

Bible background

Matthew 25:1-13.

Aim of lesson

To show that we all need to be preparing ourselves for when Jesus comes back to earth

Preparation required

Make one of the badges beforehand (you could wear it to see if the children notice it). You will also need colouring materials, cardboard circles, safety pins, sellotape, glue and scissors.

Suggested outline of lesson

1. Introduce the lesson by telling the children that this is another of Jesus' stories that had a special meaning. Discuss with the children their experience of weddings, and whether they have been bridesmaids or page boys. They will remember the excitement and expectancy. Explain what an Eastern wedding was like - in practice very different from a modern Western marriage. The bridegroom had often never seen the bride before the wedding day. On the wedding day he travelled to the house of his bride, to take her back with him to his own. The bride and family would work to ensure that everything was ready and that she was made beautiful, ready for his arrival. Friends of the bride would go to meet the bridegroom when he approached, and would greet him with great joy. It was a time for which both bride and groom had waited expectantly. The bride, with her family and friends, would then return to the groom's house and there would be a great feast, lasting one or two weeks. If the children know the story of the marriage at Cana you could remind them of the feast described in John 2.
2. Tell the story, and explain to the children that Jesus was trying to teach us about when he comes back to the earth. Show how Jesus is like the bridegroom and we are like the bridesmaids waiting for him. Try to catch the atmosphere of their excitement and relate it to our expectancy of our Lord. Imagine how everybody would feel if the bride and her friends were not ready.
3. You might like to explain that, just as the bridesmaids' lamps had to be full of oil if they were to be ready for the bridegroom, so Jesus wants us to be like that!
4. Ask the children if they are getting ready for Jesus by being kind, gentle, truthful and so on. They can make a badge to wear - you may need to help cut the circles out.

Alternative activities

1. Draw around the children's hands. The children can then use felt pens or crayons to make each finger into a person. Practise counting them.
2. Make oil lamps and jars out of modelling clay or dough.
3. Make two-sided masks on paper plates or card with awake/asleep faces.
4. If you have the room to run around and make a noise, get the children to lie down and pretend to be asleep. Tiptoe around them and then either clap your hands, shake a tambourine or shout 'wake up'. The children must then jump up. You could vary the game by telling the children an instruction they must perform when they wake up e.g. 'when it's time to wake up, get your lamp from the table and line up by the door.' 'When it's time to wake up, go and stand with a partner.'

Relevance to the children's lives

To encourage the children to see that it matters to God how they behave.

Prayer

Which of the qualities on the activity sheet do the children find it hard to be like? Ask who would like to say a prayer asking God to help them be more like he wants them to be.

Verse

'Keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.' Matthew 25:13.