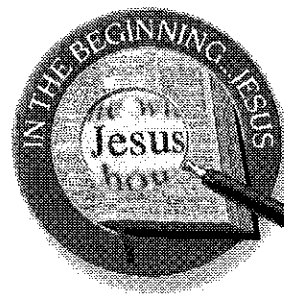


In the Beginning...Jesus



Lesson 5

God's Mercy and Abel's Response of Faith

Themes:

- God is merciful—He is kind to undeserving sinners.
- God required a covering for sin and provided a way for sinners to come to Him.
- Adam and Eve's children were all born as sinners, deserving God's punishment.
- Abel trusted God for what is true and right, and by faith became a friend of God.

Scripture:

Romans 1:21; Genesis 3:21, 24; 4:1-5

Memory Verse:

Isaiah 53:5a (and review verses 3-4)

Visuals for Lesson:

- Bible.
- *In the Beginning...Jesus* poster.
- Paper bag with a dead vine (or leaf and stem) in it.
- Plant from which the vine or leaf was cut off.
- Resource Packet:
 - GOD—MAN visual (torn in Lesson 4).
 - JESUS IS THE KEY (from previous lessons).
 - SECRET CODE.
 - SECRET CODE LETTER PIECES 1-9.
 - SECRET CODE DECODER PIECES 1-9—Tape these to the bottom of nine chairs that the children will use during the lesson.
 - GOD'S MERCY.
 - I WILL DECIDE WHAT IS TRUE AND RIGHT (from Lesson 4).
 - I WILL TRUST GOD TO DECIDE WHAT IS TRUE AND RIGHT (from Lesson 4).
 - FRUIT AND GRAIN.
 - LAMB.
 - ABEL and CAIN.
 - FLOWERS—Draw a "stain" on this visual using paint or crayons, and

- then make a photocopy of it. Keep both copies.
- ANIMAL SKINS—Or, use a real skin with fur or a piece of leather.
- Bible Clue Card #6.
- Magnifying glass (for use in reading the clue card).
- Small gift bag with a toy inside for a baby (e.g., a rattle or pacifier).

Visual for Application (Small Group Leaders):

- Bring a small pile of garbage (e.g., a rotten piece of fruit) and a napkin or paper towel.

Lesson

Display the paper bag with the dead vine, leaf, or stem inside it. Tell the children that there is an object in the bag that will help us further understand one of the clues from the last lesson. Choose a child to come up front and place his hand in the bag. He must try to guess what the object is without taking it out of the bag or looking inside the bag. Give him a moment to guess, and then have him remove the dead vine and show it to the class. What happened to this plant? **Display** the living plant from which the vine was removed and ask the children:

Will this vine be able to live apart from the plant? Why not?

Point to the torn **GOD—MAN** visual from the last lesson. Remind the children that in the last lesson we learned that Adam and Eve decided they wanted to be independent from their good and loving Sovereign Ruler. Instead of trusting God for what is true and right, they thought they should decide for themselves. **Display** the **I WILL DECIDE WHAT IS TRUE AND RIGHT** sign. What had changed in their thinking? What had changed in their hearts?

Read **Romans 1:21**:

For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Point to the darkened **SIN HEART** on the **GOD—MAN** visual. Explain that the darkened heart means that Adam and Eve had now become sinners. Is a sinful heart okay with God? God is a holy God. He is too pure and perfect to tolerate sin (**Habakkuk 1:13a**). God is right to punish sin. What did God say is the right punishment for sin?

Point to the clue under Window #6 on the poster: **PUNISHMENT FOR SIN—DEATH.**

Display the dead vine and comment: *Just like this vine cannot live apart*

from the plant, people cannot live and be happy apart from God. God had given Adam and Eve a command for their happiness. God told them what the punishment would be if they disobeyed. His command was true and right. God is a holy God and will not tolerate sin. He was right to punish them with death.

Have the children turn in their Bibles to **Genesis 3:24**. Ask them to read the verse to themselves. Afterward, say something like, *So the man and the woman died. The end. Why not?*

Display your Bible and comment: *This is not the end of the story. It is only beginning—the story must lead all the way to Jesus and the cross. But how can this happen if the man and woman are separated from God and die?*

Display SECRET CODE and the nine **SECRET CODE LETTER PIECES** and tape them to the wall. Tell the children that these pieces (printed in secret code) actually form two special words that explain how the story of the Bible can still go on. Can any of them understand the code? What do they need to solve it? Tell the children that you have a riddle for them. Instruct them to listen carefully to the riddle as it will tell them where the clues to solving the secret code can be found.

Riddle: If I were a mouse near your feet, I could look up and see the clues.

After the children find the nine clues (the **SECRET CODE DECODER PIECES**) taped to the bottom of the chairs, have them use the clues to quickly solve the secret code. Write in the correct letters (or choose a child to do this) as the children call out the answers to the code. The finished words: God's Mercy.

Ask: What is God's mercy? [Allow the children to respond.] Let's use a Bible Clue Card to help us find an example of God's mercy.

Display Bible Clue Card #6. Choose a child to come up and insert the card behind the red paper of the **JESUS IS THE KEY** visual to reveal:

*Scripture: Genesis 3:21
Clue under Window # 9*

Have the children turn to **Genesis 3:21**:

And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

Ask: When did this happen, before Adam and Eve sinned, or after? [After.] God provided a covering for them. Was that a kind thing for God to do, or was He trying to harm them? [A kind thing.] Did they deserve God's

kindness? [No. They only deserved His punishment.]

Explain that God's mercy is His kindness to undeserving sinners. Although Adam and Eve deserved to die right away, God had mercy on them. Not only didn't Adam and Eve die right away, but God also made clothing for them.

Ask: Wait a minute, hadn't Adam and Eve made their own clothing from fig leaves after they had sinned? Why did they need new clothing? What's wrong with the clothing that they had made? What is different about the covering that God provided?

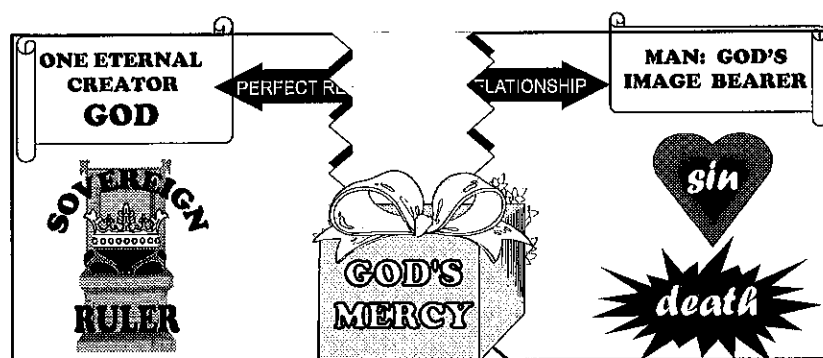
Display ANIMAL SKIN (or the real skin). *Where did it come from? How is an animal different than a plant? Is the animal that this skin belonged to still alive? Why not? Why would God choose to kill an animal and use its skin to cover Adam and Eve?*

Explain that because God is holy, He is too pure to even look on sin. However, God still wanted to have a special relationship with His image bearers, so He made a way to cover their sin. But in doing this God also wanted Adam and Eve to remember how terrible their sin is. So God decided that He would cover them in their sin with the skin of a dead animal. God decided that this was the right way to cover His sinful people.

Choose a child to open Window #9 to reveal the clue: **COVERING FOR SIN.**

In other words, God was telling them, "You should have died right away, but because I am merciful, I will cover your sin by the death of an animal. In this way I show how you can still have a relationship with Me."

Display the **GOD'S MERCY** visual and tape it over the gap between the torn pieces so that it now looks as follows:



Point to the **GOD'S MERCY** visual and remind the children that God's mercy is His kindness to undeserving sinners. That is why the visual is in the shape of a gift. A gift is an undeserved kindness. Emphasize that even though God is merciful and made a covering for Adam and Eve, their sin was still there, and their bodies would still get old

and die. This kind of covering that God provided didn't solve the problem of their sin or the punishment they deserved—it was only temporary. It was only a clue to the real solution.

Point out that this was not the only example of God's mercy to Adam and Eve. **Display** the gift bag. Tell the children that a clue is in the bag. Have a child come up and feel the object and then guess what it is. Have the child take the baby toy out of the bag and show it to the class. Ask the children to what this clue might refer.

Have the children turn to **Genesis 4:1-2**:

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a worker of the ground.

Comment: *Not only was God kind in not killing Adam and Eve right away and then covering their sin, but what did God give to them? [Two sons.] Was that a kind thing for God to do? [Yes.] Do you think Cain and Abel would be born with the same kind of sin problem as their parents? Why or why not?*

Illustration: **Display** the FLOWER with the "stain" on it. *Was the stain part of the original picture? No, it came later. What will happen if a I make a copy of the picture? Show the children the copied picture. The stain is reproduced.*

Explain that because of God's mercy, Adam and Eve were able to live and have children. However, these children were going to be like Adam and Eve in two important ways: First, they were born as God's image bearers, created to have a special relationship with God. Second, they were born as sinners with darkened hearts, deserving the punishment of death.

But did Cain and Abel die as soon as they were born? No, they grew up and had jobs. Abel was a shepherd, and Cain was a farmer. And just as their parents needed their sin covered in order to have a right relationship with God, so did Cain and Abel. Let's look in the Bible and see what happened.

Choose children to read **Genesis 4:3-5**:

In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions.

Display the **FRUIT AND GRAIN** and the **LAMB** and ask: *How was Abel's offering different from Cain's? Which offering shows the right punishment*

for sin? Which offering would be most like the animal skins that God used to cover Adam and Eve?

*Comment: Cain and Abel both had a decision to make. **Display I WILL DECIDE WHAT IS TRUE AND RIGHT and I WILL TRUST GOD TO DECIDE WHAT IS TRUE AND RIGHT.** Based on their offerings, which decision had Cain made in his heart and which decision had Abel made in his heart? (Tape **CAIN** and **ABEL** onto their corresponding decisions.) How did God respond to their offerings?*

And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering He had no regard. So Cain was very angry and his face fell.

Point out that both Cain and Abel were sinners. But Abel trusted God to decide what was the right covering for his sin, and Abel did things God's way. God was pleased with Abel. Because Abel was trusting God, he could now be a friend of God. (Lightly tape **ABEL** directly under **MAN: GOD'S IMAGE BEARER.**) Cain said something like, "I will decide for myself what is the right offering." He thought he could do things his own way. He did not trust God, and God wasn't pleased with his offering. Cain could not be a friend of God.

Summarize the key themes as follows:

After Adam and Eve sinned, the story of the Bible didn't end. The Bible is God's story. God had mercy on His sinful people and made a way to cover their sin. God used the death of an animal as a way to cover them in their sin—showing that God is right to punish sin with death. God then gave Adam and Eve children. But their children would be sinners just like them. The only way sinful people can have a right relationship with God is by trusting God and doing things God's way like Abel did.

Note: Before the next lesson, carefully glue **GOD'S MERCY** in place. You may want to glue the two torn poster board pieces onto a dark piece of poster paper to make the visual easier to use and more strong and stable.

Application

- Ask the children, *Do you remember what God's mercy is? Have the children turn to **Psalm 103:9-10**. What do these verses tell us about who God is and what He is like? Would God have been right to punish Adam and Eve as soon as they sinned, killing them right away? [Yes.] Do you think Adam and Eve understood what it meant for God to provide a covering of animal skins? Who had named all the animals? Are animals more like people than plants are? In what ways? Can you imagine if*

someone killed your pet so that you would not have to be punished? How would that make you feel about your sin and what you really deserved?

- **WORKBOOK**—Have the children turn to Lesson 5 in their workbooks. Have them recall the new clue for today: **COVERING FOR SIN**. Have them write the missing words to complete the clue and complete their workbook page. Have the children carefully study the picture clue that was revealed on the poster. *What is still visible on the animal skins that Adam and Eve are wearing? [Blood.] Do animals have blood like people do? What had to happen to that animal in order for the animal's skin to be used to cover Adam and Eve?* Ask the children why God required this kind of covering for sin. (See **Habakkuk 1:13a** and **Romans 6:23a**.) Remind the children that, at first, Adam and Eve tried to make their own covering (**Genesis 3:7**). Did that work? Why not? *Have you ever tried to make your own covering for sin? What might that look like?* (Give the children some concrete examples of how some people try to cover up their own sin. Have they ever tried to do these things? Will it work? Why not?) *Do you think offering an animal like Abel did would be pleasing to God? Do you think it would take care of your sin problem?* Explain that this covering for sin was only a temporary solution. God had a much better way planned, which is related to Jesus and His death on the cross. Do the children see any connection between what God did for Adam and Eve and what Jesus did on the cross?
- Ask the children if they know what a family tree is. Quickly make a very simple family tree of your own family. Ask the children if your parents and grandparents are the same as their parents and grandparents. Point out that Adam and Eve also have a family tree. Who does it include? Everyone! Explain that even though we might have different parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc., we all have one common set of parents way, way back: Adam and Eve. *Why is that important for us to know?* Recall the picture with the stain on it. *When it was reproduced, what was also reproduced? [The stain.] Because Adam and Eve were sinners and had darkened hearts, what did that mean for their children and their descendants? Can you think of a Bible verse that tells us all people are sinners? [Romans 3:23. Also, Romans 5:12.] Can you feel this in your own heart? How? Do you think that you could decide for yourself the right covering for your sin like Cain did? What was the result of Cain trying to do things his own way? How was Abel's attitude different? Was Abel still a sinner like Cain? Why did God accept Abel's offering but not Cain's? [Abel trusted God and did things God's way (**Hebrews 11:4, 6**).] What do the words "by faith" mean? Do you have faith in God? What are you trusting Him for?*
- Place some garbage (e.g., rotten food) on the table. Cover the garbage with a napkin or paper towel. Ask the children: *Since the garbage is*

covered now, has it disappeared? Can we pretend it's no longer there? Can we say it's now a sweet smelling flower? Why not? Do you think that by making a covering for sin, the sin will just go away and disappear? Point out that even though God made a covering for sin, He knew Adam and Eve's sin was still there. It didn't go away, and they still would get old and eventually die because of it. This covering that God made was only temporary, something He did for them so that He could still have a special relationship with them while not having to "look" at their sin. Did God have a plan for dealing with His sinful people that would someday TAKE AWAY their sin? What is it? Can you think of any Bible verses that tell us?

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