

Session 1

Jesus heals a leper

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Jesus showed us who God is by touching the untouchable and loving those who were often feared and rejected. When we live upside-down we show God's love to people we might otherwise avoid.

BIBLE TEXT

Luke 5:12-15

FAITH CHALLENGE

Jesus shows love and compassion.

ADVANCE PREPARATION

- Read through the entire session, and decide what you will do.
- Set up the room/space for the various activities.
- Prepare a bowl of water and several towels for Kids Cluster.
- Review the motions for the theme song.
- Practice the drama on page 31 with four characters: Jesus, Leper, Villager 1, Villager 2.
- Gather supplies for the activities you choose to do.
- Prepare a snack (p. 14).

Kids Cluster

1. **Plan an activity for early arrivals.** Check page 6 for ideas.
2. **If the children do not know each other,** make nametags and play some get-acquainted games (p. 6).
3. **Welcome the children and gather for a time of singing** (p. 9). Be sure to include action songs, familiar songs, favorite songs, and new songs.
4. **Explain that in Jesus' time,** before Jewish people went into the temple to worship God, they washed themselves to show their desire to be pure. Invite children to wash their hands in a bowl of water before coming to the central worship area.

Tip

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Children may have family or friends who are ill. Some may recover and some might not. Be sensitive in these conversations and emphasize Jesus' love and compassion during difficult times.

Tip

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Children will have some experiences that Jesus might have had. During Kids Cluster, children will wash their hands like people in Jesus' day did. Create a nice washing area, using a large earthenware bowl and towel. Encourage a prayerful attitude. Explain the significance.

Kids Live Upside-Down

Tip

Using motions helps the songs stick in children's minds. It is also a way for children to participate when they don't yet know the words of the song. Take time to teach the motions so that they can be used and enjoyed each week.

Tip

Because the drama is fairly lengthy and requires some practice, see if you can find adults who are willing to present the drama. This is a great way to involve people in the church who may not normally participate in children's events.

Tip

Use the questions/ideas as conversation points during the craft time. It is not necessary to sit quietly and reflect on these points, but do include them during other activities.

1. **Begin by singing the theme song**, "We're on an Upside-Down Mission" (p. 9). Use motions.
2. **Introduce the theme of the day:** Jesus shows love and compassion.
3. **Ask children to talk about a time when they were sick**, or when a family member or friend was sick. Ask questions such as, "Who cared that you were hurting? What did they do to help you?" Some children may give examples of having a cold or the flu. Others may talk about cancer or a long-term illness.
4. **Before reading the Bible story**, explain that in biblical times leprosy was a word for all kinds of skin diseases. These diseases were not like having a cold! Some of them were contagious and eventually led to paralysis, loss of body parts, and even death. In Jesus' culture, people who had leprosy were viewed as filthy and unacceptable. They had to wear torn clothing and announce themselves whenever they encountered people. By law, they had to be completely separate from family and the community.
5. **Tell the Bible story** using the drama on page 31.
6. **Talk about the Bible story.**
 - Jesus could have said to the man, "Be made clean." Why do you think Jesus touched the man to heal him?
 - I wonder how long it had been since someone had touched the man with leprosy?
 - How do you think the man felt when he was away from his family?
 - I wonder why Jesus ordered the man not to tell anyone that he had been healed. Do you think the man was quiet about what Jesus did?
 - Can you think of other times that Jesus healed someone?
 - Have you ever prayed for someone who was sick? Has someone ever prayed for you?
 - Have people ever acted like you were "untouchable?"
7. **Sing "Teach Me Kingdom Ways" (p. 10).**
8. **Practice today's Bible memory verse:** "Then Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, 'I do choose. Be made clean.' Immediately the leprosy left him" (Luke 5:13). Look on page 13 for creative Bible memorization ideas.

Kids Create

CARING FOR THE SICK (GROUP)

- Work together and identify a person or several people who are sick and in need of encouragement. Perhaps it is a family member, a friend, someone in the church family, or someone in larger the community.
- Think of ways to bless and care for that person. What would be most meaningful? What would bring the most joy to that person?
- Come up with several ideas and then choose one or more ideas to do! Perhaps you will make cards or paint pictures. Maybe you can make a snack to share. If the person enjoys nature, perhaps you could go outside and gather nature items for a collage.

UPSIDE-DOWN BANNER

- Start the banner! See page 15 for materials and instructions.
- Jesus touched the untouchable. Add a handprint to the banner, representing the loving touch that Jesus gave, and the love we can offer to others.

A COLORFUL STORY (INDIVIDUAL)

Materials: white paper, variety of art mediums (chalk, watercolors, markers, paint)

- Give each child a piece of paper that has been folded into thirds. In the left third, ask children to imagine the man who was covered with leprosy. What colors would they use to represent the feelings of that man? Fill that portion of the paper with one or more colors, using any of the available art mediums (chalk, watercolors, markers, paint, etc).
- In the middle third of the paper, have children imagine the feelings Jesus may have experienced as he saw the man with leprosy. Use one or more colors to represent that.
- In the right third of the paper, have children choose colors that represent how the man may have felt after he was healed from the leprosy.

OLIVE TREE

Materials: green construction paper, scissors, markers

- Cut out leaves for the olive tree (p. 18).
- Write the name of someone who is sick on each leaf.
- Say a prayer for that person as you add the leaf or leaves to the olive tree.

Kids Move

NO TOUCHING ALLOWED!

(PAIRS)

What if, like people with leprosy, we couldn't touch anyone else? Our lives would be very different, and sometimes quite challenging.

Materials: oranges (one per pair)

- Pair children and give each pair an orange.
- Have the pair place the orange between their foreheads and then try to walk to the opposite side of the room without touching each other at all.
- Try other variations and see what happens (i.e., place orange between partners' shoulders or knees).
- After the activity, share the orange as a snack.

DOCTOR DODGEBALL

(GROUP)

Materials: several soft balls, dividing line/cones

- Divide the group into two teams and have them stand on opposite sides of the room. Provide each team with several soft balls (not softballs).
- Make a dividing line in the middle of the floor that cannot be crossed.
- Choose someone to be the doctor. There can be a doctor for each team, or one doctor for both teams.
- Teams begin throwing the balls at each other and may run up to, but not over, the middle line. When a player is hit by a ball, he or she needs to lie down on the ground. The doctor needs to run out and tag the player so that he or she can rejoin the game. The doctor is immune to the balls.

THE WORD SPREADS

(GROUP)

Luke 5:15 says, "But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad." Play a game of whisper down the lane/telephone.

- Have children stand in a line. Whisper a short story-related message to child 1, who then passes it to child 2 as quietly as possible.
- The last person in line will say the message out loud. Is it the same message that was initially given?

FROZEN BEANBAG

(GROUP)

This is a friendship game that encourages children to reach out and help each other.

Materials: bean bags (one per child)

- Children will balance beanbags on their heads. At your signal, children will move around the area at their own pace. You may then signal that the children need to hop or skip.
- If a beanbag falls off, that child is frozen. A friend must then pick up the beanbag and replace it on the frozen person's head without losing his or her own bean bag. Play for a specific period of time or until everyone is frozen.
- When the game is over ask the players how many times they helped their friends, or how many times their friends helped them. How did it feel to help someone? How did it feel to be helped?

Closing

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For closing ideas, see page 7.

DRAMA

Characters

Jesus
Leper
Villager 1
Villager 2

Villager 1: He's coming this way! My neighbor said so and, believe me, my neighbor knows everything about everybody.

Villager 2: Who's coming this way?

Villager 1: Jesus! The man who heals! Haven't you heard of him? They say he casts out evil spirits.

Villager 2: That would be a miracle.

Leper: (*Takes one step toward them.*) Did you say miracle? Did you say someone is coming who can heal people?

Villager 1: (*Screams.*) A leper! Go away! Why didn't you announce yourself?

Villager 2: Oh, how terrible! You are covered with leprosy! Get away. How can you put the rest of us at risk like this? There ought to be a law.

Villager 1: There is a law. He's supposed to stay with others of his kind. And when he's in public he's supposed to announce himself. And we are not supposed to talk to him. What is he trying to do—make the rest of us sick? How despicable!

Leper: (*Pulls back slightly and calls halfheartedly.*) Unclean. Unclean. Unclean. (*Forgets himself and moves in again. Reaches toward Villager 1.*) But you said there is a healer.

Villager 1: (*Screeches*) Don't touch me!

Villager 2: He won't heal you. It would take a miracle to heal you.

Villager 1: He can't heal you. Only God could heal you—maybe.

(*Villagers pull away from the leper and slowly freeze with arms at side and heads lowered.*)

Leper: (*Addresses children.*) "Go away," they shout, "Don't touch me!" they say. They speak with such disgust. "Announce yourself," they insist. "You have to call out whenever you're near people."

"Unclean! Unclean!" They want me to shout it wherever I go. My name is not unclean. I have a name, you know. A name that my parents chose for me.

My parents. They're mostly a vague memory now. I've lived apart from them so long that sometimes I think it was only a dream. I do dream of them. Especially my dear, dear mother. The other night I dreamed my mother put her arms around me (*hugs himself*). I saw her coming toward me, and like a child I ran into her arms. Suddenly I was the little boy I used to be, and I sobbed. "I love you," she said.

I knew it was a dream. I knew it couldn't last. When it started to fade, I cried out, "No! No! I won't wake up. I won't!" But I did, and then I saw the face of Daniel—one of the other lepers that I'm forced to live with. He was shaking me, "Wake up!" he said. "Stop crying. It's just a bad dream."

I wanted to strangle him. "How do you know I'm having a bad dream? You of all people should know that even the worst nightmare is better than being awake."

To be awake is to remember my horrible existence with Daniel and the others. We huddle, staring at each other's sores, wondering if we look as bad as our neighbors. Knowing that if we do, it's no wonder the others are repulsed by us. No wonder that even our own families are afraid to touch us. No wonder that my mother brings food to the edge of our colony outside the city and waves pathetically—inching backward as I go to pick it up.

They say a healer is coming this way. They say he does miracles. "But he couldn't heal you," they say.

But they say he does miracles . . .

(Leper slowly freezes. Jesus walks toward the leper. Villagers look up.)

Villager 1: It's Jesus! That's him! Maybe he'll do a miracle. Let's ask for one.

Villager 2: Yeah, let's pick something really impossible!

Leper: *(Looks up slowly and turns.)* Impossible? Jesus? *(Throws himself to the ground at Jesus' feet.)*

Villager 1: He's unclean! Don't touch him!

Villager 2: There's a law against his kind. He has to announce himself. He's unclean!

Leper: *(Looks up at Jesus.)* Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

Jesus: *(Reaches down to the man, touching his shoulder, urging him to his feet. Then gently touches leper's face. With his other hand, he takes the man's hand as in a handshake.)* I am willing. Be clean!

Leper: *(Smiles. Looks questioningly at Jesus, then at his hand.)* "You are touching me. No one touches me. But you are touching me. *(He touches his own face and arm, realizing that his sores have disappeared.)* I'm clean! I'm clean!

Jesus: Don't tell anyone. Instead, go to the priests. Offer the sacrifice commanded by Moses so everyone will have proof of your healing. But don't tell anyone. *(Jesus smiles as though he knows how impossible this will be.)*

Leper: He touched me! He healed me! I'm clean! I'm clean! *(Runs off, past the children.)* Clean! Clean! I'm clean! I'm going home! I'm clean!

Villager 1: *(Turns to Jesus with disbelief.)* He was a leper. You touched him.

Villager 2: You healed him!

Villager 1: *(Emphatically)* Only God could do that. *(Looks Jesus up and down, trying to understand. Speaks uncertainly.)* Maybe?