

Children's Lessons for Life Groups

All-In-One lessons for kids ages 4-12

from

All-In-One Sunday School, Volumes 2 & 3

Lesson 17



Fruit of the Spirit: Peace

17

LESSON AIM

To help kids understand that ★ God wants us to be at peace.

OBJECTIVES

Kids will

- ✓ have fun getting all worked up and then learn to be at peace,
- ✓ hear how Martha got all worked up while Mary sat peacefully at Jesus' feet,
- ✓ learn the value of being at peace,
- ✓ make a craft that teaches them how to spend peaceful moments with Jesus, and
- ✓ have an opportunity to commit to spending time with Jesus each day.

YOU'LL NEED

- bubble gum*
- a CD player
- a CD of ocean surf or peaceful worship music
- photocopies of the "Tale of Two Sisters" story (p. 102)
- 2 scarves (optional)
- photocopies of the "Pocketful of Peace" handout (p. 106)
- an X-Acto knife
- scissors
- colored pencils

*Always check for allergies before serving snacks.

BIBLE BASIS

Luke 10:38-42

Jesus was evidently a frequent and welcome visitor at the Bethany home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Imagine the flurry of activity the Lord's visits must have caused, for he brought with him his disciples and any number of extraneous followers. All these folks needed to be

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fed and given beds at night. Hospitality was given without reservation—but not without a fair amount of wear and tear.

Martha stomped grim-faced through the house seeing to all the important things that occupy a competent hostess as Mary sat serenely at Jesus' feet, drinking in his teaching, reveling in his presence. Can you see Martha wiping a trickle of sweat, tucking back a stray hair, then letting out a deep sigh of frustration as she approached Jesus with her complaint about her unhelpful sister? How she must have cringed at Jesus' rebuke. And to be caught by a gospel writer who recorded her faux pas for generations of Christians to learn from! Aren't you glad it wasn't *you*? (And couldn't it well have been you, any number of times in your life?)

Who could blame Martha, after all? Wasn't she seeing to everyone's needs, serving as Christ taught us to serve? Yes, but Jesus very clearly placed the higher value on Mary's single-minded devotion to him. Jesus commended the peaceful sister and hushed the harried one. How many times have we let ourselves be consumed by the tyranny of the moment when we should have been sitting quietly at the feet of Jesus, basking in his peace?

Galatians 5:22-23

Peace. What a rare commodity in our society! Do you know anyone who truly exudes an air of serenity and peace? Isn't it wonderful to be in such a person's presence? To be calmed by the person's utter trust that God reigns over his universe? Lady Julian of Norwich, an exceptional Christian, penned this in the fourteenth century: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." That's peace that only the Holy Spirit can give. It's high on Paul's list. It's there for you. Are you resting in it?

UNDERSTANDING YOUR KIDS

Kids won't have the tiniest bit of trouble relating to Luke 10:38-42. They're intimately familiar with siblings' uncanny ability to annoy each other. A work mate recently confessed that when she and her twin were growing up, as they went to sleep they would let their arms hang into the area between their beds just to violate each other's space. My husband and I always have marveled at how sibling snippiness is magnified in the space crunch of camping in a small tent or pop-up trailer. I'll never forget my son's complaint about my daughter: "Mom, Christy's *breathing*." We gently reminded him that though the slight wheeze might not be pleasing to him, the intake and expulsion of air are necessary for the sustenance of life. We also suggested that he focus on the much louder cricket that was happily ensconced in his corner of the tent. (I wonder if Martha ever complained, "Mom, Mary's *breathing*.")

We need to challenge children to learn to be at peace with others as well as within themselves. Picture the intense sensory overload of a video arcade, a house in which the TV never goes off, a blasting boombox. Kids love it! Many kids can't be comfortable without some kind of noise. But all this distraction is the product of the last few decades. Kids need to learn what it's like to unplug, decompress, and, as they would put it, "chill." They have a wonderful opportunity during those rare quiet moments to hear the voice of God to which Mary was so attuned.

The Lesson

ATTENTION GRABBER

All Worked Up

Have kids sit around a table or in a circle.

Say: Today I'm going to give you a chance to see one another as you've never seen one another before. In fact, you may never see one another this way again! I'm going to show you how to get all worked up. We'll take it step by step, but first you have to learn two very important signals.

When I hold up my hands and shake them like this (hold your arms straight over your head and shake your hands as rapidly as you can), that's your signal to get all worked up. But when I clap three times and rest my hands like this (clap three times; then rest your hands across your chest), that's your signal to chill out. To chill out, just let your whole body turn to rubber and droop. Let's try that. Pause as kids relax. That's right—just let yourself turn to rubber. Very good.

Now to get all worked up, the first thing you'll need is bubble gum. Everyone gets two pieces. Toss handfuls of gum until each child has two pieces. Great. When I give the signal to get all worked up, start blowing as many bubbles as you can. Then shake your hands as I did and wave your arms back and forth at the same time. Pause for kids to try that; then give the chill-out signal. Good. Now do the arms and bubbles and blink as fast as you can. Pause as kids try this. Very good! Now there's just one more thing to add, and that's tiny little running steps with your feet. Stay in your chair and just pick up your feet and put them down as fast as you can. Pause as kids try that.

Say: One of the people in our Bible story today got seriously worked up, so I hope you'll put your best effort into this. I also hope you'll put your best effort into chilling out, because the other character in our story was calm and serene.

Okay—here's a test run.

Raise your arms, shake your hands, and ask:

◆ **What will you do when I do this?** (Get all worked up.)

Clap three times; then rest your hands across your chest and ask:

◆ **And what will you do when I do this?** (Chill out.)

Say: Excellent. Now move your chairs into two rows facing each other so you can have the benefit of seeing how wonderful the others look when they're all worked up. Now be on your toes, because I'm going to give separate signals to each group.

Alternate giving the get-all-worked-up and chill-out signals. Have

Teacher Tip

For a little extra fun, ask if kids think you can do all the actions at once. Make them promise to give you a standing ovation if you can pull it off. Then get all worked up and give them a chance to see you as they've never seen you before!



the two groups doing the opposite thing most of the time. Include one full minute when both groups are all worked up so kids really have a chance to get worn out and frazzled. Finish by having both groups chill out for a few seconds. Then turn on a CD of ocean surf or serene worship music, and give kids the following commands in a soothing voice:

◆ **Take a long, slow, deep breath...now slowly exhale.**

Repeat.

◆ **Let your head fall forward; then slowly and gently roll it toward your left shoulder...then your right shoulder.**

◆ **Take another deep breath...and slowly exhale.**

◆ **When your body feels heavy and fully relaxed, sit up and look at me.**

Ask:

◆ **Which did you prefer—being all worked up or chilling out? Explain.** Let several children state their preferences.

Then say: **You know, God made each of us different. Some of us like to go, go, go and not slow down for a minute. Others have a less high-energy personality and enjoy doing things that are calm and quiet. Most people probably like a little of both—quiet times and rowdy times. Turn to a partner and tell which kind of person you are—active, quiet, or a little of both.** Pause as kids share. Then ask:

◆ **How many go, go, go, high-energy people do we have?**

◆ **How many quiet people?**

◆ **How many who are a little of both?**

Tell kids what your personal style tends to be. Then ask:

◆ **Tell about a time you were all worked up, even though you didn't want to be, and you just couldn't seem to calm down.** Let several kids share their experiences.

Say: **Today we're going to learn that ★ God wants us to be at peace. Our Bible story is about a woman who was trapped in hyper mode. And because her sister was the quiet type, the hyper sister became really frustrated—so frustrated, in fact, that she tried to get Jesus on her side. Can you imagine having Jesus settle a squabble between you and your brother or sister? Let's find out what happened.**

BIBLE STUDY

A Tale of Two Sisters (Luke 10:38-42)

Make two photocopies of the "Tale of Two Sisters" story in advance.

Choose two girls in the class who are expressive readers and give them copies of the stories. After they've read the script aloud, lead everyone in a round of applause. Then say: **Martha is about to complain to Jesus about her sister. Can you believe it? Let's find her exact words in Luke 10:40.**

A Tale of Two Sisters

Martha: We're a fortunate family—I can tell you that. When Jesus comes to our little village, do you know where he stays? At our house! I live here in Bethany with my brother, Lazarus, and my sister, Mary. When Jesus comes to town, there's so much to be done. You realize, of course, that he brings his best friends with him. There are Peter, James, John, Matthew, and—well, you know—the rest of the Twelve. Do you have any idea how much those men eat? Of course, I am known as the best hostess in Bethany. I brush my grilled fish with just a bit of olive oil and sprinkle on just the right herbs. Mmm—mmm. None of that fishy taste, you know. And my roasted lamb? It just melts in your mouth. And my fig cakes? Well, just let it be said that there isn't a single neighbor who hasn't asked for the recipe.

Mary: We're so honored that Jesus comes to stay with us. Think of it—the Messiah we've waited for all these years chooses our house to rest in. When he's here, he fills the house with love. Every word that he speaks seems to go straight to my soul. I understand things that I never thought I could—and yet there are so many things I don't understand. I want to stay close and catch everything Jesus says. Missing a single word would be like dropping a jewel and letting it roll into the mud. I wish I could explain what a privilege it is to sit and listen to the Son of God. I wish I could share the experience with you.

Martha: You know, the longer we know Jesus, the more people he seems to bring with him. It's only natural—everyone wants to see him, touch him, be healed. But can you imagine what it's like to try to run a household in the midst of all that?

Fortunately, our friends and neighbors help. They bring in food, invite some of the disciples to stay at their homes—that kind of thing. I don't know what I'd do without them, because I certainly don't get much help from my sister, Mary. Why, when Jesus gets here, she just kind of goes into a daze. She sits dreamily at his feet, not noticing how much there is to do.

Mary: Jesus is here again! I'm so glad! I've had the strangest feeling lately that he's not going to be with us much longer. There's a sadness about him today, as if he's struggling with what's ahead. I don't understand why he would struggle—after all, he's the Son of God. He can do anything. But he knows that something is about to happen, something that will be difficult for him—I'm sure of it. I can just see the sadness in his eyes. I'm glad he's come to us. He can find some peace and quiet here among his closest friends. I'll stay right here close beside him. Who knows when we'll get to see him again?

Martha: Well! This is just the outside of enough! I have all these people to feed, including the Lord himself, and what does Mary do? She sits there. Sits! Can you believe it? I've worn myself to a frazzle. I've had to organize the food that's coming in from the neighbors. There are extra sleeping mats to be gathered and our best dishes to be put out for the meal. I started cleaning this morning as soon as it was light and barely had the house ready when Jesus arrived. Someone has to get fruit at the market, and I still have bread to bake. Do you think little Miss Mary might at least start the fire? No! She sits by Jesus as if she's the queen of the scene. I've had it. I'm going to say something.

Have a volunteer look up and read Martha's complaint. Ask:

◆ **How do you think Jesus will respond?** Let kids offer their opinions.

◆ **What do your parents do if you're angry with your brother or sister?** (Try to decide what's fair; tell us to work it out.)

Say: **Well, let's see what Jesus did about it. We can find his response in Luke 10:41-42. Who would like to read that?**

After a volunteer reads the passage aloud, ask:

◆ **Why do you think Jesus responded the way he did?** (Because he was disappointed in Martha; because he knew Mary was doing something more important.)

◆ **How do you think his words made Martha feel?** (She was probably really embarrassed; she might have cried.)

◆ **What was Martha doing wrong?** (She was too hyper about taking care of meals and things; she cared more about getting things ready than she did about what Jesus was saying.)

◆ **What was Mary doing right?** (She was spending time with Jesus; she was paying attention to what Jesus was saying.)

Say: **The problem was that Martha let herself get all worked up. All she could think about was everything that had to be done. That seemed more important than spending time with Jesus. Martha lost her sense of peace because of her busyness. She didn't take time to put Jesus first. Mary, on the other hand, treasured every second with her Lord. She sat peacefully at Jesus' feet, and that pleased Jesus more than all of Martha's work. ★ God wants us to be at peace and to put him first whether we're sitting quietly like Mary or serving actively like Martha.**

Teacher Tip

If you prefer, you may read the sisters' parts yourself. You might want to bring two scarves to drape around your head—one as a costume for Martha and the other as a costume for Mary. Simply change scarves and modify your voice a bit as you switch from sister to sister.



LIFE APPLICATION

Time Out With Jesus

Before class, make copies of the "Pocketful of Peace" handout. Use an X-Acto knife to open the slit at the top of the handouts. Ask:

◆ **What can we learn from "A Tale of Two Sisters"?** (That it's good to spend time with Jesus; that it's bad to be too busy for Jesus.)

◆ **What does this story teach us about serving others?** (It's just bad to let yourself get out of control. It's good to serve others, but with the right attitude.)

◆ **When do you tend to get too busy and hyper?** (When I've got soccer practice and a lot of homework; if I watch too much TV, then don't have time for everything else.)

◆ **How do you think we can be more like Mary and less like Martha?** (By spending more time reading Jesus' words; by not letting ourselves get too busy.)

Say: **Our lives are much busier and noisier than our great-grandparents' lives were. Because of fast food and cell**

phones and the Internet, we can cram much more into our days than people could 60 or 70 years ago. But God designed us with a need for quiet time with him. ★ God wants us to be at peace.

◆ **How would your life be different if you were totally unplugged, if you had no electronic devices whatsoever?** (Things would be a lot quieter; I'd probably be bored; I'd have more time because of not watching TV.)

◆ **We can't sit at Jesus' feet as Mary did, but how can we spend time with God?** (By going to church; by reading our Bibles.)

◆ **At the times you've felt God's presence, what kinds of things were you usually doing?** (Praying; looking at the clouds.)

Say: **The third fruit of the Spirit Paul mentions is peace. Mary was at peace; Martha was not. Ask:**

◆ **If Mary could come here today to tell us how to be at peace, what do you think she might say?** (Don't let things that aren't important take over your life; spend quiet time with God.)

Say: **Our craft this week is a cool little tool that can help us learn to be at peace the way Mary was.**

Distribute the "Pocketful of Peace" handout. Have kids cut out the pocket on the heavy lines and then fold it so the printing is on the inside. Demonstrate how to fold the right side to the center, the left side to the center, and the bottom flap up. Then fold the top flap down, and tuck the point into the slit in the top flap. Have kids write their names on their handout, and decorate the outside with colored pencils so it looks like a pocket.

COMMITMENT

Peace to You

Say: **Let's go through this pocket handout step by step and learn how to use it. First, scatter around the room so no one is sitting near you.** As kids do this, begin to play a CD of ocean surf or soft, peaceful worship music. Have older kids sit with younger ones to assist. Then say: **Now open the top and bottom flaps of your handout. Who would like to read what's written at the bottom?** After a volunteer has read the bottom flap aloud, say: **Open the left flap. This section tells us how to find peace with God.** Have a volunteer read that section aloud. **We'll stop for a few seconds for you to think about these words and pray.**

After a few seconds, have a volunteer read the middle section aloud. Pause again for reflection and prayer. Finally, have another volunteer read the last section aloud. Say: **If you were using this at home, you would turn to your Bible and read Jesus' words at this point. But today, I'll read to you. Please place your handout on the floor behind you, and listen to these words from Scripture. Close your eyes as you listen to me read. The**

first few verses I'll read are from the Old Testament.

"Be still in the presence of the Lord and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:7).

"Those who love your laws have great peace of heart and mind and do not stumble" (Psalm 119:165, TLB).

"You will keep in perfect peace all those who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!" (Isaiah 26:3).

Then say: **Now hear these words of Jesus.**

"I am leaving with you a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid" (John 14:27).

"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

And finally, hear the words of Paul, the apostle who taught us that the third fruit of the Spirit is peace.

"Let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful" (Colossians 3:15).

"Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and your minds as you live in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

"Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all" (2 Thessalonians 3:16).

CLOSING

A Peaceful Parting

Stop the CD, gather kids in a group, and ask:

● **Why does ★ God want us to be at peace?** (Because that's when God can speak to us; because it's good for us.)

Say: **Turn to a neighbor and tell how you will spend peaceful moments with Jesus this week.** Encourage kids to plan a quiet time when they get up in the morning, just before bed at night, or at another convenient time.

Say: **Let's finish our lesson in a peaceful way.** Ask:

◆ **What three fruits of the Spirit have we learned about so far?** (Love, joy, and peace.)

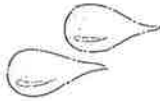
Say: **Let's ask God to bless our lives with those things as we close.** Pray: **Dear Lord, thank you for Mary's example. Please give us your peace, and help us find time to spend peaceful moments with you. We ask for your love and joy in our lives as well. Please help us open our hearts to you so your Holy Spirit can work in us. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Remind kids to take their "Pocketful of Peace" handouts with them.

A Pocketful of Peace

1. Peace With God

Quietly think back over the last few days. Have you done something you're sorry for? Ask Jesus to forgive that sin right now.



"Create in me a new, clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts and right desires. Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you" (Psalm 51:10, 12 TLB).

Believe that you are forgiven and at peace with God.

2. Peace With Yourself

Read aloud these words of Jesus:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and



learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Are there things that are worrying you?

Pretend to hold those things in your hands.

Pray and ask Jesus to take the worries from you.

Jesus knew how important it was for his followers to get away and spend time with him. After a busy day he told them, "Let's go off by ourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31).

This is your invitation to a quiet time with Jesus.

3. Peaceful Moments With Jesus

Find a Bible with Jesus' words



printed in red. Turn to the Gospels, the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Choose anyplace in those books to begin reading, and read Jesus' words by "reading the red." Read aloud; then pause to think about what you've read, as if Jesus were talking to you.

Pray and ask God to help you to understand Jesus' words and to live by them.