

**The Case of the Man in the Middle***Leviticus 6,16; Matthew 27; Hebrews 1-5,9,10,18***Story-telling Tips**

Ahead of time:

1. Read the Bible verses and story. Pray!
2. Choose story action cues and prepare storyboard figures/Story Scenes, if using. (In Visual Aids book)
3. Practice telling story with the storyboard figures/Story Scenes, timing your presentation. Shorten, if necessary.

During your presentation:

1. Maintain as much eye contact as possible as you tell the story.
2. Put up storyboard figures/add story action cues/hold up Story Scenes as you tell the story. Allow the children to help you put them on the board, if desired.
3. Include the children in your story with a few questions about what they think will happen or words/concepts that might be new to them.
4. Watch the kids for signs that their attention span has been reached. Shorten, if necessary.

**INTRODUCTION/ LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS**

**“Our story is called: The Case of the Man in the Middle. Here is your listening assignment.”** Read from Detective Dan’s Listening Assignment signs, but questions are summarized below:

**Detective Dan’s Lesson #1 Listening Assignment:**

I need to know:

1. **What one Man stood in the middle between God and people, so they could become God’s people? What worship gift did He offer up to God to make this happen?**
2. **What is that Man doing even now for God’s people?**

**Detective Dan’s Lesson #2 Listening Assignment:****Our Bible Verse is Hebrews 4:15-16:**

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

I need to know:

1. **Who is the great high priest who offered the final worship gift for God’s people?**
2. **What is He doing for God’s people now?**

**Detective Dan’s Lesson #3 Listening Assignment:**I found six clues, but two of them are **NOT** in the story.

They are: white clothes, rug, ladybug, sinful heart, worship gift, and a cross.

*Hold each of them up for the children to see as you identify them.*

I need to know:

1. **Which four belong in the story and which two don’t?**
2. **Who is always asking God to help God’s people?**

**Read the assignment questions, THEN SAY,**

“Ok, Deep Down Detectives! Put on your best listening ears and see if you can hear the answers to Detective Dan’s questions. When I finish telling the story, we will see if we can answer all the questions.”

*Read the Bible Truth story, answer questions, present the gospel and lead in prayer.*

*Answers to questions; the gospel; and, ACTS prayer are included with the story text.*

**The Case of the Man in the Middle** *Leviticus 6,16; Matthew 27; Hebrews 1-5,9,10,18*

**Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics)** Numbers correspond to storyboard pictures and placement upon the storyboard. Always feel free to use less pictures, if it's best for your kids. Simply black out the numbers next to pictures you do not plan to use. All pictures are found in the Visual Aids book. Put BG (background) pictures on storyboard ahead of time. SB pictures (listed below in story text) are added to board as you tell the story. These numbers are also found on the back of each picture. Tip: Stack pictures in numerical before telling story for easy use. Use sticky-back velcro to attach pictures to storyboard felt. Use sticky-tac putty to stick a picture on top of another picture. OR, if using the Story Scenes to tell the story, disregard the storyboard picture references listed below.

**Do you know what a holiday is? It's a day when people stop their work and get together to celebrate something special. What holidays can you think of? (SB1) Perhaps New Year's Day or Independence Day come to mind. Or, maybe days like Christmas or Easter?**

*Can you name any holidays?*

Well, God's people in the Bible celebrated holidays, too. Perhaps you have heard of some of them. There was (SB2) the Passover (when they celebrated how the LORD rescued the people from being slaves in Egypt); and, (SB3) the Feast of the Tabernacles (when they celebrated God taking care of them as they crossed the dry, wilderness and brought them to live in the Promised Land); and, Rosh Hashanah (their New Year's Day). All these holidays were days to look back and celebrate what good things God had done for them. There was so much to celebrate! God had been so good to them!

But the most important holiday that God's people celebrated by far was called (SB4) "The Day of Atonement." "Atonement" is a big, Bible word that means "paying for sins so we can be God's people." The Day of Atonement wasn't just the most important holiday, it was the most important day of the year. Without atonement, the people could not stay God's people.

You see, (SB5) God is all good. He is holy. (SB6) But these people—just like you and me-- were sinners who had disobeyed Him. (SB7) They had broken their friendship with Him and they did not deserve to be His people. Do you know what they deserved instead?

*Can you tell me?*

They deserved God's punishment, not His love. They deserved to be forgotten by Him, not helped by Him. Oh, no!

(SB8) Only a special, perfect worship gift given to God would pay for their sins and allow them to be His people. And this wasn't even a worship gift they could take to God, themselves! They had to have a special PERSON to take it for them to a special MEETING PLACE, in a very special WAY. The special meeting place was called the Tabernacle-- the place of God's special presence here on Earth. And the special person was called the High Priest. This was the only way they could stay near God as His people.

Here's the special way the high priest had to present the worship gift:

The high priest had to prepare himself very carefully. God was holy. He was not. He must do everything just right if he were to meet with God and his worship gift be accepted. (SB9) First, he washed himself from top to bottom. Scrub, scrub, scrub! (Remove BG3 to reveal BG2 Inner Tabernacle) Then he went inside the Tabernacle and (SB10) put on his special Atonement Day clothes—special, pure white clothes he only wore this one day of the year. He put on white pants, a white shirt and a white robe. Around his waist, he wrapped a white belt. On his head he put white hat. These clothes were so special that they were always kept in the Tabernacle!

*Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics)*

**At last it was time for the high priest to intercede (pray) for the people. (SB11) The people gathered outside the Tabernacle and watched as the he went in and out of the Tabernacle two times. Each time, he prepared a special worship gift and took it to present to the LORD.**

**(SB12) The first gift was for the high priest's own sin. (SB13) He took it into the Tabernacle and went behind the beautiful curtain covered in cherubim at the back. This tiny room was called the Most Holy Place. In it was the Ark of the Covenant. It was a golden box with cherubim angels on it. Inside the Ark, were the Ten Commandments--the 10 Big, Laws that God had given His people to obey. This was the place where God promised to receive the high priest's worship gifts and hear him intercede (that is pray for) the people.**

**Standing in front of the Ark was like standing before God in heaven. (SB14) The high priest sprinkled some of the worship gift onto the Ark, then prayed, "Forgive me, LORD, so I can come before You and pray for the people," he prayed as he offered his worship gift.**

**(SB15) Next, the high priest came back out and prepared the worship gift for the people. (SB16) Once more he went into the Most Holy Place and (SB17) sprinkled some of this worship gift onto the Ark. Then this time, he prayed for the people, "Forgive Your people's sins! Be near us! Keep us close to You so we can be Your people another year. LORD, help Your people!" he said as he offered the worship gift for them.**

**(SB18) When he finished offering these gifts, the high priest took off his white clothes and put back on his regular high priest clothes. (SB19, SB20) He went outside the Tabernacle and the people watched as he offered two, more worship gifts upon the big, fiery, bronze altar that stood near the Tabernacle. These were burnt offerings, one for the high priest and one for the people. Once more he prayed for the LORD to receive these offerings and keep them as His people.**

**And then it was all done... at least until the next year. The LORD had accepted the worship gifts. He had made the way for His sinful people to stay near Him as His dearly-loved people for another year. How grateful the people were for this plan that the LORD had set up! How they needed that high priest, that man in the middle! He was the only way they could stay near the LORD as His people!**

**(SB21) For hundreds of years, God's people saw one high priest after another come and go into that Most Holy Place. Each offered the special gifts. Each prayed the special prayers asking God to be near His people, to provide for them and to forgive their sins for another year.**

**Why did those high priests have to go back year after year? Why couldn't they just go in once and make one, big worship gift for the people for all time? Well, it was because there was something wrong with every single one of those high priests and every single one of the worship gifts they offered. They weren't good enough to forgive the sins of God's people!**

**You see, all those men may have scrubbed their skin until it was shiny clean. They all may have worn the special, white clothes. And they all may have gone into the Most Holy Place on the right day, in just the right way! But underneath it all, all those high priests had something bad in their hearts, just like the rest of God's people, and that was the problem. Do you know what they had in their hearts?**

*Can you tell me?*

**(SB22) It was sin! And by God's law, (SB23) only a PERFECT high priest --one with NO SIN-- who brought a PERFECT worship gift would be good enough to really forgive the sins of God's people. Only HE could really intercede for the people and God answer his prayers for their sins to be forgiven and their needs to be provided for. All these high priests and all these gifts were really just tie-overs until the perfect, REAL high priest with the perfect, FINAL worship gift came. He would put an end to the worship gifts forever. He would pray for God's people and His prayers would last forever.**

*Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics)*

**But WHERE would the people ever find a perfect high priest with a perfect worship gift? Was there no hope for God's people?**

*What do you think?*

**Yes, there was! The people never would be able to find a perfect high priest or a perfect worship gift on their own, but they didn't have to. God sent them one--God's perfect Son, Jesus!**

(SB24) Jesus came from heaven to be born a baby. He was God's Son and now he was a human, too—the son of Mary. Jesus didn't stay a baby. He grew up, up, up to be a man. (SB25) And with every day of His life, He always loved God and kept all of God's laws. Jesus was perfect! And because He was perfect, He could be the perfect high priest God planned Him to be. Here at last, was the one who could be the Final Middle Man. He could present a worship gift for the sins of God's people that would last forever. But where would Jesus get that worship gift? It had to be just as perfect as He was.

*Do you know where Jesus would find the perfect worship gift needed?*

**There was only one THING... really, only one PERSON, who could be that perfect, worship gift. It was Jesus, Himself. Yes, He would be not just the perfect high priest, but the perfect worship gift, too.**

So that's what Jesus did, though it was so very hard. (SB26) Jesus went to the cross to suffer and die. He gave His own life as the perfect worship gift for the sins of God's people, once and for all! And, while the other high priests took their worship gifts into the Tabernacle... behind the cherubim curtain...to sprinkle on the Ark of God's presence here on Earth, Jesus took His worship to a very different place. (SB27) When Jesus died, He went up to heaven and stood before the real cherubim and God, His Father. And there, Jesus presented His very life as the one, final, perfect worship gift for all of God's people. And do you think God accepted it? (SB28) He certainly did! God's people will always be near to God as His dearly-loved people.

(SB29) Ripppppp! That beautiful curtain in front of the Most Holy Place split in two. It wasn't needed any more! The true high priest had come! (SB30) And on the third day, Jesus proved it when He rose from dead! God had accepted His perfect worship gift! At last, God's people were forgiven once and for all! Yay!

(SB31) Then, Jesus rose up to heaven to rule. He's there, even now. And He STILL continues to be the Man in the Middle--the great high priest-- for all of God's people. All day, all night, all the time—not just once a year—Jesus is interceding (is praying) for them. And guess what God's answer to all of Jesus' prayers for them is?

*Can you guess?*

(SB32) It is always "Yes and Amen!" Yes, your sins are forgiven... FOREVER! Yes, everything you need to live for God will be given...FOREVER! Yes, you will always be close to God and He will be close to you! This high priest makes sure that they keep on believing in and living for God their whole lives. He will give them everything they need to live for God!

**What a wonderful high priest God's people have in Jesus! Thank You, God, for sending Your Son to be the Man in the Middle that we need!**

**Cracking the Case:** (story wrap-up for Listening Assignments)

It's time to see how we did with our Listening Assignment.

**Detective Dan's Lesson #1 Listening Assignment:**

I need to know:

**1. What one Man stood in the middle between God and people, so they could become God's people? What worship gift did He offer up to God to make this happen?** Jesus was the man in the middle. Jesus was the final, high priest who offered up His own perfect life as the worship gift to pay for the sins of God's people.

**2. What is that Man doing even now for God's people?** He is ruling in heaven. He is carrying out His Father's good plans. He listens to the prayers of God's people and prays for them, Himself. He is making sure they have everything they need for life and godliness.

**For You and Me:**

God's people long ago needed Jesus, the perfect High priest, to pay for their sins and bring them to God, once and for all time. We need Jesus to do this for us, too. He is happy to, when we turn away from our sins and trust in Him as our Savior. Ask Him to help you! He loves to answer this prayer!

**Detective Dan's Lesson #2 Listening Assignment:****Our Bible Verse is Hebrews 4:15-16:**

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

I need to know:

**1. Who is the great high priest who offered the final worship gift for God's people?** Jesus was.

**2. What is He doing for God's people now?** He is ruling in heaven. He is carrying out His Father's good plans. He listens to the prayers of God's people and prays for them, Himself. He is making sure they have everything they need for life and godliness.

**For You and Me:**

God's people long ago needed Jesus, the perfect High priest, to pay for their sins and bring them to God, once and for all time. We need Jesus to do this for us, too. He is happy to, when we turn away from our sins and trust in Him as our Savior. And, if you do, you, too, can know that He is ever praying for you. He will help you keep on believing in God and living for Him.

**Detective Dan's Lesson #3 Listening Assignment:**

I found six clues, but two of them are **NOT** in the story. They were: white clothes, rug, ladybug, sinful heart, worship gift, and a cross. *Hold each of them up for the children to see as you identify them.*

I need to know:

**1. Which four belong in the story and which two don't?** The white clothes, sinful heart, worship gift and cross belong. The rug and the ladybug do not.

**2. Who is always asking God to help God's people?** Jesus is.

**For You and Me:**

God's people long ago needed Jesus, the perfect High priest, to pay for their sins and bring them to God, once and for all time. We need Jesus to do this for us, too. He is happy to, when we turn away from our sins and trust in Him as our Savior. And, if you do, you, too, can know that He is ever praying for you. He will help you keep on believing in God and living for Him.

**The Gospel** (story wrap-up if NOT using Listening Assignments)**Our Bible Truth is:**

**Why Do God's People Keep Believing in Him? It Is God's Sustaining Grace...**

**Jesus Provides God's People with Everything They Need to Live for God!**

We need Jesus to provide us for everything we need to live for God. Why? Because we have all chosen to turn away from God. We can never please God or love Him or live for Him by ourselves. Oh, how we need a Savior!

And that's why God, in His great mercy, sent Jesus. Jesus gave His life to pay for the sins of God's people. Even now He is ever listening to their prayers and praying for them. He is making sure they have everything they need to love God and live for Him. These can be God's gifts to us, too, when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. How good God has been to us by sending Jesus!

*Close in prayer.*

**Closing ACTS Prayer**

- A** Jesus, we praise You for being the Son of God, the giver of all the grace God's people need to live God's way.
- C** We confess that many times we don't want to do what You want us to do, or we feel too weak to do it. We forget that if we are God's people (those who turn away from their sins and trust in Jesus), we can depend on Jesus to always give us the grace we need to live Your way. We need You to be our Savior!
- T** Thank You, Jesus, for always giving us the grace we need to live God's way. Thank You for promising to be praying for all who trust in You, even now as You rule in heaven.
- S** Work in our hearts that we would turn from our sins and trust in You, Jesus, as our own Savior. Help us to love one another, and to keep on loving God and living for Him every day of our lives.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

***Go to Lesson Plan, p.9 for the script to the rest of the lesson.***