Jesus Heals Ten Lepers



Scripture Reference: Luke 17:11-19

Suggested Theme: Jesus loves when we show Him gratitude. We can express thankfulness to God and others too.

Memory Verse: “Praise the Lord! Thank the Lord because he is good. His love continues forever.” Psalm 106:1

Story Overview:

Then men with leprosy met Jesus as He was passing through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem. Jesus told the men to go to a priest and be declared clean. As the men were going to find a priest, they realised they had been healed of their leprosy. Nine of the men continued on to find a priest. Only one of the men, a Samaritan, returned to thank Jesus and give praises to God.

Background Study:

The modern name for leprosy is Hansin’s disease. It is characterised by running skin sores and white patches. In New Testament times, leprosy was a term used more broadly to include probably any number of acute skin diseases (like eczema or psoriasis) involving inflammation of the skin.

Leviticus 13:1-46 instructs the Jews, quite graphically, how to deal with leprosy. A person suspected of having leprosy visited a priest. One of the priest’s duties would have been to know how to discern skin conditions. If the condition had not been leprosy, then various herbs and oils could have been used to heal it. If the priest considered it leprosy, then the person was declared unclean.

After being quarantined for seven days, the person was examined again. If the skin appeared clear, then the person was quarantined for another seven days to make sure and then pronounced clean.

If the skin had not cleared up, then the quarantine was extended by another seven days. At that time, if the condition remained, then the person was cast out of the community. If the skin condition cleared up at any time, the priest had to go outside the community to check on the person. Leviticus 14:1-32 outlines the eight-day ceremony that had to take place before the person could be declared clean again.

Today’s story begins as Jesus travelled along the border of Samaria. Jews viewed Samaritans as half-breeds, and the two groups were often openly hostile to each other. Despite this, this group of Jews and Samaritans were drawn together by their common suffering of leprosy. Lepers were strictly forbidden to get near healthy people. They called out when approaching so no one would get close enough to be contaminated with the disease.

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Perhaps they had heard of Jesus and thought He could help. Whatever they thought He might do to help them, they must have been shocked when Jesus healed them of their leprosy. The Scripture does not say exactly what condition these men were in, but the symptoms must have been obvious because they knew immediately that the leprosy was gone. Perhaps their skin was restored, or maybe the rotted flesh or missing appendages reappeared.

The men had been living away from other people. They must have been anxious to go and see their loved ones! Before they could do that, they would have to go through the ceremony to be publicly declared clean. Jesus told them to go to the priest and show themselves.

All of the men rushed away to the priest. They must have been totally wrapped up in their joy. Only one of them (a Samaritan) stopped and returned to thank Jesus. Saying “thank you” was and is much more than being polite. It is acknowledging where and whom the gift has come from. He wanted to acknowledge Jesus. Jesus had not only restored this leper’s body to health, but He also restored him back to his family and community.

It is good for children to acknowledge those who bless them. The old saying “it is the thought that counts” is still true. No matter the size or quantity of a gift, we should thank those who give gifts physically or with their time and care.

Bible Verses about Being Thankful

- Psalm 95:1-5
- Psalm 106:1
- Ephesians 5:20
- Colossians 2:7
- Colossians 3:15-17
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Way to Introduce the Story:

Present each child with a lolly (candy) at the beginning of the gathering. Take care to praise those who say “thank you.” Do not embarrass any of the children who do not say “thank you”; simply praise the children who do. Tell the class how good it made you feel when the children showed appreciation. You may even want to try again and see who says “thank you” the second time around. The result is guaranteed to be better when you tell the children you want to give it another try! “Once Jesus did something very kind for ten men. Let’s see if any of them said “thank you.”

The Story:

Have you ever had a sore or rash on your skin? You might have put cream or powder on it to make it go away. Sometimes, the rash or sore might just go away by the next day.

In the times of Jesus’ ministry, people sometimes got sores or a rash that would not go away. The medicines they had in those times did not cure those skin problems. Sometimes, the sores would get so bad that the person would die. This was called leprosy.

People with leprosy could not get close to anyone else in case others got leprosy, too. People with leprosy could not hug anyone or eat with anyone. They had to live away from the city. They could only be with other people who had leprosy.

Once, there were ten men who had leprosy. They did not live in a city. They had to stay away from everyone. They must have been very sad.

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The ten lepers had heard about Jesus. They heard that Jesus could make people well. The problem was that the men could not just walk up to Jesus because they did not want Jesus to get leprosy, too. Instead, they waited on the road for Jesus to walk by. When they saw Jesus approaching them, they called him before He got too close.

The ten lepers said, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

Jesus must have been very sad to see these men. They would have had sores, and some of them might have even had leprosy so long that their toes or fingers might have rotted off. The lepers probably even stunk.

Some might have just wanted to run away from the men, but Jesus did not run away from them. He told them to go and show themselves to the priest. The ten men listened to Jesus and went. While they were going, they were healed! Jesus could have ignored the ten men, or run away—but Jesus healed them and made all the leprosy disappear instead!

The men were so happy! They could hardly believe it when they looked at their healthy skin. Now, they could go and be with their friends, and now they could go and give their families a great big hug.

Now that they were healed, when they saw the priest, he would have a special ceremony for them, and the men would get permission to go back to the city where the other people lived.

Most of these ten lepers were Jewish men like Jesus, and the apostles were, but one of the lepers was a Samaritan. Jews and Samaritan Jews did not like each other very much. The Jews thought the Samaritans were not very good people. They thought they were better than the Samaritans.

But as the ten men continued toward the priest, one man, a Samaritan, stopped and began walking back to Jesus. He wanted to say “thank you” for what Jesus had done.

The Samaritan was so thankful that Jesus had healed him that he threw himself down by Jesus’ feet and kept saying, “Thank you.” Others thought that Samaritans were not good, but Jesus knew that this man had a good heart and was full of faith. After all, the other nine kept going on their way to the priest and didn’t return to thank Jesus.

Jesus told the man to go ahead and go to the priest. He said to the man, “Go, your faith has made you well.”

The man went on his way very happy and thankful.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- What did the ten men decide to do so that they could meet Jesus? (Wait on the road so that they could talk to him when he passed by)
- Jesus met ten men on the road. What disease did they have? (Leprosy)
- What did Jesus do to the ten lepers? (Healed them of leprosy)
- When did Jesus heal the ten men? (As they were walking to go to the priest)
- What did one of the men do when he realised he was healed? (He went back to Jesus, praised God, and thanked Jesus)
- How many of the ten lepers thanked Jesus for healing them? (Only one)
- What did Jesus tell the one man? (His faith healed him)
- What did you learn about Jesus from this story?

Reflection:

- What do you think the road the ten men waited on looked like?
- What do you think it looked or felt like when the ten men were healed?
- How long do you think the men walked for before they were healed?
- Do you think the ten men were surprised when they realized they were healed? Why or why not?
- Why do you think most of the men didn't go back to thank Jesus?
- What are you thankful for?
- What do you want to ask Jesus to help you with, just like how the ten men asked for Jesus' help?
- What has God helped you with? (Suggestion: pray and thank God)
- Who do you think you are most like in this story?
- What is something you wonder about in this story?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a lifelong friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- He's Got the Whole World in His Hands Song

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- J-E-S-U-S Song
- Books of the New Testament Song
- Songs from hymnals and chorus books that relate to being thankful. Examples could be “Give Thanks (with a grateful heart)” and “Thank you, Lord (for loving me)”
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Place ten cards on the table. One card should have “thank-you” written on the back, while the other nine should have “leper.” Children take turns mixing them up and trying to guess which one is the “thank-you” card.
- Use books from the public library that show pictures of someone with leprosy.
- Help children draw simple faces on their ten fingers. Take turns acting out the story with these “finger puppets.”
- Use a fine-line permanent marker to write ”thank you” on plasters. Let the children stick the plasters on as a reminder to say thank you to people. A fun activity for older children might be to only put the plaster on after they have thanked ten people for things they have done.
- Hand each child a small treat of some sort. When a child says “thank-you”, then they get an extra treat. Soon, everyone catches on and says, “Thank you!”
- Search online for pictures of people with leprosy. Some of these pictures can be very disturbing, especially to younger children, so use discretion and only show pictures that are age-appropriate for the children you teach.
- Make a Bottle Cap Word Puzzle so children can unscramble the important words from the lesson. Click here for Bottle Cap Word Puzzle Instructions.



Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Show the children how to fold paper in an accordion style and cut to make paper doll chains. Make a paper chain with ten men. Use these to review the story. Tear one off for the one that came back to

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thank Jesus. (paper doll instructions in links below)

- Have children write “I Am Thankful” on the top of a piece of paper. Then, let them cut out pictures from magazines or draw things they are thankful for in their lives.
- Make cards and write thank-you notes to people in the congregation.
- Help children start writing a “gratitude journal.” They can add ten more things they are thankful for each week in your gathering.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page and worksheets about the healing of the lepers (Calvary Curriculum)
- Colouring page (sermons4kids.com)
- Craft: Paper Doll Chain version 1
- Craft: Paper Doll Chain version 2
- Worksheet (Sunday school sources)
- Worksheet, Draw a line to the picture (Sunday school sources)
- Printable, Word Search puzzle (sermons4kids.com)
- How to say “thank you” in many languages (Enchanted learning)

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