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Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested

Scripture: Matthew 26:47-68, John 18:1-14

Theme: Jesus was betrayed but He went willingly

Jr High (Ages 12-14)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: "The Courage of a Willing Heart" Imagine a moment when you feel totally betrayed, like someone you trusted, maybe even loved, handed you over to the worst possible outcome. For Jesus, that moment was in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Judas led Him into a room like a traitor. But here's the surprising truth: Jesus didn't fight back. Instead, He went willingly, even though it meant suffering. Why? Because He knew betrayal wasn't about hate, it was about love. He allowed it so that, one day, He could rescue us from the worst betrayal of all: our own sin. Life Application: How many of us would have stood up for ourselves in that moment? Jesus didn't wait for permission to save the world, He chose to trust even when it was hard. The same courage He showed then is the same courage we're called to live out today: in friendships, in hard choices, and in trusting God even when the path feels dark. Encouragement for Teachers: Remember, junior high kids are testing boundaries, with rules, with faith, with themselves. This lesson isn't just about history; it's about asking: Where have I been betrayed or disappointed, and how can I trust God's plan? Be ready to talk about their own struggles. God doesn't ask us to be brave in our strength, He gives us strength to be brave. Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

Bible Story

Title: "The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus: A Moment of Faith and Fear"

One evening, just before the Passover feast, Jesus and his disciples gathered in the upper room, sharing bread and wine as a reminder of God's covenant. Jesus had already warned them that one of them would betray him, but even so, Peter and the others weren't sure who it would be, especially Judas, who had been with them for years. The Bible doesn't say Judas felt guilty, just that he did betray Jesus. He took thirty silver coins and slipped away to the priests,

selling out his best friend and teacher. Now, as Jesus sat down to eat, his disciples were confused, scared, and maybe even hurt. But Jesus didn't flinch. He knew the plan was unfolding, and he trusted God, even in the darkness.

After supper, Jesus and Peter went out to the olive garden, where he prayed. While praying, he asked his disciples to wait nearby. Then, he asked Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" (John 21:15, though this verse is actually about Peter after the resurrection, we'll come back to it). The disciples probably hesitated, what did he mean? Jesus was getting ready to leave them for good. The Bible doesn't say Judas immediately betrayed him in the garden, but soon, he arrived with a crowd armed with swords and clubs, led by officers from the chief priests and Pharisees. Judas had brought them straight to Jesus, like a traitor with a key.

Jesus didn't resist. He asked his disciples to surrender too, saying, "Put your sword back in its place," and turned to his captors. The Bible says they arrested him without a fight, not because he was weak, but because he trusted God to handle it. Peter, who had earlier sworn he'd never deny Jesus, ran away that night, hiding and weeping. The disciples scattered, confused and scared. This wasn't how they expected Jesus to leave them. They'd hoped he'd fight or escape, but he let himself be taken, even though he could have run. That's the kind of love and courage Jesus showed.

Jesus was led away to be judged and crucified. The priests and soldiers taunted him, mocking him as they did, but Jesus stayed silent. He didn't run away or fight back, he trusted God to protect him. Even in this dark moment, he didn't betray his own cause. His disciples? They ran. They failed. And Judas? The Bible says he took the thirty silver coins and threw them to the temple, then hanged himself (Matthew 27:5). His betrayal was real, but his regret was too late.

--- Why This Story Matters: Jesus's arrest shows us that faith doesn't mean we're perfect, it means we trust God even when we're afraid or make mistakes. Judas betrayed Jesus, Peter denied him, and the disciples ran away. But Jesus didn't let their failures stop him. He went to the cross anyway, knowing God would raise him up again. That's the kind of trust we're called to have, even when we fail, God is still faithful. The next time you feel like you've let someone down or don't know what to do, remember: Jesus was betrayed, too. He didn't blame them. He trusted God. And that's a promise for us.

Key Verse

John 18:11 , 'Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given Me?'

Here's how you could explain this powerful verse to junior high students in a way that feels real, relatable, and meaningful: --- "Imagine you've been invited to a super important mission, maybe saving a friend from a tough situation or leading a group of people toward something great. But along the way, you realize there's a big test ahead: a cup (maybe it's like a choice, comfort vs. hardship, success vs. sacrifice). Jesus was saying, 'I don't have to pretend I don't want this hard thing. I will face it because God trusts me with it, and I trust Him to guide me through it.'" Why it matters for us: This verse reminds us that Jesus didn't run from hard things, He took them because He knew God had a plan. Just like in life, when we face tough choices or big tests, we don't have to avoid them just because they're hard. We can say, "Yes, I'll do what's right, no matter what," trusting God to help us. And if we're brave like Jesus, we'll know God's plan is worth it! Real-life question: What's a "cup" you're facing right now? Maybe school stress, family drama, or a hard decision? Jesus didn't flinch, He drank it all. Can you trust God to help you too? --- Bonus tip: Have them ask: "How would you answer Jesus if He said, 'Shall I drink this cup?'" (Hint: Their answer could be their own prayer!)

Activities

Activity 1:

Students create and act out a dramatic, low-key scene of Jesus' arrest using body language and paper props, then discuss how silence (or words we choose to say) can feel like betrayal.

1. Pair Up & Sketch (5 mins)

2. Split students into pairs. Give each pair a sheet of paper to draw one visual representation of a key moment from Jesus' arrest (e.g., Judas kissing Jesus, Peter denying Him, or the crowd shouting "Crucify Him!").
3. Prompt: "How does your drawing show silence or a hidden betrayal?" (Encourage quiet moments or hidden actions.)
4. Act It Out (7 mins)
5. Have each pair stand in a circle. One student will act out their drawing without speaking, only using body language, facial expressions, and gestures (e.g., a trembling hand, a hesitant nod).
6. The other student must guess what's happening. After the guess, discuss: "How did your body tell the story without words?"
7. Debrief: "Betrayal in Small Things"
8. Ask: "When have you silently betrayed someone, even if they meant no harm? How did it feel?"
9. Connect to life: "Jesus' betrayal was intentional, but often betrayal starts in small, silent things. How can we choose our words and actions to build trust?"

Activity 2:

Students "sell" a hypothetical item (like a stuffed animal) to Judas for "30 pieces of silver," then discuss what that transaction reveals about Jesus' sacrifice.

1. The Trade Setup (3 mins)
2. Give each group a toy and 30 small bills (or write "30 pieces of silver" on a scrap of paper). Explain:
3. "Imagine Judas asked to trade this toy for money. What might he've thought? What did he really trade?"
4. Write on the board: "Jesus didn't ask for anything. He gave Himself freely."
5. Draw the Exchange (5 mins)
6. Have students sketch their group's "deal" on paper. Ask:
7. "Why did Judas say he needed the money?" (Hint: "Was it for a sin he was hiding?")
8. "What's a 'small' trade in your life that feels like a big deal?"
9. The Betrayal Lesson (5 mins)
10. Show the Bible verses (Matthew 26:15, 16). Ask:
11. "Why did Judas think Jesus was the enemy? How can we fight lies with truth?"
12. Life application: "Jesus' sacrifice wasn't about punishment, it was love. How can we choose love, even when it's hard?"
13. Why These Work for 12, 14 Year-Olds:

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions designed to spark meaningful reflection and conversation for junior high students while connecting the story of Jesus' betrayal and arrest to their own lives. Each question invites exploration, empathy, and personal application:
- 1. "Betrayal Can Feel Like a Sudden Storm, Like a Friend or Family Member Turning Against You."
- Matthew 26 records Judas' betrayal as he kisses Jesus to show his betrayal. If someone close to you betrayed you, whether in friendship, family, or even a mistake you thought was betrayal, what emotions did it stir up? How did you respond? Why do you think people sometimes act in ways that hurt others, even when they meant to help? What lessons from Jesus' betrayal could guide us in these kinds of relationships?
- (This question invites students to grapple with real-life pain and the complexity of human relationships while connecting it to Jesus' example of trust and forgiveness.)
- 2. "Even in the Darkest Moments, God Still Loves Us, Even When We're Broken or Betrayed."

- After Jesus was arrested, his disciples fled, and even Peter denied him three times (Matthew 26:69, 75). Later, Jesus appeared to them and said, "It was I myself who was betrayed" (Matthew 26:21). If you've ever felt like you failed someone, left someone behind, or acted in a way you regretted, what does Jesus' words mean to you? How can we trust that God doesn't abandon us, even when we're the ones who turn away?
- (This question helps students reflect on their own struggles with faith and failure while encouraging them to trust God's love in their own lives.)
- 3. "The World Can Try to Trap Us, But Jesus Is the One Who Can Set Us Free."
- The priests and soldiers in John 18 were looking for a way to "get rid of" Jesus, but they didn't expect him to choose to die for them. If you've ever felt like you were "caught" in a situation you couldn't escape, like peer pressure, a tough decision, or a mistake you couldn't fix, how did you handle it? What does it mean that Jesus freed us from sin and death, even when we betray ourselves or others?
- (This question ties the story of betrayal to the broader theme of redemption, encouraging students to think about how Jesus' sacrifice changes their own struggles.)
- 4. "Forgiveness Isn't Always Easy, But It's the Only Way Forward."
- Peter, in Matthew 26, asked Jesus, "Will you forgive us if we repent?" Jesus answered, "I will forgive you" (Matthew 26:23). Judas, who betrayed Jesus, later hung himself (Matthew 27:5). If someone wronged you, whether in anger, hurt, or a broken promise, how would you handle forgiving them? Why is forgiveness so hard sometimes? What does Jesus' forgiveness mean to you, and how can you apply it to your own life?
- (This question explores forgiveness as both a challenge and a commandment, encouraging students to think about reconciliation in their own relationships.)
- Why These Work:
- Honest language: Avoids sugarcoating hard emotions (anger, betrayal, regret) to connect with students' real experiences.
- Real questions: Ties the Bible story to everyday struggles (friendships, failure, forgiveness).
- Life application: Helps students see how Jesus' story offers hope and guidance for their own lives.
- Open-ended: Encourages deeper thought rather than just yes/no answers.
- Would you like any of these adjusted for a specific group dynamic or cultural context?

Prayer Focus

Prayer Focus for Junior High Students: "Lord, this morning, we're looking at the story where Jesus was betrayed, by someone He loved, even though He loved them back. It's easy to wonder, 'How could they do this?' or 'Why would anyone turn against what they believed in?' But we know You understand. Help us to trust You even when things feel unfair, especially when we're hurting or watching others make tough choices. Give us hearts that are open to grace, not quick to judge, and remind us that even in pain, Your love never fails. Help us to follow You, even when it's hard or scary. Amen." --- Why this works: - Relatable: Names the confusing emotions students might feel (betrayal, judgment). - Hopeful: Ends with trust in God's love, not just "fixing" the betrayal. - Life-application: Connects to real-life choices (trust, forgiveness, following Jesus). Optional follow-up question for discussion: "If someone betrayed you (even in a small way), how would YOU respond to God's love?"

>> Missions Spotlight

In many cultures, betrayal by a friend is the deepest wound. Missionaries working in tribal areas of Papua New Guinea, where tribal betrayal has been common, share that Jesus understands betrayal, and forgave even His betrayer.

-> To the Cross

Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Peter drew a sword to fight. But Jesus said, 'Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?' Jesus went to the cross willingly. No one took His life , He laid it down.