

USE THE SANDALS AND SHIELD

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

TRUST FEAR SIN SALVATION

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Ephesians 6:15-16; Philemon

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To understand salvation delivers us from fear and sin as Onesimus was not afraid to return to a difficult situation

MEMORY VERSE

"Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Fight or escape! When Onesimus was in trouble, he chose to escape. When preadolescents are in trouble, the world tells them they have two options: fight or escape. Onesimus discovered a third option: he understood that trust in God brings salvation. And salvation provides the courage to face fear and embrace freedom, rejecting the tyranny or power of sin.

This session provides the opportunity to present this third option to the preadolescents. They do not have to resign themselves to fight. Nor do they have to run away from their fears. They can find strength in the power of God, put on the armor he provides, and trust in the Lord when things go wrong. Encourage students by telling about a difficult situation (age appropriate) that you were able to face and overcome with God's help. Or, you may choose a difficult situation from one of your family members. Encourage them to think about the situations they may face. Use this story to help them be ready and use the faith God gave them to persevere and stay true to God in any circumstance.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

The problem

Slavery is a problem that society has always struggled with. It was the cause of many struggles through the centuries, and the early Church was no exception, since from its beginning the Roman Empire accepted slavery as a common practice. Our story today is about the slavery of a person: Onesimus. He was a slave owned by Philemon a master to whom Onesimus stole something and escaped seeking his freedom. The slave fled from Colossae to Rome. What Onesimus discovered in Rome was true freedom in believing in Christ. Meanwhile, his master, Philemon, remained in Colossae. He too, having trusted Jesus as his personal Savior, experienced a new freedom. He was now a Christian, a new creation in Christ. He was a leader in the church in Colossae and opened his home to hold meetings and have fellowship with other believers. While still a slaveholder, he was responding to a higher call for his life, the call of Christ.

The appeal

Paul knew the situation Onesimus faced in Colossae. Roman law declared that if a slave stole and fled from his owner, he could be put to death. Someone capable of doing something like that was considered useless to their master. Paul also understood that Onesimus' usefulness was not based on the benefits he could offer as a slave, but rather on becoming part of a community of believers. From imprisonment in a house in Rome, Paul makes his appeal in a letter written to Philemon. The apostle wrote: "Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever—no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord" (Philemon 15-16).

Paul could order Philemon to treat Onesimus as himself. But instead, he appealed to Philemon's love for Christ. The apostle did this knowing that if he gave Philemon the freedom to choose what to do with Onesimus, he would treat him as an equal, without rancor or hatred, for the love of Jesus. Paul's hope was that Philemon would extend the forgiveness that he had received from Jesus Christ to his former slave, receiving him as a brother in Christ.

Freedom

Onesimus was already experiencing true freedom in Christ. He received God's forgiveness and began an intimate or close relationship with him. But he also needed to restore his human relationship with Philemon. It is for this reason that Onesimus returned to Colossae. Salvation did not exempt him from facing the consequences of his past actions. However, it was his trust in God that led him to return to his master. Paul trusted, by sending Onesimus back to Philemon, that the early Church would serve as a place of forgiveness, grace and freedom. There would no longer be slaves or free; there were only those forgiven by Christ.

What counts is the love that transcends or goes beyond our differences and the faith that frees us from sin. Teach your students to love, accept and extend the grace of God to all who they find along their way.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Freedom

Hand out Student Activity Sheet #406-A (In Your Opinion, What does Freedom Mean?). Give pencils, pens, markers, crayons, etc. Tell them to think of words or draw things that describe freedom. What freedom does God give you? Give time for them to think, write, and draw. Discuss their answers as a group.

Important words

Write the words and their meaning on cards or paper. After you have taught them to the students and given examples, you can place them next to each of the figures that will already be placed on the mural prepared for this unit: "The armor of God."

Footwear/ sandals (Ephesians 6:15): This piece of God's armor reminds us that as his children, we must always be ready to tell others the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ. Telling others about Jesus is the best news that can be given to a person.

Shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16): This piece of God's armor protects us from moments that can discourage us or generate the desire to return to our old ways of living and turn our backs on the Lord. When we choose to have faith and believe in God, we decide to live bravely, with the courage he gives us. Even if others laugh, make fun of us or persecute us we can still trust in God.

TEACH THE LESSON

Philemon

Before the start of the session, copy and cut out the section on the events in the life of Philemon and Onesimus in Student Activity Sheet #406-B and #406-C. Attach each of them on paper that appears to be an old scroll. Roll them up and number them: 1, 2, 3,

and 4.

In the group, give four scrolls to very good readers. Let each of them open them (in order from 1 to 4) and read it to the group. Tell the rest of the students that they will respond with you in the “group” sections.

The greeting

Reader 1: Dear Philemon, it is so good to be able to write to a co-worker for Christ. I am a prisoner because of the Lord, but Timothy and other brothers are of great help to me. I raise my prayers. “Grace and peace to you, from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (v.1).

Group 1: Paul begins his letter by appealing to Philemon as a brother and fellow worker in Christ.

Expression of gratitude and prayer

Reader 2: My dear friend, I thank God, always presenting you in my prayers. I heard very good things about you. I heard of your great faith in Jesus. Also of the love you have for your brothers and sisters in Christ. “I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ” (v.6). When you have time to share your faith in Jesus with others, God’s love will grow even more in you. We have great joy and encouragement in your love; I thank you for everything you gave me.

Group 2: Paul talked about Philemon’s love for others and how this encouraged him. He describes his prayers for Philemon and everything he did for him.

The request

Reader 3: It is your great love that helps me know that I can write this letter and ask you something so great. I am an old man and a prisoner, I trust you’ll do the right thing. I know you’ll do what God asks you to do, and also what I ask you for the love you have for Jesus.

I write to you about someone you and I know. I mean Onesimus who was your slave. He was with me and became like a son to me. You will not believe the tremendous change that God made in his life! Now he is a believer in Christ. He loves Jesus and recognizes the evil that he did to you. I admit that once he was useless to you, but now he’s useful to you and me. This is why I send him to you again. I would like for him to remain here with me so that he may serve me here in prison, to speak of Christ with others, but I will not do this without first speaking with you.

You must decide what to do with Onesimus. I know and I trust that you’ll do what is right. It is a wonderful thing that he comes back to you, not as a slave, but as more than a slave, as a beloved brother. So, if you consider me as your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me (v.17). If he owes you something, I will pay it to you. Treat Onesimus as you would treat me. I have written to you, trusting in your obedience, knowing that you’ll do even more than I say (v. 21).

Group 3: Paul appeals to Philemon’s love for Jesus and his friendship with him. He trusts that he will treat his former slave as he would treat him personally.

The farewell

Reader 4: This is all I have to write to you. I want you to prepare a guest room for me. I hope to be free and visit you soon. Thank you for receiving Onesimus with the love of Jesus. I am praying for you. May Jesus be with you.

Signed: Paul.

Group 4: Paul concludes his letter with a note about his hope to visit Philemon. He blesses him and expects Philemon to be a blessing to Onesimus.

After the story, use the following questions from the second student activity sheet to help the students review the Bible story.

Since he was a slave who had stolen from his boss and escaped, Onesimus was in serious danger of death if he returned. How scary! What freed Onesimus from his fear? (Salvation) What transformed Onesimus? (His faith in Jesus)

What changed in Onesimus? (He became a believer, a follower of Jesus. He recognized his sin and repented. He knew that no matter what happened Jesus would be with him.)

What does the armor of God have to do with this story? (Footwear sets us up for salvation and Onesimus was willing to do this.) Paul talked about the Gospel with him. The shield of faith is freedom from fear through faith in God. Onesimus knew that he could have freedom in Christ, freedom to return to a difficult situation without fear, because God would be with him.

How can you have the same freedom as Onesimus? (When we believe in Jesus and become his followers, we’re made children of God. So, no matter what happens, he is with us. We can be freed from fear by trusting in the Lord.)

CONNECT THE LESSON

Dear _____

Give Student Activity Sheet #406-D to the students. Ask them to write their names in the line provided at the top of God's letter to them. Ask everyone to read it silently. Explain: "You can trust God when you put on his armor. You can trust that he loves you, that he wants the best for you, and wants everyone to believe in his Son Jesus Christ. He longs for you to be his child too."

After reading God's letter to them, give them the opportunity to write a letter of response to God. It can be a letter of thanksgiving for his armor, for his salvation that they have already received, or a letter of accepting God's salvation at this time. As the Holy Spirit guides you, invite the students to bow their heads and pray. Ask if anyone has an interest in being saved. Use the invitation for students to accept Jesus as their Savior: The ABC's of salvation. (See also the third lesson in this cycle, Lesson 369.) It is as easy as A-B-C!

A: Admit that I have sinned and I need God to forgive me and to help me change.

B: Believe that God loves me and sent his only Son, Jesus, so I can be forgiven.

C: Receive Jesus as my Savior and claim my new identity as a child of God.

Make this the most important moment of your life as a teacher of this particular group. Think like this moment will not be repeated again. Always have an assistant who can continue with the group when you have this type of invitation. Pray with and for them. Tell parents of their children's decision. Your group, the church and the parents are your best allies to care for and shape the lives of these preadolescents who begin their walk with Christ. Thank the Lord because you're a key part of students' lives.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

[Download Suggestions for Bible Memorization PDF](#)

Before the session, write the memory verse on cards, each word separately, and hide them throughout the room. Then copy the passage on the board and have the students repeat it several times. At the end, have the students look for the cards and assemble the Bible verse on the table in the correct order. You can use this activity in the following two sessions.

WRAP-UP

Pray

Then pray with the students, that the Lord will help them to always have their armor on to defeat Satan. Pray that God will give them the strength to announce God's love to other people.

Encourage

Encourage the students by singing an appropriate chorus or hymn.

Invite

Invite the students to return to the next session to continue learning more about God's armor. Remind the group to welcome visitors.