



OVERVIEW SECTION

How to Read This Lesson Plan

The **Overview Section** is the foundation of this lesson plan. The questions and activities for the class that you will be teaching on Sunday morning have been based (sometimes loosely) upon what you read in this section. The **Overview Section** is composed of five components (each component is underlined in the lesson plan):

How to Read This Lesson Plan (defines all components of the lesson plan)

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation (a reminder of why we do this)

Scripture(s) for the Session (a reminder that the scripture is to be read in every class)

Key Verses & Theology (background for teachers to ponder)

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture (the ideas that the session's lessons are based on)

The actual lesson is found in the second section, **The Sunday Morning Experience Section**. Think of this section as the step-by-step instruction guide to your Sunday morning teaching experience. There are four components to this section (again, each component is underlined in the actual lesson plan):

Preparation (including supplies needed)

Classroom Statement (a brief explanation of what will be taught/happening in the classroom)

Step-by-step process of the lesson (including the scripture to be read)

Suggested variations for age groups (Self-explanatory but not always applicable)

We encourage you to read the rest of this **Overview Section** before reading the **Sunday Morning Experience Section**.

Purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation

The purpose of Sunday Morning Spiritual Formation is, with God's help and in community, to hear and interact with the stories of our faith tradition, to pray, worship and play together, and to equip and support the building of relationships with God and with each other.

Scripture(s) for the Session: Matthew 27:11-26

Please READ this aloud in every class you teach. The actual words to the scripture can be found in **The Sunday Morning Experience Section: Step-by-Step process of the lesson**. When reading to the class, please read it from the lesson plan (not an actual Bible) as the wording of the scripture has been modified to help clarify some language issues.

Key Verses & Theology: These are provided to help the teachers think about and build a framework for understanding the story to help in answering some of the questions that the students might raise in class.

Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" 14 But Jesus still gave no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. When you are accused of something, whether you did it or not, what is your initial response? My immediate response is to defend myself, give reasons, or explain the situation. This response in me is even more aggressive when I think I am being wrongly accused. I imagine other responses range from blaming others to begging for mercy or leniency. But Jesus does none of these things. This is quite remarkable. Jesus' life is on the line, and yet he lets false accusations stand without rebuttal. Who *does* this? It is no wonder that Pilate is greatly amazed. But why would Jesus function this way? Living the Way of God cannot be forced or argued upon someone else; a person can only invite others to experience it. Jesus is not in a position to invite any more. The chief priests and Pharisees had plenty of opportunities to receive the invitation, but they choose to arrest Jesus instead. At this point, what is left for Jesus to say?

20 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. In the last WRM session (S3.Session 7: Jesus enters Jerusalem), we studied Jesus' arrival to Jerusalem. He arrives with fanfare and a parade. People are waving tree branches and then they are attentively listening to him teach in the Temple after he drives out the merchants. That was at the start of what we call Holy Week. Now, 5 days later, Jesus has been arrested, falsely accused and the crowd, probably some of the same people who listened to Jesus in the Temple and cheered for him when he came in the gates, are now persuaded to condemn Jesus to death. So what gives? Why would the crowd be so fickle and short-sighted and forgetful? Because that's what crowds do! Just think of a sports crowd that cheers its team at the beginning of the game and then boos them halfway through because the team is now losing. Crowds are fickle, short-sighted and forgetful! They only want what's hot and what's now. Jesus was hot and now *so* five minutes ago. Now it's Barabbas who's hot, who's now. The chief priests and Pharisees use this to their advantage and get the crowd all riled up about something other than Jesus, in this case, Barabbas. It is in this story where we can very easily see how the ways of the crowd and the ways of the Pharisees kill the Way of God (as embodied by Jesus). When we do not accept the invitation to live God's way, then by default, we end up in the Pharisee or Crowd camp...and participate in the killing/ending of the Way of God.

24 So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, and that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." So Pilate is amazed at Jesus' silence. He knows this is not the response of a crazy, dangerous person. He does not think Jesus is guilty, plus his wife is having dreams about the innocence of Jesus and writing notes to him that say, "Dear, don't be stupid." But in the face of the anger and demands of the crowd, Pilate stops caring about the innocence of Jesus and starts caring about his own innocence. Once we start worrying about covering our own back, our own career, our own family, then that finalizes the ability of the crowd and Pharisees to end the possibility of living God's way. Traditional theology says that God sent Jesus to die for our sins. The story of Jesus' trial says otherwise; this story tells us that Jesus died because of bureaucratic cowardliness by Pilate, because of the crowd being easily

swayed due to an embrace of ignorance and because of the jealousy of the Pharisees that drove this whole charade of justice. God didn't send Jesus to die from that. God sent Jesus to SAVE us from that. But in order to be saved from the way of functioning, we have to choose to live God's way. When we don't, then we end up killing the life that God desires for us to live.

Themes to Focus on from the Scripture: Themes are provided to help teachers understand the teaching of the *session* (not necessarily the class). Sometimes an activity in one class may not match up with any of the themes.

Accusations – The act of accusing is to charge someone of wrong-doing. Whether accusations be true or false, they are an incredibly powerful tool of persuasion. Politicians, lawyers and co-workers use them with great skill to shape perception, and in so doing, ruin many reputations, careers and lives. The problem with accusing is that it does not allow for forgiveness or redirect one's actions. Prophecy is the redeemed act of accusation. Prophecy, like accusing, will name wrong-doing but THEN, prophecy, unlike accusing, also encourages/promotes actions that are about repentance (changing direction – seeking reconciliation with God and others). Even though the Pharisees come from a storied culture of prophets, in this story they choose the fallen form of prophecy: The Accusation.

Decision-making – Accusations gain so much traction in our lives because as humans, we often make decisions based on what we fear. Accusations play on our fear, amplify our fear and cause us to make decisions based on what we fear less. But even without the accusations, we are fearful. The Pharisees fear Jesus surpassing them in popularity and power; Pilate is afraid for his career and what a riot would do to it; the crowd fears missing out on the next big thing and makes snap-decisions that seem important and popular in the moment. All this fearful decision-making creates quite the frenzied mess, though, doesn't it? But what we see with Jesus is that his decision-making (choosing to follow God's way) leaves him still and calm, peaceful even, in the middle of this swirling chaos that will eventually kill him.

Surrender – Because Jesus has surrendered to living God's way, Jesus isn't trying to save himself in this story. Because Jesus isn't trying to save himself, he's not caught up in the fear that can so often drive us to make foolish decisions. So maybe he's not happy with what's happening (in fact, I think that's safe to assume), but he's also not worked up into a frenzy about what's happening, either. Jesus is making choices based on his relationship with God. God's telling Jesus to not fight back. So Jesus doesn't. And he's the only one who then appears sane in the story, even though he is the arrested, accused and beaten defendant.



THE SUNDAY MORNING EXPERIENCE SECTION

Preparation

- Print out this lesson plan and bring it with you on the Sunday Mornings you are teaching
- Arrive at pre-arranged time to join other teachers, shepherds and staff for an opening prayer.
- Supplies Needed: glow germ and black light (buy from www.glogerm.com – the mini-kit should work just fine); a sink or basin with water; soap; paper towels, blank paper; pencils and crayons; apron or smock; printed out chart (at the end of this lesson plan); timer/stop watch; towels

Classroom Statement

This Science Class consists of reading the Matthew 27:11-26 story of Jesus' trial and then participating in a science experiment that highlights the concepts of accusations, evidence and decision-making. The experiment is a hand-washing experiment that encourages the students to guess what the outcome will be of each hand-washing exercise.

Step-by-Step Process of Lesson

Shepherd comes in with students

SHEPHERD ASKS "Question of the Day."

INTRODUCE yourself

Hi, my name is ____ and I want you call me (tell the students how they may address you).

PRAY Short and simple is perfect. For example:

God, thank you for this day and for each other. We need your help. Help us to learn about you this day. Amen.

TELL

- The story we're going to read today is often referred to as "Jesus' Trial."
- The story happens about 5 days after the story we just finished in the last session where Jesus went into the city of Jerusalem and cleared the merchants out of the Temple.
- Between that story and this story, Jesus was arrested.
- This story starts with the chief priests and Pharisees who are having Jesus tried by Pontius Pilate, who is the Roman governor of the area. Pilate has to determine whether Jesus is guilty.

- There are some words in the story that you may not know that we'll go over now.
- The word "accuse" means to say that a person did something wrong. Also, when someone accuses someone else, there's often a gesture of finger pointing that goes with the accusing.
- "Crucifixion" is a terribly painful form of punishment that kills a person. The person's wrists and ankles were often nailed (sometimes tied) to a wooden cross and then that cross was lifted up and the person's weight would compress their lungs and eventually make it impossible for them to breathe. People who were crucified died from not being able to breathe. The Romans used this form of punishment for thieves and people who tried to overthrow the Roman rulers.
- "Innocent" means that an accused person has done nothing wrong.
- Jesus was innocent. But let's listen for what happens to him...

READ Matthew 27:11-26

Now Jesus stood before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate; and Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus said, "That's what *you* keep saying." 12 But when Jesus was accused by the Israelite chief priests and Pharisees, he did not answer at all. 13 Then Pilate said to him, "Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?" 14 But Jesus still gave no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. 15 Now at the festival the governor was supposed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone whom the crowd wanted. 16 At that time they had an evil prisoner, called Barabbas. 17 So after they had gathered, Pilate said to the chief priests, Pharisees and crowd, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Messiah?" 18 Pilate said "Jesus who is called the Messiah" to annoy the chief priests and Pharisees because he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed Jesus over. 19 While Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, Jesus, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him." 20 While that was happening, the chief priests and the Pharisees persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. 21 The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." 22 Pilate said to them, "Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" And all of them said, "Let him be crucified!" 23 Then Pilate asked, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified!" 24 So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, and that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." 26 So he released Barabbas to them; and after having his soldiers whip Jesus, he handed Jesus over to be crucified.

ASK (answers in parentheses)

- Jesus was accused of claiming to be the King of the Jews – did Jesus answer these accusations? (No. Though, he did tell Pilate, "That's what *you* keep saying.")
- The story says that Pilate was amazed that Jesus wasn't defending himself from the accusations. When people are guilty they often make excuses or brag about how great they are. Pilate could see that Jesus wasn't guilty. But did Pilate let Jesus go? (No)
- How did Pilate try to free Jesus instead? (put him up with another prisoner to be released and made the crowd choose – they chose Barabbas)
- What did the crowd say should be done to Jesus (that he should be crucified)
- What does Pilate do when the crowd says to crucify Jesus? (He washes his hands and gives Jesus over to be crucified)

- Why do you think Pilate does this? (He's afraid of the crowd and gives them what they want)

TELL

- This is a very sad story.
- And there are a number of wrong things that happen in the story.
- Can you think of some wrong things that happen in it? (the accusations are false; Pilate thinks Jesus is innocent but lets the crowd determine what will happen; the crowd chooses Barabbas instead of Jesus even though just days earlier they were listening to Jesus in the temple; Pilate claims he's innocent of whatever happens to Jesus, but that's not true – Pilate IS responsible)
- We're going to look at two things that are wrong in the story for class today.
- The first thing that is wrong in the story is that the Pharisees make accusations that are not true. And they have no way to show that the accusations are true. They just keep saying the accusations are true.
- The second thing is that Pilate washes his hands with water and claims that he is innocent.

TRANSITION

- So for our first activity, we're going to make some scientific accusations about washing our hands.
- And then, we're going to test our scientific accusations to see if those accusations are correct or not.
- A scientific accusation is usually called a "hypothesis."
- Today, we're going to make some guesses about how much and how quickly we clean this gel off of our hands.
- The tricky part is that we can't see the gel. We have to use this little blacklight flashlight here to tell if we still have it on our hands or not.

EXPLAIN

- First, we're going to develop a chart that will help us score how clean our hands are.
- Everyone gets a piece of blank paper.
- Now divide that paper into four sections by drawing a line down the middle of it length-wise and width-wise.
- Once you've done that, in each section of the paper trace the outline of your hand
- Each hand will represent a TYPE of dirtiness: Completely dirty, Very dirty, Dirty, and Slightly dirty. Label in the top left corner of each section the completely dirty hand as +++, the very dirty hand as ++, the Dirty hand as + and use a minus sign (-) to represent "completely clean."
- Now take crayons or a pencil and mark/color in each hand according to how dirty you think "completely dirty," "Very dirty," "Dirty," and "Clean" looks like.
- Now that we're done with that, I'm passing out a chart that we'll use to judge how clean our fellow students hands are. (handout)
- We'll use the + and - signs to show what we think.
- Next, I need some volunteers (pick 3 or 4 students)
- What I'm going to do is put some "glow germ" on you.
- I'm going to cover your hand with it and we have to wait a minute for it to dry.
- Notice that you're hands don't look any different.

- But when I turn on this black light, they sure do look different, don't they!?
- So on our chart, under 0 seconds, mark ++++ (completely dirty) for all four students.
- Now I need one very decisive volunteer (pick another student)
- You are going to be the judge that determines how clean or dirty a hand is, ok?

DO Hand-washing Experiment

- Now, we're going to have one student wash their hands for five seconds, and with NO soap.
- How clean do you think the student's hand will be after 5 seconds? Put your finger on the picture of the hand that you think will be closest
- Ready, set...pick!
- Ok, let's have our student wash their hand for 5 seconds without soap. Ready, set, Go!
- Alright, stop! Let's get the black light and have our volunteer judge compare their chart and the washed hand, and determine that the hand is...._____!!!
- Alright, did the rest of you guess the right answer? If you did not guess correctly, then your scientific accusation was wrong! =)
- Let's have our second student wash for 5 seconds WITH soap.
 1. Again, put your finger on the chart that shows how clean or dirty the hand will be after washing.
 2. Wash for 5 seconds with soap. Ready, Set, GO!
 3. OK, stop! Let's get the black light and have our volunteer judge compare their chart and the washed hand, and determine that the hand is...._____!!!
- Let's have our 3rd student wash for 10 seconds WITHOUT soap (repeat steps 1-3)
- Let's have our 4th student wash for 10 seconds WITH soap (repeat steps 1-3)
- Let's have our 1st student wash for 15 seconds WITHOUT soap (repeat steps 1-3)
- Let's have our 2nd student wash for 15 seconds WITH soap (repeat steps 1-3)
- Let's have our 3rd student wash for 20 seconds WITHOUT soap (repeat steps 1-3)
- Let's have our 4th student wash for 20 seconds WITH soap (repeat steps 1-3)

ASK

- Alright. Well-done everyone! Have a seat!
- So which were cleaner: The hands washed without soap or the hands washed with soap?
- For those of us making scientific accusations, were you feeling frustrated with the judge sometimes?
- Why? (Because the judge was making judgments that went against my/your/their accusations)
- At some point did you tell the judge to change his/her mind?
- Judge, did you feel pressure to change your answer from time to time? Why?
- In the story, Pilate says that he's washing his hands of Jesus being killed. Did he wash his hands with or without soap? How long do you think he washed his hands for? Using your chart, point at how clean or dirty you think his hands were after washing his hands.

TELL

- Pilate was in a tough position. He knew what the right answer was, he knew Jesus was innocent, but he was feeling a lot of pressure from the chief priests, Pharisees and the crowd -- just like our judge was feeling some heat from y'all during class earlier today.
- Sometimes, in those situations, we might want to make the decision that is easiest on us by just giving in to the pressure.
- But if Jesus had done what Pilate did (give in to what was easier) then he wouldn't have allowed himself to be arrested. And then he wouldn't have been killed and then there would not have been the Resurrection.
- Instead of giving in to what was easier, Jesus gave in to God and God's direction.
- So even though we might want to make the easier choice, like Pilate did, remember what Jesus did – because that's the better way: Jesus seeks out God's will and is obedient to what he hears.

CLEAN UP

CHART to be passed out

Washer's Name	Washing Time in Seconds				
	0	5	10	15	20
#1.					
#2.					
#3.					
#4.					