small Groups

- Young men and young women both need male and female role models. Coed groups led by a married couple are ideal because they also show preteens a picture of the value of Christian marriage and family life.
- Preteens are becoming aware of the opposite gender and need healthy guidance in developing appropriate friendships. The small-group context is ideal for this training.
- Coed groups allow for activities that may be considered traditionally male or female to be shared and experienced by both genders, allowing for a broader appeal to nontraditional kids!
- Oftentimes in coed groups, boys tend to be less aggressive and girls tend to be friendlier. The mixture seems to bring out the best in both genders.
- Some spiritual topics can be more fruitfully discussed in coed groups because a variety of opinions might be shared.

Keep the Kids Talking!

Children like to speak their minds! The challenge is to keep the discussion focused on the lesson, to involve all children and to prevent distracting chatter. Children's learning will be much more effective when they are involved in the process of learning through discovery and discussion rather than through sitting and listening.

Good Preparation

Write good questions before class. Good discussions occur when the teacher knows what questions to ask. Study the class material thoroughly (even if it's a familiar Bible story) and think through the discussion questions provided in this book. Think of additional questions to ask as well. Avoid questions with obvious one-word answers. Discussion grows out of questions that ask for opinions, ideas, reactions, etc., not just repeating factual answers. (This means you must begin preparation well before your group meets!)

Minimize distractions. Children are naturally curious and are interested in everything that goes on—whether it's the lesson activity at hand or not! Evaluate the distractions in your classroom by asking the following questions: Is there noise in the classroom from the choir warming up next door? Are people walking through the hallway? Are there toys or items scattered around the classroom that the children will want to play with? Are cell phones ringing? Do parents arrive long before the class ends and stand around outside the room?

Then consider these solutions: If outside noise is a problem, play a music CD or cassette as background to cover outside noise. Toy shelves can be turned to face the wall to help children avoid the temptation of playing with the toys. Arrange chairs so children are faced away from distractions. Remind teachers (and children!) before class begins to turn off cell phones. Keep in mind, however, that your reaction to distractions is the biggest factor. If you respond in a matter-of-fact manner, children will, also.

Limit the discussion. Children are not able to remain interested during long times of discussion. Children's physical requirements for movement need to be met. It's better to end the discussion time before children grow restless. Most discussions should be tied to some physical activity, either as an introduction to the activity, as a break during the activity or as a summary after the activity.

Involve everyone. Try to involve all children in a discussion. Start by asking several easy, low-threat questions that all children are capable of answering. Seek to involve the potentially disruptive child right at the start. Children are less likely to be disruptive when they're occupied. If a child looks restless, call him or her by name and ask a question. Also ask questions of children who have been quiet. Be sure not to ask a difficult question they may not know. One reason children may not participate is that they feel they don't know the answer and don't want to be embarrassed in front of their peers.

Handling Interruptions

Get back on track. Despite the best plans, a discussion may veer off course. First, determine if the new topic is valid. Perhaps one child is overly focused on a small detail (such as how Joshua could make the sun stand still when in reality Earth moves) but the rest of the class is not interested. Acknowledge that the new topic is interesting and can be discussed at another time, and then return to the original topic. Restate the last question and if children do not respond, try another question.

If a child deliberately wants to get off the topic, use humor to return to the topic. If the children digress because they don't understand the topic or the question, use a simpler question or take time to explain the topic.

Discussion off the topic is not always cause for alarm. Sometimes a child needs to discuss a topic not on the agenda or finds an unexplored point in the topic. If the new topic will help children apply Bible truth to everyday life and will benefit the



entire class, stay with it. If a child needs to discuss a special need, such as a death in the family, make time at the end of the activity for the class to offer support and prayer.

Go with the flow. Interruptions will happen. If the interruption is minor and the children are not unduly distracted, then ignore it and continue. Some interruptions require the teacher to stop and take care of matters: a child needs to leave early, an adult arrives to make an announcement or the air conditioner needs to be adjusted. Try to get the class back on track. If the class has grown too distracted, move on to another activity.

Be prepared for silence. Sometimes children will respond to a question with silence. This can be good if the children are pondering a deep question. It can be fatal if this is due to lack of understanding, embarrassment or boredom.

Give children a few seconds to think about the question. Ask for a visual signal (thumb up, fist on chin, etc.) when students think they may have at

least part of the answer. Rephrase the question in case the first question was not understood. If children still are unable to answer, you might share the answer you would give and then move on to another question.

Sometimes children do not respond when the questions are too easy (Who are Jesus' parents?), too obvious (Does God want us to help our neighbors?), too personal (What sins have you committed this week?) or too difficult (According to legend, what are the names of the three wise men?). After class, revise the questions that failed to get a good response and use the improvements as a model for writing good questions for the next class.

Sometimes children will give the answer they think the teacher wants to hear. Write open-ended questions that are more challenging: How would you feel if you had been a shepherd who was off-duty the night the angels appeared? What do you think the blind man did after Jesus healed him? How can you defend your friend from a bully?

Leading a Student to Christ

Many adult Christians look back to their elementary years as the time when they accepted Christ as Savior. Not only are children able to understand the difference between right and wrong and their own personal need of forgiveness, but they are also growing in their ability to understand Jesus' death and resurrection as the means by which God provides salvation. In addition, children at this age are capable of growing in their faith through prayer, Bible reading, worship and service.

However, children (particularly those in early elementary grades) can still be limited in their understanding and may be immature in following through on their intentions and commitments. They need thoughtful, patient guidance in coming to know Christ personally and continuing to grow in Him.

1. Pray.

Ask God to prepare the children in your class to receive the good news about Jesus and prepare you to effectively communicate with them.

2. Present the Good News.

Use words and phrases that children understand. Avoid symbolism that will confuse these literal-minded thinkers. Discuss these points slowly enough to allow time for thinking and comprehending.

a. "God wants you to become His child. Do you know why God wants you in His family?" (See 1 John 3:1.)

b. "You and all the people in the world have done wrong things. The Bible word for doing wrong is 'sin.' What do you think the Bible says should happen to us when we sin?" (See Romans 6:23.)

c. "God loves you so much, He sent His Son to die on the cross for your sin. Because Jesus never sinned, He is the only one who can take the punishment for your sin. On the third day after Jesus died, God brought Him back to life." (See 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 John 4:14.)

d. "Are you sorry for your sin? Tell God that you are. Do you believe Jesus died to take the punishment for your sin and that He is alive today? If you tell God you are sorry for your sin and tell Him you do believe and accept Jesus' death to

take away your sin—God forgives all your sin." (See 1 John 1:9.)

e. "The Bible says that when you believe in Jesus, God's Son, you receive God's gift of eternal life. This gift makes you a child of God. This means God is with you now and forever." (See John 1:12,13; 3:16.)

As you give children many opportunities to think about what it means to be a Christian, expose them to a variety of lessons and descriptions of the meaning of salvation to aid their understanding.

3. Talk personally with the child.

Talking about salvation one-on-one creates opportunity to ask and answer questions. Ask questions that move the child beyond simple yes or no answers or recitation of memorized information. Ask what-do-you-think? kinds of questions such as:

"Why do you think it's important to . . . ?"

"What are some things you really like about Jesus?"

"Why do you think that Jesus had to die because of wrong things you and I have done?"

"What difference do you think it makes for a person to be forgiven?"

Answers to these open-ended questions will help you discern how much the child does or does not understand.

4. Offer opportunities without pressure.

Children are vulnerable to being manipulated by adults. A good way to guard against coercing a child's response is to simply pause periodically and ask, "Would you like to hear more about this now or at another time?" Lovingly accepting the child, even when he or she is not fully interested in pursuing the matter, is crucial in building and maintaining a relationship that will yield more opportunities to talk about becoming part of God's family.

5. Give time to think and pray.

There is great value in encouraging a child to think and pray about what you have said before making a response. Also allow moments for quiet thinking about questions you ask.

6. Respect the child's response.

Whether or not a child declares faith in Jesus Christ, adults need to accept the child's action. There is also a need to realize that a child's initial responses to Jesus are just the beginning of a lifelong process of growing in the faith.

7. Guide the child in further growth.

Here are three important parts in the nurturing process:

a. *Talk regularly about your relationship with God.* As you talk about your relationship, the child will begin to feel that it's OK to talk about such things. Then you can comfortably ask the child to share his or her thoughts and feelings, and encourage the child to ask questions of you.

b. *Prepare the child to deal with doubts.* Emphasize that certainty about salvation is not

dependent on our feelings or doing enough good deeds. Show the child verses in God's Word that clearly declare that salvation comes by grace through faith (i.e., John 1:12; Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 5:11).

c. *Teach the child to confess all sin.* "Confess" means "to admit" or "to agree." Confessing sins means agreeing with God that we really have sinned. Assure the child that confession always results in forgiveness (see 1 John 1:9).



The Problem of Sin

Get Started ■ 5-15 minutes

Action: Identify problems people face because of sin in our world.

Without Circles

What You Need

Paper, pencils.

What You Do

1. Distribute paper and pencils to students.
2. Students draw pictures of things that would be different if circles didn't exist (donuts, baseballs, basketballs, the sun, people, cars, etc.). After several minutes, invite students to describe their pictures.
3. Ask these questions.

■ **Would a world without circles be easier or more difficult? Why?**

■ **What are some of the problems we might have without circles?**

■ **It's fun to think about how just one change in our world could affect so many things. But there's something that did completely change the world and has created countless problems ever since. What do you think it might be?**

■ **How do you think the world changed after the first sin?**

■ **What are some problems we have because of sin?**

4. Conclude the activity by saying,

■ **Let's see why sin caused lots of problems in a world that had been perfect.**

Bonus Idea

Divide group into two teams and give each team a large sheet of paper. Teams compete to see how many things they can write or draw that would be different if circles didn't exist. After several minutes, call time. Teams compare items to see who has the most ideas that don't match.



The Message

Sin separates us from God.

The Bible Basis

Genesis 2; 3:1-19;
Romans 3:23; 5:12; 6:23

From the time of Adam and Eve's sin, God began to show a way for sin to be forgiven.

The Scripture

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus." Romans 6:23



Get It Together ■ 20-30 minutes

Action: Realize that because sin separates us from God, we all need His forgiveness.

Genesis 2; 3:1-19; Romans 3:23; 5:12; 6:23

What You Need

Bibles.

What You Do

Lead students to read and discuss the Bible verses listed. Extend the discussion with the questions and comments provided.

Introduction

It's hard to imagine what life might have been like if sin had never happened way back in the beginning of the world. Let's talk about what really happened.



A Perfect World

■ Read Genesis 2:8-9 to find the description of the place where Adam and Eve first lived.

■ What did God provide for Adam and Eve?

■ What do you think Adam and Eve's relationship with God was like?

God created a beautiful perfect world. Then He created two people, a man and a woman—Adam and Eve. God provided EVERYTHING Adam and Eve needed. In this perfect world, Adam and Eve were loved and cared for by God. Their relationship with God was one of friendship and happiness.

One Rule

■ Read Genesis 2:16-17 to find the one rule God asked Adam and Eve to follow.

■ Why do you think they had only one rule?

■ How many rules do you have in your family or in your school classroom or in our city?

■ What would happen if Adam and Eve broke the rule?

Wouldn't it be nice if we lived in a world where only one rule was needed? That one rule, however, had a stiff penalty. If Adam and Eve ate fruit from the tree of knowledge, they would die! Dying was something that had never happened before in God's creation.

The Bible doesn't say why God made this rule. Some people think God's rules are intended to keep us from enjoying life. However, as we see from the rest of this story, God's rules are really to protect us and to keep us from doing things that hurt ourselves or other people.

Satan's Temptation

■ Read Genesis 3:1 to find what Satan first said to Eve.

■ What was wrong with Satan's words?

■ What did Satan say in Genesis 3:4-5 to tempt Eve to disobey God?

■ What are some times when people today do what they think is right instead of what God says is right?

Things were going along very well for Adam and Eve, until one day, Satan, God's enemy who is sometimes called the devil, came visiting. He was disguised as a serpent. Satan planned his words to confuse Eve and cause her to doubt what God had said.

Satan lied. He wanted Adam and Eve to disobey God by choosing to do things their way instead of God's way.



The Results of Sin for Adam and Eve

- How do you think their sin made Adam and Eve feel?
- Read Genesis 3:15 to find what God promised.

When Adam and Eve ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they sinned by disobeying God. By that one disobedient act they caused sin to become a part of the world. Now everyone born after them would have a desire to sin and disobey God. They felt so guilty and ashamed that they hid from God.

Because of their sin, Adam and Eve no longer had a perfect life. They no longer had a close relationship with God and with each other. They couldn't live in the beautiful garden anymore. Their work, instead of being something they enjoyed doing with the abilities God gave them, became a difficult struggle of trying to survive! Eventually, their sin resulted in their deaths.

But even in this sad situation, God gave them hope—the promise of someone who would take away their sin. God promised that one of Eve's descendants would someday defeat sin and Satan.

The Results of Sin for Us

- What does Romans 5:12 say was the result of Adam's actions?
- How does Romans 3:23 describe the results of our sin?
- How does Romans 6:23 contrast the wages of sin with God's plan to defeat sin?

Many centuries later, Paul, a follower of Jesus, wrote how sin changed the world and our relationship with God.

Sin entered the world, and sin brought death.

Because of our sin, we are separated from God and from experiencing His love.

"Wages" is another word for what we earn. Instead of receiving the punishment our sins have earned—death—God gives eternal life because of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Romans 6:23 tells us that the result of sin is death. (Read verse aloud.) But because Jesus came to live as a human, He was able to defeat the sin problem we have had since the time of Adam and Eve. As a result of what Jesus did, when we believe that Jesus paid the price for our sin, we can receive God's forgiveness. God's gift to us every day is forgiveness! (Lead students in prayer, thanking God for His forgiveness and for sending Jesus. Then talk with interested students about becoming members of God's family, referring to "Leading a Student to Christ" on pp. 10-11.)

Get Going ■ 20-30 minutes

Action: Privately list, and then pray about, reasons he or she needs God's forgiveness.

Distribute Get Real (p.16) to students. Invite students to tell or write answers to the questions. End the discussion by completing Get Connected with students. (Optional: Students complete page at home.)



GET REAL

- If Adam and Eve hadn't sinned, do you think the world would still be perfect today? Why or why not?
- Do you think people today feel like Adam and Eve felt after they sinned? Why or why not?
- Though feelings and attitudes are not good or bad in themselves, why do you think it is important to base our actions on something other than our feelings?
- When are some times kids your age might sin by disobeying God?
- What can you do to remind yourself of God's gift of forgiveness?



Get to Know

"For the wages of sin is death,
but the gift of God is eternal
life in Christ Jesus."

Romans 6:23

Get Connected

Think about reasons you need forgiveness from God. Then pray, asking God for forgiveness and thanking God for showing His love by sending Jesus to Earth and by forgiving your sins.



The Sin Solution

Get Started ■ 5-15 minutes

Action: Discover and discuss examples of the principle “Reap what you sow.”

Reap What You Sow

What You Need

Ingredients, equipment and utensils for snack you choose (see ideas below).

What You Do

1. Students make and eat one of the snacks below.

- **Snack 1:** Spread softened cream cheese over rice cakes or minibagels. Sprinkle colored sprinkles on cream cheese.
- **Snack 2:** Slowly add 1½ cups milk to ½ cup peanut butter. Blend until smooth. Add one small package instant vanilla or chocolate pudding. Beat slowly until well mixed. Let stand five minutes. Spoon pudding into ice-cream cones and serve immediately. (Serves 10 students.)

2. While students are eating, ask these questions that encourage students to think about the consequences of different actions.

- **What were the results of your work? When are some other times that you have done something that produced a good result?**
- **What are the results of some wrong actions of kids your age?**
- **What might be the results of studying hard in school? Practicing the guitar?**

3. Conclude the activity by saying,

- **Getting the results of something you have done is often called reaping what you sow. When a farmer sows, or plants, seeds, he hopes he will reap, or get the result of, a good harvest.**

- **Today we'll be talking about the results, or consequences, of sin—doing things our way instead of God's way. We'll also see how God planned to deal with the results of sin.**

Bonus Idea

Divide the group into pairs. Pairs create multiple-choice quizzes that describe different situations or actions with four possible consequences. Pairs switch quizzes with other pairs in group and choose the matching consequences for the situations described. Pairs may score and discuss quizzes with each other.

The Message

Sin brings death, but Jesus gives life.

The Bible Basis

Leviticus 9; 16:21-22;
Hebrews 7:23-28; 10:1-4

The sacrifices offered by the priests temporarily paid the penalty for the sins of the people, but Jesus' sacrifice paid the penalty forever!

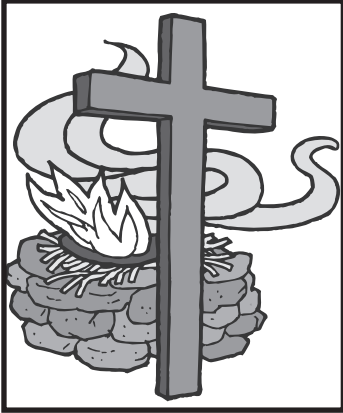
The Scripture

“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.”
1 John 3:16





Get It Together ■ 20-30 minutes



Action: Understand that the Old Testament sacrifices could not be a permanent solution to the problem of sin.

Leviticus 9; 16:21-22; Hebrews 7:23-28; 10:1-4

What You Need

Bibles.

What You Do

Lead students to read and discuss the Bible verses listed. Extend the discussion with the questions and comments provided.

Introduction

All of our actions have results—some good and some bad. Sometimes these results make a big difference in our lives. That’s how it is with sin.

Results of Sin

- What is the most important result of sin?
- What happens to our relationship with God when we sin?

When we disobey God, our relationship with God is interrupted. Sin separates us from God, and we aren’t able to experience the benefits of knowing and loving Him.

Sin is serious business! In fact, the Bible says the ultimate result of sin is death—separation from God now and forever! The good news is that from the very first time people sinned, God had a plan for dealing with sin.

A Temporary Solution

- Read Leviticus 9:7-8 to find out what God wanted His people, the Israelites, to do in order to be forgiven for their sins.
- What were they to bring as a sacrifice?

Moses, one of the great leaders of the Israelites, told his brother, Aaron, that the Lord had commanded the Israelites to make sacrifices at the altar.

As a way of paying for their sins, the Israelites sacrificed the best animals from their flocks or herds. These animals took the punishment for the Israelites’ sins. The religious leaders of the Israelites, called priests, led the people in sacrificing the animals to God.

In Bible times, animals were raised to provide food and clothing. The animals in a family’s herd were valuable. They were like money on legs! Leviticus 9:7 says that taking something precious they owned—a perfect animal of the herd—and giving it to God was how the Israelites were to make atonement for their sins.

Atonement for Sins

- What do you think the word “atonement” means?
- How might a person today try to make up for a wrong action?

“Atonement” means to make up for the wrong things you have done, to restore things back to the way they were before. A good way to remember this explanation is to break the word into parts: “at-one-ment”—bringing back together what has been broken apart.

Sometimes a person accepts punishment for the wrong action, or sometimes a person tries to fix the problem caused by the wrong action. But the only way in Old Testament times to restore a broken relationship with God was through the sacrifice of a perfect animal—one not sickly or blemished in any way.

All through the Old Testament, the priests acted as the go-between or mediators between God and the Israelites. But this solution to the problem of sin was only a temporary one. Something MORE had to be done. Let’s find out why.



The Problem

- Look in the New Testament part of your Bible to find Hebrews 7:23. What does this verse say was the problem with every one of the high priests?
- Why were the animal sacrifices only a temporary solution? Read Hebrews 10:3-4 to find the answer.

Because they were human, the priests eventually died! The priests, being human, weren't any more perfect than the people themselves. It was clear that a better priest was needed—someone who was perfect and who would live forever!

The blood obtained through the death of animals reminded people of their sin but could never COMPLETELY take away sin because an animal cannot fully substitute for a human being.

So now we come to the really good news in God's plan for dealing with sin.

Jesus' Sacrifice

- Who did God send as the perfect go-between, or bridge, between Himself and people?
- Read Hebrews 7:27 to find out why Jesus was better than the priests and animal sacrifices in the Old Testament.
- How is Jesus different from the priests of the Old Testament?
- What was God's plan for dealing with sin?

Jesus, God's Son, is perfect! Because He had no sin, He didn't need to offer sacrifices. The priests were not perfect, but Jesus is perfect and lives forever. Only the sacrifice of someone as perfect as Jesus would be good enough to take away people's sins completely.

Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins and to bridge the gap created by our sin. Because Jesus never sinned, He was the perfect and final sacrifice. And because Jesus came back to life again and is alive today, we know that we can be forgiven and live forever with Him.

Conclusion

Even though the people in the Old Testament didn't know the story of Jesus' birth, they showed faith in God by offering the animal sacrifices God required. Because of their faith, their sins were forgiven. The animal sacrifices were a picture of Jesus' much greater sacrifice. Now, after Jesus lived on Earth and died to take the punishment for everyone's sins, we can show our faith in God by admitting our sins to God and asking for His forgiveness.

First John 3:16 tells us the love God had for us by sending Jesus to die for our sins. (Read verse aloud.) Jesus was God's gift of life to us—the perfect solution to the problem of sin. (Pray with students, thanking God for the gift of life in Jesus. Talk with interested students about becoming members of God's family, referring to "Leading a Student to Christ" on pp. 10-11.)

Get Going ■ 20-30 minutes

Action: Think about Jesus' sacrifice for their sin, and thank God for sending Jesus to take away sin.

Distribute Get Real (p. 20) to students. Invite students to tell or write answers to the questions. End the discussion by completing Get Connected with students. (Optional: Students complete page at home.)



GET REAL

- What are some ways people might try to get rid of the problem of sin?
- Why is it important that God sent Jesus to Earth?
- What's the most important thing kids your age need to know about God's plan for dealing with sin?
- How would you describe God's plan for dealing with the problem of sin in the world?
- When you think of God's plan to deal with the problem of sin, what can you thank Him for?



Get to Know

"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us."
1 John 3:16

Get Connected

What difference does it make to you to know about Jesus' death on the cross? What would life be like if Jesus had not died on the cross? Thank God for showing His love by sending Jesus to Earth and by forgiving your sins.



Light in a Sinful World

Get Started ■ 5-15 minutes

Action: Explore uses of light.

Turn On the Light!

What You Need

Black construction paper; gel pens, gel markers or chalk; tape.

What You Do

1. Distribute black paper. Ask the questions below.

- **Imagine a world as dark as this paper. What are some things that would be hard for you to do without any light?**
- **What are some things that help people who can't see?**
- **What do you think would be your hardest adjustment if you no longer could see?**

2. Students use gel pens, gel markers or chalk to draw pictures of things people usually need light in order to do (read, draw, play sports, etc.). Encourage students to draw as many pictures as possible and then tape the pictures to a door or window in your classroom, attempting to fill the area with pictures.

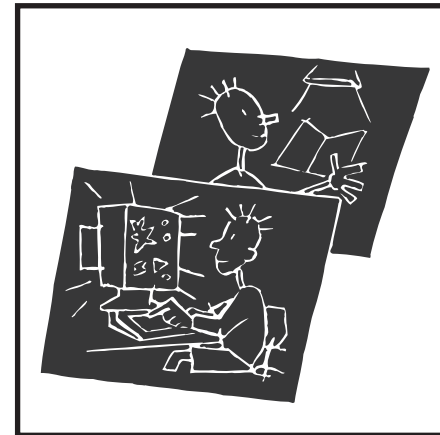
3. Conclude the activity by saying,

- **We use light for many things. Even if we couldn't see at all, light would still be important to us. Without light, we would not be able to grow food to eat!**

■ **A long time ago, a writer in the Bible used the word "light" to describe Jesus. We'll find out why in our Bible study today.**

Bonus Idea

Provide dry-erase markers and invite students to draw directly on a clean window. Be sure to erase drawings immediately after class.



The Message

Become part of God's family by accepting Jesus.

The Bible Basis

Luke 2:22-40

The birth of Jesus demonstrated the light of God's great love to a sinful world.

The Scripture

"Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Acts 10:43



Get It Together ■ 20-30 minutes

Action: Realize that Jesus is like a light, helping us to see and receive God's love.

Luke 2:22-40

What You Need

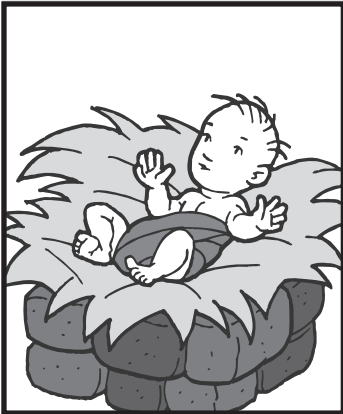
Bibles.

What You Do

Lead students to read and discuss the Bible verses listed. Extend the discussion with the questions and comments provided.

Introduction

Usually we only talk about Jesus' birth at Christmastime, but His birth changed history in such a dramatic way that it's important to think about it at other times of the year, too.



A Temple Visit

- What's something parents often do after a baby is born?
- According to Luke 2:22-24, why did Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the Temple?

Forty days after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem. The law of Moses—the Law God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai in the book of Exodus—said that the firstborn child was to be dedicated to God. Dedicating the baby showed that the child would serve God. The law also said that a woman had to offer a sacrifice of a lamb after she had a baby. A poor person could offer two pigeons (or doves) because lambs were expensive (see Leviticus 12).

Simeon's Prophecy

- What are some things that people usually say to parents with a new baby?
- How did Simeon describe Jesus in Luke 2:30-32?
- Read Luke 2:34 to find out what Simeon said about Jesus' future.
- What do you know about how that prophecy came true?

Even though Mary and Joseph didn't send a messenger to the Temple to tell people they were coming, when they arrived, they met two people who were already expecting them! The first person was a man called Simeon. He truly loved God and was waiting to see the Savior God had promised to send. God had revealed to Simeon that Simeon would not die before he had seen the One God had promised to send to save His people.

When Simeon saw Mary and Joseph with baby Jesus, Simeon went to them and took Jesus in his arms. Simeon KNEW Jesus was the One sent by God!

Simeon described Jesus as a light who would help Gentiles—non-Jewish people—learn about God and who would bring honor to God's people, the Israelites. Jesus was the One who would bring salvation to the world! The name "Jesus" means "the Lord saves."

Simeon said that Jesus would cause many people to fall and many to rise. By using the word "falling," Simeon meant that some people wouldn't believe in Jesus and would reject Him as their Savior. When he used the word "rising," Simeon meant that Jesus would make it possible for many people to rise up and become members of God's family.

The last thing Simon prophesied was that Jesus would meet with lots of opposition. All through His life, there were people who were angry with Jesus. Even the people in Jesus' own hometown became angry while He was teaching. (See Luke 4:28-30.) Jesus encountered so much opposition that He was killed! Today



we know that Jesus' death was part of God's plan—Jesus was to live a perfect life, die to pay the penalty for our sins and come back to life.

Anna's Prayer

■ Read Luke 2:38 to find out what Anna did when she saw Jesus.

As soon as Simeon finished talking with Mary and Joseph, an old woman named Anna came up to them. She loved God and spent all her time in the Temple praying and praising God. She was known as a prophetess—God told her things to tell to other people.

When Anna saw Jesus, she knew that He was someone special. She thanked God and began talking about Jesus to everyone who was looking forward to God's promise of a Savior.

Conclusion

The life that Jesus lived was like a light. Just as lights help us see things clearly, Jesus' life helps us see and understand what God is like and how He showed His love to a sinful world. You have the opportunity to become a part of His family by accepting Jesus and receiving forgiveness for sin. Acts 10:43 tells us that we can receive forgiveness of sin through His name. (Read verse aloud with students.) If you've already become part of God's family, you know that God continues to show His love for you every day. (Pray with students, thanking God for His love and for sending Jesus so that we can be part of God's family. Then talk with interested students about becoming members of God's family, referring to "Leading a Student to Christ" on pp. 10-11.)

Get Going ■ 20-30 minutes

Action: Identify what is true about Jesus and why He is the light of the world, and participate in God's plan of salvation by becoming part of God's family.

Distribute Get Real (p. 24) to students. Invite students to tell or write answers to the questions. End the discussion by completing Get Connected with students. (Optional: Students complete page at home.)



GET REAL

- Why would you say that Jesus is like a light to the world?
- What else do you know about Jesus? What other words would you use to describe Jesus?
- How does Jesus' coming help people learn about God and His plan for them to become part of His family?
- How can a person become a member of God's family?



Get to Know

"Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."
Acts 10:43

Get Connected

Think about what you believe is true about Jesus and why He is the light of the world. Tell God what you believe about Jesus.



Get to Know God

Get Started ■ 5-15 minutes

Action: Discover that we show our priorities by our use of time and possessions.

Color Pass

What You Need

Large sheet of paper, one red and one blue marker.

What You Do

1. Show large sheet of paper. **Let's play a game to fill in this paper with important things.** Students sit in a circle. Place large sheet of paper in the center of the circle and give markers to two students. Students pass markers around the circle in different directions until you signal them to stop.

2. Student holding the red marker writes or draws on the large sheet of paper something he or she likes to do (skateboard, hang out with friends, paint, read mystery books, etc.). Student holding the blue marker writes or draws something he or she has to do (chores, homework, go to school, eat vegetables, etc.). Repeat until each student has had a turn to write or draw on the paper or until time is up.

3. Ask these questions.

- Which of these things do you think are most important? Why?
- You are starting to make your own choices about different things. What kinds of choices do kids your age get to make?
- How do you think people in Bible times chose to spend their time?
- Do you think their choices would be the same or different from people today? Why?
- What's something you wish you had more time to do? Is there anything you'd like to do less of? Why?

■ We all spend a lot of time sleeping and going to school or working. In the time you have free to do whatever you want, what would you do?

4. Conclude the activity by saying,

- The things you spend a lot of time doing show what's important to you—your priorities.
- Today we're going to hear what the priorities were of a man in Bible times.

Bonus Idea

If you have more than five or six students, pass more than one of each color of marker so that more students may participate in writing or drawing at a time.



The Message

Take time to know God.

The Bible Basis

Luke 12:13-21

Jesus told a story of a man who foolishly concentrated on storing his wealth, never realizing that all his wealth would be useless in the end.

The Scripture

"Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal." Matthew 6:20



Get It Together ■ 20-30 minutes



Action: Understand that because only our relationship with God lasts forever, getting to know who God is and what He is like is the greatest priority.

Luke 12:13-21

What You Need

Bibles.

What You Do

Lead students to read and discuss the Bible verses listed. Extend the discussion with the questions and comments provided.

Introduction

When have you thought that your brother or sister, or a friend, wasn't treating you fairly? What did you say or do? What happened? How did you feel? A man with these same feelings came to see Jesus one day. Jesus had been talking to people about what is important in life and why people shouldn't worry about certain things. Let's find out what happened.

The Inheritance

- Read Luke 12:13. What did the man in the crowd want Jesus to do?
- What do you think was important to the man who talked to Jesus?
- Read what Jesus warned this man in Luke 12:15. What did Jesus want this man to know about?

In Bible times, a father's money and possessions were divided between his sons, but the oldest son received TWICE as much as the younger son. The Bible doesn't say whether the older brother wasn't giving this man any of the inheritance or if the man just wanted more money than he was legally entitled to.

Jesus knew the real reason behind this man's question. This man was asking for Jesus' help in the situation with his brother because money was the MOST important thing to this man. It was even more important than getting along with his brother!

The Parable

- Read the beginning of the parable in Luke 12:16-17. What could the man have done with his extra crops?
- What do you think the man decided to do? Compare your idea with what he did. Read Luke 12:18-19. What did the man decide to do? Why?

Jesus told a parable, or story, as He often did, to help everyone understand what He was talking about. This particular story is sometimes referred to as the parable of the rich fool.

The man could have left some of the crops in the fields for poor people to harvest for food. The man could have taken the extra grain to the market and sold it. The man could have given the extra grain to the poor. The man could even have started a bakery!

The rich man probably thought he wouldn't have to work so hard next year—that now he was set for life. Maybe he dreamed about all the stuff he could buy with the money from the crops—maybe a new coat, more donkeys, more chickens, maybe even a bigger house!

Keeping his crops for himself was all this man thought about. And THAT was the problem. He put all his trust and hope for the future into building bigger barns for his crops.



The Problem

- Read Luke 12:20 to find out how God described this man and what happened next.
- Read verse 21 to discover what Jesus told the crowd. What do you think “rich toward God” means?

The man didn't know it, but he was going to die that very night! The rich man had spent all his time thinking about how to keep the crops for himself so that he would have them later, and now there wasn't going to BE a “later”! He was not going to need those crops anymore. No wonder the man was called a fool! He'd paid attention to only one thing all his life and missed the MAIN thing!

A person who is rich toward God is someone who puts God first, someone who spends time getting to know God and shows love and obedience toward Him.

Conclusion

The parable Jesus told makes it clear that money and possessions don't last forever. Matthew 6:20 tells us to store up treasures in heaven and not on Earth. (Read verse aloud.) The only thing the Bible says will last forever is our relationship with God. Getting to know who God is and what He is like is the most important thing we can do in our lives. (Pray with students, thanking God for His love and asking for His help in getting to know Him more.)

Getting to know God begins with becoming a member of His family. God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins so that we can be forgiven and enjoy God's love for us. (Talk with interested students about salvation, referring to “Leading a Student to Christ” on pp. 10-11.)

Get Going ■ 20-30 minutes

Action: Plan ways of getting to know God.

Distribute Get Real (p. 28) to students. Invite students to tell or write answers to the questions. End the discussion by completing Get Connected with students. (Optional: Students complete page at home.)