

The Helmet of Salvation

LESSON

1

LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ God offers us the free gift of salvation.

OBJECTIVES

Kids will

- ✓ play a game that involves unequal trades,
- ✓ hear what Jesus offered the dying thief,
- ✓ make paper “helmets of salvation,” and
- ✓ have the opportunity to accept God’s forgiveness and grace.

YOU’LL NEED

- small prizes or treats*
- small boxes or bags
- pennies
- miniature marshmallows*
- round toothpicks
- a CD player
- a CD of soft worship music
- photocopies of the “Helmet of Salvation” handout (p. 18)
- scissors

*Always check for allergies before serving snacks.

BIBLE BASIS

Ephesians 6:17

“That kid just doesn’t have her head on straight.” How often have you heard that expression? It usually indicates that the child in question is mentally or spiritually confused, displays wrong attitudes, and is otherwise generally discombobulated. As we “dress” our kids in the armor of God, let’s work from the

top down. Let's begin with the helmet of salvation and teach kids how to get their heads on straight! They need to understand that accepting God's offer of salvation means that

- ◆ they're forgiven. Thanks to Christ's redemptive work on the cross, their sins are no more. They're new creatures.

- ◆ they choose to be on God's side and to give God their loyalty.

- ◆ they choose to follow Jesus and to live as he did—lives that exemplify love and grace.

- ◆ they become heirs to God's kingdom and a glorious future in heaven.

Use this lesson to teach kids that accepting God's free gift of salvation is the only qualification they need to receive all the other great benefits that go along with being God's children. It's their key to the locker where all the other pieces of armor are kept, their first step into life in the Spirit with all its wonderful fruit, and their ticket to eternity in heaven.

Each denomination has its own expectations about how the step of salvation should be taken. Take time during this lesson to explain your church's view of this all-important process.

Luke 23:26–24:7

No Scripture more graphically illustrates the “unfair” trade that God freely offers than this conversation between Jesus and the dying thief who believed in him. Could it be that God loves humankind so much that when a thief who lives a life of crime professes faith with his dying breath, God will receive him? God will cleanse his heart and give him eternity in heaven? Absolutely!

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

As you teach kids these basic tenets of the Christian faith, be prepared for all kinds of responses. Some kids may reflect spiritual understanding far beyond their years. Some may display a hunger for God and a strong realization of personal inadequacy. Others may just be taking their first steps down that path. It's not always the oldest and brightest who are the most spiritually mature. You're the guide, and you're assisted by none other than the Holy Spirit. Use this lesson to teach kids that to put on the helmet of salvation is to step into the light of God's grace.

The Lesson 😊

ATTENTION GRABBER

The Price Is Wrong

Before class, set out various small prizes on a table and hide each prize under a small box or a bag turned upside down. The prizes might include quarters, fancy pencils, erasers, or treats. You'll need one prize for each child, plus a couple of extras in case you have visitors. As kids enter, whet their curiosity about what might be hidden under the boxes and bags, but warn them that peeking disqualifies them from the game that's about to begin.

Have kids line up according to birthdays, the youngest in front and the oldest in back. Say: **We're going to begin today with a game. I'll give each of you a penny; then you'll have to decide if you want to keep the penny or trade it for one of the prizes on the table. If you decide to trade, you may choose one box or bag. There might be a good prize in the box or bag you choose, or there might be nothing at all.**

Hand the first child in line a penny and ask:

◆ **Would you rather keep your penny or have one of the prizes that's hidden on the table?**

If the child wants a prize, take the penny, and allow him or her to reveal one of the prizes on the table. The child must reveal only one prize, take the prize, and sit down. If the child prefers to keep the penny, simply have him or her sit down.

Repeat this process with each child. It will soon become obvious that all the prizes are worth much more than a penny. When everyone has played, gather kids in a circle and ask:

◆ **What did you think about this game?** (It was weird because the prizes were all worth more than the pennies; it was set up so we'd all want to trade our pennies for the prizes.)

◆ **Why do you think I'd set up a game where you all get better prizes than the pennies I gave you in the first place?** (Because you like us; because you wanted to make it fun; because that's what the book said to do.)

Say: **This game is called The Price Is Wrong because you all had a chance to trade for something much better than your pennies. Today we're going to find out how God offers us a trade that's even better than the trades I offered you in our game. We're going to learn that ★ God offers us the free gift of salvation.**

Have children eat their treats or set their prizes aside so they won't be a distraction during the rest of the class.

Teacher Tip

If you use edible prizes, it's best to make all the prizes edible so that everyone has a treat to enjoy.



BIBLE STUDY

The Sweet Gospel Story (Luke 23:26–24:7)

Say: To begin today's Bible story, everyone needs to make a marshmallow man. I'll pass around a box of toothpicks and a bag of miniature marshmallows. Everyone take three toothpicks and five marshmallows. You may eat one of the marshmallows. Pass around the toothpicks and marshmallows.

When everyone is ready, say: Okay, let's make our marshmallow men together. Demonstrate as you give the following instructions. First, push a toothpick into a marshmallow. The marshmallow is a foot; the toothpick is a leg. Now make a second foot and leg. Hold the tops of the legs together and slide on two marshmallows—one for the body and one for the head. Now break your last toothpick in half and push the halves into the body to form arms. Great! Now you each have a marshmallow man. Set it on the floor in front of you, and sit on your hands. Ask:

◆ How do you feel about your marshmallow man? Do you like it or care for it at all? (Yes, it's cute; no, I think it's dumb.)

◆ Suppose I got really mean and walked around the circle and stepped on each person's marshmallow man. How would that make you feel? (Angry; sad; I wouldn't want it to get spoiled.)

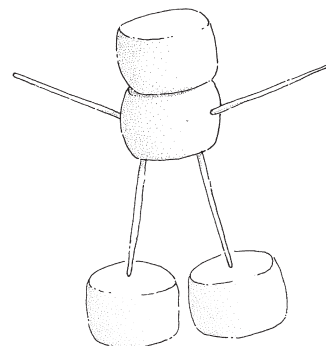
◆ Suppose your marshmallow man suddenly came to life, walked up your arm, and poked you in the eye? How would you feel about it then? (I'd be mad; I'd laugh; I'd punch it.)

Say: You see, in some ways we're like our marshmallow men. God made us and he loves us and cares about us a lot—much more than we care for our marshmallow men. But we have an enemy—Satan. Sometimes Satan does mean things to us, like if I went around the circle and stomped on your marshmallow men. Satan always tries to get us to mess up and do wrong things. Sometimes we do. We may lie or cheat or steal or be disrespectful to our parents or even to God. Some of you said you wouldn't like it if your marshmallow men poked you in the eye and hurt you. God doesn't like it when we do things that are hurtful to him. Ask:

◆ What are some of the things we do that are hurtful to God? (Use his name to swear; be mean and selfish; disobey the Ten Commandments.)

Say: Our God is holy and perfect. When we sin and do things that are wrong, it's as though we are turning our backs toward God. Our sin separates us from our holy God. To show that, let's put our marshmallow men behind our backs. Put your marshmallow man behind your back.

But God loves us and misses us all the time we are separated. So, to fix our broken relationship, God decided to give



us an incredible gift—a gift that is worth much more than anything we could ever trade. God gave us the gift of his Son, Jesus. Jesus was a human being like us. But Jesus was much more than we are. He was both God and man. So, just like God, Jesus was perfect. He was tempted by Satan, but he never did any of the mean or wrong things that we do. He lived on earth to show us how we should live. He taught that loving God and loving others are the most important things in life.

After Jesus had taught and preached and healed people for almost three years, he paid for our sins by giving his own life. Jesus loved us so much that he was willing to do anything to fix our relationship with God. He took the punishment that we earned.

Use extra toothpicks to make three crosses side by side on the floor in front of you to represent Jesus and the two men who were crucified with him.

Roman soldiers hung Jesus on a cross to die. Two other men were put on crosses beside Jesus. They were both criminals. One of the criminals taunted Jesus and made fun of him. “Aren’t you the Christ?” he asked. “Save yourself and us!”

But the other thief couldn’t believe his ears. He could see that Jesus was someone special. Listen to what he said. Read Luke 23:40-42 aloud. Say: **What a thing to ask! This man was a criminal under a death sentence. And now, just as he was dying, he wanted Jesus to forgive him. Ask:**

◆ **Wasn’t that too much to ask? Explain.** (No, because Jesus loved him; yes, because he was a bad guy.)

◆ **What did Jesus do?** (Forgave him; listened to him.)

Say: **Jesus could tell that this thief had faith in him. So, even though this man had lived a life of sin, Jesus turned to him and said, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” Whoa!**

Ask:

◆ **Was that a fair trade? A life of sin, maybe one hour of being good, and then he gets to go to heaven?** (No, but Jesus did it anyway; yes, because the man believed in Jesus.)

Say: **Do you know that God is willing to make that trade with each one of us? That’s right, ★ God offers us the free gift of salvation. When we say, “God, please forgive my sins and make me clean inside and let me become Jesus’ follower and live in heaven someday,” God answers, “Yes, I’ll do that for you. My Son Jesus paid for your sins, so now you can be my child. I’ll love you and watch over you and guide your life. And when you die, you’ll come and live with me forever in heaven.” Ask:**

◆ **What do you think about that trade—our sins for becoming God’s child and living in heaven someday?**

◆ How is that like The Price Is Wrong game that we played at the beginning of class? (It's a very good trade for us!)

Say: That trade—that gift God gives us—is called salvation. It's a gift that God hopes each of us will accept.

Take time at this point to explain your church's teaching about receiving God's forgiveness and free gift of salvation.

LIFE APPLICATION

Marshmallow Meditation

Say: Remember the marshmallow man and how he was set behind your back to remind you that sin is like turning our backs on God? Because Jesus died, we don't have to be separated from God. You can bring that marshmallow man back out and take a look at it. Because of Jesus' great gift, we can come face to face with God. We don't have to be separated from him. I'll play some soft music as you pray silently. You may want to thank Jesus for being willing to die for us, you may want to thank Jesus for taking the blame for your sins, or you may want to pray for forgiveness. Let's spend a few moments in silent prayer.

Play soft worship music as kids pray silently. Then close by praying aloud: **Thank you, Lord, for taking our sins and offering us the free gift of salvation. In Jesus' name, amen.**

COMMITMENT

Salvation Helmets

Before class, make a sample "Helmet of Salvation" from the handout found at the end of this lesson.

Say: **When we accept God's free gift of salvation, we literally put on a piece of the armor of God—the helmet of salvation.** Ask:

◆ **What does a helmet do?** (Protects someone's head; acts as a second skull.)

◆ **What do you think the helmet of salvation might protect you from?**

Say: **Listen to what the Bible says about the whole armor of God and why we need it. See if you can identify how many pieces of armor there are.** Read aloud Ephesians 6:10-18. Then ask:

◆ **How many pieces of armor did you count?** (Six, plus prayer.)

◆ **What did you learn about why we need armor?** (Because we're on God's side in a battle between good and evil; because the evil one tries to hurt us.)

◆ **Why do you think the helmet of salvation is particularly important?** (Because it helps us think about good things; it reminds us of Jesus' love for us.)

Say: **God's armor protects us from our spiritual enemies.**

Ask:

◆ **Who might not want us to be successful in our spiritual lives?** (Satan; people who are not on God's side.)

◆ **What might our spiritual enemies try to get us to do?** (Sin; disobey God.)

Say: **We Christians need to put on the helmet of salvation to protect ourselves. In upcoming lessons, we'll learn more about the full armor of God.** Put on the helmet of salvation you made before class. **These paper helmets can remind us of the real protection God's armor gives us.**

Distribute scissors and photocopies of the "Helmet of Salvation" handout. Explain that kids are to fold on the dotted lines and cut on the solid lines. Then they'll gently stretch the helmets over their heads.

When all the kids have put on their helmets, say: **These helmets identify us as people who are on God's side in all spiritual conflicts. Now repeat after me!** Lead this rhyme as if it were a marching cadence, with the kids repeating each line.

**I don't know, but I've been told
The armor of God makes me strong and *bold!***

**See the helmet of salvation on my head?
God took my sins and gave me heaven instead.**

Then ask:

◆ **Besides heaven, what are some other privileges we receive by accepting God's forgiveness?** (Talking to God face to face; protection from spiritual enemies.)

Continue the cadence as a prayer:

**Thank you, God, for these good gifts!
Help me live as you want me to live.**

CLOSING

Let the Helmet Speak

Ask:

◆ **What does it mean to you to put on the helmet of salvation?** (That I've accepted God's gift of forgiveness; that I'll live in heaven someday; that I'm a follower of Jesus; that I have eternal life.)

Say: **Good answers! Wearing the helmet of salvation also means that you are identified as a follower of Jesus, that he is your Lord and leader. Besides the helmet of salvation,**

there are several other pieces of armor for God's people. You can read about them in the verses printed on your helmet.

Have kids take off their helmets. Ask volunteers to read each "ring" of the helmet aloud.

Say: During upcoming lessons, we'll learn more about the other pieces of armor and how to put them on. If you enjoy memorizing, these are great verses to learn by heart. They'll help you remember all the protection you have as a person on God's side.

Now I have an assignment I hope you'll accept. Show your helmet of salvation to someone this week, and explain what it reminds you of—that ★ God offers us the free gift of salvation.

Make sure kids take their marshmallow men and their helmets of salvation as they leave.

