



Date: _____
Series: Building Christian Character
Winter Year 2, Lesson 35

Being Open- hearted to God

Primary Scripture: Exodus 4:21, 20:18-21. The hard-heartedness of Pharaoh in Exodus, and God's promise to deliver those who are openhearted to him.

Key Verse: Deuteronomy 4:29 "But if you look for the LORD your God when you are among those nations, you will find him whenever you search for him with all your heart and with all your soul."

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

Children, like people of all ages, need openness to God's work and activity in their lives. The Bible often speaks of the heart as the center of our desires. As well, it describes an aspect of our soul. Therefore, spiritually, kids need their hearts to desire God's presence and his filling in their lives. As well, they need to know that it is dangerous to reject God and his ways. Rejecting God is hard-hearted and could lead to our downfall. Rather, God desires we would be open to him by confessing our sin, receiving Jesus, and having our desires set on what Jesus wants for us.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: It was Jesus' desire to please his Father that took him to the cross for our sake. Through his death and resurrection, God's forgiving power can shatter even the hardest of hearts.

Jesus in us: As we come to Jesus in faith, he personally enters our hearts and our desires. He keeps our hearts open to do the Father's will

Jesus through us: God is not interested in our ability as much as our availability. Jesus works through those whose hearts are open to him.

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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 needed: clay heart that has set out for several days so that it has hardened and a soft clay heart

Talk about how God looks at our heart – who we are on the inside. Our hearts are the center for what we feel and love. Say:

Today we are going to talk about two kinds of hearts. One is an open heart that wants to know God better, to love him, and to honor him. The other heart is the kind of heart that does not want to know God, to love him, or to honor him. It is called a hard heart.

Show kids the hard clay heart.

Take a look at this clay heart. Can you tell if it is hard or soft just from looking at it? Well, it is hard. This clay heart has been sitting out in the air for several days, and it has hardened so that I cannot bend it at all.

God wants to mold us and shape us to become more like him. If our hearts are hard, that means we don't want him to have anything to do with our lives.

Show kids the soft clay heart.

Now, look at this heart. Can you see how it can be shaped or molded? As a matter of fact, I am making the imprint of a cross. That means God wants to take our hearts and put his presence right in us.

Deuteronomy 4:29 says, “But if you look for the LORD your God when you are among those nations, you will find him whenever you search for him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Let’s worship God now. As we worship him, let’s remember that he wants us to have open hearts to him. God wants us to tell him that we love him and want him as part of our lives.

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 music.

The Power of the Cross:

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

Hold the dried heart in your hand as you recount the following story about David.

Kids, how many of you remember King David from the Bible? Was he a good king? Yes, he was. In the Bible, he was called someone who was after God’s own heart. He sought God.

Did he ever make any bad mistakes? Do you know what they were? Yes, one time he did something very bad. He stole another man’s wife and he had that man killed. He did not think anyone noticed it, and he thought he got away with it. Have you ever thought that before when you did something wrong?

The truth is that God sees it, and he even sees in our heart when we are hiding sin. God sent a prophet, Nathan, to talk to David. David was very sorry. He could have had a hard heart and said, “No, I don’t want to be sorry for my sin or talk to God about it.” Instead, he had an open heart and he said, “I need to talk to God and confess to him my sin.”

Here is what David wrote in the Bible. In Psalm 51:9b-12 he says, “Wipe out all that I have done wrong. Create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a faithful spirit within me. Do not force me away from

***your presence, and do not take your Holy Spirit from me... vs. 17:
"The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. O God, you do not despise a broken and sorrowful heart."***

Does it sound like David was sorry for his sin? Yes. He says that it is better if you have sins not to be hard-hearted to God, but you should break your heart to him.

Take a hammer and smash the hard clay heart. Then take some of the soft clay and fashion a new heart. Use bits of the old heart to imprint a cross in the newly molded heart.

Lead the kids in confession of sin and assurance of their forgiveness. Point out that, when they do so, that takes our old, hardened hearts and breaks them open. Then God can give us forgiveness that comes from Jesus so that we can have new hearts that want to do what he wants.

Song of Response:

Choose a song to help the children turn to Jesus. Or, you may want to 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.

If there is a special offering project that the kids are giving to, take a bit of soft clay and construct a crude picture of what the offering is going for. Have the kids guess what it is. Link this to the concept that, as we give our hearts to Jesus, we do so by giving money so he can use it to help other people come to know him.



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.

“If You’re My Buddy, Smile”

Divide the group into teams of five, giving each team a section of the room with one chair. Participants from the team will take turns in the chair. When they are in the chair, they are to pretend to have a very hard heart and keep an absolutely straight face. Children will take turns approaching the contestant in the chair. They may only say these words: “If you’re my buddy, won’t you please smile?” To this, the contestant in the chair will try to remain straight-faced and say, “I don’t want to be your buddy and I don’t want to smile.”

A member of the group gets to ask the contestant in the chair the question three times, to which that person must reply straight-faced three times. If the contestant cracks a smile or laughs, a new contestant sits in the chair. If the contestant remains straight-faced through three pleas from one person, a new child will try to evoke a smile. Those children questioning are free to use any tone of voice, comic expressions, or light touch in appropriate places.

After the game, find out who went the longest without cracking. Discuss how hard-hearted means to say “no” to God and to refuse his friendship.

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.

The Bible event comes from Exodus 4:21 where we hear of Pharaoh’s hardened heart. His heart was hardened against God and he would not listen to God’s spokesman, Moses, and let God’s people go. Even after he saw the wonders of God’s miracles and after his hardened heart caused great suffering throughout the land of Egypt, his pride still stood in the way. He did not want to listen to God.

On the other hand, Moses had an open heart to God and desired to do just what God wanted him to do. Therefore, God used Moses to defeat Pharaoh and Egypt because their hearts were hard.

Using a clip from the "*Prince of Egypt*" by Dream Works Pictures, show the Bible event. This movie, which is popular with the children, can be given additional meaning if more of the Biblical application is given. Show this film clip so that you might point out that Pharaoh's heart was hardened against God, and Moses' heart was open to what God wanted. God wanted to free his people and to bring them to the Promised Land.

Anytime anyone's heart is hardened against God, his or her heart will finally be broken. Their life could be ruined unless they turn to God for forgiveness and give to God their broken heart. If they remain hard-hearted and do not want any part of God in their life, then tragedy will surely strike!

The eighteen-minute film clip can begin when Moses returns to Egypt as the deliverer and begins his conversation with Ramses. He has come to free the people from their slavery. The film can last until the angel of death has moved through the city, approximately seventeen minutes later.



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.

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 in the 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 the 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:

- clay heart that has set out for several days so that it has hardened
- soft clay heart

The Power of the Cross:

- hammer
- two clay hearts used before

Learning Game:

- chair for each group

Bible Reading:

- “*Prince of Egypt*” by Dream Works Pictures—order from:
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0783236689/002-4057945-1179217?v=glance>

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