

CAN YOU HEAR THE LOVE?

by Randy Keener

KEY VERSE:

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left...Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

Luke 23:33 and 36

FAITH STORY:

Luke 23:26-56

FAITH FOCUS:

This passage tells the story of Christ willingly taking on himself the sins of the world, and sacrificing his life through a horrible death on a cross so we may have eternal life.

SESSION GOAL:

Help students understand that it was out of Christ's unending love for us that he died on the cross for our sins.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, the students will:

- Students will articulate how sounds can tell a story.
- Students will hear sounds that re-create what the crucifixion may have sounded like.
- Students will articulate Jesus' motivation in being willing to die on the cross.
- Students will think about sounds of their own life, and ponder what those sounds are saying about their life.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1** The movie, The Passion of the Christ. You will need to view it prior to class and make note of the clips you will be showing so you can find them. Clip #1 is in the garden when Jesus is being taken away. Clip #2 is when Jesus receives the 40 lashes. Clip #3 is when the nails are being driven into Jesus and the cross is flipped over.
- 2** The equipment to show the movie. A cloth to drape over the TV.
- 3** Paper, pencils, pens
- 4** Bibles for each student
- 5** Blindfold
- 6** Dry erase board, chalk board or newsprint
- 7** Supplies for a prayer station: a small wooden cross, small pieces of paper, hammer and nails.
- 8** Supplies for another prayer station: A container with a small sand pit in it, candles, matches.

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (5–10 minutes)

Invite a volunteer who is willing to recall a recent day in their life and share it with the class. When you have the volunteer, blindfold him or her and ask them to think back on the day, and to think about it only in terms of the sounds that they heard. Ask them to talk about the sounds they heard, and make a list of those sounds.

After the student has shared the sounds of the day with the group, they may remove the blindfold. Ask the group to try to determine what kind of day it was, based on the sounds listed. Then ask the student to tell the group what he/she did that day. Compare it with what the group thought happened that day.

CONNECT: (5 minutes)

Lead a short discussion about how sounds alone can tell a story. Ask students to give other examples of when sounds alone can communicate very clearly what is happening. Then say: Next, we are going to listen to some sounds and I'd like for you to imagine what is happening during this time.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (20–30 minutes)

Hand out the paper and pencils to students. Ask students to close their eyes as you cue up the first scene. Put the cloth over the screen. Play the scene, and ask students to write down the sounds they are hearing. Repeat the process with the next two scenes.

Read the crucifixion story from Luke 23:26-56.

Say: *You've heard the story, and you've heard sounds that related to the story. What are the feelings, emotions and events going on here? What are the sounds that you AREN'T hearing? (For example, do you hear anyone come to Jesus' rescue?)*

Say: *You've heard the sounds of a lot of pain, grief and torture. Why did this story happen? What was Jesus' motivation to go through this?*

Refer students to John 3:16 to help answer the question of Jesus' reason for doing this.

APPLY: (5–7 minutes)

Ask students to take some time to think about the most significant sounds in their life, and to write them down on their paper. Assure them that this is for their own reflection and they will not be required to share it with the class. When students are done, ask them to evaluate their lists—are the sounds those of love, disagreement, depression, joy, excitement, grief, happiness, frustration? Are there sounds that represents sins in their lives?

RESPOND: (10 minutes)

Explain the two prayer stations to students. They may choose to go to one or both or neither during this response time.

The prayer station with the cross is a place where they may choose to go to write their sins on a piece of paper and nail it to the cross.

The prayer station with the candle is a place to light a candle and say a prayer to God—it can be a prayer of thanksgiving for what Jesus did on the cross, a prayer of confession, a prayer of commitment to Jesus.

Teacher tip: *This is a heavy session, a heavy topic. Your students will react differently, depending on what is happening in their lives, and how God's Spirit speaks to them during this time. Be sensitive to this and be prepared to minister to students individually as needed.*

INSIGHTS INTO SCRIPTURE:

This story, together with the resurrection, is the formative event from the New Testament that gives us our salvation history. God saw the sin problem and knew that in order for there to be fellowship with us, God would have to make a covenant with humankind. This covenant was made through the death of God's son, Jesus. The cross was an act of grace that we did not deserve. The cross is also important in that it showed us how to live. We too should expect suffering when we are obedient to God and respond non-violently to our oppressors.

This particular lesson emphasizes the torture that Christ endured. The physical passion of Christ began in Gethsemane. Of the many aspects of the initial suffering, the one of greatest psychological interest is the bloody sweat. It is interesting that Luke, the physician, is the only one to mention this.

The second part of the suffering that is important to understand was the whipping that Jesus received. Preparations for the scourging were carried out when the prisoner was stripped of his clothing and his hands were tied to a post above his head. It is doubtful the Romans would have made any attempt to follow Jewish law in this matter, but the Jews did have an ancient law prohibiting more than forty lashes.

Crucifixion on the cross was the ultimate sign of love for us. It's a love that says "I do not want to be a distant God, but rather a God who has a relationship with you and knows you personally."

WORKS CITED:

NRSV Harper Study Bible. Lindsel, Harold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989.

Romero, Jesse. "A medical account of the crucifixion." Jesse Romero.com., 10/5/2004.