

Life of Christ

Clean and Unclean

Matthew 15:1-18; 23:23-28

Younger Verse

Create in me a clean heart, O God.

Psalm 51:10

Older Verse

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me.

Psalm 51:10

Lesson Goals

Learn that the Pharisees only cared about being clean on the outside
Understand that Jesus taught about having a clean heart
Recognize that Jesus is the only one who can give us a clean heart

Welcome Time

Has your Mom ever told you to clean your room, and you just threw everything in the closet or under the bed? Was your room really clean? You may fool your Mom for a while, but the truth will eventually come out when she opens your closet!

Bible Story

*Please note: This portion of the lesson is given to help in teaching the lesson. Please read through the story and read it in the Bible before teaching it. Do **NOT** read from this piece of paper. Instead, make a note sheet and place it next to the story in the Bible.*

The religious teachers and the leaders of the temple (Pharisees) had heard about Jesus' miracles. People were talking about all the amazing things Jesus was doing. The religious leaders didn't like Jesus. They were always looking for ways to trick Jesus. These men only cared about what things looked like on the outside. They didn't care about what was on the inside. So they had made a lot of rules about washing and keeping things clean. They made people think that if a person was clean enough on the outside, they would be closer to God.

One day, these religious leaders saw Jesus and His disciples eat without washing their hands. Jesus broke these men's rules! They were angry. They asked Jesus why He and His disciples didn't wash their hands like the rule said. Jesus answered by asking them a question. He asked them why they didn't follow *God's* laws. Jesus knew what was in their hearts.

Jesus told the Pharisees that even their worship of God was not right, because they didn't really mean it in their hearts. Jesus later told the Pharisees that they were clean on the outside, but the inside (the heart) was dirty. He compared it to a cup—it can be clean on the outside, while the inside is filthy.

Jesus also compared these men to tombs—graves for dead people. The tombs may be clean on the outside, but on the inside they are unclean. Jesus warned the Pharisees that they needed to worry about what was in their heart more than what they looked like on the outside.

Sometimes we care more about what we look like than what is in our heart. It is definitely a good thing to take a bath and be clean. But it is a lot more important that we

are clean on the inside, in our hearts.

What about you? Are you clean or dirty on the inside? Jesus tried to help the Pharisees understand that God does not look at their hands to see if they are clean or unclean. God looks at our hearts.

The Bible tells us that we all have done things that have made us unclean and dirty before God. These things separate us from Him. God loves us and made a way for us to be clean and pure. God sent His Son, Jesus, to help us. Jesus lived a life that was clean and pure. He never sinned at all. When He died on the cross, He died for all the sins that we have done. He died for us! Then, three days later, Jesus came back to life!!

When we ask Jesus to forgive our sins and come into our heart, He washes away our sins and gives us a clean heart!

Review Questions

1. Did the Pharisees care more about being clean on the outside or the inside? (the outside)
2. What did Jesus' disciples do that made the Pharisees mad? (They ate without washing their hands, which broke their rule)
3. What laws did Jesus tell the religious leaders they didn't follow? (God's laws)
4. How can you have a clean heart? (by believing in Jesus and asking Him into your heart)

Prayer Time

Thank God that He made a way for us to have clean hearts. Ask Him to help us live lives that are clean and pure.

Life Application

The Bible talks a lot about having a clean heart. God knows that when we have sin in our heart, it makes us feel bad. We are not able to have a good relationship with God, or others, when we have sin in our heart. Confession is important. 1 John 1:9 says that if we confess our sins to God, he is faithful to forgive us and to cleanse our sin.

Psalms 51 talks about confessing our sins and allowing God to make us clean. David had committed a sin that he was really ashamed of. He wanted to be right with God again, so he wrote this Psalm as a prayer of confession. It can be our prayer, too. We all have times when we need God's forgiveness. He is willing to forgive us and give us clean hearts.

We don't need to be like the Pharisees and pretend we are clean when we have sin in our hearts. The only person we are fooling is ourselves. God knows what is in our heart! Let's "come clean" with Him!

Planning for Next Lesson
No Bread?
Matthew 15:29-38; 16:5-12

Preschool Lesson for Clean and Unclean

The religious leaders had heard about Jesus' miracles. People were talking about all the amazing things Jesus was doing. The religious leaders didn't like Jesus. They were always looking for ways to trick Jesus. These men only cared about what things looked like on the outside. They didn't care about what was on the inside. So they had made a lot of rules about washing and keeping things clean. They made people think that if a person was clean enough on the outside, they would be closer to God.

One day, these religious leaders saw Jesus and His disciples eat without washing their hands. (act like you are washing your hands) Jesus broke these men's rules! They were angry. They asked Jesus why He and His disciples didn't wash their hands like the rule said. Jesus answered by asking them a question. He asked them why they didn't follow *God's* laws. Jesus knew what was in their hearts.

Jesus told them that they had forgotten what was most important. Yes, it is important to wash our hands. But Jesus wants us to have clean hearts. That is the most important thing. Jesus knew that these men had dirty hearts. He wanted them to know that the sin in their hearts made God sad.

He wanted the people to see that they should talk to God and ask Him to forgive their dirty sins. When they did this, God would make them clean on the inside.

Jesus wants us to do kind things and help others. He wants us to think good thoughts and be good to other people. Jesus tells us that God knows what we think and how we feel. He loves us and wants us to think and do good things for others.

Sing, "Jesus in the Morning."

Pray and ask God to help us think good thoughts and be kind to all people.

Hands-on Activities for Clean and Unclean

For preschoolers, bring a pan and carefully add water and dish soap. Let them take turns cleaning things. Be careful that the water does not splash out. You may want to put a towel or trash bag on the floor to catch spilled water. It might be easier to clean things outside.

Have the kids think of things that are real versus things that are pretend. Share how the Pharisees were pretending to love God. Talk about what it means to REALLY love God.

Before class, find a pretty cup or mug and a plain white or dull cup or mug. Coat the pretty cup on the inside with dirt and make sure the plain cup is clean. Now, share the two cups with the class. Explain that the pretty cup looks so nice on the outside. Now reveal the inside—all dirty. Show the plain cup and how it is clean on the inside. Explain that the Pharisees looked so nice on the outside but inside their hearts were dirty with sin. Share how Jesus wants us to be clean on the inside in our hearts.

Bring a little bottle of disappearing ink (most party stores carry it) and a handkerchief or paper towel. Drop several drops of ink on the towel and share how we are all dirty with sin. Now turn the towel towards you so that the kids cannot see the ink slowly disappearing. Share how Jesus made a way to clean up all our dirty sins. Slowly explain how Jesus made a way for us to go to Heaven. Now reveal the clean towel with no ink! Share how Jesus removes all the sin from our lives when we ask Him to forgive us. Let the kids see the ink and demonstrate it so that they can see it slowly disappearing. Help them see what it means to have a clean heart.

Bring soap and water to class (or use hand sanitizer without water, if easier). Let everyone wash their hands. After they are finished, insist that they wash their hands again. Then, do it again. Obviously the kids will begin to see that they do not need to wash their hands AGAIN. Share how this relates to the lesson today.

Bring little soaps and plastic knives. Have the kids carve designs in the soap to remember to be clean on the inside with our attitudes and motives.

Make a “dirt” pudding by crushing chocolate sandwich cookies to look like “dirt” and sprinkling it over pudding cups.

