

NEPAL

LESSONS FOR MISSION MINDED KIDS

LESSON 6

NEPALESE TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS



Nepal

Lesson 6: Nepalese Traditions and Customs

Goals for Lesson 6:

- Children will understand that the American customs they think are normal are not normal to everyone, and may even be seen as rude to some.
- Children will become familiar with some of the customs and traditions of the Nepalese people.
- Children will begin to say the Nepal verse with minimal help.

Verse for Nepal:

“The humble will see their God at work and be glad. Let all who seek God’s help live in joy. For the Lord hears the cries of His needy ones; He does not despise His people who are oppressed.” Psalm 69: 32-33

Before Class:

- Read through lesson and decide what you will use according to your age group and time allotted.
- Locate verse word cards from “Erase-a-Word” activity in Lesson 3. Prepare them and other props as needed for the “Clothesline Verse” activity.
- Prepare props as needed for the “Nepalese House” activity.
- Enlarge the cover picture of the little boy saying “Namaste” as well as the pictures of traditional clothing. Mount on colored paper for stability or prepare as slides to view on a screen.
- Make copies of the coloring page and collect crayons or markers to use in class.

Lesson Plan:

- Begin your lesson time with prayer. (5 min.)
- Play the “Clothesline Verse” game together to review the Nepal verse. (15-20 min.)
- Read the story portion of the lesson to the children, using the pictures to show your students the traditional dress and greeting. Talk about the differences between what we consider normal and what the Nepalese practice. Talk about how missionaries must prepare before entering a new country so that they can fit in with the new culture and be accepted by that group of people. Talk about the benefits of already knowing a language and culture and the practical idea of being a missionary to your own cultural group. Come up with ideas together of how to be a missionary to share the love of Jesus with the people in our own cultural group. (15-20 min.)
- Set up the Nepalese House activity and act it out together. Spend time talking about how different their lives are and what their response should be toward those who have less. (15-20 min.)
- End your time together with prayer for the people who live in Nepal who are so different from us, and yet still have the same spiritual needs. Pray for the missionaries who go there to share the love of Jesus with the Nepalese people. (5-10 min.)
- Use the coloring page as an activity in class, or send it home to complete later. (5 min.)

Lesson 6 Story: Nepalese Traditions and Customs

If you grew up in Nepal, the way you interacted with the people around you would be different than what you are used to in the United States. Each group of people in the world has their own customs. That is the way they typically interact with each other and what they consider to be normal and polite. Customs might include things like how we greet our friends, how we treat one another and what things we think are rude. Customs often change over time, so that what is considered polite and normal now might have been seen differently by our grandparents. Each group of people usually has a set of traditions as well. These are the things that they learn from their parents and grandparents and pass on to their own children. This might be a way of dressing, a type of music or dance, or a type of food usually eaten.

Think about some of the customs we practice here in the United States. What is a typical way to greet your friend? How do you greet your grandparents? What is considered polite when you first meet an adult? If you lived in Nepal, the typical way to greet someone would be to put your palms together with your fingers near your chin and say, “Namaste”. (**nah-mah-stay**) (**show picture of boy**)

In America, we sometimes keep our shoes on and sometimes take them off when we enter a building. In Nepal, everyone must take off their shoes at the door of a house or a temple. In America, we usually use the first name of someone we know well, even if we add a title before the name (like “Aunt Sue” or “Pastor Joe” or “Miss Amy”). In Nepal, titles are used more frequently, and using first names is not common. For example, you would not only call your own mother “Amaa”, but you would also call your friend’s mother by that name. You would also use the Nepali words for “Uncle”, “Sister”, “Son”, “Doctor”, “Miss”, etc. instead of using their first names. (Instead of saying “Uncle Steve”, he would just be “Uncle”)

In Nepal, licking your fingers or blowing your nose in public is considered rude, but slurping your hot tea or coffee is very acceptable. If you want to say “yes”, you must shake your head from side to side, and if you want to say “no”, you nod your head up and down.

Traditions are similar to customs, but a little bit different. Traditions are often seen in the way a group of people celebrates. They are also sometimes evident in the clothing or music of a group of people. Your family might have its own

traditions for some holidays. For example, is there a certain way your family always celebrates birthdays or Christmas? Since the U.S. is a large mixed group of people (sometimes called a melting pot) whose ancestors came from many other countries, many of our traditions originated in other countries. (Our tradition of decorating a Christmas tree came from the many German people who settled here, and our tradition of hiding colored eggs at Easter came from the British settlers who came to America).

In Nepal, even though many people don't dress like this anymore, the traditional clothing is very colorful. The men wear "topi" (toe-pee) hats on their heads **(show picture of man)** and the women wear beautiful long dresses to perform the traditional dances. **(show picture of dancer)** These were the dances that Nepalese women have performed for hundreds of years, using the same styles of dresses and music. The traditional folk music is played with flutes and drums and is very lively and melodic. Now the traditional music and dances are often performed for special national holidays or festivals.

When you grow up in a certain culture, the accepted customs and traditions of those people seem normal to you. But if you visit another culture, you would want to understand their way of living and interacting so that you would not offend those people. Missionaries who go to live in another country need to learn the customs and language of the new people before they are able to tell anyone about Jesus. If a missionary is seen as a rude or offensive person, no one will want to listen to what he has to say.

Sometimes missionaries stay in their own country or in a country very similar to their own. Do you remember that Rev. Janga could walk from his own country of India to the country of Nepal when he went there as a missionary? Since India's customs and traditions and religions and languages are very similar to those in Nepal, Rev. Janga didn't have to learn very much new information in order to fit in very well with the Nepalese people. He could begin right away to teach them about Jesus, and many people listened to him because he looked and acted and spoke just like them.

What about you? You already know the language and the customs and traditions of the people who live nearby you. God has called you to be a missionary to the people around you, and you can start right now.

Clothesline Verse

Game Preparation: Use the single word cards you made for the memory verse review from Lesson 3 (or footprints from Lesson 2). Shuffle them and before class, place them randomly over the top of a table, word side up. String a light rope from one end of the room to the other so that it hangs at about eye level for the children. It must be long enough to accommodate all 40 word cards. Put 40 clothespins in a basket or shoebox and place on the table beside the word cards.

Game Directions for Readers (or a mixed group of readers and non-readers):

Have your students form a line. At your signal, the first person comes forward and takes a card and a clothespin from the table and attaches the word to the clothesline. That person goes to the back of the line and the second student comes forward. Each child in turn puts a card onto the line with a clothespin, attempting to put the words into the correct order. The game is meant to move pretty quickly, so don't allow students to spend a great deal of time on their turn. If there is a mistake, a child may move someone else's card to a new spot to make it read correctly. Each new word should be placed where the child thinks it should go. Non-readers can ask you what the word is. The next child always has the option of changing something already on the clothesline, choosing any random word, or picking out a specific word he knows will come next. Each player returns to the end of the line for another turn and play continues until all words are in the correct order, with the reference at the end. When the children agree that it is correct, walk along the clothesline, pointing to each card as you say the verse out loud together as a class.

Game Directions for Non-Readers:

Use the cards from Lesson 3 that have the numbers on the backs. Lay the cards randomly on the table with the numbers showing. Students form a line and each takes a turn putting the cards on the clothesline in (backwards) numerical order from the right to the left. Number 40 will be on the far left and number 1 will be on the far right. Each student has the option of moving a number that is out of place, choosing a random number to put on the line, or finding a specific number he knows will come next. When the children agree that the numbers are in the correct (right to left) order, unfasten one end of the rope and swing it around so that the words appear. Refasten the end of the rope in the opposite corner or have an adult helper hold the free end of the rope. Point to each word (now the words will be in the correct left to right order) and say the verse together. Although they will not be "reading" the words, some beginning readers will be able to recognize some of the words, and most of the children by now will have most of the verse memorized.

Nepalese House Activity

Find an area where you will be able to mark off a square that is 10 feet by 10 feet. If possible, use masking tape on the floor, and remove it immediately after the activity. Another alternative would be to position four chairs in a 10 foot square and wrap a piece of yarn or string around them to close in the "walls". Leave a small opening in one "wall" for a doorway. Prepare as many "props" as you want, such as a large baby doll for the family's baby, some straw mats for the floor, making a fake fire with a large pot to cook with, folding a few blankets in one corner of the house to sleep with, etc.

****Ask a group of your students to pretend that they are a family of six to nine people who live in the mountains of Nepal. Choose various sizes, if possible, to mimic a real family. Tell the students that this square is their house. They will pretend to build a fire (outside the door for nice weather or inside the door for cold weather) and cook their meals there. They will sit near the fire to eat once or twice a day. Split them up and give them chores to do, such as going with the father to work in their field of vegetables and grain, carrying water from the nearest stream or well, weaving straw mats for the floors, making blankets from the sheep's wool, caring for the family sheep or goats, gathering fuel for the fire, caring for the baby, etc. They will act out their jobs for a short while, then call them all back to prepare and eat their evening meal. Then tell them it is time for bed. Tell them they will all sleep together on straw mats in the one room, and they will be very thankful for a few blankets and the body warmth of their siblings to keep them warm during the cold winters in Nepal. Have them lay down in the house, making sure all limbs are contained within the tape or rope walls. Cover them in groups with two or three blankets to share between the family, and tell them to have a good night's sleep. Wait a minute and then allow them to get up and rejoin the rest of the group. Talk together about the differences between their lives and their houses and the lives and houses of many families living in rural Nepal (and many people in developing nations around the world).***

******Many rural houses in Nepal are made from the natural resources found nearby. Tree trunk sized logs are partially submerged into the ground to act as posts for corners and stability for the walls. Smaller branches are then tied horizontally up the logs to provide a place for attaching the wall sticks. Smaller sticks are then woven and tied between the logs and branches to fill in the wall space. In warm climates, walls are left like this to allow the breezes to blow through. In colder areas, both the inside and the outside of the wall is then coated with a thick layer of dried cow dung mixed with water to make mud. As yucky as this sounds, it is a free natural resource that when dried, provides fairly good protection from the elements. The house can be easily repaired and "re-sided" each year. Boards can sometimes be bought for making doors and windows, or metal could be bought for a roof. Since the Hindus worship cows, it is also considered a blessing from the gods to cover the dirt floor with this "mud". Grass mats are also used on the floor to sit and lay on. In the mountainous regions where the weather is severe, rocks can also be used for construction (held together with cow dung mud, of course).



Nepali folk dance



A Nepalese man wears traditional clothing and a "topi" hat.

