

Depart From Evil and Do Good

(Focuses on peer pressure)

Part 1

Goal for the Lesson

God often uses very simple words to give us direction for our lives. Even a little child can know and keep God's commandments. We might be wiser to say to our children, "God says" instead of "I say" or the "church says." Our children need to know that it is God Whom they are obeying or disobeying in their daily actions. If we teach them early to love and obey God, when they mature and are away from home, or ready to establish their own homes, they will have a habit and a relationship with God which we, as parents, earnestly hope and pray will continue to be their motivation for life.

"*Depart from evil and do good*" is such a simple command, and if we would just obey this one command, and our children would do likewise, what different lives we would have. How many consequences of sin we would avoid. How pleased God would be with His obedient children! How pleased we would be, as parents and teachers, if our children would depart from evil and do good. Let us take some time to make this command and many of its ramifications an integral part of our and our children's lives.

Scripture for the Lesson

"*Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*" —Psalm 34:14

"*Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.*" —Psalm 37:27

These Scriptures are so plain and simple that we can hardly excuse ourselves from understanding what they mean.

Definitions

Ask the children what they think the words mean in these verses, and then explain the correct definitions.

<i>Depart</i>	-to go away from, to leave
<i>Do</i>	-to perform an act, to accomplish something
<i>Good</i>	-morally excellent, righteous, virtuous, pious, satisfactory in quality or quantity
<i>Seek</i>	-search for
<i>Pursue</i>	-chase after
<i>Peace</i>	-safety, rest, prosperity, morally excellent, righteous, virtuous, pious, satisfactory in quality or quantity
<i>Evil</i>	-morally wrong, harmful, injurious, wicked

Ask the Children

Ask the children questions to prod them to think about how the verses can apply to them.

- (1) What are some evil things children may be tempted to do?
- (2) What kind of companions are evil companions?
- (3) What are some good things children can do?
- (4) What kind of companions are good companions?
- (5) Seek and pursue are "action" words. How would a child seek peace and pursue peace?
- (6) Do is also an "action" word. What should a child be busy doing?

Skit 1

A small group of boys are playing marbles in the dirt, and a couple of the boys start telling dirty jokes. Joe knows this is wrong; he doesn't laugh, but he keeps playing.

Ask the Children

- (1) Do you think the two boys who have started telling dirty jokes are doing something evil?
- (2) Do you think it was enough for Joe to just not laugh at the improper talk?
- (3) Should Joe have departed from evil?
- (4) Why do you think Joe did not depart?
- (5) Do you think he wanted to play marbles that badly?
- (6) Do you think he was afraid that his friends might have laughed at him?
- (7) Do you think "fear of what the boys will think" is a good reason not to depart from evil?

Teacher Notes (explanation of skit)

Sometimes children deliberately disobey, and at other times, they might want to do what is right. Sometimes, they are fearful of their friends, and do not always know exactly what to say or how to handle the situation. Sometimes, they just give in to temptation. Joe is torn between doing right, which is departing from the marble game, or staying in spite of the evil.

Personal Application Questions

- (1) Have you ever been with someone when they began to do something that was not good?
- (2) Did you handle it like Joe and just keep quiet?
- (3) Why?
- (4) How could you have handled it differently?
- (5) Do you ever experience peer pressure?
- (6) What types of things do your peers want to pressure you to do?
- (7) How can you handle peer pressure?

Sharing Thoughts With Children

Joe knows right from wrong. Joe, at the first hint of unclean language, should have collected his marbles, stood up, and said, "See ya later." He knows he should leave this group of boys immediately, but he does not leave. The reason most likely is that he wants them to like him, and he is afraid that if he leaves because of their behavior, they won't like him. He may even be afraid that they will make fun of him. Call him names such as "Mr. Goodie." This is called peer pressure. His peers, just by their behavior, are pressuring him to do wrong. However, God's command is "Depart from evil." It does not matter if Joe is afraid, he should depart from evil. Leave the group. Get up and walk away. If that is impossible for some reason, then he should speak up, do good, and tell them to stop the evil.

Departing From Evil

When you find yourself in the midst of a situation that you know there is something not right going on or about to go on, immediately stop, think, and pray. God will lead you how to get out of it, or how to depart from the evil.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it," —1 Corinthians 10:13. We never have to give in to peer pressure, we never have to sin; we can depart!

We need to remember that we belong to the King of kings and Lord of lords, and we need not be afraid to do right. It does not hurt for people to call us names or poke fun at us. Instead, we will know that we pleased God, took a stand for right, and kept God's command to depart from evil.

Skit 2

Susie is with her friends when one of them plays some music that she knows her parents would disapprove of, and would not want her to listen to. She doesn't quite know what to do, so she does nothing.

Ask the Children

- (1) Does Susie know that the music is wrong?
- (2) Why do you think she keeps silent?
- (3) By keeping silent, is she disobeying her parents?
- (4) So, Susie is making a choice, isn't she?
- (5) What could Susie have said to her friends?
- (6) What if her friends just laughed at her and kept playing the music? Then what should Susie have done?

Teacher Notes (explanation of skit)

Susie knows that she should not listen to the music, but she does not quite know what to do. The problem is that Susie *knows* what her parents would want her to do, and instead, for some reason, she keeps silent and does nothing.

Personal Application Questions

- (1) Do your friends ever play music when you are with them that you know your parents would disapprove of?
- (2) If you listen to your friends' music, and you know your parents would disapprove, are you making the decision to obey your friends rather than your parents?
- (3) Are there two commandments broken here? Can you name them?
- (4) Why do you think that young people so often bow to peer pressure rather than "depart from evil"?
- (5) Is there ever a reason NOT to depart from evil?

Sharing Thoughts With Children

There is no excuse to stay in the presence of "evil." If possible, Susie should have hurried home. If not possible, she should have spoken up and said, "Please can we not listen to that kind of music? I've promised my parents I wouldn't listen to that stuff, and I really want to keep my promise." If the girls persist, Susie can walk far behind the group. There is always a way to depart from evil.

Departing From Evil

This lesson deals with a decision between good and evil brought on by peer pressure. The desire to be accepted by others can bring us temptation in many forms. We are often afraid that people will think that we are too strict, too old-fashioned, too good; that people will laugh at us, or not want to be friends with us. This is putting fear of man before fear of God, and as long as we fear man first, we will have a difficult time departing from evil. Proverbs 16:6 tells us "*By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.*" Everyone, adults and children, need to fear the Lord first, and then we will not fear people. And, when we fear God first, we will strive to obey Him in all things and one of those things is "departing from evil."

Review the verses and give the children a challenge to "depart from evil!"