

Session 1—Red Cedar Evergreen

Standing Tall

in

Holiness

Scripture Text: Daniel 1

Bible Verse: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, But his delight is in the law of the LORD and in his law doth he meditate day and night, And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1-3).

Aim: To encourage children to be separate from the world.

POWER Line: I choose to be holy.

Theme Development

Andy the Arborist

Andy the Arborist specializes in trees—their characteristics, health and safety issues, and relevance to the biblical lesson. He is dressed in a plaid shirt, jeans, suspenders, work boots, and hardhat. Toting a chainsaw, minus the chain, Andy makes

an appearance after the introductory worship segment, firing up his chainsaw. He gives a mini-lesson about the tree of the day as an attention getter. After a brief sketch he revs up the chainsaw and transitions into Bible Memorization.

Enlist a young man to play the part of Andy, giving him the necessary facts about each tree and practicing before class to keep a smooth flow between him and the teacher. The sketch does not have to be memorized, but make sure all the main points are covered, ad-libbing as necessary.

Room Décor

Decorate with a backdrop of trees. Download pictures from the Internet of the featured trees, copy onto transparency paper, and then using an overhead projector transfer the image onto Kraft paper or posterboard, as large as possible. Enlist artistic teens to draw a forest on butcher paper that you can stretch out behind the stage. If possible, borrow a few large ficus trees or other silk trees from church décor to add dimension to the scene.

If you have time for crafts in your CPR session, let children make rubbings of leaves or bark from trees. Decorate t-shirts by painting one side of leaves with acrylic paints. Use the leaves as stamps to imprint designs on the t-shirts.

Supplies

- Small chainsaw with chain removed
- Polyfil and/or white tinsel, garland or icicles, masking tape

- Lyrics to "I Shall Not be Moved" and "He's a Peach of a Savior"
- Picture of a red cedar evergreen

Preparation:

- Practice the attention getter sketch with Andy the Arborist.
- Review the motions to the songs with helpers.
- If using Polyfil, stick circles of masking tape to the back of the material.

Schedule

I. *POWER* of Worship

A. Welcome/Worship

- Scripture Reading: Psalm 1:1-3; Isaiah 55:12
- Song: "I Shall Not Be Moved"
- Song: "He's a Peach of a Savior"

B. Skit: Andy the Arborist—Red Cedar Evergreen

II. *POWER* of the Word

A. Bible Memorization

B. Illustrated Sermon

- Standing Tall in a Tight Spot

C. Invitation and Prayer

***POWER* of Worship**

Welcome/Worship

Ask an older student to open your prayer revival by reading Psalm 1:1-3. Then turn to Isaiah 55:12 and read it.

Psalm 1 says that Christians are like trees planted by the water, and Isaiah 55 says that the trees of the field shall clap their hands. So, let's get our branches (our arms) up in the air, clap our hands, and worship Jesus.

Lead students in singing the old hymn, "I'll Shall Not Be Moved." Encourage children to wave their arms and clap their hands over their heads, but keep their feet firmly in one spot.

Another "tree" song with motions is "He's a Peach of a Savior," sung to the tune of "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

He's a peach of a Savior; I'm the apple of His eye.

He always trims my branches when my branches get too high.

He picks my fruit in season, gives me water when I'm dry.

And that's why I'm bananas for the Lord!

Chorus:

Glory, glory, wave your branches. Glory, glory, wave your branches.

Glory, glory, wave your branches, because we're bananas for the Lord!

Attention Getter

Andy the Arborist arrives in the classroom revving up his chainsaw (minus the chain) and gives a little background on the tree of the day—the evergreen red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*). Red cedar trees are hearty and can withstand cold temperatures, snow, and adverse conditions. Even if they are planted in a crowded location they can

still grow to full height. The bark of a red cedar is rot resistant and can be used for fence posts and aromatic wood to line chests and closets.

Teacher: *(startled, as Andy enters with roaring chain saw)* **Oh, my! Who are you?**

Andy: *(shouting above the noise)*: **What? Can't hear you! Let me shut this thing off.**

Teacher: **Goodness! You startled me, bursting in here with all that noise! Who are you and what are you doing at Children's Prayer Revival?**

Andy: **My name is Andy the Arborist and I'm here because . . .**

Teacher: *(interrupting)* **Andy the . . . what did you say? Arsonist!**

Andy: **No! No! No, ma'am! I said ar-bor-ist. I don't set forest fires! I'm more like a doctor to keep trees healthy and safe.**

Teacher: **Well, then, in that case I'm glad to meet you, Andy. But, what are you doing here? There aren't any trees in this room.**

Andy: **Are you sure about that? I think you may have some red cedar evergreens somewhere in this group of children.**

Teacher: **These children? Evergreen trees? Why would you think that?**

Andy: **Beggin' your pardon, ma'am, do you know anything about red cedars?**

Teacher: **Well . . . uh. . . they are green, and they stay that way all through the winter.**

Andy: **Exactly! They are some of the hardiest trees around. Can handle some of the coldest temperatures, snow and ice on their branches . . .**

Teacher: *(interrupting)* **But, Andy, there isn't any snow in here! And we have a heating system to keep us warm if we need it.**

Andy: **Well, that's not the kind of icy weather I'm talking about, Sister . . . what is your name?**

Teacher: **Sister (name).**

Andy: **Right. Now, Sister (name), these young people certainly may face some icy stares from their friends at school, or even a few cold shoulders when they talk about Jesus. And, did you know that even if red cedars are planted in a tight spot they can still grow to full height? Doesn't that sound like some of your students?**

Teacher: **Yes! Like when they have to make a choice between being popular or being holy.**

Andy: **Hey, you're catching on! Are you sure you aren't an arborist on the side?**

Teacher: **Me? An arborist? Uh, no. But I am beginning to understand your meaning. What else can you tell us about these red cedar young peo . . . I mean, trees?**

Andy: **Well, because they can resist rot, red cedars make great fence posts, to help keep the good things in and the bad things out!**

Teacher: *(claps hands)* **Splendid! Like young people who can resist sin.**

Andy: **Exactly! And, some of the most aromatic, good-smelling wood is red cedar. Ever heard of a cedar chest? That's red cedar! Smells good and helps preserve treasures you want to keep.**

Teacher: **Wow! I guess we do have some evergreens here. Some of these kids keep the faith when people all around them are doing things they shouldn't. And guess what?**

Andy: **What?**

Teacher: **Today we are going to learn about some young men in the Bible who were red cedar evergreens and stood tall in some pretty tough conditions. Want to stick around and listen?**

Andy: *(firing up chainsaw)* **Thanks, but I can't stay. I have to check on some sick trees for a friend. Might need a little trimmin'! Bye!**

***POWER* of the Word**

Bible Memorization

Introduce one verse of the memory passage at each session. Post the words on the white board in front of students. Ask children to read the first verse aloud with you a few times to become familiar with the words.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor seateth in the seat of the scornful."

Next, have the students stand up and put motions to the verse as follows:

"Blessed is the man"—wave hands in the air, wiggling fingers to indicate happiness;

"That walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly"—walk in place while shaking head no;

"Nor standeth in the way of sinners"—stand with one hand on hip and the other straight

out like a traffic cop would to halt traffic; *"Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful"*—

students take a seat and stick noses in the air to indicate scorn.

Repeat the verse using the motions three or four times, then ask if anyone would like to say the verse without looking at the board, using only the motions to guide him.

Give several students an opportunity to quote the verse before moving to the Bible story.

What does it mean to “walk in the counsel of the ungodly”? (listen to ungodly people's advice; value their opinion) **Give me an example.**

What does it mean to “stand in the way of sinners”? (imitate sinful people, approve of their lifestyle) **Give me an example.**

What does it mean to “sit in the seat of the scornful”? (have fellowship with people who are critical of goodness, be critical of others who are) **Give me an example.**

Illustrated Sermon

Standing Tall in a Tight Spot

How many have heard of the Bible character Hananiah? Let students respond. **No? Well, maybe you have heard of Mishael?** Response. **Hmmm, are you sure you don't know them? Well, surely you know Azariah!** At this point one or more students may catch on and shout out the names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. If not, continue using the Jewish names until you wish to reveal exactly who you are speaking about. It will enhance the suspense of the story.

These three buddies, along with another friend named Daniel, were taken into custody when King Nebuchadnezzar captured the city of Jerusalem. The young men were brought into the king's house because they were good-looking, smart, and quick learners. King Nebuchadnezzar wanted them to learn the

Chaldean language and culture. Have any of you ever studied a foreign language or culture? Give time for students to respond.

There are many cultures in our world and they usually have unique language, food, holidays, rituals, religion, and values. What do you know about Spanish culture? Asian culture? American culture? Those are all types of ethnic cultures. But what about Hollywood, worldly music, or sports? Could they be considered cultures? Discuss.

Do Christians have certain traits in their culture? Ask for examples. Do Christians have a certain language, food, holidays, rituals, or values? How are these characteristics different than the culture of the world?

Christians don't have racial boundaries, because God loves everyone and anyone can be born again. But, can Christians mix in with the cultures of Hollywood or worldly music or sports? Let students discuss. What problems might occur if a Christian mixes with the cultures of the world?

This was the problem facing Daniel and his three Jewish friends. They were captives in a culture very different from their own, and the king wanted them to take part in it. The king took the four young men, along with many other Jewish captives, and placed them in the care of Melzar, a supervisor. They were to eat the king's meat and drink the king's wine for three years while they studied the Chaldean culture. Then at the end of three years everyone would be brought before King Nebuchadnezzar to reveal their learning.

Daniel and his friends made a pact that they would not eat the meat or drink the wine of the king. Do you know why? Let students respond. King Nebuchadnezzar's people worshiped many gods and one of their acts of worship was to offer their food to idols before they ate it. The Jews had special dietary laws and they did not insult God by eating meat that was offered to idols. Daniel and his friends asked to be excused from the menu and to be given water to drink and vegetables to eat. After some discussion with Melzar the supervisor, they were allowed to test their plan for ten days.

Ask for four volunteers to be Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. If your class is small, use one person as Daniel. Students stand in front of the class, positioning their arms as tree branches. Quietly tell them that as you add Polyfil or icicles to their arms they should pretend to be weighted down.

Here we have red cedar evergreen young captive(s). The first day at mealtime, platters of the king's meat and goblets of wine were brought to the tables. Then a special platter was delivered to Daniel's table, where he was sitting with his three friends. Whispers and finger pointing began. Some of the crowd stared icily at the group. Why were they not eating what everyone else was? Place some Polyfil on the outstretched arms and shoulders so that the tape keeps the material in place. The room seemed a little chilly, but everyone turned back to their food and began to eat.

At the next meal when Daniel and his friends were again brought vegetables instead of meat, cold stares met their eyes. "Who do they think they

are? Somebody special? Too good to eat the king's meat?" Drop more Polyfil on the outstretched arms. It wasn't a pleasant feeling to be scorned, but Daniel knew he and his friends were making the right choice.

Each day at meal times they felt the icy disapproval of their fellow captives. Drop more Polyfil. Day two, three, four, five . . . it was like a weight, bearing down on the branches of these red cedar evergreens. Still, they continued to keep themselves from the unholy menu as the supervisor watched and waited to see how they would compare to the others in ten days.

While passing through the halls, some of the other guys would turn a cold shoulder as Daniel and his friends approached. Conversations froze as they walked by and others may have murmured, "Poor guys! Don't know what they're missing!" or "I don't see how a little bit of the king's meat is going to hurt anybody!"

At last the tenth day arrived. Breakfast was served, and once again separate food platters were brought to the tables. Although Daniel and his friends were bearing the weight of such cold attitudes from their fellow captives, they were confident today's results would be in their favor.

Finally, Melzar stood Daniel and his friends before him. Now the results would be clear. Daniel and his friends shook off all the icy insults and chilly chatter that had tried to break their spirits. Volunteers shake off /pull off the Polyfil or icicles. As they stood straight and tall, Melzar looked at their skin tone, felt of their muscles, and was astonished to find that they were in much better physical

shape than any of the other captives. Students show muscles and teeth. Pretend to look them over. **So, for the rest of the three-year period, Daniel and his friends continued with a separate diet.**

Even though Daniel and his friends were surrounded by scoffers who ridiculed them for keeping themselves from the king's meat and wine, the results were obvious. When they finally stood before King Nebuchadnezzar and talked with him, he proclaimed them to be ten times better than all the other wise men in his entire kingdom! Just like true red cedar evergreens, the young men had grown to their full potential, even though they had been in a tight spot between unbelievers and mockers. Ask volunteers to return to their seats.

Invitation and Prayer

Ask children to bow their heads as you give the invitation. **None of us has been taken captive physically, but the world we live in is an unholy place. We are here until Jesus comes back to take the church away. Friends from school and other places who don't know Jesus may look at you with icy stares for living holy. Maybe they have said mean or unkind things to you for not participating in certain activities or for the way you dress or speak. Just like Daniel, you have a choice. You can choose to give in to the world and its culture, or you can refuse to eat of its unholy menu and stand tall like Daniel and his friends.**

If you want to be a red cedar evergreen for Jesus, tell Him so now. He will help you shake off the insults and grow into a powerful Christian young person who can achieve great things. Lead children in a prayer of dedication.