

LESSON PLAN

BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS

John 1,3; 1 John 1,3

Lesson Memory Verse: John 1:12 - "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

Lesson Aim: Teach children the differences between believers and unbelievers and lead them to believe Christ.

Lesson Plan: Use the KEY – HE – SEE – WE – BE plan (explained in the Introductory Notes).

KEY (for Attention): (Choose the names of two children in your class and use them in the following illustration.)

What if Sally Smith walked up to Mary Jones' father, grabbed his hand and said, "Dad, may I please have a dollar for some candy?" Mr. Jones would think Sally Smith was all mixed up, wouldn't he? She certainly made a mistake calling him "Dad." Not just anyone can call Mr. Jones, "Dad." He is only "Dad" to Mary Jones and her brothers and sisters – not to all her friends!

Did you know that some people think that because God made all of us, everyone in the whole world can call God their "Father?" But that is not true. The Lord Jesus, Himself, said so. Let's open our Bibles to John 1:12 and see what He said.

HE (for Authority): This verse tells us which people are really God's children and can call Him their Father. Jesus says those that believe on His name and receive Him as their Savior have the right (power) to be called the children of God (not "sons"). Only those who have received Jesus as their personal Savior can have God as their Father. Who is the father of unbelievers? It is shocking, but I will tell you the answer to that question in our lesson today.

SEE (for Apperception) and WE (for Application): PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word. In our lesson today we will discover great differences between believers and unbelievers.

NOTE: In order to make the contrasts between believers and unbelievers more clear, use the whiteboard. List each characteristic of unbelievers as you teach your lesson. Then list the characteristics of believers opposite the characteristics of unbelievers.

Unbelievers

Children of Satan
Separated from God
Anger from God
Prayers not heard by God
Lost
Going to Hell

Believers

Children of God
Fellowship with God
Love from God
Prayers heard by God
Found
Going to Heaven

OUTLINE OF THE DOCTRINE

I. Unbelievers

A. Unbelievers are children of Satan – 1 Jn 3:8-10.

1. God is not the Father of unbelievers (Jn 8:42). One day when Jesus was speaking to religious men who were unbelievers, He said, "If God were your Father, you would love Me." But these men did not love Jesus; they did not believe He was God's Son. They would not receive Him as their Savior. So Jesus was telling them, "God is not your Father."

2. Satan is their father (John 8:44). Then Jesus made it very clear that Satan was the father of these men that did not love Him. That is surprising, isn't it? But Jesus Himself said it. Jesus always told the truth. These smart, religious men did not have God for their Father. They were in Satan's family! This is true of all people who do not receive Jesus as their Savior.

WE: We must love Jesus and receive Him as our Savior to be in God's family. Otherwise we are in Satan's family.

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B. Unbelievers are separated from God – Isa 59:2.

1. God is angry with unbelievers and has condemned them, because they refuse to receive His love gift them, His beloved Son (John 3:16, 18, 36). Isn't it unpleasant at home when mother is angry with you? Although many people do not seem to realize it, God is angry with them. Why? They refuse to believe Jesus is God's Son and receive Him as their Savior. When a person refuses to believe Jesus is God's Son, he is calling God a liar because God said, "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17; 17:5). He also is saying, "I do not need Jesus to save me" when God sent His Son to save him and give him eternal life (Jn 3:16-18; 1 Jn 5:10-12). The sin of unbelief is an awful sin in God's eyes (Rev 21:8). Only when we believe in Jesus is God's anger taken away. Then God can bless us and make us happy. God sees only two types of people: believers and unbelievers.

2. God has not promised to hear the prayers of unbelievers. Unbelievers are not in God's family, so He does not need to answer their prayers. They have no right to ask God for things as though He were their Father. The first prayer God wants to hear from any person is, "God, be merciful to me a sinner. Please forgive my sins. I want to receive Jesus as my Savior."

WE: We must not allow ourselves to be separated from God. We do not want Him to be angry with us. We do want Him to answer our prayers.

C. Unbelievers are lost and on the road to Hell – 2 Cor 4:3-4; Mt 7:13.

Unbelievers are lost because they are on the wide road to Hell (Mt 7:13). God is not willing that any should perish, but in His sovereign plan, He has left that decision for the sinner to make. Unbelievers have chosen to reject Jesus as Savior, but there is hope that they will repent and receive Jesus before they die. If they continue in unbelief until they die, their decision will be final and they will be lost forever.

WE: If we do not want to be lost and on the road to Hell, we must not join the crowd on that wide road.

II. Believers

A. Believers have God as their Father - Jn 1:12; 3:3-8.

When we were born, we were born in sin and belonged to Satan's family, but the Holy Spirit helped us to believe that Jesus, God's Son, died for our sins. Then we received Jesus as our Savior and we were "born again." This time we were born into God's family. Now we are the children of God. Illustration: Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-36; 19:38-42).

WE: We must be born again to have God as our Father. Have you been born again?

B. Believers have fellowship with God - 1 Jn 1:3.

1. God loves believers because they have received His Son. He blesses them because both the Holy Spirit and Jesus intercede for them before Him (Rom 8:26, 34). As a result God takes care of all their needs (Mt 6:26-33). God is satisfied with believers because He sees Jesus' righteousness, not theirs, and is pleased with them.

2. God answers the prayers of believers because they are His children. They have this privilege because they have received Jesus as their Savior. Jesus said, "No man comes unto the Father but by Me" (Jn 14:6). Unbelievers cannot talk to God as their Father because they refuse to receive His Son. But those who love Jesus and keep His commandments can pray in His name and God will answer their prayers (Jn 14:14-15; 15:7, 16; 16:24). Illustration: Most of the children in a country would be afraid to go up to the king and talk to him. But the king's children are not afraid. If you have Jesus as your Savior, you are a child of God, the Ruler of the whole universe. You can talk to Him with confidence and He will listen to you. Jesus brings you close to God (Eph 2:13).

WE: We are privileged that God wants to have fellowship with us. He wants to bless us with good things and answer our prayers. But this privilege is available to those that have received Jesus as their Savior. Have you done this?

C. Believers have been found and are on the road to Heaven (Lk 15:4-6; Jn 3:15-17; 14:6).

God is willing for all people to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). When sinners believed His Son's payment for all of their sins by His death on the cross (1 Pet 2:24; 1 Jn 2:1-2) and received His gift of eternal life, which was

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made possible by His resurrection from the dead (Jn 11:25), they were found in Christ and no longer lost in sin. When they believed, they were allowed to pass through the narrow gate (Jn 10:9) and be permitted to travel on the royal road to Heaven (Mt 7:13-14; Jn 14:6)

WE: Once we are born again into God's family, we do not have to fear death because when we die, we will go right to Heaven (2 Cor 5:6-8). Even more wonderful, we may not have to die at all because the Lord is going to come back someday for us in the clouds. He can come at any moment (1 Th 4:13-17; 1 Cor 15:51-52). He may come today. When He comes, all Christians will receive perfect new bodies. We will be judged to see if we will receive rewards for serving the Lord, but we will not be judged to see if we are going to go to Heaven for believers have already been given eternal life (Jn 5:24).

APPLICATIONS OF THE DOCTRINE: "From Fear to Fear" – The Story of Martin Luther

Martin Luther frowned as he rode along through the lovely countryside of Germany. He was deep in thought. For months he had been troubled. He knew that his father wanted badly for him to become a lawyer. Now that he had graduated from the university, he had to decide if he would enter law school or not. Martin had always been taught to respect and obey his father. Yet now, he was struggling inside. "What should I do?" Martin wondered. "I don't want to be a lawyer. I feel that I should become a priest. Surely if I become a priest, I could find peace with God!" He heaved a deep sigh.

Martin was a good boy and an excellent student. Other people thought well of him. Yet Martin knew he was a sinner. He had been taught that all his life. He had also been taught that if he confessed his sins to the priest and did good works he would eventually get to Heaven. But even after he confessed his sins to the priest, Martin did not feel that those sins were gone. He lived in fear of the day God would punish him for his sins in purgatory. He wanted very much to make God happy with him!

Martin had been thinking so hard that he had not noticed the dark clouds gathering in the sky. He had hardly heard the low rumble of thunder in the distance. Suddenly large raindrops began to splash on his cheeks and his nose. Martin shook himself, spurred his horse and said to himself, "My, but this storm certainly came up quickly!" Martin rode as fast as he could, but he was unable to escape the bad thunderstorm. Lightning flashed again and again. It seemed to be very close. Then with frightening speed, a bolt of lightning struck the ground not too far in front of Martin. The impact threw Martin right off his horse. Martin was afraid. There on the ground he prayed to Saint Ann. Martin did not know how to get God's help, so he prayed to Saint Ann to help him. Martin vowed that if he got through the storm alive, he would enter the monastery and become a priest!

As soon as Martin got back to the place where he lived, he invited his friends to come over for a party. All evening he was his usual self, but just before everyone went home Martin made an announcement. "My friends," Martin said seriously, "This will be my last party with you. Tomorrow I will enter the monastery." Martin's friends were shocked. They pleaded with him to change his mind. But the next morning, Martin walked through the town with his friends and said a final good-bye to them at the monastery door.

From that day Martin's life completely changed. He spent his time doing duties assigned to him. He tried to do everything just right. Surely, here at the monastery Martin would find peace with God. But as time went by, Martin was still troubled in his heart. It seemed that no matter how hard he tried, he still felt the awful guilt of sin inside him. Martin began to spend much time punishing himself for his sin. He went without food and prayed all night until he became so weak and sick that he could hardly walk. But no matter what Martin did, the guilt and fear would not go away.

One day Martin was sent on a special trip across the mountains to far away Rome. Martin was excited. As he traveled he hoped that at Rome he could find relief from his unhappiness. After over a month of walking, Martin and his companion came to a place in the road where at last they could see Rome. Martin was so thrilled he shouted, "Hail, holy Rome!" But when Martin got into the city he began to be disappointed. Rome was the central city of the Catholic Church, the home of the Pope, but he found the people were very wicked. Many horrible sins were being committed in the city. The people were not serious followers of God. They didn't seem to love God at all. Martin was heart-broken. The more he saw of the city, the more he realized that in Rome he could not find the way that would please God.

When Martin got back to Germany, he once more began to study very hard. Martin had gone to school for many years. He was very well-educated. He had been given a Bible when he entered the monastery,

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and he began to study it more and more. There were no Bibles written in German, the language of Martin and his people, but Martin had studied Latin and was able to read the Bible for himself.

The leaders at the monastery liked Martin. They knew that he wanted to please God, so they allowed him to study and then they allowed him to teach. After several years Martin finally got his doctor's degree. With this degree he was allowed to teach the Bible to other monks. Martin taught from Psalms and then from Romans. He had begun to see that the Bible did not agree with the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Church only taught about God's judgment, but the Bible also taught about God's love.

One day as Martin was reading his Bible, he began to understand the meaning of a wonderful verse – Romans 1:17. He read it again and again. "The just shall live by faith...The just shall live by faith..." The more he thought about things the more he realized that he could not please God and find peace by good works. He could not have forgiveness from sins by going to another priest or to a saint. He could only find forgiveness by looking to the Lord Jesus Christ Who had died for his sins.

One day as Martin was studying the Bible, he prayed and trusted the Lord Jesus as his Savior. "Dear Lord Jesus Christ," he prayed, "Please forgive me of my awful sins. Forgive me for thinking that I could please you with my own works! And please, I pray, save me and use my life for You!" At last Martin had found the way to please God. He had obeyed God by believing and receiving God's Son as Savior. Now Martin did not have to worry about God's judgment. He knew that Jesus had taken his sins away and that he would go to Heaven when he died.

God used Martin Luther in a wonderful way. Martin began to stand up for the Bible. He showed people that the Church was wrong. They did not have to work for their salvation; they only had to receive Jesus. The Church's leaders became angry with Martin. They forced him to leave the Church. But Martin did not care. He had found true happiness by trusting Jesus as his Savior and he wanted others to find that happiness, too.

WE: If we are unhappy because of our sins, we need to ask Jesus to be our Savior. When we do this, we will find peace and joy because God will be our Father. Then we will not need to be afraid to die and meet God. He will receive us into His home and love us forever.

BE (for Action): (Ask some questions about the lesson for a good review and to keep their attention.) How did Martin feel before he became a believer? Why did he feel this way? How did Martin try to find peace with God? Where did Martin find the answer to his problem? What was the answer? How did Martin feel after he became a believer?

What have you done about your sins? Are you afraid to die and meet God? If you are afraid, you need to do what Martin Luther did. Pray and ask the Lord Jesus to save you from your sin. If you are already saved, you should have peace with God. You should know you are on your way to Heaven. Are you telling other people how to be saved like Martin Luther did? Be sure to tell someone this week. (Give an opportunity for the unsaved to accept Christ and for the saved to ask God to help them witness.)