

# TAKE CARE OF YOUR THOUGHTS

All Activity Sheets

## KEY WORDS

OBEY HURT COMMAND FOLLOW FORGIVE FEELINGS DECREE HATRED WRONG

## BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Exodus 20:13; 1 Samuel 24; Matthew 5:21-22 and 43-45

## LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the students begin to understand that thoughts that come from feelings of hatred lead to acting in a very wrong way, and to understand how important it is to forgive those who have or are hurting them.

## MEMORY VERSE

“Obey the Lord your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you today” (Deuteronomy 27:10, NIV\*).

## PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Could an elementary child (6 to 8 years of age) kill someone? We can give thanks that there are few if any who have committed such a crime. However, no one ignores the violent acts that some children commit. Therefore, although the topic covered in this lesson is not common for children of this age, it is still important.

At a time when much of the world tries to avoid absolutes, children between 6 and 8 years of age need a clear direction as to what they should do with strong emotions such as anger or hatred. The constant violence to which elementary school children are exposed through the media can make their conscience insensitive. This lesson will help our students understand that God commands us to respect the lives of our fellow human beings, and that this mandate not only forbids us to kill a person, it also commands us to avoid feelings of hatred or revenge. In fact we also need to actively seek the good of others, even our enemies.

Although this is not an easy thing to teach children, as our world becomes increasingly violent, this instruction becomes more important. The biblical story and the activities included in the lesson will give students practical suggestions for fulfilling the commandments of both the Old and the New Testaments. Pray for the children to choose the path of love that God tells us to take towards those who did something wrong to us.

## BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Read Exodus 20:13. "I would like to kill that man ... that woman ... that child!" Very often we hear a phrase like this that, although it is said in jest, comes from a feeling of frustration, but does not imply a real intention to do so. Perhaps we should reconsider this apparently "light" expression of hatred, taking into account that God does not take murder lightly. When he began to address interpersonal relationships in the Ten Commandments, the warning not to kill anyone came immediately after the command to obey one's parents.

In this passage, "to kill" means homicide, that is, the deliberate and vengeful destruction of a human life. God forbids killing because he is the creator of life and considers it precious.

Read Matthew 5:21-22 and 43-44. While it is good to refuse to commit an act of violence against other people, that is not enough. Jesus shed new light on the sixth commandment because looking beyond the outer act, he could see the emotions that drive people to commit murder. There is no passage in the Old Testament in which God tells us to "hate your enemy," but quite the opposite (Exodus 23:4-5 and Proverbs 25:21-22). Over the years, the "popular theology" among the Jews led to this misinterpretation of the law. On the contrary, Jesus said that anger against a fellow man is as sinful and destructive as homicide. The word that we translate as anger does not refer to a burst of anger that appears and disappears with the same ease, but it designates a devouring feeling that accumulates over time. Instead of harboring that feeling, the people of God must resist the hatred and violence that other people may cause, and replace it with a reaction that's born of love and is composed of three elements: prayer, acts of kindness, and gentle words (see Luke 6:28).

Read 1 Samuel 24. In this beautiful story, David not only fulfilled the mandate of the Old Testament, but also anticipated the teachings of Jesus. David was in grave danger. The caves in which he hid could become traps with no possibility of escape. By one of those strange turns of life, Saul himself fell into the trap, entering precisely in the cave where David was hiding. Despite the advice of his men, David did not think of killing Saul. He even regretted having cut off the edge of his cloak, behavior that was considered an act of rebellion and disrespect towards a leader. Despite Saul's behavior, David respected his position as a king chosen by God. In addition, the young man trusted in Yahweh internally and knew that he had chosen him to be Saul's successor. But, he did not want to manipulate the circumstances to accelerate the development of the events God had planned. Instead, David "retaliated" against Saul in the manner described in Matthew and Luke.

He used kind words: "my lord" and "my father" (v. 8 and 11).

He acted benevolently by refusing to kill Saul at that time or any other future occasion, and promised mercy to Saul's family. In those days, the kings who assumed leadership were in the habit of ordering the death of all the family and relatives of the previous king, in order to eliminate potential rivals.

Everything David said to Saul had the appearance of a prayer. And when Saul died, (2 Samuel 1) David expressed his sorrow for him with sincere lamentation. By deciding to think and behave properly, David avoided becoming what Saul was - a tormented and vengeful man - to be instead, someone of whom God could say: "a man according to my own heart" (Acts 13:22). What a beautiful reflection of Jesus' words in Matthew 5:48! "Be perfect therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Forgiveness begins with a decision. When a person does something wrong to you, do you decide to forgive them? Do you decide to love them with God's love instead of hating them?

## INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Welcome your students with affection and ensure that the room is clean and tidy when they arrive. Before entering today's topic, review briefly the past lessons of this unit and ask your students to give some examples of how faithful they have been to God during this last week.

### What are you thinking about?

Have the children sit in a circle. While you walk around them, gently touch each one's shoulder. After a moment, stop and ask someone: "What are you thinking?" The child will answer the question and then take the teacher's place. She will walk around the outside of the circle, gently touching another child's shoulders and then stopping and asking the same question. Continue the game until each child has responded and walked.

After the game, tell them: "It was fun to know what everyone was thinking, was not it? But now I have a question to ask." Write the question on the board: "Is what we think as important as what we do?" (Let them answer.)

## TEACH THE LESSON

## David decides to love

King Saul put on his armor and prepared his sword. He had just arrived back after chasing the Philistines, but he was not going to rest. Now he could not! He had just received an important message. "David is in the desert," the message said. And Saul thought: "This is my opportunity. I can finally kill him." Saul was the first king of Israel. God had chosen him to be king, and at first he was a good king, but then he began to disobey God and do things his own way. For that reason, God had to choose another king, one who would obey him.

God decided that the next king of Israel would be David, because he loved and obeyed God's commandments, and the people also loved David. That made King Saul very angry, and that's why he began to have bad thoughts about the young man. Again and again, Saul thought, "I hate David. He's trying to take my throne away." That was not true, but the more he thought about David with hate, the more convinced he was that David was his enemy, until he thought, "I'm going to kill him."

Then he started looking for a way to kill David. Things got so bad that Jesse's son had to flee to hide in caves in the desert. He was joined by other men who trusted him, because they knew that he obeyed God. But, his life was in grave danger. Saul read the message again. Now he knew where David was, so he called his army of three thousand soldiers and went with them to look for him.

David was hiding in a cave, and he heard a noise. There was another person in the cave! He and his men looked ... There was King Saul! Then, David's friends told him, "This is your chance to kill Saul. He is bad, he disobeys God, and he is also trying to kill you. He deserves to die! We believe that God brought him here so you can kill him."

(Read the next sentences slowly and with drama.) David quietly approached Saul like a ninja, and very carefully took the knife out of its case. In silence, he stretched out his arm towards the king ... and cut off one edge of the robe. Then, slowly and carefully, he snuck back to where his men were. Saul did not hear or feel anything. But, David immediately felt bad. What he had done was a great lack of respect towards a king. Then he said, "I should not have done that. Nor should I kill Saul. That would be very bad. God chose him to be the king of Israel. I will not hurt him."

After a few minutes, Saul left the cave. He was ready to keep looking for David. David waited until Saul was a bit far away, and then he also walked out of the cave. "Saul!" David shouted. The king looked back, surprised. He could not believe that David was so close! David bowed down before him, and said, "Why do you listen to those who tell you that I want to hurt you?" Then he showed him the piece of cloth, and shouted, "Look! I could have taken your life. My men begged me to do it, but I did not. I will never try to hurt you. You are the king chosen by God. Why are you still trying to kill me?"

Saul saw the cloth. It was from his robe. He could not believe it! Then he thought, "David could have taken my life, and I wanted to kill him." King Saul was sad about his anger and his evil thoughts towards David, and his intention to kill him. Finally he said, "You are a better man than me. Someday you will be king, and when you are, promise me you will not kill my family. Let them live."

"I promise," David replied.

Then, Saul went home, and David returned to his hiding place in the caves. He could not trust Saul, who could change his mind and try to kill him again. But, he trusted that God would help him, and when God saw fit, he would allow him to be king. But, until that day came, David would fulfill the commandment of God, and not kill Saul.

## CONNECT THE LESSON

### Thinking and doing wheel

Help the children assemble the review wheel of the Bible stories according to the instructions explained on Student Activity Sheet #229-A. Have the students turn the wheel towards Saul. Talk about what he did and compare it with what David thought and what he did next. Ask them: "What were the thoughts and actions that pleased God, those of Saul or those of David? (Those of David.)"

Have the children turn the wheel over, this time showing the side corresponding to Jesus and the children of today. Ask a volunteer to read what Jesus says, and ask them: "Why does Jesus tell us to love our enemies and pray for them?" (Because his advice helps us act with love and forgiveness.) Have the children identify in each figure the correct actions. Then ask them:

• "Do you think it is easy to obey Jesus' teachings? • What can we do if it is hard for us to love our enemies and pray for them?" (Ask God to help us obey.)

Conclude by saying: "If anyone is still angry and having bad thoughts, he may sin. Therefore, God wants us to have good thoughts and forgiveness, and he will help us. If we think in the right way, we will also do the right thing."

## PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

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Divide the whole verse (Deuteronomy 27:10) into several phrases of a word or more, for example: "Obey the Lord", "your God", "and follow his commands". Prepare a set of cards of equal size and on each of them write some of the words that make up the verse. Place the cards face down on the table and ask a volunteer to mix them up well. In turn, each child will draw a card and, with the word or phrase that's written on it, should form a more complete short sentence, without saying the whole verse. (Example: the card says: "Obey the Lord," and the child completes: "Obey the Lord your God and follow his commands"). Then, place the card face up on the table. As each child picks up a card and completes the sentence, it will be placed in its corresponding place until the complete verse on the table is assembled. The game will end when the verse is complete and can be read together. (Note: if the number of children exceeds the number of cards, 2 games or more can be played.)

## WRAP-UP

### Pray

Ask the children to keep very quiet, and then ask them: "Who can tell me how Jesus wants us to treat our enemies?" (With love, forgiveness and prayer.) If possible draw two faces: one with an angry expression and another with a smiling face. Assign them the numbers 1 and 2 respectively. Then, tell the children that today's prayer will be done in two steps, explaining: "First, we will look at (or think about) an angry face and think of someone who did something unpleasant to us." Then say: "Now let's pray silently for those people." When you are finished praying for those who did something unpleasant, say: "Now look at the smiley face and think about how happy you will be when you see that person again after forgiving and showing love to them. There will be no more anger, and your friendship will continue!" Finally, ask a volunteer to pray for God to help them love and forgive those who have treated them badly.

### Encourage

Encourage the children to continue to practice this kind of prayer for those who do unpleasant things.

### Invite

Remember to say something interesting about the next session to encourage the children to attend. Tell them their friends are also welcome.