

The Gospel According to Harry Potter Church Series Lesson Plan #1: Sorcerer's Stone

This lesson plan is the first in a five-week series written for an intergenerational class designed for a church. The focus of the group will be on the Harry Potter Series; it's themes and Christian moral values taught in the books. It will be a forum for parents and children to read and reflect together on a topic while learning something about God and our role in the world. We will concentrate on one book a week over the course of five weeks. People are encouraged to read the books before they come; if they have not read the entire series, they are welcome to come to the sessions that discuss the book(s) they have read. All adults and children from ages 11 and up are welcome, even if the adults do not have children.

The Sorcerer's Stone begins with a plot that draws the reader into the world and causes many questions in the reader's mind, which need to be answered. The reader understands that something big has happened, a baby boy lost his parents but we do not know how or why. A wizard and a witch leave the baby with a family, the Dursley's, which they call "muggles". We are told that these "muggles" are the worst sort of people imaginable (10). The wizard, Albus Dumbledore leaves the baby, Harry Potter on the doorstep with a note for the family and then leaves along with the witch, Professor McGonagall and Hagrid, a half giant (17).

Next, we meet Harry living in a cupboard under the stairs of his aunt and uncle's house (19). We discover that Harry is not treated well at all. His cousin, Dudley, gets all

the attention and care, while Harry is allowed to eat very little, only gets hand-me-down clothes, and is made to do a good portion of the housework. Harry feels that he is a little different from everyone else, but he tries to keep it to himself. He has occasionally made things happen that he can't explain and when he does, he gets in trouble for it (24-25). Just before Harry's twelfth birthday, he gets a letter from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry (34). His uncle goes to extreme measures in an effort not to let Harry read the letter, which keeps being delivered in mass quantity by owls. With the intervention of Hagrid, Harry finally is allowed to read the letter and embarks on a journey of discovery about himself and his parents (51-54).

In preparation for his first term at Hogwarts, Hagrid takes him to Diagon Alley to purchase supplies. While at the bank to retrieve some of the money Harry's parents left him, Hagrid takes a small parcel out of a high security vault (76). Curiously, everywhere that Harry goes in this magical community, people know his name and want to meet him. Harry finds out the true story involving his parents' death and the lightning bolt scar on his forehead. James and Lily Potter, both great wizards, were killed by Voldemort, who was a wizard that "went bad."¹ He was very powerful and anyone who he set out to kill died, until Harry. Lily Potter gave her life to save her son. No one is sure why Voldemort could not kill Harry but since that night Voldemort has disappeared but is probably still out there, waiting for the opportunity to gain his strength. Harry known as the "boy who lived" (56).

After buying all he needed for school, Harry was given a train ticket that would take him to Hogwart's. The entrance for the train platform was concealed by magic. It

¹ J.K. Rowling. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. (New York, Scholastic Inc.: 1997) 56.

was only after meeting a boy named Ron Weasley and his family that Harry was able to discover how to get onto the platform (93). During the train ride, Harry sat with Ron, a red haired boy whose family had little money, quickly making friends with him. A girl named Hermione came to sit with them during the train ride (105). She was proud of her magic skills and showed them off.

Once at the school, the first year students were escorted into the great hall and one by one sorted into their houses (Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, and Slytherin) by a sorting hat (121). Harry had heard from Ron that Slytherin was the least desired house because every wizard that ever went bad was in Slytherin house. With this information, Harry told the sorting hat that he did not want to be in Slytherin, even though the hat was tempted to do so. Eventually, Harry, Ron and Hermione were all placed in Gryffindor.

Despite Harry's efforts to the contrary, he stood out among the students. The students continually talked about him. He was even singled out by Professor Snape, who clearly hated Harry (137). Harry had another enemy in Draco Malfoy, a student in the Slytherin house. Harry decided that Draco was no good and rejected his proposal to be friends (109). Since then, they have been enemies.

When most of the students are gone for Christmas vacation, Ron and Harry stay at the school. Harry is given an invisibility cloak for Christmas (201). An unsigned note attached to the cloak stated that it belonged to Harry's father. While looking for a book in the restricted area in the invisibility cloak, Harry stumbles upon a mirror (208). When he looks into the mirror he sees his mother and father. The mirror's power captivated Harry and with the help of Dumbledore discovers that the Mirror of Erised has the power to

show someone his or her greatest desire. Dumbledore warns Harry that it “does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live.”²

The favorite sport of the campus is Quidditch and Harry was chosen as the Seeker for the Gryffindor team (151). During the game, Harry’s broomstick is bewitched in an effort to kill him. Ron, Hermione, and Harry think it is Professor Snape that wanted to harm Harry (190). This act, along with other suspicious activity, causes the three to believe Snape is after the stone.

There is a mystery going on in the school. A Sorcerer’s Stone is being guarded in the castle. Harry, Ron and Hermione believe that someone is after the stone to give it to Voldemort so he will be able to gain power. They believe that it is Snape. When circumstances worsen at Hogwarts and Dumbledore is called away from the campus, Harry knows that Professor Snape will try to steal the stone. In an effort to prevent Voldemort’s coming to power, Harry, Ron and Hermione risk their lives to stop Snape from stealing the stone (268). They go underground in the castle. In order to get past several spells devised to keep protect the stone, the three of them have to work together, each using their gifts, Hermione’s logic, Ron’s chess skills and eventually Harry’s pure heart which desired the stone only to save others instead of use it. In the Chamber where the stone is kept, Harry, alone, runs into Professor Quirrell instead of Snape (288). Quirrell turns out to be the minion of Voldemort who is living in Quirrell, feeding off him like a parasite. Quirrell was hungrily looking into the Mirror of Erised, trying to discover how he could get the stone. When Harry looked into the mirror this time, he saw the stone in his pocket and when he looked down it really was in his pocket (292). When

² J.K. Rowling. *Sorcerer’s Stone*, 214.

Quirrell/Voldemort discovered that Harry had the stone, Voldemort revealed himself on the back of Quirrell's head and tried to tempt Harry into giving it to him. He tempted Harry with the promise of bringing Harry's parents back to life. When Harry continued to refuse, Quirrell lunged at him. But as Harry put his hands on Quirrell to ward him away, Quirrell started to burn and turn to ash. As Harry held on to Quirrell to burn him further until he fainted (295).

When Harry awoke, he was in the hospital and Dumbledore stood watching him. Dumbledore explained that it was Harry's mother's self-sacrificing love that prevented Quirrell from touching Harry (299). Love that powerful leaves a mark on people, that evil cannot understand. Harry came away from the experience understanding more about true love and friendship, being content in what you have (through the Mirror of Erised), and about death not being the greatest enemy (through Voldemort's desire to be immortal despite the consequences and Nicolas Flamel's willingness and contentment with dying so that the Stone could be destroyed).

While the themes of love, choice, family, prejudice, and loyalty are major themes throughout all the books, I will choose one of these to focus on in each session. These are just a few of the many important themes that one could pick up on and discuss with a class of this nature. In the interest of having only a five-week series, the themes already mentioned are what we will concentrate on. The theme for the first book is love because the Sorcerer's Stone deals with this topic the most out of the five books. Also, I feel that this is relevant to both adults and children and I feel that the formation of the lesson, its inclusion of a fun project while also including substance, will keep the youth as well as the adults sufficiently occupied. It is an easy topic to do for the first lesson, which will

allow the group to get acquainted and gain one another's trust for the slightly more difficult subjects to come.

The book centers the theme of love in the self-sacrificing love of Harry's mother. He has learned the truth of how his parents actually died for the first time. In this discovery, he has learned the love his mother had for him in giving up her life in protection of her son and learns at the end of the book how important and special an act like that is, in that it leaves a mark on a person. Harry seems to extend true loving friendship to those around him, especially to those who are thought of as outcasts by the majority of students at the school (i.e. Hagrid, Neville, Hermione, Ron, etc.) It is within the discussion of this theme that we will make connections with Christian teaching in scripture. We will look at what the book says about love and compare it to the description of acts of love found in scripture.

Lesson Plan:

I. Introduction to the Class 5:00pm-5:10

1. Ice Breaker Question- State your name and answer the following question:
Who is your favorite character in the Harry Potter series? Why?

II. Exploring the Theme of Love

1. Definitions and exploration of Love 5:10-5:25

- a. Have magazines, crayons, pens, colored paper, scissors, and glue available for them to create a collage depicting what love means and looks like to them. Who do they love?
 - b. Teacher's Note: Have the resources mentioned above out and ready before the class begins. While the group is participating in the activity, prepare the board with the columns found on the handout in order to be ready to move on to the next section. Once that is done, move around the room and answer any questions the group might have.
 - i. Examples of different types of love: love for you parents, children, spouse, friends. Love for children usually includes a protection element. Love for your parents could include gratitude for their care of you.
 - c. Come back together and have the class share the pictures they made.
2. Brainstorm various definitions of love now that they have had the opportunity to reflect on some of the people and ways they show love. Write the different types of love on the board. Ex. Agape, romantic, friendship, self-sacrificing, etc. **5:25- 5:30**

- a. To help them brainstorm, ask the following questions: What are some expressions of love? In what ways do various relationships demonstrate love? Ex. How does friendship with someone show love?
3. Christian reflection on love and Harry Potter **5:30-5:50**
- a. Divide the main group again into smaller groups. Make sure that the various age groups are represented in each group as much as possible. No more than four people per group.
 - b. Pass out a copy of the attached handout and a writing utensil to each group. Have the groups assign someone to fill in the handout for the group. Make sure each group has at least two Bibles in it. If there are enough Bibles, it is preferable for every member of the group to have one. They will be required to look up the different kinds of love discussed on the sheet in the first column and fill in the second column with an example from the Sorcerer's Stone of that love.
 - c. Collect the group back together and go over their answers. Write the chart from the handout on the board and proceed to fill in the Harry Potter column with the class as they give you their answers. **5:50- 5:57**
 - d. Probe the class to explain why they chose the examples in Harry Potter that they did.
4. Closing Activity for the Week **5:57-6:00**

- a. Think about and practice some of the definitions of love throughout the week. Be mindful of your acts of love.

Reflection on Christian Love and Sorcerer's Stone

Directions: Look up the Bible verses listed for the various types of love found in scripture. Then, in the column across from each entry, write an instance in which the type of love is demonstrated, pulling mainly from J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, and if need be, include examples from the other books.

Scripture References to Love	Examples of Love in Sorcerer's Stone
Love of God toward humans Exodus 20:6	
Love of humans toward God Deuteronomy 7:13, Mark 12:28-34	
Family Love Genesis 22:2; Ruth 4:15	
Love among friends 1 Samuel 20:17,41,42; 1 Peter 2:17	
Love to the Stranger Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19	
Romantic Love Genesis 34:3; Song of Solomon	
Love of Enemies Matthew 5:43-44; Romans 12:20	
Sacrificial Love Romans 5:8; Galatians 2:20	

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Teacher's Note: These are just some of the answers the groups may come up with. Be prepared for several different answers to each category.

Scripture References to Love	Examples of Love in Sorcerer's Stone
Love of God toward humans Exodus 20:6	This section can be left blank, but some might include sections they think portray an analogy for God's love toward us.
Love of humans toward God Deuteronomy 7:13, Mark 12:28-34	This section can be left blank, but some might include sections they think portray an analogy for our love toward God.
Family Love Genesis 22:2; Ruth 4:15	Mr. and Mrs. Weasley's love and concern for their children (train station scene)
Love among friends 1 Samuel 20:17,41,42; 1 Peter 2:17	Ron, Hermione and Harry's dedication to one another. Ron and Hermione's willingness to accompany and help Harry retrieve the stone.
Love to the Stranger Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19	1. Harry's friendship with Prof. Lupin (bk 2) 2. Harry showing friendship to Fleur Delacour and Krum (bk 4)
Romantic Love Genesis 34:3; Song of Solomon	1. Harry's attraction to Cho 2. Percy's attraction to Penelope 3. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley's relationship
Love of Enemies Matthew 5:43-44; Romans 12:20	1. Snape saving Harry at the Quidditch match 2. James Potter saving Snape in their childhood
Sacrificial Love	1. Lily Potter's sacrifice of her life for Harry

Romans 5:8; Galatians 2:20	2. Harry's willingness to face death in order to prevent Voldemort's return.
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