

John Hus, Bohemian Reformer, Gives His Life for Christ

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

II Timothy 2:15

Play can be used for Reformation Day (October 31)
(Middle school level)

Background Information

John Hus (Jan Huss) was born in Hussenitz, Bohemia (modern day Slovakia) in 1369, during the Middle Ages or Dark Ages in Europe, where the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ was not yet in the hands of the common people, the peasants. He was ordained to the Catholic priesthood in 1402 and was later made Rector of the University of Prague. God used an earlier reformer from England, John Wycliffe, and his writings to influence and teach John Hus the truths of Scripture, for as Hus diligently studied the Word of God, he discovered the established church in Bohemia embraced many unscriptural doctrines and practices.

As he began to preach and teach these “new” doctrines of Biblical truth, he was criticized and warned by the established church, and finally excommunicated and removed from the University of Prague by the king in 1412. At the Council of Constance, Switzerland in 1414 John Hus made the ultimate sacrifice for His Lord and Savior—rather than recant any of his scriptural doctrines—he was burned at the stake on July 6, 1415.

Props

- Necklace nametag for each character
- Two music stands, one for the Narrator and one for a preaching podium
- Two separate sets of old books
- An indulgence (3x4 card declaring, “Your sins are forgiven!”)
- Table with candle sitting on top and two chairs
- A pole to be used as a stake, and stand (a tall wooden pole painted like rough wood placed in a stand)
- Rope to bind Hus to stake
- A tall pointed paper hat with pictures of demons/devils drawn on it and the words, “This is a heretic”

Characters and Costumes

- **Narrator** in modern clothes
- **John Hus** in robe with belt (choir robes work well)
- **John’s Mother** in Middle Ages costume: long sleeve blouse (chemise) and long skirt
- **John’s Father** in Middle Ages costume: loose-fitting long sleeve drop yoke shirt and knee breeches
- **Anne of Bohemia** in royal dress and crown

- **Cardinal Anthony** in dark robe and miter (curved, tall, white head-covering)
- **Two Executioners** each in a black robe with hood

Blocking

Narrator stands stage right of center stage at a music stand with a copy of the skit and his lines highlighted. At stage left **John Hus** and **John's Father** stand around the table and two chairs, and **John's Mother** is seated. A candle, a set of books and an indulgence is on the table. At center stage there is a music stand for **John Hus's** church podium.

Play: John Hus, Bohemian Reformer, Gives His Life for Christ

Narrator: Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Jesus' death bought freedom from sin for mankind. Men for centuries have experienced this blessed freedom. Yet men who were free from the bondage of sin were not free from the bondage to antichristian governments. For a millenium men believed the idea of "the divine right of kings" which meant that certain men, such as kings, were placed in power by God Himself and could rule others without their consent or agreement. Under this form of government, there was no freedom of conscience, no full freedom of speech, no equality for all men and women, no rule by law, and no representation.

(Narrator raises his arm toward the audience)

But God had a plan! God knew that to be truly free, each person must be able to study the Bible himself. There were many truths about freedom still locked away in God's Word. But the few Bibles written were not available to the common person. God used John Hus in Europe in the 14th century to continue to open the door to many more Biblical truths.

John Hus was born in 1396 of peasant parents in Bohemia, which is now modern day Slovakia, in the city of Hssenitz.

John's Father: *(John's Father puts his arm around John's shoulder)*

Little John, you will receive the best education we can find: then we will send you to the finest university, the one in Prague.

John's Mother: *(John's Mother stands up and addresses John)* By God's grace you will grow up to be a preacher to the Bohemian people!

(John's Father and Mother exit the stage)

Narrator: John made many friends in Prague. He was a fine scholar and while he was in his early 20's, he became widely known for his preaching in Bohemian instead of in the educated Latin tongue.

(John Hus walks to the center of the stage and addresses the audience)

Hus: Why should I preach the good news in Latin, the language of the church—a language that few can understand? I will preach in Bohemian—the language of my people. Then they can know and understand the many wonderful truths found in the Bible! And along with the established church, I will attempt to disprove the teachings of Wycliffe and the early reformation.

- Narrator:** He was so loved by the people that he was appointed the pastor of Bethlehem Chapel, where the gospel was only preached in Bohemian.
- (Hus walks back to his chair and table and sits down to study)*
- Narrator:** *(Anne of Bohemia enters the stage and stands in the center as the Narrator addresses the audience.)* About this time, Anne of Bohemia was wed to King Richard in England. God was providentially preparing this young princess to help spread the Gospel.
- Anne of Bohemia:** I have been studying the teachings of John Wycliffe, the man who has made the first English translation of the Bible. As a Christian, I believe these teachings are from God's Holy Word and teach much truth! I want to help Bohemian students travel to England to attend Oxford University. There they can study John Wycliffe's writings for themselves and then take back the true gospel to Bohemia!
- Narrator:** Thus God used Anne of Bohemia to bring the true gospel to Bohemia, and that is where John Hus first heard it. *(Anne of Bohemia exits the stage.)*
- Hus:** *(Looks over the books on his table.)* The writings of this great man, John Wycliffe, reveal many wrongs of the established church. I myself have been blinded for many years, but now I see. I see now that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church—not a church official, a mere man! I know now that it is not Biblical to confess your sins to a priest only, instead of to Jesus! I Timothy 2:5 says that there is "one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."
- (Hus stands to his feet and shakes his fist in the air)* And this selling of indulgences—it must cease! People must not be deceived into believing that they can be forgiven of their sins by buying a piece of paper. *(Tear up an indulgence that is on the table.)*
- Ah, the grace of God! I now see that we are saved by His grace and forgiveness alone. Traveling on a pilgrimage, attending Mass, and other good works do not buy our salvation.
- Hus:** *(Walks over to his church podium)* I cannot compromise God's Word. I must speak out now to my beloved people about the wrongs I find within the Church!
- Narrator:** Hus was made head of the University of Prague and preached diligently the truths revealed to him. Later, Pope Alexander banned the reformer John Wycliffe's teachings from England and Bohemia.
- Hus:** It is wrong to forbid the reading of John Wycliffe's books on God's truths just because they are not liked by some church authority!
- Narrator:** Later, however, because of radical sermons against the morals of the Catholic clergy, Hus was excommunicated from the Catholic church and then removed from the University.
- Hus:** With God's help I will continue to preach God's truth so that all men may know the way to eternal life. So . . . does anyone know where there is an empty barn? I need a place to lead a worship service!
- Narrator:** Several years passed. Then in 1414, the Emperor of Germany, Sigismund, brought together a great meeting in Constance, Switzerland. Over 4,000 patriarchs, archbishops, cardinals, priests, and even the Pope came together to settle disputes of the church.
- Hus:** I will go to this Council in Switzerland. The emperor has promised me that I will be kept safe. I will be able to clarify my teachings and the truths that I preach from the Bible.

Narrator: Things did not go well at the Council as Hus expected and hoped. Emperor Sigismund turned coward and did not protect Hus as he promised. Forty charges were brought against John Hus, and he was ordered to recant.

Hus: I am told to recant—to say that all I have been preaching and teaching is wrong. I have not been given one chance to explain my views or to show the Council the truths of the Holy Scriptures. (*Looks up to heaven*) How can this be, dear God?

Narrator: Hus has had no trial, but his sentence is read; he is ordered to be executed.

(*Cardinal Anthony and Two Executioners enter the stage, one Executioner with ropes and the other with the stake and stand. They pull Hus from his podium and bind him to the stake at the left of his podium.*)

Hus: Lord God, pardon my enemies. Thou knowest that I have been falsely accused and unfairly sentenced. I pray thee, in Thine unspeakable mercy, not to lay this to their charge.

Cardinal Anthony: I order you, John Hus, once more, to confess your errors and retract them before it is too late.

Hus: (*Addresses the audience*) The bishops want me to recant, but if I were to do so, I should be a liar before God.

(*Cardinal Anthony places the pointed paper cap on Hus's head and steps back.*)

Narrator: A paper cap is placed upon Hus's head—a mock crown—with figures of devils upon it and the words, “*This is a Heretic*”. As Hus is burned at the stake, what words do the people hear?

Hus: (*Looks up to heaven intently*) I will extol thee, O Lord, for Thou has lifted me up and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on me.

Narrator: On July 6, 1415, the body of John Hus was reduced to ashes, but the truths that he so boldly taught were believed more fervently than ever by others and began to rapidly spread. Slowly but steadily, other reformers, like Martin Luther and William Tyndale, gave the common people in their own countries the Bible in their own language. Thus, the way was paved for true liberty to be discovered, liberty such as we enjoy each and every day in America.

Sources

“Faithful Unto Death”, Christian History Institute, Number 14

John Hus. (1997). Retrieved from <http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/john-hus.html>