



Date: _____
Series: Good Kings – Bad Kings
Fall Year 4, Lesson 18

Being Controlled by God's Spirit

Primary Scripture: Romans 8:9-10, 14-16; Matthew 21:33-44

Key Verse: Romans 8:9, “But if God’s Spirit lives in you, you are under the control of your spiritual nature, not your corrupt nature.”

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

Kids need to learn responsibility for their actions. To learn such responsibilities, they need to learn more about why they behave in certain ways. There are forces around them that affect this behavior. God’s truth reveals that the greatest forces are those working from the inside. Our sinful nature can influence us to act selfishly and in rebellion against God. But God’s Spirit can fill us and influence us to have an attitude and heart like Jesus himself. The power of the Christian walk comes from letting the Holy Spirit have more control over our thoughts and actions daily.

How does Jesus fill this need?

Jesus for us: It was impossible for us to meet God’s standards on our own, but God freed us by sending his Son Jesus to pay for our sins (*Romans 8:3*).

Jesus in us: Having the Holy Spirit means, literally, having the Spirit of Christ live in us (*Romans 8:11*) and help control our lives.

Jesus through us: Jesus’ presence in our lives is not only for our own benefit but also for the good of others to whom we can serve and witness.

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 puppet that is used by putting a hand inside

Note: Do not use the same puppets that you regularly use for your children's ministry, as these puppets should not be seen before an audience in a "lifeless" condition.

Show the puppet and say:

Boys and girls, do you know how to use puppets?

Without someone working a puppet, they wouldn't have any life at all. Let's take a look.

Remove the puppet from your hand so it appears lifeless. Talk to it and encourage it to come to life. Obviously, nothing will happen.

This puppet needs someone to give him life. So let's bring this puppet to life.

Put your hand in puppet and make it appear alive.

It is true that God gave us life. But are we like puppets to him? Does God make us do one thing or another?

For example, we know that God wants us to show love to him and to others. We also know that he is all-powerful. Couldn't God just force us to love him and others? Sure, he could. But is that what he does? Does he force us now to do what is good?

If that were the case, we would not have any freedom to choose what we want. We would be like lifeless puppets with no choice at all. God would never force us to do good works. But he will do this – he will fill us with his Holy Spirit so that we can do what is good and want to love him and others.

Today when we worship, let's pray that God fills us with his Holy Spirit so we can be controlled by God's Spirit. As we worship God, let's open our hearts and invite his Holy Spirit to fill us up so we will want to do what he wants.

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.

Supplies: a red water-based marker, a black water-based marker, and the puppet from the Attention Grabber

With a black marker, write the word "sin" on the back of your hand. Draw a red cross on the front of your hand.

Put your hand in the puppet, and have it fight you.

Wow! What has gotten into this puppet? Let's take a look on the inside.

Pull your hand out and show "sin" written on the back of your hand.

Oh, there was sin inside this puppet. As we discussed earlier, God did not make us as puppets and force us to do what is good. But the Bible says that since the very first people sinned and disobeyed God, every person who has ever lived has sin living inside of him.

Put your hand in the puppet.

The Bible says in Romans 8:3, *“It is impossible to do what God’s standards demand because of the weakness our human nature has.”* Our human nature is the sin that lives inside of us. This puppet that wants to fight is like you and me with our nature of sin.

But God took care of that. The other half of Romans 8:3 says, *“But God sent his Son to have a human nature as sinners have and to pay for sin. That way God condemned sin in our corrupt nature.”*

In other words, God took away that sin so we would not be forced by sin on the inside to always do wrong things. God did that by sending his Son Jesus to die on the cross for us.

Pull your hand out of the puppet, and show the cross.

It is the power of Jesus’ forgiveness that now lives on the inside so that we are not controlled by sin anymore. But we can allow God to have control.

Put your hand back in the puppet.

This happens when the Spirit of Christ lives in us. Let’s pray for that now.

Dear God, you know that on the inside we have a bad nature that is sinful and wants to make us disobey you and do wrong things. We are thinking of ways we may have disobeyed you, our teachers, or our parents last week. Maybe there were ways in which we were not kind or helpful to others. Maybe we were even mean or rude. Pause for kids to reflect.

Your word tells us that you set us free from the sin that wants to control us with the power of your forgiveness. Please forgive us because of what Jesus has done for us. Now let us be filled with the Holy Spirit so that everything we do is because Jesus lives inside of our hearts. Help us to remember that always. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

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.

Your choice of music.

Offering:

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

Supplies: red water-based marker

As kids come forward for the offering, lightly draw a small cross with a red water-based marker in the palms of their hands. This reminds them that they are filled with the Spirit of Christ if they have trusted Jesus as Savior.

As they lay their gifts in the offering basket, let the children know they can show God's love by sharing their gifts with him and others in need.

If some children did not bring offerings, invite them forward anyway to symbolically lay their hearts in the offering.

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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.

Spirit-powered Race

Supplies: masking tape; each team of five children will need a kit with the following supplies—20-foot piece of kite string, scissors, marker, three-inch piece of masking tape, medium-sized balloon, a straw

Prepare balloon kits in advance.

Using masking tape, make two parallel lines on the floor, 20 feet apart. *The lines should be long enough for five children to stand side-by-side along them.*

The object of the game is to make a spirit-powered balloon that can travel the farthest distance on the 20-foot string.

Have each team work together, making their spirit-powered balloon. Give them about four minutes of preparation time. They can cut their straws to whatever length they choose. They will need to figure out if a shorter or longer straw works better. They thread their string through the straw so each tail of the string dangles out of opposite ends of the straw. Then, they blow up their balloon and decorate it while holding the end of the balloon to prevent the air from escaping. Have them tape their straw to the side of the balloon.

Then two team members should stand on opposite sides of the room behind the masking tape lines and hold the string tight at each end. One of the members from each team will hold the end of the balloon until the countdown. Then they will release the spirit-powered balloon that will shoot across the string as the air is released. The team whose balloon travels the farthest is the winner.

Another option is to let the kids adjust their engineering design by changing the length of the straw or the placement of tape on the balloon. The game can be repeated after adjustments have been made.

Learning Point:

Where does the power come from in the spirit-powered balloon? It comes from the air inside which came from one of the kids blowing it up.

Where does our power come from? The Bible teaches us to think of the Holy Spirit like air. God's breath blows his Spirit into us. The Bible even calls God's Holy Spirit the Spirit of Christ. That means that when you have the Holy Spirit living in you, you also have the presence of Jesus living in you. Listen to what it says in the Bible, Romans 8:9-10. *"Whoever doesn't have the Spirit of Christ doesn't belong to him. However, if Christ lives in you, your bodies are dead because of sin, but your spirits are alive because you have God's approval."*

Bible Presentation:

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.

Illustration 1: God does not force you to be his slave but loves you to be his son or daughter.

Supplies: pitcher of water and an empty plastic cup

Debrief a child in advance. Ask him to refuse to obey the presenter who will forcefully command him to give a drink of water to someone else. The presenter will even wrestle him until the water is knocked over in an attempt to force him to share the water. No matter what, he should refuse to obey. The skit will be repeated a second time where the presenter plays the role of God the Father. In this second skit, the child will accept his Son Jesus and willingly share the water.

Begin saying:

What controls you on the inside? Romans 8:9-10 tells us that if God's Spirit lives in you, you are under God's control. You don't have to listen to sin inside you that would want to control you. If you know Jesus and belong to him, then you have the Spirit of Christ living in you. If Christ lives in you, even though there is sin in your life, your spirit is alive on the inside. This is because you are forgiven and approved by God.

Romans 8:14-16 says that all of you who are guided by God's Spirit are God's children. God doesn't want you as slaves. He wants you as his own kids. So he adopted you. He calls you his children. He won't

force you to love him, but he loves you so much that you can call out “Daddy, Father.” His Spirit knows your hearts. He knows those who are his—you are God’s children. God’s own Spirit will live inside you to tell you so.

Ask for a volunteer, but choose the one who has been debriefed ahead of time. *This script below will use the names Jeremy and Emily for ease of illustration.*

Put a cup on the table and fill it with a small amount of water from the pitcher. This first illustration is said with some attitude.

Let’s pretend that I am God and I have just made this person. What’s your name? Oh, that’s right, Jeremy. I should know that. My will is that this person will always obey me because I’m the master. I’m the king of the universe! I’m God. I’m the master, and you are my slave. So, here is a cup of water. I think some people here today might be thirsty. So, I would like you to share this water with them. Emily, in the front row, is thirsty. I command you to pick up that water and go give it to her!

The child refuses. So the presenter continues to insist while grabbing his hand and forcing him to get the water. There is a struggle, and finally, the water is spilled. Everyone loses.

Is this how God acts toward us? God is ruler over everything, but he does not treat us as slaves. He does not force us to do what is good. If that were the case, we would be just like puppets or robots. This would not demonstrate our true love to God. It would be actions that we are *forced* to do. God does not force us to do good. He does this.

Refill the water glass. This illustration is said in love.

Pretend I am God, the ruler and master over the universe. Jeremy, I made you, and I know you very well. And I want you to do things that will love and honor me. It is also best for you to show love and honor to others.

But I know that you cannot choose to do those good things on your own power. As a matter of fact, you have already made many mistakes. You have kept all this water to yourself and refused to give it. So I’m going to send my Son Jesus. He will do what you could not do. He will live a perfect life in your place. And even though he doesn’t deserve to die and be punished for wrong things, I’m asking him to do that for you. Then all the punishment that I need to give for all the bad things that you have ever done, or will ever do, will be put on Jesus. That way, those bad things are lifted off of you.

I do all this because I love you. I don't want to treat you like a slave. Instead, I want to adopt you as a son. If you trust my Son Jesus you will be adopted also as my son and I will fill you up with the Spirit of Jesus himself. You will have Jesus in your heart and you will have his power to do what I want.

So, my son Jeremy, will you receive the gift of my Son Jesus? Will you be adopted as my child? If so, answer "yes."

The volunteer answers "yes." Dip your finger into the water, and put the sign of the cross on his forehead.

I will let everyone see that I have adopted you as my son when you are baptized. And now that you are my adopted son, would you please share this water with Emily?

He gives the glass of water to Emily and sits down. Thank him for obeying you.

Illustration 2: The story of the vineyard (*Matthew 21:33-44*)

Supplies: a box filled with the following hats—derby or fashionable dress hat, three straw hats, four baseball hats, dressy men's hat; three large signs with the following audience cards—"Booo," "Yeeaaay," "Uh, oooh"

One or two adults will assist the presenter by choosing participants from the audience and giving them the appropriate hat from the box. The landowner will wear a derby or a fashionable dress hat. The workers will wear straw hats. The servants who are sent to collect money will wear baseball hats. And the landowner's son will wear a dressy men's hat.

We will do an audience participation drama to illustrate Matthew 21:33-44. To do this, my assistants from time to time will call people out of the audience. If you like to participate in dramas where you must act out what you hear, please move to this side of the room. During the drama, my assistants will come and pick out some of you sitting on this side of the room to participate in the drama.

The audience has an opportunity to respond as well.

Hold up the sign that says "Booo."

This sign means that all of you should say what? (Booo.)

Hold up the sign that says "Uh, oooh."

This sign means that you say what? (Uh, oooh.) Right, that means that someone is in trouble.

Hold up the sign that says "Yeeaaay."

And of course, this sign means that you say what? (Yeeaaaay.) There are also certain phrases that I will repeat three times. I will say the phrase, and then I will motion you to repeat it twice with me. Let's try it. The landowner hoed and planted... and...

Motion the audience to repeat it with you.

hoed and planted... and hoed and planted. Excellent! Are you ready to begin?

Sit down with your back to the audience and face the stage as you tell the story while your assistants gather characters.

There was once was a landowner. Here he comes now.

An assistant brings a boy forward and puts the derby or fashionable hat on him.

Landowners are very important people because they own land. Maybe that is why they call them landowners. Look at him and see how rich and confident he is. Let's hear it for our landowner as he takes his hat off and takes a bow.

Hold up the sign that says "Yeeaaaay."

This landowner decided to plant a vineyard. He hoed and planted...

Motion the audience to repeat it with you.

...and hoed and planted... and hoed and planted. What do you think about his vineyard so far?

Hold up the sign that says "Yeeaaaay."

What would he do with all these grapes? He decided to make a winepress – a place where you could step with your right foot, squish with your left foot... step... squish...

Motion the audience to repeat it.

...step... squish... step... squish... Let's hear it for the winepress!

Hold up the sign that says "Yeeaaaay."

Then he built a wall. He hauled and stacked...

Motion the audience to repeat it.

...hailed and stacked... hailed and stacked. What do you think about his wall?

Hold up the sign that says "Yeeaaaay."

Now he just needed a watchtower to watch out for bad guys. So he lifted and reached and...

Motion the audience to repeat it.

...lifted and reached... lifted and reached until all the bricks were in place. Let's hear it for the watchtower!

Hold up the sign that says "Yeeaaaay."

Let's hear it for the landowner!

Hold up the sign that says "Yeeaaaay."

So the landowner dusted off his clothes, looked around, and said, "Time for a vacation." Let me hear you say "vacation." (Vacation.) Right. So he set off for a long trip. However, before doing that, he decided to rent his estate to three workers. Here they are now.

The assistant brings three volunteers forward and gives them straw hats.

Hello there! The workers are entering the estate now... Ooops! One of them just walked through the wall. Turn around and go through the gate. Thank you.

Before leaving on vacation, the landowner made a deal with the workers. He said, "You can stay here and collect the grapes, squeeze them in the winepress, and sell them for cash. But remember, it all belongs to me. So you need to pay me my share. I'll send some collectors later."

So off went the landowner to a far away place. He was gone for one week – then two... then three... then four... and even more. The workers were enjoying the vineyard estates. As a matter of fact, I think I can hear them having a party now. I said, "I think I can hear them having a party now!" They are laughing about something. What are they saying? I think I hear them now. They are saying, "It's all ours!" I said, "I hear them saying, 'It's all ours!'"

Encourage the workers to repeat this. Hold up the sign that says "Uh, oooh."

Yes, that could mean trouble. Before too long, one of the servants of the landowner was at the front gate.

An assistant brings another child forward and puts the baseball hat on his head.

Let's hear him knock.

An assistant can make a knocking noise as the child acts this out.

**He came upon the workers who were renting the estate and said,
"Cut the bash! I need the cash!"**

Encourage him to repeat this.

But the workers said, "What's this trash? Your head we will bash!"

Encourage the workers to repeat this.

With that, they bashed his head. I said, "They bashed his head." And they took him to the dump. When he never returned to the landowner, the landowner sent another servant.

An assistant brings another child forward and puts the baseball hat on his head.

I see that servant now. That servant showed up and said, "What gives with these digs? I want to know. I'm from the boss, and he wants his dough." I said that he said, "What gives with these digs? I want to know."

The servant repeats this.

He said, "I'm from the boss, and he wants his dough."

The servant repeats this.

But the worker said, "Oh, haven't you heard? It's not so absurd."

Encourage the worker to repeat this.

"We're the ones who own it now, so before us, you'll have to bow."

Encourage the worker to repeat this.

And with that, they beat him and threw him out.

Hold up the sign that says "Booo."

Well, the landowner sent still another servant... and another servant.

An assistant brings two more volunteers forward, puts baseball hats on their heads, and motions for them to go to the front.

They arrived at the estate and received the same treatment as the other servants.

Hold up the sign that says "Uh, oooh."

They were killed and thrown out, too.

Hold up the sign that says "Booo."

Finally, the landowner said, "I'll send them my own son. Surely, they will respect him. They will know he is from me."

Encourage the landowner to repeat this.

So off went the landowner's son.

An assistant chooses a volunteer and puts a dressy hat on him.

As he was approaching, the workers saw their chance. They huddled together and made a plan. "If we kill his son," they said, "we will get his inheritance. All this will belong to us. Let's do the dirty deed."

Encourage the workers to repeat this.

So when the son came up to the door, he said, "Hello, do you recognize my face? This is my daddy's place. I'm here to check on you and then take what's due."

Say this in couplets so the son can repeat each sentence.

And the worker said, "No more rhymes, he's all mine."

Encourage the worker to repeat this.

And with that, they killed him.

Have actors all return to their seats.

Now here is the question. When the owner of this vineyard comes back, what do you think he will do with those workers?

Take answers.

The Bible says that, surely, he will judge, punish, and destroy those evil people. When Jesus told this story, some people knew he was

talking about them. They were religious leaders who had rejected Jesus as God's true Son and the Promised One.

After Jesus told this story, the religious leaders even plotted to kill him. They were involved in the death of Jesus. But because of his death, Jesus made it possible for anyone who accepts his death in his or her place to be forgiven and filled with his presence. Maybe that is just like God giving us a chance to greet Jesus when he comes to us.

Can we open our hearts to him and invite him to live here? After all, if you look at his face, maybe you will remember that his daddy owns this place. This is the place where he dwells.

There is another truth very close to this story – God owns us and sent his Son to us. Will we open our hearts and be filled with him?

If not, we are like those workers who refused to let in the landowner's son. If we do accept Jesus, then the Spirit of God cannot control us. Or another way to say it is that we can be filled with the Spirit of Christ.



Witness

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.

Ask the kids to talk about a time when they really felt close to God and felt his presence. Have an adult give an example, particularly when he/she experienced this in church, in God's word, in prayer, and/or in worship.

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 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 puppet that is used by putting a hand inside

Note: Do not use the same puppets that you regularly use for your children's ministry, as these puppets should not be seen before an audience in a "lifeless" condition.

Power of the Cross:

- red water-based marker
- black water-based marker
- puppet from the *Attention Grabber*

Offering:

- red water-based marker

Learning Game:

- masking tape
- each team of five children will need a kit with the following supplies:
 - 20-foot piece of kite string
 - scissors
 - marker
 - three-inch piece of masking tape
 - medium-sized balloon
 - straw

Bible Presentation:

- pitcher of water
- empty plastic cup
- box filled with the following hats
 - derby or fashionable dress hat
 - three straw hats
 - four baseball hats
 - dressy men's hat
- three large signs with the following audience cards:
 - Booo
 - Yeeaaay
 - Uh, oooh

BOOO!

YEEAAY

UH, OOOH