

THE GENTILE CAUSE

The Jerusalem
Council
Acts 15:1–14,
22–35
AD 49

OVERVIEW

BIBLE TRUTH

The Gospel is for everyone.

BIBLE VERSE

We hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Romans 3:28

LEARNER GOAL

I know God loves me just as I am and forgives my sins for Jesus' sake.

LAW & GOSPEL

I sin when I think that I must do something, however small, to contribute to my salvation. **Jesus has done it all perfectly for me. In Him, my salvation is complete.**

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

A disagreement arises in the Church concerning the Gentile believers. Some want to make the Gentiles follow the Jewish laws. Peter, Paul, and Barnabas give testimony to the Jerusalem Council concerning their work among the Gentiles. The council sends a letter to the Gentile believers, encouraging them and welcoming them as God's chosen people.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read the Bible text and notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

MORE TIME Read the leader devotion found in the digital resource center.

IN DEPTH Read “Conflict among Christians” in *The Lutheran Study Bible*, page 1867.

SUPPLY LIST

FOR THIS LESSON

- ☐ Play dough, multi-colored sequins or gems, people- & heart-shaped cookie cutters, small rolling pins & placemats
- ☐ Children's books about parental love or toy figures
- ☐ Buddy puppet & heavy hand weight or other object
- ☐ Paper heart, small cross, or toy figure of Jesus
- ☐ Grapes or marshmallows & straight pretzel sticks
- ☐ 10-inch paper plates & plastic spoons

FOR EVERY LESSON

- ☐ Bible, songbook & classroom supplies
- ☐ Copies of *Discover Leaflet*, stickers & music downloads
- ☐ Supplies for bonus activities
- ☐ cph.org/digitalcontent



LEADER NOTE

Greet each child and show the children where to put their offerings. Direct them to an activity that will connect what they know to what they will learn. If class time is short, omit these and start with Jesus Time.



BONUS ACTIVITY

Make homemade “Salt Play Dough” for the prelearning activity.



BONUS ACTIVITY

Use the “Invocation Song” to begin your Jesus Time.



LEADER NOTE

Show the children your Bible before you tell the Bible story; read the Bible Verse from it. Remind the children that the Bible is the most important book of all because it is God’s true words for us. It tells us everything we need to know about God and His Son, Jesus.

LAUNCH

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

PLAY DOUGH Set out play dough or salt play dough, multi-colored sequins or gems, people-and heart-shaped cookie cutters, small rolling pins, and placemats (for easier cleanup). Have the children cut out people and hearts from play dough on the placemats. Talk about how God’s love and forgiveness shape us into people who are loving and kind to others.

BOOKS OR ROLE-PLAYING Set out books about parents’ unconditional love (e.g., *Love You Forever*, by Robert Munsch) and discuss, or use toy figures to act out scenes from daily life. Pose situations for loving and naughty behaviors (e.g., child disobeys Mom). Discuss parental love. Say, **Today we’ll hear how God loves us because of Jesus, no matter what.**

JESUS TIME

SING “I’m in God’s Family” (digital resource center) or “The Best Book of All” (*Little Ones Sing Praise*, p. 49)

SAY **Hi, boys and girls! I wonder, do you need to do something special for God to love you? Accept answers. We’re going to find out the answer to that today.**

PRAY **Thank You,* Jesus,* for loving us* and all the boys and girls and people in the world.* Help us learn about You.* Amen.***

LEARN

INTRODUCE THE BIBLE STORY

Use your Buddy puppet and a hand weight or other heavy object that the children won’t be able to lift. Ask Buddy, **Have you ever tried to lift something heavy all by yourself that was too hard to do alone?** Show weight and ask if he thinks he could lift it. Buddy isn’t sure, but he says he has great muscles so he thinks he could. Have him try, but struggle and fail. Buddy says, “It’s too heavy on my own. I need help.” Ask the children, **Do any of you think you can lift it?** Let the children briefly try too, monitoring so they don’t drop it on themselves. Say, **Trying to lift this heavy weight reminds me of our Bible story today. Some of God’s people were making rules for others, but no one could keep these rules. They were too difficult. Peter and Paul told them about Jesus. Jesus kept all of God’s rules for us. He came to make us right with God. Paul also talked about a big word that is very important in our story today. It is *justified*. Can anyone guess what it means? Buddy says, “I think it means too heavy.” Good guess. What do you think, children? Listen to their answers. Let’s find out.**

TELL THE BIBLE STORY

Peter, Paul, and Barnabas helped to spread the truth that we are justified by grace, not by our own works or perfection but through Jesus, who died and rose for us. Young children are also included in this gift of love and grace by the work of the Holy Spirit through God’s Word and Baptism. Tell the Bible story in your words, using the *Discover Leaflet* as a guide.

SAY THE BIBLE VERSE

Say, **The Bible says we are “justified by faith apart from works of the law” (Romans 3:28). I wonder, do we always do what God wants? No, none of us do what God wants all the time! We sin. And we can’t lift the heavy weight of sin to save ourselves. So God sent Jesus to pay for our sins on the cross. He forgives our sins for Jesus’ sake and doesn’t count them against us. Say Bible Verse. Chant: I’m justified, “just if I’d” never sinned. (Pretend to “pump iron.”) Yay, Jesus! (Wave hands in the air.)**

LIVE

DISCOVER LESSON TRUTHS

Separate each *Discover Leaflet* into two pages. Send the first page home with each child, or put the page into a purchased binder. Hand out the second page, stickers, and crayons.

SIDE 1 Review the story as the children color the apostles' clothes. Give them heart stickers to add to all the people to show that Jesus loves them all.

SIDE 2 Talk about what's happening in the two pictures on the left. Say, **Our sins hurt others and separate us from God.** Have the children put a cross sticker over each behavior. **God forgives our sins because of the work Jesus did on the cross. He justifies us.** How does being forgiven make us feel? (Thankful, happy, loved) Talk about the picture of Jesus with the children. Encourage the children to tell Jesus thank You for His love and forgiveness. After the children color this picture, have them trace the letters to spell *Jesus*, color the heart, and add their name to the line to show Jesus loves them and came to save them from sin.

ENGAGE IN ACTIVE LEARNING

Take time to reinforce lesson truths with one or more of these active-learning options. Turn to "Active Learning" on the back page for instructions to do the activities below.

□ MOVE

Play a "Tell Everyone" game. Explain what to do and model the rules.

□ SNACK

Make barbells using grapes or marshmallows and stick pretzels (gluten-free if allergies necessitate).

□ CREATE

Use paper plates, plastic spoons, markers, and stickers to make a paper-plate stage and Peter.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Even young children need to hear both the Law (God's will for us) and the Gospel (the Good News of God's forgiveness in Jesus). Developmentally, they are not at a point where they truly understand sin or even admit that they sin. But they all feel the consequences of sin in their lives (rejection, loneliness, fear, guilt). They need to hear about a Savior who loves them no matter what, a Savior who is always there for them in all circumstances, a Savior who has paid the full price of their redemption from sin. Use this lesson to underscore that they do not have to "be good" to earn Jesus' love. He loves them no matter what and made them His children. Ask, **Do you have to be good for Jesus to love you? How does knowing Jesus loves you and paid for the wrong things you do on the cross make you feel? What are ways you show that you love Jesus too?**

LEAVE

SING "I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus" (digital resource center) or "Jesus Loves the Little Children" (*Little Ones Sing Praise*, p. 94)

SAY Today we heard how some people thought they had to do something special so God would love them and save them. But God doesn't love us because we are good or do special things to please Him. In fact, no matter how hard we try, we aren't good all the time! And we can never lift the heavy weight of the wrong things we do by ourselves. But God loves us and sent Jesus to save us by dying on the cross for us. God forgives us and makes us His children through Baptism and His Word. He helps us live as His children.

PRAY Dear Jesus,* thank You* for taking away* all of our sins* on the cross.* Thank You* for loving us* just the way we are.* Help us* tell others* the Good News about You.* We love You, Jesus!* Amen.*



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus kept the Law perfectly. He died and rose again to pay for the sins of the world. This Good News is for all people!



BONUS ACTIVITY

Use the "Justified" activity as another opportunity to help the children understand that we are saved by faith alone, not by our being good. Help them see that Jesus gives us faith to believe in Him through Baptism and His Word. He also helps us live as His children, showing love for others. But this isn't what makes Him love us. He loves us unconditionally.

ACTIVE LEARNING

□ MOVE

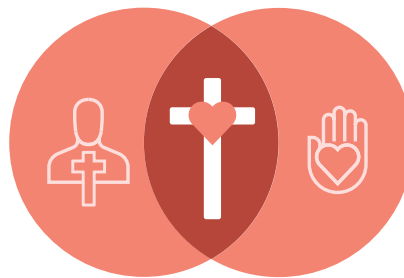
Have the children stand or sit in a circle and pass a paper heart, small cross, or toy figure of Jesus. The child with the object says, “Jesus loves you,” to the child next to him or her, then passes the object to the child, who in turn repeats this message as it and the object get passed around the circle. When all have had a turn to hear and share the Good News, stand and sing “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” (*Little Ones Sing Praise*, p. 42). Add actions.

□ SNACK

Make barbell weights, using two grapes or marshmallows and straight pretzel sticks. Talk about how Jesus lifted the heavy weight of sin off of us. Say, **Now God sees you and me “Just if I’d” never sinned.**

□ CREATE

Ahead of time, cut a horizontal slit across the center of 10-inch paper plates, allowing 1–2 inches on each side of the slit to create a “stage” for a spoon puppet. The children can draw a face and hair on the back of a spoon to be Peter. Above the slit, show the children how to draw a simple church outline or buildings for the town of Antioch (scribble-coloring is okay), and add the cross sticker. Below the slit, add face stickers of the new Gentile Christians. Draw a triangle or rectangle body or clothes for each sticker face. Have the children retell the story. Model Peter reading the Good News: **We do naughty things and can’t save ourselves. Because of God’s big love, He saves us through Jesus.** Teach children this chant: **Justified, “just if I’d” never sinned. Jesus loves me.** Peter puppet could also sing “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” (*Little Ones Sing Praise*, p. 42).



CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

God welcomes all into His family without placing qualifications on them.

CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I can share my faith with others no matter their background.

GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

See how this lesson builds on previous learning for each age.

ADULT

I can identify how the early Christians resolved the controversy in the text, and I can consider how their approach to teaching that the Gospel is for everyone applies today.

YOUTH

I can show how conflict resolution in the text informs Christian debate today and reminds us that the Gospel is for everyone.

ELEMENTARY

I understand that the Good News that Jesus is the Savior is for all people everywhere.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God loves me just as I am and forgives my sins for Jesus’ sake.

★ BONUS ACTIVITIES

SALT PLAY DOUGH

15 minutes

Mix 3 cups flour, 1½ cups salt, 6 teaspoons cream of tartar, and 6 tablespoons oil in a bowl. Combine 3 cups water with dry ingredients. (Add a few drops of food coloring to water before mixing with dry ingredients to make colored play dough.)

Cook over low to medium heat. Stir until a ball forms. Cool until able to knead. Add nonmetallic glitter, if desired. Store in a resealable bag.

INVOCATION SONG

10 minutes

Sing to “Where Is Thumbkin”:
Come and worship, come and worship (*motion to come*),
Father, Son; Father, Son (*put both hands up, then spread out as if on a cross for each mention*);
And the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit (*roll hands in barrel tumble, then cover heart*);
Three in One, Three in One (*hold up three fingers, place them into other cupped hand, pull out with one finger pointing up*).

JUSTIFIED

15 minutes

Sing “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” (*Little Ones Sing Praise*, p. 42). **Do you have to be good for Jesus to love you? No! We all do wrong things. We sin, but Jesus loves us and paid for our sins on the cross.** Give each child a heart-and-cross sticker and say, [Sloan] **believes in Jesus.** Conclude, **Because of Jesus, I am justified, “just if I’d” never sinned.**