

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB



***CLOSE ENCOUNTERS
WITH THE MESSIAH***

CLOSE ENCOUNTER'S CLUB!

WOW!

Kids—bunches of them!

All of them want to come to our church to learn about living the Christian life.

OH-OH!

Parents—bunches of them!

All of them want to send their kids to the CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB.

CALM DOWN!

You are in charge. (Say that three times—slowly.)

WHEW!

Here's what to do...let us answer your questions.

WHAT IS CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB?

Close Encounters Club is a midweek Kids' Club where kindergarten through grade six students learn how to live the Christian life in a casual, fun atmosphere. For ninety minutes, students enter a world where stories from the Bible come alive. Music, stories, activities, games, crafts and snacks make this unique Biblical encounter the highlight of their week. They develop a sense of "*belonging*" to a remarkable society, making new friends while bringing personal friends into a safe and exciting environment.

How many kids are enrolled in Cub Scouts, Brownies, sport activities, cheerleading? You name it, we put our kids in it! Let's not miss the opportunity for a great outreach to our community and our church. Imagine if all the kids in your church and the churches around you became involved in **Close Encounters Club!** Think of the positive impact on children, adults and families and ask yourself, "*Why not?*" A church can change the world by loving its' children. It is one of the most powerful changes any church can make.

Change "I'm bored," into "Ooh, Aah, What are we doing next week?" This is a program designed for elementary learning styles. Instead of lectures and quiet times adults enjoy, this curriculum features interaction and laughter, silliness mixed with serious subjects and short spurts of high energy activity balanced by faith moments spent with leaders. Throw away student workbooks! They *live* Bible experiences. They will never forget it!

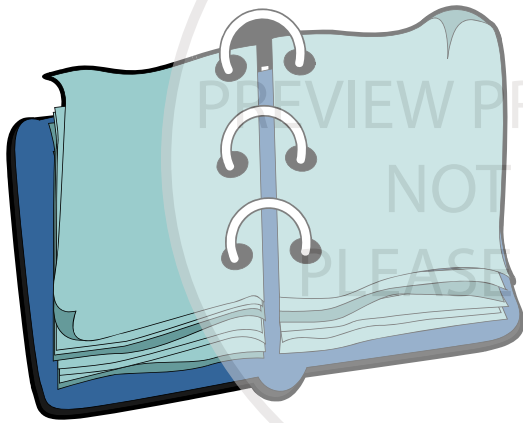
GIVE ME BASICS—WHAT HAPPENS?

Students arrive at the church and begin their adventure with a snack, table games and announcements. Divided into groups, they travel to the inspiring *Learning Center* or *Surprise Shoppe*. The learning activity could be a craft, meeting someone from a Bible story, bumping into a community leader or developing a theme room based on the Scripture focus.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

:00-4:20	SNACK AND YAK
4:20-4:40	THE LEARNING CENTER
4:40-5:00	THE SURPRISE SHOPPE
5:00-5:30	CLOSEENCOUNTERSINGERS

WHAT IS THE YEARLY PLAN?



Close Encounters Club is divided into trimesters. Each trimester is twelve weeks long beginning with a *Family Night Dinner* and ending with *Show Off Night*. In between are ten weeks of Bible fun and facts. **Close Encounters Club** runs with the school year with ample vacation time between sessions to recharge the staff.

Adapt the sessions as desired. Some churches prefer to use two sessions per year, leaving the third twelve week curriculum for the next year. Moving the third session to September does not hurt the program at all! This may depend upon spring community activities. It may be difficult to function if students must choose between their school sport and **Close Encounters Club**. Some churches choose to open the school year with a *Family Night Dinner* and close the year with another family function. *Show Off Night* is always popular and should remain at the end of each curriculum session to bring families together.

Build in church calendar dates for *Family Night Dinner*, ten weeks of class time and *Show Off Night*. Block out the weeks when **Close Encounters Club** will not be in session due to holidays, school breaks and church events. Once the calendar is complete, communicate the plan to church staff, leaders, parents and students. ***A good rule to follow: If school is not in session, neither is Close Encounters Club.*** This assures the safety of students in case of inclement weather and eliminates transportation problems during school vacation days.

I AM A PARENT, WHAT DO I DO?

We need you! If your child is a member of **Close Encounters Club**, involve yourself on a weekly basis. If your work schedule interferes with volunteering, be aware of snack and financial needs. Offer to help when you can and support the leaders with prayer and encouragement. Question your children about their club activities. Help them learn about Jesus at home. Show videos, read stories, keep up with what they are learning at church.

I AM A LEADER, WHAT DO I DO?

Lots!–But it's all fun! Once you commit yourself to the students of **Close Encounters Club**, read all the materials for the session. When assigned a leadership position, do it with a sense of responsibility and joy! Put your faith on your face! It communicates volumes. Your cheerful attitude will be caught by leaders and students. Spend time with students and not other adult leaders. This is their time. They need your attention. Gather supplies and decorate your activity center appropriately. Individual lesson preparation is fast and easy. Allow student groups to interact with the decoration, chat, ask questions and participate during class time. This is a more loosely organized atmosphere than the disciplined school experience.

EXPLAIN THE WEEKLY SCHEDULE ...WILL I ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE?

Sure you will! Part of the fun is the fellowship that develops between the leaders and assistants. Choose a day and time that accommodates the majority of teachers and students. Consider school dismissal time and travel time. Some clubs are successful when scheduled in the evening, others work well when planned after school. Once a weekday and time is established, try not to change it. Families begin to think of Wednesday (or whatever day you choose) as **Close Encounters Club** day. Do not confuse them.

The group meets ninety minutes each week during the ten weeks of classes. Begin and end on time. Stress the importance of picking up children on time. Attend **Close Encounters Club** for the full ninety minutes. Come early to greet students as they arrive. Eat and play games with them at *Snack and Yak*. Sing during *Cloencountersingers* and stay until the last students have gone home.

Each of the twenty minute activity centers is fun and meaningful for students and leaders. Enter into the activities with enthusiasm and watch your Close Encounters Club grow!

SNACK AND YAK

Students enter the snack area and get their food immediately. If students come after school, snacks keep tummies from grumbling. It is also a great way to tempt everyone to become involved from the moment they arrive. If your **Close Encounters Club** is held in the evening, a snack is also advised. Kids love to eat anytime and it is a fantastic people mixer.

Tables and chairs provide a spot to eat, talk and play a game. Scatter a variety of small table games and puzzles throughout the room. These should be fun, attractive and in good shape. Throw away the frayed leftovers of days gone by. Replace missing pieces and broken parts immediately. Use the last minute or two to give instructions, make announcements and divide into separate groups.

Table Games: *Mazes, puzzles, play doh, building blocks (legos), board games—chess, checkers, Perfection, pick up sticks, dominoes, and other games available through stores.*

Large Muscle Games: *Consider some large group activities like basketball, bingo, tag, dodge ball, parachute (sheet) tosses, obstacle course races, balloon games, relay races. Purchase a game book and play games that your local kids enjoy. Choose one activity for each week.*

Offer all table games every week. Students delight in moving from table to table and changing players as they go. Some kids may simply enjoy eating their snack while talking with friends. Still others are ready to let off steam and need to run, jump and play. Offer all of these options every week and let them choose. The happy chaos that results is a delight to the children and an opportunity to talk, play and laugh for the adults.

A formal listing of names, addresses, grades/ages, parents, church, etc. is helpful in the planning process. A neat way to take attendance informally is to ask the pastor to be the **Keeper of the Book**, moving from table to table, checking off each name and making small talk. It is a wonderful way for the pastor to make an appearance and for the students to feel that they have a personal relationship with their minister. *“The pastor knows MY name,”* is an important part of growing up in the church.

THE LEARNING CENTER

After Snack and Yak, students move into the Bible learning portion of the day. They may hear a Bible story, meet characters from the Holy Land, play roles, eat appropriate foods, discuss *hot* issues kids face every day or participate in activities that make the specific Bible theme come to life. Each twelve week session deals with a different theme coming from the Old Testament, New Testament or Relationships. The entire curriculum hits highlights of scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

THE SURPRISE SHOPPE

The students play games, make crafts or grow a theme room. Students build their own Garden of Eden, SS Ark and Church chapel. They even go to prison with Paul. Who knows what will be happening from week to week? Decorate an empty space to reflect the theme from items found in homes and attics. Teachers involved in this area must keep the element of surprise involved each week. No amount of begging, bribing or threat will pry the surprise from the lips of those involved.

CLOSEENCOUNTERSINGERS

The music program is built around songs that fit the theme. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES suggests music books and audio tapes which may be purchased as an accessory to the curriculum. *Closetountersingers* includes all students AND all leaders. Asking the leaders and assistants to participate in the music program adds voice to the choir and a helping hand with controlling discipline.

APPROVALS

For the convenience of the purchaser, permission is granted by CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES to copy any and all materials needed for the local church involved in this program. Make as many copies as needed to present the program effectively. Craft patterns should be copied onto card stock or heavy paper. When sharing the great time your group has had, pass along the following information:

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES

Call Toll Free: 1-888-CEM-LIFE

Ask for: Ellen Bunnell

This courtesy allows us to continue to provide curriculum at a low cost to churches across the country. A variety of child friendly Bible translations have been used in the curriculum. Materials utilized from other authors are acknowledged and permission has been gained when possible.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS SPECIAL EVENTS

THE FAMILY NIGHT DINNER

Build in an evening to begin each twelve week session when parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and friends come to eat dinner with their favorite child. Plan a covered dish dinner with families including their favorite casserole, salad or dessert to the buffet table. Add beverages, paper plates, cups, napkins and silverware from the church and you have—instant dinner! Plan the starting time so that working parents have time to get home, pick up the food and children and hurry back to church for dinner.

Publicize the Family Night Dinner through church communications, notes sent home with Sunday School students and a special mailing to neighborhood families. Invite every child in the area. Think of families who have no church connections. Consider combining forces with other churches in your local area to add leadership and numbers to the club.

After dinner, present the upcoming events to the parents while students meet with Closecountersinger leaders. New songs are introduced while the adults plan the rest of the program. Many leaders will come from this meeting. Parents need to be informed of future events, discipline problems, fund raisers, calendar scheduling, etc. The parents become an active volunteer group. Pass the COUNT ON ME sign up sheets around the room for volunteers willing to provide snacks, help with crafts, teach or drive when necessary. Always ask them to volunteer for a specific date. It will make weekly planning much easier.

<i>SAMPLE SCHEDULE</i>	
6:00-6:40	<i>DINNER AND CLEAN UP</i>
6:40-7:00	<i>GROWN UP PLANNING</i>
	<i>CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS</i>
7:00	<i>DISMISS</i>

SHOW OFF NIGHT

Show Off Night is Week #12 in each curriculum session. This is an opportunity for the Close Encounters Club Kids to show their families and friends what they have learned.

<i>SAMPLE SCHEDULE</i>	
6:30	<i>WELCOME AND THEME SONG</i>
6:35	<i>SONGS OF CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS</i>
6:45	<i>THE THINGS WE HAVE BEEN LEARNING</i>
6:55	<i>INTRODUCE AND THANK LEADERS</i>
7:00	<i>DISMISS FOR A SNACK AND FELLOWSHIP</i>

COUNT ON ME VOLUNTEER LIST

We need YOU!

Sign your name and telephone number beside the job you are willing to do.

NUMBER	HELP NEEDED	NAME	TELEPHONE
WEEK #2:			
WEEK #3:			
WEEK #4:			
WEEK #5:			
WEEK #6:			
WEEK #7:			
WEEK #8:			
WEEK #9:			
WEEK #10:			
WEEK #11:			

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE

WEEK #12:

SHOW OFF NIGHT! COME AND ENJOY THE SHOW!

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB SIX YEAR PLAN

YEAR #1

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH CREATION...God's Book of Beginnings
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MESSIAH...Who Is Jesus?
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH ME...Learning to Like and Build UP Me!

YEAR #2

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE GENESIS PEOPLE...The Real Old Timers
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE JESUS PEOPLE...People Who Knew Jesus
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH MY PEOPLE..How To Live In A Family

YEAR #3

WALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN...Moses and The Forty Year Trek
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE CHURCH...Adventures in Acts
WALK LIKE A CHRISTIAN...Basics Of the Faith

YEAR #4

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ARK ON A LARK...Noah's Great Adventure
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MAILMAN...New Testament Letters
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH MY WORLD...Growing In Maturity

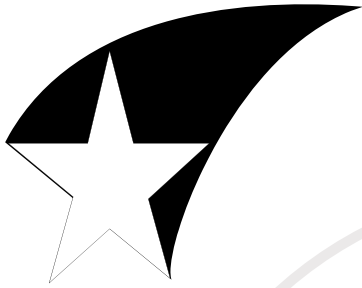
YEAR #5

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE BOOK...What's The Bible All About?
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH TOMORROW...All About Heaven
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH FRIENDS...Good friends, Bad Friends, Picking Friends

YEAR #6

ADVENTURES WITH HEROES...Old Testament Heroes
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DREAM TEAM...The Disciples of Jesus
CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH MONSTERS UNDER THE BED.. Kids' Scary Issues

LET'S GET READY!



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB is basic so all young students can understand the spiritual message communicated while keeping the interest of the oldest club members. The material is broadly graded so students can be grouped together.

THE LEARNING CENTER and THE SURPRISE SHOPPE may be divided into several smaller groups using separate teams of teachers who carry out specific activities. If your club is reaching a small number of children (20 or less), keep everyone together for the entire program.

When dividing into small groups, consider how much leadership is required. A large church may be able to divide into separate groups for each grade. Medium sized churches may want to group Kindergarten-Grade 1, Grades 2-3, Grades 4-6. These groups rotate to the various centers. Some time changes will be necessary with this type of organization. Clubs of less than fifty member may be divided into two groups. They switch centers after twenty minutes. The same teaching team teaches their material twice.

RECRUITING LEADERSHIP

The Close Encounters Club committee must be functioning before the school year begins. This committee will make all decisions concerning the organization of the club year. Choose people who have a heart for children's ministry and the cheerful soul of a child. Because this program depends upon enthusiasm, it is important to have people who appreciate fun and games and who will commit themselves to success.

CHAIRPERSON: A committed Christian adult who is willing to organize all committee meetings and make final decisions for Close Encounters Club. The chairperson ideally is someone other than the Pastor who is already busy in the life of the church.

SECRETARY/TREASURER: A committed Christian adult who attends all meetings, take notes, handle correspondence, keep files, order materials and handle the checkbook.

ALL TEACHERS: Committed Christians who are willing to attend committee meetings, plan the year and fulfill their various teaching roles on a weekly basis.

PARENTS: Moms and Dads who are willing to share leadership as needed. Involve them to the point of coming when they can as assistants, attending Family Night Dinners, Show Off Nights and providing snacks once in awhile.

*New leaders are appointed before each school year begins.
Communicate that these positions do not mean lifetime service.
Stick to it and develop new leadership where needed each year.*

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR RECRUITING LEADERS

- 1. There is nothing like face to face contact when asking a leader for a serious commitment.** Do not rely on a note posted in the weekly bulletin or newsletter stating, “We need teachers.” You may be disappointed. Ask personally.
- 2. Describe the job.** Be truthful and complete in your explanation. No sugar coating allowed! It isn't fair to say, “*You won't have to do much. Just show up.*”
- 3. Tell leaders who they will be working with and what kind of support they can expect from the church and from club leadership.** It is important to support the team with prayer, resources and teaching tips.
- 4. Tell leaders the length of their commitment.** All existing leaders are given the first chance to take the same position for the next year but are free to say no or to move into another spot.
- 5. Take your time when asking a person to become a leader.** Go to their home or sit in a quiet place to talk. If they say yes, terrific. If they want time to think about it, call in 24-48 hours to ask again. If the person says no, ask why and see if their doubts can be alleviated. If you sense a definite no, thank them for considering your request and let them go without guilt.
- 6. Ask all leaders to sign a teacher's covenant.** This includes a job description of what is expected of them through the year. Attach the appropriate explanations the specific areas from this information to the covenant.

RECRUITMENT TIME LINE

MARCH AND APRIL

Present midweek program to church for Board approval

MAY

Interest meeting with parents. Discuss leaders and funding.

JUNE AND JULY

Recruit leaders. Publicize!

AUGUST

Register students

SEPTEMBER

Close Encounters Club begins!

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

IS EACH LEADER IMPORTANT?

AM I PUTTING MY EFFORTS IN THE RIGHT PLACE?

Marlene LeFever, Christian education specialist,
wrote this insightful story in “A Teacher’s Touch”:

Forty years ago a Philadelphia congregation watched as three nine year olds were baptized and joined the church. Not long after, unable to continue with dwindling membership, the church sold the building and disbanded. One of those boys was Dr. Tony Campolo, Christian sociologist at Eastern College, Pennsylvania and pastor to U.S. Presidents. ‘Years later when I was doing research in the archive of our denomination,’ Tony said, ‘I decided to look up the church report for the year of my baptism. There was my name and Dick White’s. He is now a missionary. Bert Newman, now a professor of theology at an African seminary, was also there. Then I read the church report for my year: “It has not been a good year for our church. We have lost 27 members. Three joined and they were only children.’

CARE AND FEEDING OF CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB LEADERS

It is important to take care of the leaders God has provided.

The best method of care taking is to communicate important information, offer support and initiate training.

- 1. PRAY.** God knows the best way to get things done at your church with your people. He will show you the most effective way to reach the children of your church and community through your midweek program. Ask Him!
- 2. ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS AND COMMUNICATE ANSWERS.** Give leaders the sense that what they do is important for God's kingdom. "Why are we doing what we are doing?" "What is our purpose?" "Where is God working?"
- 3. ADAPT THE MIDWEEK PROGRAM TO FIT YOUR NEEDS.** Is the major purpose outreach and evangelism? Choose leaders who are called to evangelism. Consider selecting a musical with a good message and spend time perfecting a presentation. Music leaders who devote themselves to practice make a difference. Plan a series of trips to places of interest in your area. Parents are great trip counselors. If your group meets only a few times a year, concentrate on kids bringing friends and making contacts for other church programs. Use charismatic leaders who motivate the crowd.
- 4. LOOK FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE TEACHABLE, FLEXIBLE, DEPENDABLE AND ARE TEAM PLAYERS.** Don't wait for volunteers to come to you. Potential leaders often think they are not good at teaching and some simply have never been asked! The personal approach works best with eye to eye contact and a warm smile and a promise of relationship building.
- 5. PRESENT EACH TASK AS AN OPPORTUNITY NOT A PREDICAMENT.** The assignment should be a ministry not a crisis. Ask specific people for a specific job. Avoid appearing out of nowhere with a help request. Let them observe before making a decision.
- 6. TRAIN LEADERS FOR SUCCESS.** It takes time, energy and patience to prepare leaders. One Christian educator says, "It is a sin to give lay people a job and not tell them how to do it!"
- 7. SAY THANK YOU!** Recognize volunteer leaders by finding personal and surprising ways to say thank you publically and privately. Small gifts, thank you notes, applause and other small expressions of appreciation are taken seriously by the leaders who are looking for confirmation of a successful program. Do not be stingy with praise! Lavish it upon every leader early and often.

**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB
LEADER'S COVENANT**

I _____, the undersigned, promise to take seriously the CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB position of _____. I will perform this job faithfully as a committed Christian in my local church.

***I will attend each week.** If I cannot attend, I will arrange a substitute and will notify the CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB Director as soon as I know I cannot be in my appointed position.*

***I will treat each child with the respect due him or her.** I will encourage each child and will listen to each child when they want my attention.*

***I will study the work set before me** each week in order to present the best program that is within my ability so that children will most likely come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.*

***I will participate wearing a smile** and exhibiting a pleasant attitude toward the people with whom I will be in contact. I plan to have a very good time!*

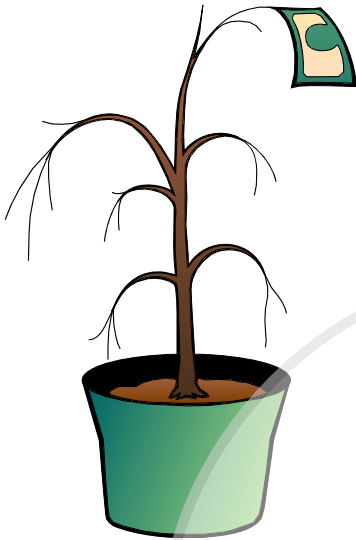
***I will try to the best of my ability to live a Christian testimony** that will most likely encourage others to want to be like me because I am Christ filled.*

***I promise to pray for the children I work with on a regular basis.** If it is within my ability to help any child, I will do my best to help.*

***I promise to forgive myself for any mistakes I might make.** It is not necessary to be perfect. I am God's child and He will make up the difference. He knows my heart.*

Signed _____

FINANCING CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB



Money grows on trees, right? Plant, water, weed, harvest a few ripe green bills and the problem is solved! Well...not quite.

Touch the lives of the church congregation and reach into the local community to children from other churches and even unchurched neighborhood children. There are a variety of ways to finance this special outreach effort of the local church. Choose the option that appeals to your local congregation.

CHURCH BUDGET

Ask to be considered a budget item on the church books. Depending upon the number of children involved, ask for \$500-\$750 per year. This should cover the cost of curriculum, craft and office supplies and some of the snacks. More money may be needed if the leaders decide to provide a club shirt for each leader and club member.

REGISTRATION FEE

A registration fee is an easy way to cover some of the costs for each child. No child should be refused for lack of a registration fee. A \$5.00 fee for one twelve week session will help pay the bills. Discuss this with the leaders.

WEEKLY DUES

Ask each child to bring \$1.00 per week for the cost of the snack and craft supplies. No child should be refused for lack of weekly dues.

CHURCH SPONSORS

Ask members of the congregation to sponsor Close Encounters Club by giving gifts of \$10-\$20-\$50-\$100. They become Honorary Close Encounters Club members and receive membership cards and open invitations to all club activities. The children should learn the names of these special families and write thank you notes during a *Snack and Yak* session.

ADOPT A CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB KID

Church families may consider adopting one child as their own. This family pays all registration fees and weekly dues for that child. These families attend all dinners as part of the family. This is a opportunity for leaders to suggest children who may not be able to participate because of difficult situations in the home. They also take the responsibility of praying for this child every week during the months of **Close Encounters Club**.

FUND RAISING

Be sensitive to the desires of your local church and the needs of the families involved when fund raising. Sell inexpensive items like candy bars, submarine sandwiches or pizzas. Consider sponsoring a church family spaghetti or chicken and biscuit dinner. All donations are donated to **Close Encounters Club** expenses.

Never sponsor a fund raising activity which requires children to sell items door to door. Our communities are no longer safe havens and we must protect our children by keeping them in family settings.

DENOMINATION SUPPORT

Some Christian denominations reserve funds for churches in their districts, regions or conferences specifically to assist in mission efforts. Ask about special memorials or grants available for children's ministries. You may be pleasantly surprised to find the help you need!

ANOTHER FINANCIAL ISSUE: CHECK THE CHURCH INSURANCE PLAN!

Many churches build protection for all groups meeting in the building into the basic insurance coverage they carry. Be sure your church covers all children and leaders in the building while they are participating in any **Close Encounters Club** event.

Be certain your group is covered if you take them away from the church property? Will everyone be insured if there is a car or bus accident? Even if you think you know the answers to these questions, as the church finance committee to check and be absolutely certain before the program begins.

If there is no insurance coverage or limited coverage, provide what you need through the church or by charging each member a token fee to cover the added premium to the church's existing policy. No one wants to think about injury or death to anyone involved in Close Encounters Club activities, but the times to find out and be prepared is BEFORE such an accident occurs.

THE SNACK AND YAK PACK



*Open a can, tear open a package of cookies
or design a gourmet meal, you choose!
This is a popular stop for every kid!*

*SNACK AND YAK is a group of adults who take their responsibility for the first twenty minutes of **Close Encounters Club** seriously. They provide a snack for each child. They prepare table games and sport activities. These adults supervise all action for this portion of club time.*

Greet each Close Encounters Club member cheerfully. Store coats, boots, school books, musical instruments and back packs in an out of the way, easy access area. Use the same area each week so young club members learn where to find their belongings.

CASUAL, CASUAL, CASUAL! Folks enter the SNACK AND YAK area where a variety of activities are prepared. Place weekly dues in a basket (Do not worry if some do not pay.). Delicious foods tempt students and leaders at the kitchen window and they carry their snack to a game table where they eat, talk and play a game. Students may move from table to table. Reserve one end of the area for a large muscle activity. Those who want to play a more active game gather in that area with a leader.

SNACKS: Make simple tasty snacks or complicated snacks or full meals, as desired. Some parents prefer nutritious foods but slip in some fun foods once in awhile for the “Wow!” factor. Often students are drawn to your program because you feed them. Make it a surprise.

A GENTLE SUGGESTION

Do not be held hostage to students who dislike the treat.

Resist the temptation to provide alternative snacks.

If someone does not like what is served, say, “Oh, I’m sorry.

Maybe you will enjoy next week’s snack. Would you like a glass of ice water?”

Never announce what next week's snack will be. Some students base their attendance on whether or not they like that food. Surprise is best! The only alternative snacks should be for students who have health or allergy issues.

NEVER—force anyone to eat ANYTHING. Learn from the drastic mistake of a preschool teacher who forced young student to eat a peanut butter cookie after his mother had informed the school of his peanut allergy and he tried to decline. He ate the cookie, had a major allergic reaction and nearly died. It just isn't worth it. Students won't starve if they refuse food offered.

Churches find that a simple meal shared once a week, brings everyone closer together. Foods can be simple and served on paper plates. Students should help with clean up. An expanded time must be considered if a meal is served.

YAK: Give students and leaders plenty of opportunity for casual talk. All *yakking* is done while seated at the game tables. If conversation is slow, start the gabfest by posing a fun discussion question (one each week):

*WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE GIVEN ONE MILLION DOLLARS?
IF YOUR HOUSE BURNED DOWN, WHAT ONE ITEM WOULD YOU GRAB? WHY?
WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF SCHOOL WAS CANCELED FOREVER?
WHERE WOULD YOU GO IF YOUR PARENTS SAID
YOU COULD TRAVEL ANYWHERE?
TELL US ALL THE FOODS IN YOUR FAVORITE MEAL.
IF YOU COULD PLAY ANY SPORT (AND BE THE BEST),
WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY?
WHO WOULD YOU BE IF YOU COULD BE ANYONE IN THE WORLD?*

ANOTHER GENTLE SUGGESTION

*Make a special effort during SNACK AND YAK to sit with a table of kids
and enter into the YAK conversation.*

*Club members should see leaders who genuinely enjoy being with kids
even during time when they could cluster in one corner of the room, drinking coffee.*

TABLE GAMES: Playing games is a relaxing way to ease everyone into the day's activities. Place games, building blocks, puzzles and other fun activities on the tables. Older students may enjoy a large puzzle that remains in place until it is completed. Young students like quick and easy building games with a lot of color. Adult and teen leaders should enter into the fun of table games. Teach chess or checkers. Young students learn to count or keep score.

YET ANOTHER GENTLE SUGGESTION

Do not keep old, beaten games with missing parts.

Purchase games and puzzles that are in good condition. Replace games as necessary. The SNACK AND YAK crew decides when it is time to retire an old game and select a new one.

RECREATION: Include some recreation styled action games. Some students need transition time between school and **Close Encounters Club**. Use some of the suggested games but consider purchasing a good game book and use it often. Rotate the games to avoid boredom. Revive old favorites like marbles that can be taught by an older generation to a new generation!

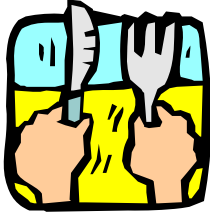
If the weather is nice, take SNACK AND YAK outdoors!

Games become more active.

Spread picnic ground cloths for casual conversation and quiet game playing.

ANNOUNCE AND ORGANIZE: Use the last few minutes to gather the group, make announcements for the day's activities and upcoming events. Introduce new club members, give them a round of applause and be sure that every student has a leader to follow to their first activity center.

SNACK AND YAK FOOD SUGGESTIONS



*Prepare snacks as simple or complicated
as the people providing them desire.
Keep the “healthy” factor in mind
and consider diabetics and special allergies.
Design menus that are fun for everyone involved.*

APPLE SLICES AND CHEESE CURLS
CELERY STICKS/CREAM CHEESE, PEANUT BUTTER AND RAISINS
PEANUT BUTTER AND BANANA SANDWICHES
VANILLA ICE CREAM WITH FRUIT COCKTAIL AND JUICE ON TOP
PEACH/CHERRY/APPLE COBBLER
WATERMELON SLICES
ORANGE SLICES
CANTALOUPE AND POTATO CHIPS
CAKE AND ICE CREAM
BANANA SPLITS
PIZZA SLICES
SOUP AND CRACKERS
HOT DOGS, FRITOS AND PEPSI
COOKIES—ALL KINDS/HOMEMADE OF COURSE!
CUPCAKES THEY CAN FROST AND DECORATE
BALOGNA SANDWICHES
POPSICLES/FUDGESICLES/SHERBET CUPS

BEVERAGES: Offer a drink with each snack. If you give it a really gross name, they love it! *Bug Juice, Suicide Soda* (A combination of every kind of juice available. Mix it in front of the group so everyone can see the awful combination. Hopefully it will remain zingy and tasteful.) *Slurp ‘N Burp, Green Grasshopper Squish, Snake Soup* (ice water that you explain had a big rattler dragged through it to give it flavor.) Put the drink of the week in a large thermos or cooler labeled with the name to elicit wonderful reactions and great YAK starters.

DINNER SUGGESTIONS: If desired, plan a small dinner each week. These foods can be simply made and simply served family style or buffet style. Use these suggestions or create your own luscious meals.

HOT DOGS, CHIPS, FRUIT AND BEVERAGE
SPAGHETTI, TOSSED SALAD AND ICE CREAM
HAMBURGERS, JELLO AND CHIPS, DESSERT
CHICKEN AND MACARONI AND CHEESE, PEAS AND DESSERT
SUBMARINE SANDWICHES, FRUIT SALAD AND DESSERT
TURKEY, FRENCH FRIES AND FRESH FRUIT
TOASTED CHEESE SANDWICH, TOMATO SOUP AND DESSERT
VEGETABLE SOUP, CRACKERS/BREAD AND BUTTER AND
DESSERT
LASAGNE AND TOSSED SALAD AND DESSERT
TACOS, CHIPS AND DESSERT
CHILI, CRACKERS AND DESSERT
PEANUT BUTTER SANDWICHES/
HOMEMADE BREAD, CHIPS, DESSERT
MC DONALD'S HAPPY MEAL NIGHT!

When providing a weekly dinner, organize a cooking crew and allow the students to help with clean up. More time will be needed so plan accordingly. Consider the cost. Plan the food into the budget or request donations. Set up the menus before the series begins and ask for help on a weekly basis.

SNACK RECIPES

ICE CREAM CAKE

1 (12 OZ.) Pkg. Oreos
1/3 C. butter

1 can Hershey Fudge Topping
1 large container Cool Whip

Mix crushed Oreos with the melted butter. Put 2 cups of the mixture into a cake pan and press down. Spoon softened ice cream over the mixture and smooth. Put the fudge topping over the ice cream. If fudge is too thick, thin with milk. Spread Cool Whip over the top and sprinkle with remaining Oreo mixture. Keep frozen.

GOB CAKE

1 Box devil's food (with pudding) cake mix
1 recipe Gob Cake Icing

Make cake exactly as directed on box. Line 2 cookie sheets with waxed paper. Spread 1/2 of batter on each sheet and bake at 350 degrees for 5-10 minutes. Spread Gob Icing between layers.

GOB ICING

10 T. flour
2 C. milk
2 sticks oleo
2 c. confectioners sugar
2 t. vanilla
1/2 t. salt

Cook flour and milk until thick. Cool mixture. Cream together oleo, shortening, sugar, vanilla and salt. Mix with cooled flour mixture and spread between layers of Gob Cake.

PUMPKIN LOG

3 eggs
1 C. sugar
2/3 C. pumpkin
1 t. soda
1/2 t. cinnamon
3/4 C. flour

Filling: 1 (8 oz.) Cream cheese 1 t. vanilla 2 T. butter 1 C. powdered sugar

Grease flour and line with waxed paper a jelly roll pan or cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 minutes. Flip out cake on a towel dusted with powdered sugar. Roll up in towel and let cool. Spread on cake leaving about an inch on the end exposed. Roll up toward the exposed end. Can be frozen.

DUMP CAKE

1 pkg. Yellow cake mix 1 C. chopped pecans
1 can (20 oz.) Crushed pineapple in syrup (undrained)
1 can (21 oz.) Cherry Pie Filling ½ C. butter or margarine
Apple cut in thin slices

Preheat oven to 350 degrees: 9 x 13 pan. Dump undrained pineapple into pan; spread evenly. Dump in pie filling and spread into even layer. Dump dry cake mix onto cherry layer; spread evenly. Sprinkle pecans over cake mix. Put butter over top. Bake at 350 for 48 to 53 minutes. Serve warm or cool.

PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH FUNNEL CAKES

1 C. Flour 1/4 t. salt
1/4 t. baking powder 2 eggs
2 T. sugar ½ C. milk

Sift dry ingredients. Beat eggs, add sugar and milk. Stir. Add ½ to ¾ cups milk until it makes the batter runny. Use a funnel with a ½ inch hole. Drop in a circle in hot oil. Be generous in the serving. If desired, sprinkle with powdered sugar.

FIVE CUP FRUIT SALAD

1 C. crushed pineapple (drained) 1 C. coconut
1 C. mini marshmallows 1 C. sour cream
1 C. mandarin oranges (drained) Add maraschino cherries

Mix together and put in refrigerator overnight.

TWENTY FOUR HOUR SALAD

3 ½ oz. Pkg. Instant vanilla pudding mix
11 oz. Mandarin orange sections
1 C. whipped cream 6 oz. Mini marshmallows
14 oz. Can fruit cocktail 2 sliced bananas

Mix well and chill.

CHEERIOS NUGGETS

1 C. packed brown sugar	½ t. baking soda
½ C. margarine or butter	6 C. Cheerios cereal
¼ C. light corn syrup	1 C. peanuts
½ t. salt	1 C. Raisins

Heat oven to 250 degrees. Grease 2 9 x 13 pans. Heat sugar, margarine, corn syrup and salt in a two quart saucepan over medium heat, stirring constantly until bubbly around edges. Cook uncovered stirring occasionally two minutes longer. Remove from heat. Stir in baking soda until foamy and light colored. Pour over cereal, peanuts and raisins in greased four quart bowl. Stir until mixture is coated. Spread evenly in pans. Bake 15 minutes. Stir. Let stand just until cool—about 10 minutes. Loosen mixture with metal spatula. Let stand until firm—about 30 minutes. Break into bite sized pieces. Makes about 10 cups.

MONKEY BREAD

3 Cans buttermilk biscuits	1 Stick margarine
1 C. white sugar	1 C. brown sugar
1 T. cinnamon	

Boil margarine and brown sugar for five minutes. Cut the biscuits into fours. Place in plastic bag with white sugar and cinnamon. Shake. Layer into greased angel food cake pan. Pour the brown sugar mix over all. Bake at 350 degrees for 30-35 minutes

NOTE: Remove from pan immediately!

NACHOS

1 bag tortilla chips, PLAIN not flavored
1- 8 oz. Pkg. Shredded cheddar cheese
1 envelope Hidden Valley Ranch Dressing, prepared as directed

Place tortilla chips in microwave dish. Put enough in to cover the bottom of the pan. Pour some of the dressing over, enough to coat well. Sprinkle cheese on top, about one handful. Microwave until cheese is melted, about 30 seconds. These ingredients make three batches.

PUPPY CHOW

8 C. rice chex cereal
1-12 oz. bag chocolate chips
2 C. powdered sugar
1 stick margarine
½ C. peanut butter

Melt chocolate chips, peanut butter and margarine in microwave on high until smooth. Put chex cereal in a large bowl. Pour melted chocolate over all. Cover the bowl and shake to coat the cereal. Remove seal, pour in powdered sugar. Reseal bowl and shake again. (A Tupperware bowl with a seal is ideal for this snack.)

PINEAPPLE UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

1 C. brown sugar
1-16 oz. can crushed pineapple...drained
2-10 oz. packs buttermilk biscuits
Cinnamon
1 stick margarine

Mix brown sugar, melted margarine and cinnamon. Add the drained pineapple to it. In the bottom of the pan spread the pineapple evenly. Spread brown sugar mix on top. Place whole biscuits on top...4 across and 5 down the sides. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes until well browned. As soon as it comes out of the oven, flip on platter. Spread topping evenly if needed.

GOOD GRIEF, IT'S GOULASH!

This sounds like a full meal but it is a great hot snack on a cold day. Give each person a small serving in a cup. Serve with crackers and a cold drink.

1 lb. Ground beef
¼ C. chopped onions
¼ t. garlic powder
1 t. salt
Dash pepper
2 t. sugar
¼ t. oregano
1 C. water
15 oz. tomato sauce
1 C. elbow macaroni

Put all ingredients in a large pan. Let the mixture come to a boil. Simmer 25-30 minutes stirring often. Very quick, very easy!

JELLO AND PRETZEL SALAD

Crush 20 pretzels (2 2/3 C.). Add to 3/4 C. melted butter and 3 T. sugar. Mix well. Press into a 9 x 13 pan and bake 8 minutes at 400 degrees. Let cool.

Combine 3/4 C. sugar or 1 C. confectioner's sugar, 1 (8 oz.) Cream cheese and 1 (9 oz.) Small Cool Whip. Mix and spread on top of cooled pretzels.

Combine 2 pkg. Strawberry or raspberry Jello, 2 C. boiling water, 1 pint frozen strawberries or raspberries. Let set and put on top of cream cheese. Cool in refrigerator.

TACO SALAD

1 lb. Ground beef ½ C. pitted ripe olives, drained
½ c. taco sauce 2 C. shredded cheddar cheese
1 chopped head lettuce 1 pkg. Taco tortilla corn chips (crumbled)
1 med. Green pepper, chopped ½ C. Thousand Island salad dressing
1 med. Tomato, cut into wedges

Cook and stir ground beef over medium heat until light brown. Drain. Stir in taco sauce and heat. Toss lettuce, green pepper, tomato wedges, olives, cheese and chips. Spoon hot beef mixture and salad dressing over lettuce. Toss. Serve immediately.

WALDORF SALAD

4 or 5 cut apples ½ c. chopped walnuts
½ pint whipped whipping cream ½ c. chopped celery
Combine all ingredients; sweeten to taste with powdered sugar.

HOT COCOA

Make this dry mix and keep on hand for a choice of drink on a cold afternoon.

8 qt. pkg. Dry milk 1 C. confectioners sugar
6 oz. jar Coffeemate 2 lb can of Nestle's Quik

GAMES FOR SNACK AND YAK

Provide a variety of table games like Checkers, Chess, Candyland, Old Maid, Trivial Pursuit or Bible Trivia. These classic favorites are placed on the tables each week. Purchase sets of Legos or similar block building sets popular with elementary age children. Place one or more sets on separate tables each week. Kids also enjoy games like pick up sticks, marbles, Perfection and Jenga.

Do not over organize this time period. Remember the students are arriving a few at a time. They may be tired from school activities and need a transition period to refresh themselves for the Close Encounters Club program. The snack should be ready to serve when the first people come in the door. Serve as they come and urge them to find a table where they can eat and begin to play a game.

Leaders should be scattered around the room at game tables. This is the perfect opportunity for leaders to mingle with the students as they arrive and become friends. It cannot be stressed enough that the adults use this Snack and Yak time in a positive way. Make it a policy to talk only to the students and not to the other adult or teen helpers.

There are times when the leaders may want to organize the group into formal game activities. Consider basketball, dodge ball, four square, relay races, parachute games or other competitions. If shy or tired students refuse to participate, allow them to rest and watch. They may play later or on another afternoon. Older elementary girls are especially “clannish” and prefer to talk among themselves or watch the game.

Establish a HOMEWORK CORNER. Students may receive help with spelling words or math problems. Station one or two leaders in this corner.

Use the group game resources available in your local book store or library. Purchase several game books and use them to play a variety of old and new games appropriate for each age group. The games should be quick, exciting and fun. Equipment must be on hand before the activity begins.

A Gentle Game Suggestion

It is nice to have games donated. The donations save money in the budget which can be used for other things. However, be sure the games are new. Puzzles must have all pieces and art supplies must not be dried or used up. Old or damaged games must be discarded at regular intervals. Insert new games when the students have played most of the old ones and need new challenges. Check out sales after the holidays and stock up on games before they are needed.

PLAY DOH AT THE TABLE

One popular table activity is designing shapes with Play Doh. The clay may be purchased or homemade. Use this excellent recipe. It is soft and when stored properly in zip lock bags and sealed containers, lasts a long time. Younger students head for this table every time. Add a few cookie cutters, rulers, shape cutters and small toys and time flies!

1 C. Flour	2 T. Cream of Tartar
½ C. salt	1 C. water
2 T. vegetable oil	Food coloring

Heat oil in saucepan. Add other ingredients to oil. Cook three minutes stirring constantly. Drop ball of dough on waxed paper and cool. Knead and separate as desired. Add food coloring while kneading.

PUPPETS AT THE TABLE

Sometimes puppets can help a shy person make the transition of becoming acquainted with new people. Let each person make a sack puppet of themselves. When they are finished, start around the room letting each puppet introduce himself. The attention is drawn to the puppet and not to the shy student.

DO-IT-YOURSELF

Equipment: *Each table is supplied with all sorts of materials such as construction paper, tinfoil, scotch tape, pip cleaners, ribbon, crepe paper, decorative, scraps, scissors, glue, crayons, pencils, rulers and buttons.*

Design individual creations or table creations designed by the entire group.

1. Decorate a hat
2. Table Centerpiece
3. Create a Scene (pick a theme)
4. Paper Bag Mask
5. Holiday Decorations
6. Fantasy Animals

NAME BINGO

Equipment: *One piece of white paper at each table. Crayons or markers.*

As each person arrives, ask them to sign a slip of paper and place it in the container provided. Pass out bingo forms. Give everyone five minutes to circulate around the room getting signatures in each box. Return to the tables and begin to play bingo using the slips of paper they signed. Call names.

Game Ideas: Letter X Bingo, Vertical Bingo, Horizontal Bingo, Double Bingo, Coverall

BALLOON BASKETBALL

Use an inflated balloon for the ball and boxes or wastepaper baskets for the goals. Score as in basketball except that a broken balloon counts five points off for the offending side. Be sure to have plenty of replacement “balls”.

BALLOON BATTLE ROYAL

Arrange the players in a large circle, each with an inflated balloon hanging from a string tied to the ankle. One signal, each player must try to break all other balloons by stamping on them. When a balloon breaks, it's owner leaves the circle and the game continues until only one player is left. This can be wild and a little dangerous for younger students.

RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

Play this game outdoors or in a large room. “It” turns his back on the rest of the group who are lined up 30-50 feet away from him. The object is for the group to walk or run toward “It” while his back is turned as he counts to five. At “five” he shouts, “Red Light!” as he turns around quickly. Any player who is moving when “It” turns must go back to the starting line. The first player to get to “It” and tag him wins the game and becomes “It”.

DUTCH SHOE RELAY

Give each team two shoe boxes. On signal, each student in turn places his feet in the boxes and shuffles to a goal line and back to the starting point where the next player repeats the action.

THREE LEGGED RACE

Run this contest on an individual or team basis. Tie a student’s left leg to an adult’s right leg. On signal, they make their way to the turning line and back again. The first team to complete the course wins.

PEOPLE ON A STRING

Equipment: *Ball of string with a spoon tied on the end for each team.*

Each team lines up side by side. The first player passes the spoon down the front of his shirt and lets it come out his pant leg below and then passes the spoon on to the next player. After the whole team is connected, reverse the process. The team that finishes first with the string all wound up on the ball and sitting down is the winner!

MAKE A FACE

Equipment: *One piece of white paper at each table. Crayons or markers.*

Pass the paper from one person to the next around the table. Each person must add part of a person’s face to the picture. The end result will be a hilarious looking “human” face. Take time to show each table’s efforts when done. Award prizes to the funniest, scariest, most beautiful, most colorful, booby prize.

More Face Game Ideas: Draw a fantasy animal, vacation home, car, boat, perfect school, perfect mom or the perfect church.

JUICE RACE

Equipment: *Large bowl filled with juice. Each table should have the same amount of juice. One tablespoon for each person at the table.*

The object of the game is to finish your bowl of juice before any other table. You must drink it one tablespoon at a time. Pass the bowl carefully around the table or lean into the center to take a spoonful. Repeat until the bowl is empty. The winning table is the first to place their spoons in the empty bowl and shout “Done!”.

More Food Game Ideas: Use Cheerios or mini crackers. Blindfold the table groups and ask them to spoon out their snack sight unseen. Use a variety of small snacks that are placed in the bowl secretly. Try items like olives, pickles, licorice, soft chocolate candies, m&m’s, bread cubes, potato chips and other odd foods mixed together.

BUILD THE TALLEST BUILDING

Using whatever equipment is available, each table must build a tall building within a one minute time limit (longer if desired). They must work together carefully so the building does not topple before it is measured. Make the task challenging by providing odd building materials. Include items such as tin cans, pencils, paper towels, pillows, hats, water, paper which they can fold in any manner to make the building taller. When the buildings are complete, make a big deal of measuring each structure with a measuring tape.

PASS THE RING

Equipment: *One ring from anyone’s finger.*

All students place their hands face down and flat out on the table. One person is chosen “It” and turns around. While “It” counts to ten the ring is passed from one person to another around the table. When “It” turns around, he must find the ring in two guesses. If caught with the ring, that person becomes “It”.

HOT POTATO INFO

Prepare a sack with questions written on cards such as: What is your favorite song? What is your favorite sport? What is your favorite Bible story? What is your favorite ice cream, etc. Have the players sit in a circle. Play music and start the sack around the circle. When the music stops, the player holding the sack must take a question and answer it. Start the music again. Proceed until everyone has had a chance to answer a question.

GET THOSE ANIMALS IN THE ARK

Float several small margarine tubs in a tub of water. Throw small rubber or plastic animals into the “boats” without sinking them.

CROSSING THE RED SEA

Make a circular path from large cards printed with number 1-20 on them. Place small cards numbered 1-20 in a bowl. Players must follow the path through the “Red Sea”. When the music stops, the adult leader draws a number from the bowl. The player standing on that number can either win a prize or be eliminated. Or, win a prize before they are eliminated! The game continues until only one player remains.

MUSICAL HATS

Pick six players to stand in a circle, each facing the back of the person in front. Five of the players put on hats (buckets, paper hats, baskets) and when the music starts each player grabs the hat on the person’s head in front of him and puts it on his own head. The hats are moving around the circle from head to head until the music stops. Whoever is left without a hat is out of the game. Remove one hat and continue until there are only two players left. They stand back to back grabbing the hat off of each other’s head and when the music stops, the one wearing the hat is the winner.

GOOFY GOLF

Set up a miniature golf course all over your playing area. If you are using a church building, make your course travel down hallways, in and out of rooms, down staircases and other interesting spots. For golf balls, use real balls, balloons with a marble inside (they take unusual rolls), old stale marshmallows, ping-pong balls or whiffle golf balls. For clubs, use golf clubs, broom handles, rolled up newspapers, etc.

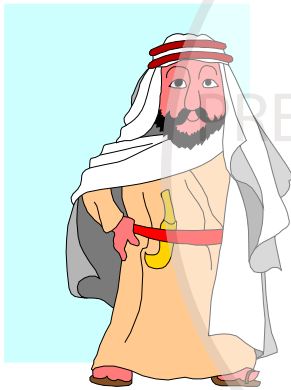
Each hole should be marked with a flag as in regular golf and tees should also be designated. Set par for each hole, print up some scorecards and have a GOOFY GOLF TOURNAMENT.

THE LEARNING CENTER

*THE LEARNING CENTER changes themes
for each twelve week series.*

*This is a twenty minute Bible lesson where students learn
about God's Word in a casual, contemporary atmosphere.*

Close Encounters Club offers a six year plan to guarantee that students from kindergarten through grade six cover Biblical highlights from Genesis through Revelation. They study issues that relate to living a Christian life in a sometimes harsh world.



OLD TESTAMENT: The first twelve week series of each school year finds **Close Encounters Club** kids studying highlights from the Old Testament. Taking classic stories and themes to a contemporary level, students hear about *Close Encounters With Creation, Close Encounters With the Genesis People, Walk Like An Egyptian, The Ark on a Lark, Close Encounters With The Book and Adventures With Heroes.* These Bible themes come to life in a learning center decorated with pictures, plants, items and interesting props. The leader may become a Bible person or may invite people from scripture stories

to visit and tell their stories to the group. Bringing Old Testament stories to life makes a difference!

NEW TESTAMENT: The focus of the second twelve week series shifts to studies in the New Testament. Learning about the life of Jesus and how He changed the lives of those around Him, bring personal faith in Christ to life for the club members. The series includes: *Close Encounters With The Messiah, Close Encounters With the Jesus People, Close Encounters With the Church, Close Encounters With the Mailman, Close Encounters With Tomorrow and Close Encounters With the Dream Team.*





RELATIONSHIPS: In the third twelve week series, attention in THE LEARNING CENTER shifts to modern issues that concern children in elementary school. In a gentle, straight forward manner, children talk about themselves, their families, their friends and other *stuff* that no one ever discusses about their faith and every day problems. All issues are discussed from a Biblical point of view. Titles are: *Close Encounters With Me, Close Encounters With My People, Walk Like a Christian, Close Encounters With My World, Close Encounters With Friends and Close Encounters With Monsters Under the Bed.*

The task of THE LEARNING CENTER team is to follow curriculum instructions in presenting the current theme. Quiet learning activities may include story telling, scripture memorization, crafting, decorating the activity area and role playing. Each week, the teaching method changes. Have fun while presenting serious materials. Present the lessons on an elementary school level.

Close Encounters Club teaching is much different from a public school atmosphere. Present spiritual concepts in short spurts. Allow students to interact with the activity, laugh, chat and ask questions. Avoid long lectures and choose child friendly versions of scripture that communicate Bible truth on their level. If the King James Version of scripture is important to your church, use it for memorization and story telling.

THE SURPRISE SHOPPE

*This is a twenty minute "hands-on" adventure.
Students become involved in an active way with the Biblical theme.
They make a craft, play a game, work in a theme room
or meet a Bible person.*

THE SURPRISE SHOPPE sparks the imagination and appeal to the hands on learner. The variety of projects keeps students guessing from week to week about the happening awaiting them. Churches across the country say that this is the favorite spot for many of their energetic students.



If your church is on a tight budget and cannot afford expensive crafts every week, you will enjoy the sessions which feature less materials and more imagination. If budget is not a problem, there are plenty of suggestions for crafts which become cherished keepsakes. Adapt THE SURPRISE SHOPPE to fit your personal taste.

Reserve one classroom as the area where craft and play is focused for the entire twelve week session. Use an adult classroom where the props may be left in place and Sunday School is held with the decoration making their class exciting while saving space. There is nothing like having Sunday School in the middle of the Garden of Eden or in Paul's prison cell to make adults sit up and take notice of children's ministries.

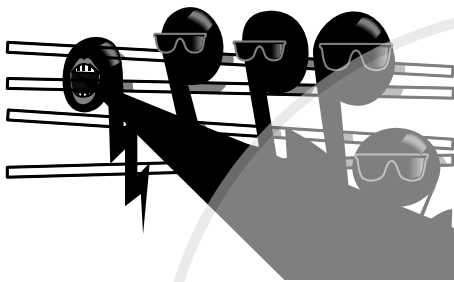
If saving space is an issue, consider making this area mobile. Set up one corner of a room or hallway and decorate using cardboard backgrounds and moveable items. Hide them away in a storeroom or closet between club sessions.

The element of surprise is important. Even though the students may beg for information, keep them guessing. They enjoy the journey even though they may say they want to know everything that is going to happen. One unique aspect of this area is that every once in awhile, students enter a different world. They may build a garden in Eden, go to jail with Paul, visit a home where Jesus grew up, design their own chapel, learn about earth's environment or play a variety of games and make enjoyable craft projects.

CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS

*This thirty minute music session is a favorite for young and old.
Not only do club kids and leaders sing together for fun
but they get to perform at church and community events!*

Lead the music in such a way as to sponsor enthusiasm and encourage memorization of lyrics. The curriculum suggests songs for each theme and song books which can be purchased separately. There may be favorite choruses and chorus books already at your local church. Music leaders may choose songs as desired.



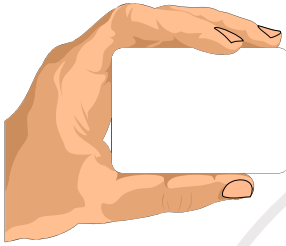
CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS is open to students AND adult leaders. There is an important message communicated in mixing adult and child voices in the same group. The adults see music from the child's perspective and are a support system for discipline. Students see how much the leaders care about them. As they perform, the congregation sees a mixture of generations reaching the community for Christ. To see a singing group function like this is an inspiring experience. Try it!

Assign a music leader who is responsible for the weekly gatherings as well as performances. Add a second person as a pianist. Small churches may combine the director and pianist. Audio tapes may help provide instrumental music for practice and performance. Tapes are available through CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES. The piano is the main musical instrument but try a song with a guitar, keyboard or taped background. Use homemade instruments just for fun. Bells create a nice effect and can be added using even the smallest children.

It would be great to have a perfectly tuned group singing every syllable correctly but let's face it, the charm of a casual singing group is the energetic experience. Mix music knowledge with just plain fun when learning the songs. Avoid the temptation to become a formal choir. Be sensitive to copyright laws. Purchase a CCLI license or use the existing license for your church. If you choose to teach using song charts, use black marker only. Light colors and tiny lettering frustrate people who cannot see. Consider music sheets, overhead projector and other teaching aids.

ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY ...DELIGHTFUL OPTIONS

*CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB is a special place to be.
Make each member feel part of a wonderful adventure!*



MEMBERSHIP CARD: When a student attends CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB three times in a row, that student becomes a formal club member and is entitled to a membership card. Design small cards that look official. Cover them in protective plastic. Attach a long cord appropriate to hang around the neck. The card is good for entrance into other events (movie night, holiday parties, Sunday night sings) without cost and may entitle the bearer to a free gift.

UNIFORM: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES offers an official club shirt for students and leaders. Many popular colors are available in t-shirts or sweatshirts at a low cost.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB STORE: To encourage attendance and performance, establish a store. Club members are issued a ticket each week for attendance and other accomplishments. They save their tickets to “spend” at the store when it is open once a month. Assume each ticket is worth between ten and twenty five cents and gauge the prices of items according to the number of tickets earned.

All store items should have Christian significance. Pencils, bookmarks, plastic toys with Bible phrases, faith bracelets, books, puzzles, t shirts, etc. make great choices. Provide less expensive items and items that take a few weeks of savings to obtain. The philosophy behind the store is that those who may be tempted to skip a week or two will think twice if they are losing a shopping ticket.

Arrange a safe place to keep tickets so they will not be lost or stolen. Consider using an envelope system. Each child has an envelope with their name printed on it. When they receive a ticket, they print their name in ink on the ticket and put it in the envelope. They can spend or save at their own discretion. Keep all ticket envelopes together in a safe place.

GIFT GIVING: Provide a small gift for each student to be given at the end of each meeting. These items should be very small but colorful. Elementary students love getting gifts and will begin to look forward to their surprise each week.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT OUR STUDENTS!

Think about the characteristics of the students in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB. Each age group has God given, unique behaviors. Tap into their interests and their abilities to accomplish as much as possible in the time they are with the group.

EARLY ELEMENTARY ...KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE

PHYSICAL: These restless children love high activity and work hard to please, often becoming overtired. They try new motor skills and are unconcerned about danger. Small muscle and eye-hand coordination is developing so they enjoy coloring, cutting, pasting, painting and building. They look everywhere at once and touch everything within reach.

MENTAL: With an increasing attention span, these youngsters can enjoy at least twenty minutes of activity. They can tell the difference between fantasy and reality to some extent. Their reasoning ability is just beginning to develop. They have a good memory and love to listen to stories. They learn best when they are active.

EMOTIONAL: Familiar routines in familiar surroundings are important. New feelings are emerging and they become angry easily. Sometimes these students cry, throw tantrums and sulk. They may be ashamed of their mistakes. It is at this stage that the students may be defiant or rude as they try to become independent. They need reminders and verbal guidance.

SOCIAL: These children are loyal, self centered, tattler, friend seekers. They may be bossy, jealous, proud or protective. They want friends but do not make a good friend because of their selfishness. They thrive on praise and approval and dislike criticism.

SPIRITUAL: The students can understand God as Creator and may ask appropriate spiritual questions. They may fear God since He can see everything they do. They see Jesus as a real person but need more knowledge of His life and purpose. They can grasp simple explanations about Jesus dying and raising from the dead to return to earth. Beginning to understand sin, they know Jesus took the blame for our wrong actions. They know Bible story characters are real. They begin to pray.

MIDDLE ELEMENTARY ...SECOND AND THIRD GRADE

PHYSICAL: These children love activity and are interested in organized games. They enjoy stunts and rough play. There are frequent accidents as they learn how to move their bodies. They become more controlled and graceful in their movement. They practice skills until they can succeed. Girls are usually ahead of boys at this stage.

MENTAL: Concentration and long periods of mental focus begin to appear. They like to plan ahead and are good at memorizing short sentences. They love to read and are doing so independently. They do not like failure but enjoy challenges and risks. They begin to think logically but may use the trial and error approach.

EMOTIONAL: These students can be shy or bold, morbid or cheerful, lazy to excitable. They are likely to overdo and may not complete their tasks. Their feelings are easily hurt and they do not like criticism from adults. They may have many fears—dark, fights, injury, failing, not being liked. They may worry. Friendships with adults become important.

SOCIAL: Best friends are the order of the day. They may not want to go on family outings if friends are available. They are able to function in a group by allowing others' opinions to be part of decision making. They enjoy belonging to a club and look for friendship with older children. They are learning politeness. They often have no use for the opposite sex and are beginning to have consciousness of their own racial, ethnic heritage.

SPIRITUAL: These students want to be good and see the difference between good and bad. They are starting to feel the pull of right actions and try to be good. There is an active interest in God and they enjoy stories about Jesus, God's Son. They understand sin and can study the Bible as their reading and reasoning skills increase.

UPPER ELEMENTARY ...FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE

PHYSICAL: Older students still love high energy activity. They have some self control and can budget their time as well as share successes with athletic peers. Boys begin to gain a more positive self concept while girls begin a growth spurt becoming taller, heavier and stronger than boys. Sometimes girls are better than boys athletically.

MENTAL: These students are alert and eager to learn. They begin to use abstract thinking. They like to memorize, read and hear stories. They have a great interest in history, people, current events, science, nature, geography. They are independent, critical thinkers. They are problem solvers.

EMOTIONAL: Usually these students are cheerful, content and relaxed. As they grow into their minds and bodies they exhibit more moods. They like and dislike strongly and are sensitive to criticism. Sometimes they have outbursts of anger. These students often burst into laughter.

SOCIAL: Lots of friends make these kids happy, usually they want a friend of the same sex. They share personal information with friends and like gangs and clubs. They are great team players and often respect their teachers. They love to tease, chase, push, hit, nudge and poke.

SPIRITUAL: It is time to begin teaching about Who God is. They follow their own convictions about Jesus and are ready to accept Him as Savior. They pray and come up with their own prayer issues. They focus on Bible facts. They want to join the church group. This group often has a strict moral code and make moral judgments. They sometimes agonize over right and wrong.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES ...OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

OUR HISTORY...

In 1980, leaders in a small United Methodist Church along the Allegheny River in Pennsylvania sounded off at a Vacation Bible School planning meeting. "If we have to do VBS like we've always done it, we quit!" After the shock wore off, the group spent two hours brainstorming their idea of a perfect summer children's ministry event. The result was a meaningful yet fun and easy five day Vacation Bible School (*Close Encounters of a Biblical Kind*) that caught on throughout Western Pennsylvania and eventually the United States. It proved to be only the beginning.

WHO WE ARE...

Ellen Bunnell has been a church educator since graduating from Edinboro University in 1971 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary English. Teaching children, youth and adults the basics of the Christian faith has always been Ellen's joyful priority. Mix the desire for teaching about Jesus with the urge to make the Bible come to life and seeds for a lifelong ministry were planted. Ellen possessed a perfect laboratory to test new Christian Education when her three children were born and eagerly took part in experimental activity centers as every level of their childhood.

David Bunnell is a United Methodist pastor who graduated from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL in 1979 with a Master of Divinity degree from the School of Christian Education. He contributes his expertise in computers, advertising and printing.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES moves with the Bunnells as church assignments change. Each parsonage serves as offices filled with equipment for publishing. Vacations and late nights provide the opportunity to publish materials for churches across the nation.

We are a personal ministry devoted to churches who want something unique for their church and community. Leaders telephone Ellen and David any time of the day or night and find someone to answer questions and motivate hesitant leaders to establish amazing ministries to children in their local church.

The materials are printed in a simple, easy to use notebook format and are researched, written and produced by Ellen and David.

OUR MISSION...

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES is a Christ centered ministry dedicated to making children, youth and adult programming exciting and fun! We translate the message of God's love through Jesus Christ into action packed, visual experiences.

OUR STATEMENT OF FAITH...

We believe there is one God and Creator of heaven and earth, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His death at calvary, in His physical resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father and in His personal return. We believe the work of the Holy Spirit is a gift given at the moment of salvation and allows God to work within and through the lives of Christians all over the world. We believe the Bible is the inspired, authoritative Word of God.

We believe that the purpose in life is to know and glorify God and to gain eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The only way to God is through His Son, Jesus. Each human is confronted with the claims of Christ. To accept or reject Him as Savior and Lord is a personal decision. Accepting Jesus is God's only requirement to avoid judgment of sin and gain entrance to heaven for eternity. It is our responsibility to reach out to as many people as possible with the Good News of the gospel of Christ.

We believe that children are a heritage from the Lord and a true blessing. We are accountable to Him for raising, fashioning and preparing our children for a life of service to His Kingdom and to people of the world.

We believe that all human life is God given and sacred. Whether a person is unborn or old, in a family or single or widowed, physically or mentally handicapped makes no difference to God and must not affect the way we deal with any person from the cradle to the grave.

OUR PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION...

Since students learn in a variety of ways, we believe we must present the gospel using an assortment of methods. Our programs focus on the value of interaction and personal attention from the teaching staff. Building in chat time provides an opportunity for friendship and casual questioning of serious issues. Bringing the Bible to life is central to our goal of teaching students about real people and real events from long ago. Our "Live It" themes capture the imaginations of the youngest students and challenge the older students to think about today's life in terms of their faith in Christ. Quick, hard hitting learning/activity centers make learning God's Word relevant as well as fun. Part of the job of teaching children is teaching and encouraging the adult staff. Making each Vacation Bible School, Sunday School, Close Encounters Club, camping program and holiday presentation enjoyable for volunteer teachers is vital to the success of a local Christian Education program. Happy, fulfilled teachers make happy,

fulfilled students.

CONTACT US...

We work with a small staff and try to be personally available to all our Close Encounters churches. Help us to continue providing resources useful to your ministry by contacting us at our web site or by calling us toll free. We are so thankful for you!

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES

WWW.CEMLIFE.COM

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ellen@cemlife.com



PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE

LEADING A CHILD TO CHRIST

Many Christians say that they accepted Christ as elementary children. These are important years. There is a serious responsibility and an honor and privilege to be the person who leads a child to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

As children learn and grow, they become ready to trust Christ at various ages. We must be sensitive to their readiness and encourage but not push for a decision they are not ready to make. Allow the child to decide when the time is right. Provide all the information they need to step over the line and into the Christian faith.

Encourage children to speak to you privately instead of making a public announcement of their decision for Jesus. They may not understand that raising their hand means accepting Christ. Once you are certain that the child understands what they are doing, pray with that child. Talk to parents and be especially sensitive to unchurched families. Continue to pray for each child who makes a decision to follow Jesus. And encourage spiritual growth by providing programs and opportunities to mature their faith.

HERE ARE THE BASICS OF THE SALVATION MESSAGE:

1. GOD LOVES YOU AND ME. He wants you to have peace and a wonderful life. However, we have all done things that make Him unhappy.

"...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 5:1

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly." John 10:10b*

2. WE HAVE SINNED. When we choose to think and do things that are wrong, we displease God and separate ourselves from Him.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

...AND WE TRY TO REACH GOD BY OURSELVES. Many good things

take the place of God. We may think that if we do good things, go to church, think good thoughts and treat people well, that God is pleased.

“There is a way that seems right to man, but in the end it leads to death.” Proverbs 14:12

3. GOD HAS THE ANSWER...BELIEVE IN JESUS!

Jesus is the only answer to our sin and separation from God problem. He died on the Cross and rose from the grave, paying the penalty for our sin.

“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

4. RECEIVE CHRIST! Trust in Jesus Christ by your own invitation.

Jesus said, *“Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.”* Revelation.3:20

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” :John 1:12

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY

HERE'S WHAT TO DO!

Admit you need to ask forgiveness for your sin.

Be willing to change your behavior.

**Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the Cross
and rose from the grave.**

**Through prayer, invite Jesus to come and control your life
through the Holy Spirit.**

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned and need Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins. I want to stop sinning and so I ask You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust You and follow You as Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name, Amen.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MESSIAH AT A GLANCE

THE LEARNING CENTER

Teach the sweeping story of Jesus from Old Testament prophecies to His Resurrection.



Week #1: Family Night Dinner

Week #2: THE OLD TIMERS!

Week #3: WHO IS JESUS?

Week #4: BORN WHERE?

Week #5: TEMPLE ADVENTURES

Week #6: EENY-MEENY-MINEY-MO!
PICKING FRIENDS

Week #7: IT'S A MIRACLE!

Week #8: NOBODY LIKES ME, EVERYBODY HATES ME!

Week #9: GOODBYE, SO LONG-BUT NOT FOREVER!

Week #10: TERRIBLE, AWFUL, NO GOOD DAY!

Week #11: HE'S BA-ACK!

Week #12: SHOW OFF NIGHT

SURPRISE SHOPPE

NAZARETH HOUSE "The House of the Lord"

Week #1: Family Night Dinner

Week #2: SHALOM!

Week #3: HAVE A SEAT

Week #4: BREAD OF LIFE

Week #5: SHAKE A FRIEND'S HAND

Week #6: SABBATH REST

Week #7: ROSH HASHANAH
JEWISH NEW YEAR

Week #8: HANUKKAH
FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Week #9: WEAVE

Week #10: CLAY POTS

Week #11: PASSOVER

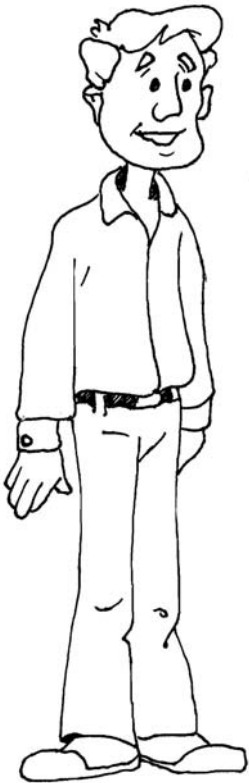
Week #12: SHOW OFF NIGHT



You're The Learning Center Leader! ...Don't Panic!

Each Learning Center session is designed for twenty minutes. Time flies when you are having fun...So, have fun!

Some activities require tables and chairs but most learning takes place as students move around the open area or sit on the floor.



DECORATE!

Students learn best when they SEE, HEAR, TOUCH, TASTE, SPEAK. Include snippets of all learning styles. Decorations should fit the theme in a big, colorful way.

Bring interesting items from home to peak student interest. Print words on poster board in black marker. The curriculum offers decorating options to get started.

BE CREATIVE!

Build on suggestions included in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MESSIAH. Add your own touch of creativity along the way.

Enjoy a game, play CD's, involve students in drama. Learning is fun when you break out of the traditional mold. Results of your efforts last a lifetime.

TELL A STORY!

There is nothing like good, old fashioned story telling. Really experience the story! Place yourself and the listeners into each scene. Practice at home with a mirror if you have never told a story aloud. Look sad or raise your voice in anger when appropriate. Students who learn best ' *hearing* ' gain much from story time.

DISCIPLINE!

Discipline is a dirty word but someone has to say it and someone has to do it. During your session you will be in charge of chaos or controlled chatter. Judge when that imaginary line has been crossed.

Notice the word is "discipline" and not "punishment". Involve problem students actively. Seat them close to you. Separate buddies who poke each other. If necessary, raise your voice. The last resort is asking the student to leave the area.

Obvious reactions to avoid: Swearing, verbal abuse, spanking, slapping, embarrassing students in front of peers.

1. Ask student to stop misbehavior.
2. Involve student in activity.
3. Talk privately outside group area.
4. Send student to the CE Club Director.
5. Involve parents.

Rarely will you need to carry out extreme measures. Activities move quickly. Students do not have time to challenge authority before they are moving to another area.

BE DEPENDABLE!

Be present and be prepared. If absence is unavoidable, arrange for a substitute teacher to cover the activity. Give that person time to prepare. It is frustrating to have a leader promise to participate and then attend sporadically.

ENJOY YOURSELF!

What a unique concept! Leaders can have fun too. Enjoy the material, prepare with prayer and study, smile—even laugh with each child. Be the person you would like to see your students become: A role model who affects your church and community for an entire generation of believers.

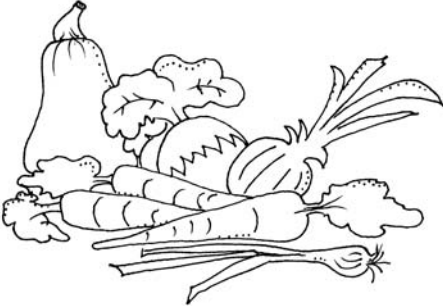
USING SCRIPTURE

Use a scripture translation accepted by your church. Make Biblical concepts child friendly. Find a version you know they will understand. We have chosen *The Message* for this specific series of lessons. Feel free to change “read aloud” and “memorization” portions as desired.

WEEK #1:

FAMILY NIGHT DINNER

Serve a family style dinner in a relaxed atmosphere. After dinner, introduce the theme to parents. Hand out a basic outline of the activity centers.



BASIC GOALS FOR CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MESSIAH

1. By the end of all sessions, each student will know where to find Jesus' story in scripture.
2. By the end of all sessions, each student will be able to say 3-5 scripture verses related to Jesus.
3. By the end of all sessions, each student will have considered the basic concepts of Jesus' life and the plan for salvation as presented in the New Testament.
4. By the end of all sessions, students will understand the unconditional love God exhibited when He sent Jesus to be our Messiah, our Savior.
5. By the end of all sessions, each student should understand more fully the life and purpose of Jesus.

WEEK #2:

THE OLD TIMERS!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Because this area focuses on the life and ministry of Jesus, display pictures of Jesus. Include scenes from his life.

Borrow pictures from friends, family and church to give students a visual perception of what artists concluded as they painted pictures of Him.

TABLE: There are weeks when students need work space. One table without chairs works great. Students stand to complete their tasks. The table should be off to one side so everyone can move about the room as needed.

VIP GUEST: Invite an older person (or more than one) to visit *The Learning Center* and tell stories of their lives. Let them conclude with the story of how they first accepted Christ as their Savior. Base your interview on the following questions:

1. Tell us your favorite room in the house where you grew up and why.
2. What were your favorite toys and why? What was school like?
3. What kind of clothes were popular when you were a kid? What happened to you when you disobeyed your parents.
4. When you have your first warm feelings toward God and what were the circumstances?
5. What advice can you give to help us grow in our Christian lives?

INTRODUCTION

Seat students on the floor in a comfortable half circle.

Welcome to CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MESSIAH! Today we begin a new adventure. We're going on a journey to discover as much as we can about Jesus, the Man from Nazareth, our Savior and Lord. What makes Jesus different from any other human being? Let's find out!

Messiah. Have you ever heard that word? The word "messiah" is another name for Jesus with a very special meaning. It began long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Jews looked for their Messiah who would be the King of Israel. Christians know that God promised Messiah, His only Son, Jesus, a spiritual savior.

Creator. God had great plans for humans when he created the earth. People did not live up to God's dream. So, God made a new plan. This plan included a savior—someone who would pay for our sins. The Messiah! God would come to earth Himself in the form of a person.

Word spread through Israel, God's chosen people, that God would send this Messiah. As soon as they heard the news they tried to figure out who it was. Evil people decided to fake out the people of Israel. Some tricky people said, "I am Messiah. Treat me right."

Old Timers—Prophets. Fortunately God let a few of His own people in on His plan. These people were the *old timers*, older folks who had lived a long time and worshiped God with all their hearts. The nation trusted these old timers. When they spoke, everyone listened. God told these old timers the truth about His Son, the expected Messiah. These people had visions of the future.

STORY TIME

Supplies: Pictures of grandparents, great grandparents.

We tend to believe older people because they have lived long enough to know the difference between right and wrong. The people in these pictures are special to me. (Tell students about your family.)

VIP Guest: Introduce your VIP. Ask questions (*See TEACHER PREPARATION*) and allow students to interact with the guest.

CONCLUSION

Isaiah: I know about someone who is a real Old Timer. His name was Isaiah. He was a prophet who told people that the whole world was in God's control. He warned that Israel would be destroyed if they disobeyed God.

He lived over 700 years before Jesus and yet he knew facts about the future that no one else knew. Isaiah told the nation of Israel about the life of Jesus of Nazareth...before He was even born!

Why, you ask? Remember, there were "fakers" in the land saying, "I am God's Messiah. Treat me special." Once God gave Isaiah details in a vision—a dream—the people of Israel could sort out fakers from the real Messiah.

PRINT THESE PHRASES TO PLACE ON THE WALL AS YOU TEACH: How do we know Jesus is God's real Messiah? The facts Isaiah wrote from his vision match the life of Jesus. Let's look at a few:

1. Jesus was a regular guy. *"The servant grew up before God—a scrawny seedling, a scrubby plant in a parched field. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing to cause us to take a second look. Isaiah 53:2-3 The Message*

Look at the person sitting next to you! Nobody special, you say. He's just like me. That's Jesus! He looked like every other kid in town.

2. Jesus was looked down on by people. *“One look at him and people turned away. We looked down on him, thought he was scum.”* Isaiah 53:4 The Message

Sadly, as Jesus began to teach about the Kingdom of God, people became disgusted with Him. He didn't believe the same things they were taught in the synagogue.

3. Jesus was treated badly. *“He was beaten...but he didn't say a word. ...Even though he'd never hurt a soul or said one word that wasn't true.”* Isaiah 53:7-9 The Message

Jesus did not do one thing to be mistreated and killed on a Roman cross. He was good and kind. Leaders were afraid people would follow Jesus and not them, so they beat Him and killed Him. It was a very selfish thing to do.

4. Jesus died to save many people. *“Because he looked death in the face and didn't flinch...He took on his own shoulders the sin of the many, he took up the cause of all the black sheep.”* Isaiah 53:12

Nobody wants to die. Jesus wanted to stay on earth longer but He was willing to offer His life so our lives could be saved. Jesus knew the wonderful place waiting for us at the end of our journey and He took the bad stuff so we can have the good stuff!

Can you believe what happened? How sad that when Jesus was finally born in Bethlehem, they missed Him! After years of searching for Messiah the Old Timers didn't believe Jesus was God's Son.

Today, people still look for the Messiah. Sometimes they don't believe the truth about Jesus being our Savior. Someday they will. Until then, we can be glad Old Timers like Isaiah told the truth about the Savior of the world, Jesus the Messiah!

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:

WEEK #3:

WHO IS JESUS?

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Two copies of the Name Game. *Make copies on heavy paper. (Normal copy paper works but may show through and give away the "Memory" part of the game.)* Crayons/markers, scissors, zip-lock bags.



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Learning Center! Who is Jesus? I mean it. Do you have any idea who Jesus really is? *(Let students respond.)*

We learn much about Jesus by knowing some of His names. Normal folks usually have a first name, middle name and last name. Our names tell something about us or the people who came before us.

ASK: Tell us your names and why your parents chose your names.

INSTRUCTIONS: While we discover a few of Jesus' names, color the Jesus Name Game pieces and cut them out. It is a Memory game to help you remember these names!

STORY TIME

EMMANUEL—GOD IS WITH US: Matthew 1:23 *(Descending Dove)*

I love the word *Emmanuel*. It rolls off my tongue as I say it. Say it with me, *Emmanuel*. This Jesus name means "God is with us". Jesus is God's Son who came to earth to live among us. It's like saying Jesus came to camp out with us. He 'pup tented' with us! When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by His cousin John, a dove flew down to him and a Voice from Heaven said, "This is My Beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased."

SON OF DAVID:

Matthew 12:23 (Star)

This star is the Star of David. David became King of Israel after being a shepherd, giant killer and great warrior. David was the great, great, great, great grandfather of Jesus. God promised David that the Messiah would come from his family and God kept that promise. This star is still the sign of Israel today. When we see it on Israel's flag, we remember how great David was. Yes, Jesus is the Son of David.

CARPENTER'S SON:

Matthew 13:55 (Saw)

Joseph was Jesus' earthly father. He was a humble carpenter from Nazareth. Joseph was responsible to teach Jesus how to live on earth. He taught the boy how to love, live and protect His earthly family. Jesus learned how to be a carpenter just like Joseph. Around the town of Nazareth, Jesus was known as "the carpenter's son".

FRIEND:

Luke 7:34 (Friendship Hands)

Jesus liked people, even people others hated or were sick or poor. None of that seemed to bother Jesus. He ate dinner with sinners and walked the roads with tax collectors who were especially hated. I am glad to say, along with millions of other, Jesus is my Friend.

TEACHER:

PLEASE PURCHASE Matthew 8:19 (Book)

Whenever Jesus talked about God, huge crowds gathered to hear Him teach. He was a smart man who answered their important questions about life in an easy way even young children could understand. I want all my teachers to be like Jesus.

LAMB OF GOD:

John 1:29 (Lamb)

Jesus is called The Lamb of God. When Jesus lived on earth, sheep and lambs were important. People got food and clothing from them. People took good care of little lambs. Jesus was God's Special Lamb.

BREAD OF LIFE:

John 6:35 (Bread and Children)

Without bread, people cannot live. In Jesus' time and in our time, people need food! Why is Jesus called Bread of Life? Without Jesus we have no hope of surviving. He is our hope for Heaven and Eternal Life. Jesus is our Bread of Life.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD:

John 8:12 (Candle)

What happens when we light a candle in a dark room? All the corners are lit with light! That's just like Jesus. When people hear about Jesus, their lives change. The light up! Even in the darkest corners of the earth, people change when they hear the story of Jesus, the Light of the World.

KING OF THE JEWS:

Matthew 27:11 (Crown)

When Old Timer prophets told Israel about God's promised Messiah, the people were excited. They began looking for a powerful king to rescue them from poverty and war. They thought this king would kill their enemies and provide food. They wanted better homes and an easy life.

The people of Israel misunderstood the Messiah. Jesus, The King of the Jews, was a different kind of King. Jesus was king of all people everywhere and king of Heaven and earth. This special name caused His enemies to kill Jesus on the Cross. Above His head they posted a sad sign showing they didn't understand Jesus at all: "He says He is the King of the Jews".

SAVIOR:

Luke 2:11 (Three Crosses)

God loves us so much that He never gives up on us! When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God made a new plan. God's Son was born in Bethlehem. When Baby Jesus grew up, he died to pay the cost of sin. Jesus did that and **SAVED** us from death and Hell. That's why Jesus is called Savior.

LORD:

Matthew 8:2 (Cloud)

Jesus didn't stay dead! He rose from the grave three days later. That is when Jesus became our Lord! It was amazing! As the disciples watched, Jesus went to Heaven saying, *"Don't worry! I'm coming back for you!"* Since God always keeps His promises, our job is to keep looking up because Jesus, our Lord and Savior, is coming back someday to take us to Heaven to live with Him in that beautiful home forever and ever.

CONCLUSION

Complete coloring and cutting the Jesus Name Game. Turn pieces upside down and mix them up. Turn over one piece at a time and try to match them. As you match, place each match in the zip-lock bag. If you are playing with a friend, the person who has the most piece in their bag is the winner.

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 53:6a (KJV)

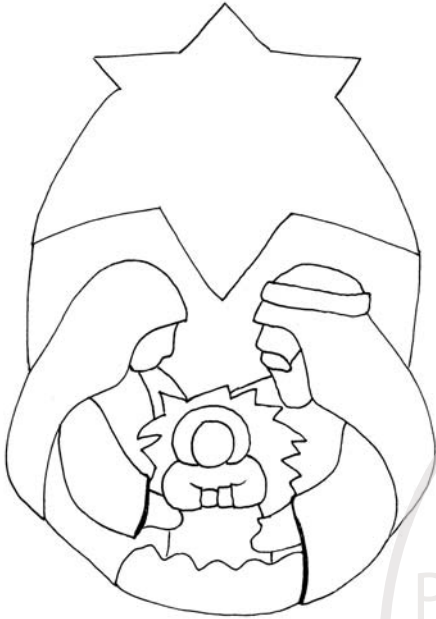
All we like sheep have gone astray...

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:

WEEK #4:

BORN WHERE?



TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Interview area with chairs for each Bethlehem character in the skit. Name tags for each character stating their name and occupation. Copies of script for each participant.

Option: If equipment is available, consider filming a video like a television talk show. Show the video instead of live characters.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a special talk show called BORN WHERE. Meet famous people who were in Bethlehem the night Jesus was born. It has been difficult to gather these people so listen carefully to their story!



BORN WHERE?

- Demetrius/Shepherd:** Bathrobe, bare feet, head covering, staff.
- Chimham/Innkeeper:** Bathrobe, sandals
- Angelica/Angel:** White gown or draped sheet, Christmas tinsel halo, tinsel can be draped as a long belt, bare feet or sandals.
- Interviewer:** Modern clothing, microphone

INTERVIEWER: *(Sarcastic)* Welcome to "Born Where", a television program dedicated to the story of a supposed Messiah who is reported to have landed on earth. It is in our best interest to find out about this alien presence. Let me introduce you to three people who have allegedly met this Messiah.

Innkeeper Chimham. You are accused of turning away people coming to your inn in desperate need. How could you? I bet you wouldn't know an alien if it jumped on your head. The same night, I heard you rejected a young woman and her husband. She was about to have a baby. How could you? Despicable!

INNKEEPER: I am sick of being the bad guy. I am here to set the record

straight. There was not then, nor has there ever been, a so-called "alien". A baby was born that night, yes. But, no alien...got it?

How could I do anything else? I did not turn Mary and Joseph out into the night. Bethlehem was crowded with hundreds of people who had to sign the census.

I didn't have a room but I had a warm, dry stable. I gave what I had. And for that, I have been the bad guy for over two thousand years. No good deed goes unpunished is what my family always said.

INTERVIEWER: Calm down, Chimham. I understand your problem.

INNKEEPER: You just say you understand. It was a cavern. The animals were happy. Luggage was stacked against the wall on one end. It was cozy...

INTERVIEWER: And...

INNKEEPER: And what? They grabbed it quick! I charged half price and never charged a penny for the baby once he was born.

INTERVIEWER: How generous. Shepherd Demetrius, Did I hear that some of your friends were tending sheep in the hills near Bethlehem that night? Were you there? What happened?

SHEPHERD: I was there. My buddies and I were taking turns sleeping. It was real quiet. A gang of kids tried to scare the sheep so once we ran them off the quiet was kind of nice. Next thing you know....

INTERVIEWER: Yes? The next thing you know....

SHEPHERD: Angels, thousands of them! They were smiling and bowing and...and...shining! They were celebrating. They wanted us to join them.

INTERVIEWER: You don't expect us to believe that! That is absolutely ridiculous. Angels are just legends, fairy tales, pretend creatures.

ANGEL: Ahem, excuse me. I'm sitting right here. I can hear you. My name is Angelica and I am one of God's angels.

INTERVIEWER: I was told a so called "angel" would be on the show today. I don't believe it but pick up the story and I will decide if it makes sense.

ANGEL: I am one of legions of angels who serve the Lord God Almighty. It

doesn't matter if you believe me.

INTERVIEWER: What happened from your viewpoint that night?

ANGEL: What a glorious night! Heavenly Father sent His Only Son to earth.

He blessed a young girl named Mary with the honor of giving birth to His special child. Joseph was a strong, good man who raised Jesus as Heavenly Father desired.

Have you heard God's new plan? He sent Messiah, His Son Jesus, to teach humans about the loving God they forgot.

INTERVIEWER: God loved people? Even bad people?

ANGEL: Oh yes. Heavenly Father loves with the best kind of love. Even when we disappoint Him He keeps loving people and working for their good. Never doubt God's love.

INTERVIEWER: Where exactly were you, Angelica?

ANGEL: I was in the angel chorus. We angels were so happy when Jesus was born! We announced that Baby Boy to the shepherds outside Bethlehem. I think we scared them. They didn't say much. No one else seemed to have time to listen to us.

INTERVIEWER: That wasn't polite. Why frightened the very people willing to listen to you?

ANGEL: We warned them. Archangel said right up front, "Don't be afraid." You cannot get much clearer than that!

His whole speech went like this, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people. For today in the City of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

We chorus angels couldn't wait another moment! We appeared from heaven and sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

INTERVIEWER: Demetrius, did *you* believe the angels? What did you do?

SHEPHERD: Well, after I picked myself up off the ground, I noticed the angels disappeared. I was still shaking. Then and there my fellow shepherds and I had to make a decision. We decided to get into Bethlehem to see if there was a baby.

We actually found the cave and very young parents. They held out this tiny, sleeping baby boy. They were so proud of him. We were surprised. They just smiled when we told them about angels on a hillside.

INTERVIEWER: Did you tell anyone else?

SHEPHERD: *(Laughing)* Just everyone we could find! We grabbed strangers on the street. We told our families. We looked up old friends.

INTERVIEWER: How did that night change your life?

SHEPHERD: I have not been the same. I am a believer in Jesus the Messiah. I am a follower of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. I was in the crowd where He healed the sick and fed the hungry. I saw Him die on a Cross in Jerusalem. I know Jesus is risen. I saw the empty tomb with my own eyes.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think, Innkeeper Chimham? Did a miracle of God happen in your stable?

INNKEEPER: There was much excitement when Jesus was born. I never took it real personal. People are people. They paid their lodging fees. As for a miracle, you'll have to decide for yourself.

INTERVIEWER: Well folks, there you have it. Thanks to our panel with a round of applause. Once again:

Chimham the Innkeeper!
Demetrius the Shepherd
Angelica the Angel

Goodbye and remember if it's Sunday, it's God's Day.

CONCLUSION

If time remains, allow students to interact with the Innkeeper, Shepherd and Angel. They make shake hands, ask questions and get their pictures taken with the guests.

MEMORY VERSE: Luke 2:11 (KJV)

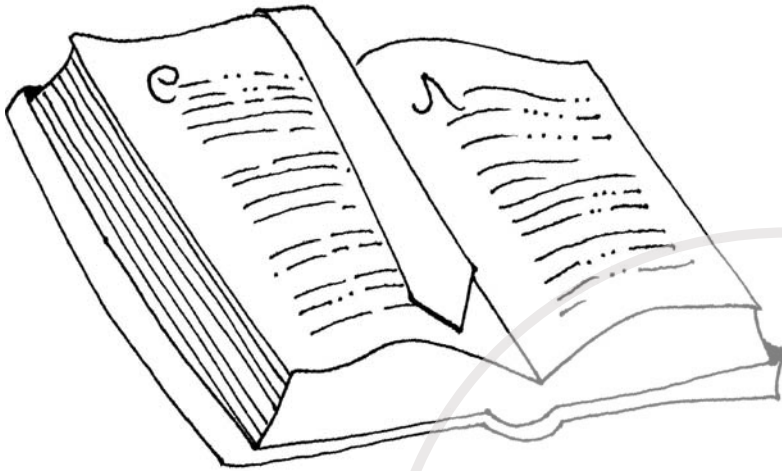
For unto you
is born this day
in the City of David
a Savior,
which is Christ the Lord.

NOTES:

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WEEK #5:

TEMPLE ADVENTURES



TEACHER PREPARATION

Toss soft pillows on the floor so students may lounge comfortably as the story of Jesus' Temple adventure is told.

Scatter bowls of popcorn around the room so everyone can munch during story time.

INTRODUCTION

Sit back, relax, eat popcorn and listen to a story I have wanted to tell you for a long time. Last week we were honored

to host several people who excitedly shared their Bethlehem adventure when Jesus, the Messiah, was born.

STORY TIME

The Messiah.

Scarey person?

The Messiah.

Grown up person?

The Messiah.

Someone we should get to know!

Let's go back to yester-year and visit the days when the Messiah was the boy, Jesus, son of Mary and Joseph, the carpenter's son.

Jesus lived in a simple home. He slept in a bedroll on a hard packed dirt floor. He rolled it up each morning and stashed his bed in a corner. Jesus was a good Jewish boy who recited his scripture prayers every day. He loved his mother and father and was a friend to his younger brothers and sisters.

When we see paintings of Jesus and his family wearing halos, it's tempting to believe He lived a life of ease. The truth is, Jesus lived a hard life in a dusty, hot place. Water was drawn from a well and hand carried. There were no grocery stores...only food they grew themselves.

Jesus worked with Joseph in the carpenter shop. He made window frames, wooden doors, carved oxen yokes and other wooden or stone items. That's how Joseph's family survived. Jesus also went to the synagogue (church) school. The Rabbi (Pastor) taught Old Testament scripture. Only boys went to school!

Girls stayed home and learned skills to be good wives and mothers. They did not learn how to read and write. Girls--does that sound fair?

Let's talk about what happened when Jesus was twelve. His family loved God and obeyed all the rules Jewish families followed. It was Passover--time to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the year Jesus became a "Son of the Law". It was a big deal for Jewish boys. He would be honored at a Temple ceremony so he had to have the proper clothing. This was a solemn, impressive occasion.

Jerusalem was a bustling city filled with interesting shops and beautiful synagogues. People discussed important issues. Families traveled on foot and pitched tents or stayed at inns. Good food, prayer, ceremonies...it was a party every day! Jewish people loved celebrating Passover in Jerusalem because they saw friends and relatives they had not seen since Feast of Passover last year.

Mary and Joseph looked forward to showing Jesus off to their family. He was growing into a strong young man. He was smart and kind. What parent could ask for more?

ALL GOOD THINGS MUST END! After the celebration, it was time to pack up and go home to Nazareth. Mary and Joseph walked with the family caravan for a whole day before they noticed Jesus was missing. They called, "Jesus! Jesus! Come here." No answer.

Joseph searched every caravan. Many things could happen to a young boy. Why hadn't he looked sooner? Joseph and Mary headed back to Jerusalem to search for Jesus. Can you imagine how afraid they were?

STILL SEARCHING! Three days later, they were still searching. No one had seen a boy like Jesus. Mary cried. Joseph was scared. Had Jesus been kidnaped?

FOUND! Finally...finally...they went to the temple. In the middle of a group of very smart men, Jesus was answering questions. He was teaching them!

Joseph did not dare speak harshly in the midst of these important men but Mary didn't care. *(Has your mom ever been mad at you? How does she let you know she is angry?)* Mary said *(I bet it was her loud voice)* "Jesus, where have you been? We have been so worried. Three days! How could you do this to us?"

Jesus calmly said, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know I would be about my Father's business?"

GOING HOME! His parents didn't understand him at all. Jesus went home to Nazareth with them. He continued to obey them and grew in wisdom and body and in favor with God and men.

AHH, WHAT A STORY! It has mystery, adventure and a happy ending. I wish we knew more about Jesus' boyhood years. Wouldn't it be nice to know what games he played, friends' names, favorite dessert. Did he have a pet? A dog, a bird, a cat, a donkey? I guess God figures all we need to know is that the Messiah enjoyed a normal childhood. He changed history. And that's just the beginning of the story!

CONCLUSION

POP QUIZ!

Ask these questions if there is time.

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. Where did Jesus grow up? | NAZARETH |
| 2. What was Joseph's job? | CARPENTER |
| 3. Where did Jesus go to school? | SYNAGOGUE |
| 4. TRUE OR FALSE-Girls went to school. | FALSE |
| 5. Where did Jesus family travel each year? | JERUSALEM |
| 6. What did they celebrate? | PASSOVER |
| 7. How long was Jesus missing? | 3 DAYS |
| 8. Where did Mary and Joseph find Jesus? | TEMPLE |
| 9. What did Jesus say he was doing? | MY FATHER'S BUSINESS |
| 10. Where did Mary, Joseph and Jesus go? | HOME TO NAZARETH |

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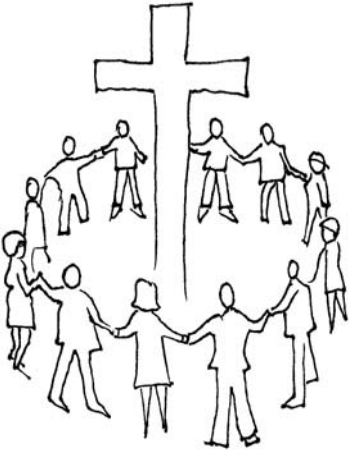
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WEEK #6:

EENY-MEENY-MINEY-MO! PICKING FRIENDS

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Names of Disciples on 12 separate pieces of posterboard. Attach names to the wall before class.



SIMON/PETER	ANDREW
JAMES	JOHN
PHILIP	BARTHOLOMEW
THOMAS	MATTHEW
SIMON	JAMES
	THADDAEUS
	JUDAS ISCARIOT

INTRODUCTION

A DISCIPLE is a FOLLOWER, a LEARNER. The 12 friends Jesus chose to follow Him stopped their jobs and traveled with Jesus. They learned as much as they could from Jesus. They changed lives by living out what Jesus taught them.

Let's find the names of Jesus' 12 friends. Take them off the wall and hold one name while we discover who that man is.

Younger Students: Even though they cannot read, allow them to collect the names and hold them.

DISCIPLES!

SIMON/PETER: Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter (The Rock). Simon was a big, strong fisherman. He often said and did the wrong thing. Simon Peter loved Jesus very much. He was the guy who denied Jesus three times during the night Jesus was arrested.

ANDREW: Andrew was Simon Peter's brother. He was a kind, smiling man. Andrew had the honor of being the first missionary of the church. He introduced Peter to Jesus. He then told many others that Jesus was the promised Messiah. What a missionary!

JAMES: James was Jesus' best friend. His brother was John. We don't know much about him. His father, Zebedee, was a fisherman so James and his brother were probably fishermen too. He followed Jesus and was a good leader. Jesus called him a Son of "Thunder". Why? It seems that James and John had personalities like lightning. James died at the hands of people who hated Jesus. How sad.

JOHN: James' brother John loved Jesus and Jesus loved him. When Jesus died, he asked John to take care of his mother, Mary. What an important job!

PHILIP: Philip was a shy man. He wasn't sure that all the things Jesus said were true. He held back. Jesus often spoke to Philip personally. Philip often got jobs that helped build his faith. Philip was the disciple who helped when the boy offered his little lunch to 5000 people.

BARTHOLOMEW: He had another name, Nathaniel. Not much is known about him. Some history books say he became a missionary to India. It is probably true since ships went to India. He must have loved Jesus to give up his own life to follow Jesus.

THOMAS: Doubting Thomas! He didn't believe Jesus rose from the grave. How could it be? When he finally saw the risen Christ, he fell on his knees and said, "My Lord and my God"! Thomas wasn't very smart but he was honest. He asked questions. Jesus answered his friend because it gave him a chance to tell more about Himself. Thank God for Thomas' questions!

MATTHEW: Matthew was a tax collector, and, oh how people hated tax collectors. Matthew heard stories about Jesus on the street. He wrote them down. He studied Jesus' family. Could it be that Jesus chose Matthew because He knew Matthew would faithfully write down all the events of their three years together?

SIMON: Another Simon! He was from Cana in Galilee. He was a member of a band of terrorists who hated Rome. He put Jesus in a dangerous spot with the Roman government who ruled Israel.

JAMES AND THADDAEUS: The Bible doesn't say anything about these two men—except their names. These men followed Jesus quietly and learned to be true disciples.

JUDAS ISCARIOT: Judas is the disciple who turned Jesus in to the government before Jesus died. He started as a friend but changed. Judas took care of the money for the group. He got greedy and sold the life of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

CONCLUSION

Play a fun game of FOLLOW THE LEADER. It's the NAME TRAIN! Everyone stands in a straight line like a train.

Hold up the Disciple's Name on the card in your hand. Say the name loudly. The group says:

SIMON, SIMON, SIMON (while stomping feet and waving hands in air)

WHOO-WHOO (like a train whistle)

SIMON, SIMON, SIMON! (Stomping feet/waving hands)

WHOO-WHOO (train whistle)

Move to the next name and repeat the process. The "train" may move around the room as a train while playing the game.

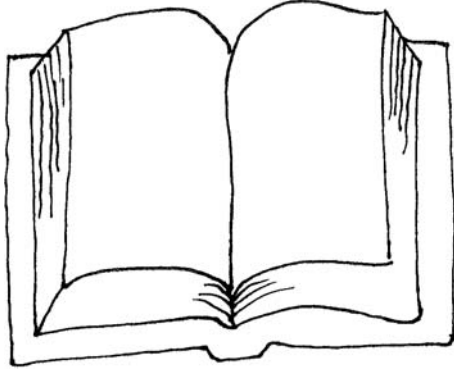
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WEEK #7:

IT'S A MIRACLE!

TEACHER PREPARATION



Supplies: Small amount of white rice to throw on students, cupcakes, small paper cups for water and grape juice, a beautiful carafe for the changed "wine".

Options: Ask someone to appear in a wedding gown for a discussion of how important a wedding celebration is in the life of a family. Or, bring a collection of wedding pictures for the same discussion.

INTRODUCTION

Let's talk weddings! Congratulations! (*Toss rice on the students*) Did that surprise you? Throwing rice on the bride and groom is a tradition that means "Good luck and have a lot of children". It is one of the fun parts of a wedding. Sometimes people blow bubbles on the happy couple. Sometimes white doves are released from cages. Sometimes little envelopes with live butterflies are opened by the guests.

Look how happy everyone is in these wedding photos. Aren't the dresses beautiful? The men look so proud.

I asked a bride to join us, and here she is! Tell us about your wedding.

STORY TIME

John 2:1-11: Jesus and His friends went to a wedding in Cana, Galilee. Weddings lasted many days. Those people really knew how to party! There was music and dancing. Lots of food and lots of drink. People talked, laughed and enjoyed the celebration.

We don't know the names of the bride and groom in Cana. Mary was there and the rest of Jesus' family too. Maybe the bride or groom was a cousin or close friend.

70

Let's get in the party mood!

Serve cupcakes and a small glass of ice water.

See? I told you it's fun to have a party!

At the Cana wedding, everyone kept eating and drinking. The servants served all the wine. Soon the wine vats were empty. How embarrassing! Nothing could be worse. It was in poor taste for the host to run out of wine.

Mary overheard the servants and said to Jesus, "Please, I know you can do something about this. They have run out of wine and the wedding is not over."

Jesus called the servants and said, "Fill these six water pots to the brim with water." They did it. "Now, take a scoop from the pots and let the headwaiter taste."

*Fill each student's empty water cup
with grape juice from a carafe.
They may drink it as the story is finished.*

The headwaiter's eyes got real big. He called the groom and said, "Hey, usually the best wine is served first but you have saved the best wine 'til last."

CONCLUSION

What happened? It was a miracle. In fact, it was the first miracle Jesus ever performed. The servants knew that Jesus changed water into wine, Mary knew it. And the disciples saw their leader perform a miracle. They believed Jesus was truly the Messiah!

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:

WEEK #8:

NOBODY LIKE ME, EVERYBODY HATES ME!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Crumple white paper into balls. Make about 100 snowballs-50 per side for the fight. These are perfectly safe and nothing should get broken!



INTRODUCTION

Teach this silly little song until everyone can sing it.

Nobody likes me,
everybody hates me.
I think I'll go eat worms.
Big, fat, squishy ones.
Little bitty, gooey ones.
Oh how they tickle and they squirm.

It's fun to sing this little verse about worms but think about it: what if you felt *nobody* liked you? What if *everybody* really did hate you? How would you feel? *(Let students respond)* I bet you would feel like crawling away, or crying, or being quiet or...eating worms. It is not fun if people give you trouble just because of who you are.

STORY TIME

Jesus had dangerous enemies. These people did not believe Jesus was God's Messiah. Some thought He was a faker and maybe he was crazy. Some enemies suspected Jesus was the Messiah and it scared them. Their power would be lost if Jesus was really God's Son.

These enemies tried to make Jesus say things He didn't mean. Jesus was always too smart for them. They tried to kill Him. God wasn't ready for that so Jesus always escaped.

Some enemies were religious leaders called **PHARISEES**. They should have known God's plan but they couldn't see the truth even with Jesus standing right in front of them.

MARK 3:1-6: One Sabbath day (when Jewish people NEVER worked), Jesus found a man with a crippled hand. The Pharisees had their eyes on Him to see if He would heal him and break a Sabbath law.

Jesus pulled the man into the center of the group. He asked the crowd, "What is better? Doing good or doing evil? Helping people or leaving them helpless?" It was very quiet in the room.

Jesus looked them in the eye, one after another. He was angry and then furious at their hard nosed religion. He said to the man, "Hold out your hand." When the man obeyed, his hand was good as new!

The Pharisees got out of there really fast. They were sputtering about how they would join forces with the government and run Jesus.

Some enemies were **ROMANS**. They were government leaders who wanted to keep all Jewish people poor and powerless.

Jesus knew His enemies. He never let them scare Him. He answered their questions honestly.

Jesus has enemies today. People say Jesus is not God's Son and not the long awaited Messiah. When you hear it, say, "No way! I know the stories of Jesus are true."

FRIENDS: Do you have friends who make fun of Jesus and Christians? It is hard to say "I'm a Christian" when you spend time with people who laugh at Jesus. Maybe it's time to make new friends!

TV: Some television shows make fun of people who believe in Jesus. Don't watch those shows.

SWEARING: Some people use God's name as a swear word. They say God, Jesus and Christ when they are angry. How do you think God feels about swearing/cursing? Watch YOUR mouth! Make your words sweet and pleasing to God.

Don't be an enemy of Jesus! Be a friend of Jesus. There is so much to gain. He loves you and wants to be your friend.

CONCLUSION

Surprise! We are going to have a snowball fight! We're not enemies. We are friends who are going to have some fun fighting.

Divide the group into two teams. Each side gets 50 snowballs. The goal is to throw as many snowballs into the other team's territory as possible in-ONE MINUTE. (You may choose the time limit.)

No kicking allowed-only tossing **one at a time** as fast as possible. The other team will be throwing snowballs back to your side. When I shout "stop", freeze where you are! We will count the snowballs. The team with the least amount of snowballs on their side is the winner.

Play until the end of class. Save the snowballs. Whenever you have extra time, bring out the snowballs for another good natured "fight".

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:

WEEK #9:

GOODBYE, SO LONG! BUT...NOT FOREVER!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Picture of "The Last Supper", packed suitcase (See Introduction for item suggestions), wear coat and hat.

Option: See *Story Time* for Communion. If you decide to do it, bring one loaf of uncut bread and grape juice in tiny cups. Perhaps your pastor will serve Communion to the group.

INTRODUCTION

Wear coat and hat. Carry packed suitcase. As students enter, make it clear that you are leaving.

Hello! And...Goodbye! I have to go away.

Whenever I leave on a trip, I am sad saying goodbye to my friends. This time I have to take my suitcase because I'm leaving for a very long time. Before I go, open my suitcase. Let see what I think is important to take with me.

Open the suitcase and let students remove each item. Discuss reasons for taking the items. It's more fun if you seat the group around the case and let them touch the items. Some good things to pack: Grooming items, night clothes, change of clothes, book, Bible, ID card, favorite teddy bear.

Sometimes saying goodbye is fun because great adventures are just around the corner. Most of the time we know we'll be home soon so the goodbye is just for awhile.



There are times when goodbyes are hard. **Moving away** is difficult knowing you will not come back. When a friend leaves, it leaves an empty place in your life. The big goodbye comes when someone you love **dies**. We know we will miss them until we see them in Heaven. That goodbye is so big that we cry and even Mom and Dad cry.

STORY TIME

There came a day when Jesus the Messiah had to say goodbye. It was hard because He loved His friends and family. He was fearful of the pain He would suffer on the Cross. Yes, Jesus felt pain!

LAST SUPPER PICTURE: Jesus and His friends met for one last meal in an upstairs room. They wanted to remember old times and cry for the time they would be separated. They ate a regular meal of vegetables, meat and other delicious things. Then Jesus started a ceremony that we, true believers in Jesus, still eat today. It is a serious time we call Communion.

Jesus broke a loaf of bread and each man took a small bite. He said, "Remember My body, broken for you." Jesus passed a cup of wine to each man. They took a sip. Jesus said, "Remember My blood, shed for many." It is the one ceremony Jesus said churches should do all the time until He comes back. It's a good reminder of Jesus' death on the Cross.

***Option:** It would be meaningful to have Communion. Consider the sensitivities of your denomination and local congregation concerning Communion. Omit it if you feel uncomfortable. If you decide to do it, the atmosphere should be quiet and serious. Ask the pastor to serve the elements and talk to the children about how to behave when Communion is served in church. This is a great teaching opportunity.*

CONCLUSION

Jesus talked about the sadness and the hope of His going away. Let's learn what He said: (John 14:3)

Younger Students: "If I go, I will come again."

Older Students: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

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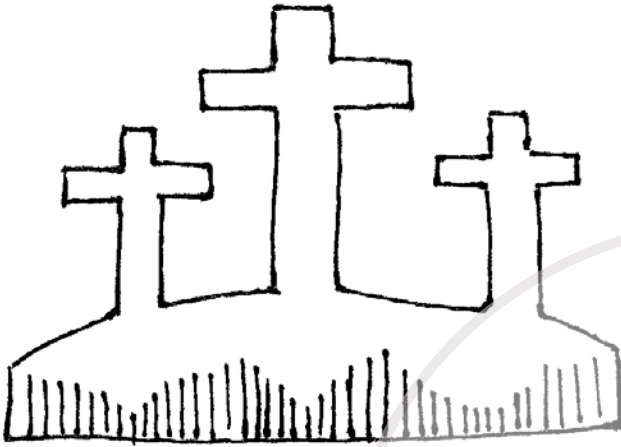
WEEK #10:

TERRIBLE, AWFUL, NO GOOD DAY!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Large cross. *(Make one from cardboard or use a decorative Cross from your church sanctuary.)* Wear a piece of Cross jewelry.

Collect and display items referred to in STORY TIME as the story is told.



INTRODUCTION

(Show Cross) Take a look at this Cross. Tell me what you know about it. We often wear the Cross as a piece of jewelry. We see it in church. Sometimes Christians wear shirts that display a

Cross. If you come to church, you know that Jesus died on a Cross. Now that day was a terrible, awful, no good day!

As terrible as it was, this was God's plan. Jesus was willing to die to become our Savior. It's the most important story we will ever tell.

STORY TIME

FLOWER (Silk or real): Jesus and His friends ate their Last Supper and walked to a garden where Jesus wanted to pray. The Garden of Gethsemane was on a small hill outside Jerusalem. Jesus prayed. The sleeping disciples disappointed Him by not watching over Him.

LIPSTICK "KISS" ON PAPER: Suddenly a group of soldiers arrived with Judas. They waited for Judas to kiss Jesus and then they arrested Him and took Him away. His frightened disciples ran away.

BOWL OF WATER: After a full night of trials and beatings, Jesus was taken to Governor Pilate. Pilate said, "I find no reason to kill this man." The people shouted for the release of a murderer, Barabbas, instead of Jesus. Pilate washed his hands in a bowl of water. "I wash my hands of the blood of this man."

That terrible day ended as the soldiers led Jesus toward a hill called Golgotha. They made Him carry the cross on His back, but Jesus fell down. A man named Simon stood nearby and soldiers grabbed him and said, "Carry his cross!"

LARGE NAIL: When they got to Golgotha they nailed Jesus to the cross. There were three crosses, Jesus was in the middle with a criminal on each side. People shouted at Him, they laughed, "You saved others, why can't you save Yourself?" Jesus could have climbed off that Cross but He chose to stay there and die to save you and me.

TEAR A PIECE OF COTTON FABRIC: After asking John to take care of Mary, His mother, Jesus said, "It is finished." That is when Jesus bowed His head and went to Heaven. Suddenly a huge curtain that hung at the temple was torn in half, from top to bottom. A Roman soldier who wanted Jesus to die said, "Surely this Man was the Son of God." He knew he was wrong about Jesus.

CONCLUSION

The day Jesus died was a sad story but this is the greatest story ever told! Jesus died knowing that you (*put in names of children*) would do things wrong (sin). He died for everybody's sins. Jesus made it possible to be forgiven and have our sins FORGOTTEN! He forgets what we did!

The next time you do something you are not supposed to, remember to say "Sorry" to Jesus, and remember what He did for you!

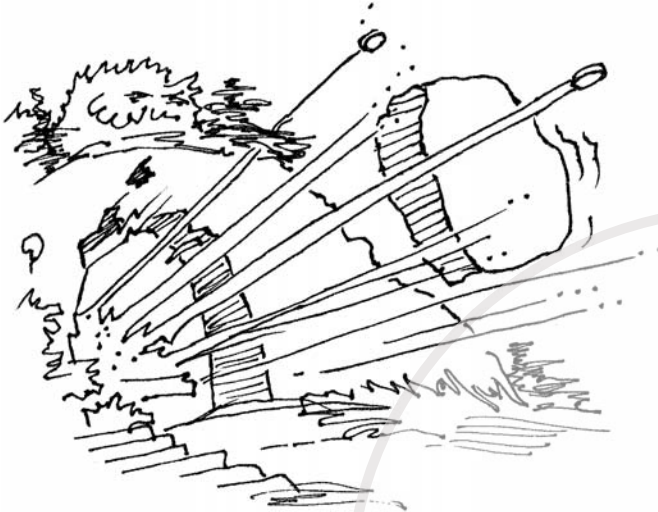
VERSE OF THE DAY: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."*
John 3:16 NIV

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:

WEEK #11:

HE'S BA-A-ACK!



TEACHER PREPARATION

There are many ways to tell the Resurrection story. There are Resurrection Cookies, coloring pages and stories easily found on the internet.

Try this skit using students as participants. Dress in simple costumes. If they read, let them read their part, if they are younger students, let them portray the character while you read their parts.

SUPPLIES: Holy Land costumes. Large paper red, black, blue, green and yellow hearts with teaching phrases hand printed on each heart.

INTRODUCTION

I have a feeling you guessed the end of our Messiah story. Jesus did not stay dead after He died on the Cross. How can that be true? Well, that is the Miracle of Easter. Over 2000 years ago, Jesus, the Son of God, Messiah, Savior rose from the dead.

Jesus was born miraculously in Bethlehem, lived His life teaching about God's Kingdom, healing the sick, raising the dead and becoming God's answer to sin that has plagued humanity since Adam and Eve ate forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.

STORY TIME

I could tell you the Resurrection story but....let's have a bit more fun with this very happy, wonderful day! You can help me!

Dress students in simple Holy Land garments...anything from head pieces

to wings to caftans works well. Hand out costumes casually.

NARRATOR: Early Sunday morning, after Jesus died on Friday, Roman soldiers were guarding Jesus' tomb. There was a heavy stone rolled in front of the door. Suddenly, a flash of light knocked the guards away and they couldn't move!

GUARDS: *(Jump and fall to the floor.)*

GUARD: Hey, I can't move. Can you?

GUARD: Me either. Oh-oh, we're in trouble. Nobody better steal Jesus' body.

GUARDS: *(Jump up and run away.)*

NARRATOR: It's Sunday! It's Easter Sunday! Look who's coming?

WOMEN: We must bury Jesus the right way. We'll take perfume and wrap Him properly.

NARRATOR: They looked in the tomb and jumped back!

WOMEN: *(Jump back!)* Where is Jesus?

ANGEL: Don't be afraid. I know you're looking for Jesus who died on a cross. He is not here. He has risen just as He said. Look for yourself!

WOMEN: *(Look inside tomb area with great surprise.)* Wow!

ANGEL: Go as fast as you can and tell His friends, the disciples, that Jesus has risen from the dead!

WOMEN: Well, we can tell them but I bet they won't believe us! *(Run away.)*

NARRATOR: Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, the disciples were hiding and crying in a house with all the windows and doors closed. They were afraid the bad guys were going to kill them too!

DISCIPLES: Oh woe is me, Jesus is dead and we're going to be next! I

thought Jesus would be our King. How could He die so young?

WOMEN: (Run to disciples) Hey! We just got back from the tomb and Jesus wasn't there. An angel told us Jesus rose from the grave like He promised. We're supposed to run and tell you guys.

DISCIPLES: Are you crazy? People don't come back to life when they die?

WOMEN: But, we saw Jesus while we were running here. It was wonderful to see Him. He said, "Good morning!" We fell down and worshiped Him. Jesus said, "You're holding Me too tight. Don't be so afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee. I'll meet them there." Yippee! Jesus is alive. He's alive!

NARRATOR: The disciples decided to look for themselves. They ran to the empty tomb. When they got there, the angel spoke to them too. Soon all eleven disciples were on their way to Galilee, heading for the mountain Jesus set up for their reunion.

Meanwhile, back in Jerusalem, the guards were in big trouble!

GUARDS: But really, High Priest, We fell down and couldn't move. The body disappeared into thin air and we ran here to you!

NARRATOR: They were afraid they would be put to death but the evil High Priests had a plan. They paid them lots of money. The soldier guards then went around town saying,

GUARDS: His disciples came in the night and stole the body while we were sleeping! Oh, it was an awful thing. You should have seen them carting away Jesus. It's a shame to do that to a dead body.

NARRATOR: There wasn't a word of truth to their story but people still believe that lie today.

DISCIPLES: (Pointing...) There He is! There's Jesus! Let's worship Him.

NARRATOR: Some of the disciples did worship Jesus but others needed more convincing. It had been a hard week and they didn't want to risk

themselves again. However, Jesus went right ahead and gave His marching orders. He said, "God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."

CONCLUSION

Because Jesus died and rose from the grave, we can go to Heaven. Have you ever wondered how to become a Christian? We only do it once and this is the most important decision you will ever make. Once you follow God's directions, you are sons and daughters of the Lord Jesus Christ, The Messiah!

SUPPLIES: Large red, black blue, green, yellow paper hearts attached to the wall.

BELIEVE IN JESUS! (Red Heart) We must believe the story about Jesus the Messiah is true. It doesn't matter how old you are. You can be very young and believe in Jesus. Jesus promised, "Everyone who believes in Me shall never die." John 11:26

ADMIT OUR SIN! (Black Heart) We must admit we are sinners. How do we know we are sinners? The Bible says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

ASK FORGIVENESS! (Blue Heart) Anytime we sin we can ask Jesus to forgive us. He will. Remember, Jesus is Alive! "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9

TRUST IN JESUS! (Green Heart) There is a wonderful promise in Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths."

GO TO HEAVEN! (Yellow Heart) Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:1-3

Heaven! God's House! My House! I'm going! How about you? If you want to be sure you are a Christian heading for Heaven, pray this simple prayer with me:

Dear Jesus, I love You and believe in You. I know I am a sinner and I ask Your forgiveness for my sin. I will trust you as my Savior, Lord and Messiah for the rest of my life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

That's it! No long list of rules. No fear of being turned away. When we pray that simple prayer, we become part of God's family forever! Welcome to the family!

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CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:

WEEK #12:

SHOW OFF NIGHT



THE LEARNING CENTER will not be open today. Set up the area for parents to pop in for a short visit. Place all displays, artwork, decorations used during the sessions.

Stay in THE LEARNING CENTER to 'meet and greet' parents and answer questions.

Most of the SHOW OFF NIGHT event is held in a large group area (Sanctuary, Family Life Center) with students and families. Attend the event cheerfully and be available to speak to parents.

Choose the best event of the sessions and recreate it for the audience.

THE

SURPRISE

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SHOPPE

NAZARETH HOUSE

The House Of The Lord!

NAZARETH HOUSE

The House Of The Lord

This SURPRISE SHOPPE features an imaginary weekly journey to the life and times of Jesus. Decorate one room to resemble a Holy Land village home like Jesus may have lived in during His childhood.

The goal of NAZARETH HOUSE is to make the earthly life of Jesus real. Seeing a story rather than hearing it opens eyes, ears and hearts to what really took place.

Become the current resident of NAZARETH HOUSE. Engage students in every day activities. Tell them about life in Nazareth.

Use our basic information for historical facts. Share information informally as students make projects, meet village people and eat authentic foods. Become familiar with the facts before the sessions begin.

TEACHING OPTION: Instead of teaching every session alone, ask other people to become Nazareth neighbors and friends. Assign one lesson plan to a small group and then check on them to be sure the session is ready to go!

DECORATION

Choose one room where NAZARETH HOUSE may be set up and left for the duration of the CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MESSIAH series. A Sunday School classroom, church basement or hall could be transformed into a village home.

Bring props from home or borrow items. Keep it simple. Homes during Jesus' life were small, dark, bare and uncomfortable. Animals often shared the same space as humans. Most daily living was done outdoors.

LIGHTING: Homes were lit with small candles in clay pots. If it is safe, use candles. *(Always have a bucket of water in the area.)* Instead of candles, consider small electric lights placed on the floor behind baskets and plants for a neat, light/dark effect.

PLANTS: Place green plants in all corners of the room. Plants may also be placed outside the door.

BASKETS: Scatter wicker baskets, wooden bowls and utensils. Fill them with yarn, potatoes or other simple items.

BED MATS: Roll sleeping bags, mats or woolen blankets against one wall. No pillows.

WOOD ITEMS: Display an old wood ladder, wood tools, wood benches and stools.

POTTERY: Stack simple pottery bowls, pitchers and cups on a bench.

WOVEN ITEMS: Hang macrame pieces on the wall and woven blankets on windows.

MEZUZAH: (Make or purchase) Each Jewish home displays a Mezuzah. Even Jews who are not religious follow this meaningful tradition. This is a small container of scriptures attached to the outside door frame of a Jewish home. It should be placed on the right side of the door about shoulder height. It is usually about 3" long.

The scriptures are traditionally the Shema. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21) For your purposes, print "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord Is One."

Establish this weekly ceremony as students enter NAZARETH HOUSE:

Each student kisses their lips, touch the mezuzah and kiss their lips when entering the room.

FOOT WASHING BOWL AND TOWELS: Place a large container of warm water and clean towels at the door way. Students remove shoes and socks, have their feet washed and dried and find a spot to sit. To save time, do this Week #1 only.

COSTUMES/LEADERS ONLY FOR YOUR INFORMATION (FYI)

MEN: Men's clothing consisted of a linen **loin cloth** for an under garment. A coat or **tunic** was worn every day. The coat came down below the knees and usually had tassels hanging on the bottom. These coats were worn for work and removed to sleep. Blue was the typical coat color.

The **cloak** took the place of our overcoat. Besides being a coat, it was a blanket, a bed or a carpet. It needed a **belt** tied around it to keep it closed. Belts were made of rope, leather or cloth. **Money purses** and **daggers** were tied to the belt and hidden in the folds of the material. Poor people usually had one garment serving as both cloak and coat made of camel hair and a leather belt.

WOMEN: Women's clothing was similar to men. They also wore and coat and cloak tied by a belt. Their clothing was more refined and fitted. Women wore ribbons of wool and silk, shawls tied over their shoulders and material plaited braids as jewelry.

MEN AND WOMEN: Both men and women wore head coverings. They were made with a piece of cloth tied at the forehead. The rest of the material fell over their shoulders. Another head covering was made of many strips of clothing bound around the head similar to a turban.

Common materials were wool, linen or flax. Clothes were bleached and dyed with natural animal or vegetable products. Blue and brown were the most common colors worn and they often striped their garments with white and brown. Levites usually wore yellow. Some embroidery was used for women's clothing and more elaborate dress clothes.

UPDATED NAZARETH HOUSE COSTUMES: Wear simple, light materials for comfort. Bare feet or sandals are appropriate. Wear a head covering and rope belt.

OPTIONAL SURPRISE SHOPPE PLANS

Change or adapt any or all activities. Create an enjoyable Holy Land environment. Have fun. Teach about life as Jesus may have experienced it in an easily understandable way.

There are DVD's available that show life in Bible times. If available, show one. If a large book of Bible Time stories is available, make it available.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT NAZARETH HOUSE?



The house was the center of Jewish life. People didn't live indoors much when the weather was good. Most houses had a courtyard or garden where the family entertained friends during warm weather. The house was more important in cold weather.

The typical house was a whitewashed cube with one door and one window. The inside had a single room divided into two—one side for animals (cold weather) and one side for human family. Some houses were partial cave dwellings built against limestone rock and hollowed out. More elaborate homes were built around a central courtyard with rooms opening onto it. This provided coolness through the house. There were no separate kitchens, except in rich homes. Cooking was done in the courtyard or under a lean-to during bad weather or at the community oven.

The roof was flat but slanted enough to carry off rain into the gutters. There was a stairway leading to it on the outside of the house. The roof had many uses—spreading laundry to dry, storage for tools, cool patio on summer evenings and even a sleeping spot on hot nights. Often when the family slept on the roof, they pitched tents. The roof was perfect for prayer time. Rich families built light buildings on the roof rather than tents and eventually these developed into a second story.

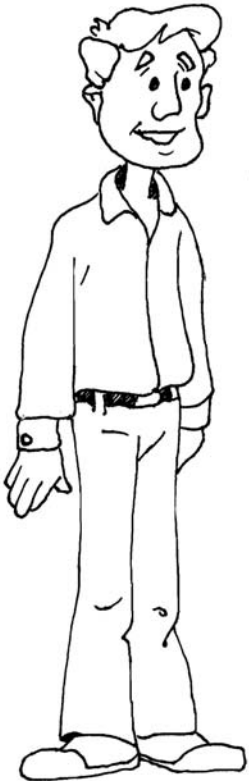
Building materials included clay, limestone and daub (mud type plaster). Whitewash was lime. The floors were beaten earth for the poor and pebbles or baked clay tiles for the rich. The doors were narrow and low except for the main entrance.

People went to the fountain or stream of water for water needs. Animal skins, jars and pitchers were carrying tools. Generally, there were no fireplaces because they were not needed. If it got cold, they lit charcoal braziers.

Furniture was simple. The main piece was a chest which held provisions and clothes. Poor people ate on the chests or on a bushel turned upside down. The rich had tables. Many people sat on the floor to eat and talk but they also had seats in the form of stools, chairs and arm chairs which were made of wood frames stretched with cloth or woven straw.

The middle class and poor slept on woven mats put on top of one another as a bed. The mats were rolled up and put away for the day and rolled out again at night. They slept in the same clothes they wore during the day. When they were cold they wrapped themselves in their cloak. Most did not have blankets. Their pillow was a piece of wood or stone.

You're The Surprise Shoppe Leader! ...Don't Panic!



Each Surprise Shoppe is designed to last twenty minutes. Time flies when you are having fun. Have fun! Some activities require tables so set up a corner where crafts are completed.

DECORATE!

Make THE SURPRISE SHOPPE a great place to be. Make a large sign reading, WELCOME TO NAZARETH HOUSE This area builds in visual attraction from week to week.

BE CREATIVE!

Add your unique touch of creativity along the way. Learning is fun when you break out of the traditional mold. Results of your efforts last a lifetime. A combination of projects purchased from catalog sources and homemade versions works well.

DISCIPLINE!

Discipline is a dirty word but someone has to say it and worse yet, someone has to do it. During your sessions you will be in charge of chaos or controlled chatter. Judge when that imaginary line has been crossed.

Notice the word is "discipline" and not "punishment". Actively involve problem students. Seat them close to you. Separate buddies who poke each other. If necessary, raise your voice. The last resort is asking the student to leave the area.

Obvious reactions to avoid: Swearing, verbal abuse, spanking, slapping, embarrassing students in front of peers. Instead:

1. Ask student to stop misbehavior.
2. Involve student in activity.
3. Talk privately outside group area.
4. Send student to the Club Director.
5. Involve parents.

Rarely will you need to carry out extreme measures. Activities move quickly. Students do not have time to challenge authority before moving to another area.

BE DEPENDABLE!

Be present and be prepared. Arrange for a substitute to cover the activity and give that person enough time to prepare if absence is unavoidable. It is frustrating to have a leader promise to participate and then attend sporadically.

ENJOY YOURSELF!

What a unique concept! Leaders can have fun too. Enjoy the material, prepare with prayer and study, smile—even laugh with each child. Be the person you would like to see your students become: A role model who affects your church and community for an entire generation of believers.

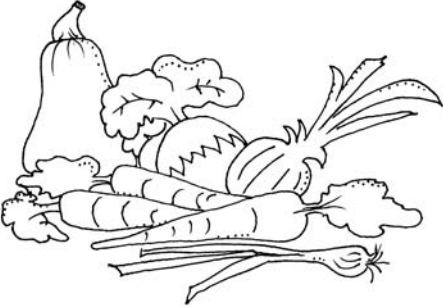
USING SCRIPTURE

Use a scripture translation accepted by your church. Make sure Biblical concepts are child friendly. Find a version you know they will understand. We have chosen *The Message* for this specific series of lessons. Feel free to change “read aloud” and “memorization portions as desired. Often memorized scripture is most memorable using the King James Version.

WEEK #1:

FAMILY NIGHT DINNER

The SURPRISE SHOPPE Team attends Family Night Dinner and will explain NAZARETH HOUSE.



Discuss NAZARETH HOUSE goals:

1. Students experience the life of Jesus in a daily living fashion by being placed in the center of a common Jewish home.
2. Students learn about the customs of people who lived at the time of Jesus.
3. Students become willing participants of daily chores.
4. Students make usable object similar to those used in ancient homes.
5. Students gain a working knowledge of life and hardships people faced before modern conveniences.

Ask parents to volunteer by signing the COUNT ON ME Sheet to volunteer to help at a specific time or for a specific project.

WEEK #2:

SHALOM!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Decorate NAZARETH HOUSE before students arrive. Provide plenty of floor space where students sit to experience life in this simple home. The visual experience will make a lasting memory.

Talk casually to students about life in Nazareth using information given. Don't memorize all facts. Read from the lesson plan when necessary.



Become a Nazareth citizen. Call yourself Mary, Martha, Rhoda, Hannah, Miriam, Peter, Saul, Reuben, etc. Choose a name students will respect.

Supplies: Mezuzah doorknob hanger patterns, copies of scripture.

WELCOME TO NAZARETH HOUSE!

Greet students outside the room. Explain the exciting adventure they are about to experience as they "travel" back in time to the days of Jesus. Show them the mezuzah on the door frame. Explain the honorable ritual that they will participate in each week. Wash feet at the door.

MEZUZAH: (Make or purchase) Each Jewish home displays a Mezuzah. Even Jews who are not religious follow this meaningful tradition. This is a small container of scriptures attached to the outside door frame of a Jewish home. It should be placed on the right side of the door about shoulder height. It is usually about 3" long.

The scriptures are traditionally the Shema. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21) For your purposes, print "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord Is One."

Establish this weekly ceremony as students enter NAZARETH HOUSE: Each student kisses their lips, touch the mezuzah and kiss their lips when entering the room.

FOOT WASHING: With a basin of water and several bath towels, wash students' feet at the door. Once their feet are clean, they sit in a circle on the floor inside the room. (Do this just once to save time from week to week.)

INTRODUCTION

Shalom! (*Shalom is a Hebrew word meaning peace,, nothing missing, nothing broken, well being and complete. We say Shalom when we want to say hello or goodbye.*)

Welcome to my humble NAZARETH HOUSE. My name is (Insert Name). This is a typical Jewish home like Jesus lived in. During the next few weeks, I hope we become good friends as I tell you about my home and my life in Nazareth.

Galilee: Let me tell you about Galilee. It is the most beautiful and rich land in Palestine. Each spring our fields are covered with wild flowers. The small hills and grassy plains are wonderful for growing grain and feeding flocks of sheep. I love the sheep and their sweet lambs.

Food: We eat grapes, figs, olives, pomegranates and many other delicious fruits. We drink cold, clear water from the Sea of Galilee. And the fish...the fish is scrumptious. Many fishermen live near us so

the food is healthy and enjoyable.

People: Half the people who live in Nazareth are Jewish and half come from other nations. Most Galileans live in small villages scattered in the hills and along the lakeshore. We are hard working, happy, kind and uplifting people.

We speak Aramaic, a simple version of Hebrew. Most Galileans are Greek speakers. There are no more than 100 citizens of Nazareth. Most men are farmers but we have a few excellent craftsmen, like Joseph the carpenter.

Peace And War: Don't worry, you are safe right now. We are at peace but rumor has it that a battle between the Jews and Romans is about to happen. We're untouched by government trouble in Nazareth but we hear about it.

Village: Nazareth is sheltered near the Plain of Esdraelon. Our square houses are close together on the side of a small hill far from the main road. The highest point of Nazareth is where the synagogue was built a long time ago. The synagogue and the outdoor market are the centers of our town life.

PLEASE PURCHASE

TOUR NAZARETH HOUSE

Show students each area of the house (room) and explain the reasons for each item. This information develops depending on what is on display.

MAKE A MEZUZAH

Copy the Ten Commandments for each student. (See pattern)

Copy a Door Knob Hanger for each student. (See pattern)

Students fold the scripture into the hanger and take home to hang on their bedroom doors.

WEEK #3:

HAVE A SEAT

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Bring lots of newspaper to make woven "Sit Upon" individual floor mats. Masking tape or duct tape is helpful for mats that refuse to stay folded on the edges.

To keep newsprint from rubbing on student clothing, spray paint each mat after class and let dry. Be sure students sign their mats so they can find them easily each week.

Completed mats should be neatly stacked at the end of each session.



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INTRODUCTION

Shalom! Welcome to NAZARETH HOUSE. Today you become a member of my Nazareth family. You look uncomfortable sitting on the hard floor. We can't let this happen. The only way to make you comfortable is to help each of you weave a seat.

We make most things in Nazareth. Our market place is fun but it doesn't sell everything we need. People rush around the sellers' stalls looking at the wondrous items. There are fresh vegetables and sweet fruit to choose. Merchants from Jerusalem show lovely jewelry and soft fabric. We can't afford such luxury but it is a marvel to see.

I take my water jug to the well near the market each day. All my friends are there and we talk and laugh while we work. Then I spend my few coins on food for the day's meal.

People shout to each other and haggle over high prices charge by the merchants. Some people who have no work come to the market to find jobs. Sometimes hungry people steal food and run away. In larger towns the market place is dangerous. We know everyone around here so we feel safe.

Nazareth was settled 2000 years before Jesus was born. The first people built homes here because of the sweet flowing spring of water. Today, it is known as Mary's Well. We are blessed to be near a caravan route to Egypt. Our village covers 6 acres of land plus the outer farm land. We look very good to merchants and that's why they like to come here to sell their goods.

MAKE A WOVEN SIT UPON MAT

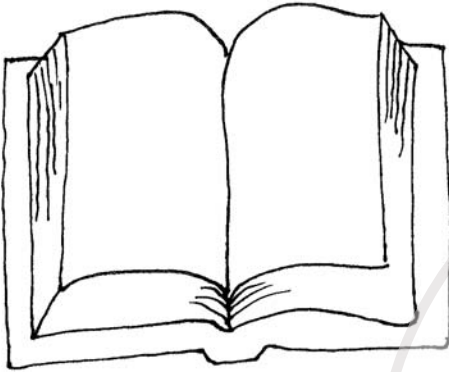
I lack enough coins in my purse to purchase woven mats for all of you. So, as a member of the family, it is time to get to work. Make your own mat! (See pattern illustration.)

1. Fold 8 pieces of newspaper into long strips.
2. Lay 4 pieces of newspaper side by side.
3. Weave the other 4 pieces of newspaper, one at a time, through the strips on the floor using the "over one, under one" technique.
4. Tuck in each end by folding it over the edge. Tape may be needed to hold the strips in place although they should hold with the fold.
5. Write your name on your mat.

OPTION: Teachers spray paint each mat with clear acrylic finish to keep printers ink from rubbing off.

WEEK #4:

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD



TEACHER PREPARATION

Serve this basic Jewish meal. Students sit on their new mats!

Supplies: Freshly baked unsliced bread, butter, jam and honey. Add samples vegetables along with baked fish sticks and grapes or melon for dessert. **Option:** Make fried bread by cutting small pieces of bread dough, place in hot oil until browned. Serve with honey or jam.

INTRODUCTION

Shalom! Welcome to NAZARETH HOUSE. You have arrived at a very good time. I have just finished baking our daily bread. It is nice and warm and fresh.

***OPTION:** If there is time, demonstrate mixing bread ingredients and knead dough in front of them. Let them knead dough. Be sure hands are clean!*

First I take barley from my storage pot and grind the kernels between two heavy stones called millstones. The coarsely ground meal fills my large bowl.

I pour water into a small bowl and crumble a small piece of dough saved from yesterday. This is called leaven. On feast days I add mint or cinnamon for a special treat.

I leave the dough in a kneading trough for several hours until it rises. Then I shape the dough into several large flat disks. I never forget to save a bit of dough for tomorrow!

100

Nazareth has a community oven. I take my bread there to bake it. While the bread bakes, I spin weave, wash and make goat's milk curd in a goat skin churn.

SHARING DAILY BREAD

Join me for our light dinner meal. We eat simple, tasty food. We enjoy bread and wine. Dried, salted fish or broiled chicken comes from the nearby Sea of Galilee and a farm along the main road. Only rich people eat meat every day. We taste roasted lamb or goat on holidays.

My family loves sweet fried cakes. We do not have sugar but we do have wild honey and thick grape or fig syrup. Cheese makes the meal perfect!

After washing your hands, sit on your mate in a circle around the large dinner pots.

Let us Pray: Great God of the Hebrew people, look upon this family with love and mercy. See how we love and serve You. Give us this day our daily bread. We will worship and love you always. Amen.

Help yourself to foods you desire. Take only what you will eat. Do not waste food. It is a sin!

As we eat, we tell stories about our ancestors. This comforting tradition began in the days of our father, Abraham, 2000 years ago. Each day our sons learn the duties of each faithful Israelite.

As the group eats, read portions of Hebrews 11.

CLOSE IN PRAYER.

WEEK #5:

SHAKE A FRIEND'S HAND

TEACHER PREPARATION

Actors: Ask people to dress in Holy Land costume and become friends who visit NAZARETH HOUSE. Read from a prepared script.

Students sit on their mats before the first friend arrives. Students listen to town gossip as delivered by friends.

Supplies: Serve cheese and crackers when students arrive.



INTRODUCTION

Shalom! NAZARETH HOUSE will be a busy place today. I am preparing to greet some friends. I want you to meet them. Some live in Nazareth and others live in Jerusalem. I am so hungry for news from afar.

KNOCK, KNOCK!

Teacher: Come in, friend! Meet my guests! This is my friend Hannah. She lives across the path and we draw water at Mary's Well together. What brings you to my house, Hannah?

Hannah: Dear friend, I am in need of a large wooden bowl. My bowl dropped and lies broken on the ground. Tomorrow is Sabbath and I must complete my family's meal before sundown.

Teacher: I have just the bowl you need. It is an extra bowl that belonged to my mother-in-law. I am sure it will fit your needs. You will find it right outside the door.

Hannah: Thank you, dear friend. Have you heard Salome is getting married? Her father was getting nervous because she has turned 13 and is getting to be an old girl. She must be married soon. Her father negotiated the bride price and Salome will marry Hadad in the fall after the harvest has been gathered.

Teacher: Wonderful! I saw those two smiling and winking at one another. I think they put the bride and groom idea in their fathers' ears. Sly ones, don't you think?

Hannah: They seem very happy. The betrothal ceremony will be held soon. The legal documents will be signed before witnesses. My dear Jonathan has been asked to be a witness. It is an honor for him to sign his name.

Teacher: Oh my, I must make wedding garments. We dress in fine clothing for weddings. What a grand time of celebration with dancing, music, laughter, eating and drinking.

Hannah: I must go now, friend. Thank you for loaning me your bowl. I can't wait to see your wedding garments. Call on me if I can help with the sewing. Shalom! Farewell!

KNOCK, KNOCK!

Teacher: Shalom! Enter friend. Jacob, you look worried. What happened?

Jacob: Friend, I need your help. My father has died and I must plan his funeral.

Teacher: We feel sorrow for you in this terrible loss. Old Reuben was sick but I thought he would live a bit longer. Your family has been so good to us. Of course, I will help you. What can I do?

Jacob: I need help to prepare his body for burial. We need to wash him and rub him with oil and perfume. I have the grave clothes in which to wrap him.

Teacher: I can hear your family mourning. Have you hired a professional mourner yet? You need one woman mourner and two flute players.

Jacob: Hire whomever you wish. We will bury him in the family cave tomorrow. Shalom. Farewell. (Exit)

Teacher: Death is part of life in Nazareth. Tomorrow a procession of noisy, mourning people and flute players will accompany the family to Reuben's tomb. A man skilled in speech making will talk about Old Reuben to remind us of his goodness and his deeds.

KNOCK, KNOCK!

Teacher: Shalom, Chloe! It is good to see you. Have you heard the news about old Reuben? Has your daughter given birth to her baby yet?

Chloe: I came to tell you the baby was born early this morning. He is a beautiful baby boy! All is well.

Teacher: Hallelujah! A boy child! They have been blessed by God. We were fearful no child would be born to them after all these years. They must be praising God....and it's a boy!

Chloe: Our whole family is going to the Temple in Jerusalem for the circumcision and to give thanks to God. Come with us. We want you to be part of this celebration of life.

Teacher: I will come. I am glad the Lord answered your prayers. Tell me when you are leaving so I may be ready to travel. Hug that baby boy for me!

Chloe: Shalom! I must tell all the others of my joy!

KNOCK, KNOCK!

Teacher: Shalom! Come in, friend. Elizabeth, it is not often you come to my humble home. Sit down and meet my guests. What is in your heart?

Elizabeth: (Sitting in the circle) I have interesting, yet disturbing news. You know Mary and Joseph, the carpenter who died a while ago, don't you? They have many grown children and are well known in Nazareth.

Teacher: Of course I know them. Joseph fixed my door frame. Jesus came with him to hold the heavy top in place. Joseph died soon after. What is it? Has something happened to Mary?

Elizabeth: The women at the well are buzzing about Jesus claiming to be our Messiah! The very Messiah God promised for generations. Jesus says He is God's Son, sent to save the world. He is teaching in the Temple and even spoke at our synagogue.

This cannot be true. I feel sorry for Mary. She has lived a hard life. The rumors have flown since Jesus' birth before the marriage. Mary continues to say Jesus was born of God. She is a great excuse maker! I think Jesus is addle brained or a con man...or worse! He is not our Messiah any more than I am.

Teacher: It is a puzzlement, Elizabeth. Jesus never told ME He is our Messiah. He has been the boy down the path. He has been a good son to Mary since Joseph's death. He stayed home, did not marry.

I'm sure you and the other women have misunderstood. Do not worry. His brothers will make him be quiet. They will give him some sense. It saddens me to think Jesus is losing his mind.

Elizabeth: I'll take some figs to Mary and talk to her. Perhaps I can soothe her in her troubled time. Shalom! Farewell.

Teacher: Hmm. You know, the scriptures promise a Messiah who will save Israel from all enemies. I know our Messiah will be a strong king and mighty leader. He will destroy the Roman government and make us free.

I guarantee you, Jesus is not our Messiah. He is just Jesus, Joseph's son and carpenter. Why, I have seen him fix water troughs and windows. He plays with the children and walks his mother to the marketplace.

And yet, I was at the wedding in Cana. I tasted the best wine that servants claimed Jesus made from pots of water. I saw a lame beggar walk after Jesus whispered words into his ear.

My cousin was in a crowd of 5000 when Jesus fed them all with five loaves of bread and two small fish. Perhaps it's true. No, it cannot be true. I am a silly woman thinking thoughts of fancy. And yet, if these things are true...

I must think quietly for a bit. Thank you for visiting. I hope you enjoyed meeting my friends. Come again next week. We will celebrate Sabbath in Nazareth House. For now, I must think.

Take students to the door.

Shalom!

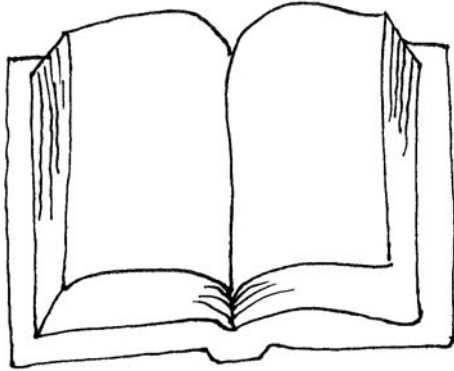
WEEK #6:

SABBATH!

TEACHER PREPARATION

ACTOR: One man in Holy Land costume and prayer shawl to talk about Sabbath worship.

Serve CHALLAH, a special white bread made for Sabbath meals. Ask someone who enjoys baking bread to make this special braided bread for the group. Or purchase Challah at a local bakery. This recipe is traditional.



1 3/4-2 C flour	1 pkg. Active dry yeast	1/3 C. Water
1/4 C soft butter	2 T. Sugar	1/2 t salt
	1 Egg	1 beaten egg
Extra flour to knead dough		
Extra butter to grease bowl		

1. Mix one cup flour and yeast together in a bowl.
2. Place water, butter, sugar, salt in saucepan. Heat to 115-120.
3. Add flour, yeast mixture, egg. Beat 5 minutes. Stir in remaining flour to make a stiff dough.
4. Spread extra flour on clean surface. Knead dough 5-8 minutes.
5. Grease large bowl with butter and place dough in it. Cover with cloth. Place in a warm place free of drafts. Allow dough to double. 1-1 1/2 hours.
6. Place dough on floured surface. Punch down and knead gently a few times. Divide into 3 equal dough balls. Allow to rest for 15 minutes.
7. Roll each ball into a 16" long rope. Starting in the center, braid the ropes. Pinch ends together to braid them.
8. Grease cookie sheet with butter and place Challah on sheet. Cover with cloth and let rise to double. @45 minutes.
9. Spread beaten egg on Challah with pastry brush.
10. Bake 15 minutes in 350 degree oven.

SABBATH NEWS

Teacher: Today we do NOTHING! Absolutely nothing. It is against God's law to work on the Sabbath. This is the seventh day, Saturday. It is a sin to work, bake, draw water or do work of any kind. We are strict about this law so you must stop working.

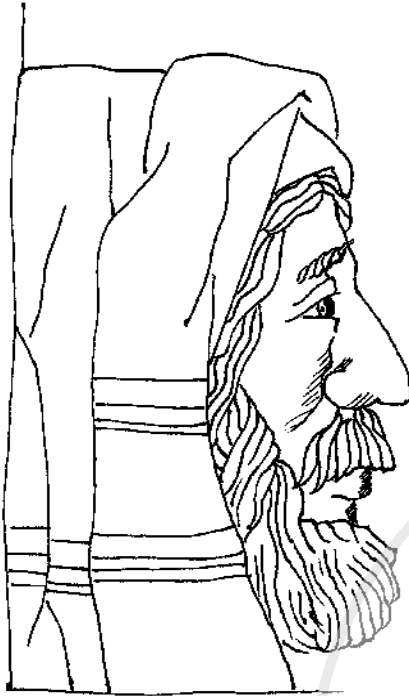
Sabbath (Shabbat—in Hebrew) is a holiday we celebrate every week. The Sabbath has its beginning in the Bible. The fourth commandment is, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all they work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any manner of work, for in six days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, the sea and all that is in them and rested on the seventh. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Sabbath begins Friday at sundown. A shofar, instrument made from a ram's horn, is blown at this hour. People come home from work, wash and sit down to a special Sabbath meal.

A kiddush blessing over the wine is sung and then we bless the bread. "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth." The first piece of Challah bread is divided and a small piece given to everyone. (Do this now.)

Saturday morning we go to synagogue and afterward people wish each other "Shabbat Shalom"! (Peaceful Sabbath) (Do this now.)

VIP GUEST



I have asked a friend to tell you about Sabbath worship. While we enjoy our Challah, hear what makes God happy.

VIP: Shalom! Let me share my Sabbath faith. Everything we have and everything we are comes from God. Jewish faith is based on honoring God and obeying God's laws.

SYNAGOGUE: Anywhere in the world where twelve Jewish men gather, a synagogue can be established. Benches are lined up along three walls. Men, women and children sit on the benches wearing prayer shawls over their heads. The fourth wall faces Jerusalem. There is a seven branch lamp stand with lit candles.

PRAYER LEADER: The prayer leader, a common man, leads us in praise to God. We sing to God's eternal and mighty covenant (promise) with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We believe God who promised us a redeemer, a savior. We shout "Amen"!

Repeat this verse with me: *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord."*

WORSHIP LEADER: The Hazzan, our worship leader, blows the ram's horn to call us to synagogue and bring forward the Ark. Our ark is a wooden chest holding the Torah scroll covered in fine linen. The Hazzan removes the linen and holds the scroll high for all to see.

TORAH: It is our duty and joy to read the Torah. It contains the first five books of the Bible. We read it every Sabbath, festival and new moon and on Mondays and Thursdays (market days). After we read, the scroll is lovingly replaced in the Ark. A speaker delivers a sermon based on the scripture we just heard read.

HAFTARAH: The Haftarah is the conclusion of Sabbath worship. One man reads from one of the prophetic books of the Bible.

BAR MITZVAH: When Jewish boys reach age 13, they celebrate their “bar mitzvah”. Girls celebrate their “bat mitzvah”. They memorize long passages of scripture and become members of the synagogue. The Haftarah is often read by a boy who has just reached his 13th birthday.

CONCLUSION

TEACHER: I remember the day when Jesus, the son of Joseph the carpenter and his wife, Mary, went to Nazareth’s synagogue on the Sabbath. He stood up to read from the book of Isaiah. Jesus read about a prophet anointed by the Lord. He closed the book and handed it back to the leader and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue looked at him.

Jesus said, *“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”*. People were upset and said, *“Hey, isn’t this Jesus, Joseph’s son?”* Jesus said things they did not want to hear they got VERY angry. Instead of our normal Sabbath good wishes, everyone went home mad.

The more I remember Jesus, the more I wonder at His words of being our Messiah. Could it be true. Is Jesus God’s Redeemer promised so long ago?

CONCLUSION: End the activity with more simple snacks and quiet restful conversation.

As students leave, say “Shabbat Shalom” (Peaceful Sabbath) to each person.

WEEK #7:

ROSH HASHANAH

JEWISH NEW YEAR

TEACHER PREPARATION

Help students celebrate the Jewish New Year. Serve apples and honey because the year has been as good as the apple and as sweet as the honey.

Supplies: Star of David pattern to make a hanging decoration. (Make copies on heavy paper for each student.)



INTRODUCTION

TEACHER: Rosh Hashanah means "Head of the Year" or "First of the Year". It's just like saying "Happy New Year". However, the celebration is much different than our New Year celebrations. (Football, midnight, drinking). Rosh Hashanah is one of the holiest days of the year. One thing is the same, Jewish people look at past mistakes and plan to make good changes in the new year. And, it is celebrated in the seventh month!

The common greeting is **L'shanah tovah** (for a good year). Say it with me!

FOOD: The celebration begins in the evening with a delicious holiday meal. **Challah**, the special braided bread is on the table. Instead of a long braid, it is now a round braid symbolizing one year is over and new year is beginning. Challah is dipped in honey so the new year will be sweet. **Fish** is often served because fish represents fruitfulness and plenty.

REST: No work is permitted. Much of the day is spent in synagogue.

The ram's horn (shofar) is blown. A special prayer book, the Machzor is used.

PURPOSE: The first day of Rosh Hashanah starts a ten day period of penitence and prayer ending with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, another high holy day.

SNACK

One popular Rosh Hashanah tradition is eating apples dipped in honey. It is a symbol of the wish for a sweet new year. It's yummy. Bread is also dipped in honey for the same reason. I have some delicious treats for you to sample.

Serve sliced apples and small bowls of honey for dipping. Place chunks of bread on plates so students can dip that into honey.

CRAFT

Cut the Star of David from white heavy paper or cardstock. Provide a piece of dark blue tissue paper. Glue tissue, backing each star, so it can be seen inside the star points. Print the Hebrew words for Happy New Year on the star:

L 'Shana Tova

Use a paper punch to place one hole in top of star. String yarn for hanging.

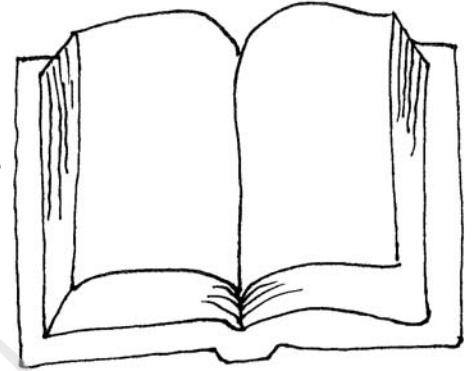
Option: Pre-cut inside of stars to save time for younger students.

WEEK #8:

FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Copies of Dreidel game. Sharpened pencils to use as spinner. (Dowel rods sharpened to a point also work.)



INTRODUCTION: THE HANUKKAH STORY

TEACHER: Shalom! I'm going to tell you a story. This is not just any old story, this is a very special story. Because of God's great miracle, Jewish people still celebrate the miracle to this very day during Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights.

Over 2000 years ago, enemies (Syrians and Greeks) took the Temple in Jerusalem away from the Jews. They filled the Temple with statues of their gods and tried to force the Jews to worship their idols. As you can imagine the Jews refused. Many were killed and abused.

A small group led by Judah Maccabee decided to fight for their freedom. Maccabee means "hammer". For three years the soldiers hammered away at the enemy until they won.

When the Maccabees returned to the Temple, they discovered the Lamp of Eternal Light was no longer burning. They found enough special oil to re-light the lamp for one day. A miracle occurred and the oil lasted eight days. During those eight days the Jews celebrated the re-dedication of the Temple.

CELEBRATING HANUKKAH: Hanukkah means “Dedication”. Today Jews celebrate by lighting one candle each night for eight nights on a Menorah using a ninth candle.

People laugh and sing and eat good food. They exchange small gifts each day. A favorite food is latke (potato pancake). Children play with a dreidel, a Jewish Top with four sides.

CRAFT/GAME

Make dreidels and teach students how to play the dreidel game. Cut and color the six sided box. Fold and tape/glue according to the pattern. Sharpen pencil. Push it through top and bottom of box.

Children have played this game for centuries. The dreidel reminds us of the miracle of Hanukkah when a few drops of oil miraculously burned for eight days and nights after the Holy Temple was recaptured in 165 BC. The letters on the dreidel stand for the Hebrew words

Nes Gadol Hayah Sham (A great miracle happened there)

1. Sit around the table or in a circle on the floor.
2. Everyone starts with the same number tokens (beans/buttons).
3. Each player puts one token in the center of the playing area.
4. Players take turns spinning the dreidel. Use this chart to determines what to do:

NUN: Player does nothing

GIMMEL: Player takes all tokens in the center

HAY: Player takes half of tokens in the center

SHIN: Players add one token to the center

5. When there are fewer than two tokens in the center, each player puts one more token in the center.

6. Play continues until someone has all the tokens.

Option: This is a great way to spend extra time from week to week. Students will get better at it the more they play it.

The Dreidel Song

CHORUS: I have a little dreidel
I made it out of clay
And when it's dry and ready
Then dreidel I shall play.

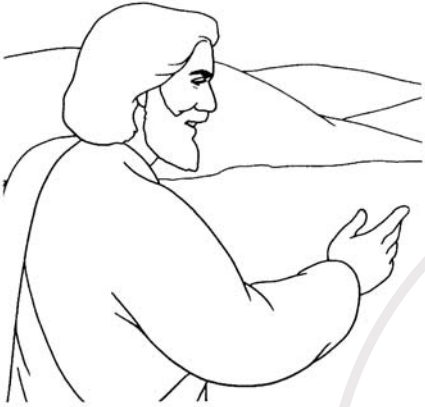
It has a lovely body
With legs so short and thin
And when it is so tired
It drops and then I win! CHORUS

My dreidel's always playful
It loves to dance and spin
A happy game of dreidel
Come play now, let's begin! CHORUS

WEEK #9:

WEAVE!

TEACHER PREPARATION



Supplies: Purchase Raffia Basket Weaving craft projects from S&S arts and crafts catalog. Order from their online catalog: www.swww.com

Raffia Basket Group Pack (pk/24): All basket weaving materials and instructions included to make 24 attractive oval baskets. 4 ½" long. Item #: WE612X (Pack of 24) Price: \$19.99 Price may change.

Option: Students could weave potholders or construction paper place mats.

WEAVING FOR FUN AND PROFIT

Shalom! Women in Nazareth learned how to weave as little girls. Most of the time women were the weavers but some men were good at it too. First we spin fibers into yarn. We used a hooked rod and twist the fiber onto a spindle.

The yarn must be woven into cloth. The typical loom in Jesus' time made cloth about three feet wide so two pieces of cloth had to be sewn together to get the proper width. In Galilee, looms were often wider so clothing could be woven in one piece.

John 19:23: "Jesus' tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom."

CRAFT

Today we are going to weave a basket to gain some weaving experience. Weavers were fine craftsmen. They sold their cloth in the marketplace. Most people made their clothing at home because they didn't have any money.

Weave Baskets

This project could take two weeks. Decide how much time to dedicate to it by the number of students and their ages.

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WEEK #10:

CLAY POTS

TEACHER PREPARATION

Make homemade play doh. There are many excellent recipes on the internet. Choose your favorite and make a lot! Here's one cooked recipe that works great:



1 C flour 1 C water
1 T oil 1 T powdered alum
½ cup salt 2 T vanilla
 food coloring

Mix all dry ingredients. Add oil and water. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until reaching the consistency of mashed potatoes. Remove from heat and add vanilla and food coloring. Divide into balls and work in color by kneading the play dough.

INTRODUCTION: CLAY POTS

Shalom! Clay is found in the ground all around Nazareth. Some clay is rich and red. Other clay must be worked by hand to get a smooth consistency. The potter of Nazareth digs clay, works out the air bubbles, shapes it, fires it in an oven and dyes it. It is a huge job.

Clay pots are important in our Nazareth House. We use our post for cooking and storage and lamps.

Today you will make your own clay pinch pot to take home. This pot will not light but it will remind you of the hard work required to light Nazareth homes.

CLAY POT PROJECT

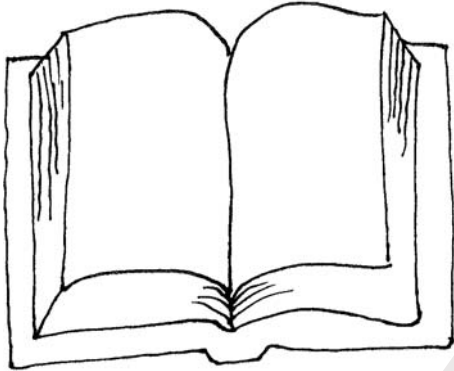
Give student a ball of homemade dough. They must roll it in a ball, hollow out the middle to form a bowl and pinch one side to form a spout for the oil. (Do not fill with oil or attempt to light.)

OPTION: Purchase small ceramic pots, fire them before class. Students will paint with acrylic paint. Or, ask students to make anything they desire with their lump of clay. Provide a plastic sandwich bag so students can carry their pot home.

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WEEK #11:

PASSOVER



TEACHER PREPARATION

Make the popular Passover dish called Haroseth. It is simple and lends authenticity to the activity.

Chop or grind 2 apples, a handful of raisins, a few nuts.

Add ½ t. cinnamon, 1 t. honey, 1 t. grape juice.

Mix ingredients thoroughly.

Serve on Matzoh crackers (unsalted)

INTRODUCTION: PASSOVER

Shalom! Welcome to your last visit in my Nazareth House. We will end our time together by celebrating a wonderful holiday. It is a day of remembrance of all our mighty God has done for us. Come! Celebrate Passover with me!

THE STORY OF PASSOVER

We will remember what God did for His people when we were slaves in Egypt. The Egyptians forced the Jewish people to work as their slaves. We made mud bricks and worked for no pay under cruel masters. It was not God's plan for His chosen people to remain slaves forever.

God sent Moses and Aaron to rescue us and take us out of Egypt. Pharaoh (Egyptian King) would not let us go so God sent ten terrible plagues to cause him to rethink his decision.

Moses kept giving Pharaoh chances to obey God after each awful plague. Moses would say, "Let my people go" and Pharaoh replied, "No"! *(Students repeat these phrases after each plague.)*

1. Water to Blood

The streams, rivers, ponds and pools became blood. All the water in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone also turned to blood. Yuck! How awful for the people. No water to drink or to clean or bathe.

Moses said, "Let my people go!"
Pharaoh said, "No!"

2. Frogs

So many frogs came out of the river that they crawled in houses, bedrooms, bed and overs and even in the bread dough mixers. Frogs crawled all over the people. Yuck!

Moses said, "Let my people go!"
Pharaoh said, "No!"

3. Gnats

Swarms of tiny gnats settled in Egypt. They were like a dust storm crawling all over food and people and houses and the ground. Yuck!

Moses said, "Let my people go!"
Pharaoh said, "No!"

4. Flies

Swarms of flies followed the gnats. They crawled all over the babies and animals. They got in the food and bothered all the people in their houses. Yuck!

Moses said, "Let my people go!"
Pharaoh said, "No!"

5. Livestock Disease

The cattle, horses, donkeys, camels, oxen and sheep got a terrible disease. No food from those animals. Yuck!

Moses said, "Let my people go!"
Pharaoh said, "No!"

6. Boils

Awful sores appeared on all the people and animals throughout Egypt. Everyone was miserable. Boils were ugly and painful. Yuck!

Moses said, "Let my people go!"

Pharaoh said, "No!"

7. Thunder and Hail

A storm hit Egypt so hard that the water rose and hail destroyed crops and hurt homes and people. No one had ever seen such a horrible storm. Yuck!

Moses said, "Let my people go!"

Pharaoh said, "No!"

8. Locusts

More bugs! Grasshoppers filled the earth and ate everything in sight. Whatever the hail from the storm did not kill, the locusts ate. Yuck!

Moses said, "Let my people go!"

Pharaoh said, "No!"

9. Darkness

A terrible darkness covered the land of Egypt. There was a thick darkness over all the land for three days.

Moses said, "Let my people go!"

Pharaoh said, "No!"

10. Death of the Firstborn

The last plague was the worst. At midnight the firstborn in Egypt died. Everyone from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of slaves to the firstborn of all the animals. This time it was different.

When Moses said, "Let my people go!"

Pharaoh said, "GO! GET OUT OF HERE.

I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!"

It was terrible but God gave everyone, Israelites and Egyptians a way of escape. He said, "Anyone who kills the perfect lamb and sprinkles the blood on the door posts will be saved."

People were told to enter their homes, eat their lamb dinners and not leave their house under any circumstances. Those who obeyed were **PASSED-OVER** when the death angel struck. There was much wailing and grief in Egypt that night.

And that's why Pharaoh said, "Get out of here". He had seen enough of God's power. Moses hurried the people out of Egypt so quickly that the

women did not have time to let their bread rise. Today we eat MATZOH to remind us of the flat bread the people took into the desert.

We also celebrate Passover with a Seder meal. The foods are odd like salt water to represent our tears and bitter herbs to remind us of our slavery years.

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

Passover celebrates the bounty of the land (Spring Harvest and Foaling season for cattle and sheep) and reminds us of our exodus from Egypt.

LET'S CELEBRATE PASSOVER: HAROSETH

Come! Enjoy Haroseth, a wonderful reminder of our days in Egypt. Even the color reminds us of the bricks we made.

SHALOM: SOMETHING TO REMEMBER

When Jesus chose His disciples, Nathanael asked, "Can something good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46) He knew Nazareth was not a humming center of wealth or culture. Nazareth is not even a real town. It means "Guard Place". The village began as a spot to protect larger towns. There are no major highways and no one wants to come here to live.

And yet, Jesus lived here throughout His boyhood. This quiet, simple place was away from danger and evil people. Nazareth is a wonderful place to grow up.

I'm sorry to report that when Jesus began His worldwide ministry, the people of Nazareth rejected Him. After all, He was that kid down the street--Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph, He was the town carpenter. He lived a simple, quiet life. Jesus tried to heal people here and preach. We wouldn't listen to Him and very few were healed or saved. Jesus said a prophet is not honored in his own land and He was right. How sad for Nazareth.

I saw Jesus myself and questioned His sanity. Today I know that Jesus of Nazareth is truly the Son of God, the Christ, the Savior of the world, the

Messiah!

Go in peace to serve Messiah.
Shalom, shalom, shalom!

WEEK #12:

SHOW OFF NIGHT



NAZARETH HOUSE is open for touring after the formal presentation of music and programming. Come dressed in costume to greet parents and students as your Nazareth character.

Give a short talk during the formal time about the events that took place from week to week in NAZARETH HOUSE.

Other characters may make an appearance if they are available and willing to participate.

Go home to rest
knowing you have served the Lord with gladness.

Well done, good and faithful servant!

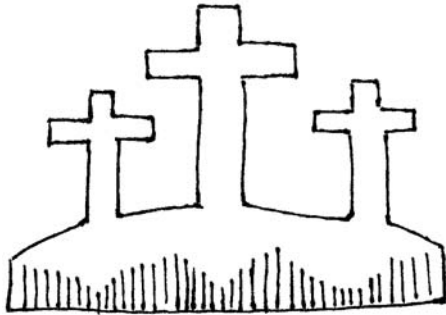
FYI (For Your Information)

In case you were wondering where the details and historical information for Nazareth House were found, here is a partial listing of resources:

"Jesus and His Times", Reader's Digest, Pleasantville, NY.

"Great People of the Bible and How They Lived", Reader's Digest, Pleasantville, NY.

"Zondervan's pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible", Zondervan Publishers.



CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS

This 30 minute weekly music session gathers students at the end of each day's program. Choose lively, fun choruses that students of all ages can learn and enjoy.

Form a CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS Choir if the group presents songs during Sunday morning worship.

MUSIC CHOICES

The curriculum suggests song books to purchase separately. The music crew can choose their own music as desired. Tailor the music to ages and abilities of the students. If a suggested song is too difficult, scrap it and find another chorus that fits your gang.

PLEASE PURCHASE
HERE'S AN IDEA!

Add adult and teen leaders to CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS. Mix voices and send a message that God's kingdom includes everyone! The church sees leadership reaching the community for Christ.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Use piano, guitar, keyboard. Many companies offer split track CD's. Once in awhile, bring out children's band instruments so everyone can play along during song time.

MUSIC PEOPLE

One person should be the leader with a musician if possible. Adult

leaders singing with the group become helpful discipline people. A firm hand on a shoulder or “one of those” looks helps tremendously.

LEARNING MUSIC

Relax. It’s nice to have a perfect choir but the charm of this group is in the fun. Mix music knowledge with just plain fun.

Print music sheets. They get wrinkled but soon everyone who reads has music memorized anyway. One benefit of memorization is that everyone has the memorized songs in their hearts forever.

DISMISSAL

Dismiss on time. Music is the last event. Parents are waiting. Avoid chaos of children running around as they wait for their ride home. Do not dismiss early.

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MUSIC SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MESSIAH

All options listed include songs for your entire children’s ministry.
Excellent choices from Close Encounters Ministries!

GREAT BIG PRAISE FOR A GREAT BIG GOD, Book 1 Younger Students Available: Book Only, Book and Split Track Tape, Book and

Split Track CD Combination (Current prices available at www.cemlife.com)

Jesus Grew and Grew
Jesus Loves Me
O How He Loves You and Me
Jesus Loves The Little Children
I Like to Sing About Jesus
Jesus, We Just Want to Thank You

+ Many More!

ALL THE BEST SONGS FOR KIDS, 230 Songs **Preschool-Preteen**

This is an amazing book for your total children's ministry! Available:
Book Only, Book and 5 Split Track CD's, Book and Split Track Tapes.
(Current prices available: www.cemlife.com)

Say To the Lord, I Love You
Jesus Loves Even Me
Everybody Ought to Love Jesus
Jesus Is His Name
Jesus, Name Above All Names
Jesus Is Alive and Doin' Well
+ Many More!

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