

The Pencil

SPiRiT



God and me



No maximum number
depending on adequate
supervision



10 minutes

Aim: To help boys understand characteristics of the Christian life

Equipment:

- Various types and sizes of pencils (include one with no lead)

Outline:

The thing we are going to talk about tonight is:-

- Thin and long
- Everybody here has used one
- It comes in different colours but 75% of them sold in America are yellow
- 2.8 billion of them are used in America every year
- These days they are made from wood and graphite.

It is of course the humble pencil!

History of the Pencil:

Before the pencil was developed the ancient Roman scribes used a metal rod called a Stylus to write on wax. Some of the early styluses were made from lead but today a substance called Graphite is used. Because Graphite is very soft and brittle, it needs to be wrapped in something. In the 1560's string used to be wrapped around the Graphite but by 1812 wood was used.

The early wood pencils weren't painted so as to show off their high quality, but by the 1890's many manufacturers were painting and giving their pencils brand names.

In China in the 1800's, where the best Graphite came from, the colour yellow was used. This was because the colour yellow was associated with royalty. That's why even today 75% of the pencils sold in the USA are painted yellow.

Today the centre of the pencil is a mixture of Graphite and clay. By varying the ratio of Graphite to clay, pencil makers can adjust the hardness of the pencil. Some manufacturers use the letter "H" to indicate the hardness and the letter "B" to indicate the blackness. The letter "F" is also sometimes used to indicate the fineness.

Application:

So what can we learn from the pencil?

1. If I were to give you this pencil (the one with no lead), could you use it to write with? Why? Because it doesn't have a lead in the middle of it – it would be a bit "pointless" .

That's like a lot of people today who aren't Christians – they don't have Jesus in their life. Without Jesus in your life you're missing the most important ingredient. He can fill the emptiness. Matthew 5 v 6 says "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled".

2. What good is this pencil if I leave it lying here on the table? It's of no use, I need to pick it up and hold it.

Our lives are like that because we need God to take hold of our lives and allow him to work through us. Psalm 9 v 9-10 says "If I settle on the far side of the sea, even there

your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast”. So we’re only of some use when God is controlling us.

3. So we’ve got a pencil with a lead and we’ve got it in our hand – what do we need to do now? We need to use it to make a mark – to write with it.

You use one every day at school to do your Maths, spelling, artwork, Science and English. If we are followers of Jesus then we should be making a mark for Jesus – telling others about Jesus, supporting missionaries, caring for the sick and elderly, giving gifts to help the poor to name but a few. The work we do for the Kingdom of God is worthwhile work, 1 Corinthians 15 v 58 says “Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain”.

4. Finally, what can happen to your pencil if you have been using it all day? It loses its sharpness and you need to get out your pencil sharpener to sharpen it.

Followers of Jesus need to keep sharp too. What sort of things can Christians do to stay sharp or focused on God’s work?

- Read the Bible and other Christian books
- Go to church and Sunday school
- Pray and ask God for help
- Meet with other Christians in small groups to study the Bible

So the next time you pick up a pencil, remember what it can teach you!