

Miles to Stay Out of Jail

By RLD Editorial Team

for use as
STEP 1 

Lesson 5**Focus:**

God provides salvation.

Lesson 5**Bible Basis:**

Genesis 3:1-19;
Romans 5:12, 19

Lesson 5**Memory Verse:**

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

—Romans 5:19

Students will consider how even “minor” violations of rules or laws can harm other people as they explore God’s provision for our disobedience.

Materials:

Internet access

When someone breaks the law, they often go to jail. But putting people behind bars isn’t always the best idea. Suppose you stole money—you’re not going to have a way to pay it back while you’re sitting in jail, right?

If it’s possible, earning money to pay back the person you robbed might make more sense than doing hard time. Call it “making the punishment fit the crime.”

Judge Michael Cicconetti (*CHICK-oh-NET-ee*)—a small-town judge near Cleveland, Ohio—takes that principle to a whole new level. When people come into his courtroom for the first time, he sometimes gives them a choice. They can either go to jail . . . *or* complete a weird punishment. Let’s take a look.

Play the following video clip for your students:

Judge Hands Out CREATIVE Punishments

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/3PXv7QEGxGo>

One example of the judge’s creativity was sentencing a woman to spend all night in the woods alone for abandoning a bunch of kittens in public parks. In a sense, she was abandoned like the kittens were—though actually, there were people looking out to make sure she stayed safe.

➤ Do you think a shorter jail sentence, donation to the Humane Society, and night in the woods was a reasonable punishment for her crime? Or was it too harsh for such a minor offense? (Let your students share their opinions freely, but don’t let things get out of hand.)

➤ **Imagine you've been arrested and brought to Judge Cicconetti's courtroom. He offers you a choice between spending 90 days in jail and 14 days in jail, a donation, and a night in the woods. Which would you choose? Why?** (Accept all reasonable answers.)

Some people might think Judge Cicconetti was too harsh. Some of think he was right on the money. But all of us would probably agree on one point: the woman deserved punishment for what she did. It's not okay to leave helpless animals in the woods.

Most of the time, we only look at how things will affect *us*. The woman who abandoned the kittens was probably thinking, "Hey, I can't afford to care for this many animals, and I'm not sure where to take them. I'll just leave them outside, and maybe people will find them and take them home." She wasn't thinking about what bad things could happen to the kittens.

➤ **Have you ever received a punishment crafted to fit an offense? Tell us about it.** (Let your students share their stories—most will have tales to tell about not taking out the trash on their appointed day and being sentenced to take out the trash for the whole week as a result—or some similar household infractions. Be prepared to share your own experience.)

Today, we're talking about sin—the Bible's word for when we do wrong things. Sometimes, we think our "little" sins, like lying to a friend or yelling at our parents, aren't a big deal. However, "little" things can make a big impact on our relationship with God and other people. Just ask the kittens how they felt about being the victim of the woman's "little" crime!

That's why even "small" sins are a big deal to God. Let's explore some of the Bible's teachings about what happens when we do wrong.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

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STEP 4 

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—Romans 5:19

Materials:

- Ruled paper
- Pens/pencils
- Optional: Whiteboard and markers (or screenshared document)

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

Earlier, we heard about a woman who dumped thirty-five kittens in local parks. She may have told herself that leaving them outside was no big deal. But it was a big deal to the kittens—and the judge who sentenced her!

When we sin, we often respond like the woman: we tell ourselves it's no big deal. But really, we're hurting our relationships with other people and with our Creator. That's why sin is a big deal to God.

If you add up all the sins you've ever committed, there's no way you could ever pay for them. That's why God made a way for us to be forgiven. But it was an expensive solution—it cost the blood of Jesus to make us right with the Lord. Jesus took our punishment for us.

Distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). Write this personalized paraphrase of Romans 5:19b on your whiteboard (or screenshared document): "Through Jesus' death on the cross, I have been made right with God." **On this paper, I want you to list five "crimes"—in other words, sins—that God might charge you with if He was going to put you on trial. Nobody is going to see this paper but you, so you can be honest.**

Now, turn your paper over and write this paraphrase of our memory verse on it (be sure to read it slowly enough so students can copy as you read): "Through Jesus' death on the cross, I have been made right with God." In other words, God has forgiven your sins—and even better, He looks at you as though you never messed up in the first place!

Since Jesus has made you right with God, there's no point in keeping this paper around. Go ahead and tear it up! God looks at you as though the sins you wrote down never happened. Give students the freedom to shred their papers into the garbage can.

All of us have sinned. All of us deserve to be punished. But thank God that He sent Jesus to pay our penalty! Now, we've been made right with God. Let's thank Him for that amazing gift of salvation.

Close in prayer.

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