

Small Group Experience

LESSON 1 - “Every Soul!”



Whatchagaddaknow?:

“Red and Yellow, Black and White, They Are Precious In His Sight!”

Power Verse:

“The Lord...does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.”

-2 Peter 3:9

Retelling The Bible Story

SUPPLY LIST:

- * Narrator Nametags Print Piece (provided; print one set)
- * Bible Story Print Piece (provided; print one set)
- * Tape

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Before small group begins, print and cut the Bible Story Print Piece and Narrator Nametags Print Piece; review the story so you are familiar with the main points. Once small group begins, review the Bible Story by asking for four volunteers. Each volunteer should tape a name tag to their shirt and take turns reading one part of the Bible Story aloud to the group. Continue on this way until the story is complete.

Say - I am very excited for today's lesson. There is a lot to talk about, so let's begin right away. I need four volunteers who are willing to read aloud.

-Choose volunteers and give each a name tag-

Say - Each of you now has a new name - “Narrator!” I have a copy of the Bible Story, and the narrators will take turns reading one part of the story aloud. Once you read one part of the story, pass it along to the next narrator. We will continue on this way until the story is complete.

-Allow the narrators to take turns reading the story aloud-

Say - Thank you, you did a great job! This Bible Story is important for so many reasons. I want to hear your thoughts on a few things from the story.

Ask - Why did God give Peter a dream about animals coming down from heaven on a blanket?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Ask - How did God feel about Peter's prejudice?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Ask - What was the result of Peter letting go of his prejudice?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Game/Activity

SUPPLY LIST:

- * Person Print Piece (*provided; print one set and laminate, if possible*)
- * Loved Nametag Print Piece (*provided; print one nametag per kid*)
- * Tape (*for the group to share*)
- * Scissors (*for the group to share*)
- * Crayons, markers, or pencils
- * Blindfold

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Before small group begins, print the Person Print Pieces and Loved Nametag Print Piece. Cut out the person from the Person Print Pieces, attach the top and bottom halves of the person, and laminate (for best results). Once activity time begins, allow each kid to cut out one Loved Nametag and write their name on it. It will need to say their name to help identify the tags from one another. Then, cut and roll a piece of tape and place it on the back of the Loved Nametag.. Play the game as you would play “Pin the Tail on the Donkey.” One at a time, blindfold kids and allow them to try and “pin” the nametag on the person. This can be played multiple rounds as time allows and is a fun lesson concept reinforcing activity.

Say - I just had four of you wear labels during our story review, but now I think we should practice labeling others. What better way to practice labeling others than a game? First, everyone should cut out one nametag, write your name on it, and place a rolled-up piece of tape on the back.

-Allow time for the kids to complete the activity-

Say - Now it's time to play! This game will be played just like “Pin the Tail on the Donkey.” Each of you will take turns being blindfolded and trying to place the nametag on the person.

-Play the game; this can be played multiple rounds as time allows-

Group Sharing

SUPPLY LIST:

- * Every Soul Matters To God Nametag Print Piece (*provided; print one nametag per kid*)
- * Bibles (*for the group to share*)
- * Pencils, crayons, colored pencils

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Before group sharing begins, print the Every Soul Matters to God Nametag Print Piece and cut out the nametags. Once group sharing begins, give each kid a nametag and something to write with. Group sharing is focused on encouraging the kids to open up and discuss the lesson concepts and relate those concepts to their lives. Help facilitate and guide the discussion time.

Ask - What do you think I mean when I say, “Every soul matters to God”?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

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Say - Peter learned that his prejudice towards people who were different than him was NOT okay with God. You might be thinking, “That’s all fine and good, but I don’t have a problem with prejudice. I’m not sure what any of this has to do with me.” In this context, it’s easy to talk passionately about how every soul matters to God, but what happens when we’re not at church? What happens when we’re at school, hanging out with friends, at a ball game, or texting? What does, “Every soul matters to God,” look like in our everyday lives? I want us to talk about that together.

Ask - Does God really love everyone the same? Why?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Say - We’ve been using nametags all day. You wear a nametag so that everyone knows what your name is, right? But what about the other “names” we give people? What are some common labels we assign?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Say - All too often, we assign labels and names to people that have nothing to do with the way God sees them. Think about the person who drives you nuts, the person who picks on you, or the person who makes horrible choices. Now ask yourself if they matter to God as much as you do. That’s a tough question. Divide into small groups, look up John 3:16, and read and discuss it together. Write your thoughts about the verse on the back of your nametag.

-Allow time for the groups to complete the task-

Ask - How does this verse speak to God’s feelings about people?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Ask - Would anyone like to share any other thoughts about this verse?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Say - God loves people so much that He was willing to give his only Son over to death so that everyone, everywhere, can be forgiven. That’s an intense love.

Ask - Does our world make godly love for people difficult to practice? Why or why not?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Say - Peter had a moment in which he was confronted with the truth of his prejudice. Immediately after his realization came the opportunity make it right. He was asked to share God’s love with the people he struggled to even like. Just like Peter, we have been made aware that every soul matters to God, no matter what. God doesn’t look at people and see any label other than “loved, valued, and worth it.” Now we are presented with the opportunity to make it right - to share God’s love with the people we may have even struggled to like. How do we do this? How do we stop with the labels and love no matter what?

-Allow time for the kids to respond; discuss their answers with the group-

Prayer Time

Say - Every soul matters to God, and every soul **MUST** matter to us! Let's pray and ask God to help us drop the labels and see others through His eyes.

Pray

Closing

Say - Peter had a big problem - he was prejudiced. He believed that God loved him and forgave his sins, but he never thought about how God felt about the Gentiles, the non-Jews. Peter didn't believe “those” people mattered as much, so he omitted them from his plan to share the Good News. After all, why would God want the Gentiles? They looked different, talked differently, ate differently, and basically got on the nerves of the Jews. God made it a point to address Peter's prejudice in an undeniable way. He opened Peter's eyes and heart to see the animosity he held for the Gentiles. God revealed to Peter that He loved the Gentiles just as much as He loved the Jews. Once He gave Peter this knowledge, He gave Him a chance to prove that he understood that every soul matters to God. Peter did, and an entire household turned to God! God wants to address our prejudices. He wants to open our eyes and hearts to people we might have labeled and show us that the only nametag they wear is “LOVED.” When God reveals this truth, we will be faced with the same challenge as Peter. What do we do with the knowledge that every soul matters to God, and how do we share God's love with the people we once labeled? It's awesome to think that God will use you to change the lives of people for eternity if you let Him! In fact, that's been His plan for your life all along. Thank you for coming today. I will see you again soon!



PART 1...One day, God appeared to the Apostle Peter in a dream as he was sleeping. God showed Peter a vision of a blanket coming down from Heaven that had a bunch of animals on it. God told Peter to kill the animals and eat them. This food was the kind of food that Peter had been taught to NEVER eat.

Peter was SO offended! He couldn't believe God was asking him to eat that kind of food. He told God, "I have NEVER eaten any food that is impure." God told Peter, "Do not call anything impure that I have made clean." This happened three times, and then Peter woke up.

PART 2...Through these dreams, Peter realized that God was trying to teach him an important lesson. You see, Peter had a big problem. He and the other disciples had a real problem with anyone who was not a Jew by birth. They told the Jews about Jesus, no problem, but they refused to share the good news of Jesus with the Gentiles. Peter was one of the main disciples who dealt with this prejudice, or choosing not to love others because they're different.

PART 3...Right after Peter woke up from his dream, there was a knock at his front door. The men at the door were servants of a man named Cornelius. One of them said, "My master, Cornelius, would like to see you." So, they took Peter to Cornelius' house. Cornelius was not a Jew, but God told him to get Peter so Peter could tell him about Jesus. Peter realized that God was trying to teach him through those dreams that God loves EVERYONE the same.

PART 4...Peter told Cornelius' family, "I now realize that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation." He basically said, "I've come to realize that EVERY SOUL MATTERS TO GOD!" It was a powerful moment. Peter prayed with Cornelius' entire family to accept Jesus that day. It was a miracle! It only happened because Peter chose to treat others just as God does. He showed love to Cornelius and his family even though they were different. That's what each one of us must do as well.







