

BEING GOOD THE HARD WAY

7-10

BIBLE VERSES: Matthew 5:39 - 44, Matthew 5:13-16, Psalm 37:3, 2 Chronicles 14 and 15, Isaiah 1:16-18, Galatians 6:7-10, Romans 12:18-21.

The aim of this session is to ask what goodness is, and to think about how and why we should try to demonstrate goodness in our lives.

LEADER'S NOTES

Being good is something that children hear a lot about! "Be good for Mummy," "Now I want you to be good while I go to the photocopier," "If you are good you can have some sweets."

The problem is, in English, we have made 'good' a neutral word. Being good doesn't have positive action associated with it— it is more the absence of negative behaviour: passivity. "Good" is what boring children are!

However, in the Bible, being good is much more proactive. Being good means actively trying to do what God wants – to be Christlike. To love our enemies and forgive people who have upset us. To help the people that we don't like! To stand up for the truth, for the people who are persecuted, even when that will make us unpopular.

Goodness is not actually a gentle quality; it is astringent. Goodness is like salt and light. It shows sin for what it is and does its best to cleanse it.

Psalms cries out, "There is none good – no, not one." Paul says, "The good I want to do, I don't. Instead, I do the bad that I don't want to do!"

Goodness doesn't come naturally to us: we are sinful and selfish by nature, but being good means taking a stand against our nature and trying to be Christlike. This will be a new idea to most of the children in the group. They will be accustomed to think of being good as being quiet, boring, and not making a mess. Perhaps they will be able to think of being good as being kind to other people. But they won't have thought about the more unpleasant qualities of goodness.

And yet they will have come across them – "Eat up your greens. They're good for you." "Take this medicine, it will do you good." "If it tastes nasty it means it's doing you good."

The Bible story in this session focuses on King Asa, who was one of the good kings of the Old Testament. His goodness had an impact on the whole Kingdom, because He forbade idol worship and insisted that everybody kept the law. Asa didn't shrink from doing good even when it meant rebuking and removing his own mother from power! There is also a study on being salt and light. We are called to be obviously good, so that the rest of the world can see God.

If the children want to be Christians, they need to understand that we have been called to be different. We are supposed to be witnesses for Jesus. When we live good lives people see us and are drawn to want to know about Jesus. When we don't try to be good, we show that actually being a Christian doesn't make any difference at all. And it is supposed to! That is what Jesus died for.

One of the final activities in the session asks the children to look at a luminous star and to see how it works. It takes light from the sun, and lights up a small piece of ceiling until its energy runs out. Then, when it is recharged by sunlight, it works again. In just this way, we draw close to Jesus and take on His character. We do good and reflect His glory. Then we need to constantly be coming to him again to be recharged. It is our relationship with Him that enables us to be good examples of good people!

STICK THEM!

GAME | 📌↑ WARMING UP

Give each child a strip of between 5 and 10 stickers. Small dots will do – you can get them cheaply at most stationers.

The children have to try to stick their stickers on the backs of the other children without being seen.

They can stick them on to clothes provided that they can do it without being spotted. If the child they are trying to stick a sticker onto turns around as the sticker is being applied, then the child attempting to stick it must find another victim instead

The children have to concentrate both on trying to stick stickers and on not being caught!

After 5 minutes or so, see if anyone has managed to get rid of all their stickers.

See who has the most stickers on their back, and if anyone has managed not to get any.

The Point: Just for fun.

EQUIPMENT

A strip of stickers for each child.

DURATION: 5 MINS.

PIG IN THE MIDDLE

GAME | 📌↑ WARMING UP

Put most of the children into a circle, and put one, two or three children in the middle, depending on the size of your group. (i.e. if your group is larger you will want more children in the middle.)

The children making the circle should throw the ball to one another across the circle, and the children in the middle of the circle should attempt to catch it for themselves.

If one of the children in the middle catches the ball, they take their place in the circle and the child who threw the ball goes into the middle.

Play for five minutes or so.

This is a good game to play while children are arriving.

The Point: Just for fun.

EQUIPMENT

A ball

DURATION: 5 MINS.

THREE LETTER WORDS

GAME |  **WATCHER** |  **WARMING UP**

Scatter the letters out across the floor or around the sides of the room.

Tell the children that they need to see if they can find the letters that will make a 3-letter word from the letters scattered around the room.

When you give the signal, the group should go through the letters and pick out the letters that they need.

For instance, a child finding a “p” and an “e” could then look for an “n” or a “t” or a “g”. When they have found on 3-letter word they can look for the letters to make up a second word and so on.

The winner will be the child with the most words when the whistle is blown to end the game.

You could also play this in teams so that when each child completes a word they can bring the letters to a team base, and then there would be a winning team rather than a winning individual.

The Point: Just for fun.

EQUIPMENT

A selection of letters. You could utilise the letters from a game of scrabble, use beads with letters on them, or write individual letters onto small pieces of paper.

DURATION: 5 MINS.

A MISTAKE AT THE BANK

VISUAL AND AUDIO CLIPS |  **WATCHER** |  **GETTING STARTED**

Summary: Phoebe's bank has put some money into her bank account by mistake. She doesn't want to accept the money because she feels it is stealing.

Clip start time: 4:30

Clip end time: 5:35

Clip length: approx 1 minute

Play the clip and discuss these points:

- Why doesn't Phoebe want to keep the money?
- What do the rest of her friends think she should do?
- If Phoebe keeps the money will it hurt anyone?
- What would you do if someone gave you money by mistake?
- What do you think is the “good” thing to do?

Say that Phoebe has a dilemma: she can keep the money, although she knows it isn't really hers, because that is the easy thing to do and she can use it in good ways. Alternatively she can go to the bank and explain the mistake and get it sorted out. That is harder, because it involves effort and she will end up worse off. However, the “good” thing to do is the second because it would be stealing to keep the money.

- Can the group think of any other examples where it would be easy to benefit from someone's mistake rather than to be “good” and get it sorted out?

Being good sometimes means that we have to stand up for what is right, even if it is inconvenient for us and our friends think we are being silly!

If you don't have access to the clip you can still paint the scenario to the children and then discuss it.

The Point: This is an example of someone who has an opportunity to keep money that isn't hers, because no one will realise the mistake. However, Phoebe decides that she would rather be honest or “good” and get the mistake sorted out. Being “good” can mean that we make decisions that look silly to other people.

EQUIPMENT

A copy of “Friends” series 1, episode 3, “The One With The Thumb”, and the means to play it.

DURATION: 5 MINS.

GOOD DEED

DRAMA |  **WATCHER** |  **GETTING STARTED**

Ask the group if any of them have been Scouts or Brownies? Do they know the Brownie law? (“A Brownie thinks of others before herself and does a good turn every day.”)

- What sort of thing might you do if you were doing a good deed for someone?
- Do people like you doing good deeds for them?

Let the group divide into small groups of no more than 5 people and ask them to create a short play about someone doing a good deed.

Explain that the deed could go really well – for instance, the child could see a little girl crying because she has dropped her ice cream and use her own money to buy another ice cream for the little girl.

The deed could go badly – for instance, you try to help an old man with his shopping and he thinks you are stealing it and calls for help. The shop manager calls the police.

Specify that the play must be 2 minutes or less and remind children that they only need to show the deed and perhaps what happens just before and just after. (Otherwise children of this age start with waking up and getting dressed and having breakfast....)

Give no more than 5 minutes for the creating of the role plays and then let the children who want to do so perform them to the rest of the group.

Ask the children why people do good deeds? Is doing a good deed the same as being a good person?

The Point: This starts the children thinking about what a good deed might be. When do we do good deeds, why should we try to do them? Is there a difference between doing a good deed and being good?

EQUIPMENT

Nothing

DURATION: 10 MINS.

STAINED!

ACTIVITY |  **WATCHER** |  **GETTING STARTED**

This is a messy activity and you will need to protect the floor. It would be best to have each group working standing up to a table if you have tables accessible.

You will also need to be aware of any child who has allergies to detergent products.

Give each group of 5 children a bowl of water and a tea towel with stains on it. The stains could be jam, black currant, tea, wine, butter, mud.

Ask the group if they can get the stains out of the cloth using the agents available. They should conduct an experiment to see which cleaning agent works best.

Give each group soap, salt, lemon juice, washing powder and an advertised cleaner such as Vanish or OxiClean and let them try to wash the stains out, noting which agents work and which don't.

Call the groups together and get them to sit in front of the leader.

Ask them how clean their cloths are.

Take the dirtiest cloth and put it in a bowl of diluted bleach.

- Ask if it is easy to get stains out of things? Which stains are hardest to remove?
- Is it necessary to get stains out of things?

Say that yes, it is necessary to clean things, but it can be quite hard work!

Explain that often we are in situations where people are doing things that are wrong. If we love Jesus, we will want to do what is right, and we may want to help other people do what is right, too. This can be hard because it can hurt our relationships with other people when we show them that we don't agree with what they are doing.

Sometimes, being good can seem hard or strict. Can the children think of times their parents have told them to do something because it is good for them, but they haven't liked doing it? For instance, taking horrible medicine or eating cabbage.

Explain that today's session is about goodness – being good – and that we think of being good as trying not to be naughty, but in actual fact, goodness is much more than that!

Finish this activity by taking the cloth out of the bleach and seeing how much more effective bleach has been than the other cleaning agents.

You can, if you feel it appropriate, make the point that Jesus wants to clean us from our sin.

The Point: Goodness is not always an attractive quality – it can be tough and astringent. This activity shows that force is needed to clean things properly, and makes the connection with the fact that goodness can be hard.

EQUIPMENT

Old tea towels stained with different stains. A selection of cleaning agents – soap, lemon juice, salt, vanish, washing powder, bleach. Bowls of warm water.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

SUFFER FOR BEING GOOD

BIBLE STUDY | 🕯️ DIGGING IN

Ask the children to find and read 1 Peter 3:13-15 and 1 Peter 4:14-16.

When you have read the passages together ask the children to summarise them.

Ask the children if they think it is surprising that people could actually get in trouble or suffer for doing good things? Ask why people might suffer for doing good? Can they think of any examples where people have suffered for doing good things?

Ask the children to divide into small groups and give each group some paper and a pen. Ask them to brainstorm all the stories, either from the Bible or from life today, that they can remember where someone has suffered for doing good? (For instance, Paul, Peter and Stephen were martyred for following God, Jeremiah was put into prison, Saul attempted to murder David, David had Uriah murdered, Joseph was imprisoned in Egypt, Daniel was thrown to lions....)

Ask each group to choose one of the examples they have thought of and to create a short role play showing their example of suffering for doing good. See if the other groups can guess which story is being portrayed.

Ask the children if they have ever suffered for doing good? Say that it is possible that in their lifetime they will suffer for standing up for right. Pray together that God will help all of us to be strong and to stand up and do good even when we know we might suffer for it.

The Point: To see that sometimes people suffer for doing good, and to covenant to try to stand up for the good even though it may be hard.

EQUIPMENT

Bibles.

DURATION: 15 MINS.

SALT AND LIGHT

BIBLE STUDY | 🕯️ DIGGING IN

Sit the children in front of you.

Hand round a packet (or packets!) of salt-n-shake crisps WITHOUT the salt on. Ask the children what they think of the taste?

Pour a pile of salt into a saucer. Ask the children what it is. What do we use salt for?

(Let the children give some answers: it makes things taste nice. It stops people slipping on ice, for

instance.)

Do you know what people used salt for in the old days?

(Preserving things, stopping them go off.)

Jesus said that people who believe in Him are the salt of the earth. What do you think He meant by that?

(Christians should, by their example, show what is the right way to live and the way to please God. We help society to stay good, standing up for good when people try to do bad things. By our example we show what God is like.)

Put the salt away and switch off the light. If possible, make the room dark.

Ask the children what problems there might be in the dark?

(Can't see. Can't read or do any work. Might fall over something.)

Switch on a small lamp, but put it under a chair with a towel draped over it.

Does this lamp help?

(Not really because it is hidden.)

Where should I put the lamp?

Try putting the lamp in different places – up high, in a corner and finally in a central position so that it lights up as much of the room as possible.

What does light do?

(Helps us see. We can do things in the light. We feel safe in the light.)

Jesus says that Christians are supposed to be lights to the people who don't know God. What do you think He meant by that?

(Christians do good things and so show what God is like. That helps people to learn about God and want to follow Him. Because Christians stand up for what is right, people realise that other things are wrong.)

Add salt to a packet of salt-n-shake crisps and hand that round. Don't they taste better now?

Christians are supposed to make the world seem better because God helps them to be good and to do good things for other people.

Finish this activity by reading Matthew 5:13-16.

The Point: This shows that we are called to be good and explains that being good directs people to God, the source of goodness.

EQUIPMENT

A lamp, salt and a saucer, salt and shake crisps.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

KING ASA

BIBLE STUDY | 📖 **WATCHER** | 🕒 **DIGGING IN**

Give each child two pieces of paper and a pencil. They will need to be sitting on the floor or up to table so that they have something hard to lean on.

As you tell the story, the children will illustrate certain points. This gives them something to focus on as they listen.

Asa was a King of Israel many hundreds of years ago, long before Jesus was born. At that time a lot of people in Israel had started to worship pretend gods and had built little temples to worship them in.

(Ask the children to draw a temple on one of their pieces of paper.)

How do you think God felt about His people, who he had rescued hundreds of times, worshipping silly pretend gods instead of Him?

God hated it.

When Asa became king, he wanted to follow God and do what was good. When people want to follow God they always want to do the things that please God, just as you like to please your friends that you can see!

The first thing Asa did was to get all the temples torn down from the hills where people went to worship the pretend Gods.

(Ask the children to tear the pictures that they have drawn of the temples.)

Then the people had to worship the real God, and Asa encouraged them to do that. Because the people were worshipping God, God gave them peace – there was no war for ten whole years! During that time, Asa decided to protect his cities. He built strong walls around them and little forts so that the people could protect themselves when war started again.

(Ask the children to draw a city with a fortified wall around it.)

As well, Asa told the people that they had to keep God's law – the law He had given to Moses hundreds of years before. When the people obeyed God's law, they would do what pleased God.

(Ask the children to add a big book of Law to their picture.)

Later on in his reign, Asa had another mass clear out of all the idols and altars to pretend gods that the people had built.

He spent money to make the Temple beautiful again. Things that had been broken were mended and everything was made to look beautiful. Asa gave new gold and silver treasures to the Temple.

(Ask the children to draw a temple.)

When the Temple had been fully restored, Asa invited all the people to come to a big celebration in Jerusalem.

He declared that the country would follow God again and keep His laws.

The people agreed and they made a big sacrifice to God, and had a huge praise party where they praised and thanked God and promised to do what He wanted. The people were happy to do this because they had remembered all the good things God had done for them.

(Add praising people to the picture.)

Asa was determined to do good even when it was difficult. One day he discovered that his mother, who was the King mother and had her own throne and was very important indeed, had a small statue of a pretend god that she worshipped secretly.

Asa was furious. He took the statue and ground it into powder and he said that his mother could no longer be called King Mother. She was not allowed to be in the government at all any more.

Asa was a good king and he reigned for 41 years.

Asa was determined to do what God said was good.

- What did he do that showed that he wanted to do good things?
- Do you think that what he did was popular with the people?
- How easy do you think Asa found it to depose his own mother?
- Why did he do it?
- What can we learn from Asa about being good?

This story is told in 2 Chronicles 14 and 15.

The Point: Asa was a King who obeyed God and did good. This is an example of someone that was a good example and affected the people around him. Asa was not afraid to obey God.

EQUIPMENT

Pencil and paper for each child.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

DIGGING IN TO GOODNESS

BIBLE STUDY |  DIGGING IN

Choose the verses that you feel are best suited to your group's understanding, and discuss the questions together.

Matthew 5:39-44

- How does Jesus say that we should treat our enemies?
- Can you think of any ways that you could put this verse into practise?

Romans 12:18-21

- If someone upsets us how should we react?
- How should we treat our enemies?
- What does Paul mean when he says that if we do good things for our enemies it is like “heaping coals of fire on their heads”?
- How can we overcome evil with good? What does that mean?

Galatians 6:7-10

- What does it mean to reap what you sow? Can you think of an example?
- When might we get tired of doing good things?
- Why should we keep doing good even though we are fed up of doing it?
- Who should we do good things for?

Isaiah 1:16-18

Isaiah gives us a list of things that we should do and things that we shouldn't do. What are they?

- Why do we need to learn to do good? Doesn't it come naturally to us?
- What does it mean to do “good things”?
- What does v.18 mean? How can sins be “turned white”? *

The Point: This activity helps the children to see what goodness really is and looks at specific ways in which the Bible calls us to do good.

EQUIPMENT

Bibles

DURATION: 10 MINS.

GOOD CHALLENGE

ACTIVITY |  **WATCHER** |  **RESPONSE**

Challenge the children to do one good deed every day between this session and the next. Remind them that goodness is more than just being kind to someone, it is standing up for what is right... Ask the children to make suggestions as to what kind of good deeds they could do.

Give each child a sheet of paper and ask them to write on it the days of the week, and to leave a box in which they can write the good deed they were able to do. Children can be as creative as they like with this – their boxes can be whatever shape they fancy and they can use colour and add in pictures of they like.

Challenge the children to fill in their sheet before the next session! (Remember to ask to see their sheets next time you meet!)

Before you send them out, pray and ask God to inspire the children to do good things so that they are like Him.

The Point: To think about how we can be good.

EQUIPMENT

Paper and pens.

DURATION: 5 MINS.

SHINING STARS

ACTIVITY |  **WATCHER** |  **RESPONSE**

Show the children a luminous star and ask if the children know what it is and what you would do with it?

If they don't know explain that you would stick it on the wall or the ceiling. During the day, the stars absorb the light from the sun, and when you turn the light off, or it gets dark, they shine. They will probably only shine for an hour or so before the energy they got from the sun runs out, but if you turn the light on, they get "charged up" again.

Ask how much light the children think the star gives? Not a lot – just a little bit.

Can the children think of a way that these stars are like us and the light is like God?

Let the children suggest ways and then explain:

- God is good. He does good all the time.
- People are not naturally good.
- If we spend time with God, praying and reading the Bible and worshipping, we can be "charged up" by God so that we have some of His light and we shine a bit. We do good deeds when God helps us to.

If we don't spend time with God, we don't get charged up and our shine goes away – just as the stars don't shine if the light doesn't charge them up first.

The stars don't shine as brightly as the light does – and we don't shine as brightly as God does, either. We shine a little bit and people who are near us might see God working in us.

Ask why we should want to shine? Why should we try to do good things?

We are God's witnesses – when we do good we show that God can affect people's lives. If people know that we believe in God but we do bad things, they won't think God is any use and they won't want to become Christians themselves.

You can give out stars to the children so that they have something to remember this example with.

You might like the children to make their star into a necklace. In this case, give each child a length of thread and a selection of beads made from drinking straws cut up small. The children can thread their star onto the thread and add straw beads until they have a necklace long enough to go round their neck. Alternatively, plaiting three different coloured strands of thread together could make the necklace.

The Point: We are naturally bad – our goodness comes from God and should reflect God to other people. The luminous stars light up a small portion of a room after they have taken light from the sun. So we get light from God and radiate that to a small number of people that we come into contact with.

EQUIPMENT

Adhesive plastic luminous stars, moons and other celestial objects. These can generally be found in 'The Works' for about £1 a packet. Different coloured threads and plastic drinking straws cut into small pieces.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

TO DO GOOD

PRAYER |  WATCHER |  RESPONSE

Read Matt 5:44 to the group.

Divide the group into smaller groups, preferably into friendship groups and keeping similar aged children together. Divide the leaders around the groups as far as you can.

Ask the group to talk about the verse they have just heard. What did it say? What did it mean? How can they put it into practise in school tomorrow?

Ask the group when they find it easy to do good things for people and when they find it hard? Who is the hardest person to be nice to?

When the group have discussed the questions, the members of the group should pray for one another asking God to help each person to be good to the people they find it hard to be nice to.

You might feel that it is more appropriate for the group to come back together and for one of the leaders to close in a general prayer asking God to help the individual members of the group to do good to everyone they come into contact with.

The Point: It isn't easy to do good, especially in situations where people are not being good to you. This activity gives the children a chance to pray about the situations where they know they need to do good to other people, but where they find it difficult for some reason.

EQUIPMENT

A copy of Matthew 5:44

DURATION: 10 MINS.

TRUST IN THE LORD!

MEMORY VERSE |  **WATCHER** |  **RESPONSE**

“Trust in the Lord and do good.” Psalm 37:3(a)

Split the verse into five pieces: Trust, In the, Lord, And do, Good.

Jumble the letters in each segment up to make anagrams, and write the anagrams on separate pieces of paper:

“Strut” “Ehint” “Drol” “Addon” “Dogo”

You will need a set for each group of four or five children.

Give the pieces of paper to the leaders so that one has all the first pieces, one has all the second pieces and so on.

The members of the group should go to the leaders and ask nicely for the pieces of paper.

If they ask nicely, the leader will give them the piece of paper. If not, another child in the small group should come and ask for the paper.

When the group has all five pieces of paper, they need to unjumble the words and then see if they can put the verse in order.

Say the verse together.

The Point: To encourage young people to learn the Bible.

EQUIPMENT

The words of the verse jumbled up and written with each jumbled word on a separate piece of paper. There should be one set of word cards for each group of 5 – 8 children.

DURATION: 5 MINS.

GOOD LIKE YOU: A DRAMA ABOUT GOODNESS

DRAMA

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