



*HopeSprings Children's Ministry Lesson by Erin Hasslinger,
edited for general use by Emily Rose Proctor*

Thank you for your interest in bringing a word of hope to your Children's Ministry! HopeSprings, along with our church partners and hundreds of volunteers, aims to restore hope and healing through the eradication of HIV and AIDS and the stigma that follows. Our organization, based in Baltimore, MD, trains and educates churches and communities in order to build human resource capacity (through volunteers) to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS and to better equip those God has called to serve in the epidemic in our own backyard. Stigma is the number one barrier that deters people from getting tested, knowing their status, and connecting with others to get the support they need to live a long and healthy life, as HIV is no longer a death sentence! The more opportunities we can create to speak truth to our friends, family, and neighbors regarding people living with HIV/AIDS (and any individual living with a life-long disease) the more we move away from living in fear and the better we are able to love those created in God's image.

In our efforts to keep the dialogue going within church communities HopeSprings has developed and outlined a dynamic curriculum that can be tailored to fit your schedule and needs of the children and families within your church congregation. What has worked well in other church ministries is to lead with the following bible story and prayer time, discussion questions, worship time and then move into the planned activities. The lesson's goals are outlined below.

Bible Story – Mark 1:40-42 Jesus Cleanses a Leper

Memory Verse – Psalm 118:17 "I will not die, but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done."

Lesson Goals –

- Understand that Jesus loved even those no one else did
- Recognize the faith of the leper
- Learn that Jesus is the ultimate restorer of our lives

Opener – Have you ever been sick and your parents didn't let you hang out with your friends? Or have you been to a hospital and were not allowed to visit someone because you might catch their sickness? Today we will learn about a man whose sickness made his life pretty miserable and lonely. Yet this man reached out to Jesus and his life was transformed.

Bible Story – **Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy**

⁴⁰A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean."

⁴¹Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" ⁴²Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

As Jesus was going from town to town sharing the Word of God, more people began to hear about the things that Jesus was doing. People would walk great distances to be able to see Jesus. One day Jesus was in a small town. A man came right up to Jesus and fell to the ground on his knees. Why do you think he did that? (wait for responses) The man had an illness, a disease, called leprosy. This is a horrible skin disease, and people who have this disease are called lepers.

The people that were not sick would make the lepers stay far away from them. They were afraid of getting leprosy, too. The man who came to Jesus was very brave. He could have gotten in trouble for getting too close to healthy people. He really believed that Jesus could help him.

The man said to Jesus, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." In that time, someone who was "clean" was ok to be around, to touch, and to include in religious activities. Jesus looked at the man as he was on the ground, like someone who was begging or maybe praying. Jesus knew how much he had suffered as a result of his illness and the way society had treated him. As Jesus gently placed His hand upon the man, he said, "'I am willing. Be clean!" The man probably was surprised that Jesus touched him since no one else would. It may have been a long time since he had been touched by anyone. Jesus really cared for this man. The man suddenly realized that his leprosy was gone, and his skin looked normal. He was so excited, and he told everyone about what had happened to him!

The man in today's story had a lot of faith in Jesus. He believed that Jesus had the power to change his life for the better. He even risked getting in trouble by going to Jesus when he was sick and considered "unclean" by his friend, family and community. We can have incredible faith in Jesus too and also show love to those who may be sick with disease, like Jesus did. Jesus had compassion for everyone, even those who were different from Him.

Prayer Time – Thank God for loving us and sending Jesus to show us how to love and care for others. Pray that we will love others as He loves others who are sick and in need of our love, support and encouragement. Pray that we would be able to show the others how much Jesus really loves ALL OF US. Pray that we would have the courage to turn to God for help when we are sick or lonely.

Life Application –

- **What was this disease known as leprosy?** People with leprosy, called lepers, were forced to live alone, outside of the city walls, away from friends and family. They were not allowed to live with those who were healthy, which may have made them sad or lonely. People living with HIV can also feel sad and lonely if people are scared of catching HIV and avoid them or treat them as if they are bad people that deserve to be sick.
- **How did Jesus treat the man with this disease?** Jesus was moved with compassion and wanted to help the leper, so he stretched out His hand and did the unthinkable, and touched the leper. Those who were watching would have been truly shocked and horrified by this! Under the law, a person became ceremonially unclean when he touched a leper. Also, there was of course the danger of contracting the disease. Lepers would normally never approach a healthy person because of the reactions and rejections from them. Jesus did not show any rejection or disgust for the leper.
- **What did notice about the Leper in this story?** The leper had faith that Jesus could make him clean and an acceptable part of society again. We too can ask God for a fresh start and to help us live joyful and meaningful lives in community. Do you remember what the man said to Jesus? He said, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." The man truly believed that God can make any of us "clean" again, no matter what our situation.
- **What did you learn from Jesus in this story?** We can follow Jesus' example and reach out to even those whom society avoids or treats badly. Others may distance themselves from people who are sick or different than they are, but Jesus shows us that God's love is for ALL PEOPLE. Also when we feel "unclean" or rejected by society or by other people, Jesus can make us clean by the power of his love.

Let's spend a few minutes signing and worshipping our loving God!

Worship Songs – "Open the Eyes of My Heart Lord" or Your Song of Choice/Worship Leader

Activities – At church we can serve friends, like Jesus did, that are living with a disease that can make their lives a lot more difficult. Let's show them compassion, love, support and encouragement!!!

- **Station 1: CARD MAKING – 15 min** *(for those living with HIV—you will need to connect through a local non-profit or healthcare provider)* – Let’s send our friends some words of encouragement today. Write a message to a friend living with HIV/AIDS. Use the memory verse and any other creative things you can think of to bring a smile to your friends face. We will be delivering these cards to our friends during the week!! 😊 They will really appreciate your kind words and support!! This will help them feel loved and cared for by God and by us.
 - **SUPPLIES:**
 - Construction Paper
 - Crayons/Colored Pencils/Markers/Pencils or Pens
 - Cut out hearts with Memory Verse
 - Stickers
 - Glue Sticks
 - Scissors

- **Station 2: COOKIE DECORATING – 15min** *(for those living with HIV who have meals provided to them—again you will need to research local nonprofits and healthcare providers to find a partner through which to deliver the cookies)* Do you love cookies!?!? Well so do our friends living with HIV/AIDS. Some our friends need nutritious meals that are delivered to them to keep them healthy. They also enjoy sweets too. Let’s send them some decorated cookies so they have dessert with their meal!! Write your name and a message on the label and we will wrap up a cookie for your friend. We will deliver the cookies to our sick friends next week!! Yummm! I know they will love them!! Jesus often fed those who were hungry; he showed us that this is one way to help people know that they are loved by God and by God’s people. Thank you Jesus for showing us how to love our friends who are living with disease.
 - **SUPPLIES:**
 - Premade/purchased cookies*
 - Sandwich Bags – One cookie per bag
 - Labels where children can write their names and a message
 - Icing/Sprinkles/Other Cookie Decoration Items
 - Plastic Knife or Spoon for Icing
 - Table Cloth
 - Hand wipes
 - Antibacterial Gel - clean hands before decoration
 - Stapler to Attach Labels to Bags

**Premade using the original recipe (included in the email) or purchased from a local bakery or bakery within a grocery store. You will need to have the ingredients list for the cookies and individual bags for the cookie(s).*

For additional resources or training within your church, please contact HopeSprings:

or

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