

# The Toothpaste Sermon

## LOWER ELEMENTARY 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 kids, 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 religious 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 enough paper cups so each child has one.

-Set up a table with washable markers and wet wipes.

Do This:

1. Give each child a paper cup and ask them to draw or write things on the outside that people see about us, like 'smiles' or 'kind words'.
2. Next, have them use the markers to write or draw on the inside of the cup things that are in our hearts, like 'love', 'kindness', or 'jealousy'. Explain that sometimes, we have things inside that aren't so nice, but we can ask God to help clean our hearts.
3. Finally, use the wet wipes to 'clean' the inside of the cups, showing that God can help make our hearts clean if we ask Him. This demonstrates that what's inside us is important and that God cares about our hearts.

## Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- Clear plastic cups (2 per child)
- Permanent markers
- Dirt or soil
- Water
- Small plastic spoons
- Heart stickers

Get Ready:

- Write "Outside" on one cup and "Inside" on the other cup for each set.
- Fill a container with water and another with dirt for sharing.
- Have heart stickers and permanent markers on a table for easy access.

Do this:

1. **Introduction**: Explain that sometimes people care more about how they look outside than how they are on the inside, but Jesus teaches us that what's in our heart is what really counts. Reference Matthew 23:25-26, simplifying it to: "Jesus says we should clean our hearts first, so we can be truly clean inside and out."
2. **Activity Start**: Give each child two cups. Ask them to decorate the "Outside" cup with permanent markers, making it as beautiful as they want. They can draw flowers, stars, or anything pretty. This cup represents how people try to look good on the outside.
3. **Contrast with the Inside**: Now, for the "Inside" cup, have them put a small amount of dirt at the bottom using the plastic spoons. Explain that sometimes, people might look nice on the outside but can have not-so-nice thoughts or feelings, like being mean or jealous, represented by the dirt.
4. **Cleaning the Inside**: After discussing the "dirty" insides, give them water to pour into their "Inside" cup, washing the dirt away. Explain that this is like asking Jesus to help clean our hearts, making us kind, honest, and loving on the inside.
5. **Seal with a Heart**: Finally, give each child a heart sticker to place on their "Inside" cup. This heart represents Jesus' love filling and cleaning our hearts, making what's inside beautiful and important.
6. **Reflection**: Conclude by reminding them that like the cups, it's not just how we look outside that matters, but being clean and good on the inside, in our hearts, is what Jesus wants for us. Encourage them to think about ways they can be kind and loving every day.

## Snack Activity: Heart-Filled Fruit Cups

You'll Need:

- Clear plastic cups
- A variety of diced fruits (e.g., strawberries, grapes, apples, oranges)
- Small heart-shaped cookie cutter
- Yogurt (for topping)
- Granola (optional)

Get Ready: Wash all the fruits and prepare a clean workspace. Parents should help with cutting the fruits if needed.

Do this:

1. Use the heart-shaped cookie cutter to cut some of the fruit slices into heart shapes. This step is to remind us that it's what's in our hearts that counts, just like in Matthew 23:25-26.
2. In the clear plastic cups, start layering your fruits. You can create patterns or mix them randomly. The clear cup represents our lives that people can see.
3. Top the fruit cup with a dollop of yogurt and sprinkle some granola if you like. The yogurt topping can remind us to cover our actions with kindness and goodness from our hearts.

As you eat your fruit cup, remember that just like the heart-shaped fruits hidden inside, what's most important is what's in our hearts, not just what people can see on the outside.

# Game Activity: Heart Clean-Up Relay

You'll Need:

- Small trash bags or baskets labeled 'Kind Words', 'Helping Hands', and 'Sharing'
- Pieces of paper with actions written on them (both kind and unkind actions)
- A large open space

Get Ready: Write different actions on pieces of paper. Actions should be a mix of kind and unkind things, like 'helped a friend in need', 'said something hurtful', 'shared my toys', or 'refused to listen'. Place these papers in a central pile at one end of the playing area. At the other end, set up three bags or baskets, each labeled with one of the categories: 'Kind Words', 'Helping Hands', and 'Sharing'.

Do this:

1. Divide the children into teams. Each team lines up at the end of the playing area opposite the bags or baskets.
2. On 'Go', the first player from each team runs to the pile, picks a piece of paper, and decides if the action is a 'Kind Word', 'Helping Hand', or 'Sharing' action. They then run to place it in the corresponding bag or basket.
3. After placing the paper in the correct bag or basket, the player runs back and tags the next team member, who then takes their turn. The game continues until all the papers have been sorted.

The goal is to remind the children that our actions and words reflect what's in our hearts, just like Matthew 23:25-26 teaches us. It's not just about looking good on the outside but being clean and kind on the inside.

# Craft Activity: Heart Clean-Up Craft

You'll Need:

- White paper plates (1 per child)
- Washable markers
- Stickers of various shapes and colors
- Wet wipes

Get Ready: Write 'Matthew 23:25-26' on the rim of each plate before class.

Do this:

1. Tell the children that sometimes people focus on looking good on the outside but forget to take care of their hearts on the inside, just like in Matthew 23:25-26. Explain that it's what's in our hearts that really counts.
2. Ask the children to use the markers to draw or write things on the plate that might represent not-so-good things in our hearts, like being unkind, lying, or being selfish. They can draw symbols or write words.
3. Then, give each child a wet wipe. Tell them the wet wipe represents God's love and forgiveness. Have them gently wipe their plates clean, showing that God can clean our hearts when we ask for forgiveness and try to do better. After cleaning, they can decorate their clean heart plates with stickers to represent the good things they want to fill their hearts with, like kindness, honesty, and love.