

BIBLE TRUTH 4, LESSON 1: PLANNER/OVERVIEW

GETTING STARTED: Welcome and Opening Songs (*introduce unit and get kids moving with these songs*)

Welcome to Praise Factory: PFI: Praise Factory Investigators Theme Song *PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 1*

Rules to Help Us Worship God and Love One Another: WoGoLOA Classroom Rules Song
PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 2

Big Question Under Investigation: Big Question 11 Songs *PFI NIV Songs 11, Tracks 3,4*

Big Question Bible Verse: Romans 6:23 Song *PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 5*

DIGGING DEEP DOWN: Key Concept and Story (*introduce the Bible Truth and tell the related story*)

Bible Truth 4: The Holy Spirit Brings Us to God

Bible Truth Hymn: Amazing Grace, vs.1,2 *PFI NIV Songs 11, Tracks 12,13*

Bible Verse: Titus 3:4-7

Bible Verse Song: He Saved Us *PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 14*

Lesson 1 Old Testament: The Case of the Stony Hearts *Psalms 137:1-6; Ezekiel 36, 37:15-28; John 2:12-3:21*

TAKING ACTION: Response Activities (*choose from among these activities*)

Snack and Discussion Planner: Harps and Poplar Trees

ACTS Prayer: Prayer Sheet

Bible Truth Review: Discussion Questions and Game: Beanbag Scramble

Bible Truth Hymn: Amazing Grace, vs.1,2 *PFI NIV Songs 11, Tracks 12,13*
Song, Sign Language and Song Game: Mimic Me! **PFI NIV Songs 11 BOOK or ONLINE**

Bible Verse Review: Titus 3:4-7 Discussion Sheet and Game: Who's Got the Penny?

Bible Verse Song: He Saved Us: Titus 3:4-7 *PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 14*
Song, Sign Language and Song Game: Word Take Away **PFI NIV Songs 11 BOOK or ONLINE**

Story Review: Discussion Questions and Game: Frisbee Toss 'n' Quiz

Case Replay, Jr: Drama Activity for Youngest Children (children do same story actions together)

Case Replay, Sr: Drama Activity for Most Children (children re-tell story with individual parts)

Craft: The Israelites' Harps

VIPP (Very Important Prayer Person) Prayer Time: Coloring Sheets (back of book) & Game: Ball Roll Review

TAKING IT HOME: Take Home Sheet for Review and Family Devotions

PFI Pronto: Bible Truth 4, Lesson 1 **PFI NIV Prontos 11 BOOK or ONLINE**

The Case of the Stony Hearts *Psalm 137:1-6; Ezekiel 36, 37:15-28; John 2:12-3:21* by Connie Dever

Our story is called:

The Case of the Stony Hearts.

As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out:

1. Who had stony hearts? What was stony about them?
2. What should their hearts be like? Who alone could change them? How?

This story begins in Old Testament times, about 600 years before Jesus lived here on earth.

Some Babylonians had gone down to the Euphrates River to enjoy the shade of the poplar trees that grew along its banks. As usual, they brought their slaves along to serve them. Babylonian slaves came from many nations--all of them captured in war and brought back to Babylon to serve as slaves. But these particular slaves were Israelites. And the Babylonians, looking for some new entertainment, asked them to sing some songs from their homeland.

"Enough songs of Babylon!" the Babylonians said. "Take out your harps and play us a tune, you Israelites. Sing us a new, joyful song from Jerusalem, of Zion, your home," they ordered.

"How can we sing to you of Zion when it lies in ruins, destroyed by your soldiers!" the Israelites said. They hung their harps upon the branches of the poplar trees, sat down by the Euphrates and wept.

How sad the Israelite slaves were! They knew that they had sinned against the LORD and not turned back to Him when He warned them to stop sinning. He had told them that the Babylonians would destroy them if they did not repent. They refused, and so, the great armies of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had swept into their land and destroyed it... and all of Jerusalem with it. Gone were their lands, their houses, their cities, their Temple. The Babylonians soldiers had bound the people in chains and made them their slaves.

If only their hearts had not been so dirty with sin and so hard as stone! If only they had loved and obeyed God as He desired! Then none of this would have happened! "What can we do to be rid of these sad times brought by our sin? What can we do to bring back the good days in the kingdom of Israel?" the Israelites wondered.

The LORD saw how sad His people were and He sent

His prophet Ezekiel with a comforting promise for them: "You will have to stay in Babylon for seventy years, as I told you before. But after that, I will bring you out of Babylon and take you back home so you can rebuild Jerusalem and the kingdom of Israel," the LORD told them.

"And that is not all. I am going to do something even better than give you back the kingdom of Israel as it was!" the LORD promised. "I am going to truly bring an end to your sad times brought on by your sin. Like water washes dirty things clean, I am going to clean your hearts of sin. I am going to change them so that they will no longer be hard and disobedient like stone. I will make your hearts alive again by putting my Spirit inside you! Then I, Myself, will move you to love Me and follow My ways," He told them. "And one day, I am going to send My Messiah to make the whole earth My perfect Kingdom forever. Then you will be My beloved people and I will be your beloved God."

The Israelites took comfort in the LORD's promises and waited...for long seventy years. And sure enough, God kept His promise to them. On the very day after the seventy years were finished, they were freed.

How the Israelites rejoiced to be going back home to Jerusalem! Yet they wondered, "Would the LORD fulfill His other promises--when He would change their sad times brought by their sin; and send the Messiah to bring His Kingdom forever?"

Six hundred years passed and still the Israelites waited to see the LORD answer these promises. The Babylonians were long gone, but now a new enemy--the Romans--had come and taken over the kingdom of Israel and brought new sinful, sad times.

Story-telling Tips

Ahead of time:

1. Read the Bible verses and story. Pray!
2. Create story cue cards on index cards (or highlight text).
3. Practice telling story dramatically, timing your presentation. Shorten, if necessary to fit your allotted time.
4. Decorate area with story props that help bring your story alive.

During your presentation:

1. Maintain as much eye contact as possible as you tell the story. Point to/use props at important points in the story. Include the kids in your story with a few questions about what they think will happen or words/concepts that might be new to them.
2. Watch the kids for signs that their attention span has been reached. Shorten, if necessary.

"Now would be a good time for the Messiah to bring God's Kingdom," the people of Israel thought. "He would get rid of the Romans and set up His kingdom forever," they hoped. "What can we do to be rid of these sinful, sad times? What can we do to bring the Kingdom of God?" they wondered.

"Perhaps there is a reason God hasn't sent the Messiah to rescue us," thought the Pharisees. "Perhaps our hearts and lives are too dirty because we don't keep His laws. Perhaps if we keep all of God's laws and are really good, then that would bring an end to these sinful, sad times and bring God's kingdom sooner," they hoped. But as hard as they tried, they couldn't keep the God's laws just right. No. They couldn't bring the Messiah by their own good deeds. They had to wait for God to fulfill His promises.

And so He did. At the right time, Jesus came. He began to do amazing miracles and to tell everyone that the Kingdom of God was near. He even stormed into the Temple area and cleared it of men who were making money off of people come to worship the LORD. "This is God's house," Jesus said. "It's to be a house of prayer; not a thieves' den as you have made it!"

Everyone began talking about Jesus and the things He did. "Who has ever spoken like this or has done miracles like this? Who would dare clear the Temple, as if it was his? Could this be the Messiah?" some people wondered.

But the Pharisees and others said, "Who does Jesus think he is? He does amazing things and talks like he is something special, but he's no Messiah! When the Messiah comes, He will appear suddenly and destroy all our enemies. He will set up God's kingdom with great power. We are the teachers of the law and we know about these things," they said.

One Pharisee named Nicodemus wasn't so sure. He had spent hours reading the Bible and knew all the promises about the Messiah—even the ones the LORD had given the Israelites through Ezekiel so many years before. Nicodemus heard what Jesus said and saw what Jesus did. And he began to wonder just who Jesus was. There was something about Jesus that made Nicodemus want to know more. "Perhaps Jesus does know how to bring an end to these sinful, sad times,"

thought Nicodemus. "Perhaps He knows how to bring the Kingdom of God."

So late one night Nicodemus went through the streets of Jerusalem to talk with Jesus. "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could do the miracles you do if God weren't with him," Nicodemus said to Jesus.

"No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again, born of God," Jesus answered him.

"I thought the kingdom of God was for the people of Israel who kept God's laws. What could this mean to be born again?" Nicodemus thought. "How can a man be born when he is old?" he asked Jesus.

"No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit," Jesus replied. "But I'm not talking about your body being born like a baby again. I'm talking about your spirit, your heart. You can only enter God's Kingdom if God's Spirit has given new life to your spirit," He explained. "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'" Jesus continued. "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit. No one can see the Holy Spirit, but it is He who works in the hearts of people as He pleases, changing them. He's the one who brings an end to sad, sinful times by working in their hearts. He makes them able to enter the Kingdom of God."

This was all so new to Nicodemus! "How can this be?" he asked Jesus.

"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and you don't understand these things? But I have even more to tell you. I am God's Son, the Messiah and I have come to bring God's Kingdom. But it won't be by powerfully overthrowing the Romans, as so many think. It will be by being lifted up on a cross and dying for God's people. For God so loved the world that He gave Me, His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Me shall not die, but have eternal life--life in God's Kingdom forever!" Jesus explained.

Nicodemus may have left that night with more questions than he came. Jesus' answers surprised him. If only he would remember the promises God gave the people of Israel through Ezekiel long ago! That night

Jesus was telling him that at last God was fulfilling those promises. Jesus would die for God's peoples' sins. By His Holy Spirit, He would wash away their sins and change our hearts by filling them with His Spirit. This was how God would bring an end to the sinful, sad times and bring in the Kingdom of God--in the hearts of His people.

Cracking the Case:

It's time to answer our Case Questions.

1. Who had stony hearts? What was stony about them? The people of Israel. Stones are hard and lifeless. The hearts of the people of Israel were hard and lifeless to God and His good laws.

2. What should their hearts be like? Who alone could change them? How? Their hearts were meant to be full of love for God and His good laws. God alone could change them. He promised to change them by His Holy Spirit.

Something for You and Me

Our Bible Truth is:

The Holy Spirit Brings Us to God

Our Bible Verse is: Titus 3:4-7

"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

What happened to Nicodemus? Did he ever experience the spiritual birth of the Holy Spirit in his heart and was saved? We don't know for sure. We do know, though, that it was Nicodemus who stood up for Jesus against the other Pharisees and priests when they wanted to have Him arrested and killed without even a trial. And it was Nicodemus who bought the seventy pounds of spices and helped to bury Jesus after He was crucified. Some say that after Jesus rose from the dead, Nicodemus did become a Christian and was baptized by Peter and John.

It will not be until heaven, in the Kingdom of God, when all of God's people are gathered to worship the Lord Jesus around His throne that we will know for sure

about Nicodemus.

But something we can know for sure it that the same gift of washing and cleansing sin, the same gift of the Holy Spirit filling and changing hearts that Ezekiel spoke about and that Jesus told Nicodemus about, is a gift that God offers freely to all.

Let's praise God for being the God who saves. Let's ask Him work in our hearts, showing us our sins and helping us to turn away from them. Let's ask Him to give us faith in Jesus as our own Savior. And let's ask Him to wash our hearts and fill us with His Holy Spirit that we might be born again, born of God, and be saved.

Close in prayer.

Closing ACTS Prayer

A God, we praise You for being the Lover of Sinful People. You welcome them to come and be forgiven!

C God, we confess that many times we act like the Pharisees. We act like we can make ourselves good enough to please You on our own. Sometimes we don't think we really are that sinful, but, oh, how we need a Savior!

T God, we thank You for promising to send a Savior to save all those who turn from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior.

S God, work in our hearts! Send the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts, helping us to turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior. Make us Your people, filled with Your Holy Spirit, and who love You and want to live lives that please You.

Special Words

Pharisee: A teacher of God's laws in Jesus' day who were known for trying especially hard to keep God's laws and lots of extra, little rules they thought helped them keep God's laws better.

Priest: Men who came from Aaron's (Moses' brother) family who worked in the Temple in Jerusalem.

ACTS PRAYER ACTIVITY

Use this sheet to write down your ACTS Prayer

Instructions:

Use this sheet to help the children apply the Bible Truth into a prayer. You can use the ACTS provided or even better, have the kids think of their own applications. Also have the children add their personal requests to the prayer, too. Lead the children in the prayer or let them pray sections, with your help. Never force a child to pray! Non-readers can participate by you whispering a section of the prayer into their ear and allowing them to pray it aloud for the group.

ADORATION:

God, we praise You for being the Changer of the hearts of sinful people, like you and me.

God, we praise You for being.....

Add your own Adorations:

CONFESSION:

God, we confess that we are all sinners. We have hard hearts that are slow to believe, love and obey You. We need Jesus to save us!

God, we have sinned against You....

Add your own Confessions:

THANKSGIVING:

Thank You for sending Your Holy Spirit to work inside us that we can know You, love You and live for You. You give us what we need, but could never get on our own.

God, we thank You for...

Add your own Thanksgivings:

SUPPLICATION:

God, send the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. Give us faith as we hear Your Word, the Bible. Help us to turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Make us new creations! Give us the new birth! We want to know You and live for You!

God, we need Your help...

Add your own Supplication:

SNEAKY SNACK

Can you figure out how this snack ties in with our case?

Snack: Harps and Poplar Trees

Twisted "heart-shaped" pretzel harps salty from tears and celery "poplar trees" with ranch dressing.

This is only a suggestion. Feel free to modify. Be mindful of allergy issues among your children!

Case Tie-in: After years of warnings and patiences, the LORD allowed the Babylonians to destroy Judah and carry the people off to slavery back in Babylon. At last, the people could see their sin. They wept and hung up their harps on the trees when asked to sing songs from their homeland. How sad they were! But the LORD comforted them. Not only would He return them to their homeland one day, but He promised to send His Holy Spirit to live in their hearts. He would change them, filling them with love for Him and His good laws.

SOUL FOOD

Food for thought during snack time

1. What does the snack have to do with the story?

Choose a few questions from the other activity discussion sheets to talk about during this snack time.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

Directions: Read and discuss Bible Truth, using a FEW of the questions. Play game. Feel free to modify the game to fit your children.

The Holy Spirit Brings Us to God

Ever since Adam and Eve rebelled against God, each of us have been born with a spirit dead with sin. That means that on our own, none of us can know God or choose to live for Him, just like a dead person can't bring his body back to life.

But God can do what we cannot do. He can bring dead hearts to life, so that we can know Him and want to live for Him. He does this by sending His Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. As we hear God's Word, the Holy Spirit can help us see our sins and help us want to turn away from them. He gives us faith in God. Faith to trust that Jesus died on the cross for sinners and rose from the dead in victory. He gives us a new heart that can know God and want to live for Him.

Jesus called this being "born again, born of God." He calls this being born again because this change in heart is so radical that God actual makes us into a new creation--a brand-new person! He calls this being born of God, because this change comes from God. And with it, He makes us a part of His family forever.

We can ask God's Holy Spirit to work in our hearts like this. God delights to answer this prayer. He loves for sinners to ask Him to change them and make them into His people.

Understanding the Bible Truth

1. Every since Adam and Eve rebelled against God, each of us has been born with a spirit that is what? *Dead with sin.*
2. What does it mean that our heart is dead with sin? *That on our own, none of us can ever know God or choose to live for Him, just like a dead person can't bring his body back to life.*
3. Who can bring dead hearts to life? *God can.*
4. When God brings a dead heart back to life, what can we do? *We can know God and want to live for Him.*
5. How does God bring a dead heart back to life? *By sending His Holy Spirit to work inside the hearts of sinners.*
6. What does the Holy Spirit do when He works in a sinner's heart? *The Holy Spirit helps them see their sins, be sorry for them and want to turn away from them. He gives them faith in God. He gives them new hearts that can know God and want to live for God.*
7. What does it mean to be born again, born of God? *For the Holy Spirit to work in a sinner's heart, making it new and alive to God.*
8. Whose family do we become part of when we are born again, born of God? *God's family. We become His people, His adopted children.*

Bible Verse Connection Question

1. What does our Bible Truth have to do with our **Bible Verse: Titus 3:4-7**: "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."?

Our verse tells us that it is the Holy Spirit who gives God's people a new heart to know, love and obey God. God's people receive this gift of rebirth and new life because of what Jesus did on the cross to save them: He took the punishment for all their sins.

Bible Truth Story Connection Questions

1. Who did Ezekiel tell the Israelites that God would send to truly change them? What would be different about their hearts when He did? *God's promised to cleanse their hearts and make them new by His Holy Spirit one day, so that they would believe and obey God.*
2. What did Jesus tell Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit would do in the hearts all who believed in Him? *He would give them new hearts, making them born again, born of God.*

Life Application Questions

1. How can we know that the Holy Spirit is working in our hearts? *If He helps us see our sins, be sorry for them and want to turn away from them. If our hearts want to please and love God.*
2. What can we ask God to have the Holy Spirit do in our hearts? *Help us to see our sins, be sorry for them, and turn away from them. Ask Him to help us to trust in Jesus as our Savior. Ask Him to cleanse our hearts and make us born again.*

ACTS Questions

1. What is something we can praise God for because of this Bible Truth? *Praise God for being the Changer of the hearts of sinful people.*
2. What are sins we can confess to God because of this Bible Truth? *Confess that our hard hearts are cold to God and slow to love Him and obey Him. We are dead in our sins on our own. We deserve God's punishment! We need a Savior! We need the Holy Spirit!*
3. What is something we can thank God for because of this Bible Truth? *Thank God for seeking out His people to make Himself known to them.*
4. What is something we can ask God for because of this Bible Truth? *We can ask God to send the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts that we would want to turn away from disobeying Him and trust in Jesus as our own Savior. We can ask Him to give us new birth, new life through the Holy Spirit working in us. We can ask Him to give us hearts to know, love and obey God.*

The Gospel

1. We all have hearts that are dead to God and rebellious against Him. What hope does He offer us? What is the gospel? *God is the good Creator and King of the world. He made people to worship Him and live by His good laws. But we are all sinners who have rebelled against Him. We all deserve death--God's just, eternal punishment for our sins. How terrible! But God has good news for us. In His great mercy, God sent His Son Jesus to earth to save sinners. Yes, Jesus, the perfect Son of God, left His home in heaven and became a man. He lived the perfect life that pleases God. (He's the only one who has ever done that!) He offered it up to God His Father as the perfect sacrifice for sins when He suffered and died on the cross. Then, on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead in victory. He had fully paid for the sins of God's people, so they wouldn't have to! Now all who turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior will receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. They will be His very own special people who will know Him and enjoy Him forever. We can be God's people, too, if we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our own Savior.*

Game: Rush to Safety

Materials

Construction Paper
 CD and CD player
 Masking Tape
 Small bowl or bag
 Bible Truth Questions

Preparing the Game

1. Choose 20+ questions for your game from the Bible Truth Discussion Questions, or make up your own.
2. Write the Bible Truth questions on small thin strips of paper (or make a photocopy of the Bible Truth Discussion Questions and simply cut them into strips) and put them in the bag/bowl.
3. Cut circles about 9" in diameter, enough for every child but one.
4. Tape the circles on the floor around the room.

Playing the Game

Point out the safety spot circles on the floor. Tell the children that you will tell the children to move however you command them to move, such as march, walk, skip, crab crawl, etc. (BUT NOT RUN!!!) when you play the music. But when the music stops, they are to get to a safety spot. Show them that there is one spot too few for them all so that someone will be caught out. The child who has no safety spot picks a question for the class to answer. If the class answers it correctly, then the child is added back into the group. If not, then the child stays out and another safety spot is removed.

Game continues as number of questions, time, and attention span allow.

NOTE: Have the children who are "out" help make up actions for the other children to do, put them in charge of the music, etc. along with you. This will keep them happily occupied as they continue.

Non-competitive Option

Have the child without a safety spot choose a question for the class, but then join the game, even if the class gets it wrong. Add the question back into the bag for further review. Don't reduce the number of safety spots.

Optional TAKING IT TO OTHERS Activity: Quiz Questions

Have the children choose a few of the questions from the game to ask the parents/other children during TAKING IT TO OTHERS time. Help pre-readers by whispering the question in their ear and letting them ask it aloud to the parents/other children. Make sure you read the Bible verse aloud before you ask your questions.

Directions:

1. Write words to song in large print before class.
2. Play the song for the children, helping them follow along on the song sheet.
3. Discuss the song, using a few questions from the discussion sheet. *Don't use them all!*
4. Introduce sign language for key words of your choice from sign language sheet for your song. Use as few or as many as you think the children can learn.
5. Sing and sign the song. Sign language as well as large format lyrics and sheet music are found in the PFI Unit Songbook or online.
6. If desired, play the Song Game.

Optional TAKING IT TO OTHERS Activity: Presenting and Singing the Song

1. Sing and sign the song, encouraging the watching children/parents to join in.
2. Ask the class some of the questions listed below. The Bible Truth Connection Question is particularly good to help them understand how the song ties in with the Bible Truth.

Amazing Grace

Verse 1

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found.
Was blind but now I see.

Verse 2

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Listen to it on PFI NIV Songs 11, Tracks 12,13

1. What is grace? *Being treated with favor or given a gift that you could never deserve.*
2. What is a wretch? *A person who has done bad things and deserves nothing. A person who is bad trouble and can't get out of it.*
3. What was the wretch saved from? *From the punishment he deserved from God for the bad things he had done; and, from the trouble his sins had gotten him into.*
4. Who saved this wretch and how? *Jesus died on the cross to pay for his sins and the Holy Spirit worked in his heart that he might see his sins, turn from them and believe in Jesus.*
5. How is being a sinner like being "lost" and becoming one of God's people like being found? *All people were made to know and love God, yet they rebelled against Him and cut themselves off from Him. Now, unless God works in their hearts to help them believe in Jesus and receive forgiveness for sins, they will live their lives apart from God and His blessings, like someone lost out on their own away from their home. But, when someone does turn to God and believe in Jesus, they come to know God again and all the blessings that come with knowing Him. That is like being found and brought back to your wonderful home after being lost out on your own.*
6. What kind of "blindness" and "seeing" did the wretch have? *Spiritual blindness—not being able to know that you are a sinner or know God. Spiritual sight—being able to know that you are a sinner and able to know God.*
7. What three things did God in His grace "do" in the wretch's heart (verse 2)? *Made his heart to fear God's wrath against his sin; relieved his fears as he learned about Jesus' offer of forgiveness to those who believe in Him; and, worked in his heart that he would believe in Jesus as his Savior.*
8. How did God in His grace "do" these things in the wretch's heart? *By His Holy Spirit, working in his heart.*

Bible Truth Connection Question

1. How does this song relate to our Bible Truth: **The Holy Spirit Brings Us to God?**

All people would be lost in their sins and rebellion forever if it were not for God's work by the Holy Spirit in their hearts. By God's amazing grace, His free gift given to sinners, the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of God's people. He first gives them "sight" to make them aware of their sinfulness and to fear His judgment, then as they turn to Him, He relieves their fears by taking away their guilt the hour they believe. He cleans their hearts from sin and gives them love for God. Why does the Holy Spirit do this? Because Jesus died on the cross and paid for all their sins. God's people know the gift of the Holy Spirit working in their hearts all because of Him!

Story Connection Question

1. How does this song relate to today's story? *The Israelites rebelled against God again and again. At last, the LORD punished them for not repenting of their sins and trusting in Him. They spend long, sad years in Babylon. They did not deserve to ever know God's forgiveness and kindness, but God treated them better than that! He showed them His amazing grace, yet again. He promised to bring them back home at the end of 70 years. And best of all, He promised to send the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts. He would give them hearts that would fear Him and hate their own sin. He would give them hearts that believed in Him and loved Him. All this would be because of the Messiah He was sending to be their Savior. Many years they waited for these gifts of God's amazing grace. Nicodemus was one of the first Israelites to hear how the Holy Spirit would work inside God's people from none other than the promised Messiah! At last God's people would receive the long-promised gifts!*

Bible Connection Question

1. What does this hymn have to do with our Bible Verse: **Titus 3:4-7**: "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."?

God, in His kind grace, sends His Holy Spirit to work in His people. He shows God's people that they are "wretches" before Him—they are sinners deserving His punishment. When they see they deserve His punishment it causes them to fear. Through His Word and others sharing the good news of Jesus with them, they hear how God sent His Son Jesus to take the punishment for the sins of all those who turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus as their own Savior. They are forgiven! They will not face God's punishment! This relieves their fears from the hour they believe. How amazing is God's grace given to them through Jesus' death on the cross...and given to them through the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

Life Application Questions

1. How can our lives be affected by the message of this song? *We thank God for His amazing grace shown to sinners and ask Him to send the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts that we might see our sins, turn from them and believe, like the person in this song.*

ACTS Questions

1. What is something we can praise God for from this hymn?

Praise God for being the Giver of Amazing Grace, enough to save His sinful people.

2. What are sins we can confess to God from this hymn? *We can confess that many times we are blind to our sins, not even seeing them. We need God's grace! We need a Savior!*

3. What is something we can thank God for from this hymn?

We can thank God for showing His people their sins, helping them fear His punishment, and then forgiving their sins through Jesus. We can thank God for the gift of faith, given to His people, by His grace.

4. What is something we can ask God for from this hymn?

That God would work in our hearts that we might see our sins, turn from them and trust Jesus as our Savior

Gospel Question

1. What is the good news of Jesus that can relieve our fear of God's punishment? What is the gospel?

God is the good Creator and King of the world. He made people to worship Him and live by His good laws. But we are all sinners who've rebelled against Him. We all deserve death--God's just, eternal punishment for our sins. How terrible! But God has good news for us. In His great mercy, God sent His Son, Jesus to earth as a man to save sinners. He lived the perfect life that pleases God. (He's the only one who's ever done that!) He offered it up to God His Father as the perfect sacrifice for sins when He suffered and died on the cross. Then, on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead in victory. He had fully paid for the sins of God's people, so they wouldn't have to! Now all who turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior will receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. They will be His very own special people who will know Him and enjoy Him forever. We can be God's people, too, if we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our own Savior.

Song Game: Pass the Secret Sign

Materials

Sign Language signs used in song, particularly choose words with important meanings you want the children to learn, such as "grace", "redeem", etc.

Bag or bowl

Blindfold

Preparing the Game

1. Cut out signs and put in bowl.

Playing the Game

1. Practice the song and signs until the children know them well.
2. Have all the children stand in a tight circle, except one, "It," who will stand in the middle of the circle, blindfolded.
3. Have the children in the circle to put their hands behind their backs. Choose a sign from the bag and hand to a child in the circle, still keeping hands behind their backs, not looking at the sign.
4. When "It" says "Pass the Secret Sign", the children will begin to pass the sign around behind their backs.
5. When "It" says "Stop the Passing!" the child who has the sign freezes with the sign behind his back.
6. The child with the sign brings it around and looks at it. You can help the child practice the sign.
7. Then take the blindfold off of "It", watch the child with the card do the sign, then have "It" guess the name of the sign. (If desired, "It" can ask another child in the circle for help with their guess.)
8. The holder of the sign then becomes "It." Sing the song with all the signs, then repeat.

choose a FEW questions for discussion, then choose the game and/or music activity

Meditation Version: Titus 3:4-7

"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

Alternate Memory/Games Version: Titus 3:5

"... He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit."

Understanding the Bible Verse

1. Who was the kindness and love of God our Savior who appeared and saved God's people? Jesus.
2. Why is kindness and love of God a good way to describe Jesus? God is so kind. He treats us so much better than we deserve. So in His love, He chose to rescue sinners from their biggest problem that they could never rescue themselves from--their sin and the punishment of death they deserve because of sin. Jesus chose to come, suffer and die for the sins of God's people to save them. This is the most kindness and love anyone has ever shown--and to people so undeserving!
3. Why did Jesus come to be our Savior? Because of His mercy, not because of righteous things we had done.
4. What are righteous things? Obeying God and His good laws.
5. Why did it have to be God's mercy, not our righteousness that Jesus came to save us? Because we are all sinners. We could never deserve such kindness from God because of what we do. We would have to be perfect to serve that.
6. Who is "us" that God saved? *God's people. All who turn from their sins and trust in Jesus to save them. That can be us, too, when we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.*
7. How did God save His people? *Through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit He gave them through Jesus Christ, their Savior.*
8. What does "rebirth" mean? *To be born again, born of God.*
9. What does "renewal" mean? *To be made like new again.*
10. Who gives rebirth? Who renews them? *The Holy Spirit.*
11. What part of us is born again, is renewed by the Holy Spirit? *Our spirits, our hearts.*
12. How is being born again and being renewed by the Holy Spirit like being washed? *Our spirits are "dirty" with sin. The Holy Spirit makes them like new, just like washing dirty clothes takes away the dirty and makes them look like new.*
13. Why did it have to be through Jesus that God could give His People the Holy Spirit? *No sinner can have the Holy Spirit live inside him unless his sins have been paid for. Jesus offered His life up as the payment for the sins of His people, since they could never pay for them, themselves. So it is only through Jesus' death for us that we could ever be made right to receive the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts.*

Bible Truth Connection Question

1. What does this verse have to do with the **Bible Truth: The Holy Spirit Brings Us to God?**

God's people receive this gift of rebirth and new life through the Holy Spirit because of what Jesus did on the cross to save them: He took the punishment for all their sins. The Holy Spirit works inside the hearts of sinners so that they can see their sins, be sorry for them and want to turn away from them. He gives them faith in God. He gives them new hearts that want to please and love God.

Story Connection Questions

1. What did the Lord promise the Israelites would happen when the Holy Spirit did wash and renew their hearts? *They would have hearts that loved God and would obey Him.*

Life Application Questions

1. What should we do if we want the Holy Spirit to wash and renew our hearts? *Turn from our sins and believe in Jesus as our Savior.*

ACTS Questions

1. What is something we can praise God for from this Bible Verse?

Praise God for being the Giver of the Holy Spirit to His People to give them new birth and new life in Him.

2. What are sins we can confess to God from this Bible Verse? *That we have all turned away from God. None of us love God on our own and obey Him. We deserve God's punishment! We need a Savior! We need the Holy Spirit!*

3. What is something we can thank God for from this Bible Verse? *We can thank God for sending Jesus to die for His people's sins, that they could be given new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.*

4. What is something we can ask God for from this Bible Verse? *We can ask God to work in our hearts that we would want to turn away from disobeying Him and trust in this wonderful Jesus as our own Savior. We can ask Him to give us new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. We can ask Him to give us hearts that know and love God.*

The Gospel

1. What is the good news of Jesus that the Holy Spirit helps us believe? What is the gospel?

God is the good Creator and King of the world. He made people to worship Him and live by His good laws. But we are all sinners who have rebelled against Him. We all deserve death--God's just, eternal punishment for our sins. How terrible! But God has good news for us. In His great mercy, God sent His Son Jesus to earth to save sinners. Yes, Jesus, the perfect Son of God, left His home in heaven and became a man. He lived the perfect life that pleases God. (He's the only one who has ever done that!) He offered it up to God His Father as the perfect sacrifice for sins when He suffered and died on the cross. Then, on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead in victory. He had fully paid for the sins of God's people, so they wouldn't have to! Now all who turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior will receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. They will be His very own special people who will know Him and enjoy Him forever. We can be God's people, too, if we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our own Savior.

Game: Memory Verse Limbo

Materials

Bible verse written up in large print so that all can see
A broom or other long pole

Preparing the Game

None.

Learning the Verse

Some or all of your children may be non- or early readers. Teach the verse in sections, having them say it after you. Repeat a few times. Add clapping or other movement as they say it.

Directions

1. If desired, lead the children in a discussion of a **FEW** of the most important questions before beginning game.
2. Explain the game to them as follows:

Have the children line up. Have everyone say the verse together. Start with the pole at head height and have each child say the verse before "limbo-ing" (bend backwards without touching the pole) under the pole. Feel free to help the children say the verse. After everyone has gone through at the first height, lower a few inches and repeat the process. (Say verse and have children go through). A child is "out" when he/she can no longer limbo without falling down or touching the pole.

Give children who have a failed limbo attempt the option of being restored to the limbo line again by saying the verse a second time (on their own, with a partner or with you); or, allow them sit quietly in a line in front of the limbo line so that they can help others still "limbo-ing" saying the verse (if needed) or simply watch.

Game continue as time or attention span allow.

Non-competitive Option

Let the children continue to limbo at each height, even if they have a failed attempt at a particular height.

Optional TAKING IT TO OTHERS Activity: Quiz Questions

Have the children choose a few of the questions from the game to ask the parents/other children during TAKING IT TO OTHERS time. Help pre-readers by whispering the question in their ear and letting them ask it aloud to the parents/other children. Make sure you read the Bible verse aloud before you ask your questions.

Directions:

1. Write words to song in large print before class.
2. Play the song for the children, helping them follow along on the song sheet.
3. Discuss the song, using a few questions from the discussion sheet. *Don't use them all!*
4. Introduce sign language for key words of your choice from sign language sheet for your song. Use as few or as many as you think the children can learn.
5. Sing and sign the song. Sign language as well as large format lyrics and sheet music are found in the PFI Unit Songbook or online.
6. If desired, play the Song Game.

Optional TAKING IT TO OTHERS Activity: Presenting and Singing the Song

1. Sing and sign the song, encouraging the watching children/parents to join in.
2. Ask the class some of the questions listed below. The Bible Truth Connection Question is particularly good to help them understand how the song ties in with the Bible Truth.

He Saved Us

He saved us, he saved us,
Through the washing of re-birth
And renewal by the Spirit.
He saved us, he saved us,
Through the Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit whom he poured out,
On us generously,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
The Holy Spirit whom he poured out,
On us, through Jesus Christ.
Titus Three, verse five through seven.

Listen to it on PFI NIV Songs 11, Track 14

Song Game: Mimic Me!

Materials

Sign Language
Song

Preparing the Game

None.

Playing the Game

1. Practice the song and signs until the children know them well. Choose a person to be the leader and let them decide upon an action for everyone to do as they sing the song, such as jump on one foot, etc.
2. Sing the song while doing the chosen action.
3. Select another child to be the leader.
4. If desired, you can choose a different action for different important words in the song, such as jump on one foot when you sing the word "grace", but clap your hands when you sing the word "Jesus". Ask the children the meaning of each of the words before adding in their action.

Game continues as number of questions, time, and attention span allow.

Directions: Read and discuss Bible Truth, using a FEW of the questions. Play game. Feel free to modify the game to fit your children.

General Story Questions

1. What river flowed near Babylon? *The Euphrates River.*
2. What did the Babylonians want the Israelites to do for them? Why? *They wanted them to sing some songs of Israel, because they were tired of the songs of Babylon and wanted to hear something new.*
3. Why couldn't the Israelites sing for the Babylonians? *They were so sad that their land had been destroyed by the Babylonians and they had been taken as slaves to Babylon.*
4. Why did the Lord punish the Israelites? *Because they kept on disobeying Him and would not repent.*
5. How did the Lord punish the Israelites? *He punished them by sending the Babylonians to destroy their land and taking them to be their slaves in Babylon.*
6. What promise did the prophet Ezekiel bring to the Israelites? *That after 70 years, the LORD would take them back to Jerusalem, rebuild the Temple, send the Messiah to bring God's kingdom to all the earth, a wash their hearts clean of sin with His Holy Spirit.*
7. What were the Israelites still waiting for when they went back to Jerusalem? *For the coming of the Holy Spirit into their hearts and the Messiah.*
8. What did the Pharisees think the Israelites should do that might bring God's Kingdom and the Messiah sooner? *They should all try to be really, really good Jews.*
9. Who came and took over Israel? *The Romans.*
10. What did Jesus do that made the people think he might be the Messiah? *He did lots of miracles and taught with authority.*
11. Why did the Pharisees think Jesus was not the Messiah? *Because they were certain the Messiah would come suddenly and destroy all their enemies with great power. He would set up His kingdom in Jerusalem. Jesus didn't do that.*
12. Why did Nicodemus go to see Jesus? *Nicodemus wondered if Jesus might be the Messiah. He wanted to know more.*
13. What did Jesus say must happen for someone to enter the Kingdom of God? *You must be born again, born of God.*
14. What does it mean to be born again, born of God? *To have the Holy Spirit come into your sinful heart, cleanse it of sins and fill it so that you can believe and desire to love and follow God.*
15. What does the Holy Spirit do in our hearts so that we can believe? *He works in our hearts so that we can know we are sinners. He helps us to turn away from our sins and have faith in Jesus as our Savior. He cleans our hearts and fills them with Himself, the Holy Spirit, so that we love God and want to please Him.*
16. Why do we think that the Holy Spirit worked in Nicodemus' heart? *Because he stood up against the other Pharisees when they decided that He should be crucified. He helped with the burial of Jesus. And, because some say that he did become a Christian and was baptized, by Peter and John after Jesus rose from the dead.*

Bible Truth Connection Questions

1. What does this story have to do with our Bible Truth? *Ezekiel told the Israelites of God's promise to cleanse their hearts with His Holy Spirit one day, so that they would believe and obey God. Jesus told Nicodemus that this change was like being born again, born of God.*

Life Application Questions

1. What should we do if we want to be born again? *Turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Ask God to send His Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. He always promises to work in the hearts of those who ask!!*

Bible Verse Connection Question

1. What does the story have to do with our **Bible Verse: Titus 3:4-7**: "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."?

The LORD promised the Israelites that one day the Holy Spirit would wash and renew their hearts so that they would love God and would obey Him. For years the Israelites waited for that day. Nicodemus was one of the first to hear the good news that through Jesus, the Messiah, all of God's people could have eternal life and new birth through the Holy Spirit.

ACTS Questions

1. What is something we can praise God for being that we learned in our story?

Praise God for being the Sender of His Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of His people.

2. What is something we can confess as sin that we learned in our story?

Confess that many times, like the Israelites, we know what God wants us to do, but we choose not to do it. We deserve His punishment. We need a Savior!

3. What is something we can thank God for that we learned in our story?

We can thank God for giving the Holy Spirit to work in His people's hearts so that they can know and love Him.

4. What is something we can ask God for that we learned in our story?

We can ask God to send the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts, helping us to turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior. We can ask Him to make us His People, filled with His Holy Spirit, and who love Him and want to live lives that please Him.

The Gospel

1. What is the wonderful message of salvation that the Holy Spirit helps God's people believe? What is the gospel?

God is the good Creator and King of the world. He made people to worship Him and live by His good laws. But we are all sinners who have rebelled against Him. We all deserve death--God's just, eternal punishment for our sins. How terrible! But God has good news for us. In His great mercy, God sent His Son Jesus to earth to save sinners. Yes, Jesus, the perfect Son of God, left His home in heaven and became a man. He lived the perfect life that pleases God. (He's the only one who has ever done that!) He offered it up to God His Father as the perfect sacrifice for sins when He suffered and died on the cross. Then, on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead in victory. He had fully paid for the sins of God's people, so they wouldn't have to! Now all who turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus as their Savior will receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. They will be His very own special people who will know Him and enjoy Him forever. We can be God's people, too, if we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our own Savior.

Game: Spoon and Ball Relay

Materials

Spoons, one per each team

Ping-pong Balls, one per each team

Masking Tape

Baskets: one small one per team; plus, one large one to be shared by all teams.

Story Review Questions, one per child

Paper and marker/pencil for writing questions and keeping score

Preparing the Game

1. Choose 20+ questions for your game from the Story Review Discussion Questions, or make up your own. Write point values to each question, such as 5, 10 and 25 points, depending upon how difficult they are.

5 point questions: What does it say? Simple fact questions, such as "How did Satan tempt Jesus to disobey God, His Father?"

10 point questions: What does it mean? Meaning questions, such as "Why was it important that Jesus obeyed God perfectly?"

25 point questions: What does it mean to me? Life application questions, such as "What is something God wants you to do that you find especially difficult to obey?"

2. Fold up all the questions and place them in the large basket. Place all of the questions in the larger basket at a central point in the room. Use the tape to mark starting points for each team and place the smaller baskets next to the start line. Have a spoon and ping pong ball ready for each team.

Playing the Game

Part 1: Getting the Questions: Split the children into two teams. Have them line up behind the taped lines on the floor. Give the first person in each line a spoon and a ping pong ball. Tell the children that at your signal the first person will walk with the ball balanced in the spoon down to where the basket is. They are to drop the ball into the basket, pick up the ball again as well as a question from the basket and run back with the spoon, ball, and question to their team. They hand the spoon and ping pong ball to the next person in line and deposit their question in their smaller team basket located next to the start line. The relay continues until all children have had a turn.

Part 2: Asking the Questions

After the relay is finished, the children sit down in their groups. The leader will take a question from a team's basket, tell them how many points it is worth and ask them the question. If the team gets it right, then they get the points. If not, then any other team has a chance to win the points. The teacher then proceeds to the next team's basket and continues the process. At the end, add up the points and see who wins.

Non-competitive Option

Split the children into two groups and retrieve the questions as above until all the questions have been retrieved. Have the children of the two groups take turns pulling a question out of their basket for all the children to answer. Tally how many questions the children were able to get right. If desired, can play the game again, using only the questions they did not correctly answer. Ask them these again and see how many they get right the second time. Repeat as long as attention span allows or until all the questions have been correctly answered.

Optional TAKING IT TO OTHERS Activity: Quiz Questions

Have the children choose a few of the questions from the game to ask the parents/other children during TAKING IT TO OTHERS time. Help pre-readers by whispering the question in their ear and letting them ask it aloud to the parents/other children.

CASE REPLAY ACTIVITIES

Use this guide to review the Case Story and act it out for others to enjoy!

CASE REPLAY, JR: YOUNGEST CHILDREN

Description: The children will act out the story together, everyone doing the same action/sound effect at the same time. This activity is most suitable for kindergarteners.

Materials

The Case RePlay, Jr. script for younger children

Preparation

1. Read through the script and write in the blanks along the side possible actions/sound effects the children could do to act it out.

Instructions

1. Tell the children that they will be re-enacting the story together as you tell it.
2. As you read the script, lead the children in actions/sound effects to do with you.
3. If desired, you can read the script and stop at certain sentences and ask them what a good action/sound effect would be to act out what you just read.
4. Repeat the re-enactment one or two times more.

CASE REPLAY, SR: OLDER CHILDREN

Description: The children act out the story as a three-scene play. You will narrate it using the Case RePlay, Sr. script and they will act it out (no spoken words, for the most part), with each child assuming a different character's role. This activity is most suitable for first grade and up. You will review the story, then practice it a few times before performing it for others.

Materials

The Case RePlay, Sr. script

White board or other large format paper (if using a word bank)

Costumes and props

Preparation

1. Prepare for the play by choosing costumes and props for each character in the story. Decorate the area with any scenery props.
2. Write the words "Beginning," "Middle," "End" on a large piece of paper/whiteboard with plenty of space under each heading. You will use this paper to help the children think about the story as a three-scene play, as it is presented in the script.

Instructions

1. Tell the children that they will get to act out the story as a three-scene play, with a beginning, middle and end section. Tell them that before they can act it out, they need to think it out. as you narrate it with your script.
2. Take the children's answers as they recount the story, helping them put key incidents in the right order.
3. If desired, when they have filled in their Beginning, Middle, End, read through your whole (real) script, so they hear exactly what you will have them act out.
4. Then tell the children that it's time to practice acting out the story.
5. Assign parts to each child. If you are using costumes, do NOT give them out at this point. They will be a distraction.
6. Have all the children sit on the floor or in chairs on one side of the "stage," then call the characters up in place as their part in the story comes.
7. As you read the script, guide the children in where you want them to move or do to act it out.
8. After going through the whole script once, give out any costumes and props and act out the script once or twice more.

Optional TAKING IT TO OTHERS Activity: Re-enacting the Story

Read the script as the children act out together (younger) or assuming different roles (older) as the other children or the parents watch.

CASE REPLAY, JR--YOUNGER KIDS (KINDERGARTEN) P.2

“Welcome to our play! The name of our story is called: The Case of the Stony Hearts.

This is a Old Testament story. It took place about 600 years before Jesus lived on earth.

And now we present: “The Case of the Stony Hearts.”

Scene 1:

Down by the Euphrates River, the Babylonians wanted their Israelite slaves to sing them some songs from Jerusalem. The Israelites were too sad to sing and play. They kept thinking about how they had disobeyed the LORD and He finally punished them by destroying Jerusalem. He had let the Babylonians carry them away to be their slaves. They hung up their harps on the trees and wept. But the LORD sent the prophet Ezekiel to encourage them that He will one day bring them back to Jerusalem. The Temple would be rebuilt. And best of all, He would send the Messiah to bring God’s kingdom to all the earth, and wash their hearts clean of sin with His Holy Spirit.

Actions:

Scene 2:

After seventy years, the Israelites were freed to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple, as the LORD had promised. They kept waiting and waiting for the Messiah to bring God’s kingdom and for their sinful hearts to be cleaned by the Holy Spirit. The Romans came and took over Israel. The Pharisees tried to keep God’s laws better and better so that maybe the LORD would send the Messiah, rescue them from the Romans and bring God’s Kingdom sooner; but still they had to wait. At last Jesus came. He heals people and preaches that the Kingdom of God is near. He clears the Temple of merchants selling things to worshipers. Could this be the Messiah? Some think “yes.” but the Pharisees say, “No! He isn’t doing things the right way to be the Messiah. He’s just a trouble-maker!”

Scene 3:

The Pharisee Nicodemus wasn’t so sure. One night, he went to Jesus to find out more. Jesus tells him that it wasn’t by keeping the laws better that would bring the Kingdom of God. It was by being “born again, born of God” by having the Holy Spirit work in your heart, washing it of sin and changing it so that you believe in God and love Him in your heart. Jesus tells Nicodemus that God had sent Him to be lifted up on a cross to die so that all who believe in Him might have their sins forgiven and enter the everlasting life of the kingdom of God. Nicodemus goes away with much to think about. Many think that the Holy Spirit began to work in his heart so that he might believe in Jesus, since it was Nicodemus who stood up for Jesus against the others and even helped to bury Him. Some say that he was baptized by Peter and John.

Bible Truth Tie-In:

The Bible Truth we are learning is: **The Holy Spirit Brings Us to God.** Ezekiel told the Israelites of God’s promise to cleanse their hearts with His Holy Spirit one day so that would believe and obey Him. Jesus told Nicodemus that this change was like being born again, born of God.

CASE REPLAY, SR--OLDER KIDS (1ST GRADE AND UP) P.3

"Welcome to our play! The name of our story is called: The Case of the Stony Hearts.

This is a Old Testament story. It took place about 600 years before Jesus lived on earth.

The characters in our story are: Babylonians; the people of Israel; the prophet Ezekiel; Romans; Pharisees; Jesus; and, Nicodemus.

And now we present: "The Case of the Stony Hearts."

Scene 1: (Beginning)

Down by the Euphrates River, the Babylonians wanted their Israelite slaves to sing them some songs from Jerusalem. The Israelites were too sad to sing and play. They kept thinking about how they had disobeyed the LORD and He finally punished them by destroying Jerusalem. He had let the Babylonians carry them away to be their slaves. They hung up their harps on the trees and wept. But the LORD sent the prophet Ezekiel to encourage them that He will one day bring them back to Jerusalem. The Temple would be rebuilt. And best of all, He would send the Messiah to bring God's kingdom to all the earth, and wash their hearts clean of sin with His Holy Spirit.

Scene 2: (Middle)

After seventy years, the Israelites were freed to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple, as the LORD had promised. They kept waiting and waiting for the Messiah to bring God's kingdom and for their sinful hearts to be cleaned by the Holy Spirit. The Romans came and took over Israel. The Pharisees tried to keep God's laws better and better so that maybe the LORD would send the Messiah, rescue them from the Romans and bring God's Kingdom sooner; but still they had to wait. At last Jesus came. He heals people and preaches that the Kingdom of God is near. He clears the Temple of merchants selling things to worshipers. Could this be the Messiah? Some think "yes." but the Pharisees say, "No! He isn't doing things the right way to be the Messiah. He's just a trouble-maker!"

Scene 3: (End)

The Pharisee Nicodemus wasn't so sure. One night, he went to Jesus to find out more. Jesus tells him that it wasn't by keeping the laws better that would bring the Kingdom of God. It was by being "born again, born of God" by having the Holy Spirit work in your heart, washing it of sin and changing it so that you believe in God and love Him in your heart. Jesus tells Nicodemus that God had sent Him to be lifted up on a cross to die so that all who believe in Him might have their sins forgiven and enter the everlasting life of the kingdom of God. Nicodemus goes away with much to think about. Many think that the Holy Spirit began to work in his heart so that he might believe in Jesus, since it was Nicodemus who stood up for Jesus against the others and even helped to bury Him. Some say that he was baptized by Peter and John.

Bible Truth Tie-In:

The Bible Truth we are learning is: **The Holy Spirit Brings Us to God.** Ezekiel told the Israelites of God's promise to cleanse their hearts with His Holy Spirit one day so that would believe and obey Him. Jesus told Nicodemus that this change was like being born again, born of God.

The Israelites' Harps

Description:

Children will make a simple harp with rubber band strings.

Materials

White foam core board (30"x40" is best value), enough to cut out 1 of Template #1 for each child
OR Sheets of corrugated cardboard, purchased from office supply or shipping company, etc. (or lots of old boxes) need enough for TWO 8 ½" by 11" sheets per child. (2 pieces of cardboard are required to make body of harp strong enough)

NOTE: Foam core makes a lot prettier harp to decorate!

Razor blade or craft knife

Pen

8-32 2" long bolts, 8 per child

Matching 8-32 nuts for bolts, 16 per child

Rubber bands of varying gauges, 4 per child (plus extra for breakages)

Decorating supplies, such as markers, crayons, sequins, glitter glue, foam shapes, etc.

Glue

Preparing the Craft

1. Using Pattern #1, cut one out of foam core OR two out of cardboard per child out of the cardboard, if possible lay lines of cardboard in the direction of the arrows on the template. This will make for a stronger harp. Mark the inside of each piece of cardboard with an "X."
2. Use the pin or craft knife to bore 8 holes in the foam core/cardboard, as indicated by black dots on T #1. If using the cardboard, line up the two pieces of cardboard so that the holes go through the same place in each piece.
3. Lay out decorating supplies, glue, nuts and bolts. KEEP THE RUBBER BANDS TO DISTRIBUTE LATER

Making the Craft

1. Show the sample of the craft you have made.
2. Have children decorate one or both sides of their foam core harp shapes. If using the cardboard, the children will decorate one side of each piece of cardboard, leaving the inner sides (marked with an "X" blank).
3. Have the children attach one nut to each of the 8 bolts, winding them up the threads until they are about 1/4" from the head. Then have them stick the bolt down through each hole (head side sticking up on the same side of harp), then wind the other nut on the bolt until the foam core/cardboard is firmly sandwiched between them. If using cardboard instead of foam core, have the children put the inner two pieces together, line up the holes, then thread the bolt and attach it.
NOTE: You may want to attach the first nut to the bolt ahead of time for the children; OR for the youngest children, you may want to attach the bolts for them. Also, do not screw the bolts down so tightly that it smashing in the harp—this will weaken it.
4. Children can now attach their rubber bands. Have them place them between the nut and the head on one side of the harp and stretch them across to the corresponding bolt on the other side. Each side of each rubber band can be tuned to its own pitch. Simply wind each side (separately) around the bolt, until you get the pitch you want. Also, different gauges and lengths of rubber bands make different sounds. Have the kids experiment.

Optional TAKING IT TO OTHERS Activity: Craft Presentation

If you are presenting the craft to other children or parents the children can hold up their crafts (or your model craft) and read their Bible Truth Connection answers to explain the importance of the craft.

CASE CRAFT**Discussion Guide****Instructions:**

As the children are settled into making their craft, ask them these questions to help them understand the craft's significance. Use the answers provided to guide the children's answers.

Discussion Questions

1. Where were the Israelites taken as slaves? *To Babylon.*

2. What did the Babylonians want the slaves to sing? *Where?*

Songs from their homeland, from Jerusalem, down by the Euphrates River.

3. How did the Israelite slaves react? *Why?*

They hung their harps on the trees and wept. They were so sad about their slavery, their land being destroyed by the Babylonians, and their rebellion against God, that caused all of this that they could not sing.

4. What is the Bible Truth that we are learning?

The Holy Spirit Brings Us to God.

5. What does our craft have to do with our Bible Truth: The Holy Spirit Brings Us to God?

The Israelites were so sad about the LORD's punishment on them for not repenting of their sins. They deserved to never be forgiven, but the LORD promised them something to really sing about: He would bring them back to their land. And best of all, He would send the Holy Spirit to change their hard hearts, and the Messiah to save them from their sins.

6. What can this craft help us remember?

We all are sinners who deserve God's punishment. But God is merciful to sinners who turn away from their sins. He sends the Holy Spirit to change their hearts so that they do not want to sin anymore. He gives them faith to trust Jesus as their Savior.

TAKING IT TO OTHERS**Craft Presentation****Instructions:**

Have children hold up your model craft/their crafts. Choose five children (or you say) the five sections below to explain the craft's importance.

Presentation:

1. Our craft is: *The Israelites' Harps.*

2. *By the Euphrates River in Babylon, the Israelite slaves hung their harps up on the trees and wept. They were so sad about their slavery, their land being destroyed by the Babylonians, and their rebellion against God, that caused all of this that they could not sing.*

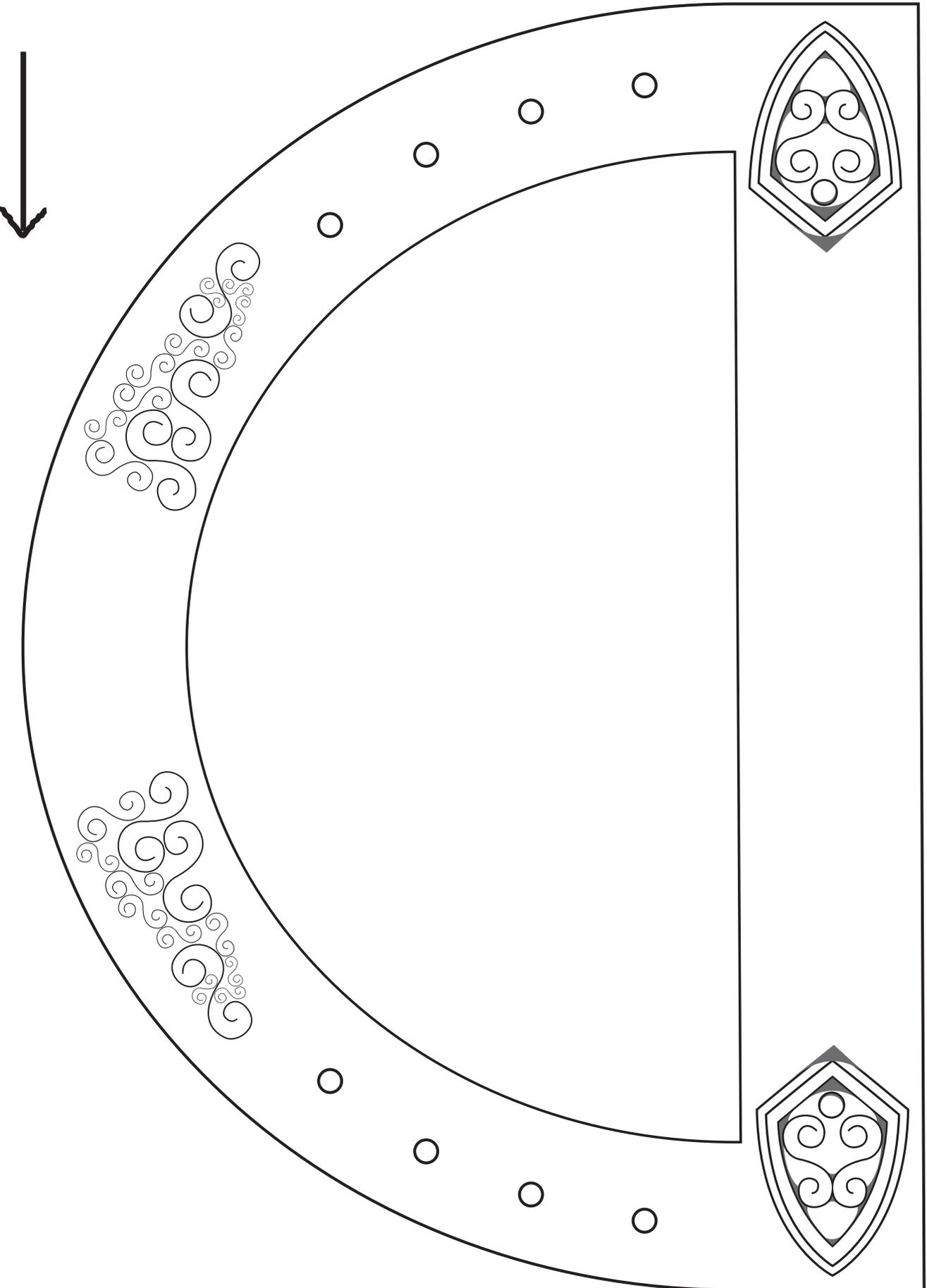
3. *Bible Truth 4 is: The Holy Spirit Brings Us to God.*

4. *The Israelites were so sad about the LORD's punishment on them for not repenting of their sins. They deserved to never be forgiven, but the LORD promised them something to really sing about: He would bring them back to their land. And best of all, He would send the Holy Spirit to change their hard hearts, and the Messiah to save them from their sins.*

5. *Our craft can help us remember that we all are sinners who deserve God's punishment. But God is merciful to sinners who turn away from their sins. He sends the Holy Spirit to change their hearts so that they do not want to sin anymore. He gives them faith to trust Jesus as their Savior.*

Note: Even non-readers can participate in presenting the craft, if you will whisper what they are to say in their ear and let them say it aloud for the others to hear.

direction of warp of cardboard



BEFORE CLASS:**1. PICK YOUR PERSON**

VIPPs can be anyone in your church! Typically, they fall into 6 categories: Church staff, Elders, Deacons/deaconesses, Special Volunteers (people who aren't paid, but spend a lot of time helping out in particular ways), Supported Workers (aka missionaries), and Church Members.

2. GATHER YOUR FACTS

Use the VIPP Information Sheet to write down the facts about your VIPP. The information on this worksheet is used in the VIPP activities, listed in the "Choose an Activity" section below.

DURING THE ACTIVITY:**1. INTRODUCE YOUR VIPP**

Introduce your VIPP to the children, using the VIPP Information Sheet. Fill in a set of VIPP Clue Cards with the information for your VIPP. If desired, you can even have the actual person come into class for the children to meet.

Need help describing what someone does for the church in a kid-friendly way? Check out the list of common VIPPs on the Praise Factory website in the PFI resources. There are lots of kid-friendly descriptions for common VIPP's, such as pastors, elders, deacons and a lot more.

2. PRAY!

Lead the children in praying for the VIPP. Ask the children if they would like to pray for one of the VIPPs prayer requests. Even non-readers can pray for the VIPP if you whisper the prayer request in their ear, then let them say it aloud. Never force a child to pray!

3. CHOOSE AN ACTIVITY

There are two activities you can use to help the children learn about the VIPP:

VIPP Clue Cards: These are nine coloring sheets in which children fill in the nine things they learn about the VIPP from the VIPP Information Sheet. Photocopy a set of each child. Use as few or as many of these Clue Cards as you desire.

VIPP Game: This is a game that uses a set of Clue Cards for one or two VIPPs.

Choose a VIPP and fill in his/her information on the VIPP Information Sheet. Fill in a set of VIPP Clue Cards with the information for your VIPP. Tell the children about the VIPP, having them fill in the VIPP Clue Cards with the key facts as they learn them. Write any words the children need to write on a white-board or other piece of paper so they can see how to spell them. Help younger children write these words on their clue cards. Ideas for how to tell the children about many common VIPPs are listed at praisefactory.org with the resources for this Bible Truth.

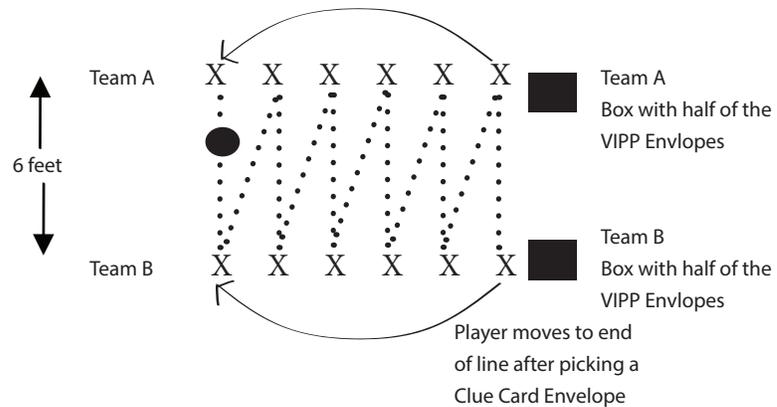
Optional TAKING IT TO OTHERS Activity: Introduce and Pray for the VIPP

If you are presenting the VIPP to other children or parents you can assign children to hold up the 10 clue cards and say what each card tells about the VIPP. (Or, you can have the children hold them up as you tell what each one means.) Then lead the children in praying for the VIPP.

Game: Ball Roll Review

Materials

Information Sheet for one VIPP
 2 Set of Clue Cards
 Ball
 8 8.5" x 11" Manilla Envelopes
 Tape
 Pen and Markers
 2 Boxes



Preparing the Game

1. Fill in one set of clue sheets for the VIPP you are using.
2. Tape the other (blank) set of Clue Cards to the outside of the manilla envelopes.
3. Put the filled-in clue cards in the corresponding envelope.
4. Put half the Clue Card Envelopes in one box and the other half in the other box. These are the Team A and Team B Boxes.

Playing the Game

Reveal: Tell the children about the VIPP, showing them your filled-in clue cards as you tell about them.

Review: Have the children break into two even groups and sit down on the floor facing each other, with about a 6' spread between the 2 lines (see diagram above). For Round 1, Give the ball to the first child in Team A and have them roll it across to the child on Team B directly across from them. Then, that Team B child rolls it back across to the next child on Team A, etc. all the way down the line to the last child on Team B. The last child to get the ball will then pick a Clue Card envelope out of their team's box. They (or the teacher) will tell the group and the Clue Card category by looking at the picture of the Clue Card on the outside of the envelope. Have the children try to remember the VIPP's answer to the category. If the class gets it right, the category is "retired". If they get it wrong, then it gets put back in the pile of category envelopes. The child who picked the Clue Card, then takes their place at the other end of the line. They begin Round 2 by rolling the ball to the first person on Team A, etc. This time, the ball will end up with the last child in the Team A line. ending with the last child in the other line, who gets up and chooses a clue from their Clue Card box. Continue until all the clues have been chosen/answered correctly.

VIPP INFORMATION SHEET

VIPP NAME:

WHAT VIPP LOOKS LIKE

Man or Woman? _____

Hair color? _____

Eye color? _____

FAVORITE ANIMAL

FAVORITE FOOD

FAVORITE FREE TIME ACTIVITY

WHAT VIPP DOES DURING WEEK

VIPP GROUP OF SERVICE:

Church Member

Deacon

Elder

Church Staff

Special Volunteer

Supported Worker
(Missionary)

3 WAYS VIPP SERVES CHURCH

3 WAYS TO PRAY FOR THE VIPP
