

The Toothpaste Sermon

PRESCHOOL LESSON PLAN

Theme: It's what is in our heart that counts.

Scripture: Mathew 23:25-26

Memory Verse: Matthew 23:26, 'First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.'

The Children's Sermon

Hey there, today we're going to talk about something really important, and it's called "Hypocrisy in religious practices." That's a big phrase, isn't it? But don't worry, I'll explain it so it's easy to understand.

First, let's talk about what it means to be a hypocrite. Imagine you have a friend who tells you that lying is bad, but then you catch them telling a lie. That's being a hypocrite - saying one thing but doing another. Now, when we add "in religious practices" to it, we're talking about people who act very religious and say they follow God's rules, but their actions don't match their words. They might pray out loud where everyone can see them or make a big show of being kind at church, but then act mean or selfish when they think no one is watching.

Jesus talked a lot about this. He wants us to be real with our faith, not just pretend. It's like if you made a beautiful drawing for your mom, but you only did it so she would give you cookies. Your heart wouldn't really be in the gift, right? Jesus wants our hearts to be right when we do things for God, not just looking for a treat.

Now, let's imagine you're at the playground, and you see someone playing alone. You remember hearing at church or at home that it's good to be kind and include everyone. So, you go over and ask them to play. That's doing what you believe in your heart, not just because others are watching, but because it's the right thing to do. That's being true to your faith.

But, if you only asked them to play because you saw a teacher watching and you wanted to look good, that's a bit like being a hypocrite. You're not doing it because you care, but because you want to look good. That's what we mean by "Hypocrisy in religious practices" - acting good just to show off, not because you really believe it or feel it in your heart.

Jesus tells us a story about two people who went to pray. One was a Pharisee, a very religious person, who prayed loudly, thanking God that he wasn't like other people who do wrong things. Then there was a tax collector, who quietly asked God to forgive him for his mistakes. Jesus said the tax collector was the one who really got it right because his heart was in the right place. He wasn't trying to show off; he was being honest with God.

So, what can we do to avoid being hypocrites in our faith? Well, it starts with our hearts. We should do kind things because we really want to help and show love, not because we want a gold star or a pat on the back. When we pray, we can talk to God like we're talking to a friend, honestly and from our hearts, not just saying words we think sound good.

Remember, God sees everything, not just what we do in public, but also what we do in private. He knows our hearts and loves us very much. He wants us to be real with Him

and with others. So, let's try to live our faith truly, being kind, loving, and honest, whether people are watching or not.

And if you ever find yourself wanting to show off or do something just for praise, take a moment to think about why you're doing it. Ask God to help you do things for the right reasons, with a heart full of love and honesty.

So, kids, let's remember that being true to our faith means more than just looking religious. It means living out our beliefs with genuine hearts, both in public and in private. Let's ask God to help us avoid "Hypocrisy in religious practices" and to live in a way that truly reflects His love and kindness.

Let's pray together: "Dear God, help us to be honest and true in everything we do. Help us to avoid hypocrisy in our religious practices and to live our faith with genuine hearts. Thank you for loving us, no matter what. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Bible Memory Verse

Matthew 23:26, 'First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.'

You Will Need:

- Plain white paper cups
- Washable markers
- Wet wipes

Get Ready:

- Gather all materials on a table accessible to the children.

-Write the memory verse on a large piece of paper or whiteboard where all the children can see it.

Do This:

1. Explain the memory verse to the children, emphasizing that Jesus wants us to be clean on the inside (kind, honest, loving) so we can be clean on the outside too.
2. Give each child a plain white paper cup and washable markers. Ask them to draw or write things on the outside of the cup that represent good deeds or kind actions.
3. Once they are done, use the wet wipes to clean the outside of the cups. Explain that just like the cup, we need to be clean on the inside first, and it will show on the outside. Then, let them draw hearts or happy faces on the inside of their cups to represent a clean heart.

Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- Clear plastic cups (1 per child)
- Dirt or soil
- Small plastic spoons
- Water
- Glitter or small shiny confetti
- Paper hearts (1 per child)
- Markers or crayons

Get Ready:

- Fill each cup halfway with dirt.
- Place the cups, spoons, water, glitter/confetti, paper hearts, and markers/crayons on a table accessible to the children.

Do this:

1. Explain that sometimes people only clean the outside of things, but what's inside is most important, like our hearts. The cup with dirt represents people focusing only on the outside.
2. Let each child use a spoon to dig a small hole in the dirt in their cup. Explain that the hole represents opening our hearts to good things.
3. Pour a little water into each hole, then sprinkle some glitter/confetti into it. The water and glitter represent filling our hearts with kindness, love, and good things.
4. Give each child a paper heart and markers/crayons. Have them draw or write something kind or loving on the heart.
5. Place the paper hearts next to the cups as a reminder that what's in our hearts is what truly counts.

Snack Activity: Heart-Filled Fruit Pockets

You'll Need:

- Whole wheat pita bread (small size for little hands)
- Cream cheese (choose a low-fat variety for a healthier option)
- Fresh berries (strawberries, blueberries, raspberries)
- Heart-shaped cookie cutter
- Plastic knives (safe for kids)

Get Ready: Wash all the berries and lay them out on a paper towel to dry. Parents or teachers should pre-cut the pita bread into smaller sizes if needed, to make it easier for little hands to handle.

Do this:

1. Use the heart-shaped cookie cutter to cut out the center of each pita bread. This will create a heart-shaped hole in the middle of the pita.
2. Spread a thin layer of cream cheese inside the pita pocket, around the edges of the heart-shaped hole. This can be a bit messy, so it's perfect for little ones to practice spreading.
3. Fill the heart-shaped hole with fresh berries. Encourage the children to mix the colors and types of berries to make their heart 'full' and colorful.

This activity is based on Matthew 23:25-26, teaching children that what's inside us is what really counts, just like the inside of our fruit pockets. It's a simple, tangible way to discuss the importance of our inner qualities, like kindness and love, over external appearances.

Game Activity: Heart's Treasure Hunt

You'll Need:

- Construction paper (various colors)
- Markers or crayons
- Small treasure boxes or envelopes

Get Ready: Before the activity, cut out large heart shapes from the construction paper. On each heart, write simple, kind actions or virtues such as 'sharing', 'kindness', 'helping', and 'love'. Hide these hearts around your play area along with the treasure boxes or envelopes, which should contain small treats or tokens of appreciation.

Do this:

1. Explain to the children that just like in the story from Matthew 23:25-26, what's most important is what's in our hearts. Today, they're going on a treasure hunt to find these special heart qualities.
2. Let the children search for the hearts and the hidden treasures. When a child finds a heart, gather everyone and read the word aloud. Discuss briefly what that word means and how they can show that quality in their lives.
3. After the hunt, encourage the children to draw or write on a new heart shape how they can show the quality they found in their everyday life. Place these hearts in a visible area as a reminder of the true treasures in our hearts.

Craft Activity: Heart Clean-Up Craft

You'll Need:

- Paper plates (1 per child)
- Washable markers
- Stickers (heart-shaped and others)
- Baby wipes

Get Ready: Write 'What's in our heart counts' on the top of each paper plate with a marker before class.

Do this:

1. Talk to the children about Matthew 23:25-26, explaining that just like we clean our rooms, Jesus wants us to have clean hearts full of love and kindness.
2. Ask the children to draw or scribble 'messy things' (like angry scribbles, sad faces, etc.) on the paper plate around the words to represent the 'mess' in our hearts when we are not kind or loving.

3. Hand out heart-shaped stickers and tell the children these represent love, kindness, and good things Jesus wants in our hearts. Have them place the stickers over the 'messy things' to 'clean up' their heart.

4. Use baby wipes to gently clean the marker scribbles around the stickers, showing how Jesus helps clean our hearts when we ask Him to fill us with love and kindness.

Prayer Activity: Heart Clean-Up Prayer

You'll Need:

- A clear jar filled with water
- A small spoonful of dirt
- Dish soap

Get Ready: Gather your materials and have the children sit in a circle where they can see the jar clearly.

Do this:

1. Show the children the clear jar of water and explain that it represents our hearts when they are full of love and kindness.
2. Slowly add the dirt to the jar, stirring it to mix. Explain that sometimes, we have unkind thoughts, say mean things, or do things that aren't nice, which can make our hearts 'dirty'.
3. Add a few drops of dish soap to the jar and stir slowly. As the water clears, explain that praying and asking God to help us be kind and loving can 'clean' our hearts, making them pure again.
4. Lead the children in a simple prayer, asking God to help keep their hearts clean and full of love.