

G.R.O.W.

Lesson 1—Go to Church

OVERVIEW

Bible Story: 1 Kings 12:26-30

Bible Background: 1 Kings 12:1-33

Key Verse:

Psalm 122:1—"I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'"

Important Notes:

- (1) Although at times this lesson says, "ASK" and "SAY" this lesson is not intended to be read to the students. Let it be an outline guide for you but let your words come from your heart as an overflow of not only what you have prepared in this lesson but of your own time with God and what He is doing in your life as well.
- (2) Remember, we never fill time—we use time, every moment for the benefit of the Gospel. If you have extra time, share your personal salvation testimony, ask your students to share theirs, or share what God has been doing in your life recently. Be transparent. Be genuine and let your love for Christ shine in all you say and do.
- (3) As enter your room and ask them how their week has been and what God is doing in their lives, be sure that you don't spend too much time "chasing rabbits." Discussion is essential in leading small groups but not at the cost of the lesson not being taught.
- (4) Any time you lead a student discussion be careful that students don't gossip. At no time should anyone ever speak negatively of anyone whether they are in your class or not. If a student begins to do this, just say, "Why don't we talk about that later in private." They may have information that you need to know but if it is just gossip, then you need to let them know that you don't listen to gossip and spreading gossip is like playing with fire—it destroys, especially those who enjoy it and share in it.

BEFORE CLASS

Preparation: *Your preparation will determine what direction your class will go.*

- Consider the importance church has played in your own life and relationship with Christ.
- Consider the reason you attend church.
- Study and prepare your lesson so that you are familiar with the illustrations and outline.
- Contact students who missed Sunday School last week.
- Pray for each student by name.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Discussion Questions

Go around the room and let each student answer the following questions. We want to try to get all of our students talking and we want them to feel the freedom to express themselves without other students mocking them. Stay in control of the discussion and don't let it turn into a debate. Let each person express their opinion and by doing this you will build a platform for the lesson. Also, be careful that you don't spend so much time discussing that you don't get to the core of the lesson.

As student enter the room **ASK:**

- *How was your week?*

- *What did God do in your life this past week?*

Once everyone is in the room, **ASK** the following questions to everyone:

- *On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being extremely important and 1 being not important at all, how important is church to you?*
 - *On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you enjoy going to church?*
 - *If you were unable to go to church for a year, how would it affect your life?*
 - *Why are you at church this morning?* (i.e., “Because I want to be here,” “Because mom makes me come,” “Because my friends are here,” etc.)
- (1) If someone says that they don't want to be at church simply **ask them what they had rather be doing**—i.e., sleeping, playing a video game, working, etc.
- (2) If someone says that they are at church because they choose to be, **ask them why church is important to them** and why they would choose it over sleeping, staying home to watch TV, etc.

The following questions are open questions which means let those answer who want to answer:

- *Do you have any chores at home?* (i.e., washing the dishes, taking out the trash, etc.)

- *Are your chores something you look forward to or something you dread?*
- *If you had your choice would you get rid of your chores?*

“Get To/Got To” Illustration

With everything in life you will jump into one of two attitudes:

I get to do it... Or...I’ve got to do it.

Whether you’re doing your chores, going to school, visiting grandma, or playing basketball you will have one of these two attitudes. The same is true with the things of God:

Some people say, “I get to read my Bible.” Others say, “I’ve got to read my Bible.”

Some say, “I get to tell others about Jesus.” Others say, “I’m supposed to go witnessing—I’ve got to.”

This morning when you woke up you jumped into one of these two attitudes: “I get to go to church today.” Or, “I’ve got to go to church today.”

ASK: Concerning reading your Bible, praying, witnessing, going to church, memorizing Scripture, having a daily time with Jesus...Do you have a “get to” attitude or a “got to” attitude? (*Go around and let all your student answer—Ask them to be total honest and that no one is going to make fun of them.*)

TEACHING TIPS

Always be on the hunt for guests whether it is in Sunday School, in a worship service, or on a Wednesday night. We want every guest to fill out a guest card and we never want a student to visit us without a follow-up contact to let them know we were glad they were here.

KEY VERSE

SAY: Some people view going to church as a chore—something they have to do, but listen to what King David wrote in the Bible: (*Read this from your Bible.*)

“I rejoiced with those who said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord’” (Psalm 122:1).

- *Why do you think David was glad to go to the “house of the Lord”?*
- *What are some reasons that people are glad to go to church? (i.e., Because their friends are there, they love Jesus, etc.)*
- *What are some reasons that people are NOT glad to go to church? (i.e., Because they don’t feel accepted, nobody talks to them there, they don’t know or care about Christ, because they believe church is boring or that the church is only after their money, or that there is just a bunch of hypocrites there, etc.)*
- *Answer this question to yourself: What makes you glad or unglad to go to church? What’s the difference between you and David?*

SAY: The Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart which means we can take a look at things he said and see the heart of someone who truly seeks and wants to know God.

- Answer this question to yourself: *Would you say that you are a person after God's own heart and if not, what would need to change in your life for you to truly follow after Him?*

BIBLE LESSON

Explain the background: 1 Kings 12:1-25—King Solomon (who was the son of King David) was the wisest and the most wealthy man in the world. Under his reign the nation of Israel had expanded and grown powerful. He had also built a temple to God as well as many other incredible projects. When he died all the people gathered to his son, King Rehoboam, to say, *"Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you."* Rehoboam answered for them to come back in three days. During this time he consulted the advice of elders who said, *"If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants."* But Rehoboam rejected their advice and listened to the advice of the young men who said to tell the people, *"My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions."*

- *Do you think Rehoboam was wise to listen to the young men's advice?* (No.)

As a result the nation broke into two halves: The northern kingdom of Israel (ten tribes) who rebelled against Rehoboam and followed a man named Jeroboam. Jeroboam had been one of Solomon's officials whom Solomon had tried to kill but he had escaped to Egypt and had returned after Solomon's death (1 Kings 11: 26-40). Only two tribes in the land of Judah remained under King Rehoboam.

But Jeroboam in the northern kingdom had a problem—The house of God, the temple, was in Jerusalem which was under Rehoboam's control. Listen to what he thought: *"Jeroboam thought to himself, 'The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam'"* (1 Kings 12:26-27).

- *What would you do if you were in Jeroboam's place and you wanted to stop your people from going to Judah to worship?* (See if any of your students suggest setting up places to worship in his own kingdom.)

Have the students turn to and read 1 Kings 12:28-30.

SAY: He not only changed where they worshipped but what they worshipped. He led the people of Israel into idolatry and continued by setting up shrines on high places and appointing priests from all sorts of people. He even set up religious festivals that were similar to the ones they used to have.

- *What do you think was the end result of Israel's idolatry?* (They worsened, turned completely away from God and God judged them by sending a nation to destroy Israel and to take many of its people away to foreign countries. Those from the capital, Samaria, were taken captive to
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numerous other cities where they married people of other races and religions. When their descendants finally returned they were a “mixed” people and this is where the Samaritans in the New Testament come from.)

Application

A minute ago when we asked why some people don’t like going to church, did anyone say idolatry? Many people don’t go to church because, like Jeroboam, they set up other things in their life to “worship.” In other words, there are more important things to them than knowing and following Christ.

- Answer this question to yourself: *Is there anything in your life that is more important to you than knowing and following Christ?* If so, then this is an idol.

Consider the following things the Bible teaches us about idolatry:

- *Idolatry is sin.* A person cannot be right with God if there is an idol in his life. (Exodus 20:3)
- *Idolatry leads to emptiness and meaninglessness.* (The entire book Ecclesiastes)
- *Idolatry leads to God’s judgment.* (The book of Judges is all about this.)
- *If a person has truly given their life to Christ, they will not be able to continue in idolatry happily for a long period of time without experiencing God’s conviction and discipline.* (Hebrews 12:7-8—“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.”)

SAY: If there is anything in your life that is more important to God, surrender it to Christ today. Get rid of it or put it in its proper place but let nothing be more important to you than following Jesus—not friends, not family, not grades, not school—all these are good things but anything you make more important than Christ, no matter how good, will only harm you and destroy God’s plans for your life.

Let’s address some other reasons people don’t like going to church:

- *There is sin in their lives* (and yes, this is idolatry—All sin is idolatry because you are choosing something wrong over following Christ.) If a person has sin in his life, why would he want to go to church and be confronted with the truth of God’s Word?
- *They don’t like church because they don’t know Jesus.* Don’t you think church would be boring to you if you listened for an hour to people singing and talking about someone you don’t personally know or love?
- *They don’t understand the importance that church plays in a believer’s life,* so they treat it on the same level as a social club or on the same level as a commitment to a ball team or school activity.
- *People get out of the habit of going to church.* Usually they get busy (and even busyness can be an idol) and they lose sight of what really matters in light of

eternity. (Hebrews 10:25—“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing...”)

- *They know too many Christian who are hypocrites, cliquish and exclusive, uncaring and unfriendly, who say one thing but live another, who create an atmosphere at church that is unchristian and that only a fool would want to walk into. These people will be judged for their actions, but even they can't stop a true believer who is in love with Christ and following Him from worshipping and growing and being the church that God created them to be.*

WRAP IT UP

Final Thoughts

ASK: What can you do to help people want to come to church?

- Live for Christ
- Talk about Jesus
- Talk about church and the role it plays in your life. (*This is called a **church testimony**. Just like a salvation testimony tells someone what Jesus means to you and how you accepted Christ, a church testimony shares the importance that church plays in your life and perhaps a specific time when going church helped you.*)
- Be excited about what God is doing at church.

NOTE: If you have extra time, ask if anyone wants to share with you a “church testimony.”

Prayer Time

List prayer requests below and on the back of this page and pray for your students throughout the week.

