

Not Me, Lord

UPPER ELEMENTARY LESSON PLAN

Theme: Betraying Christ

Scripture: Matthew 26

Memory Verse: Matthew 26:41 - 'Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

The Children's Sermon

In Matthew 26:21 (during the Passover meal) Jesus said to the twelve, 'I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me.' In v:22 'They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"' (also Mark 14:18-19) Judas said in Matthew 26:25, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" (also Mark 14:19) The Bible tells us in v35: 'Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.' (also Mark 14:31)

With the exception of Judas, Peter and the other disciples didn't betray Jesus on purpose. They had no deliberate intention to, but they were afraid there was the possibility.

Some of you are probably thinking, "Not me. I would never do that." The truth is we betray Jesus all of the time. I'm sure we don't set out to. It's not intentional. Yet we betray Jesus when we say we are devoted to Him but don't live like it; when we 'talk the talk' but don't 'walk the walk'; when we gossip, tell 'little white lies'... whenever we don't stand up for Jesus.

Let's talk more about the Betrayal of Jesus. Imagine you have a best friend, someone you trust and spend lots of time with. Now, imagine if that friend promised to always be there for you but then, when you needed them the most, they weren't there. That's a bit like what happened to Jesus. He was always there for his friends, teaching them and showing them how to love others. But when a tough time came, they didn't stand by Him.

The Betrayal of Jesus teaches us a big lesson about friendship and being true to our word. When we say we are going to do something, especially when we promise to be a good friend, it's important to keep that promise. Just like in a game of tag, if you say you're "it," you don't suddenly say you're not just because the game gets hard. You stick with it until the game changes.

Now, let's think about how we can sometimes be like those friends of Jesus. Maybe we tell our parents we'll clean our room but then we don't. Or we tell a friend we'll share our snack but then decide to keep it all for ourselves. Those moments are like small betrayals, aren't they? We're not keeping our word, just like the disciples didn't keep theirs.

Prayer is one way to help us stay true. Talking to Jesus, just like we would talk to a friend, helps us remember to be better friends ourselves. We can say, "Dear Jesus, help me to be a good friend today and to keep my promises, just like I want my friends to do for me."

Another way to avoid betraying Jesus is by learning more about Him. The more we know about Jesus and how He lived, the better we can follow His example. It's like if you're learning to play soccer. The more you practice and learn from someone who's

really good, the better you'll play the game. Jesus is the best example of how to live and love others, so learning from Him helps us do the same.

Let's also remember to say sorry when we mess up. Everyone makes mistakes, even grown-ups. When we do something wrong, like betraying a promise or not being a good friend, saying sorry is important. It's like if you accidentally break your friend's toy. Saying sorry doesn't fix the toy, but it helps fix the friendship. When we say sorry to Jesus, it helps fix our friendship with Him, too.

And finally, let's try to be brave. Sometimes, we might not want to do the right thing because we're afraid of what others will think. Maybe standing up for someone who's being picked on or choosing not to laugh at a mean joke. Being brave means doing the right thing, even when it's hard. Jesus was brave all the time, and He helps us to be brave, too.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we all know we betray you in some way every day and we are ashamed of our weakness. Help us to be strong and to live our lives each day so that we can say, "Not me, Lord. Not today." Amen.

So, kids, let's remember the story of the Betrayal of Jesus not just as something sad, but as a lesson on how to be better friends, to keep our promises, and to always try to do the right thing. Let's be the kind of friends to Jesus and to others that we want to have for ourselves. And when we mess up, because sometimes we will, let's remember to talk to Jesus about it, learn from it, and keep trying to do better.

Bible Memory Verse

Matthew 26:41 - 'Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

You Will Need:

- Blindfolds
- A variety of obstacles (chairs, pillows, soft toys)
- A 'prize' for the end of the obstacle course (could be a small treat or token)

Get Ready:

- Set up an obstacle course in a safe area, using the chairs, pillows, and soft toys as obstacles.
- Place the 'prize' at the end of the obstacle course.

Do This:

1. Divide the children into pairs. One child in each pair will be blindfolded, and the other will guide their partner through the obstacle course using only their voice.
2. Before starting, remind the children of the memory verse and explain that the blindfolded child represents 'the flesh' which is weak and can easily fall into 'temptation' (the obstacles), but with the guidance of their partner ('the spirit'), they can overcome the obstacles.
3. After each pair completes the course, discuss how listening to good advice and staying focused on the right path can help us avoid temptations and challenges in life.

Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- A Bible or printed excerpts from Matthew 26
- Small pieces of bread and grape juice for Communion reenactment

- Thirty small coins (play money or real coins)
- A small bowl of water and a towel
- Blindfolds
- Paper and pens

Get Ready:

- Set up a "Last Supper" table with the bread and grape juice.
- Prepare a "Gethsemane" area with enough space for children to kneel and pray.
- Place the bowl of water and towel on a table for the foot-washing station.
- Scatter the thirty coins in a designated area for the "Betrayal Scene."
- Create a "Denial Area" where the blindfold and paper and pens are located.

Do this:

1. ****Last Supper Reenactment****: Begin with a reenactment of the Last Supper. Have the children sit around the table. Read Matthew 26:26-29 as they take turns breaking the bread and passing the grape juice, discussing the significance of Jesus' sacrifice.
2. ****Foot-Washing Ceremony****: Move to the foot-washing station. Read Matthew 26:14-16 and discuss the humility of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Allow the children to take turns washing each other's hands (for simplicity and hygiene), emphasizing serving and loving one another.
3. ****Judas' Betrayal****: Lead the children to the area where the coins are scattered. Read Matthew 26:14-16 and 47-50. Discuss the betrayal by Judas. Have each child pick up a coin, reflecting on the cost of betrayal and the value of loyalty and friendship.
4. ****Gethsemane Prayer Time****: Guide the children to the "Gethsemane" area. Read Matthew 26:36-41. Encourage each child to kneel and spend a few moments in prayer, reflecting on a time they might have felt alone or betrayed and how they can trust God in those moments.

5. **Peter's Denial**: At the "Denial Area," blindfold a volunteer and have them listen to the cock crowing (you can play a sound clip or imitate the sound). Read Matthew 26:69-75. Discuss the feeling of fear and denial. Have each child write down a fear they want to overcome and a prayer asking for courage.
6. **Reflection and Sharing**: Gather the children back together and allow them to share their thoughts and feelings about what they learned from Matthew 26, focusing on themes of betrayal, forgiveness, sacrifice, and redemption. Close with a group prayer, asking for the strength to be loyal, courageous, and loving like Jesus.

Snack Activity: Garden of Gethsemane Olive Oil Dip

You'll Need:

- A small bowl of olive oil
- A plate of herbs (such as rosemary, thyme, and oregano)
- Sliced pieces of bread
- Small cups of grape juice

Get Ready: Arrange the small bowl of olive oil in the center of a large plate. Surround it with the herbs and then place the sliced pieces of bread around the edges of the plate. Pour the grape juice into small cups, one for each child.

Do this:

1. Read Matthew 26:36-46 together, focusing on Jesus's time praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Discuss how Jesus felt knowing He was about to be betrayed.
2. Have each child dip a piece of bread into the olive oil, then into the herbs, symbolizing the bitter herbs of Passover and the sorrow of Jesus's betrayal.

3. Share the grape juice, reminding the children of the Last Supper and the significance of Jesus's sacrifice. Discuss the importance of remembering Jesus's love and sacrifice for us.

Game Activity: Garden of Gethsemane Tag

You'll Need:

- A spacious outdoor area, preferably with garden or trees
- Bandanas or cloth strips
- Glow sticks (optional for evening play)

Get Ready: Designate an area as the 'Garden of Gethsemane.' Mark clear boundaries if not naturally defined by the garden or trees. Each player gets a bandana to tuck into their pocket or belt, hanging out to be easily grabbed. Choose one player to be the 'Soldier' (the tagger), representing those who came to arrest Jesus, and another player to be 'Jesus.' The rest will be 'Disciples.' Distribute glow sticks if playing in the evening for added visibility.

Do this:

1. The game starts with Jesus praying in the 'Garden' (a specific spot within the play area), and the Disciples scattered around sleeping. On 'Go,' the Soldier tries to tag Jesus by grabbing his bandana. The Disciples try to 'wake up' (start moving) and protect Jesus by blocking the Soldier without getting tagged themselves.
2. If a Disciple is tagged, they join the Soldiers in trying to tag Jesus. The game focuses on the attempt to protect and the feeling of being overwhelmed, reflecting the disciples' experiences.
3. The game ends when Jesus is tagged. Gather everyone to discuss the feelings of betrayal, protection, and sacrifice. Relate the game experience to Matthew 26,

emphasizing Jesus' knowledge of upcoming events and His decision to face them out of love.

Craft Activity: The Cup of Decision

You'll Need:

- Small clay pots or paper cups
- Acrylic paints and brushes
- Small pieces of paper
- Pens or markers

Get Ready: Gather all materials on a large table, making sure there are enough supplies for each child. Prepare a sample cup painted with scenes or symbols from Matthew 26 to inspire the children.

Do this:

1. Read Matthew 26:36-46 together, focusing on Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He asks, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.' Discuss the meaning of 'this cup' as the suffering Jesus was about to face.
2. Have each child choose a clay pot or paper cup. Ask them to think about a time they faced a difficult decision or a time they needed courage to do the right thing. Encourage them to paint their cup with colors or symbols that represent that moment or their feelings about it.
3. After the cups are painted and dried, each child writes a prayer or a promise on a small piece of paper. This prayer or promise should be about seeking God's will in their lives or asking for courage to face difficult situations. They will then fold the paper and

place it inside their 'cup of decision.' End the activity with a group prayer, asking God to help each person, like Jesus, to always seek and do God's will.

Prayer Activity: Hearts United in Prayer: Reflecting on Betrayal

You'll Need:

- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- A bowl of water

Get Ready: Write down several scenarios on separate pieces of paper that illustrate betrayal or hurt feelings among friends or family, inspired by the betrayal of Christ in Matthew 26.

Do this:

1. Begin with a group discussion on Matthew 26, focusing on the events that led to Jesus' betrayal. Ask the children how they think Jesus felt being betrayed by one of his closest friends.
 2. Hand out the prepared scenarios to the children and ask them to reflect on how they would feel in those situations and write a prayer asking for the strength to forgive and love like Jesus.
 3. Encourage each child to fold their prayer and place it in the bowl of water, symbolizing the washing away of hurt and the cleansing power of forgiveness.
- Conclude with a group prayer, asking for unity and the ability to love others deeply, even when we feel betrayed.