Preschool–Grade 6

Peter Denies Jesus

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Stand up for Jesus when it costs you something. When you fail, don't run from Him: be truly sorry, turn back, and help others stand.
Bible passage: Luke 22:54–62. Students read Luke 22:31–34 and 22:54–62 out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." *Luke 22:32 (KJV)* and "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." *1 John 1:9 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Luke 22:31–62, Luke 24:34, John 21:15–17 and Acts 2:14. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses.

1. Opening game: Pressure Line (5–10 minutes)

Name one wall "no pressure" and the opposite wall "huge pressure." Read each situation, and students line up between the walls to show how much pressure they'd feel to hide that they follow Jesus. 1) A teacher asks the class who goes to church. 2) Friends are making fun of "church kids" in a group chat. 3) A new friend you really want to impress asks what you did Sunday. 4) An older student says, "You're not one of those Jesus people, are you?" Ask: *What makes the pressure go up?* Say: "Peter was the one who said he'd die for Jesus. Let's see what happened by a fire."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Luke 22:31–34. Old words in this passage:

- **sift you as wheat** (22:31): shake you hard, the way grain is shaken to separate it
- **that thy faith fail not** (22:32): that your faith won't give out; **converted**: turned back
- **strengthen thy brethren** (22:32): make your brothers in the Lord strong
- **thrice deny** (22:34): three times say you don't know Me

Then read: Luke 22:54–62. Students take turns, a verse or two each. Old words:

- **followed afar off** (22:54): followed at a distance; **kindled** (22:55): lit
- **maid** (22:56): a young woman; **beheld... earnestly looked upon him**: saw him and stared at him
- **Thou art also of them** (22:58): you're one of them too
- **confidently affirmed** (22:59): said firmly; **Of a truth**: truly; **a Galilaean**: a man from Galilee, like Jesus
- **while he yet spake** (22:60): while he was still speaking; **the cock crew**: the rooster crowed
- **wept bitterly** (22:62): cried hard, full of grief

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Look closer. Point out these details with the class:

- **Jesus prayed first.** Before Peter failed, Jesus said, "I have prayed for thee," and "*when* thou art converted," not "if" (Luke 22:32). He spoke of Peter turning back before Peter ever fell.
- **The slide.** Peter's promise was big (22:33). Then he "followed afar off" (22:54), sat down among the crowd at the fire (22:55), and his answers went from "I know him not" to "I am not" to "I know not what thou sayest" (22:57–60).
- **The look.** "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord" (22:61). Luke doesn't describe the look, so we don't add to it. Peter remembered God's word, and it broke his heart (22:62).
- **The way back.** "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (Luke 24:34). Jesus asked Peter three times, "lovest thou me?" and told him, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15–17). Weeks later Peter stood up and preached (Acts 2:14).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Peter was sincere in Luke 22:33. Why isn't sincerity enough to keep us from failing? What did Peter need?
2. "Followed afar off" (22:54) came before the denials. What are some ways people today follow Jesus from a distance?
3. Peter sat down "among them" (22:55). How do the people we sit with change what we're willing to say about Jesus?
4. Jesus prayed for Peter's faith before Peter fell (22:32). How does that change the way you think about your own failures?
5. Peter "wept bitterly" (22:62). What's the difference between feeling bad and truly repenting? (Read 1 John 1:9.)
6. Jesus told Peter, "strengthen thy brethren" (22:32). How could a person who has failed and come back help someone else?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **thee** and **thy** mean you and your; **converted** means turned back; **strengthen thy brethren** means make your brothers and sisters in the Lord strong. In 1 John 1:9, **confess** means to admit our sins to God, **faithful and just** means He always keeps His word and does right, and **unrighteousness** means everything that is wrong.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Luke 22:32 this week; keep working on 1 John 1:9 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Peter failed, but he turned back, and on the day of Pentecost he was the one who stood up and preached (Acts 2:14). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter himself preached it: '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) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-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 utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where am I most tempted to hide that I follow Jesus?
2. Is there something I need to confess to God and make right? (1 John 1:9)
3. Write a short prayer asking for courage to stand up for Jesus, and for a way to strengthen someone else.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: read Luke 22:31–62 and John 21:15–17 at home. Find one chance to say plainly that you follow Jesus. Encourage one Christian friend who is having a hard time.

7. Prayer

"Dear Jesus, thank You that You pray for us and love us even when we fail. Give us courage to stand up for You among anyone. When we fall, help us confess it, turn back to You, and strengthen others. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: Luke doesn't describe Jesus' look (22:61), so don't call it angry or sad. The mocking and striking of Jesus (22:63–65) is left out on purpose. Matthew, Mark and John also tell Peter's denial; this lesson stays with Luke's account.

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