Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Prays in Gethsemane

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Watch and pray. Jesus prayed when it was hard, and we can pray too.
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, 6 small objects (a crayon, a cup, a book and so on), 5 paper strips, a marker, tape, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the 5 paper strips (see part 4). Put a bookmark in your Bible at Matthew 26:36.

1. Opening game: Watch Closely! (5 minutes)

Put the 6 objects on a table where everyone can see them. Say, "Watch!" Kids look hard for ten seconds. Then say, "Eyes closed!" While their eyes are closed, take one object away or move it. Say, "Watch!" again. Who can tell what changed? Play a few rounds. Ask: *Was it easy to keep watching? What happened when your eyes were closed?* Say: "Today we will hear a true story about a night when Jesus asked His friends to watch, and their eyes closed."

2. Bible story: Watch and Pray (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Matthew 26, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Tell it in your own words:

It was night (Matthew 26:31). Jesus and His disciples had sung a hymn, a song to God, and they went out to the **mount of Olives**, a hill near Jerusalem (26:30). They came to a place called **Gethsemane** (26:36). It was a garden (John 18:1). Jesus said to His disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder" (Matthew 26:36). Say: "**Yonder** means over there."

Jesus took three disciples a little further with Him: **Peter** and the two sons of **Zebedee** (26:37). Their names were James and John (4:21). Jesus began to be very sad. He told them, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me" (26:38). Say: "**Sorrowful** means very sad. **Tarry** means stay. **Watch** means stay awake and keep watch."

Jesus knew He was going to suffer and die on the cross for our sins (26:2). He went a little further, **fell on his face**, and prayed (26:39). He called the hard suffering ahead of Him a **cup**. He prayed, "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Say: "That means: not what I want, but what You want. Jesus wanted God's will most of all."

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The story continues: Jesus came back to His three friends. They were **asleep** (26:40)! He said to Peter, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" (26:40). Then He said, "**Watch and pray**, that ye enter not into temptation" (26:41). Say: "**Temptation** is when something pulls you to do wrong. Praying helps us stay strong."

Jesus went away and prayed a second time: "thy will be done" (26:42). Say: "That means: let it be the way You want." He came back, and they were asleep again, "for their eyes were heavy" (26:43). Say: "They were so tired their eyes kept closing." Jesus went away again and prayed a **third time**, saying the same words (26:44).

Then Jesus came to them and said, "Rise, let us be going" (26:46). Say: "Jesus was ready. He had prayed, and He was ready to do what God wanted, even though it was very hard. He was going to the cross for us."

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. What was the name of the place where Jesus prayed? *(Gethsemane, Matthew 26:36)*
2. Which three disciples went farther with Jesus? *(Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, 26:37; 4:21)*
3. What did Jesus ask them to do? *(Watch with Him, 26:38)*
4. What were the disciples doing when Jesus came back? *(Sleeping, 26:40, 26:43)*
5. How many times did Jesus go away and pray? *(Three times, 26:39, 26:42, 26:44)*

4. Memory verse: Five Strips game (5 minutes)

Tape the 5 strips up in order: *Watch and pray, / that ye enter not / into temptation: / the spirit indeed is willing, / but the flesh is weak. Matthew 26:41.* Explain the old words: **watch** means stay awake and keep watch; **temptation** means something that pulls you to do wrong; **the spirit indeed is willing** means inside, you really want to do right; **the flesh is weak** means your body gets tired and weak. Read the verse together. Then take down one strip and read it again. Keep taking down one strip each time until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Jesus prayed, and then He went to the cross for us. God loves you very much. But everyone has done wrong things. The Bible calls that sin: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: '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 we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."
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: pray every day, even when you are tired. When something pulls you to do wrong, stop and pray first.

6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **Garden of Gethsemane word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/garden-of-gethsemane-word-search), crossword, maze or worksheet, the craft (vbshq.com/crafts/garden-of-gethsemane-craft), or **Watch and Pray Circle:** sit in a circle. Each child names one thing to pray about: a sick grandma, a hard test, a friend. Then pray together, one short prayer for each. Say: "We watched and prayed, just like Jesus asked!"

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that Jesus prayed in the garden and did Your will, even when it was very hard. Help us watch and pray, and help us say no to wrong things. 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.
What comes next: right after this, Judas came with a crowd and they took Jesus away (Matthew 26:47–50). This lesson stops at verse 46. Tell kids simply: "Soon after that, Jesus was taken, and He went to the cross for us."

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