



Date: _____
Series: A Miraculous Church
Spring Year 2, Lesson 56

Jesus' Burden is Light

Primary Scripture: Matthew 11:28-30; 23:1-6

Key Verse: Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest."

How does this address a need in our kids' lives?

Kids need to understand that sometimes religion can be empty and hollow. The Pharisees, in Jesus' time, practiced such religion. They did religious things to be noticed by people and gain their approval. Then they taught others to follow. This became a burden. They thought they could earn God's approval if enough religious things could be done. Kids need to understand that Jesus offers a burden that is light. A relationship with him is not one of earning his approval, but of receiving his forgiveness and acceptance. Having received such a light burden, kids can then help carry the load of others' burdens.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: Jesus carried the burden of our sins to the cross. Through his resurrection, he not only lifts our sin from us, but also fills us with the power to take on his burden of caring for others.

Jesus in us: Jesus fills us with his presence so that we might carry or share the burdens of others.

Jesus through us: In response to what God has done for us, we can be more concerned about others and help carry their burdens.

Stamp of Excellence:

Remind the kids what excellent worship looks like. We are in God's presence to honor him. Put on your best manners. This might include wearing your name tag, participating eagerly at all times, listening when the leader is talking, raising your hand to speak, not distracting others, playing the learning game with cooperation, singing enthusiastically, and praying reverently. Offer rewards or positive reinforcement to those who worship with excellence.



Worship

Invocation:

Let kids bring forward the worship symbols, such as the cross, candles, Bible, and offering plate. Invite God's presence and call by name Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Attention Grabber:

Capture the children's attention and help them focus on the worship theme for the day.

Supplies: A large box and a medium box with a cinder block or sandbag in it to make it feel very heavy.

Show kids the boxes as you discuss the following:

Today we will talk about burdens. Burdens are heavy things we carry. Here are two boxes with heavy weights inside. These weights make carrying them a burden. I need a volunteer to come and pick up the smaller box.

Invite a child volunteer onto the stage. Let the child lift the smaller box.

It's kind of heavy to pick up isn't it? Let me see if I can help.

Lift the box to help the child.

Sometimes burdens aren't physical or carried with our bodies. Sometimes burdens are carried in our minds with how we think and feel. Nobody else can see us carrying this kind of burden.

What are heavy burdens that people sometimes feel? When their hearts are sad or when they're sad on the inside and feel alone, that can be a burden. Or maybe you thought about some people in the world who are poor and don't have enough food. Worrying about

whether or not they will get to eat or be able to feed their hungry children would be a burden.

Maybe some of you are worried about school or friends, which would be a burden. Or maybe some people are worried about God and maybe they think they've done so many bad things that God doesn't want them in his family. These would all be heavy burdens. But, there are some burdens that are super-sized.

Move or gesture to the bigger box.

Take a look at the size of this burden! I'm going to see if I can pick it up. While I do this, I'd like you to imagine what might be the heaviest burden in the whole world.

Pick the box up while pretending that it's extremely heavy, lose your balance, and then start to act like you're going to lose it into the audience or on your assistant. *There should be a factor of surprise when the box, though bigger, is substantially lighter (light enough to toss).*

Surprise! This box is light!

Jesus says, "If you take my burden, it will be light." Because Jesus loves you just as you are, he has given his life for you so that you can give your life for him. We don't do this because we have to, but because God first loved us so much. Our light burden is to worship him, praise him and thank him.

Today that is our burden. We must thank and praise God. Let's worship him.

Songs of Worship:

Choose two or three songs. Briefly introduce songs so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God!

Your choice of songs.

The Power of the Cross:

Jesus has given his life for us that we might have forgiveness and power to live for him.

Supplies: table, another box covered in dark paper and labeled "sin," small bed sheet with a red cross pinned to it or drawn on its center. Place the sheet on the table.

Show the covered box and say:

This box reminds us of our sin, which can be a very heavy burden. When we do things that are against God's will, it can make us feel very bad inside because God's Spirit in us wants to do things that are pleasing to God. Sin can also be a burden because it can keep us away from God. The Bible says that one of the consequences of sin is death. A spiritual death means separation from God. That's a burden so heavy that no one can carry it on his/her own or even try to remove it from God's sight. Wherever they go, God can still see the sin. That's why Jesus came into the world.

Place the box of sin on the sheet marked with a cross.

When we acknowledge sin by recognizing it and feeling sorry about it, we can bring it to Jesus and say here's a burden that I'm giving to you.

Let's think of things we did this past week that are sins. Maybe we disobeyed God or disobeyed our parents. Maybe we were unkind to friends or enemies.

Pray through these sins with the children as you feel led.

God doesn't want us walking around carrying our burden of sins because then it is too hard to help others with theirs. So, when we ask God's forgiveness for them, those sins are removed from his sight.

Surprise the kids by removing the sheet from under the box by pulling it out with a quick, jerk-type motion so that the box remains on the table. Cover the box with the sheet.

Through Jesus' death on the cross, he covers our sins so that God looks at us and doesn't see our sins but sees forgiveness and love. God sees us now as a child of his family, just like a son or daughter. Because of that, we want to serve him not because we have to, but because it is a privilege. This is what sons and daughters of God get to do.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want help them celebrate what God has done by singing a song of praise.

Offering:

Teach the importance of giving and talk about the mission activities they are supporting.

Take the sheet, lay it by the altar and invite children to come forward to put their money on it. Then, talk about how the offering would help people with their burden of needing money for food or other mission projects.



The Word

Learning Game:

Some churches dismiss children from the adult service at this time to join Kids Church. The learning game provides a fun kinesthetic activity to help kids connect with each other. The learning point will help reinforce the theme of the day.

The “Best Beast of Burden Bearing Beanbags” Game:

In advance, make two masking tape lines on opposite ends of the room.

Divide the students into teams of eight. Ask them to find a partner within their team. One person will be a Beast of Burden. The other will help drive the Beast of Burden.

A Beast of Burden appears very much like a human wheelbarrow in a wheelbarrow race. Different than a wheelbarrow race, these Beasts of Burden must successfully carry a beanbag on their backs from one line to the other.

With eight kids to a team, two pairs from the same team will be behind a line, and two pairs from the same team will be opposite them, but facing them behind the line on the other side of the room. Students race one way and completely cross the line on the opposite side before handing the beanbag to the next set of partners. A pair of students will have to start over if the beanbag is tossed to the next group in the relay before crossing the line. You may adjust this game according to the number of players, size of the room, or the distance of the relays.

In the event that a pair does not make it over the line and the beanbag falls off, they must stop, run back to the line, put the beanbag back on and begin again. The race is not necessarily about the swiftest beast, but whoever can keep the bean bag on his/her back and complete the race.



Teaching Point:

After the game, gather kids together and ask:

What was hard or easy about carrying the burden?

How many people did it take to carry the burden? Was it just the beast or were more involved?

How was the team who best carried the burden so successful? *(They all worked together.)*

We have a burden that God gives us. It's a light one, but a very important one. With God's help, we are only to do what God calls us to do then we can help carry others' burdens like God has helped us.

Bible Reading:

Help children pay attention by giving them a word or concept to listen for as you read. Consider letting a child read who could do so with excellence.

Supplies: a strong net, several boxes with bricks inside them that can be carried by the net, sheet with a cross on it, beanbags used as symbols of things we can do to help others.

Read Matthew 23:1-6:

"Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, 'The scribes and the Pharisees teach with Moses' authority. So be careful to do everything they tell you. But don't follow their example, because they don't practice what they preach. They make loads that are hard to carry and lay them on the shoulders of the people. However, they are not willing to lift a finger to move them. They do everything to attract people's attention. They make their phylacteries large and the tassels on their shawls long. They love the place of honor at dinners and the front seats in synagogues.'"

Do you think that Jesus was complimenting the Pharisees for doing all these religious things? No. Listen to what he said in Matthew 23: 23-24,

"How horrible it will be for you, scribes and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You give God one-tenth of your mint, dill, and cumin. But you have neglected justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These are the most important things in

Moses' Teachings. You should have done these things without neglecting the others. You blind guides! You strain gnats out of your wine, but you swallow camels."

Why do you think Jesus said such harsh things? It was because these people were doing religious things so other people would notice them and think they were extra special. It wasn't because they loved God and wanted to do what he wanted, but because they loved the attention they received from it. Also, some of them thought that if they could just do enough religious things, they would be perfect enough for God and that he would take them to heaven.

Have a volunteer come forward and explain the following while holding up a box for each of the following religious thing the Pharisees did, and set it into the net.

Let's pretend this person is a Pharisee or a religious leader in Jesus' day. The Pharisees were very religious.

- **They wore special clothes to remind them that they were religious.**
- **Around their heads, they had a little box and in that box, they kept words that reminded them of God's law.**
- **On their right arm, they also had a box that they considered to be close to their hearts. On that little box they put some paper that reminded them of God's law.**
- **They made sure that their robes had certain things woven into them that reminded them of prayers.**
- **Some of them studied the Bible so much that by the time they were 30 years old they had memorized the first five books of the Bible.**
- **They made sure they said their prayers at least three times a day and sometimes they would speak them for a long time as they held their hands to heaven and spoke them out loud.**
- **They wanted to be so sure to give God a tenth of all they had, they would even go to their spice rack and take out one tenth of each spice and give that to God.**

Pull the four corners of the net up, hand it to the volunteer and say:

"Here's your load."

Have the student try to pick it up and sling it over his/her back.

"Is that very comfortable?" Wait for an answer.

Notice that the carrier is a net so everyone can see all the religious things that you do. But it gets to be a real load if you do these things

just so others think you're religious or just to get your way into heaven. If this is how you live, you would always be worried whether or not you did enough good things to get into heaven. You could never be sure, could you? Also, you would always be worried about what people thought of you. But Jesus says this: "Let go of that load and take my load."

Have the volunteer come close to the bed sheet.

Now this is Jesus' load. There is nothing on the sheet except for the cross.

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus says, "*Come to me, all who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Place my yoke over your shoulders, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble. Then you will find rest for yourselves because my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*"

Jesus' load is like this sheet. He covers us with his life that he gave for us. Since Jesus perfectly kept every part of the law that we could not, he gave us his perfection. Because of Jesus' covering, when God looks at us, he sees the perfect life of Jesus.

Take the sheet and cover the person as if it is a robe with a hood.

God looks at you, sees the perfection of Jesus and says, "In my eyes, I see you as perfect, for you are completely forgiven and accepted."

You are then no longer an enemy of God, but a son or daughter of God. You are not a slave, but part of the family. Because of how much God has done, a son or daughter would want to do things that help others, just as Jesus has shown others that God has loved them.

Lay out the sheet and put the beanbags in it one at a time while explaining the following:

How can we help others with their burdens? James 1:27 says, "*Pure unstained religion, according to God our Father, is to take care of orphans or widows when they suffer and to remain uncorrupted by this world.*"

We are also asked to take care of poor people. 1 John 3:17-18 says, "*Now, suppose a person has enough to live on and notices another believer in need. How can God's love be in that person if he doesn't bother to help the other believer?*"

What are some other things we can do to show God's love to the world?

Put a beanbag in the sheet for each example of love someone shares. Pull together the sheet corners, and have the volunteer sling it over his/her shoulder. Then ask:

Now is that burden easy and light? Yes. Is that because you've got to carry it like a slave? No, because you're God's son or daughter, accepted and loved. It is your privilege to carry this and show other people your love.



Witness and Tell:

Give children opportunities to share how God is working in their lives. It is best to use a microphone to ask children interview questions around the theme for the day.

Invite someone who regularly visits nursing homes, shelters or helps feed the poor to share his/her story. Ask if the burden seems light or heavy. Why? Invite the kids to think of ways they can participate.

Option: Have kids talk about a way they had a burden to help others in Jesus' name.

Prayer:

Let the kids pray out loud. If you are using a microphone, invite children to form a prayer line and speak their thanksgivings or requests. If you have portable microphones, you can roam the audience. Kids can also go to prayer stations set up for specific types of prayer.

Options: (select one from the options below)

Prayer Line Option: Kids line up and take turns stepping in front of the microphone to speak their prayers briefly.

Prayer Chair: Adults or children with special prayer needs are invited to sit on chairs. Kids gather around them, lay hands on their shoulders or knees, and take turns praying.

Popcorn Prayer: The leader moves through the crowd with a microphone and turns it toward kids who are raising their hands to pray. The kids speak their prayers into the microphone.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the children through the Lord's Prayer, phrase by phrase, or let them pray the entire prayer along with you.

Blessing:

Speak a blessing prayer over the children. Personalize this to your setting. Use a special scripture verse or blessing around the theme of the day.

Song of Sending:

Choose one song. Briefly introduce song so kids can better understand what they are singing and be drawn into a more focused worship. Keep the attention on God.

Supplies:

Attention Grabber:

- a large box and a medium box with a cinder block or sandbag in it to make it feel very heavy

Power of the Cross:

- table
- another box covered in dark paper and labeled “sin”
- small bed sheet with a red cross pinned to it or drawn on its center – place it on the table

Offering

- sheet from Power of the Cross

Learning Game:

- masking tape

Bible Reading:

- strong net
- several boxes with bricks inside them that can be carried by the net
- sheet with a cross on it
- bean bags used as symbols of things we can do to help others

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