

Lesson 7 / July 13, 2008

God's Love and Sin Are Black and White

for use as

STEP 1

Lesson 7

Focus:

God's arms are always open.

Lesson 7

Bible Basis:

Luke 15:11-24

Students will learn that God's love is certain and that it applies in spite of their personal sin or the sin of others.

What you'll need:

- enough newspapers (local or national) for students to read
- small rewards, such as pieces of candy

Before your students come into class, locate some newspapers. As they come in, hand these newspapers out and tell them that you are going on a hunt for something in the paper and that you will give out a surprise to anyone who can find it.

• What do you think that we'll be looking for?

Your students will have all kinds of guesses. Finally, tell them that you'll be looking for sin.

Before we look for sin in the newspaper, let's define what it is first.

• Can anyone tell me what they think sin is?

Allow for several answers, then say, According to the Bible, sin is *harmatia* in the original Greek language in the New Testament which means: "missing the true goal . . . of life."¹

• How do you think God feels when we miss our true goal of life that He has given us?

It makes Him sad when we miss the goal that He has made for us, no matter what the sin is. He is grieved because He loves us, and we (and others) miss out on blessings when we sin. OK, let's try to find sin in the newspaper. You can read headlines out loud or anything else that you read that sounds like sin.

Give a small reward for students who find sin in the newspaper. This activity should open up a lively discussion about sin—what is it, how it is often accepted in our culture, and how calling sin, 'sin' is often unpopular. But, God wants us to live lives that honor Him.

Lesson 7
Memory
Verse

Blessed is the man
whose sin the LORD
does not count against
him and in whose spirit
there is no deceit.

—Psalm 32:2

• **What does it mean for something to be “black and white?”**

When something is black and white, it’s easy to see. It’s this way, or that way, but there is nothing in between. Like this newspaper, sin is always black and white to God. He sees it clearly. Unlike in our society where sometimes people say that something is not sin when it is, sin is easy to spot for God, and He wants us to spot it easily, too. But also like this newspaper, God’s love is also black and white—it’s a sure thing.

You may throw in some comments about current social issues that have created a stir such as homosexuality and let students know that these things are sin, but that we should still love those who sin in the same way that God loves us. After your students have found numerous sins in the newspaper, again discuss how people who run from God will not experience rest.

• **How do you think that the people who committed these sins feel about their sins?** (*Some might feel bad, but some might not even think they’ve committed sins.*)

To end this activity, invite your students to pray in pairs for the world, our country, and our state—for God to open our eyes and bring us back to Him so that we will no longer miss His goal for our lives, our country, and the world. Then dive into the Step 2 Bible study.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your *Middle School Teacher’s Guide*; Step 4 appears below.)

The Complete Word Study New Testament, Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D., AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN. 1992.

Lesson 7 / July 13, 2008

God's Love and Sin Are Black and White

for use as
STEP 4

Lesson 7
Focus:

God's arms are always open.

Lesson 7
Bible Basis:

Luke 15:11-24

You will need:

- a can of slime or a bucket of mud
- a short sleeve shirt big enough for a male student to wear that can get dirty
- a CD player with soft worship music

After your students wrap up their Step 3 activities, begin by saying:
I need a boy and a girl to volunteer for this last part of our lesson. (This activity might require hugging. If you are worried about maturity levels or appropriate behavior, pick two students of the same gender.)

Before you begin, ask the boy to change into the short sleeve shirt that you have provided so that his clothing will not be ruined.

After you have your volunteers, let the group know that the girl will represent God and the boy will represent any student, boy or girl.

If _____ is any student and _____ represents God, what do we think that their relationship will normally look like when _____ (the boy) is not sinning?

You may get several answers. Some will say that they should be standing close to each other, others may say that they should be hugging. Whatever the students say, have your two volunteers act it out.

OK, we all agree that when there is no sin between them that we feel close.

Next, put slime on the boy's arms. Be careful not to get it on his or your own clothes. As you are doing so, say, **OK, this slime represents sin that any middle schooler could commit. Go ahead and yell out some sins. What could some of them be?**

You'll get lots of answers and reaction from the kids about putting slime on the male student.

Now, how do we see God's relationship with the student?

Some students may say that God is far away, that He has turned His back, or that He no longer loves the student because of sin. Have the students act out each of the answers.

Lesson 7 Memory Verse

Blessed is the man
whose sin the LORD
does not count against
him and in whose spirit
there is no deceit.

—Psalm 32:2

Note: What will help this analogy is that the girl (who represents God's side of the relationship in this scenario) will most likely be grossed out by the slime and not want to get within 10 feet of the boy.

Sometimes when we sin, we think that God is repulsed by us, like _____ is, that He doesn't want to be near us and that He has rejected us. However, as we learned in our lesson this morning, because He loves us, He always accepts us, even when we sin and He embraces us—even though we're still covered in sin.

As you say the word "embraces," walk over to the male student and wrap your arms around him.

Does this mean that God likes our sin?

The answer is an obvious no. But it does mean that He doesn't want us to sin because He knows that sin hurts us.

To wrap up our discussion, I want to invite you to get quiet with God for a few moments. Ask God to speak to you and show you any sins that you have in your life that are causing you to miss His goal for you like we discussed earlier. Once you feel that He has shown you something, ask Him to forgive you and thank Him for embracing you like the example that you just saw.

The sins can be anything that God shows you. Remember that our goal is not to feel guilty, but to experience rest in our relationship with Christ, just like Matthew 11:28 says. After He has shown you your sin, ask Him to forgive you for what He revealed.

Turn on the CD and give students an opportunity to pray. Watch to see when it looks like everyone is done praying. Don't be in a rush, but give God a chance to speak to your students.

Note: If you are aware that some of your students have not yet obeyed the gospel, this may be a good time to share God's plan of salvation with them.

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