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An 8 Week Series on
Letting Jesus Remodel Your Life

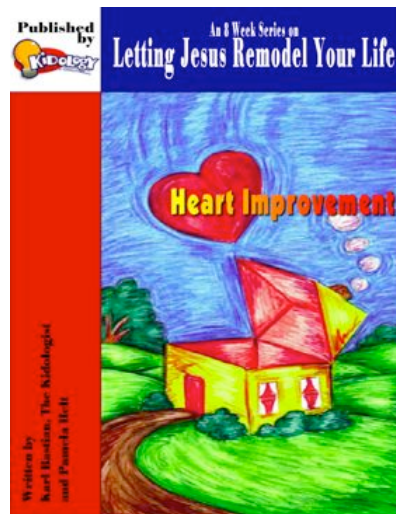
Heart Improvement

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Heart Improvement: Letting Jesus Remodel Your Life

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Introduction

This 8-lesson unit introduces children to the idea that Christianity is not just for Sunday. Jesus needs to be part of every area of a Christian's life.

Room Decoration

It is suggested that the room be decorated with a construction theme. Decorate the room with fabric swatches, blueprints and/or floor plans, decorating ideas torn from magazines, paint chips, wallpaper samples, tools, yellow "construction zone" tape, etc. Leaders can wear hard hats and tool belts.

Name That Messy Room

Throughout this unit, you will be making surprise visits to kids' homes and videotaping their rooms to show on the last day of the unit. They are not allowed to put anything away when you show up. Their rooms will be videotaped in exactly the condition they are in when you arrive. In addition to fitting with the "house" theme of this series of lessons, there are 2 purposes in this activity: 1) You are able to get into their homes and 2) You are teaching them that they need to always be ready for Jesus to return. We don't know when that will happen. When He comes back, it will be too late to clean up our lives, just as it will be too late to clean up their rooms when you arrive to videotape.

More Details:

1. Send a note home explaining what you are doing and why.
2. Don't surprise moms! Assure them that you will let them know when you are coming, but encourage them NOT to tell their kids. Getting caught with a messy room just reinforces the lesson. Tell them that you will not videotape any other part of the house and the video will only be shown during the lesson, so no other moms will see their kid's messy rooms.
3. You can either visit while the kids are there or while they are at school.
4. Make your video short but funny. Do commentary—even in a messy room. Point out some cool stuff about the room, make animals talk, fly an airplane around following it with the camera, show yourself in the mirror, etc. Avoid pictures of the kid or his name until the end of the video clip. Make each video no longer than 30 seconds.
5. If you have the capacity to edit, separate brothers and sisters rooms or as soon as they guess one, they will know that the next room is the brother or sister's room. Another way to deal with this is to only do one sibling's room at each visit.

BONUS IDEA FOR SMALLER GROUPS who use crafts during children's church:

Have the kids each bring a shoebox the first week, and over the weeks make a diorama of their bedrooms. This can be really cool! Make the rooms complete with bed, furniture, toys, posters on the wall, etc. Offer a prize for the most realistic looking room. (like laundry on floor!) They take it home on the last week. Make sure they don't 'rush it' but really work to make it look good.

Put a verse on the lid, such as:

*I will lie down and sleep in peace,
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.
Psalm 4:8*

Sample Schedule

This sample schedule is a guide for all lessons in this unit. The elements that are consistent in each lesson will appear here. An idea of how long each segment should take is also listed. Depending on your group and what kinds of discussions take place as the lesson unfolds, the time may actually be shorter or longer than what is planned.

Preparation for each lesson includes the following:

- deciding which songs will be sung and what other elements will be included in the welcome time
- gathering materials for the “This Old Heart” episode
- gathering props to be used while telling the Bible Story
- gathering materials for the memory verse segment

Welcome and singing (10-15 minutes)

This is the time to welcome the kids to the group, make announcements, and sing some songs together.

Lesson Introduction (5-10 minutes)

This Old Heart (10 minutes)

“This Old Heart” is a TV home improvement show. Each week, the host of the show, Bobby Casa and his/her assistant, Taylor Carpenter (the stars can be either men or women), introduce the kids to a tool and relate the use of that tool to “heart improvement.” The kids make up the studio audience. Bobby Casa and Taylor Carpenter should wear hard hats, tool belts, and anything else that fits with the theme. They should each have a pair of protective goggles that will be worn during the actual use of the tool each week. The show can be introduced with theme music that you choose. The same music can be played to signal the end of the episode. While it is playing at the end, Bobby and Taylor can wave and thank everyone for coming. You can also have someone (preferably an adult helper) holding an “applause” sign to cue the audience.

Before the first week, make a large floor plan of a heart-shaped building to be displayed throughout the entire 8 weeks. The building should have 6 rooms in it. Make one room at the top of the heart and save it for to be the Attic (Lesson 6). Do not label the rooms. This will be done as the unit progresses.

A script for each episode of “This Old Heart” is included with the lessons.

Bible Story (10-15 minutes)

The Bible stories in this unit focus on Paul’s life and teachings. For each lesson, pack the suggested props in a toolbox. The props will be pulled out at the appropriate part of the lesson. A retelling of the Bible story is included in the lesson plans. The items that are to be shown are printed in ***(bold, italic print)***. Don’t discuss the props as you pull them out; just use them as visual aids. Place them on a table in front of you. After you have told the story, you can review the story by showing the props as you put them away and ask the kids to tell you what each one was for.

Heart Improvement (5-10 minutes)

This is the application part of the lesson. The point of the lesson has already been presented to them in “This Old Heart” and in the Bible Story. Now it’s time to show them how this truth should change their lives.

Memory Verse (5-10 minutes)

After teaching the verse, write it in the appropriate room of the large heart floor plan that is also used in This Old Heart.

Each lesson contains a page with the memory verse printed on it. You may copy this verse to use on an overhead projector and/or as a take-home paper.

Closing (5-10 minutes)

Provide kids with any take-home papers and make final announcements. Lead the children in a worshipful song and a time of prayer. This can be as simple as one person closing in prayer or a time to take requests for prayer. It can also be a time for public decisions for Christ to be made.

Skits

Most of the lessons include a skit. These skits may appear as either the Lesson Introduction or the Heart Improvement segment of the lesson. Each skit can be presented in a variety of ways:

- ❑ As an “instant skit” in which characters are chosen right before the performance. The actors are handed a copy of the script. Each script has a different actor’s lines highlighted on it. The actors are given a quick rundown and then they perform it for the group.
- ❑ As a puppet show.
- ❑ As a prepared skit. A drama team of kids can practice the skit and have it prepared to present during the lesson.
- ❑ As a videotaped skit. If this option is chosen, characters can either be a group of kids who have met at another time to videotape the skit or a group of well-known adults in the church.

Site Preparation



Welcome and Singing

Lesson Introduction

Perform the skit, “Knock Knock.” The “Knock Knock” jokes included in the script were written for a specific group of children. You can either use these or you can insert your own jokes.

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus was talking to people who said that they loved Him, but they weren’t acting like it. This made Jesus very sad. He wants people to invite Him into every part of their lives.

Think of a famous person you like. What would you do if you found out that person would be coming to your house? What if it were a surprise? What if Jesus came to your house? What if He looked under your bed? Behind your desk? In your hamper? In your closet? What if He looked in your heart? What would He find? Only you and God can see what’s in your heart. You can pretend to be all kinds of things, but the real you is hidden in your heart.

This Old Heart

The tool for this week’s episode is a tape measure.

Bible Story

Tell the story of Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:1-19).

Paul, who was called Saul at the time, thought that he was serving God by persecuting Christians. He did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. He went to the Jewish high priest and asked for letters (*a handful of envelopes*) giving him permission to arrest Christians he could find in Damascus (*handcuffs*). When he got to Damascus, he would show the letters to the synagogue leaders so they would know what he was doing there.

While he was on his way to Damascus, a bright light (*flashlight or strobe light*) from heaven suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard Jesus saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” When Saul asked who was talking to him, Jesus answered, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” There were men who were traveling with Saul. They could hear a sound, but they couldn’t see what might be making that noise.

When Saul got up, he couldn’t see anything (*blindfold*). The men who were with him had to lead him into the city of Damascus. He was blind for 3 days and he didn’t eat or drink anything.

In Damascus, God appeared in a vision to a Christian named Ananias. God told Ananias that there was a man named Saul in Damascus. Ananias was supposed to go talk to Saul. Ananias was afraid because he knew about the bad things Saul had done. God assured Ananias that Saul had an important job to do and that Ananias should not be afraid.

Ananias obeyed. He went to Saul and told him that he had been sent by Jesus whom Saul had seen on the road. Ananias touched Saul and something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes and he could see again. Saul got up, was baptized (*jar of water*), and had something to eat (*food*).

Heart Improvement

Choose kids to look up and read the following verses:

Read John 14:1-6—Jesus is preparing a place for us in heaven. He tells us how to get there.

Read Ephesians 3:16-17—Paul prayed that Christians would let Jesus live in their hearts.

Read Mark 12:30—God wants us to love Him with everything we have.

The first thing you need to do is to give your life to Jesus. Then He'll help you change it.

Memory Verse

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30

Print the verse on a heart-shaped piece of paper. Cut the paper into jigsaw puzzle pieces. Hand the pieces of the heart to kids from the audience. They will come up and put the puzzle together. Have the whole audience say the verse together.

Closing

Announce the “Name that Messy Room” activity (more information about this activity is found in the introduction chapter of this book). Tell the kids that over the next 2 months, you will be dropping in to videotape their bedrooms. You probably won't be able to do everyone's room, but you will be visiting some of them. The kids won't know when you will be coming, so they need to be ready at all times. On the last day of this unit, the videos will be shown for everyone to see. Remind the kids that this is like Jesus' return. We don't know when He'll come back, but we need to be ready all the time.

**Love the Lord your
God with all your
heart and with all
your soul and with all
your mind and with
all your strength.**

Mark 12:30

(NIV)

“Knock Knock”

CHARACTERS:

Sam
Friend 1
Friend 2
Friend 3
Jesus
Narrator

PROPS:

A door
A poster with the words of Rev. 3:20 printed on it.
Beach ball

Narrator: Sam was standing in his house one day feeling a little bit lonely. He was feeling sorry for himself because it was raining outside and none of his toys looked like fun today. He was bored, but was tossing a beach ball around by himself. He was interrupted by a knock at the door.

Friend 1: Knock knock

Sam: Who’s there?

Friend 1: Dylan

Sam: Dylan who?

Friend 1: Dylan Chuckie are my favorite Rugrats.

(Sam opens the door and lets Friend 1 come in. They start tossing the ball back and forth, but then are interrupted by another knock).

Friend 2: Knock knock.

Sam and Friend 1: Who’s there?

Friend 2: Emily

Sam and Friend 1: Emily who?

Friend 2: Emily-vin if you don’t answer this door!

(Sam opens the door and lets Friend 2 come in. They play keep-away with the ball, but are interrupted by another knock).

Friend 3: Knock knock.

Sam and Friends: Who’s there?

Friend 3: Jessica

Sam and Friends: Jessica who?

Friend 3: Jessi-cause I’m your friend, I came over.

(Sam lets Friend 3 come in. They all play with the ball, but are interrupted by another knock).

(While Jesus is knocking at the door, he is affixing a poster to his side of the door).

Jesus: Knock, knock.

Sam and Friends: Who’s there?

Jesus: Jesus.

(Sam shrugs and continues to play with his friends).

Jesus: Knock, knock.

Sam and Friends: Who’s there?

Jesus: Jesus.

(Sam shakes his head and continues to play).

Jesus: Knock, knock.

Sam and Friends (sounding irritated): Who’s there?

Jesus: Jesus.

(Sam completely ignores Him. After playing for a while, Sam stops).

Sam: Y’know, I should probably go see what’s going on.

(Sam opens the door and sees the poster. He reads it. He walks away slowly with a sad look on his face).

Sam (to friends): I should have let Him come in.

This Old Heart

Taylor: Hello, everybody and welcome to—THIS OLD HEART! Please join me in welcoming our host, Bobby Casa! (*Applauds*).

Bobby: Thank you, Taylor! Everybody, please help me thank my able assistant, Taylor Carpenter! (*Applauds*). Welcome, everybody! We're glad that you have joined us today. Today's tool is very important to a carpenter. It is a tape measure. There is a phrase in construction that says, "Measure twice. Cut once." We must make sure before we cut anything that it is measured correctly. If we don't we will waste a lot of building materials.

Taylor: Let's measure some stuff!

(Taylor and Bobby measure tables, walls, etc. They measure about 5 things).

Taylor: I have an idea! Let's measure an audience member!

Bobby: OK. (*Chooses an audience member and measures him*).

Taylor: Now, I'll measure you (*Measures*). Bobby, our audience member is not as tall as you.

Bobby: That's OK. There's a chance that someday, he will be as tall as me. He might even end up being taller than me. This kid still has a lot of growing to do. But, no matter how much he grows he will never measure up to God.

Taylor: How tall is God?

Bobby: That's not how we measure God. We can't use our tape measure for that. What we're talking about now is that God is perfect. No matter how hard we try, we cannot be as good as He is. Romans 3:23 says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10 says, "As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one.'"

Taylor: That's bad news. I've heard that unless we are perfect like God, we cannot go to heaven.

Bobby: You are right, Taylor. God cannot stand sin, so there's no way he could let it into heaven with him. There is Good News, too, though. God sent His Son, Jesus, to the world. When Jesus grew up, He died on the cross. When He did that, He took care of all of our sins. Our hearts are pretty messed up, but Jesus likes to change hearts. When people let Jesus into their hearts, He wipes out all of the sin. Then, He stays around and helps them keep their hearts clean. Now, when God looks at our hearts, He sees Jesus there (*Show heart-shaped floor plan*). Right now, this heart is all clean and empty. In the next few episodes, we will be filling up this heart with good things. That's what Jesus wants to do for us.

Taylor: I just thought of something, Bobby. Jesus' dad was a carpenter, right? And boys usually learned their dad's jobs, so Jesus was probably a carpenter, too, right?

Bobby: Right.

Taylor: Well, that's just perfect! Since we're carpenters, too, we know how great it is to change things and make them better. I bet Jesus loves doing that in our hearts, too.

Bobby: I think so, too.