

LESSON 72

The Heart's Desires

JAMES 4:1-3



BIBLE TRUTH

SINFUL DESIRES LEAD US AWAY FROM GOD

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

SUPPLIES: puppet

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

SUPPLIES: *The Gospel Story Bible* (story 150)

3. BIBLE STORY DISCUSSION 5 MIN

Where Is the Gospel?

SUPPLIES: Bible (ESV preferred); Review “Where Is the Gospel?” to prepare

4. SNACK QUESTIONS 10 MIN

SUPPLIES: snack food and beverage

5. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5–10 MIN

6. ACTIVITIES AND OBJECT LESSONS (CHOOSE ONE OR MORE) 20–30 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES: coloring page for NT Lesson 72—one for each child; markers or crayons

Just Like a Sponge

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ a sponge cut into the shape of a heart
- ✓ sugar-free grape drink mix (sugar-free drink mix does not get sticky and is easier to clean up)
- ✓ a scoop of powdered stain remover
- ✓ two clear bowls
- ✓ stirrer
- ✓ white paper towels
- ✓ rubber gloves

You Make Me Upset

SUPPLIES: puppet

7. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

TOTAL 60–75 MIN

THE LESSON

OPENING ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

The children will learn that it is the desires in our hearts that lead us to sin.

Open the class by asking the following discussion questions (a puppet can contribute answers and clues):

- What kinds of things make you angry?
(Have the puppet suggest: What if your dad won't let you have ice cream but other children's dads are giving them ice cream? What if you can't stay up, but your mom or dad tells you it's time for bed? What if you have to eat all your vegetables?)
- Have any of these things ever made you angry?
(Draw out the children to see if they can tell you what happened.)
- Ask the children where their anger comes from, inside them or outside them.
(When you say inside, point to your heart. When you say outside, point away from your body. Have the puppet say he thinks anger comes from inside. Then see how the children respond.)

Explain to the children that sin is in our heart, and we can't blame anyone else for our anger. Our anger rises up out of the sinful desires in our hearts.

Tell the children that we like to blame others for our anger. Ask the class if they ever were teased and became angry. Ask them who was to blame for their anger. (Explain to the children that even when others provoke us to anger, the anger didn't come from them; it came from us—from our desires. We didn't want to be teased, and when we got teased we became angry.)

Ask, "Who can save us from the sinful desires in our hearts?" (See if some of them will answer "Jesus." If they don't, give them a few clues. Finally, share the gospel and explain that Jesus changes our hearts when he saves us and helps us to live for him and win the battle over our desires. Jesus said we should love our enemies and bless those who persecute us. So, even when people provoke us we can love them and not get angry.)

Take time to pray and thank God for his Spirit, which keeps us close to him. Pray for the remainder of the class time before moving forward with the lesson.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read story 150, “The Heart’s Desires,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

BIBLE STORY DISCUSSION 5 MIN

After reading the story, use the following questions to involve the children in a discussion:

- What does it mean to want something?
(*When we want something, we desire to have it for our own.*)
- What does James say people do when they don’t get what they want?
(*They fight. [Hold up a clenched fist as a clue.]*)
- Do people still fight today if they want something?
(*Yes, they do. If they do not get what they want, they might get angry or even try to take what they want.*)

Where Is the Gospel? _____

How does today’s Bible story fit into God’s greater plan of redemption?

James rebukes his readers by calling them “adulterous people” (James 4:4). This is not because they were stealing someone else’s wife or husband, but because they had turned to loving the things of the world instead of God.

Scripture compares our relationship with the Lord to a marriage. When we turn to idols, it is like turning to another husband or wife. It is adultery against God. This is a serious sin because God has demonstrated his love in the most profound way—by sending his own Son to take the punishment for our sins. When we covet something in the world, we are rejecting God’s love and the relationship he extends to us in Christ. God wants our pleasures, our desires, and our love to be focused on Christ.

SNACK QUESTIONS 10 MIN

While the children are eating the snack, engage them by asking the following questions:

- Why do you think our parents do not always give us what we want?
(We don't always want what is best for us. Ask the children to give some examples, such as eating a whole carton of ice cream at once or staying out to play after dark.)
- Why do you think God does not always give us what we want?
(God wants us to love him more than anything in the world.)
- Did you ever want something that your parents did not give you because they thought it would not be good for you?
(Explain that God works through their parents. God is in control of everything and uses parents to care for children.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5–10 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult.

ACTIVITIES AND OBJECT LESSONS. 20–30 MIN

Coloring Activity

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ coloring page for NT Lesson 72—one for each child
- ✓ markers or crayons

While the children are coloring, engage them by asking the following questions:

- What are the children arguing about in the picture?
(a toy)
- Why do you think they are arguing about the toy?
(They both want the same toy.)
- Do you think they want God most of all right now?
(No, they want the toy more than they want God.)

Just Like a Sponge

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ a sponge cut into the shape of a heart
- ✓ sugar-free grape drink mix (sugar-free drink mix does not get sticky and is easier to clean up)
- ✓ a scoop of powdered stain remover
- ✓ two clear bowls
- ✓ stirrer
- ✓ white paper towels
- ✓ rubber gloves

Mix one of the bowls half full with the drink mix. Mix some of the stain remover in the other with warm water.

Explain to the children that a heart is like a sponge. When people don't do what we want, they squeeze our hearts and whatever we have filled our hearts with will come out.

Tell them that the purple water represents anger. Take the sponge and put it in the solution and then ask the children to tell you what will happen when you squeeze it. They should say that purple water (anger) will come out. Tell them that if our hearts are filled with anger, that anger will come out when people "squeeze" our hearts. (Sometimes we say someone made us mad, but really the "mad" or sin of anger is already in our hearts.) Squeeze some of the drink mix onto the white paper towel and show the children how it is colored.

Tell them that when Jesus changes our hearts, he helps clean our sin away. (As you say this, place the squeezed-out sponge into the stain remover, which should neutralize the dye in the drink mix.) Tell them Jesus cleans our sinful hearts by his Spirit so that if someone sins against us not much anger comes out. (Squeeze the sponge onto the paper towels, and clear water should come out.) Compare the two paper towels to see the difference.

If we fill our hearts with the things we want, anger will come out when people sin against us. If we let God fill our hearts with his good fruit, kindness can come out when people sin against us. We will still sin, but by his Holy Spirit God begins to change us.

You Make Me Upset

SUPPLIES:

✓ puppet

The purpose of this puppet skit is to help the children see that anger comes out of our hearts and can't be blamed on someone else.

PUPPET: (*talking to himself*) I can't believe it.

TEACHER: Hi, Puppet. Is everything OK?

PUPPET: I'm just a little upset that's all.

TEACHER: What happened?

PUPPET: Well, I was playing with the blocks in class today and I wanted the blue blocks and John didn't want to give them to me. He makes me so mad when he does that.

TEACHER: What do you mean he makes you mad? How did he make you mad?

PUPPET: I already told you. He wouldn't share the blue blocks!

TEACHER: Why did that have to make you angry? You can't blame him for your anger, you know.

PUPPET: Well, if he would have given me the blue blocks I wouldn't have become angry. So he did make me angry.

TEACHER: Well, Puppet, John didn't put anger inside of your heart; it was already there. You see, when you didn't get what you wanted—the blue blocks—you got angry yourself. That is what the Bible tells us starts our quarrels and fights. We want something, but we do not get it.

PUPPET: You mean anger was already inside of me?

TEACHER: Well, there is sin in your heart that loved the blue blocks more than loving and honoring God by giving the blue blocks to John. And, when you didn't get what you wanted, you decided to be angry against John, who was keeping you from what you wanted.

PUPPET: You mean, when we become angry or upset it is because we are not getting something that we want too much?

TEACHER: Yes, that is true.

PUPPET: Well, I guess I better ask John to forgive me for loving the blue blocks more than I love him.

Have the puppet draw out the children to see if they can remember a time when they got angry because they didn't get what they wanted. See how many different examples you can list.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Take time at the end of class to thank God for what you learned today. Include parts of your Bible lesson in your prayer as a way for the children to remember today's lesson.

LESSON 72 - THE HEART'S DESIRES

