

Heroes of the Faith

“Moments in Church History”



By Patricia Mercier

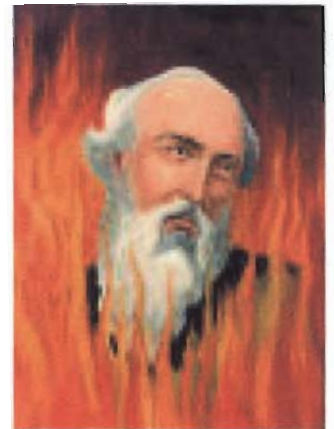


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Introduction

This curriculum was designed to help introduce the children to a little bit of church history through short object lessons. These lessons can be added to a Children's Church format or within the Sunday School classroom. The idea is to give one lesson a week on these heroes of the faith to give the children a taste of their heritage and what has happened to Christianity after the time of the disciples written about in the Bible. The people selected were ones who made important contributions and whose stories could be put into an object lesson format for children. As a result of the venue and the goal of this curriculum, many more heroes of the Church were left out.

PowerPoint presentations were created to go with the object lessons to give a visual of who these people were and what they looked like. This makes it more real for the children. If you do not have the capabilities to use PowerPoint, transparencies were also created of the same material to be viewed on overheads. If overheads are not available, the best thing to do is to take the transparency and find a projector to project the image on to a poster and trace it. Then you can paint or color the poster board to be viewed in the classroom or service. Remember images and objects need to be bigger for larger audiences to view.

Please feel free to adapt this curriculum to meet your needs as a Christian community desiring to train up the next generation. May God bless you with creativity and wisdom as you bring history alive. For further information on the church leaders discussed in this curriculum, please read Christianity Through the Centuries by Earle E. Cairns and Fox's Book of Martyrs edited by WM. Byron Forbush.

Curriculum Overview

Name	Importance	Object for Lesson
12 Disciples	Carried Gospel Message to their World	Map of the Roman World
Simon Peter	Disciple was crucified upside down in Rome during Neronian persecution	Cross
1st Century Apostolic Fathers	Wrote Letters to the Churches for guidance	Letters
Ignatius	Church Father wrote letters to the Churches while he was en route to martyrdom in Rome	Wheat
Polycarp	He compiled and preserved the epistles of Ignatius. He prayed for an hour with guards waiting before going to his death.	Prayer Shawl
2nd Century Apologists	Defended the Christian Faith in their Writings	Courtroom Drama
Justin Martyr	Apologist trained in philosophy and argued for Christianity on the basis of prophecy, miracles, and ethics.	A Book about Martyrs
Tertullian	(3 rd Century Church Father) Laid important groundwork for the doctrine of the Trinity.	Apple or Egg
Missionaries to Barbarian Tribes	Missions in the Dark Ages	European Map
Ulphilas	Missionary to the Goths	Alphabet
Patrick	Missionary to Ireland	3 Leaf clover
Augustine of Canterbury	Missionary to Angles and Saxons	Slave boys
Forerunners to Reformation	Began calling for reform in the Catholic Church	Baton (Race)
John Wycliffe	Emphasized Scripture and translated most of the Vulgate into English.	Bible
Major Reformers	(Reformation) Called for Reform in the Church	Sin Demonstration
Martin Luther	Nailed the Ninety-Five Thesis to Church doors, focused on justification by faith and translated Bible into German.	Thesis Paper



12 Disciples

Materials and Preparation: Map of the Roman World and a Bible

Show the map from the PowerPoint / transparency or get a map to hold up and show the children the areas where the disciples were said to travel. You will need to look for the places ahead of time to be familiar with them.

The Lesson:

(Show the Bible) We know about the 12 Disciples of Jesus from the Bible. But have you heard what they did after the crucifixion of Jesus and what happened to them? Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus hung himself leaving only eleven disciples to spread the message around the world. Of course there were more disciples of Jesus, but these were the ones who were closest to Him and stayed with Him for three years. The disciples spread the gospel to many places outside of Israel just as Paul and others in the book of Acts writes about. Today we will learn about what might have happened to the disciples based on tradition.

(Show the map) According to the tradition, Simon Peter went to Rome where he died and he also supposedly went to Britain and Gaul. Andrew preached in Scythia, Asia Minor, and Greece. He was crucified at Patras in Achaia. The Bible tells us that James the Son of Zebedee was killed by Herod Agrippa I. John was exiled on the island of Patmos, but ministered in Ephesus where he died of natural causes. Philip was crucified in Hierapolis in Asia Minor. Matthew has been placed in different places according to conflicting traditions. He could have gone to Ethiopia, Parthia, Persia, and Macedonia according to which tradition is accurate. Thomas preached in Babylonia and was martyred in India. Bartholomew accompanied Philip to Hierapolis and was martyred after ministry in Armenia. James, the Son of alphaeus ministered in Syria. Thaddaeus ministered in Edessa. Simon the Zealot went to Persia, Egypt, Carthage, and Britain.



Simon Peter

Materials and Preparation: Cross

Get a wooden cross or make one out of poster board.

The Lesson:

We know a lot about Peter based on the Bible. He was the one who put his foot in his mouth many times as he spoke impulsively. He was the one who declared Jesus the Son of God and then later denied Jesus three times. Peter was the one willing to step out of the boat and then begin to sink when he realized he was walking on water with Jesus. He preached the sermon on the day of Pentecost and many were saved in Jerusalem that day. As stated last time, Peter is supposed to have visited Britain and Gaul. While in Rome, Peter was sought out for death by Nero. Paul was supposedly persuaded by his friends to leave Rome, when as he was leaving, Peter saw Jesus Christ going to Rome. Peter said to Jesus, "Where are you going?" and Jesus responded, "I am going to be crucified." Peter then understood that he was to suffer in Rome and returned to Rome to be crucified. Peter did not want to die the same way Jesus did because he did not feel worthy to die in such a manner. So, Peter asked that his cross be placed upside down and he died in this manner. (Show the cross upside down as you discuss Peter's death). Peter died for his faith as did many Christians at this time. They were killed in different ways, but they all stood up for Jesus Christ and refused to deny Him.



First Century Apostolic Fathers

Materials and Preparation: Letters

Get some stationary and envelopes and place a few letters inside envelopes to pull out and show the children.

The Lesson:

(Show the letters) Remember the letters in the New Testament that were written to churches to help solve problems and answer questions. Letters like 1 and 2nd Corinthians, 1 and 2nd Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians, Romans, etc. Many of the letters were written by Paul in the New Testament. Well, letters were one of the ways for the Church leaders to communicate with the Churches all over the Roman Empire. The Church Fathers in the First Century continued the practice of letter writings and this is how we have some information about the early church beliefs and practices. Many of these church leaders were persecuted and killed for their beliefs and roles in leading the Christian Churches in the Roman Empire. (Show the PowerPoint or transparency) These were some of the church fathers in the 1st century: Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hermas, Barnabas of Alexandria, Papias, and Polycarp. These leaders helped to form the structure of the churches and create guidelines for keeping the faith of Jesus Christ.

Name	Writings
Clement of Rome	I Clement
Ignatius	To the Ephesians To the Manesians To the Trallians To the Romans To the Philadelphians To the Smyrnaeans To Polycarp
Hermas	The Shepherd
Barnabas of Alexandria	Epistle of Barnabas
Papias	Exposition of the Oracles of Our Lord
Polycarp	Epistle to the Philippians



Ignatius

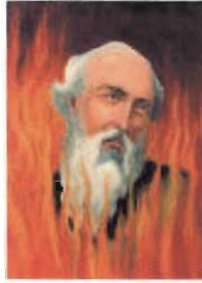
Materials and Preparation: Wheat

Get real wheat, or a picture of wheat to show. You may want to keep the letters from the last lesson to display as you talk about the letters Ignatius wrote.

The Lesson:

(Show letters) Ignatius was one of the Church Fathers we talked about in our last lesson. He was the Bishop of Antioch and wrote many letters to Churches on the way to his death in Rome. Ignatius was the first person to call the Church “Catholic”, which means Universal. Therefore, the Church eventually picked up the name calling itself the Catholic Church. Ignatius strengthened the churches as he passed through the areas on to Rome. He was delighted to suffer for Christ and spoke of this in his letters to the churches asking them not to do anything to stop his future death. (Show the wheat) Ignatius wrote: “I am the wheat of Christ: I am going to be ground with the teeth of wild beasts, that may be found pure bread.”¹ Ignatius died in the coliseum by being thrown to the wild beasts. (You may want to talk about what it means to die for your faith).

¹ Forbush, WM Byron. Fox's Book of Martyrs. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1926), 8.



Polycarp

Materials and Preparation: Prayer Shawl

If you cannot find a real prayer shawl, you can use a shawl or a small blanket to place over your head while praying. This is what the Jews did when they were praying in a public place. They would place it over their heads to hide from the rest of the world and focus on God. You may also want to keep the letters from the Apostolic lesson to show again here.

The Lesson:

(Show the letters) Polycarp was another Church Leader in the First Century who wrote a letter to one of the churches. He wrote to the Philippians. Polycarp was instrumental in compiling and preserving the letters of Ignatius. He was an acquaintance of the apostle John. Polycarp was a man of prayer. He served the Lord for 86 years and evaded capture by the Romans for a long time before he was found. When Polycarp was caught, he asked the guards if they could give him an hour to pray before going to his death. (Put the prayer shawl over your head) The Jews would use the prayer shawl to pray while they were in public and wanted to get alone with God. Polycarp prayed for one hour with such fervency that the guards wished they had not caught him. Believe it or not, Polycarp had fed these men who had captured him and were going to deliver him to his death. Polycarp was burned at the stake in the marketplace. He died for his faith. However, Christianity began to spread and be strengthened by all of the persecutions of the Church and the church leaders.



Second Century Apologists

Materials and Preparation: Courtroom drama

Set up a courtroom scene by having one person in a long robe be a judge and then two lawyers to stand before the judge to make their cases. Write some lines out on note cards for the two lawyers to speak.

The Lesson:

(Set up for the courtroom drama) Lawyer one speaks to the judge, “Judge. These Christians are being a nuisance to society. They do not worship the emperor and they do not take part in our ceremonies to the emperor. They will not buy meat sacrificed to our idols and they will not purchase idols. They are affecting our economy – that is we cannot get them to buy much of our stuff because they say it is ungodly. These Christians need to be punished and to quit spreading their message to others.” Lawyer two speaks, “Judge, if I may. These Christians are living quiet and peaceful lives. They are ethical people who just want to follow the rules of their religion. Therefore, they do not worship the emperor or any other idols. They do not hurt anyone and in fact are often found helping their neighbors. We ask for the Christians to be left alone and allowed to quietly pursue their God.”

Boys and girls, what you just witnessed was a courtroom drama. The men of the Second Century were apologists, that is they defended the Christian faith, just as we saw in the courtroom (point to the lawyer who defended Christianity). Some of the men who wrote great defenses for Christianity to the people in government and others around them were Quadratus, Aristids, Justyn Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Melito and Hegesippus.



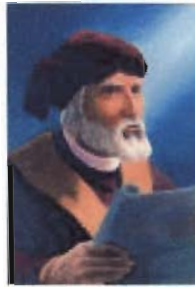
Justin Martyr

Materials and Preparation: Fox's Book of Martyrs or a Martyrs Book/ Magazine

Get a book on martyrs or even a video of the martyrs (one for children) to display when explaining the term martyr.

The Lesson:

Justin Martyr was one of the apologists of the 2nd century who was trained in philosophy. He argued for Christianity on the basis of prophecy, miracles and ethics. Justin Martyr's first apology actually convinced the emperor to favor the Christians. Crescens the Cynic, who had written against the Christians earlier causing Justin to write in their favor, prejudiced the emperor against Justin Martyr. Justin Martyr was then picked up by the Roman guards and commanded to sacrifice to idols. When he and his friends refused, they were sentenced to death. They were beaten and the beheaded. (Show book or prepare to show a video clip). The term "martyr" was coined from Justin Martyr's death. Many were killed because they refused to sacrifice to idols and now these people were called martyrs.



Tertullian

Materials and Preparation: Apple or Egg or your favorite way to explain the Trinity

In the Apple demonstration the peel represents God the Father, the flesh represents Jesus or God the Son and the core represents the Holy Spirit with the seeds of faith inside. The apple is neat because you can talk about the fruit of the Holy Spirit and planting faith in the believers. (There is a book called Three in One that uses the apple to explain the Trinity). The egg example is similar with the shell or skin representing God the Father, the egg white represents Jesus and the yolk represents the Holy Spirit. With the egg example, the raw egg can be mixed up and then the children can be asked if they can separate out the parts easily. Some people like to use water, ice and steam to explain the Trinity. Use whatever example you are most comfortable presenting realizing that each one has its limitations and we cannot press the simile too far.

The Lesson:

Tertullian was a Church Father who ministered in Carthage in the 3rd century. He was a son of a Roman army officer and was trained in law. He converted to Christianity in middle age and joined the Montanist who were a group that emphasized the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Tertullian laid the groundwork for the doctrine of the Trinity. The word Trinity cannot be found in the Bible, but the concept is there. There is only one God; yet there are three persons of God, God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. This is a hard concept for us to explain or understand, but remember that God's ways are not our ways. (Pull out the object you desire to use to explain the Trinity and explain the Trinity here).

APPLE: There are three parts to this apple and yet it is all one apple. The skin of the apple protects the apple. The flesh of the apple is good to eat. The core of the apple is what carries the seeds to plant more apple trees. All of these parts make up one apple, not three apples. The Trinity is the same. There is only one God in three persons. God the Father is the one who created the universe and sent His Son, Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus took our punishment for sin in dying on the cross and He conquered death when He rose again. The Holy spirit is the one who comes to live inside of us when we believe in Jesus. He grows in us the fruits of the Spirit and He gives us gifts to be able to build each other up in the Church. (EGG or ICE example can be used this way as well).



Missionaries to Barbarian Tribes

Materials and Preparation: European Map

Show the map from the PowerPoint / transparency or get a map to hold up and show the children the areas where the missionaries traveled. You will need to look for the places ahead of time to be familiar with them.

The Lesson:

In 313 AD Constantine who was the Emperor of Rome began to grant Christians the freedom to worship. He was attempting to preserve the Roman culture from the Barbarian tribes that were surrounding the Roman Empire and becoming a threat to its peace. Later emperors granted more privileges to Christianity so that it eventually became the state religion. The Church was no longer being persecuted by the Roman government. The Barbarians began to spread and take over the Roman Empire. This time became known as the Dark ages. The church seized on these opportunities to spread the gospel to the barbarian tribes who were taking control. Some monks were sent out to reach the different Barbarian tribes. (Show the map of where the tribes traveled and talk about who was a missionary to which tribe).

Tribe	Country they Settled in Later	Key Missionaries
Goths	Spain and Portugal Area	Ulfilas and Boniface
Picts	Part of Scotland	Ninian
Irish	Ireland	Patrick
Franks	France	Clovis
Scots	Scotland	Columba
Angles and Saxons	Great Britain	Augustine of Canterbury and Ethelbert
Frisians	Holland and Belgium	Willibrord



Ulfilas

Materials and Preparation: Alphabet

Have a poster or example of our alphabet either by writing in on a poster or chalkboard, etc.

The Lesson:

Ulfilas was a missionary to the Goths. He was consecrated as a Bishop of the Gothic Christians by the Church and then went to live with the Gothic people. They spoke a different language and did not have a way of writing it down. Ulfilas learned the language and created an alphabet to be able to write their language. (Show alphabet). Ulfilas then translated the Scripture into these peoples language so that they could learn more about God. (Discuss what it would be like to have to learn a foreign language and explain Jesus to someone in their own language).



Patrick

Materials and Preparation: 3 Leaf Clovers

It would be good to have a bunch of three leaf clovers to pass out to the children. If there are too many children, then a big poster or picture of a clover will work.

The Lesson:

We have all heard of St. Patrick's Day where we wear green and think of Ireland. Well did you know who the holiday was named after? Patrick was a missionary to Ireland. As a 16 year old boy he was taken from Britain to Ireland by pirates. He took care of the cattle there for six years before he was able to return to Britain. After returning home, Patrick felt a call to become a missionary among the Celts of Ireland. He returned to teach them about God. (Show the clover). He used the three leaf clover to explain the Trinity. (You may want to discuss the Trinity here briefly). Patrick organized the Christians around monasteries in the tribal areas and was responsible for keeping culture in Ireland when the rest of the world was in the Dark ages. The monks in the monasteries kept studying and learning more about God and His world. Missionaries were sent from Ireland to Scotland (Columba). This is why Patrick was made the patron saint of Ireland and we have St. Patrick's Day today. So the next time you celebrate St. Patrick's Day, think about the missionary who went back to the island where he was held captive to win them to Christ.



Augustine of Canterbury

Materials and Preparation: Slave Boys (Handcuffs or rope)

Get a few boy volunteers to act as slaves. Put them in handcuffs or tie their hands with ropes (be careful not to hurt them).

The Lesson:

(Have the boys stand and act like they are being sold as slaves) When Pope Gregory, head of the Catholic Church, saw the fair-haired, blue-eyed boys up for sale as slaves in Rome, he called them “angels”. These boys were Angles, a tribe in Britain. Pope Gregory decided these boys must be delivered and so he commissioned Augustine to go to bring the gospel to the British. Augustine of Canterbury first won the King of Kent. Thus England came under the Roman Catholic Church.



Forerunners to Reformation

Materials and Preparation: Baton (like those used in a relay race)

If you cannot get a real baton from a relay race, use any small stick. Get three children to simulate a relay race. Explain to them ahead of time how the race works so they will be prepared when you show it. Have the three runners spaced out in a line and then have them ready to grab the baton and walk it to the next relay person to take it.

The Lesson:

The church began to be corrupted by state politics when it became the religion of the state. However, God was keeping a remnant pure through the nuns and monks who separated themselves for prayer and purity. Monasteries were created for monks to live in as they left some of the corruption of the Church. Some leaders of the church began to speak out against the corruptions. They led the way for the Reformation to take place.

(Show the Baton and have three children simulate a race by walking through the motions and passing off the baton from “runner” to “runner”). See how the baton was passed from one runner to the next so that the relay race could be finished. Well, the first person did not finish the race, but he or she was an important part of the race. They started the race. (Show pictures of the forerunners) These men you see here were very important in beginning the motions of change in the church. They spoke out against abuses of the leaders and sin that had come into the church calling out for changes to be made.



John Wycliffe

Materials and Preparation: Bible

A big Bible would be best to show and be able to flip through the pages.

The Lesson:

John Wycliffe was one of the forerunners to the Reformation that we talked about in the last lesson. He was a professor at Oxford University in England who spoke out against the friars who begged and he considered as lazy living off the people and not doing anything. Wycliffe also got into trouble with the Pope when he defended the actions of King Edward in not paying tribute to the Pope in Rome. He opposed the Church's accumulation of wealth and sale of indulgences. Indulgences were a freeing from the punishment still due for sin after the guilt had been forgiven. Actually, this is not something that can be bought or sold, yet the church did so to make money. (Show the Bible) At this time the Bible was written in the Vulgate that is the Latin language and could only be understood by scholars who had studied the Latin language. Therefore, most Christians in the World were unable to read the Bible because they did not know Latin and could not read the original languages of the Bible, which were in Greek and Hebrew. In fact, the clergy read the Scriptures and gave the Mass (worship service) in Latin. John Wycliffe translated most of the Vulgate into English. Aren't you glad that we can now read the Bible in our own language today? The English back then was different from today, but this began the trend of translating the Scripture into the common language of the people so that they may be able to read the Bible for themselves instead of being told by the Church Leaders what it said. He emphasized the Scriptures above the traditions of the priest saying that we must not do what the Church leaders say if it is against the Scriptures.



Major Reformers

Materials and Preparation: Sin Demo (clear glass, water, dark food coloring & bleach)

Get a clear glass or jar and put water in it. The demonstration will need a small drop of food coloring and a handful of bleach (proportion). You may want to practice this a few times before presenting so you can get a feel for how much food coloring and bleach is needed to do the trick.

DEMONSTRATION: Drop a small drop of food coloring into the water in the clear glass. Show how this is sin in the Church. Then pour in the bleach. The color should disappear and the water becomes relatively clear again. The bleach represents the reformers calling for a change in the Church. They wanted to get rid of the sins.

The Lesson:

Show the glass or jar of water and discuss how this is the Church. Talk about how when Christianity became the religion of the State and Government and Christianity became mixed, some sin entered the Church. At this time the Church had become corrupt with some Church leaders buying their way in due to politics and not because they were Godly men. Then pour in the bleach and explain how the bleach represents the Reformers calling for changes in the Church. They wanted the Body of Christ to be pure and blameless before God and therefore sin needed to be removed. The four Great leaders of the Reformation were Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin and John Knox (show their pictures). As Protestants, we owe a great deal to these men who changed the Church and began new denominations who attempted to avoid the sins of the Catholic Church of their day.



Martin Luther

Materials and Preparation: Thesis Paper (or term paper)

Get a Thesis or Term paper from a college or graduate student to show what this kind of paper looks like.

The Lesson:

Martin Luther is one of the Major Leaders during the Reformation. He was struck by lightning and survived causing him to consider God. Luther then became an Augustinian monk and began to serve Jesus. He found a Latin bible and began to read it. Luther was amazed at how little of the Bible was actually read to the people. He learned that “We are justified by faith” and this became a principle he followed in ministry as he realized that we did not need to perform good works to be saved. He taught the faith from a new perspective in the University of Wittenberg in Germany. When pope Leo X needed to raise money to build the Church of St. Peter’s at Rome, he published general indulgences to be sold to raise the money. Different people were appointed in many different countries to sell these indulgences. Luther was enraged and began speaking out against the indulgences. (Remember definition from earlier: Indulgences were a freeing from the punishment still due for sin after the guilt had been forgiven). On the eve of All-saints, Luther posted a thesis on indulgences on the church next to the castle of Wittenburg. (Show the thesis paper) A Thesis is a paper that makes a point in favor of some position. You will have to write these kinds of paper when you get to High School and in college. Martin Luther wrote this thesis, which is called the “Ninety-five Theses”. This created quite a controversy and Luther was later excommunicated from the Church. Martin Luther also translated the Bible into German. The Lutheran Church today can be traced back to the heritage of Martin Luther.