

COMPANION GUIDE
TO THE PROGRAM

JESUS STORIES

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Introduction

When Jesus wanted to teach important truths, he used parables. In fact some of Jesus' most memorable teachings are in the form of parables — poignant, touching, even humorous stories that everyone could remember. Jesus and the gospel writers knew that a well told story could express truths that lessons alone could not convey. These video programs offer children a new twist on this time-honored art. Through an ingenious combination of masks, mime, and the creative use of props, storyteller Doug Berky breathes new life into the gospel writers' accounts of Jesus' life and His parables. These colorful vignettes remain true to the scriptures yet present the stories of Jesus in ways children will love and remember.

About the Videotapes

The video programs highlight three elements of Jesus' ministry. In "Jesus Teaches," viewers experience three of Jesus' most beloved parables: The Lost Coin, The Good Samaritan, and The Log and the Speck. In "Jesus Cares," we see two powerful stories from the life of Jesus illustrating His compassion: Jesus Feeding the Five Thousand and The Woman Forgiveness. In "Jesus Heals," we see two memorable accounts of Jesus' healing ministry: The Story of Blind Bartimaeus and The Story of Zacchaeus.

The Format

From the earliest wanderings of our religious forebearers through the wilderness, the stories of the faith were passed from generation to generation through storytelling. One might imagine that the tales of Moses, Jonah and the Big Fish, and the Flood, all were told to children and grandchildren against the backdrop of a crackling campfire. In that tradition, Doug Berky begins and ends each story with an informal visit beside a fire. The activity and discussion suggestions on the following pages will enable you to carry the message of the video a step further.

How to Use the Videotapes

Each five- to seven-minute story in these programs is separated by five seconds of a black screen. These interval points are provided so that you can stop the tape and discuss the story or carry out your planned activity. Thus, each story can be used for separate sessions, or you may wish to let the tape continue to play through each interval to use the entire video in one session.

Your Preparation

Before using the video with a group, you should:

1. Read the scripture upon which the story is based.
2. Allow time to reflect quietly on the scripture.
3. View the video story.
4. Review the activity and discussion segments for each story.

JESUS TEACHES

Story 1: The Lost Coin (based on Luke 15:8-10)

Activity and Discussion: “The Lost and Found Box”

1. Assemble a number of objects in a box labeled “Lost and Found.” The objects should be varied--a pair of glasses, a set of keys, a plane ticket, a library card, a baseball card, a ring, an old photo, a piece of paper with a scrawled name and phone number, etc.
2. Pass each object around the circle, one by one, and ask the children to quietly ponder what might be valuable about each object. Then ask a question such as, Which object do you believe is more important? The ring or the phone number? The glasses or the baseball card? Encourage children to share ways in which each object might be important to the person who lost it.
3. Explain that like the woman in Jesus’ story, everyone has a different idea of what is important. Then ask, “What does the story of the lost coin tell us about what is most important to God?”
4. Ask, “How does God show vast and unconditional love for us? How do you suppose God feels when we are ‘lost’? — or when we’re ‘found’? What are some ways we can stay close to God? How did Jesus stay close to God?”
5. Finally, ask the children as they go forth into their daily lives to look for the “gold coin” inside each person — that which is precious to God. As the children leave, give them a penny wrapped in gold foil as a reminder of Jesus’ parable.

Story 2: The Good Samaritan (based on Luke 10:29-37)

Activity and Discussion: “Like A Good Neighbor”

The point of this parable is simple. Yet the following activity will help bring its message from the realm of the theoretical to the practical.

1. Pack up your group and go on a “journey” around your church, or better yet, pile into a van, and go to where there are people who are NOT in church. Ask the children to look for and write down the following: Someone or something in need. It may be something as simple as an unused corner of the church building or as urgent as a lonely elderly person in a nursing home. List as many as possible. Ask, “Who should be responsible for this situation, or who should be the neighbor to this person?”
2. Now gather the group together. Process their findings. You might begin by saying, “There are many different kinds of journeys. There are also many different kinds of travelers along those journeys.” Ask the children, “Who is the priest or the Levite in each situation of need? How might we be the Good Samaritans in each of those situations?”
3. Remember the insurance ad on television that uses a blanket and the theme “like a good neighbor”? Using an old sheet, work with your children to create a “good-neighbor blanket” decorated with words and pictures that depict ways you intend to be a good neighbor by meeting the needs around you. Display the blanket on the wall of your room, in the fellowship hall, or in your sanctuary.

Story 3: The Log and the Speck (based on Matthew 7:1-5)

Activity and Discussion: “Here’s Looking at You”

1. Buy (or borrow) a pair of cheap dime store sunglasses for each student (or get a bunch of flimsy disposable sunglasses from an optometrist or ophthalmologist in your congregation.)
2. Get a jar of petroleum jelly. Remove the label, and save for later use.
3. Cue up “The Log and the Speck.” Now adjust the tint controls on the television set so that the colors are distorted. Turn off the set.
4. When the children arrive, after everyone is settled, pass out the sunglasses and explain to the children that they are about to see a special video and that the sunglasses are necessary. After everyone has donned their sunglasses, smear a thick film of petroleum jelly on everyone’s lenses. Explain that it is a special 3D solution that will enable the glasses to be functional. Be sure to smear it on thick! The only rule is that they are not to remove the glasses once they are put on.
5. Now turn on the video. You notice that the color is off. Ask the children to help you with the color (have fun with them on this — play it up big!)
6. After a couple of minutes, tell the children that they are welcome to remove the sunglasses. Collect the sunglasses, rewind the video, and show the lesson.
7. After the video is over, process the lesson. Some questions to ask:
What are some of the “logs” in our own eyes? (That is, some of those things that prevent us from helping others: selfishness, peer approval, etc.) What does God give us to help us “clear our vision”? (You may refer to specific Bible passages such as Psalm 23, the Beatitudes, the Lord’s Prayer, etc.) Write down the children’s answers.
8. Have the children create an “Eye Care” Chart. Using a poster board, create a chart similar to an eye chart in which various sizes of log shapes are displayed. Ask the children to write or paste their ideas from #7 onto the chart. Display the chart for others!

JESUS CARES

Story 1: Feeding the Five Thousand (based on Matthew 15:32-38)

The feeding of the five thousand is a story that is open to a number of interpretations. In this session, we will concentrate on an interpretation that children can easily relate to and put into practice; the idea that what one shares in love is multiplied.

Activity and Discussion: "Plenty To Go Around"

This activity will require the cooperation of the pastor and congregation. This would be a good cooperative lesson for all classes.

1. Read the scripture and view the video.
2. Here are some questions for discussion: How was the feeding of the five thousand a miracle? Where did all the extra food come from? What did the little boy do that was so special? What does the story have to say about hunger in the world today?
3. When the discussion is finished, explain that when love is shared it multiplies. To illustrate, do the following activity: Hug each child and say to him or her, "When love is shared it multiplies. You are God's way of multiplying love in the world." After you have hugged each child, explain that they are now to go find five people to hug. You may need to split up and visit several other classes. As they hug each person, they are to tell them to go and hug five more people, who are instructed to find five more, and so on. If all goes well, everyone in the church will have been hugged before the morning is over! Ask the pastor to reinforce the activity during morning worship by setting aside a time to be sure everyone has been hugged (if not, be sure nobody leaves the sanctuary without a hug!) A particularly cooperative pastor may preach on the parable.

Option: Instead of giving hugs, you may wish to have an alternate activity such as passing out chocolate kisses.

Story 2: The Woman Forgiven (based on John 7:53-8:11)

The story of Jesus' dealings with the woman caught in the act of adultery is a poignant lesson in the power of forgiveness. It is akin to the story of the "Log and the Speck" in that it focuses on the issue of one person or group of persons judging another. The following exercise is designed to address the issue of law versus forgiveness.

Activity and Discussion: "Healing Stones"

1. Using small slips of paper, write down key verses about forgiveness and tape each of the following verses to the bottom of several medium-sized stones. For example: Matt. 5:7; Matt. 18: 21-22; Mark 11:25; Luke 23:34; Luke 11:4; Rom. 12:14-18; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; 1 Peter 3:9
2. After the class has viewed the story, form a circle and reflect on the story. You may wish to explain (without too much detail) that the practice of stoning in Jesus' day was not simply a discipline for an error but also a form of mob execution. After processing the story for a few minutes, place the stones in the center of the group. Ask each person to quietly think of a time when another person had broken a rule or wronged him or her in some way. Now ask each person to pick a stone, look up the verse on the bottom, and read or talk about the verse to the rest of the class. End the class session by passing out a small stone for each of the children to keep as a reminder of Jesus and the stones that were never thrown.

JESUS HEALS

Story 1: Blind Bartimaeus (Based on Mark 10:46-52)

The healing power of faith is the theme of this story. In blind Bartimaeus, we see persistence and courage. In the crowd, we see annoyance. In Jesus, we see compassion.

Background Information

In Jesus' day, to be challenged with a disability such as blindness was understood to mean that it was the penalty for a sin of one kind or another. In other words, the people believed that Bartimaeus' blindness was evidence of a past sin. (In fact, Bartimaeus means "Son of Timai" or "Son of the Unclean.") This is significant in that it is Bartimaeus who, though blind, apparently is the only one in the crowd who recognizes Jesus as the Messiah ("Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me").

Activity and Discussion: "Journey Out of Darkness"

1. Explain in your own words the historical background outlined above. Explain that when Bartimaeus asked Jesus to have mercy on him, he was not only asking for his sight; he was crying out for dignity and respect. Ask the children, "Have you ever felt small or unimportant?" "What are some of the things that can make us feel small?" Notice that others in the crowd tried to quiet Bartimaeus. Think of some times in which you have felt unheard or misunderstood.
2. Notice that when Jesus approached Bartimaeus He asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" What does Jesus teach us about responding to others in need? Notice carefully what Jesus says when Bartimaeus explains that he is blind. Jesus says, "Your faith has made you well." What do you suppose Jesus meant by that statement?
3. When Jesus healed Bartimaeus, it was more than just a physical healing. To Bartimaeus (and the onlookers), his healing was symbolic of the forgiveness of past sin. Ask the children to think about what must have happened to Bartimaeus' self-esteem when he received his sight for the first time.
4. Ask, "What can you do to help heal others who don't feel good about themselves or who feel pain or guilt?"

Story 2: Zacchaeus (based on Luke 19:1-10)

Activity and Discussion: "Jesus Comes to Your House"

If you are using this story as part of a separate session, briefly remind your viewers about the preceding story of Bartimaeus. There are important references to Bartimaeus in both the opening and closing scenes of this Zacchaeus segment.

After viewing the video, ask the children how they believe Zacchaeus must have felt. Then explain that they are going to have an opportunity to "meet Jesus" just as Zacchaeus did.

Help your class to use their imaginations. Create a quiet atmosphere in which children can imagine the following scenario. Ask the children to get comfortable; sit comfortably on the floor. Have them close their eyes. Then have them imagine the following:

1. Imagine you are in your classroom at school. The principal comes over the intercom and announces that everyone is to go to the auditorium for a special program.

2. You join your classmates in the auditorium. There is an air of expectation in the room. Nobody knows who the guest will be. The lights dim. The curtain rises, and to your surprise, out on the stage walks not the principal, not the governor, not a famous musician, but Jesus.
3. The crowd falls silent. Jesus looks around the room. What does He look like? What is He wearing? Think about the features of His face. As Jesus canvases the room, His eyes fall on you for a moment. He stops. What is His expression? How do you feel? Now Jesus speaks to you. He calls you by name and says, "I'm visiting your house today." What do you say? How do you feel now? What is the reaction of your classmates?
4. Imagine now you are at the front door of your home. You invite Jesus inside. What does He do? How does He act? What does He say? What do you say?
5. Imagine now that you are sitting, side by side with Jesus. Think for a moment about what you and Jesus discuss. Does He ask you questions? What does He ask? How do you answer? What is His tone of voice? What does Jesus look like up close?
6. It's nearly time for Jesus to go. It's a time Jesus has taken to be with just you. Nobody else. In the silence, think about these things: What does Jesus say to you. How does He look at you? What do you say to Jesus? Finally, how do you and Jesus say goodbye to each other?
7. Gently allow the children to share their experiences if they wish. Be prepared for some very unique and very personal stories.

ALTERNATE ACTIVITY: As leader, you may draw up a brief sketch and allow several of the children to act out the above scenario. You may even pretend to be Jesus, visiting their home. Encourage the children to strike up a conversation with you.