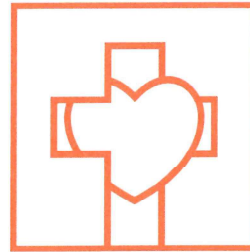


Question 1

What is our only hope in life and death?



Answer

That we are not our own
but belong to God.

Big Idea

Certain hope is found only in relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Aim

To help your children understand that children of God belong to him and should long to live for him.

Bible Passage

Romans 14:7–12

Memory Verse

“For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.” (Rom. 14:7–8)

Virtue
Forgiveness





Notes

Leader's Notes

Children may not be inclined to regularly consider the purpose of their existence, but they will daily encounter messages that seek to teach them about the meaning of life. The media, school, friends, and family are all seeking to shape and focus children for the future. Some will say that the purpose of life is to be successful and earn lots of money; others will teach that the purpose of life is simply to be happy; and still others may insist that the point of life is to make a positive impact on the world. Children's hearts are often nurtured to place their hope either in themselves or in created things, rather than in the Creator. This lesson aims to help the children understand that they were made by God and for God. The lesson will show them that they should put their hope in God as they come to him through the forgiveness won for them by the Lord Jesus Christ and that he alone is trustworthy in life and death.

Things to remember when planning and teaching:

- Children are familiar with the concept of hope, but in a limited way. They may hope for snow tomorrow or a great present at their next birthday. Their understanding of the concept of eternal hope will need to be developed.
- There is of course nothing wrong with enjoying the good gifts that God has provided in life, like money or enjoying the feeling of happiness. The difficulty arises when these good things become god things.
- The ability to hope in God comes only to those who know his forgiveness through the saving work of Jesus.
- Remember to mix and match the activities in the lesson to fit your time frame (see p. 12 for some sample outlines). You won't have time to do them all. Feel free to adapt each activity based on your class's strengths and weaknesses.

Leader's Prayer

Loving God, please give me joy in the knowledge that you are my hope in life and death. Please make me aware of the areas in my own life where I am tempted to substitute hope in created things for hope in you, the generous Creator God.

Please help the children who will hear this lesson to understand clearly how wonderful it is to know forgiveness through the Lord Jesus, so that they may place their hope in you, both now and forever. In Jesus's name. Amen



Leader's Tool Kit

- Two large pieces of paper
- Markers
- Copies of Q1 Illustrations (RB)
- Each word of the memory verse printed on its own card; two sets of cards

Notes

5 Catechism Introduction

This is an opportunity to explain to the children what a catechism is. Explain that a catechism is simply a way to learn more about what the Bible says on many different things. The way it works is by learning questions and answers. Encourage the children by telling them that this is a biblical, fun, and exciting way to grow in

the Christian faith. Explain to them that at different times in history, God has used this way of learning about him and his Word to grow, strengthen, and equip his church in different countries around the world.

Pass around copies of *The New City Catechism for Kids* for the children to see.

5 Introduction to Question 1

Ask the children if they can figure out which stories these sentences refer to:

? **The prince's only hope was to find the owner of the glass slipper.**

| *Cinderella*

? **The rabbit's only hope was that Mr. McGregor would not find him in the watering can.**

| *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Beatrix Potter)

? **The children's only hope was Aslan.**

| *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* (C. S. Lewis)

Then ask the children what they think the phrase "their only hope was" means. They will recognize that each character was in a situation that required some help to escape from it. Highlight for the children that hope often involves trusting somebody or something. Ask the children about the kinds of things they hope for their future.

Introduce Question 1: "What is our only hope in life and death?" Explain to the children that in life people hope for many things, but in actual fact the Bible teaches that there is only one certain hope in life and in death, and that is that we are not our own but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ.

**Activity**

Lay out two large pieces of paper. On the top of one of the papers write “My Family” and on the other write “God’s Family.”

Ask the children to identify and list the things that are great about belonging to their particular family. They will perhaps mention the love of their parents, the home that they live in, or the fun vacations they enjoy. Write down their answers. Ask the children what would happen if another child were adopted into their family. Would he benefit from all these great things as well because he would now belong to their family?

Then ask them to identify and list the great things about being part of God’s family. Be



prepared to offer some prompts, such as, “Think about why Jesus died on the cross,” or “What do we look forward to after death?” Write down their answers.

Explain to the children that everybody is born into a human family (it may be worth acknowledging that some of these families are less than ideal), but not everybody is born into God’s family. God brings people into his family and makes them his children through adoption! Teach the children that adoption into God’s family allows people to have certain hope and that adoption happens after people have realized that they are sinful and turn to Jesus to say they are sorry and ask for his forgiveness.

**Teaching Outline**

Begin the teaching time by asking for God’s help. Ask that the lesson would be taught faithfully and that the children might listen well.

Introduce the children to Romans 14. Explain to them that this letter is written by Paul and that in this chapter he is trying to sort out some disagreements among people in the church in Rome.

Tell the children that this was a family squabble! The people who were arguing were all people who had found forgiveness in Jesus and had been adopted into God’s family; they just couldn’t agree on how they should live. Paul explains to them that in

some situations, people in God’s family will do things differently, but that the important thing is that they seek to do things to bring praise and glory to God.

Read Romans 14:7–12. Provide Bibles for the children to read along with you.

Ask the children what they think verse 8 means. What does it mean to belong to the Lord? Is it a good thing or a bad thing?

Help the children to recognize that most people believe that their lives are their own. However, those who have found forgiveness in Jesus and have been adopted into God’s family recognize that they have been



rescued from God's anger and punishment. The Bible says that those who do not believe in Jesus are slaves to sin. In order for slaves to be freed, a price must be paid for their release. Jesus paid the ultimate price for sinners by sacrificing his own life and paying the price for sin on the cross. The Bible says that those who are adopted into God's family have been bought at a great price, and now their lives belong to God. Tell the children that being God's child is the most wonderful way to live life—the most joyful, freeing, and fulfilling. Paul is helping the Romans understand that their lives are not their own. Everything that they are and have belongs to God.

Ask the children if they think it's easy to live for God. Ask them what might stop them from living for God. Ask them to consider how remembering what Jesus did on the cross might motivate them to live for God. (Be prepared to prompt them in their answers.)

Help the children consider how to live with God as Lord of their lives. Help them see how sometimes they may prefer to be Lord. Offer some examples from their everyday experiences where they might

struggle to submit to the lordship of God. Ask them when they're tempted to put themselves first.

Explain to the children that Paul helps the Christians in Rome to focus on their own lives and not to worry about how others are living. Show the children verse 12. Explain that one day, everybody will answer to God for how they've lived their lives. Help them to understand that, because of the price Jesus paid on the cross, those who've been adopted into God's family should long to live fully for him.

Conclude by reminding the children that being adopted into God's family means that we get all the great things that come with being part of the family. We trust God in life and death, knowing that he is with us and that he alone is where our hope is found.

Finish the teaching time by helping the children commit Question 1 and the answer to memory.

(These notes are just for guidance. Please expand or amend them to suit your own children and context. Write out your talk in your own words, and include illustrations and applications that you know will connect with your children.)

Notes



Activity

Around your classroom, post pictures of various things that represent the children's lives. Cut out and use Q1 Illustrations (RB). Feel free to add your own pictures.

- Television
- iPad/Computer
- School
- Sports



- Music
- Friends
- Money
- Shopping
- Family

Arrange the children in pairs and send a pair to each picture. Ask them to discuss how

belonging to God affects how they should use or interact with the various components of their lives. When all the pairs have visited all the pictures, ask them to sit back down and discuss with the group whether they think that belonging to God makes a difference in their day-to-day lives.

5 Discussion and Question Time

Some questions that might arise include:

? Does this just mean that we move from being slaves to sin to being God's slave?

Explain to the children that they are made for relationship with God, which is where perfect freedom is found.

So while the world might think that Christianity is all about rules and regulations, the truth is that being part of God's family is how best to enjoy life in all its fullness.

? What if I just can't live for God all the time?

Explain to the children that in this life, it will be a struggle to live for God, but

that God will help them through his Spirit. They can prayerfully ask for help.

Also use this opportunity to help the children to think about their own lives and how this catechism question and answer affects them personally.

- How will they respond to the messages the world communicates about the meaning of life?
- How will they seek always to have their hope in God?
- How might they explain what their hope is to someone at school?

10 Virtue Vision



Forgiveness

Remind the children of the earlier conversation about the benefits of being in a family. When God adopted us into his family, we received forgiveness through Jesus. We belong to God and enjoy all the

privileges of being in his family. While it may be easy to *accept* forgiveness, it can be hard to *give* forgiveness. But once we become a part of God's family, we should want to imitate our Father. God showed sinners great mercy when he sent Jesus to die



on the cross. God's children must be quick to forgive because we have been forgiven.

Share this short testimony with the children:

Corrie ten Boom was imprisoned for helping Jewish people during the Holocaust escape from the people who wanted to kill them. Many years later, after she was released, she was at a church service when she saw a man who had been her prison guard. Corrie had spoken all about the forgiveness that God offers through Jesus. The man came up to her after she spoke and told

her that he had found forgiveness in Jesus and had been adopted into God's family. He wanted to shake Corrie's hand, but Corrie remembered all of the horrible things that had happened to her and others in prison. She just couldn't bring herself to shake his hand. But then she remembered who she was: a child of God who had been forgiven. As one who belonged to God, she was to live for him. So she prayed and asked God to give her the strength to forgive this former guard and rejoice that he was part of God's family too. God answered Corrie's prayer.

Notes

Memory Activity

Print each word of the memory verse onto its own card; you will need two sets of cards. If you choose not to do a memory verse, this activity can be used to help the children memorize the catechism question and answer.

- Divide the children into two teams.
- Read the memory verse out to the children.
- Read the memory verse, inviting the children to repeat each word after you.
- Read the memory verse again and invite the children to join in saying it with you.
- Hand out a full set of memory verse cards to each team; make sure the cards are not in order! Ask the children to put the words in the correct order. Points can be given to the team that first arranges the cards correctly.
- Practice the memory verse one final time.

Closing Prayer Time

Conclude the lesson by inviting the children to say short prayers asking God to help them to live for him and to allow him to be the Lord of their lives.

