Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Watch and pray. When something is hard, pray first, and put God's will before your own, like Jesus did.
Bible passage: Matthew 26:36–46. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." *Matthew 26:41 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, a clock or phone timer, paper and pencils, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: One-Minute Watch (5–10 minutes)

Everyone stands still, silent, eyes on one spot on the wall, for one minute. Anyone who moves, talks or looks away sits down. Time it. Then ask: *Was one minute easy or hard? What made it hard?* Say: "In today's story, Jesus asked three of His friends to watch with Him for one hour, and it was harder than they thought."

2. Bible story: Not As I Will (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Matthew 26. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Peter's promise. After the Passover supper, Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn and went out to the **mount of Olives** (Matthew 26:30). Jesus told them that night they would all be **offended** because of Him, which means they would stumble and run away (26:31). Peter said, "yet will I never be offended" (26:33). Jesus told him that before the rooster crowed, he would deny Him three times (26:34). Peter said, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (26:35).

The garden. Look up Matthew 26:36. They came to "a place called Gethsemane," a garden (John 18:1). Jesus told the disciples to sit there while He went to pray **yonder**, over there. He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John (Matthew 26:37; 4:21), and He began to be "sorrowful and very heavy" (26:37). **Look up Matthew 26:38.** "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: **tarry** ye here, and watch with me." Say: "Tarry means stay. Jesus knew what was coming. Two days before, He had said He would be betrayed to be **crucified**, put to death on a cross (26:2)."

The first prayer. Look up Matthew 26:39. Jesus went a little further, fell on His face, and prayed: "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Say: "The **cup** was His word for the suffering ahead of Him. **Nevertheless** means but still. Jesus told God how hard it was, and He still chose God's will."

Free to print & copy for church, classroom & home · Please don't resell or re-post

Asleep. Look up Matthew 26:40–41. He came back and found them asleep. He said to Peter, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Say: "Peter had promised to die for Jesus, but he couldn't stay awake for an hour. Inside he wanted to do right, but his body was weak. That is why we need to pray."

Three times. Look up Matthew 26:42. Jesus prayed a second time: "if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." He came back and found them asleep again, "for their eyes were heavy" (26:43). He went away and prayed the third time, "saying the same words" (26:44).

Rise. Look up Matthew 26:45–46. Jesus said, "behold, the hour is at hand," which means the time has come. "Rise, let us be going." Jesus had prayed, and He went to do God's will, all the way to the cross.

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Jesus told His friends how sad He was (Matthew 26:38). Is it all right to tell God when we feel sad or afraid?
2. Jesus prayed, "not as I will, but as thou wilt" (26:39). What does it mean to want God's will more than your own?
3. Peter promised big things (26:35), then fell asleep (26:40). Why is it easier to promise than to do?
4. Jesus said praying helps us not "enter into temptation" (26:41). When could praying first help you this week?
5. Jesus prayed three times (26:44). Why is it good to keep praying about something?

Recall questions

1. Where did Jesus go to pray? *(A place called Gethsemane, Matthew 26:36)*
2. How long did Jesus ask them to watch? *(One hour, 26:40)*
3. Why did the disciples keep falling asleep? *(Their eyes were heavy, 26:43)*

Free to print & copy for church, classroom & home · Please don't resell or re-post

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the old words: **watch** means stay awake and alert; **temptation** means being pulled toward doing wrong; **the spirit indeed is willing** means inside you really do want to do right; **the flesh is weak** means your body and your own strength give out. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jesus prayed, 'thy will be done,' and then He went to the cross for us. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.
This week: when you are tempted to do wrong, stop and pray first. Pick one time every day to pray, even when you are tired.

Free to print & copy for church, classroom & home · Please don't resell or re-post

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Matthew 26:30: Where did they go after they sang a hymn? *(The mount of Olives)*
2. Matthew 26:36: What was the place called? *(Gethsemane)*
3. Matthew 26:37: Who went farther with Jesus? *(Peter and the two sons of Zebedee)*
4. Matthew 26:38: What did Jesus ask them to do? *(Tarry there and watch with Him)*
5. Matthew 26:39: How did Jesus pray? *(He fell on His face and prayed)*
6. Matthew 26:40: How long did Jesus ask them to watch? *(One hour)*
7. Matthew 26:43: Why did they fall asleep again? *(Their eyes were heavy)*
8. Matthew 26:44: How many times did Jesus go away and pray? *(Three times; the third time He said the same words)*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that Jesus prayed, 'thy will be done,' and went to the cross for us. Help us watch and pray, tell You when we are sad, and choose Your will over our own. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a child asks why Jesus prayed: Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, fully God and fully man (1 Timothy 3:16). As a man, He prayed, and He showed us how to pray when things are hard.
What comes next: while Jesus was still speaking, Judas came with a great multitude, and they took Jesus (Matthew 26:47–50). This lesson stops at verse 46. If kids ask, tell them simply that Jesus was taken and went to the cross for us, and that He rose again.

Free to print & copy for church, classroom & home · Please don't resell or re-post