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Jesus Forgives Peter

Scripture: John 21:1-19

Theme: Jesus restores us when we fail Him

1st-3rd Grade (Ages 6-8)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Sunday School Lesson: "Jesus Forgives Peter" This lesson teaches little ones that even when we make mistakes, God loves us and forgives us through Jesus. After Peter denied Jesus three times, Jesus gave him a chance to prove his love by taking care of others, showing that God always gives us a second chance! Introduction (5 minutes): Start with a fun story or visual (like a drawing of Peter and Jesus). Ask: "What happens when we say we won't do something but then do it anyway?" (Wait for answers like, "We feel sorry or get mad.") Explain that Peter felt really bad after he lied to Jesus, but Jesus didn't punish him, He forgave him! This reminds us that God wants us to keep trying, even when we mess up. Key Lesson (7 minutes): Read John 21:15, 19 together. After Peter denied Jesus, Jesus asked him three times, "Do you love me?" and told him to take care of others (like feeding the fish!). Peter did his best, and Jesus praised him. This shows us that God loves us more when we repent (say we're sorry) than when we don't! Simple application: "When we mess up, can we ask God for forgiveness like Peter did? What can we do to show we love Him?" Application & Wrap-Up (5 minutes): Ask volunteers to help kids think of a time they failed but got a chance to try again. Praise them for being kind to others, just like Peter did. End with a prayer: "Dear God, thank You for forgiving us when we make mistakes. Help us to love and care for others like You do. Amen!" Encouragement for Teachers: Keep the tone warm and hopeful, focus on Jesus' love, not perfection! Use visuals like a "repentance jar" (where kids draw pictures of their mistakes and God's forgiveness) or act out Peter's denial and Jesus' restoration. Short, engaging, and full of hope! 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

Jesus Forgives Peter

One evening, after Jesus had risen from the dead, He appeared to His friends by the shore of a lake. Peter and some of the other disciples were there, catching fish. Suddenly, Jesus stood there on the shore, smiling at them. He called out, "Friends, do you have any fish?" They answered, "No, Master. We've caught nothing." Jesus then said, "Cast your nets on the other side of the boat." They did, and suddenly, the nets were so full they couldn't pull them in! The disciples were amazed, Jesus had worked a miracle again!

Peter, who had once denied Jesus three times, was the first to realize it was the Lord. He fell down and worshipped Him, saying, "Master, it's really You!" Jesus then asked Peter, "Do you love Me more than all these?" Peter answered, "Yes, Lord! You know everything. You know I love You." Jesus said, "Then feed My sheep." Later, He turned to Peter again and asked, "Do you love Me?" This time, Peter said, "Lord, You know everything. You know I love You." Jesus smiled and said, "When you were very young, I laid down my life to save the world. Now lay it down again for My sake. Follow Me." Peter, who had failed so badly, was given a chance to start over.

Peter's heart had been hurt when Jesus told him he would deny Him three times. But Jesus didn't give up on Peter. Instead, He forgave him and gave him a second chance. Even though Peter struggled and made mistakes, Jesus loved him and wanted him to keep serving. This shows us that God doesn't give up on us either! No matter how many times we fail, God forgives us when we ask for His help.

Why does this story matter? Because Jesus doesn't just want us to follow Him, He loves us unconditionally. No matter what we've done wrong, God forgives us when we turn to Him. Just like Peter, we can ask for forgiveness, and Jesus will always welcome us back with open arms. Let's remember today that God doesn't give up on us, and He wants us to trust Him, love Him, and serve Him with our whole heart!

Key Verse

John 21:17 , 'Feed My sheep.'

Jesus said to Peter, "Feed My sheep." This is a special message that helps us understand how to care for others in a kind and loving way, just like Jesus did when He taught and helped His friends. Peter was one of Jesus' disciples, and He told him to take care of the people who believed in Him, like His "sheep" (His followers). Just like a good shepherd takes care of his sheep by feeding them, protecting them, and leading them to water, we should do the same for others. Jesus wanted Peter (and us!) to help people learn about God, share kindness, and make sure they feel loved and cared for. But here's the exciting part: Jesus isn't just talking to Peter anymore! He's telling us, all of His followers, to take care of others just as He did. Sometimes, this means helping people who are hurting, teaching them the Bible, or showing them love through small acts like sharing a meal, listening, or being patient. Just like Jesus fed His sheep with His words, we can feed others with our actions, like sharing food, encouraging them, or being a friend to those who need it. To put this into practice, we can start small: - At home: Help feed, water, or care for animals or younger siblings. - At school: Be kind to classmates, share toys, or help someone who's sad. - Everywhere: Smile at someone who looks lonely, invite a friend to play, or pray for them to know God's love. Jesus didn't just say, "Feed My sheep", He gave us an example to follow. When we take care of others with love, we're doing what Jesus wants us to do, just like He taught His disciples! Who can you help today?

Activities

Activity 1:

Kids create a simple comic-style board showing Peter's three denials and Jesus' forgiveness, helping them understand God's mercy even when we fail.

1. Show the Story: Read John 21:15, 19 (Peter's three denials and Jesus' words: "Feed my lambs").
2. Divide the Paper: Each student gets two sheets: one for Peter's failures, one for Jesus' forgiveness.
3. Draw Peter's Denials (Left Side):
4. Draw three scenes where Peter says "I don't know you" (like in Mark 14:66, 72).

5. Label each with "I don't know you!" in big letters.
6. Draw Jesus' Love (Right Side):
7. Draw Jesus feeding Peter (with a fish or bread, like in John 21:15, 17).
8. Write "I love you, and you can start over!" (using John 21:19's promise).
9. Glue & Share: Staple the pages, then read aloud how Jesus forgave Peter even when he messed up.

Activity 2:

Kids create a paper wave craft to visualize Jesus' patience with Peter, showing how God's forgiveness waves over our mistakes.

1. Explain the Concept: Say, "Jesus forgave Peter three times, just like he forgives us when we fail!"
2. Cut Paper: Each student cuts a long strip (12, 15 inches) into three equal waves (like ocean ripples).
3. Color the Waves:
4. Draw Peter's first wave (big red line) with "I sinned" or "I fell down."
5. Draw a lighter wave (blue/green) with "Jesus forgave!"
6. Draw a tiny wave (white) with "I can start again!"
7. Glue & Talk: Glue the waves on a separate sheet. Ask: "How many times have you messed up? How many times can God forgive you?"
8. Pray Together: End with "Lord, help us trust Your forgiveness like Peter did!"
9. Both activities use simple supplies, teamwork, and Bible verses to help kids see God's mercy! Would you like a follow-up discussion question to go with these?

Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for young children (ages 6-8) based on Jesus Forgives Peter (John 21:1-19). Each question encourages thinking, reflection, and connection to their own lives with simple language and space for creative responses:
- What do you think Peter was feeling after he denied Jesus three times?
- Why do you think Jesus came back to talk to him?
- How do you think Peter felt when Jesus forgave him? Can you think of a time when someone made a mistake, and you felt sorry or wanted to apologize? What helped you feel better?
- (This question invites them to explore Peter's emotions and relate them to their own experiences of mistakes and forgiveness.)
- Jesus loved Peter even after he was mean to him. What does that teach you about God?
- If you were Jesus, how would you feel when someone you love hurts you? How could you show them love and forgive them?
- Have you ever been kind to someone who wasn't kind to you first? How did that make you feel?
- (This helps them see God's unconditional love and think about how to apply it in their own friendships.)
- Peter was scared because he didn't know what would happen after Jesus died. Do you think he was worried about his own future?
- How do you think Jesus knew Peter would get better and love him more?
- What's something scary or hard you've faced that you're still learning to trust God with? How does knowing Jesus forgives you help you feel brave?
- (This connects the story to their own fears and trust in God's care.)

- Peter said, 'Lord, lead me a fishing boat where you are.' Jesus invited him to follow Him again. What does that mean to you?
- If you could ask Jesus one question right now, what would it be?
- How can you be like Peter and trust Jesus even when you don't know what to do next?
- (For example, if you're nervous about a new school year or a challenge, how can you ask God for help?)
- (This encourages personal reflection on trust and obedience, making it relevant to their daily lives.)
- Tips for Discussion:
 - Let children share their thoughts or draw pictures to explain their answers.
 - Emphasize that Jesus' love is always there, even when we make mistakes.
 - End with prayer or a simple activity (like coloring a forgiveness picture) to reinforce the lesson.
 - Would you like any of these adjusted for a specific setting (e.g., Sunday school, small group)?

Prayer Focus

Here's a simple, heartfelt prayer for early elementary children to pray together as they learn about Jesus forgiving Peter: --- "Dear God, We know that sometimes we make mistakes, like Peter did when he didn't stay faithful. But we trust that Jesus loves us even when we fail, just like He loved Peter. Forgive us, just as Jesus forgave Peter, and help us to always try our best. Teach us to ask for help and to be kind to others, just like Jesus taught us. Amen." --- Why this works: - Simple & Repetitive: Easy for kids to remember and say together. - Focus on Forgiveness: Connects Peter's story to God's love. - Application: Encourages kindness and asking for help. The teacher could lead this prayer by repeating the words slowly and pointing to the Bible story as they pray.

>> Missions Spotlight

In post-genocide Rwanda, the question of forgiveness is not theoretical, it's daily life. Missionaries share that Jesus' forgiveness of Peter shows us how to forgive even the unforgivable. The cross makes forgiveness possible.

-> To the Cross

Peter had denied Jesus three times. Now, on the beach, Jesus asked Peter three times, 'Do you love Me?' Jesus restored Peter. Because of the cross, when we fail, Jesus doesn't reject us, He restores us. His grace is bigger than our biggest failure.