

"Do as He Says" Sunday School Lesson from Matthew 23:1-12

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October 29, 2014

This free Bible lesson is based on Matthew 23:1-12 where Jesus teaches about hypocrisy. It is designed for children's church or Sunday School. Please modify as best fits your ministry.

If your church follows the Revised Common Lectionary, this teaching plan would correspond to Year A – 21s Sunday After Pentecost, Gospel Reading – Matthew 23:1-12.

Opening Activity – Do as He Says – Not as I do

In this variation of Simon Says, the kids will have to pay extra special attention to Simon's instructions.

Have all of the kids stand up, staying a full arms length away from each other. Make sure everyone in the room can both see and hear you, and instruct them to listen carefully for each move.

Simon will give a simple instruction verbally (ex. pat your head), but act out something completely different (ex. touch your nose). After each instruction, any kids who followed the visual demonstration must sit down, while the kids that followed the verbal instructions stay standing for the next round. Mix it up after a few rounds, making your instructions and demonstration match to see if there is hesitation. Continue until there is only one child left standing.

Lesson – Do as He Says

I am so glad that game is done! I was so confused the whole time! Was anyone else in here confused?

Well, it seems I'm not the only one who had a little trouble. It can be really difficult to follow instructions when there are too many to follow.

Do you know what I noticed in that game? That it was easier for you to follow what you saw, instead of what you heard. I wonder why that is? I think we might actually need to play that again to figure this out, but this time you can stay in your seat.

Ok, remember to *LISTEN* carefully.

(while patting you head) – Grab your ears

Great job! You all did so much better with that one! Let's try a few more and see how you do.

(while holding your nose closed tight) – Bob your head

(while sticking out your tongue) – Stick out your tongue

(while waving) – *whisper* Cover your eyes with your hands

(while making a heart shape with your hands) – Maneuver your upper appendages in an alternating north – south motion in the fashion of poultry (ie. flap your arms like a

chicken)

Wow, that got really really hard at the end. (while clapping high above your head) Give yourselves a pat on the back and have a seat. Ok, last one, I promise.

It was already a difficult game, but that made it so much harder. Even when you could remind yourself to listen, it didn't help. Especially when I started using those strange words. The only thing you could really do at that point was copy my motions, and just hope that was the right answer. Not the best way to do things. Rules would be a lot easier to follow if they were easy, but they aren't always like that.

Jesus talks a lot about this in the New Testament. Back when He was on earth they didn't have the New Testament yet, but they did have the Old Testament. And do you know what the Old Testament is full of. Rules.

We normally just think about the 10 Commandments when we think of the rules of the Old Testament. Rules like, "Do not murder." It's short, easy to understand, and easy to remember, isn't it?

But did you know there are even more rules than just those 10? How many rules do you think there are? Raise your hand if you think there were 50 more? 82 more? 115 more? 203 more? 250 more? 278 more? 360 more? 400 more? That is a lot! But wait, that's still not all. 445 more? 558 more? 603 more?

Wow! There are 603 MORE rules than just the 10 Commandments, and a total of 613 rules!

There were so many rules, and many of them were very confusing. The Jewish people needed someone to help them understand and remember it all, so they had teachers called Pharisees.

The Pharisees studied the Old Testament, and they knew each and every one of those 613 rules. The Jewish people could ask them about anything, and the Pharisees could tell them the answer. Like, how many steps can you take on the Sabbath? What sacrifice is needed before Passover? How many days must someone wait before they are no longer considered unclean? What food can I eat? What things can I touch?

So many rules to follow. So many rules to remember! So many rules to understand!!

But there was a problem. The Pharisees knew the rules, but that doesn't mean they followed them. They would often tell the Jews to do one thing while doing the exact opposite. And as we learned earlier, it's a lot easier to follow what you see instead of what you hear.

But Jesus warned them not to do this anymore. It doesn't make something right just because the Pharisees are doing it. The Jews needed to learn to listen more carefully so they could follow the rules like they were supposed to.

You know what? Sometimes I am just like those Pharisees. I tell you the Bible says to forgive, but sometime I hold a grudge. And I tell you that the Bible says to love your neighbor while I'm gossiping with my friends. I make those mistakes because I'm human, just like the Pharisees, and as humans we sin, even when we don't want to. Everyone makes mistakes, even your parents, your teachers, and your best friends. But we need to

remember that instead of just doing what we see other people do, we need to listen to God and do what *He* says is right. We will still make some of those mistakes, but we will be doing what God says WAY more often.

Activity A – Do as I Say – Bible Verse Challenge

Supplies – Bibles

Verse – Matthew 23:1-4

Pass out Bibles to students. Bibles should be closed and sitting on the table face up in front of each child. When you say go, have the kids look up this week’s Bible verse. As each child finds the verse, have them stick one finger on the verse and quietly raise their other hand. The first one to find the verse gets to read it to the rest of the class.

Help younger kids and new kids find the verse by following these steps.

1. Look in the Table of Contents for the book you are looking for. Make an effort to show them if it is found in the Old Testament or New Testament to help them in the future. Then open the Bible to the page number listed in the Table of Contents.
2. Show them the large numbers in the text, known as the chapters. Flip through pages until you find the large chapter number you are looking for.
3. Then scan through the text with them pointing out the smaller verse numbers until the correct number is found.

Activity B – Do as He Says – Listen Bracelets

Supplies: thin elastic cording, scissors, alphabet beads, decorative beads, tape

Before class pre-cut the 8 inch lengths of elastic. Wrap a small piece of tape around one end, then another just below it. This will act as a marker for the kids to stop so you have the length you need to knot the finished bracelet. Then tie a knot in the other end. If you are using large beads that could slide past the knot, tie the knot around a bead to act as a stopper.

Give each child a piece of elastic and instruct them to stop beading when they reach the tape. Give them the letters needed to spell out ‘Listen’, as well as any decorative beads they like. Encourage them to wear their bracelets to remind them to listen to God instead of following others.

Closing Prayer – Do as He Says

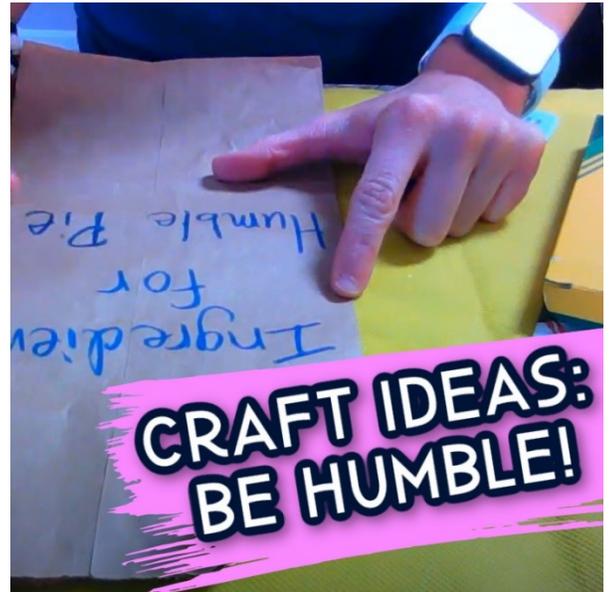
Ask for a volunteer to pray for the class before leaving, and encourage them to ask God for help to what is right.

For even more lesson ideas, don’t miss these other free resources from our website:

- [“All About Love” Lectionary Lesson from Matthew 22:34-46](#)
- [“No Right Answer?” Lectionary Lesson From Matthew 22:15-22](#)
- [“Producing Fruit” Lectionary Lesson from Matthew 21:33-46](#)
- [“You’re Invited!” Lectionary Lesson from Matthew 22:1-14](#)
- “Real Treasure” Bible Lesson on Matthew 6:16-24

“Practicing Humility”

Bible Craft ideas on Matthew 23:1-12



Don't be Puffed with Pride!

This week's gospel lesson focuses on a warning. We don't want to rely on our own wisdom or teaching. We don't want to "talk a big talk" and lead people astray.

Jesus admonished people to live genuinely and humbly. These two crafts remind children of what it means to live with a humble attitude and recognize that our strength comes only from the Lord.

Bible Verses or Craft Captions to Consider... (Main Text: Matthew 23:1-12)

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. - Matthew 23:12

The greatest among you shall be your servant. -Matthew 23:11

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. -Proverbs 16:18

Recipe for Humble Pie...Put Others First!

Don't be "Puffed up" with Pride!

Humility: Look to God for strength!

Act like a servant!

Put others first!

Be kind to those around you!

More Teaching Ideas from Matthew 23:1-12

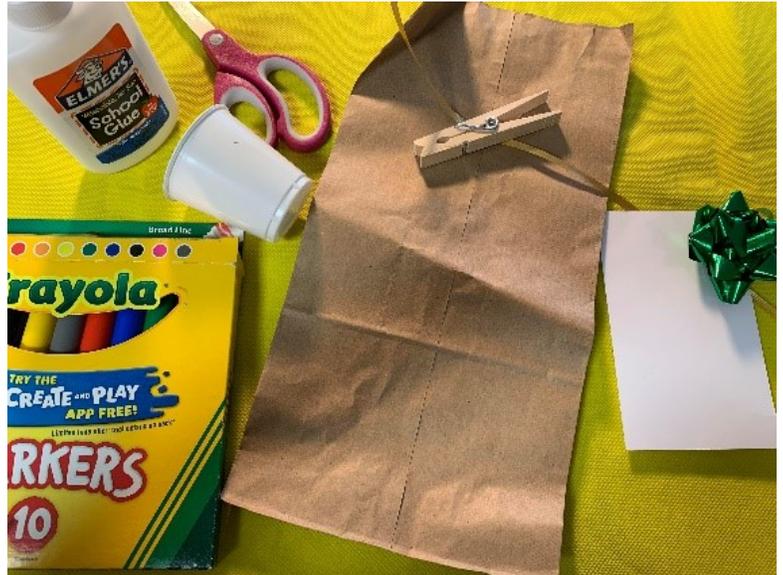
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Craft one: “Humble Pie Recipe”

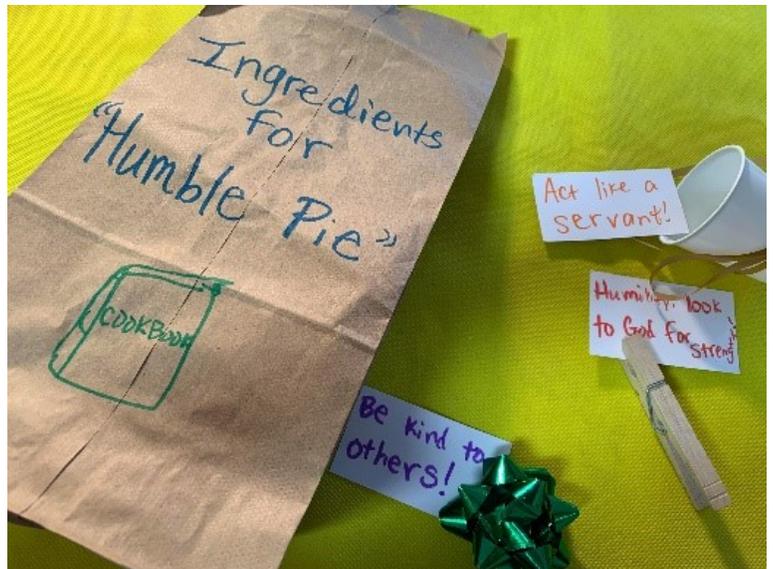
You will need:

- Construction paper or card stock
- Markers, stickers, or other decorating materials
- Bows, ribbons, or other decorations
- Glue
- Paper bag
- Scissors



Procedure:

1. Decorate the paper bag to be a “recipe bag” or “ingredient bag”, making it plain but fun!
2. Decorate notecards or papers to nestle within the bag, including notes about “ingredients” needed to be humble and not prideful. Add small tokens or decoration (bows, cups, etc.)
3. Place the “humble pie ingredients” inside the paper bag.
4. Seal the bag with ribbon or string. Add captions or verses.
5. Use your bag to recall what humility means, or use it as a prayer request receptacle!



Craft Two: “Don’t be Puffed up with Pride! Balloon ”

You will need:

- Balloons, any color
- Paper (construction) (optional)
- Popsicle sticks
- Markers or crayons
- Glue
- Yarn or pipe cleaners
- Sharpie markers



Procedure:

1. Blow up the balloon and tie it off.
2. Draw a face on the balloon (optional), perhaps a prideful or rude-looking one.
3. Carefully attach a string or pipe cleaner to the balloon.
4. Glue the popsicle sticks into a cross shape (or cut the paper likewise). Add a verse and/or caption.
5. Place the “puffed up” balloon on the cross, and remember the importance of receiving our strength and power from God alone!



“Don’t Let Pride Puff You Up”

Children’s Sermon on Matthew 23:1-12

Children’s Message: Live with Humility

Main Objective: “Practice what you preach”it’s a common saying, but what does it mean? This message explains to children the importance of humility. The Pharisees Jesus warns about in this Gospel passage did not practice what they preached. They trusted in their own strength, and pridefully worked to be seen by others. That kind of pride and self-assurance can only lead to downfall, as the object lesson here illustrates.

Law/Gospel Theme: The Pharisees were headliners of the Law. They told people how to live their lives, and they preached the importance of rules and regulations. Yet their actions were not genuine. They wanted attention for their teaching. The good news of Jesus reminds us that we are forgiven through Him. We don’t have to worry about making ourselves look good, and we shouldn’t! We can’t brag about our own ability, but rest in the work of Christ.

Optional Materials: Stacking blocks or several items to balance; a soft surface (pillow) and hard surface.

Bible Passage: Matthew 23:1-12

Message: Note: As with most messages, the details of how you choose to communicate this are adaptable and should cater to timing as well as to your audience and student needs. Use your judgment and ideas to best serve students.

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Children's Sermon (Matthew 23:1-12)

Pride and Humility

Greet children, and have at the ready several blocks, such as wooden blocks, a "Jenga" tower set, or large Lego stackers. Act boastful about your block-building ability...

Hello, children of God! I brought something with me today that I would love to show you. You see, it just so happens I am a fantastic block builder! I have my blocks here, and I plan to build an incredible tower out of these. Have you ever used blocks like this? I'll bet you can't make a tower quite as tall as mine. Here, I'll just prop these up on this pillow to show you a better view... *(As you continue to talk, stack the blocks one on top of the other, balancing on a soft surface like a pillow).*

See, I've made plenty of these block structures before. It's pretty simple, really, you just put them like this, and then add another here.... *(precariously position the blocks to topple)*

Whoa! Okay, let's see, maybe I'll try again. I really am good at this, you'll see. Okay, so I'll put some this way, and then add more on top here, and pile a few more over here....uh-oh! You know, maybe I talked a bigger game than I really knew how to do. Maybe I should try to put my blocks on a more solid foundation, for one thing. Maybe I was too confident in myself, and didn't really know what I was talking about. Let's try this differently...*(Begin stacking the blocks on a more solid surface, explaining as you go).*

You know, the Bible talks a lot about pride and humility. Jesus warns us not to get too full of ourselves. We don't want to brag about our ability or think we're better than other people. If we build our confidence on our own strength and power, it winds up being pretty wobbly, just like putting our blocks on this pillow. It will topple over because it doesn't have a strong foundation! The Pharisees, those church leaders who thought they were pretty special and didn't like Jesus, often tried to tell others how to live their lives. They talked a big game, but didn't really practice what they preached. They didn't truly love other people, but just wanted attention. Jesus told His disciples not to be like that, and we don't want to be like that either. We shouldn't boast about things, especially about our salvation. Nothing that we have comes from our own power, but from God. HE is the source of true strength. He is a more solid foundation than personal pride or ability. So rather than trusting in ourselves, we want to practice humility. That means we think of others as better than ourselves. We treat other



people with kindness, rather than looking down on them or trying to tell them what to do. We recognize that every good thing comes from God. When we build our lives on His solid foundation (*hopefully by now a better block tower has developed*), we are able to do more than we might have ever imagined! And when we don't act like we know it all or can do it all, that's when God can work through us. We rejoice that it's not all about us, but about Him! Why don't we say a prayer and ask God to help us live with humility?

Children's Prayer Moment

Dear God,
Help us to remember that you are our leader and teacher
Let us not become puffed up with pride
But grant us attitudes of true humility
Help us to live as your Son
Thank you for your love
We love you, God!
In Jesus name, Amen!

Bible Verses: Matthew 23:1-12

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ² "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, ³ so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. ⁴ They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. ⁵ They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, ⁶ and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues ⁷ and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. ⁸ But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹ And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. ¹⁰ Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. ¹¹ The greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. -Matthew 23:1-12





This lesson was prepared by [Kristin Schmidt](#), who serves at the Epiphany Lutheran Church in Castle Rock, CO.

She has shared her teaching gifts through *Ministry-To-Children* since 2014 and now serves as our lead curriculum writer.

Kristin has a professional background in elementary and pre-school education. A graduate of Biola University, she holds a Master of Education and will receive the Master of Theology degree from Concordia University, Irvine, California, in May

2020. Kristin grew up in southern California and lived the past 10 years in Georgia. She is a long-distance runner and voracious reader.

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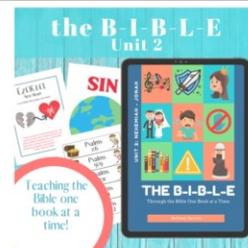
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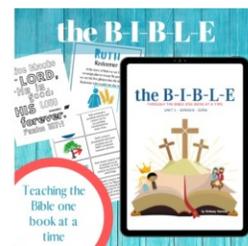
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