

"Proclaim the Name of Jesus":
SBTC Reach Texas State Mission Offering 2018

Learning readiness activity:

Materials needed:

large paper
markers

1. Take volunteers from the audience and bring them to the front. Give each a piece of paper and some markers.
2. Ask them to draw the following step by step so that everyone in the audience can watch, waiting for them to complete each step before moving to the next:
 - a. Draw a square.
 - b. Draw a triangle on top of it.
 - c. Draw a small square on one side of the triangle.
 - d. Draw a curly line coming out of the small square.
 - e. Draw a rectangle inside the larger square.
 - f. Draw two more small squares inside the larger square.
3. Ask what they think they've drawn.
4. Give each volunteer a new sheet of paper and markers.
5. Walk them through the same set of instructions, but this time, tell them they are drawing a house before they begin.
6. When everyone is finished, vote on the best picture and give a prize.
7. Ask everyone whether or not knowing what they were drawing helped the artists do a better job.
8. Ask everyone how knowing what a Christian's obedience to God's Word accomplishes might help them do a better job of following Jesus.

If you wish, you can repeat the exercise again or several more times before step eight, having them draw different objects. You may consider the following: a cat, a stick man, a stick woman, a flower, a bull's eye target, a smiley face.

Intro:

Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.

We sing about Him. We talk about Him. We try to be like Him. But why? What do our efforts accomplish? Do we do it just to say we did and make ourselves feel better about life in general, or is there more to it than that? You're about to find out.

This year's Reach Texas State Mission Offering theme is "Proclaim the Name of Jesus." Our hope is that the truth you learn today will not only encourage you to keep singing about Jesus,

talking about Jesus, and trying to be like Him, but challenge you to do a more intentional and enthusiastic job of it and to assist others around our state who are doing the same.

Spoiler alert: Life's not about us. It's not even about "them." It's about Him!

Lesson:

Christianity is a grand game of Follow the Leader—the most important one you'll ever play, with stakes so high you just can't afford to get it wrong—and the only way you'll ever win is to focus on the leader. Jesus is "it."

Read Philippians 2:5-11.

What did Jesus do?

Jesus obeyed.

At God's command (John 3:16), Jesus left the comfort and splendor of Heaven—all that was rightfully His as God (Romans 9:5)—and took on the burden of human flesh. Fully God and fully man, He lived the same life we live, endured the same hardships we endure, and faced every temptation we face, but never sinned (Hebrews 4:15). Not once! Then, in obedience to God the Father, sinless Jesus took our place on the cross and suffered an excruciating death He didn't deserve to pay the penalty we owed for our sin (2 Corinthians 5:21)—sin is anything in our lives that doesn't match God's will and character. Jesus' death earned forgiveness for us. Three days later, God raised Him from the dead. Jesus' resurrection gave us eternal life.

Make no mistake. None of it was easy for Jesus—neither the life He lived nor the death He died—but He did it because His Heavenly Father told Him to (John 6:38). As a result, God the Father rewarded Jesus by restoring Him to His former glory and giving Him dominion over all things.

What did Jesus' obedience accomplish?

Two things.

- First, Jesus' obedience accomplished our salvation.

You see, on our own, we are helpless to cross the huge gap between ourselves and holy God caused by our sin (Isaiah 59:2, Romans 3:23). Seeing our helplessness, God sent Jesus to become the bridge we needed to come back into right relationship with Him, the kind of relationship He had in mind when He placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Had Jesus refused to follow through on any part of God's plan, we would still be helpless to cross that sin gap.

Thankfully, Jesus did follow through and forgiveness for sin is available to all who choose to accept it (Ephesians 1:7-8). All we have to do is apply the faith God gives us (Ephesians 2:8). If you believe Jesus is the sinless Son of God who died and rose again so you could become God's child and live with Him forever, accept God's forgiveness for your sin, and make Jesus your boss forever, you will be spared the consequences of your sin. You will be saved (Romans 10:9-13).

****You may want to give a brief invitation here or lead students who want to be saved in a sinner's prayer. If you do, make sure they understand the words they speak aren't magic and won't save them, but are only meant to help them express the commitment they are making in their hearts. Instruct them not to pray with you unless they truly believe the Gospel message they just heard and fully intend to follow Jesus for the rest of their lives. ****

- Second, Jesus' obedience brought glory, or recognition, to God. This is important because God is all about His glory (Ephesians 1:11), and rightly so! He's God, after all. It's wrong for us to seek glory for ourselves because we make mistakes, but it's only right for God to do so. He's perfect!

As much as Jesus' loves us, it wasn't love for us that ultimately compelled Him to follow through in obedience to God and die on the cross. Like anyone else, given the choice, Jesus would rather God have found another way to rescue sinful us. Just before His arrest and trial, Jesus even asked God the Father to find another way, but when God didn't offer one, Jesus surrendered and did what God asked Him to do because He wanted His Heavenly Father to receive the recognition He deserved for His divine perfection (Matthew 26:39, John 17:4).

It worked. Thanks to Jesus, everyone who hears the story of the Gospel is forced to recognize God's extraordinary mercy, grace, and kindness to us even if they choose not to accept God's forgiveness by putting their faith in and following Jesus. Those who take full advantage of the pardon Jesus' obedience made possible are compelled not only to acknowledge it, but to offer God praise with grateful hearts, multiplying exponentially Jesus' efforts to glorify God, or lift Him up for admiration and worship.

Okay, it's your turn! Now that you know Who the leader is and what He's up to. Will you follow?

Reread Philippians 2:5-11. Pay special attention to verses 9-11.

What are we supposed to do?

As Jesus followers, we do what He did. We obey. Jesus did the hard part and lived the Gospel; now it's our job to spread it.

Evangelism, or speaking the Gospel and helping others become committed followers of Jesus Christ, is a job for ministers and missionaries and you are both. The moment you became a Christian, or put your faith in Jesus, you joined Jesus on His mission to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) and became a minister of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21), which means it became your job to help people find their way into right relationship with God through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The devil would like you to believe that you aren't capable of evangelism and should leave that job up to the professionals, but he's wrong. The moment you gave your life to Jesus Christ and became a child of God, God sent the Holy Spirit to live inside you and help you do the things you were designed to do (Galatians 4:6, Philippians 2:13). You may not know what to say, but He does. You may not be able to convince people of their need for a Savior, but He can. You won't persuade people to be saved, but He will. Rely on Him. Just tell the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, let them see the difference the Holy Spirit has made in your life, and invite them to experience what you've experienced. God will take it from there.

The devil would also like you to believe you have plenty of time to do the work of evangelism when you're older and more experienced. Maybe. Maybe not. Either way, to wait is to miss opportunities now and experience the relational static that disobedience to God can create between you and Him (James 4:17, Psalm 66:18-19).

No matter how obedient you are, though, you'll never talk to everyone who needs to hear the story of Jesus on your own. There's not enough time, and you're just one person. You need a team. Fortunately, as a child of God, you have one in your spiritual brothers and sisters, those who have also put their faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ for salvation. When you work together, you accomplish more than you ever could alone (Cooperative Program slogan). One way you can cooperate with your team is to give to offerings such as the Reach Texas Mission Offering.

**** You may want to take this opportunity to talk about the things the Reach Texas Mission Offering accomplishes, how the money is distributed, and what it means for people in your students' own community. ****

What will our obedience accomplish?

God's glory (Matthew 5:16). Every time you share the Gospel, you become a part of someone's faith journey, whether or not they accept God's forgiveness in your presence, and help add another voice to God's praise choir. Every time someone gets saved as a direct or indirect result of your generosity, you add wattage to God's spotlight and make it harder for people in this world to ignore His divine perfection.

Getting to help God get the recognition He deserves for being Who He is and doing what He's done is reward in itself for those who truly love Him. Even so, God rewards those who obey Him just as He rewarded Jesus for His obedience. A rich inheritance, God's Kingdom itself, waits for those who fulfill their calling (Colossians 3:23-24).

Make no mistake, God will be glorified (Ephesians 1:11)! Like today's passage says, sooner or later, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. On that day, everyone will be forced to recognize God for Who He is and offer Him the worship He deserves. Your effort or lack thereof won't change that, but when that day comes, you will either be watching with joy, knowing you did your part to make God famous from the start, to grow the Kingdom you're a part of, and to spare people pain and suffering, or you will be watching with regret, knowing there was more you could have done to honor and thank God for His goodness to you and to rescue people who will no longer have a chance to choose Him. The choices you make now will determine which you experience someday, so choose wisely.

Small group discussion questions (Use only as many questions as needed to fill the allotted time. Don't rush, but allow discussion to continue, especially on the first question.):

1. What stood out to you about today's lesson? How will this information affect the choices you make in the future?
2. What did Jesus' obedience accomplish for you personally? Where would you be without Him?
3. How has God used the obedience of other Christians in your faith journey? Be specific. Where would you be without them?
4. Are you an active missionary and minister? What, if anything, needs to change?
5. How will understanding what your obedience accomplishes help you do a better job of following Jesus?
6. How can we pray for you today? (Pray for the members of your group in whatever fashion works best for you.)