

LESSON 1

JESUS BLESSES ALL PEOPLE, INCLUDING ME

Key point: God wants everyone to receive His blessings.

Story: Jesus Blesses the Children.

Bible text: Luke 18:15-17 (Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16).

INTERPRETATION

Every detail of the story of Jesus is surprising, from the announcement of His birth by an angel to His ascension into heaven that make it clear we are not dealing with just another human being. Jesus is the Son of God. His divine identity is evident in every one of His actions and words. Even His tears and compassion for people reveal the profound love of the God who creates, and also seeks and saves. There is no room for doubt; Jesus is God. Everything we learn about His life points to this undeniable fact. We can ask ourselves, “why did the only Son of God come to this world?” “Why was He made the same as we are in every way?” The answer, although it may seem simple, makes us say, “To be close to us. But isn’t God always with us?” He is, however, because of our sin that is made manifest in weakness and mistrust, we need the security of seeing Him, touching Him, hearing Him, and speaking with Him. This is what Jesus does when we read His story that is really so much more than that. His story is a living word that removes the veil of unbelief and constantly invites us to believe and trust in Him as the one who forgives and saves. (See John 20:30-31)

Jesus speaks to us. He is interested, He listens, He questions us, He surprises us, He teaches us, He encourages us, He challenges us, and He changes us because He forgives and saves us for eternity. In this dialog that begins today and does not stop because it lasts to eternity, Jesus invites us. The Lord Jesus’ invitation is the beginning of this dialog. Isn’t it the same way He starts the conversation with us?

In our first Bible passage Jesus makes an invitation that includes all humankind. We observe a scene in which Jesus receives children whose parents brought them to meet Him and to receive a blessing from His hands (Mark 10:16). Here there is a conflict when the disciples tried to keep the parents from bringing their children to Jesus. The reason they took this initiative is strange to Jesus. At no time did He ask them to do what they did, but on their own they began to block the way for the parents and children. They thought that the Son of God should not be bothered or distracted by children and babies because He

had more important things to deal with. But by taking this position of wanting to control everyone's access to Jesus, they placed themselves into a role similar to that of the Pharisees (those whom Jesus Himself accused of denying people entrance into the kingdom by the heavy legalistic weights they placed on them; see Luke 11:52 and Matthew 23:13). Jesus prevents the disciples from despising anyone. On the contrary, He encourages them to see themselves as children who want to find Jesus and sit at the feet of the Savior, happy for the blessings that He Himself offers them through His love in the form of forgiveness and eternal salvation. So it is not by accident that this Bible passage appears between two sections (the parable of the Pharisee and the publican in 18:9-14 and the story of the rich young man in 18:18-30) that reflect two erroneous ways of trying to gain access into the kingdom of God. The Pharisee in the parable exalts himself and considers that God should give him access to the kingdom because of his good conduct. The rich young man also believes that his good conduct should permit him entrance into the kingdom of Heaven, however his real trust is in his material riches; he is unwilling to turn his back on them.

The truth is otherwise. No one can enter the kingdom of God if the Lord Jesus Himself does not call and invite him or her (John 14:6). All of us need Jesus as our Savior because we are all sinners, even the littlest one (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23). For this reason Jesus gives His blessing to each of God's children, be they big or small. The way of faith that believes and hopes in the Savior's promises is the total opposite of the way that strives to merit salvation. Jesus blesses the children with His hands (Mark 10:16). They are the same blessed hands that gave sight to the blind, that calmed the storm, that broke the bread, that were nailed to the cross, and that Thomas felt in order to prove the marks of His passion, death, and resurrection for eternal blessing. Those who are moved by the Holy Spirit and come to Him as children with nothing to offer, not speculating about their own works but in humility and dependence on the one who invites them, are part of the kingdom of Heaven. This is the work of Jesus that brings about the fruit of faith.

Application

Entering God's kingdom is the work of the Savior, Jesus, who by His invitation makes us part of His Church and His family (John 15:16). For Him there are no differences. Children are just as valued as adults (Acts 10:34-35). This is why He also calls our attention, so that we might not despise anyone. He exhorts us not to think that there will be time later to take the children to church and teach them to pray and study the Bible. It is never too early or too late to hear Jesus' message. His gospel is for everyone, and the time is now (2 Corinthians 6:2). Neither should we think that it is not worth the trouble to worry about those considered less valuable or significant. On the contrary, all children of God should be alert so that they are not a stumbling block for others, whether it be by what they do or what they do not do. (Matthew 18:10, 14 and 25:40)

At the same time, Jesus teaches us to be useful and active instruments in the hands of God, responding to His call to bring our children into His presence (see 2 Timothy 1:6). There is no age that cannot hear the Good News of salvation. The gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all (Romans 1:16). That is why everyone needs to hear it. That is

the only way in which the Holy Spirit will work the gift of faith (Romans 10:17). The Savior invites us to be like children, just as humble, dependent, anxious, and avid to hear, learn, and follow our Lord, leaving behind the ironies, excuses, and hearts divided by interests and occupations that might take us away from Him (Matthew 6:33 and 13:22)

LESSON 1 LEVEL 1

What do I need?

- The poster for this lesson (Jesus and the children)
- Cardboard or poster board to cover a door.
- Tape.
- Letters from the reproducibles (pp 120-121 Spanish side), that are needed to form the Bible passage. The number of letters you need are: A, 3; C, 1; D, 4; E, 8; F, 2; G, 3; H, 4; I, 10; J, 1; L, 3; N, 8; O, 7; R, 1; S, 6; T, 5; U, 4; V, 2; W, 4.
- Balloons (four or five for each participant).
- Water, in the necessary quantity.
- Paper towels.
- Tempera paints (five colors: yellow, green, red, light blue, and orange).
- Five disposable syringes, one for each color of paint (optional).
- Plastic containers for mixing the paint with water.
- Two sheets of white poster paper.
- Glue.
- Large tarp to protect the floor.
- Colored pencils, gold or yellow paper, and glue for decorating the trumpet on the student page.

Opening Activity:

Note: Before class prepare the space. If the class will be in a closed space with a door or only one entrance, put a large piece of cardboard or large poster paper over the door to close that entrance. The box or poster paper will have a small opening so a child can crawl through, approximately 18" x 24". Before covering the doorway have an adult inside to take care of the children as they come in.

To begin class, gather the group of children in front of the entrance to the classroom and ask: Can you get into the room? They will certainly say yes. Direct them to enter one at a time. Each child will have his or her own way of getting in: crawling, going backwards, or some other way. Once all the children have entered, you will try to get in. Ask the children for help. It may be comical. Finally, after a few minutes, give up, take the coverings off the door, and enter the classroom.

Once you are in the room, gather the children again and ask them the following questions: Was it easy or hard for you to get into the room? Was it easy or hard for me? Why could you get in? Why couldn't I get in? Why are you that size?

Possible answers could be:

It was easy for us, hard for you. We could get in because we're small. You couldn't get in because you're big. Because we are children.

Bible Lesson:

(The Bible story on which this lesson is based has a simple reading. You can read it directly from the Bible or use the paraphrased narration that follows).

Open your Bible to Luke 18:15-17. Tell the group that you want to tell them a story that is written in the Bible (point to it). Share: There was a time when the Son of God Himself came into this world. In those days when Jesus preached and was very well known, people wanted to come close to Him to greet Him and to ask Him to stay and never go away. One day, while Jesus was resting, several people started coming close to Him so He could greet them and bless them. There were grandparents, men, and women, and some brought their children. The children came close to Jesus because they, too, wanted to be blessed and touched by Jesus. Some of Jesus' friends were also there, and they didn't want Jesus to be bothered. They began to ask that the children be taken away. When Jesus saw what was happening, He spoke to His friends and told them that He brought good news for everyone.

Do you know what that good news is? The good news is that Jesus loves everyone and wants to bless everyone. He brings peace for our heart. He wants us to know that He does not leave us alone, even though we cannot see Him. When we recognize that Jesus is the Son of God, God makes us His friends forever. And that is very good news. Pray with the group.

Prayer:

Dear Father God, thank you for loving us. Thank you for sending Jesus with good news for everyone. Help us to understand the good news. Help us always love you. In the name of Jesus we pray, saying: Amen.

Have the children write the good news so that everyone will know it.

Before class you should glue the two poster papers together to make a large poster.

Prepare tempera paints in various containers with a lot of water. Once the paint is mixed, fill a disposable syringe with each color and fill the balloons. Tie the balloons and keep them in a plastic container with a little water to keep them from rubbing together.

Alternative for this activity: If you don't have balloons and/or syringes, prepare each color in a container and let the children paint with their fingers, cleaning their fingers before changing colors.

Put a "big poster" on the floor on the tarp. The children will each take a balloon and, one at a time, throw it onto the poster paper so it will leave a "stain" of color. Repeat this with the children until all the balloons are gone.

Then, together with the children, glue the letters that form the Bible verse onto the 'stained' paper. Bible verse: If we declare that Jesus is the Son of God, we live in union with God and God lives in union with us. 1 John 4:15.

When the poster is completed, repeat the Bible verse with the children to memorize it. Display the poster in a visible place.

Memory Verse:

If we declare that Jesus is the Son of God, we live in union with God and God lives in union with us.
1 John 4:15

Continue with the student sheets.

LESSON 1 LEVEL 2

What do I need?

- The poster for this lesson (Jesus and the children).
- Cardboard or poster board to cover a doorway.
- Tape.
- Craft knife.
- Alphabet letters from the reproducibles (pp 120-121 Spanish side).
- Two pieces of white poster paper.
- Glue.
- Pieces of colored paper.
- Scissors for each participant.
- Pencils (one for each participant).
- Chalkboard or posterboard.

Opening Activity:

Before class, put some “doors” on the cardboard. There will be four in all, and they will share the side that will serve as the hinge (see the example in the reproducibles, (pp 106-107 Spanish side). The measurements for the spaces will be:

60 inches X 30 inches

48 inches X 24 inches

40 inches X 20 inches

24 inches X 16 inches

Put the cardboard over the doorway so it blocks the way.

Then open the smallest door and ask the participants to go into the classroom. There may be a few who can enter. Then open the next bigger door, and continue until you also can go in. Reflect a few minutes on how the size of the door changed according to the size of those who wanted to come in.

Bible Lesson:

Read the Bible passage from Luke 18:15-17. The reading is short. You can read it at least three times to be sure all the details are remembered.

Once the story has been read ask the participants to tell it in their own words.

Ask: Why do you think Jesus talked about being like children?

Tell the group that Jesus is the Son of God. God created us so we could be close to Him. Sin separated us from God and His love. Jesus came into the world so we could be close to God again. Jesus suffered and died on a cross to pay for the sin that separated us from God. When He arose, He made us children of God. Now we can trust completely in the promise that God, through Jesus, will always be with us.

God loves us and has a place for us with Him when we believe in Jesus as our Savior. Jesus is the door that opens so we can enter the kingdom of God.

Let's ask God to help us believe in His promise with a prayer.

Prayer:

Father God, we thank you for your immense love. We thank you for the promise you give us in Jesus Christ. Help us to believe in Jesus trustingly, without doubting. Stay with us always. Amen.

Suggest preparing a poster with the Bible passage that reminds us of God's promise. Ahead of time, glue two of the white poster papers together. If a work table is available, set out the alphabet letters, pieces of colored paper, pencils, scissors, and glue.

Write the Bible verse on the board that we will put on the poster:

If we declare that Jesus is the Son of God, we live in union with God and God lives in union with us. 1 John 4:15.

To complete the poster the children will use the alphabet letters as a pattern, tracing each letter onto a piece of colored paper and then cutting it out. Assign each participant a letter from the Bible passage to cut out so there will not be repeats.

While they are making the poster, repeat the Bible passage with the children to memorize it.

Glue the letters on the poster and place it in a visible place.

Memory Verse:

If we declare that Jesus is the Son of God, we live in union with God and God lives in union with us.
1 John 4:15

Continue with the student sheets.

Answer to the student lesson: The number of children they should find is 12.

LESSON 1 LEVEL 3

What do I need?

- Objects for the game, for example: a garden spade, scissors, a toy car, an adult shirt, a pair of children's socks, a car key, an adult bicycle, nail polish, crayons, a lighter or matches, a beach ball, a balloon, a knife, a can opener, a children's book, a disposable razor, mascara, a bath sponge in a children's shape, or a doll, among others (reproducibles pp 108-111 Spanish side).
- Two posters made by the teacher, one that says ADULTS and the other, CHILDREN.
- The poster with the face of Jesus (reproducibles, p 119 Spanish side).
- Two pieces of white poster paper.
- Glue.
- Small balloons.
- Letters from the reproducibles (p 119 Spanish side), that are needed to form the Bible passage. The number of letters you need are: A, 3; C, 1; D, 4; E, 8; F, 2; G, 3; H, 4; I, 10; J, 1; L, 3; N, 8; O, 7; R, 1; S, 6; T, 5; U, 4; V, 2; W, 4.
- Balloons (four or five for each participant).
- Water, in the necessary quantity.
- Paper towels.
- Tempera paints (five colors: yellow, green, red, light blue, and orange).
- Five disposable syringes, one for each color of paint (optional).
- Plastic containers for mixing the paint with water.
- Colored markers for the student lessons.

Opening Activity:

Separate the participants into two teams. One team will be ADULTS and the other will be CHILDREN. In view of the students, randomly place the things for the game. At a safe distance away from the items, place the ADULTS/CHILDREN posters, slightly apart from one another. Next you will give the signal: In front of you are various items. Each team should look for those that go together according to whether they are used by an adult or a child. There are some you might wonder about. Once the game is done we will check to see if each item is in the correct place.

The game is over when the teams have placed all the elements. When the two teams are finished, look confused. Ask for forgiveness for having forgotten one item. Then show the drawing of the face of Jesus.

Ask the students if they recognize the face and know who it is. To which team does this item belong? They will probably say it belongs to both teams.

Congratulate the winning team and continue.

Bible Lesson:

Gather the group again and invite them to the reading of Luke 18:15-17. This passage is very short, so you can read it two or three times for a better understanding.

Ask the following questions: How does our story begin? What happened with Jesus' friends, the disciples? How did Jesus respond when He saw what had happened?

Now let's think: What are children like? How are we different from children*?

Point out that one characteristic of children, besides those that they have already mentioned, (height, size, knowledge) is that children are trusting. When they get angry, they easily forget; they believe in what someone promises them, almost without questioning.

Someone will probably say they are innocent. Remember that we are all sinners, children too, because sin is with us from birth, just like other human characteristics. Children are born in sin.

After the reading, share with the participants that Jesus is the Son of God. He has come into the world because our relationship with God was broken by sin and the wages of sin is death. Jesus came to the world to bring good news: When we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus, we have eternal life. Along with this good news, Jesus also promises always to be with us in this life.

What characteristics of children does Jesus want us to imitate? Jesus specifically tells us that we should be like children in order to believe, to trust, and to wait patiently for the promise. Then we would trust blindly in the promise Jesus brings us.

Let's ask God in prayer to help us believe as if we were little children.

Prayer:

Lord God, our Father, we come to You giving thanks for our life. For a long time we did not know about You. Now we know the promise of life that You bring to us through Your Son Jesus. We ask You to make us like children to believe with all our strength. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Make the poster with the memory verse. Glue the two white poster papers together to form a large poster. Blow up the balloons. Prepare the tempera paints, not too diluted. Place the letters, the containers of tempera paint, and the paper towels in the middle of the participants (ideally on a table). Paint the letters using the balloons as brushes. They can use several colors to decorate the letters.

While you are making the poster it is a good time to recite the memory verse.

Once the letters are decorated, let them dry a few minutes, then glue them on the poster, forming the Bible verse.

Memory Verse:

If we declare that Jesus is the Son of God, we live in union with God and God lives in union with us.

1 John 4:15

Continue with the student sheets.

Answers for the student activity: In Activity 2 there are some extra words that are only there as a distraction. They are SERVANT—EYES—YEARS—FALSE—NEVER—EARS—LIE—PRAY—REMEMBER.