

HOW GOD SAVED HIS PEOPLE

UNIT TWO: God Led His People

Lesson 3: The Greatest Commandment

CONTENT:

1. A rich young man once asked Jesus the way to eternal life (heaven). Jesus told him to keep the commandments. He then invited him to leave his home and possessions and follow him, but the man went away sad.
2. Jesus told his disciples then that those who love God above all else will enter heaven.
3. The first three commandments are summed up in the words of Jesus, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart...." (Mt 22:37,38.)
4. St. Francis of Assisi was also a rich young man when he heard God's call to leave everything and follow him. He realised that God was better than everything else and so responded with love.
5.  God loves us so much that we must also love him in return, with all our hearts. This means that we must put him first, before everything else.

ASSIGNMENT: Ask at home: 'Which is the greatest commandment according to Jesus?'
Read handout at home. Learn Bible verse.

REFERENCES: Matthew 19: 16-30 (Mark 10:17-31) Matthew 22:36-38.
CCC 2052-53; 2093; 2113; 2176-77..

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts, a sheet of paper for tearing up, a chocolate (or more if you want to play the game again.)

I. STARTER:

- Remember the story about Mohan and the bullies? Who showed Mohan a safe way to reach home?
[Sunil]
- In the story about Hansel and Gretel, Hansel didn't want to get lost in the forest, so he collected white pebbles (small stones) and kept dropping them on the path as they walked. Let's play a game called 'Finding the Way Home.'
[Explain that one of the desks in the class is 'HOME'. The 'den' has to follow a trail of paper and find the correct desk and the chocolate. There should be a time limit of 1 minute to find it. Send a volunteer out and ask another student to tear up a paper and lay a trail.]

II. DEVELOPMENT:

Just as Mohan's friend showed him a safe way home, Jesus showed us the way to heaven, which is our home for ever.

There was once a young man who wanted to reach heaven, but didn't know the way. (We'll call him Samuel, since the Bible doesn't tell us his name.) Samuel was rich and came from a high-up family.

Many people were talking about Jesus those days, so Samuel went along to see if the stories were true. He saw Jesus making sick people well and lame people walk. He heard him teaching about God and heaven. He thought, "Maybe he can tell me the way to heaven!" But there were so many thousands of people that he couldn't get close to Jesus.

Then one day he was lucky! Jesus was just setting off on a journey, and there were no crowds, only his disciples (his followers). Samuel ran up to Jesus and knelt down. He said,

"Good teacher, please will you tell me how to get to heaven?"

Jesus said, "Why do you call me good? Only God is really good!"

Samuel realised, "This man is not only good, he is God!"

Jesus said, "I'll tell you the way to heaven: Keep the commandments!"

Samuel said, “I have kept the commandments all my life!”

But instead of being happy, Samuel knew something was wrong. There was an empty place in his heart. He said, “Please tell me what I still don’t have!”

Jesus looked at Samuel with loving eyes. He put his hand on his shoulder and said, “You need one thing! You need God! God home, give away all your riches and come, follow me! Be one of my friends!”

At last Samuel understood. Jesus wanted him to love God first, even more than his riches.

He thought for a while, then he turned round and went away, tears falling down his cheeks.

Jesus’ friends saw him walking off crying. They thought, “What’s wrong with this fellow? He’s rich. He’s young and healthy. He has everything! Why is he crying?”

[Do you know why he was crying?] Jesus knew. He said, “It’s very hard for a rich person to reach heaven! That’s why he’s sad. He loves his money more than God!”

Jesus’ friends looked at each other. They were very surprised, because they had always thought that rich people were luckier than poor people.

Peter said, “Master, look, we have left our homes and everything and followed you!”

Jesus said, “Anyone who loves me more than anything else will get their reward and reach heaven!”

- So now you know the way to heaven. What is it? *[To love God more than anything else and to follow him.]*

Home assignment: Ask at home: ‘Which is the greatest commandment according to Jesus?’
Bring the answer to the next class.

NEXT CLASS:

[Ask the children to give the answer to the question, if they were able to find it out.]

- Last time we heard about a rich young man who asked Jesus the way to heaven. What did Jesus say first? *[‘Keep the commandments’.]*
- Then he told him to leave everything and come and follow him. Did the man do that? *[No]* Why not? *[Because he loved his riches more than God.]*

Now I’ll tell you another true story about another rich young man. He lived many years after Samuel. His name was Francis.

Francis’ father had a big cloth shop and was very rich. He gave his son lots of pocket money. Francis loved to dress up and go for parties. He had lots of friends. He didn’t bother much about studies or work.

In those days, there was fighting going on between the countries nearby. If their army won, the soldiers came back as heroes. Francis thought, “I want to be a hero! I’ll join the army and become a soldier.”

He got a fine suit of armour and a good horse and went off to fight. But their side lost the battle and Francis was caught and put into prison. For one year he lay in prison. But while he was there, something happened. God sent him special dreams and began to speak to him. He said, “Francis, give up your riches and come, work for me.”

At last Francis’ father paid a lot of money to the enemy, and Francis was set free. When he came home, he heard God’s voice again. “I have work for you. My church is falling down. I want you to build it up again.”

Do you think Francis went away sad like Samuel, or do you think he listened to God? Francis knew that God loved him very much. He knew that Jesus had died for him. So he happily gave up everything he had.

Francis gave away his nice clothes and put on a simple tunic (like a long kurta) with a rope tied round it. He walked around barefoot telling people to love God and put him first. Many other young men joined him. They would work in the fields or cut stones to build up broken churches. Slowly more and more people began to listen to Francis and to follow Jesus.

Francis loved God and everything he made. He used to make up hymns praising God for everything. Even the birds and animals listened to him. He is now in heaven. He is a famous saint. We celebrate his feast on October 4th. You can pray to him and ask his help to love God with all your heart.

[Give out handouts and read the written matter. Let the students do the puzzle by shading the words on the path as they write them in.]

III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

- Close your eyes and be quiet for a little while, so that you can be close to God. Now imagine you see Jesus walking with his friends. You go running to him like Samuel did. You kneel down in front of him and say, “Jesus, please show me the way to heaven!” Imagine Jesus smiling at you lovingly and saying, “Come, follow me! Love me more than anything else. Be my best friend, and do whatever I ask you.”
- Look at Jesus and answer him.

[If time permits, end by singing a hymn like ‘I Have Decided’]

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Home assignment: Read handout at home. Learn the Bible verse.