

30 Pieces of Silver

Goal

To help learners understand the depth of God's forgiveness during times of personal betrayal.

Gather

- ▶ Basket
- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Can, large
- ▶ Candle
- ▶ Cloth for prayer table
- ▶ Coins, 30 silver such as nickels, dimes, quarters
- ▶ Equipment to play recording
- ▶ Matches
- ▶ Money, paper play type
- ▶ Music or recording for "Lord Teach Us to Pray" by Joe Wise
- ▶ Pencils
- ▶ Pouch, cloth or leather
- ▶ Table

Advance Preparation

- ▶ Find or make play money and place it in a basket.
- ▶ Put thirty silver coins in the pouch.
- ▶ Arrange for adult supervision during the symbolic burning portion of the prayer service.

Guide

How many coins did Judas receive when he arranged to lead Jesus into the hands of his enemies? Judas collected thirty pieces of silver, about the price of a slave in those days, for this act of betrayal. Scripture records the story in:

- ▶ Matthew 26:14, 20-25, 47-56; 27:3-10
- ▶ Mark 14:10-11, 17-21, 43-50
- ▶ Luke 22:3-6, 14-23, 47-53
- ▶ John 13:21-30; 18:1-11

After Judas realized the severity of the situation, he tried to return the money to the high priest, who would not take it back. Overcome with guilt, Judas threw the thirty pieces of silver on the floor, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood."

Jesus died on the cross to offer forgiveness to all who believe in him. Instead of being overcome with guilt, Judas could have experienced God's abundant love—if he had only repented and asked for forgiveness. Judas, however, is not the only one who fails to ask for forgiveness. We all do! Use the prayer service in this lesson as an opportunity to remind the participants of the depth of God's forgiveness during times of personal betrayal.

Before beginning the prayer service, summarize the story of Jesus' betrayal. Be sure that the students understand the meaning of the word betrayal: to deceive. Also, be sure that the group realizes that examples of betrayal occur every day. Telling a secret betrays a confidence; throwing a game betrays a team.

Prepare the table for the prayer service. Cover the table with the cloth and place the candle, matches, Bible, pouch containing thirty silver coins, basket with paper money, large empty coffee can, and pencils on it. Gather the group in the worship space and encourage silence as the prayer begins.



Thirty Pieces of Silver Prayer Service

Opening Song

"Lord Teach Us to Pray" by Joe Wise

Opening Prayer

Leader: All merciful and loving God, we Your children come to You for forgiveness. We too, like Judas, betray Your love and kindness by not being true to the person of Your son and our brother, Jesus. Jesus is the true Redeemer of all sin. Help us to remember that our actions and words can bring about healing or they can bring about hurt. Guide us in our every move, so that all our living is done to bring about a Kingdom of love and not of betrayal.

All: We say Amen, because we believe.

First Reader: Matthew 26:14-16

Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I betray him to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

At the end of this reading open pouch and spill thirty coins onto the prayer table.

Pause for silence.

Second Reader: Matthew 26:20-25

When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me." And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, "Surely not I, Lord?" He answered, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born." Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" He replied, "You have said so."

Pause for silence.

Third Reader: Matthew 26:47-50

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him." At once he came up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you are here to do." Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.

Pause for silence

Prayer Response

Pass the basket holding the paper play money. Invite each participant to take one bill. Instruct the learners to reflect on a way they have betrayed Jesus and his love for them. Maybe it was a time where they were unkind to someone in school, or were mean to a sibling. For what do they need to be forgiven? Make sure to remind them that we are all human, and sometimes we do not act as lovingly as we should, but that God's forgiveness is always there, and there will always be more invitations to be generous, kind and loving to our families, friends, and even strangers!

Allow time for reflection. Distribute pencils and ask students to write their response on the back of the play money. Once the prayers are written, invite the listeners to approach the prayer table, one at a time, and to ignite the paper money to the candle and drop it into the coffee can to burn. This symbolic gesture will illustrate the need to let go of sin and to trust in God's forgiving love.

Conclusion

In conclusion, join hands and pray The Lord's Prayer.

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