

Break the Chains: The Power of Choice

A Lesson on Human Trafficking for Mixed Elementary Ages

by Susan Martins Miller

ATTENTION-GETTER

Supplies:

Index cards

Marker

Ahead of time, prepare a set of index cards with instructions on them. Make enough so that each child can have a card. Write on the cards simple instructions such as:

- Walk across the room looking only at the floor.
- Say, "I am nothing" three times out loud.
- Walk across the room on your knees.
- Rub someone else's feet.
- Say, "You are the boss of me" out loud five times.
- Say, "I'll do anything you tell me to do."
- Rub someone else's neck.
- Tell three people, "I am your slave."
- Kiss the hands of three people.

If you have a large group, you can repeat some instructions. You may also use your own ideas that will work in your physical setting.

When kids gather, have each one draw a card. Take a minute to have kids read the cards. Make sure younger children understand what their cards tell them to do. Emphasize that children *must* do what is written on their cards. They have no choice. Then go around the circle and have kids perform their actions. If you have a large group, you may want to form several smaller circles for this activity with an adult or teen helper in each circle.

If you have older kids ... Tease kids by asking if they'd like to trade cards with someone else or draw a new one. If anyone says yes, say, "Sorry, you can't. You have to do what the card says." The point is to drive home the lack of choice.

After the activity, talk about these questions.

- **How did you feel about having no choice in what you had to do?**

- **Did what you had to do make you feel good about yourself?** (Children who gave neck rubs or foot rubs may see the action as being generous. If so, press the point of having no choice. What if they had gotten one of the other cards.)

Introduce the theme for the day. Say something like, **We don't have slaves in our homes. Most of us will never meet someone who is a slave. But there are places in the world where people lives as slaves. They have no choice about what they do. They are trapped in situations they have no power to change. The Bible story today is going help us understand how God wants us to respond to situations like that.**

BIBLE STORY

Based on 2 Kings 4:1-7

LESSON POINT: God wants his people to choose to stand up and show his way.

Supplies:

- Jar of water tinted to look like oil (or you may use real oil)
- Bathroom size paper cups
- Bible

Ahead of time, hide the bathroom cups around the room. Vary the difficulty of the hiding places so that younger kids will find some and older kids will feel challenged.

Show your Bible open to 2 Kings 4.

Elisha was a prophet, a man of God. His job was to tell and show the people what God was really like. One day he met a woman who was having some serious trouble. The woman had a choice. She could:

- a) lock herself in her house
- b) leave town on the next camel train
- c) ask Elisha for help

Pause and ask kids what the best choice is. Then continue.

This woman chose to ask Elisha for help. Now Elisha had a choice. He could:

- a) say he was busy and send the woman away
- b) listen and find out what the woman's problem was
- c) cover his ears and sing "la-la-la" while she talked

Pause and ask kids what the best choice is. Then continue.

Elisha chose to listen to the woman's problem. After all, his job was to show people what God was like, and God cares about our problems.

The woman said to him, "My husband loved the Lord, but now he's dead. He owed money to someone. The man wants me to pay the money, and I don't have any money. Now that man wants to take my two sons away to be his slaves."

This was a big problem. Elisha couldn't give the woman any money to pay the debt. And in those days, slavery was not against the law. Elisha had another choice. He could:

- a) brainstorm ideas to help the woman
- b) tell her he would pray for her and go home
- c) tell her to go talk to another prophet

Pause and ask kids what the best choice is. Then continue.

Elisha chose to help. After all, his job was to show people what God is like, and God wants to help. Elisha asked the woman, "How can I help you? What do you have in your house that we could use?"

The woman said, "I don't have anything. All I have is a little bit of olive oil."
Show the children the jar of tinted water or oil.

"That's what we'll use," Elisha told the woman. "We'll need some jars. Go around to all your neighbors. Ask them for their empty jars. Then go inside your house and close the door and fill the jars with oil."

Maybe the neighbors wouldn't want to give the woman their jars. Maybe the woman didn't get along with her neighbors. Maybe nobody had any empty jars. Maybe the woman thought this was a crazy idea. She had a choice. She could:

- a) ask Elisha for another idea
- b) go ask her neighbors for jars
- c) go home and think about it for a while

Pause and ask kids what the best choice is. Then continue.

The woman chose to ask her neighbors for jars, just like Elisha said. Let's pretend we're the woman and her two sons. We have to find some empty jars! I've hidden some cups around the room. Let's see how many of them we can find.

Give the children a few minutes to look for the cups you hid ahead of time. Make sure that each child finds at least one cup, even if it means asking some children who already have found cups to stop looking.

Arrange all the empty cups together in front of you. Continue with the story.

Now Elijah told the woman to fill all the jars. He said, "As each jar is filled, put it over to one side." Remember, the woman only had a small bit of oil. How was she going to fill all these jars with oil? It was impossible! She had a choice. She could:

- a) start filling jars and see what happened
- b) tell Elisha he was crazy and give the jars back
- c) tell her sons to go out and play

Pause and ask kids what the best choice is. Fill the cups with your jar of tinted water as you continue to tell the story. As you fill each cup, set it to one side. This is something you might ask the children to help with.

The woman chose to start filling jars. I have a whole jar of oil here. The woman in the story had only a little bit of oil. But she kept filling jars. Her little bit of oil kept coming and coming and coming.

When all the jars were full, the woman asked her son for one more jar.

The son said, "There aren't any more left." And at that moment, the oil stopped flowing.

The jars were full of oil, and this was something that the woman could sell to get some money. With the money, she could pay the money she owed and save her sons. Elisha told her, "Go and sell the oil. Pay the money your husband owed. Then use the rest to take care of your family."

God made oil overflow for this woman. The woman knew it wasn't fair for the men to take her sons and make them slaves. Elisha knew that God did not want him to stand by and do nothing. They both made the choice to look for God's answer to a tough situation.

***If You Have Older Kids ...** Hide the cups in harder places around the room. During the story, let them pour the tinted water into cups. Ask them to guess ahead of time how many cups they can fill with the water, and then see how close they come to being*

right. Because the passage is short, you might also ask a good reader to read the story straight from the Bible either before or after you tell the story as written.

After the story, talk about:

- Why did the woman choose to ask Elisha for help? (*She couldn't solve her problem herself. She didn't want to stand by and see her sons taken into slavery.*)
- Why did Elisha choose to help the woman? (*As a man of God, he wanted to respond the way God would respond. He wanted to show what God is like.*)
- What did God do to show the woman what he is like? (*He used ordinary items and ordinary people to do something that was impossible.*)

PRAYER LITANY

Introduce the prayer time by saying something like this: **In the part of the world where we live, we don't hear about slavery very much. But it is happening. In some parts of the world, children still become slaves to pay their families' debts. Children and adults are stolen from their homes and forced into a life they do not choose. God still wants to use his people to set the slaves free, just like he did with Elisha and the woman who came to him with her problem.**

Explain that your prayer time will be responsive. You will say a line, and the children will answer with the same response each time. Practice this response: **Lord, help us choose your way.** Then lead the children in this responsive prayer.

When we see unfair situations,
Lord, help us choose your way.
When we have the chance to give help,
Lord, help us choose your way.
When we are tempted to turn our eyes away,
Lord, help us choose your way.
When we think we can't do anything to help,
Lord, help us choose your way.
When we think the situation is impossible,
Lord, help us choose your way.
Amen.

REMINDER CRAFT

Supplies:

Paper plates

Marker

Aluminum foil

Break the Chains: The Power of Choice

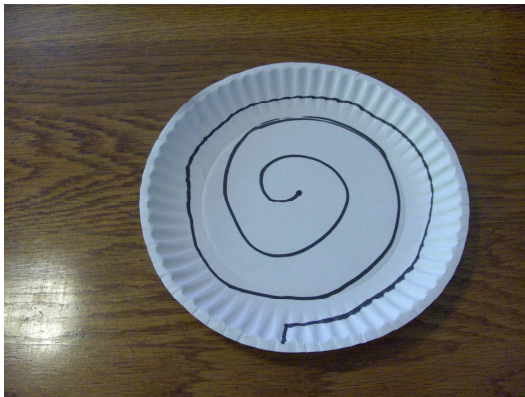
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Page 5

Scissors (for children)
String or fish line
Copies of Bible Verse Reproducible
Tape

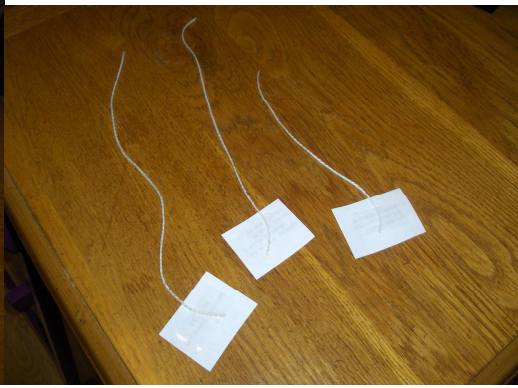
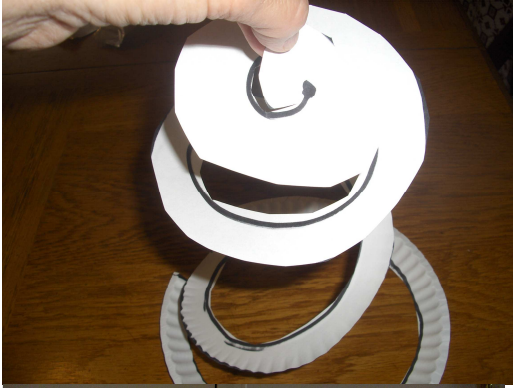
Ahead of time:

1. Make enough copies of the reproducible for each child to have one strip of verse parts.
2. Use the marker to draw a line one inch in from the outer edge of each plate. Then draw a spiral shape that leads to the middle of the plate. Try to have the width of the spiral be about one to one and a half inches. Prepare one plate for each child. Children will cut the spiral. *See illustrations.*
3. Cut aluminum foil into strips about four inches wide. Each child will need four or five.



Explain: **Chains are a symbol of slavery. Some slaves are really held in chains so they cannot get away. Our craft today will be a broken chain that reminds us that God can break the chains, and we can be a part of God's work.** Read the verse that appears on the reproducible. "Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people" (Isaiah 58:6).

Instructions: Have children cut on the black spiral lines on the paper plates. Then wrap the aluminum foil strips around the paper spiral. Encourage children to flatten and crimp the foil as smooth as they can. Cut apart the pieces of the verse and tape a piece of string to each piece. Attach the other end of each piece to the foil-covered spiral in the fashion of a mobile.



BIBLE VERSE REPRODUCIBLE

Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you.	Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people.	Isaiah 58:6 <i>(New Living Translation)</i>
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