

[Kids]

JOHN 3:16

GOOD NEWS...made simple!



6 LESSONS

1. LIFE
2. WORLD (sin)
3. GOD
4. JESUS
5. BELIEVE
6. RESPONSE

Dear Leaders:

John 3:16 GOOD NEWS...made simple! is a fun, interactive way to help kids:

- Understand the *Gospel*
- Connect relationally with Jesus, and
- Help their friends come to Jesus too.

This curriculum has 6 lessons. Feel free to adjust them to fit your time slot and age of your kids. The crafts are designed with limited resources in mind. Again, feel free to adjust them to your situation.

Teach them in Sunday School, Children's Church or mid-week programs. And they work well for Back Yard Bible Club or VBS - just add a few fun games and refreshments. Should you need to combine these lessons, we suggest the following:

5 sessions

- Combine the *God* and *Jesus* lessons

4 sessions

- Combine the *God* and *Jesus* plus, *Believe* and *Response* lessons

May the Lord richly bless you as you help kids come to know Jesus and His love for them!

1. WHAT DOES GOD WANT US TO HAVE AND EXPERIENCE?

LIFE

MOOD: Make it festive, a celebration...like a birthday party (ballons, gift boxes, etc.)

Welcome & Prayer

KEY POINT: Children can know God now and be with Him forever in Heaven.

Bible Story/Teaching: Summarize the story of the Woman at the Well (John 4). Tell how she was a very sad lady. She knew she had done things that were not good. And she wondered if anyone would ever love or accept her. She felt bad about the way she was living her life and wished she could be set free from feeling so guilty. She felt so bad, she even walked around town when most people would not see her. Then Jesus came to her. He knew all about her. She realized Jesus was God and He forgave her for her sins! She was so happy because Jesus loved her, accepted her, forgave her and wanted her to be with Him forever in Heaven! She was so happy she went home and told all her friends about Jesus and wanted them to know Him too.

What is eternal life? (wait for responses)

Eternal life is a forever relationship with God (Jesus - see John 17:3).

God wants us to experience His love, acceptance and forgiveness in our lives.

How does it feel to be loved? (wait for responses) Accepted? Forgiven?

And Eternal life is a free gift of God. (Romans 6:23)

Heaven is a perfect place where God will be forever. He wants us to be with him forever too. What do you think will be in heaven?

What's not in heaven? (tears, sadness, pain, etc.)

Eternal life begins when you put your trust in Jesus Christ alone. Eternal life is God's really great gift to us. It means to have a forever relationship with God (Jesus) here on earth and forever in heaven!

Key Verse: (Romans 6:23) For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ways to capture this verse: a) Write portions of it on several sheets of paper. Hand them out to kids to line up in correct order. In front of class, have them lift their sign/section while the class recites the verse. b) Write it out on a large sheet of paper then cut it into several puzzle pieces. Hand out the puzzle pieces and have kids put the puzzle together. Have class recite verse. c) Come up with several hand motions while reciting verse. d) Put the verse into song or rap.

Skit: Gifts - prepare 5 presents in advance with the following notes inside them along with a candy/treat.

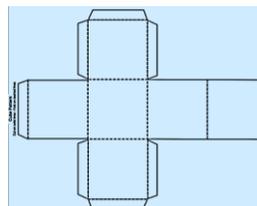
1. Eternal life = Heaven forever with Jesus (God)
2. Eternal life = Forgiveness for my sin
3. Eternal life = Experiencing God's Love
4. Eternal life = Experiencing God's Peace
5. Eternal life = Experiencing God's Joy

Give to 5 kids for no 'special' reason, e.g. one with the brightest shoes, longest hair, closest birthday, youngest brother/sister. Have kids open them and read notes to tell what eternal life is.

*Have additional candies/treats to give one to each child who was not part of the skit.

Craft: Gift Box

Use card stock to cut out box (or provide small boxes) to decorate as a gift. Put a bow on the top. Write LOVE, ACCEPTANCE, FORGIVENESS and HEAVEN on the 4 sides of the box. Write ETERNAL LIFE on the top.



Close in prayer

2. WHAT KEEPS US FROM EXPERIENCING ETERNAL LIFE?

WORLD (sin)

Mood: Leaders wear dirty T-shirts

As kids arrive, play the 'standing long jump' game. Use wide tape for the start and finish lines. On the starting line write: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23). Put the finish line 20' away and write: Heaven - Perfect!

Have kids take turns reciting Ro. 3:23 and then jumping as far as they can towards Heaven. Place a small piece of tape with their name on it to mark where they land. (Make sure the finish line is far enough away so no one can reach it.)

Welcome & Prayer

Key Point: We all have a problem God calls sin.

Bible Story/Teaching: Summarize the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Tell how he was a bad dude. He stole peoples money and was not liked. Zacchaeus realized Jesus was special - He was God's one an only Son. Being around Jesus made Zaccheus more aware of his sin and his need for a Savior. Then Jesus reached out to him to be his friend and being the Son of God, He offered Zacchaeus forgiveness for his sin. That's why Jesus came to earth. Zacchaeus was so happy he changed is sinful ways and wanted his friends to know Jesus too.

What is sin? (wait for responses... like lying, stealing, disobeying parents)

Sin is anything we THINK, SAY, DO, or DON'T DO that does NOT PLEASE GOD. (Have kids repeat this several times. Come up with several hand motions to use while reciting.)

Where did sin come from? (Romans 5:18) The world was once a perfect place. But not today. What are some things that tell us this world is not perfect? (wait for responses) Explain how Adam/Eve sinned and it broke the friendship they had with God. And how everyone since Adam/Eve sin and do things that are not pleasing to God. All except Jesus that is.

Sin keeps us from experiencing God's love and forgiveness. And it can keep us from being with God forever in Heaven. And that's why we need a Savior. That's who Jesus is.

Long before Jesus came to the earth, God promised to a Deliverer, a Savior, a Substitute who would pay for our sin in our place. He would be a perfect sacrifice. That's what Jesus did.

Jesus lived a perfect life. He never sinned. He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. By trusting Jesus we can be made right with God and be forgiven.

Sin separates a person from God but Jesus is the only one who can remove the barrier of sin. We must believe...trust in Jesus alone.

Key Verse: (Romans 3:23) All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Ways to capture this verse: Divide the class into 2 groups and have them face each other. Have one group fall to their knees saying, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Have the other group jump up and respond, "That's why we need a Savior - JESUS!" Do several times then have them switch what they say.

Skit: Sewer Water/Poison in drinking water

Have a large see through container. Have several children pour nice clear bottles of water into the basin. Then have someone add a small bottle of BLACK (food coloring) into the basin. The black water can represent "sewer water" (or poison works too). Adding the sewer water ruins the drinking water. Yuk!

In the same way, even a little sin makes us unacceptable to go to heaven. We need God's forgiveness to receive Eternal Life. Jesus is the only one who can remove the stain of our sin so we can be forgiven and go to heaven. We must trust in Jesus alone to go to heaven.

Craft: Heart Necklace

Cut out 2 hearts the same size; 1 red, 1 black. Write on the black one: "The wages of sin is death." On the red one write, "The free gift of God is Eternal Life through Christ Jesus our Lord." Glue them back to back. Punch a hole and tie a string to wear around neck.

Close in Prayer

3. HOW DOES GOD FEEL ABOUT THIS?

GOD

Mood: Have balloons around with: Happy Face (God is Love) and Gavel (God is Just)

As kids arrive have them toss balloons around trying to keep them from touching the floor. As they bat a balloon, have them say "God is Love" or "God is Just".

Welcome and Prayer

Key Point: God loves us and doesn't want to punish us but He must punish sin.

Bible Story/Teaching: Summarize the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-22). There was a boy who was loved very much by his father. The boy became rebellious and decided to leave home. He wanted to live life the way he wanted to. The boy did things that were not pleasing to God. They would have made his dad very sad. Even though the father was really sad, he continued to love the boy. One day things got very bad for the boy. He didn't have money for food, clothing or a place to stay. He finally came to his senses. The boy realized that he had sinned against his father and God. The boy turned from his sinful life and went back home. His dad welcomed the boy home with open arms.

Even though we sin, God loves us very much. He loves us in spite of who we are. He is patient and doesn't want any of us to perish (2 Peter 3:9). But God must punish our sin. That's why He sent Jesus.

What is God like?

Read: Isaiah 6:3 - pure, sinless (holy)

I John 4:8b - God is love

Jeremiah 31:3 - loves us with an everlasting love

Habakkuk 1:13 - cannot tolerate wrong (God is just...like a judge, He must punish sin)

WE ALL have a problem. What is it called? (sin)

God loves us so much He did something about our sin. Who can tell me what He did? (sent Jesus)
God offers us forgiveness through Jesus Christ. God reached out to save us by sending His only Son Jesus to die to suffer the punishment for our sin. How much did God love us? (He sent His Son Jesus to die in your place) We need to trust in what Jesus did for us to be saved.

Key Verse: (John 3:16) For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

Ways to capture this verse: a) Work with the kids to come up with hand motions to use while reciting. b) Write each word on a separate sheet of paper and have kids put it in order. c) Give each child one word and have them jump up and say it when it's their turn.

Skit: Child steals money from Gramma's purse (A leader + 2 kids act out while story is narrated.)

During summer vacation 2 children (give them names) go to stay with Gramma for a couple of weeks. Gramma goes to the bank where she cashes a check to buy food they will need. One of the children steals the money from Gramma's purse to buy a new toy when they get back home. The child hides the money in a shoe in the closet. Gramma discovers the money is missing and they go hungry for 3 days! No one will admit they took the money. Gramma is sad and angry. Then one day she is cleaning the kids bedroom and discovers the money in the shoe. "OK", she says, "who is responsible for this?" _____ confesses to taking the money. Gramma scolds _____ and is sad that they did this. Then Gramma gives _____ a big hug.

Was Gramma right in correcting _____? Why?

Did Gramma really love _____? How can you tell she did?

Although God loves us and doesn't want to punish us, He is also holy, perfect and just and must punish sin. God loved us by sending His Son to do what? (Die on the cross to suffer for our sin)

Craft: God Coin (Like a coin has 2 sides, God is both loving but also just.)

Use yellow or gold construction paper. Cut out large circles. On one side: God is Love ☺ and doesn't want to punish us. On the other side: God is Just ☹ and like a Judge, He must punish sin

Close in Prayer

4. HOW DID GOD SOLVE OUR SIN PROBLEM?

JESUS

MOOD: Leaders wear crowns and/or royal looking robes. Assemble a simple cross and place it in a highly visible place in the room. Write out (Romans 5:8) "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." on construction paper (tear edges to make it ragged) and nail it to the cross.

As kids arrive, have paper and markers available near the cross. Have them answer the question, "What is an example of a sin... what kinds of things are sinful?" Have them write an answer on the paper, fold it in half and place it at the foot of the cross.

Welcome and Prayer

Key Point: Jesus took the punishment for our sin. Jesus is our 'substitute'.

Bible Story/Teaching: Summarize the story of Jesus dying on the cross to take our place for the punishment *we deserve* for our sin (Mark 15:16 - 16:6). Jesus is God who came and lived as a child (Christmas), teenager and man on this earth. And all that time, Jesus lived a perfect life. It's amazing! He never sinned. Therefore there was nothing He ever did that deserved punishment. But Jesus came to be a substitute for us. What does 'substitute' mean? (wait for responses) Can you name some examples? (substitute teacher, margarine - a substitute for butter, in sports...a player from 'the bench')

Jesus willingly took the punishment for our sin when He died on the cross. He became our 'substitute'. Because we have sinned, we deserve to be punished. But Jesus (God) loved you so much, He came and took that punishment for you and me! What can we remember about Jesus death? What happened to Jesus?

- Beat and whipped; Crown of thorns; Made fun of Him (mocked)
- Forced Him to carry His cross - Nailed to and died on the cross (like a criminal)
- Buried in a cave (tomb)

Did Jesus stay dead? (rose from the dead, and visited the disciples and His friends)

Where is Jesus now? (in heaven where He offers us the gift of eternal life)

Jesus is very much alive although we do not see Him. And He wants us to know Him and experience eternal life now and forever with Him in heaven. We need to believe, to place our trust in Jesus alone to be saved from the penalty of our sin. We'll talk about that more next time.

Key Verse: (Romans 5:8) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Ways to capture this verse: a) Move over to the cross and ask, What does 'demonstrate' mean? (shows) What's another word for "Christ died for us"? (substitute) b) Have several kids try to recite the verse from memory, then have the whole group recite. c) Personalize the verse showing kids how Jesus died for them... Hold up a poster saying, "But God demonstrates His own love for _____ in this: While _____ is a sinner, Christ died for _____." (Have kids say their first name where the blanks are.)

Skit: Jesus is our Substitute

Have several kids hold signs like: lying, stealing, swearing, hating, etc. A leader plays the role of Jesus while another leader narrates the story. *Jesus came from Heaven to earth.* (Have Jesus (wearing a crown) come down steps (or chair/ladder) to portray Him coming down from Heaven. Jesus takes off His crown and leaves it on the bottom step.) *Although Jesus was God, He became fully a man.* (Jesus moves around the crowd doing good things because...) *He lived a perfect life! He didn't deserve to be punished and die. However, Jesus came to take the punishment for our sin.* (Jesus goes around and collects the signs representing our sin.) *Then Jesus was crucified.* (Jesus places the signs (sins) at His feet, closes eyes, tilts head and holds out arms like on the cross.) *Jesus suffered on the cross taking the punishment we deserve for our sin. He died.* (Jesus lays on floor.) *But He rose again and went back to heaven.* (Get up, put on crown and go back up steps.) *Where He offers us the free gift of eternal life so we can experience His love, His forgiveness and live forever with Him in Heaven!* (Applause)

Craft: Cross with nail marks + (My) Sin

Make crosses with popsicle sticks. Use a marker to show where nails would have been. Glue on a jagged piece of paper that says, "(Child's first name) Sin".

Close in Prayer

5. HOW DO YOU BEGIN TO EXPERIENCE ETERNAL LIFE?

BELIEVE

MOOD: Play "musical chairs" as kids arrive only don't eliminate the one who is without a chair. Just add a chair to the circle each time a child is added to the game.



Welcome and Prayer

Key Point: We need to believe (trust) in Jesus Christ alone to be forgiven and go to heaven.

Bible Story/Teaching: Summarize the story of Doubting Thomas (John 20:24-29). After Jesus rose from the dead, He visited some of His special friends the Bible calls disciples or followers. They were really excited. They went to tell one of the other disciples who wasn't there when Jesus came to visit. His name was Thomas. They excitedly said to Thomas, "We have seen the Lord (Jesus)!" But Thomas wasn't sure about this, that's why he's called 'doubting' Thomas. Thomas said, "I won't believe unless I see where the nails went through Jesus' hands and where the spear pierced Jesus side." Well, remember, Jesus is God and knew what Thomas had said. A little later Jesus came to visit Thomas and said, "Thomas, place your finger on the scars made by the nails. And feel my side Thomas. That's where the spear entered my body." Guess what happened next? Yes, Thomas BELIEVED that Jesus really was alive and had died on the cross for him. Thomas said, "MY Lord (leader/teacher) and MY God." That's what Jesus wants to be for all of us. WE must believe in Jesus even if we don't see Jesus like Thomas did. That's why Jesus said to Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Jesus wants us to believe in Him even if we don't see Him.

So, what are some other words to describe what it means to 'believe'? (faith, trust)

In the Bible the word 'believe' means more than just mentally agreeing something is true. It means to 'trust'.

Can you think of any examples of when you trusted someone? (dad catching you when you jumped into swimming pool, mom drove you to school, etc.)

Jesus wants us to trust Him so strongly that we want to choose to follow Him. That's what Lord means - Jesus wants to be Lord (our Leader) in your life.

And the Bible tells us we are saved because of what Jesus has done on the cross and NOT by things we do - thinking they will earn us a spot in heaven. Yes, God wants us to do things that are pleasing to Him but because He loves us so much. (see key verse) Why should we do things that are pleasing to Jesus? (Be sure to reinforce this motive for Godly living often.)

Key Verse: (Ephesians 2:8-9) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

OK, what does Jesus want us to have and experience? (Eternal Life)

And how do we get this free gift of Eternal Life? (wait for responses; "believe in Jesus alone")

Skit: Jesus Chair

Set up 2 chairs side by side. Put a sign on one - JESUS. On the other - YOU. Have a leader talk through this story. *Let's say this chair represents ME. (Leader sits in chair.) Now, I might do a lot of good things. But the Bible tells me that no matter how many good things I do, that will not earn my way to heaven. It's only by trusting in Jesus alone that I will get to heaven. So, let's let this chair (point to the Jesus chair) represents Jesus and what HE DID on the cross for me so I could go to heaven. Do you believe this JESUS chair could hold me up? (YES) Why isn't it holding me up? (Cuz your sitting in the YOU chair) What must I do to have it hold me up? (sit on the JESUS chair) Yes, I must believe it will hold me up and trust it (move to JESUS chair) by sitting on it. That's what each one of us must do. We must believe (trust) in Jesus alone to be saved and enjoy our relationship with Jesus. (Perhaps have a couple of kids demonstrate moving from the YOU chair to the JESUS chair)*

Craft: Key to Life

Using construction paper, cut out a large key. Write on top of key: Key to LIFE - Faith. On the skinny part of the key write: NOT by Works.

Close in Prayer

RESPONSE

MOOD: Party atmosphere (Balloons, streamers, large gift box marked Eternal Life)

Welcome and Prayer

Key Point: Jesus wants us to humbly accept His forgiveness and invite Him into our lives to help us live the way He wants us to live.

Bible Story/Teaching: Today we are talking about what it means to choose to follow Jesus. Summarize the story of Jesus calling His disciples to follow Him (Matthew 4:18-22).

Jesus had been spending a little time near a lake (Sea of Galilee) where He had been talking to the people who lived in the area about God and what the kingdom of heaven was like. He wanted people to understand and be ready to go to heaven. There were some who were really excited about this. For instance, while Jesus was walking along the shore of the lake, He saw a couple of fishermen just casting their fishing net out the side of their boat. They were brothers (Peter and Andrew). They must have been excited for what Jesus had been saying because when Jesus called to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men!" they immediately chose to turn their boat around, come to shore and follow Jesus.

And just a little while later 2 other fishermen (James and John) did the same thing when Jesus called out to them to come and follow Him. They became Jesus's disciples (like students). I'd say they were pretty excited and felt very special to get the invitation from Jesus, don't you? And guess what, you are just as special to Jesus too because He calls or invites each one of us to follow Him.

In this story we see these disciples made a "commitment" to follow Jesus. They turned from what they were doing to follow Jesus.

What does it mean to make a commitment? Can you think of an example? (wait for responses)

Here's a good way to make a commitment to follow Jesus; it's as simple as A-B-C:

A - ADMIT that you are a sinner and need God's forgiveness

B - BELIEVE that Jesus died to pay the penalty for your sin and rose from the dead

C - COMMIT to 'turn from your sin' and follow Him... letting Him be your Lord or Leader

Our Key verse for today says it well.

Key Verse: And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. (2 Corinthians 5:15)

Jesus died for you. He wants you to commit to follow Him. And with His help, to live for Him.

Who must you trust to have eternal life and go to heaven? (Jesus)

What do we turn away from when we make a commitment to follow Jesus? (our sins)

Who must you choose to follow? (Jesus) Because He loves YOU... SO MUCH!

Prayer for salvation: If you have not already made a commitment to follow Jesus and want to today, I can help you do that. We can pray and tell Jesus what you want to do.

[You may have kids bow their heads and lift a hand if they never made a commitment to follow Jesus but now sense Jesus speaking to their heart to follow Him. Then you can:

1. Have those who raised their hand come to you and you can help them pray along the A-B-C's (Something like, "Jesus, I am a sinner and need your forgiveness. Thank you that you died on the cross for my sins. Come into my life. I want to follow you from this day on. Amen.")
2. Have those who raised their hand go to their small group leader. Have the small group leaders help them pray along the A-B-C's. (see above)

Provide a special children's Bible to those who commit to follow Jesus and help them grow!!

Special Spiritual Birthday Party - With cake or cupcakes. Go over Luke 15:10 Jesus said, "In the same way God's angels are happy when even one person turns to him."
(Contemporary English Version)

Craft: Invitation Card. (Suggest you make these in advance.)

On the front write: Jesus said, "Come, follow Me."

On the inside: Name _____ Date _____

- Today I put my trust in Jesus alone for the gift of eternal life and chose to follow Him.
- I'm glad that I have previously chosen to follow Jesus
- I'm not quite ready to choose to follow Jesus

Close In Prayer