

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB



PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE

***CLOSE ENCOUNTERS
WITH CREATION***

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!

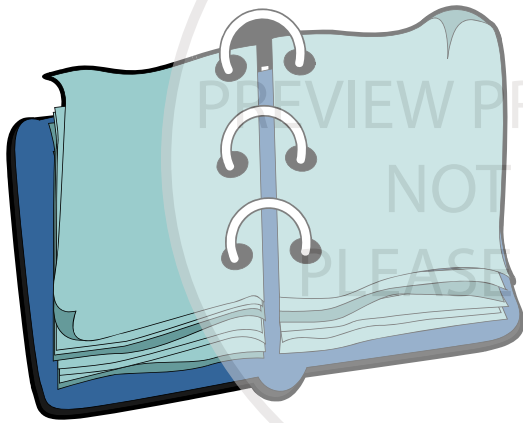
GIVE ME BASICS—WHAT HAPPENS?

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: | | | |

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WEEK #12:

SHOW OFF NIGHT! COME AND ENJOY THE SHOW!

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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

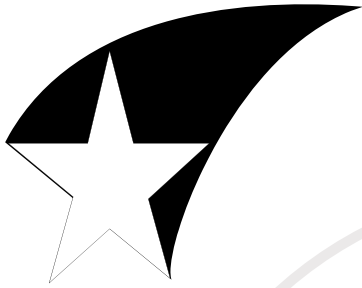
YEAR #5

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!*

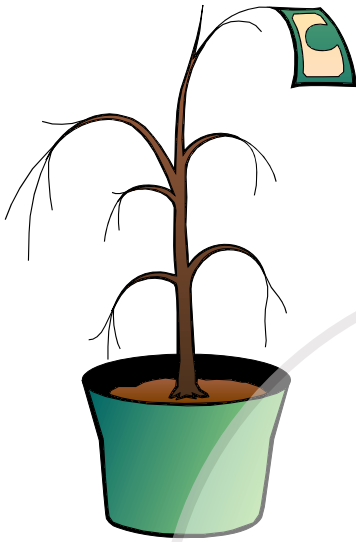
***I will try to the best of my ability to live a Christian testimony** that will most likely encourage others to want to be like me because I am Christ filled.*

***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!

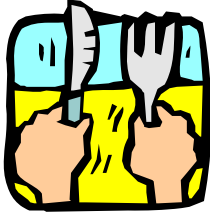
If the weather is nice, take SNACK AND YAK outdoors!

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 1/2 C. pitted ripe olives, drained
1/2 c. taco sauce 2 C. shredded cheddar cheese
1 chopped head lettuce 1 pkg. Taco tortilla corn chips (crumbled)
1 med. Green pepper, chopped 1/2 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 1/2 c. chopped walnuts
1/2 pint whipped whipping cream 1/2 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.

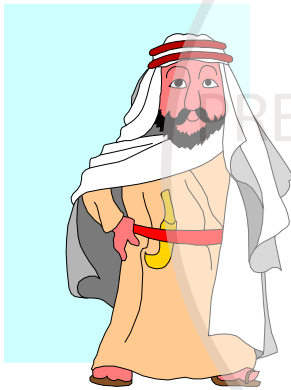
Each hole should be marked with a flag as in regular golf and tees should also be designated. Set par for each hole, print up some scorecards and have a GOOFY GOLF TOURNAMENT.

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.

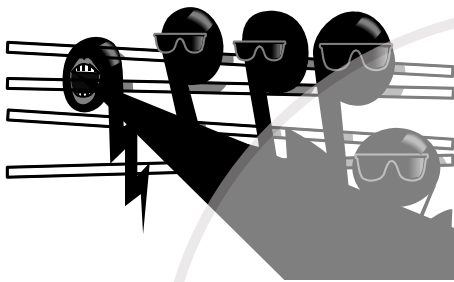
If saving space is an issue, consider making this area mobile. Set up one corner of a room or hallway and decorate using cardboard backgrounds and moveable items. Hide them away in a storeroom or closet between club sessions.

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.



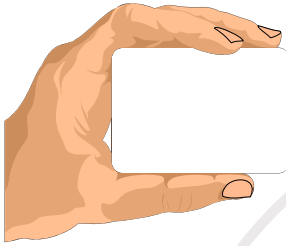
CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS is open to students AND adult leaders. There is an important message communicated in mixing adult and child voices in the same group. The adults see music from the child's perspective and are a support system for discipline. Students see how much the leaders care about them. As they 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

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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

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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 CREATION AT A GLANCE

THE LEARNING CENTER SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION

Week #1: Family Night Dinner

Week #2: In The Beginning...God!
Pictures Of God

Week #3: Turn On The Lights!
Flashlight Tag

Week #4: Moving Heaven And Earth
Mud Pies

Week #5: Tossed Salad
Veggie/Fruit Tray Sampler

Week #6: Somewhere Out There
Sun, Planets, Moon, Stars

Week #7: Fish Sticks And Birdbaths
Creation Quiz

Week #8: Let There Be a Zoo!
Circle Game

Week #9: I've Got Peeps!
Adam Meets Eve

Week #10: For The Rest Of Us

Week #11: What About Dinosaurs?

Week #12: SHOW OFF NIGHT



SURPRISE SHOPPE GARDEN OF EDEN PROJECT



Week #1: Family Night Dinner

Week #2: Room With A View!
Murals! Light, Mountain, Garden...Action!

Week #3: And There Was Dirt!
Rocky Pathways

Week #4: I Think That I Shall Never See
A Poem As Lovely As A Tree
Garden Trees

Week #5: What's Blooming?
Garden Flowers

Week #6: Going Buggy!
Garden Creatures

Week #7: Birds Can Fly! Why Can't I?
Garden Birds

Week #8: Lions and Tigers And Bears...Oh My!
Garden Animals

Week #9: There's A Snake In My Garden!
Snake Bracelets

Week #10: Adam and Eve-This Is Your Life!
Meet Adam and Eve

Week #11: There's An Angel In My Garden!
Garden Angel

Week #12: SHOW OFF NIGHT

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



Each Learning Center is designed to last twenty minutes. Time flies when you are having fun. Have fun! Some activities may 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 an over sized, 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 ideas included in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH CREATION and add your own touch of creativity along the way. Play a quick 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 worse yet, someone has to do it. During your twenty minutes 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. The 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. 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!

Enjoy the material, prepare with prayer and study, smile—even laugh with each child. What a unique concept! Leaders can have fun too. 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, spend a few minutes explaining the theme to parents. If desired, hand out a basic outline of the activity centers.

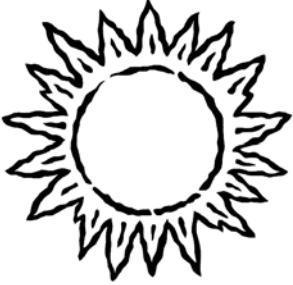
BASIC GOALS FOR CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH CREATION

1. By the end of all sessions, each student will know where to find the Creation story in scripture.
2. By the end of all sessions, each student will be able to say 5-10 scripture verses related to Creation.
3. By the end of all sessions, each student will have considered the basic concepts of Creation as presented in scripture.
4. By the end of all sessions, will understand the unconditional love God exhibited when He created the world and each human being.
5. By the end of all sessions, each student should understand more fully the attributes of God and Who He is.

WEEK #2:

IN THE BEGINNING...GOD!

TEACHER PREPARATION



Decorate the Learning Center. Decorations remain in place throughout the series. Because this area focuses on the actual seven days of Creation, fill the space with items that reflect each element.

SUN, MOON, STARS, PLANETS: Draw poster board renditions. Color in bright hues and spray with gold and silver glitter. Place high on all walls.

CLOUDS: Add large paper clouds with cotton batting sprayed glued on surface. Clouds are displayed under space items on all walls.

ONE TREE: This tree can be a real tree, hand drawn tree attached to the wall, artificial Christmas tree or branches inserted into a container.

PLANTS AND FLOWERS: Add large paper flower and leaves along the lower edges of each wall. Place artificial or live plants along the walls as desired.

BIRDS, ANIMALS, FISH: Stuffed animals, hand drawn or posters capture kids' imaginations. If a hunter is willing, display actual animals. Animal posters and hand drawn animals look great.

BANNER: Print IN THE BEGINNING, GOD.... and place the banner along one wall or on the door.

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.

TEACHERS ONLY–FYI (For Your Information): If Creation is true, then there is a Creator to Whom we are accountable. Evolution gives atheists a basis for explaining how life exists apart from a Creator God. Evolution denies the need for a God to be involved in the universe. Evolution is the “creation theory” for the “religion” of atheism. According to the Bible, the choice is clear. We can believe the Word of our omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God, or we can believe the biased, theoretical explanations of non-beliers.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH CREATION! You are going to be surprised how much fun we are going to have learning about God and how He created the world. First things first! We must start at the very beginning because that is a very good place to start!

Today’s Important Question: Where is baseball mentioned in the Bible?

Genesis 1:1 says, “In the BIG INNING (beginning) God created the heavens and the earth”.

LET’S ASK QUESTIONS!

***Weekly Option:** Make the “Let’s Ask Questions” segment fun by printing questions and attaching them to rocks or some other item and hiding them in the room before class. Students search for the questions and hand them to the leader at the right time. Do this each week using the same item or change items as desired depending on the week’s theme.*

Supplies: White paper, markers

WHAT DOES GOD LOOK LIKE? Discuss what God’s physical body might look like if He looked like us.

No one knows what God looks like because God cannot be seen with our eyes. He doesn’t have a physical body as we do. We learn about God and see what God acts like by knowing His Son, Jesus. In the Bible we read about how Jesus lived, how He treated people and what He taught. That is what God is like!

"Jesus said, 'You've been with me all this time, Philip, and you still don't understand? To see me is to see the Father.'" John 14:9 Message

Let's draw pictures of God. Since no one has ever seen God, anything you draw could be the perfect picture of God.

Let each student create their own vision of what God looks like. Tape the pictures to one wall.

HOW WAS GOD CREATED? God was not created; He has always existed. This is impossible for us to understand because everything else we know about has a beginning and an end. But God had no beginning and He has no end. He always was and He always will be.

ANT SPEAK: Imagine digging into an ant hill and being able to speak "ant" fluently. Try to explain to ants what human life is like. The ants will never be able to understand, no matter how hard you speak "ant". Everything ants know happen in the tunnels of their dirt hills. The ant would think you are crazy!

*Ask students to experiment speaking "ant".
(Invent sounds/language as desired.)*

In the beginning the Word (Jesus) already existed. He was with God and He was God. He was in the beginning with God. He created everything there is. Nothing (not one thing) exists (came into being) that He didn't make. John 1:1-3

DOES GOD HAVE FRIENDS? God doesn't have other "gods" to be His friends. He is the only God there is. God doesn't need friends like we do; He is perfectly happy being alone. However, He wants to be friends with US! God wants to be our closest friend. He has done a lot to make friends with us and to have our friendship. That's why God created us, sent Jesus to save us, gave us the Bible and gave us this church.

Jesus said, 'You are my friends if you obey Me. I no longer call you servants...now you are my friends since I have told you everything the Father told me.'" John 15:14-15

LET'S FIGURE IT OUT!

Many smart men have tried to figure out answers to all our questions. Sometimes they come up with great ideas and other times these "smarties" sound very dumb!

***Supplies:** Large Paper heart attached to the wall. One large book. Tuck hand printed MYSTERY WORDS on "question marks" inside the pages. Pull them out as you speak. Pass each word around the group. (Love, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent) One student tapes the word to the heart. Tape the mystery word on the heart.*

It's time to unravel the MYSTERY of God! How, you ask? By learning what God is like. We'll begin with MYSTERY words.

GOD IS LOVE: We know the word LOVE! We feel Go's love every day. God created the world and all of us because of Love. His love is one which loves us when we don't love Him back. When we sin, God keeps loving. When we love God the most, we still don't Love like God. Remember that Love verse in the Bible:

For God so LOVED the world, He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16 KJV

Put *your* name inside this verse! (Say individual names to replace the *underlined words*.)

OMNISCIENT: This is a MYSTERY WORD you won't know. I barely know it! Let's pass it around the circle and see if we can figure it out. The Bible says God knows everything there is to know. God did not have to go to school. He knew every little detail to include to make the earth perfect before He began creating air, wind, water, trees, animals and people. Wow! Now that's smart!

Read Aloud Psalm 139:1-6: (Read from your favorite version.) God knows all about me too! And you! David wrote a Psalm to help us understand how well God knows us.

*God, investigate my life; get all the facts firsthand. I'm an open book to you; even from a distance, **you know** what I'm thinking. **You know** when I leave and when I get back; I'm never out of your sight.*

***You know** everything I'm going to say before I start the first sentence. I look behind me and you're there, then up ahead and you're there, too—your reassuring presence, coming and going. This is too much, too wonderful—I can't take it all in! (The Message)*

OMNIPRESENT: This another MYSTERY WORD you may not know but you might be able to figure out. "In or out. In or out." Has your mom ever said that to you? If you are sitting with me in this room, can you be watching television at home? Can you be grocery shopping? How about skiing...can you be skiing at the same time? No, we can only be in one place, at one time. That's how God made humans.

God can be everywhere and anywhere at the same time. He is Omnipresent. How can that be? God can be in China and in this room at the same time. In fact, God is here, right now, with us! Listen! (*Hush the group for a moment.*) Can you see God? Can you hear God?

It is a comfort to know that wherever I am, God is there too. He hears me as soon as I speak or even think a thought.

OMNIPOTENT: Our last MYSTERY WORD reminds me of a super hero. You know, like Superman: "*Faster than a speeding bullet. More powerful than a locomotive. Able to leap tall building in a single bound.*"

God's power is so big that He does the impossible. He can see us inside our mothers and He controls the stormy seas.

Psalm 139:13-14:

Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb. I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking! Body and soul I am wonderfully made. (The Message)

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK #3:

TURN ON THE LIGHTS!

TEACHER PREPARATION



Today's Learning Center features the creation of light from darkness. Darken the area as much as possible. Bring a flashlight or spotlight to demonstrate the power of light.

Hand print phrases of today's scripture verse and tape in various places on the walls and floor. Play Light Tag to discover where the phrases are placed.

INTRODUCTION

Be careful as you find a spot to sit. Maybe you can see me a little but it is not as good as when the windows are open and the lights are turned on.

Can you guess what God created on Day #1? Genesis 1:1-5 says:

First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "Light!" And light appeared. God saw that light was good and separated light from dark. God named the light Day, he named the dark Night. It was evening, it was morning—Day One." (The Message)

LET'S ASK QUESTIONS

WHAT CAME BEFORE GOD CREATED LIGHT? The Bible says there was inky black darkness. It covered everything—kind of like when you go to bed and try to see your hand in front of your face. You cannot see your hand until the lights have been turned off for a few moments.

DID GOD LIKE THE DARKNESS? Evidently God did not appreciate darkness very much because the first thing He thought of was a way to get rid of it. He said, "Let there be Light!" and there was light.

Kind of like this– *Turn on your powerful flashlight or spotlight.* Wow! What a difference that makes! Now I can see your faces. It makes me happy to know I'm not in this room alone.

WHY DIDN'T GOD JUST MAKE OUR EYES TO SEE IN THE DARK, LIKE TACTICAL "NIGHT VISION" GOGGLES? He could have attached goggles to us but would that really be practical? God was thinking of all His creation when He created light. Trees, flowers and crops need a way to grow strong and healthy. Bugs, animals and humans need to see. God is so wise that He created the light to offer warmth.

WHAT IS OUR MAIN SOURCE OF LIGHT? The Sun! God created the sun, moon and stars on Day #5 but He had a great plan in mind when He decided light was a good idea. Much later, God gave smart people the ability to invent electricity and light bulbs. For a long time, people used fire to see at night. But, that's another story!

WHY DID GOD KEEP THE DARK? God knew people, animals and even plants need to rest. When it is dark, our bodies slow down and sleep. We get new energy when we sleep. God separated the light and the dark so we could have Day and Night. Which one is your favorite?

LET'S FIGURE IT OUT

God knows we understand Dark and Light. Even when helping us understand how to live our lives, we read about Light.

LIGHT TAG: Hand print separate phrases of the scripture verse and tape to the walls and floor. Move the light quickly from phrase to phrase. The students must look fast and think fast. Do this several times. Students may shine the light around the room to discover where the phrases are and memorize the verse.

**LET YOUR LIGHT
–SO SHINE BEFORE MEN
–THAT THEY MAY SEE
–YOUR GOOD WORKS
–AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER
–IN HEAVEN.**

MATTHEW 5:16
FUN TIME: TOUCHED BY THE LIGHT!

Supplies: One blindfold, one flashlight.

If time remains, have fun playing this simple game:

"It" is blindfolded. Students move quietly around the room. When "It" shouts "freeze", they stop. "It" shines the light in any one spot they desire. Whoever the light touches moves to the opposite side of the room and give hints to help "It" tag another student. Continue until all students have been TOUCHED BY THE LIGHT.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:

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WEEK #4:

MOVING HEAVEN AND EARTH!

TEACHER PREPARATION



Supplies: Globe, map or poster of Earth from outer space. Or, draw your own picture of earth. Print these words, "The Seven Days of Creation", and place on one wall.

Making Mud: Plastic drop cloth, water container, ice cubes, dirt, spoons, cups, paper towels and a good sense of humor!

INTRODUCTION

Before astronauts flew in space, men drew maps and made globes by measuring distances and guessing what the earth looked like. During Christopher Columbus' life, people believed the world was flat and if you traveled too far, you would drop off the edge.

Is that true? No! God created the earth to be round—well, oval. The whole earth spins in a circle even though we don't feel it.

LET'S ASK QUESTIONS

WHY DID GOD CREATE THE WORLD? God created the world and everything in it because He enjoys making things and He wanted to be with us. God created people because He wanted to have friends, men and women and boys and girls to love. He created the world for us to live in and enjoy.

WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION? (*Hand print these phrases and place on one wall.*) Let's take a quick look at these important days:

DAY 1: GOD CREATES THE LIGHT

DAY 2: GOD CREATES THE SKY

DAY 3: GOD CREATES LAND, SEAS, TREES, PLANTS

DAY 4: GOD CREATES SUN, MOON, STARS, PLANETS

DAY 5: GOD CREATES FISH, BIRDS

DAY 6: GOD CREATES ANIMALS, MAN AND WOMAN

DAY 7: GOD CREATES A DAY OF REST

LET'S ASK QUESTIONS

WHAT DID GOD CREATE ON DAY TWO? God created the sky!

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE SKY? Look at the word picture in Genesis 1:6-8:

God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters; separate water from water!" God made sky. He separated the water under the sky from the water above sky. And there it was: He named sky the Heavens; It was evening, it was morning—Day Two. (The Message)

God made a definite separation between heavens and earth. He made the airy skies with the oxygen we breathe so all living creatures have a comfortable place to exist.

Take a deep breath! That is what God created on Day 2. Let's see who can hold their breath the longest. How long could we live without air?

Option: Let students blow up balloons! Fill the floor with their "breath"!

WHAT DID GOD CREATE ON DAY THREE? God created the land and seas. Since we can't live up in the air, God made the land a solid space. First, He gathered water into places He called "seas". That left room for dry places called earth. God looked around and was very pleased with His Creation. It was time to create even more fantastic things for this wondrous place called Earth.

LET'S FIGURE IT OUT

Making Mud: Check supply list and gather items before the Learning Center begins.

Place a large container of water (9 x 13 pans) on the work table. Gather students around the container to talk about water. The container should be big enough so all students can place their hands in the water during the discussion.

1. What does this God created water look like?
2. How does water feel on your hands?
3. What happens when you try to catch water in your hands?

Pour small cups of water to taste:

4. What does water taste like?
5. (Dump ice cubes into water) Is this water?

God made water as the basic building block all living creation needs in order to survive. Plants, animals and people need water. God created the perfect life giving liquid. When the water supply runs low, God makes rain.

Place a container of dirt on the work table. Gather students around the container. Let them touch it and discuss it.

What is dirt good for? This is earth. God created the dust of earth. It's good for growing food and flowers, walking and living.

FUN TIME: MUD PIES

Choose the best method: Make individual cups of mud or pour dirt into the large container of water and let all students mix with hands.

Do not underestimate the power of water and dirt play for students of all ages. Older students might enjoy creating their own water and earth world. Let them pile dirt and dump water between the piles to form the seas.

If desired, divide the students into groups of four to make their creations.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:

WEEK #5:

TOSSED SALAD!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Bring a variety of fruits, vegetables and nuts for students to eat during the Learning Center. Place them on large platters or make sample plates for each student.



Celery, carrots, tomato, cauliflower, olives, apples, banana, oranges, peanuts, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds and mixed nuts. (Be aware of peanut allergies before offering nuts.)

INTRODUCTION

I'm hungry today. If you don't mind, let's hurry and find out what happened on Day #3. Read Genesis 1:11-13:

God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties of seed-bearing plants, every sort of fruit-bearing tree." And there it was. Earth produced green seed-bearing plants, all varieties, and fruit-bearing trees of all sorts. God saw that it was good. It was evening, it was morning—Day Three. (The Message)

Isn't it great to think of the earth "bursting out" with all the wonderful plants and flowers? Grasses, seed plants and fruit trees with seeds inside the fruit were created to keep them growing for centuries.

It makes me want to sing: *"God is so good, God is so good, God is so good, He's so good to me!"* Add: *"God made the trees, God made the seeds, God made the world, He's so good to me."*

LET'S ASK QUESTIONS

DOES IT SEEM LIKE GOD IS PREPARING EARTH FOR SOMETHING? Day 1—God creates Light, Day 2—God creates Sky, Day 3—God creates land and seas. And then, as if that is not enough, He keeps creating on Day 3 adding all the greenery and food!

WHAT KINDS OF FOOD WERE NOT MENTIONED? On Day 3 God put the entire plant system in motion so it could continue for many years. I didn't see any mention of potato chip plants or chocolate shake trees. God created fresh fruits and vegetables so all Creation could thrive.

LET'S FIGURE IT OUT

Supplies: Apple, plate, knife

If I cut this apple in half, what do we find? Sweet fruit to eat and SEEDS.

Let's look at one small seed and talk about what happens to that seed.

What must happen to this seed to get a brand new apple?

1. Dry the seed.
2. Plant the seed in the earth.
3. Water the seed.
4. Provide light and warmth.
5. Tend the small plant.
6. Protect the tree
7. Enjoy the beautiful pink flowers.
8. Keep tiny green apples pest free.
9. Pick the juicy red apple.
10. Wash the juicy red apple.
11. Eat the juicy red apple.

.....Dry another seed and start again!

God must have known that millions of people were going to enjoy juicy red apples for centuries!

Let's look at some of the vegetables God created.

Choose one vegetable and ask students to pick up the same vegetable from their small plate.

Look at this carrot. Now, why do you suppose God would create a carrot? Let's taste it and see what a carrot is really meant to be.

Let students name positive qualities of a carrot.

Repeat this exercise for each vegetable/fruit/nut sample. Discuss each sample as time allows.

Ask what God was thinking when He created a tomato.

Avoid a food "free for all". Discuss each sample and eat slowly as a group. The benefit of this exercise is to think about the plant food system God created.

NOTES:

WEEK #6:

SOMEWHERE OUT THERE!

...SUN, MOON, STARS, PLANETS

TEACHER PREPARATION



Optional Supplies: Play the song "Somewhere Out There" from the movie "An American Tail" or rent the movie and show just the scene featuring the song.

If a small planetarium is available, light the ceiling with stars and planets for the entire Learning Center segment.

Styrofoam stars, glitter, tape. Make and hang stars in room if time permits.

INTRODUCTION

Let's get in the mood to talk about Creation Day #4! Listen to the word picture in Genesis 1:14-19:

God spoke: "Lights! Come out! Shine in Heaven's sky! Separate Day from Night. Mark seasons and days and years, lights in Heaven's sky to give light to Earth." And there it was.

God made two big lights, the larger to take charge of Day, the smaller to be in charge of Night; and he made the stars. God placed them in the heavenly sky to light up Earth and oversee Day and Night, to separate light and dark. God saw that it was good. It was evening, it was morning—Day Four.

(The Message)

OPTION: Play/Show "Somewhere Out There" music.

You would think that creation of the whole earth would be enough for us to study but today we are going to add the sun, moon, stars and planets!!!

LET'S ASK QUESTIONS

Hand print each question on a star shape. Allow students to pull one question from a basket or bag.

WHY DID GOD KEEP ON CREATING AFTER HE MADE EARTH? Maybe God was in a "creating mood"! He certainly made beautiful lights in the sky and then miles and miles away, did it again! He made them all different. There are a variety of colors and air types. Some planets have no air at all. Some planets lack of gravity would make us bounce high in the air and move in slow motion.

DID GOD MAKE PEOPLE IN OUTER SPACE? We hear talk about alien creatures invading earth or living on other planets quite often. Most of these conversations about other life forms come from movies and what people imagine might be true.

No one really knows whether there is life on other planets. If there is life in other parts of the universe, God is in charge of it because God controls all of the universe. God created everything and He is the God of all life everywhere, no matter where it may be.

We look at this Son (Jesus) and see the God who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—everything got started in Him and finds its purpose in Him. He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment.

Colossians 1:15-18 (The Message)

HOW DOES GOD MAKE THE SUN AND MOON GO UP AND DOWN? God made powerful laws to govern the universe. The laws control the movements of the sun, moon, earth, stars and planets.

1. The law of **GRAVITY** holds us down on earth.
2. Other natural laws control the **WEATHER**. The laws decide if the day will be sunny or cloudy, warm or cold, depending on heat from the sun, currents in the ocean, wind and other forces as well.

God set up rules that make all these forces work together. Think about it. God controls the entire universe so if He wants to, He can interrupt the laws. **Example:** Rain to soak dry land or dry, bright sunshine to flooded areas. God is indeed powerful (*Omnipotent-All Powerful*).

LET'S FIGURE IT OUT

Look at Psalm 19:1:

The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display His marvelous craftsmanship.

If there was no gravity, life would be very different on Earth. Let's pretend we are playing catch with an imaginary ball.

Group stands in a circle. Toss the imaginary ball to one person who continues to toss to someone else according to your specific instructions: Make the ball tiny, light, heavy, slimy, hot, cold, delicious, slippery, warm.

Let's step from the past and present and into the future. If we could travel to distant stars and planets, how would life on earth change? What would we take to other planets to survive? Are these things God created? Is there anything God did not create that we really need?

If time permits, decorate the room with stars. Cut star shapes from Styrofoam trays. Cover with glitter. Hang stars all over the walls. Leaders may want to pre-cut stars to save time. Other materials may be used: felt, poster board, paper.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:

WEEK #7:

FISH STICKS AND BIRD BATHS

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Shelf Paper, crayons or markers, drawing paper, pencils. Attach one long piece of shelf paper to the wall.



Crunchy fish sticks/chicken strips. Serve with ketchup during the INTRODUCTION.

Option: Goldfish in a bowl, parakeet, canary or parrot in a cage.

INTRODUCTION

Let's test our memories! What did God create on:

DAY 1-LIGHT
DAY 2-SKY
DAY 3-LAND, SEAS, TREES, PLANTS
DAY 4-SUN, MOON, STARS, PLANETS

Today we discover what God created on DAY 5. Let's look at the word picture in Genesis 1:20-23:

God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life! Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!" God created the huge whales, all the swarm of life in the waters, and every kind and species of flying birds. God saw that it was good. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean! Birds, reproduce on Earth!" It was evening, it was morning-Day Five." (The Message)

SERVE FISH STICKS/CHICKEN STRIPS with ketchup to each student.

LET'S ASK QUESTIONS!

Hand print each question on a fish shape.
Students find a fish and ask the question.

WHY DID GOD CREATE FISH AND BIRDS? God loves a variety of creatures. Perhaps He saw empty oceans and wanted to fill the waters with beauty and excitement. Perhaps He looked into an empty sky

and thought of living creatures with wings that would make beautiful swirling arcs in the air. Fish and birds also provide delicious food for animals and humans.

WHAT DO FISH AND BIRDS EAT? They eat plants and seeds. There are a few fish that eat smaller fish. There are a few meat eating birds, like vultures. Many birds eat fish!

WHY DO SHARKS EAT PEOPLE? Actually sharks do not go looking for people to snack on. People just look delicious when swimming in the water. Sharks chomp on whatever wiggles. They are meat eaters and are constantly on the look out for the next great meal. The best thing to do is to stay away from sharks. When we go where we shouldn't go, we get into trouble. There are dangers in the world. Be careful.

DO TALKING BIRDS UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY ARE SAYING? Some birds can be trained to speak. Patient owners teach many phrases and words to their pets. Parakeets and Parrots are the most famous "talkers". Birds imitate sound and do not understand words they speak.

LET'S FIGURE IT OUT

God created thousands of different fish. People make life careers learning about each kind. Name some kinds of fish. Some are tiny like a guppy and some are gigantic like a whale but they are all fish. Fish live in lakes, streams and oceans. Some fish live in fresh water and some live in salt water. How are fish useful to humans? (Food, fertilizer, beauty, sport, healing oils, pets)

God created thousands of different birds. God has a great eye for color. Think of the gorgeous greens, reds and blues in parrots. Which birds are your favorites? How are birds different from humans? What do feathers do? (Protect, war, fly) What do birds sound like?

DRAW FISH AND BIRDS: Let's draw some fish and birds God created on Day 5. Take your time to fill our wall with beauty. We'll display them here with joy.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK #8:

LET THERE BE A ZOO!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Play Dough (home made or commercial brand) or clay, one small square of cardboard or poster board, tools (spoons, knives, etc.) Students make an original, never-before-seen animal. They place their molded animal on the cardboard for display.

INTRODUCTION

Who loves to visit the zoo? Name some of the interesting animals living in a zoo. Day 6 was a busy Creation day for God. He created all the land animals and Adam and Eve too.

Look at the word picture about animals in Genesis 1:24-25 (Message):

God spoke: "Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind: cattle and reptiles and wild animals—all kinds." And there it was: wild animals of every kind, cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile and bug. God saw that it was good."

Day 6 is God's last active day of creation. I bet He was excited as He started forming animals. I wonder which animal was created first. In the end it doesn't matter which animal came first.

As we read the animal verses, we can sense God's excitement with the wonderful variety from mice to elephants. There were majestic horses and cuddly koala bears. The dangerous tiger and lion were part of the mix.

Every corner of the earth was ready to accept the newest of God's creations. Water was ready. Trees and bushes were waiting to serve as food.

LET'S ASK QUESTIONS

Hand print questions and attach to stuffed animals.

WHY DID GOD REALLY CREATE ANIMALS? That's a good question because animals have been used in many ways. Some people hurt animals and others are loving. God wants us to be wise rulers over all animal life. That does not mean we should stop eating meat. God provided animals as a food source and He gave His permission to use the animals as food.

Along the way, we have used animals as beasts of burden. Elephants, horses, oxen all have a great strength that can pull heavy loads. Some animals have touched our hearts as pets. Just about any animal can be a pet. Dogs, cats, ferrets, monkeys, snakes and many more have become beloved by their human owners.

IF GOD CREATED SPIDERS, WHY DO PEOPLE SQUISH THEM? Lots of people are afraid of spiders. God put people in charge of spiders but that doesn't mean we should be killing for fun or destroying the world as we please. We can kill animals and plants for food. We can kill spiders and other bugs that threaten us or make it hard for us to live. A good rule to follow is to be kind to animals when possible and take good care of the world.

Bees add so much to our world with their sweet honey but there are times when bees want to sting us. We have to kill them when their hives grow on houses or near people. Sad, but true. It's the way of the world. Enjoy the honey but stay away from the bee!

WHY DID GOD MAKE MOSQUITOES? How many of you have had mosquito bites? Itchy and hurtful! We can wonder why God made animals and insects that can hurt us.

When God created the world, it was perfect. After sin entered our lives, animals and humans became enemies. Mosquitoes try to feed off of us! Yuck! They become food for larger birds and bats.

Did you know God's Word paints a word picture of what life will be like when Jesus returns and when we all live in Heaven. Let's look at Isaiah 11:6-9:

The wolf will romp with the lamb, the leopard sleep with the kid (goat). Calf and lion will eat from the same trough (food dish), and a little child will tend them. Cow and bear will graze the same pasture, their calves and cubs grow up together, and the lion eat straw like the ox.

The nursing child will crawl over rattlesnake dens, the toddler stick his hand down the hole of a serpent. Neither animal nor human will hurt or kill on my holy mountain. The whole earth will be brimming with knowing God-Alive, a living knowledge of God ocean-deep, ocean-wide. (The Message)

LET'S FIGURE IT OUT!

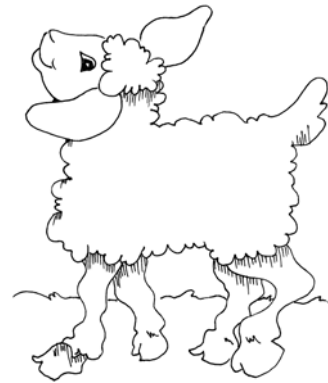
Students create their own never-before-seen animal. Gather supplies as described in TEACHER PREPARATION information.

Wouldn't it be fun—just for a little while—to know what God felt when He created animals? Let's see if WE can create an animal no one on Earth has ever seen.

Dream up the perfect pet, exotic animal or 'helpful to people' animal. You get to make it, name it and introduce it to the group! Start creating. Could it be a squirrel-o-roo, ele-keet or a yak-a-doodle?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:



WEEK #9:

I'VE GOT PEEPS! ADAM MEETS EVE



TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: White posterboard, crayons

INTRODUCTION

Turn to the person to your left and shake their hand.
Turn to the person on your right and shake their hand.
Close your eyes.

What do you remember about each person?

We forget how special the people close to us are. They were here yesterday. They will be here tomorrow. Some people make us crazy! We meet so many people and we forget that once, long ago, there were no people. No peeps! And then, God created one person and named him Adam.

QUESTION: When was the longest day in the Bible?

ANSWER: The day Adam was created because there was no Eve!

When Adam was lonely God created a friend and helper, Eve. Together they became the very first people on Earth. Look at the word picture in Genesis 1:26-28 (The Message):

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."

God created human beings; he created them godlike, reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female. God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge! Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air, for every living thing that moves on the face of Earth."

LET'S ASK QUESTIONS!

Hand print each question on a hand shape.

Represent the nations by making different colored hands.

HOW DID GOD MAKE ADAM? The Bible says God made Adam from the "dust of the ground." He took dust and formed a man's body out of it and then gave that body life. God made Adam exactly the way He wanted. Then God used a different method to create Eve. He made Adam fall asleep. God took one rib from Adam and created woman and named her Eve.

God formed man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The man came alive—a living soul! Genesis 2:7 (The Message)

HOW DID GOD MAKE PEOPLE AFTER ADAM AND EVE? God designed a plan so animals and people could reproduce themselves. Adam and Eve made babies. When the babies grew up, they got married and made more babies. That has continued until this very moment when you were born. Now there are millions of people on Earth.

Now, don't you think God forgot about you because he didn't create you like Adam! He watches over each baby and put you together in the exact way He wants. Just think—God created you inside your mother. You are very special to Him!

WHY ARE BABIES BORN THAT ARE SICK OR HAVE PHYSICAL PROBLEMS?

When Adam and Eve sinned, Earth and all the animals and people suffered. God is still in control and He has a perfect plan that includes imperfect bodies. No one is perfect. So, when you struggle with being imperfect, remember God loves you and has a plan for your life!

WHY DID GOD MAKE PEOPLE? People are special and very different from animals God created. God wanted friends and He wanted a creation who would love and appreciate the Earth. God created Adam and Eve to be His friends. He wants to be your friend too!

LET'S FIGURE IT OUT!

Can you imagine a world where everyone looked exactly alike? The same height, weight, hair color, nose, eye color, ear size, skin color. How boring! How would we tell people apart?

God created all kinds of people. Some are tall, short, brown, pink. Some have straight black hair and some have curly red hair. God wove each person together with great joy. Sing this song:

*Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.*

How do you feel/what do you think about those who hate a person because of their skin color? How does God feel/think about those who hurt His beautiful people because they look different? (Sad, angry)

HANDS DOWN POSTER FUN! We're going to make a large poster board with lots of hands on it. We'll trace our hands and then color them different colors to remind us of all the colors God loved when He made people and created the nations of the world.

Before the Learning Center, print these words in the middle:

**RED AND YELLOW
BLACK AND WHITE
THEY ARE PRECIOUS IN HIS SIGHT**

Allow students to trace their hand and color it any color they choose. They may print their name on their hand or the name of a person they love.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:

WEEK #10:

HOW TO DO NOTHING!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Pillows tossed on the floor of the Learning Center.

INTRODUCTION

Let's do nothing today. Find a pillow on the floor and rest your weary head. Close your eyes and imagine...well, imagine your favorite place to be.

Doing absolutely nothing sounds wonderful—until you have to do it! If you are like the Energizer Bunny and keep going and going and going, you might need to stop once in a while, think pleasant thoughts, visit the beach, stare at the water and just do nothing! If you are a kid, that is very hard to do!

Finally, God finished creating Heaven and Earth. This is the word picture of what happened on Day 7. Genesis 2:1-4 (Message):

Heaven and Earth were finished, down to the last detail. By the seventh day God had finished His work. On the seventh day He rested from all His work. God blessed the seventh day. He made it a Holy Day because on that day He rested from His work, all the creating God had done.

LET'S PLAY A GAME! When I say "wiggle", move as much as possible. But...as soon as I say "rest", you must stop immediately. If you do not, you will be O-U-T!

Play this game for a minute or so, until you get as many O-U-T as possible. Laugh and have fun.



LET'S ASK QUESTIONS!

Hand print each question and attach to small pillows.

WHY DOES GOD WANT US TO REST? Rest restores us. It heals our **bodies** from the weariness of constant activity. Rest restores our **minds** from the never ending list of things to do. Rest restores our **souls** from thinking we are big shots and can do it all. We think we can play hard, study hard and stay up late at night. No!

God knows us better than we know ourselves. God knows we need rest. God considers rest to be so important that He tells us to rest. Resting honors God and restores our attitude. When we rest, we remind ourselves who is God and who is not God!

WHY SHOULD I REST IF I DON'T WANT TO? Doctors who study people say our bodies seem to be on a seven day cycle. Those who rest once a week have more energy and brain power to keep going during the week.

God created one day to stop working, to think, to remember, to celebrate. It is a day for quietness and a day for worship. God didn't make a day of rest to burden us with "one more thing I have to do". He wants our life to be happy. Run continually, and your body will eventually stop working. Rest and it will be strong for many years.

LET'S FIGURE IT OUT!

Lead the group in a resting exercise. It may be difficult to get them to relax for a few minutes but if your attitude is calm, quiet and assertive, most of the students will follow your lead. The goal is to eliminate the joking and giggling for just a few minutes to see how rest makes a person feel better.

Are you ready to rest? Let's give it a try. Place your head on a pillow. Close your eyes. Relax your arm muscles. Relax your body. Relax your legs and feet. No talking!

Take slow, deep breaths. Just rest.

Play quiet music on a CD and allow the group to rest quietly for 3-4 minutes in a darkened space.

OPEN YOUR EYES! Let's talk about how you feel. How did you feel when I asked you to rest? Did your body eventually relax as we talked? Did you want to open your eyes? Listen to God's Word:

There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

Hebrews 4:9-11 (New International Version)

MORE FUN "RESTING" ACTIVITIES:

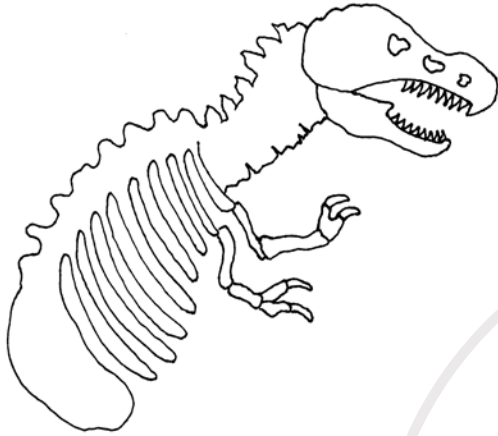
- 1. WHISPER GOSSIP:** Whisper one sentence into a student's ear. The whisper must travel from ear to ear around the circle. The last student tells what he heard. Often the message will be much different.
- 2. PILLOW TOSS:** Line up two teams seated on the floor. Each person must toss their pillow over their head to the person behind them. The first team to finish is the winner.
- 3. HA-HA GAME:** Seat all students in a circle. Student #1 says "ha", Student #2 says, "ha-ha" and so on around the circle. Soon all students are laughing merrily.
- 4. PAPER SHAPES:** Each student is given one piece of paper. They may tear it into the shape of something God created. When done, others try to guess what the shape represents.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:

WEEK #11:

WHAT ABOUT DINOSAURS?



TEACHER PREPARATION

Check supply lists for items needed for FUN TIME. Choose one or more activities as time allows. This topic could be controversial. Read carefully and adapt information as desired to complete the picture of God's Creation.

TEACHERS ONLY--FYI (For Your Information): What does the Bible say about Dinosaurs? Are there dinosaurs in the Bible? (Information from www.gotquestions.org, "Dinosaurs" by Michael and Caroline Carroll of Cook Communication, "It Couldn't Just Happen" Lawrence Richards of Word Publishing, *Dinosaurs and The Bible* by Ken Ham at www.answersingenesis.org.)

The topic of dinosaurs in the Bible is part of an ongoing debate within the Christian community over the age of the earth, the proper interpretation of Genesis and how to understand physical evidences. Those who believe in an older age for the earth tend to agree that the Bible does not mention dinosaurs, because they believe dinosaurs died out millions of years before Adam and Eve walked the earth.

Those who believe in a younger age for the earth tend to agree that the Bible does mention dinosaurs though it never uses the word "dinosaur". It uses the Hebrew word "tanniyn".

Tanniyn is translated differently in our English language Bibles. *Common words: sea monster, serpent, dragon.* Whatever it was, it appears to be some sort of giant reptile. These creatures are mentioned nearly thirty times in the Old Testament and are found on land and in the water.

There are specific mentions of two creatures that scientists think may have been describing dinosaurs. **BEHEMOTH** is said to be the mightiest of all God's creatures, a giant whose tail is like a cedar tree (Job 40:15). Dinosaurs like the Brachiosaurus and Diplodocus had tails which could be compared to cedar trees.

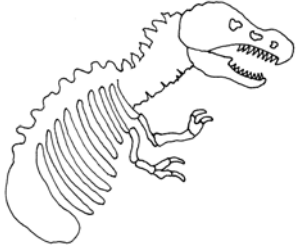
Historic references are many and come from different civilizations. Petroglyphs, artifacts and little clay figures are found in North America. Rock carving in South America show men riding Diplodocus-like creatures and look like familiar images of Triceratops, Pterodactyl and Tyrannosaurus Rex. Roman mosaics, Mayan potter and Babylonian city walls reflect fascination around the globe. Even though Marco Polo told fantastic tales of similar creatures, most scientists don't believe them.

Other evidence of the coexistence of dinosaur and man are the physical remnants of fossilized footprints of humans and dinosaurs found together in North America and West Asia.

So, are there dinosaurs in the Bible? The matter is far from settled. It depends on how you interpret available evidence and how you view the world around you and how you interpret the words of scripture.

If you have a different opinion, please do not let it ruin your enjoyment of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH CREATION. Teach within your comfort level and by all means eliminate information as desired. As always, follow the advice found within scripture, "*Test everything. Hold onto the good.*" (I Thessalonians 5:21)

INTRODUCTION



- Q. What do dinosaurs have that no other animals have?
A. Baby Dinosaurs
- Q. Where does a Tyrannosaurus sit when he comes to stay?
A. Anywhere he wants to.
- Q. What did they call prehistoric sailing disasters?
A. Tyrannosaurus wrecks
- Q. Can you name 10 dinosaurs in 10 seconds?
A. Yes, 8 Iguanadons and 2 Stegasaurus
- Q. What do you call a dinosaur as tall as a house, with long sharp teeth and 12 claws on each foot?
A. Sir!
- Q. What do you call a dinosaur as tall as a house, with long sharp teeth, 12 claws on each foot and a personal stereo over his ears?
A. Anything you like, he won't hear you!
- Q. What do you get if you cross a mouse with a Triceratops?
A. Enormous holes in the base boards.
- Q. How can you tell if there is a dinosaur in be with you?
A. By the 'D' on his pajamas.
- Q. How do you know if there is a Brachiosaurus in bed with you?
A. By the dino-snores.

LET'S ASK QUESTIONS!

Hand print each question on a bone shape.

This is a sampling of scientific and scriptural dinosaur information to get students thinking about this amazing creation of God. Creation scientists have web sites that more fully explain the topic.

DID DINOSAURS REALLY EXIST? Yes, dinosaurs certainly did roam the Earth. Fossils have been found all over the world and their bones are displayed in museums for all to see.

HOW BIG WERE DINOSAURS? Some were as small as chickens and others were smaller. Some dinosaurs were huge, weighing about 80 tons and standing 40 feet high! The average size was probably about the size of a small horse.

WHEN DID DINOSAURS LIVE? No one really knows how old the discovered dinosaur bones are. Scientists guess but there is no proof whatsoever that the world and dinosaurs are millions of years old.

The Bible explains how the universe and life came into existence. God created everything—including dinosaurs! Since we know land animals were created on Day 6 along with Adam and Eve, it is very possible that the dinosaurs really did live and work on earth while humans lived.

WHAT DID DINOSAURS EAT? The Bible says the original animals were vegetarians. In God's perfect world (before sin) there were no meat eaters and there was no death. Sadly, it didn't stay that way for long. When Adam and Eve sinned, everything changed and dinosaurs, animals and people became meat eaters.

WHY DO WE FIND DINOSAUR FOSSILS? The Earth became sinful and wicked. God warned a godly man named Noah that He was going to destroy the world with a flood. Some people think the dinosaurs were too big to go on Noah's Ark.

Creation scientists think that since God commanded two of EACH kind of animal onto the Ark, that dinosaurs must have been included. Perhaps young versions were included so they could fit.

All other animals drowned in the flood. That's why so many fossils have been found at the 4500 years ago depth. That's a big hint for how long ago Noah's flood occurred.

HAVE DINOSAURS LIVED IN RECENT TIMES? If it is true that some dinosaurs survived the Flood, they must have come off the Ark and lived in the world.

Job 40:15-24: God describes to Job (who lived after the Flood) a great beast that Job knew about. It was called **behemoth** and perhaps the biggest land animal God created. The Bible says he moved his tail like a cedar tree! Scientists say it could have been a hippo or elephant but the description actually fits a dinosaur like **Brachiosaurus**. Let's read God's word picture to see if we agree or disagree:

God said: "Look at the land beast, Behemoth. I created him as well as you. Grazing on grass, docile as a cow—just look at the strength of his back, the powerful muscles of his belly.

His tail sways like a cedar in the wind; his huge legs are like beech trees. His skeleton is made of steel, every bone in his body hard as steel.

Most magnificent of all my creatures, but I still lead him around like a lamb! The grass-covered hills serve him meals, while field mice frolic in his shadow. He takes afternoon naps under shade trees, cools himself in the reedy swamps, lazily cool in the leafy shadows as the breeze moves through the willows.

And when the river rages he doesn't budge, stolid and unperturbed even when the Jordan goes wild. But you wouldn't want him for a pet—you'd never be able to housebreak him!" (The Message)

ARE DINOSAURS MENTIONED IN VERY OLD STORIES? Very interesting! The word **dragon** is used in the Old Testament. Dinosaur could be the same word as dragon. The word *Dinosaur* was invented in the 1800's.

There are very old history book in libraries around the world that have detailed records of these large animals and their encounters with people. Evolution scientists don't believe the stories because they think dinosaurs never lived with people, ever.

WHAT HAPPENED TO DINOSAURS? There have been many ideas from starvation to poison, and more. People who study God's Word have an idea that the world after the Flood was much different from the world before the Flood.

Food was hard to find. Man killed dinosaurs for food and fun. No more habitats and other problems caused these wonderful animals to die out year by year. Soon they were extinct.

WILL WE EVER SEE A LIVE DINOSAUR? Probably not..but...then again! Some scientists believe it is possible that a few dinosaurs could be in remote jungles. They think this is possible because natives in some countries describe beasts that fit with what might be a dinosaur.

LET'S FIGURE IT OUT!

We may never know for sure exactly where the dinosaurs went and why God let them die out, we *can* know that God is in control of His universe. He enjoyed creating everything from the tiniest germ to the biggest land animal.

It will be exciting to know more about God's Creation when God chooses to let us in on the information. In the meantime we can rest in the knowledge that God loves us, created us and has a wonderful plan for our lives.

Choose one or more of the following FUN ACTIVITIES, as time allows:

FUN: BONE DROP

Supplies: Bone shaped dog biscuits (or cookies made with a bone shaped cookie cutter), chair, bowl or jar.

Students kneel facing the back of the chair. Bowl or jar is placed on the floor in front of them. Give them 5-10 "dinosaur bones" and see how many they can get into the bowl.

MORE FUN: DINOSAUR EGG RELAY

Supplies: Spoon for each student, hard boiled eggs.

Choose two teams. Give each student one spoon. Give each team one hard boiled egg. On your mark the first person in each line races to the other end of the room and back, keeping the egg on the spoon. When they return they must transfer their egg onto the next team member's spoon and repeat until all players have finished.

MORE AND MORE FUN: FOSSIL DIG

Supplies: Ask your local grocery butcher for left over bones. Boil bones for ½ to 1 hour and the bake at 350 degrees for another hours. Cool and spray with primer and white paint.

Fill plastic child's swimming pool with sand and hide bones in the sand. Provide small plastic shovels. Let kids dig to their hearts' delights and take home their fossils.

STILL MORE FUN: DINOSAUR TAIL TAG

First student is "it". As soon as he/she tags another student, they hold hands and together proceed to tag another person who joins the "tail". Keep going until the Dinosaur Tail is complete.

EVEN MORE FUN: THE MYSTERIOUS EGG

Supplies: Plastic eggs, small prizes inside eggs. (Coins, candy, etc.)
Music

Play musical "egg". Pass one egg around the circle until music stops. Person with egg keeps it and steps out of circle. Continue to play until eggs are gone. Students with eggs open them and keep prizes.

THE BEST FUN: DINOSAUR DIG

Photocopy the dinosaur bones pattern on card stock. Cut them out and place one set in a shallow container. Cover with small pebbles or rice. Give students plastic spoons and let them uncover the bones. After finding them, students can reconstruct their dinosaur.

OPTION: For a large group activity, enlarge the bones and copy several set on different colors of card stock. Place only one or two bones in various locations, bury or hide, and let students find them. Students then reconstruct the dinosaurs as a group.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

NOTES:



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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 in the area.

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

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 anyone who wants to speak to you.

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

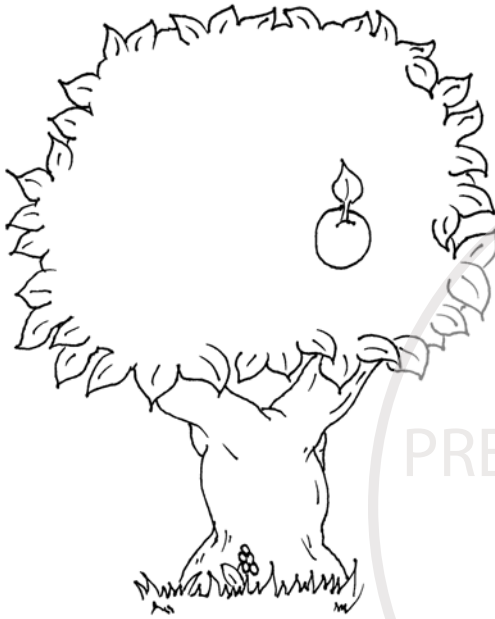


THE SURPRISE SHOPPE

THE GARDEN OF EDEN PROJECT

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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 "creation corner" where crafts are completed.

DECORATE!

Make THE SURPRISE SHOPPE a great place to be. Make a large sign reading, WELCOME TO THE GARDEN OF EDEN! Add green leaves and hot glue scattered silk flower heads. This area builds in visual attraction from week to week. Begin with a bare, clean room Week #2 and add to the space each week.

BE CREATIVE!

Build on ideas included in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH CREATION and 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 twenty minutes 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 CE Club Director.
5. Involve parents.

Rarely will you need to carry out extreme measures. The 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. 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!

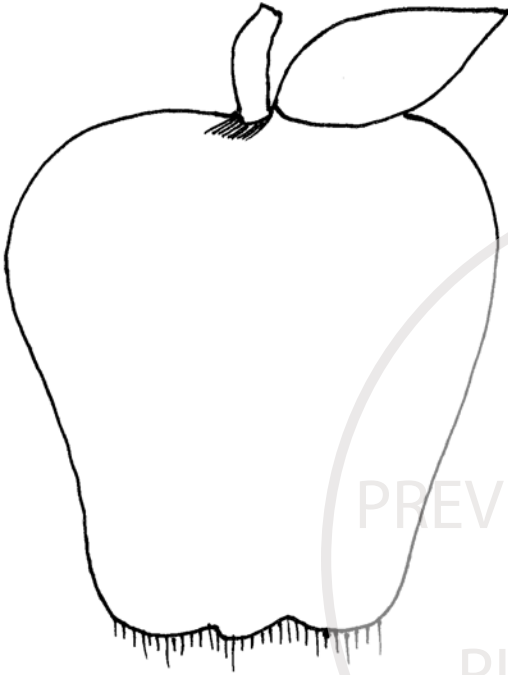
What a unique concept! Leaders can have fun too. Enjoy the material, prepare with prayer and study, smile—even laugh with each child. Be the person you would like to see your students become: A role model who affects your church and community for an entire generation of believers.

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.

WEEK #1:

FAMILY NIGHT DINNER



After dinner, explain the GARDEN OF EDEN PROJECT theme.

Students will be studying the seven days of Creation in THE LEARNING CENTER. When the same students enter THE SURPRISE SHOPPE, they will focus on the other aspect of the Creation story, THE GARDEN OF EDEN!

Students draw wall murals, create fish, animals, flowers, trees and other interesting items to fill their own Garden of Eden. Intended to give them a sense of God's involvement in Creation, their Garden will develop into a beautiful, restful place.

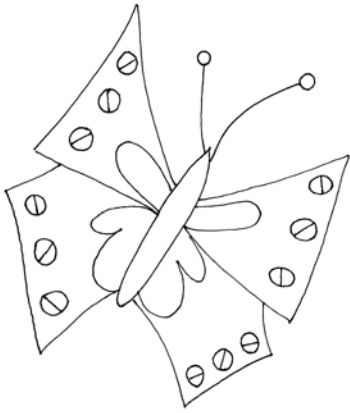
When their Garden of Eden is complete, the students will be visited by Adam and Eve. From comical to sad, the next week they will be visited by an Angel with a flaming sword and will be denied entrance to their Garden of Eden.

The purpose of THE SURPRISE SHOPPE is to place all students right in the center of the Garden of Eden story. They will "live" a portion of the lives of Adam and Eve. They attempt to understand God's purpose for creation, Adam and Eve's failed responsibility, Satan's temptation and the ultimate fall of humanity.

The goal is to create such a vivid picture of the Garden of Eden story that each student will carry this memory with him/her into adulthood. They will understand the change in lifestyle that sin brought into the world.

TEACHER PREPARATION FOR THE GARDEN OF EDEN PROJECT

Tailor the space to fit your local church facility, budget and volunteer help.



READ INSTRUCTIONS!

Get the total picture. Read specific lesson plans well in advance. Share information and changes with your team.

GATHER SUPPLIES!

Purchase craft supplies early in the planning process. Items like tree branches, rocks, sand and dirt are readily available but collect them before the day they are needed.

ROOM CHOICE!

Choose a room away from foot traffic. The Garden of Eden must be left intact. If using a classroom, consider an adult room where the Sunday students will enjoy seeing the theme grow before their eyes.

This room does not need natural lighting. A basement area, stage or empty corner of a large room are appropriate choices. Is there a class willing to move their meeting place? Artificial Christmas trees are great to fill in the garden. Set up as many as possible around edges.

WORK AREA!

Consider setting up a work table area outside the Garden of Eden where projects can be completed and transported by the students.

FLOOR PLAN!

Draw a basic floor plan so leaders know where the items will be placed in the room. Post the plan on a wall for quick reference.

GARDEN OF EDEN PROJECT OPTION



If your church is too small to make a full sized Garden of Eden, consider a miniature display. While this is a suitable option, there is nothing like the life sized display to make an impression on students, leaders and guests.

Cut plywood for a base.

Students paint blue and green for water and land.

Make items from clay, play dough, toothpicks, paper, sawdust, papier mache. Visit the local pet shop and hobby shop to purchase small items used in doll houses, fish tanks and model railroads. Search the Internet for miniature items.

It may be possible to divide the group into teams and create two or more models to display on SHOW OFF NIGHT.

OPTION: Students could make each Garden of Eden item as a separate craft. Display all project on SHOW OFF NIGHT.

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WEEK #2:

ROOM WITH A VIEW!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Small floor lights in each corner, floor fan, child's plastic swimming pool or bird bath, small water containers, water.

Shut out natural light. Cover walls with large pieces of white shelf paper. Large pieces of cardboard or plain newsprint work well too. Choose tempera paint, markers or crayons for mural painting.

TEACHERS ONLY-FYI (For Your Information): The word "Eden" is a Sumerian word meaning *plains*. It refers to the territory where the garden was located. By all accounts the Garden of Eden was a wonderful place filled with beauty and lush vegetation. It is often referred to as a paradise. Bible scholars have debated the exact location and even the existence of Eden for centuries. Because the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers are clearly named in Genesis, it has been thought to be in the Middle East. Another spot in Turkey has been suggested. Who's right? No one knows where The Garden of Eden was planted. The Flood destroyed the entire world, including the Garden of Eden. Everything that existed was destroyed. We do not know where it was and probably never can know.

SURPRISE!

DARK TO LIGHT. *Begin with the room in total darkness. Seat students on the floor in the middle of the empty room.*

Welcome to THE SURPRISE SHOPPE. We are going to become creators. That is, we are going to create our own version of THE GARDEN OF EDEN. Not that we can be as creative as God, but we can copy some of His ideas when he made the perfect garden in Eden.

Have you noticed this space does not look like much of a garden? What do we need in here? *(Let students discuss the dark/empty space.)*

Look at God's word picture in Genesis 1:1-5 (Message):

First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "Light!" And light appeared. God saw that light was good and separated light from dark. God named the light Day, he named the dark Night. It was evening, it was morning—Day 1.

Light the Garden of Eden with small lights placed on the floor in each corner. Use extension cords if there are not enough outlets.

WATER. Every garden needs water for plants and trees to grow. Animals need water to survive. God created water as the perfect life giving liquid. Think about the many uses of water. *(Students discuss.)*

Lets put water in the GARDEN OF EDEN right now!

Place a small child's pool in one corner. Students fill it with water from smaller containers. They may go to the church kitchen or restroom to gather their offering.

VIEW. Now we have LIGHT and WATER. Are you satisfied with our garden? It still looks empty to me. Let's create the VIEW we will have from our garden. Walk to one spot near the paper.

When we gaze beyond our garden gate, we will want to see majestic mountains, blue sky, white clouds, flying birds and lots of trees. It is within our power to create that right now. Do your best work! That's what God did—His best work! If we do not finish today, we can continue next week.

Students paint/color the mural that will become the basis for the space. Give suggestions as they create the background.

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

Sit with me for a moment before you leave our GARDEN OF EDEN PROJECT. One of the nicest things about a garden is the cool, restful place it becomes. The Bible says God loved to walk in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening.

COOL BREEZE: (*Fan*) To remind us of God's presence in our garden, we are going to have a soft fan blowing across the space. When you feel it's coolness, think of God being right here with us as we work.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Let's ask God to be with us as we create our very special garden:

Dear Lord,

Thank You for creating such a beautiful world for us to enjoy. Be with us as we create our own Garden of Eden. Remind us of the story of Your first perfect garden. Teach us about the beauty You wanted us to enjoy and of the gifts in nature You provided. Thank You for wanting to be our Friend. Amen.

NOTES:

WEEK #3:

AND THERE WAS DIRT!

TEACHER PREPARATION



Supplies: Place plastic drop cloths in two corners. Dump a large mound of **sand** in one corner and a **dirt** mound in another corner. Bring many large and small rocks suitable for painting. Acrylic paints, brushes, paper towels, newspaper, water, craft sealer spray.

TEACHERS ONLY (FYI-For Your Information): Just a joke, friends:

One day a group of scientists got together and decided that man had advanced in his knowledge to the place where he no longer needed God. So they picked one scientist to go and tell Him they were done with Him. "God, we've decided that we no longer need you. We have evolved to the point that we can now clone people and do many miraculous things on our own. So, thanks for everything, but we'll take it from here!" God listened patiently and after the scientist finished God said, "Let's have a 'man making' contest. We're going to do this just like I did back in the old days with Adam." The scientist said, "Sure, no problem" and bent down and grabbed himself a handful of dirt. God just looked at him and said, "No, no, no...Go get your OWN dirt!".

Seriously: Where DID dirt originate? How did the universe come into being? It is an established law of science (first law of thermodynamics) that matter and energy can be neither created nor destroyed. Something cannot come from nothing; something can only come from something. That "Something" which created the universe is GOD! "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen.1:1).

God said through Isaiah: "You forget the Lord your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth" (Isaiah 51:13).

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3). God created "dirt" as well as ALL matter and ALL life.

SURPRISE!

Come, sit in the Garden of Eden. Last week we lit the garden lights, brought water and painted the lovely view. If we have time, we can add to our mountains and trees. Do you feel the cool breeze? What does that remind us? (God is walking in our garden.)

What is new? (Sand and Dirt) We will be creating items to place in the sand and dirt that God created.

The garden looks plain. We need pathways. Lets make our paths by placing rocks around the garden. There is a Garden of Eden floor plan on the wall so as you create your beautiful rocks, we can place them in the right spots. If rocks are drying at the end of the SURPRISE SHOPPE, we will place them in the garden next week.

WORK AREA: *Students take their place at a newspaper covered work table. They paint one or more rocks as desired.*

Some things you can paint on your rocks are flowers, small animals, leaves and even bugs. Print your name on the bottom of your rock so you can take it home after SHOW OFF NIGHT.

Assist students as they decide what to paint on their rock. Completed rocks should be lightly sprayed with a craft sealer. It may be best to spray in a separate area to avoid strong spray odor.

Place rocks in lines to form pathways in the Garden, along walls and around the sand and dirt mounds. Intersperse with plain rocks if there are not enough to complete the pathways.

Place in the middle of the room: One special large rock should be painted with flowers. Print these words:

THE ROCK!

His work is perfect, for all His ways are just.
Deuteronomy 32:4.

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

We have been busy creating beautiful additions to our garden. Let's stop before we leave to think about something important.

David wrote:

"You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fulness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever."

Psalm 16:11

As we make our garden paths, let's remember God is always present (Omnipresent).

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Our Father, guide our paths each day.
Be with us as we live out the days of our lives.
In Jesus' Name, Amen.

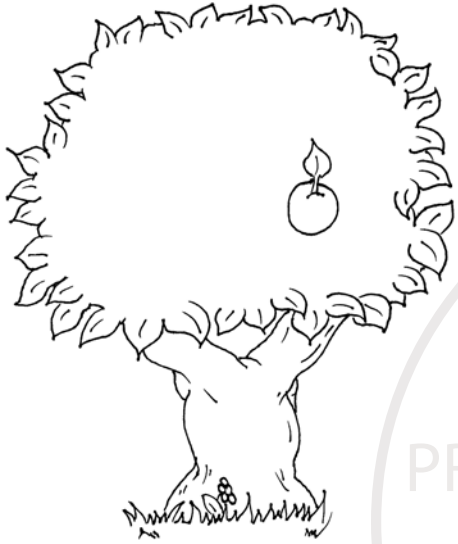
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WEEK #4:

I THINK THAT I SHALL NEVER SEE A POEM AS LOVELY AS A TREE!



TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: 2 trees placed in the center of the room. Artificial Christmas trees, tree branches placed in a large container or silk/live decorative indoor trees. Label one TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL and the other, TREE OF LIFE.

Construction paper (many colors) for fruit, markers, scissors, paper punch, string. Green construction paper for leaves. Students create their own fruit shapes.

TEACHERS ONLY FYI (For Your Information): Why did God put the tree in the Garden, if He didn't want Adam and Eve to eat from it?

If God had constructed the Garden of Eden so that there were no rules and no way for Adam and Eve to do wrong, then Adam and Eve would be effectively forced to obey God. In order for us to be free—which in this case refers to the freedom to follow or ignore God—we have to be able to make choices. Adam and Eve couldn't have chosen to follow God if they literally had no other choice.

SURPRISE!

Our Garden's pathways are complete. Can you find the rocks you painted? Look at the huge rock in the middle of the Garden. What does that scripture verse mean? (ROCK is another way of saying *God*. God is solid, stable, lasts through the ages and we can lean on Him. This is a praise verse telling people that the work of God is wonderful. He is fair and just and nothing He created turned out wrong.)

Let's talk about two trees God placed in the middle of the Garden of Eden. Look at God's word picture in Genesis 2:8-9 (The Message):

Then God planted a garden in Eden, in the east. He put the Man he had just made in it. God made all kinds of trees grow from the ground, trees beautiful to look at and good to eat. The Tree-of-Life was in the middle of the garden, also the Tree-of-Knowledge-of-Good-and-Evil.

THE TREE OF LIFE: Adam and Eve were allowed to eat the fruit from this tree. The Bible doesn't say but it seemed to give them the ability to live forever once they ate from it. Once they sinned, they were not allowed to go near the Tree of Life. Because the fruit from this tree is no longer available to humans, we are going to put green leaves on it but we will not put fruit on it.

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL: Look at God's word picture in Genesis 2:16-17 (The Message):

God commanded the Man, "You can eat from any tree in the garden, except from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Don't eat from it. The moment you eat from that tree, you're dead."

Adam and Eve didn't understand "dead". They lived in this lovely garden and were taken care of by God and the angels. They were being tested by God. Would they obey Him and leave the Tree alone or would they disobey Him and eat the forbidden fruit?

Was it an apple on that tree? The Bible doesn't say. Because we don't know what kind of fruit was on that tree, let's make lots of different kinds of fruit to hang on it's branches.

WORK AREA: *Students use construction paper and supplies to make fruit and green leaves. Punch one hole in the top of each item and attach string for hanging.*

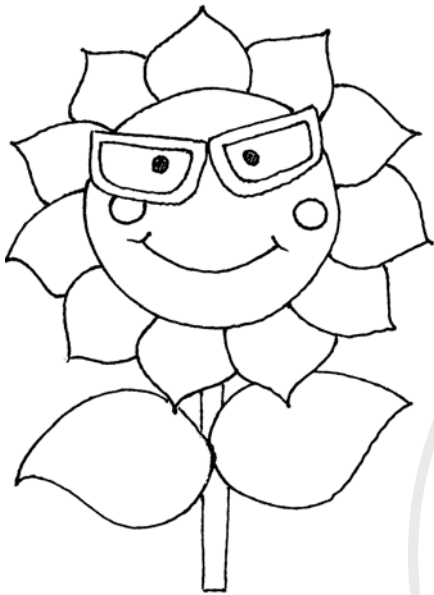
UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

Students hang their fruit and leaves on the appropriate trees.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK #5:

WHAT'S BLOOMING?



TEACHER PREPARATION

It's time for the Garden of Eden to bloom with color and green, leafy plants. Consider one or more possible solutions. Borrow lots of green potted plants. Fill spaces with these living things. Large ferns, palm trees and leafy plants look nice as fillers in the room. Silk greenery and flowers look great too. Use a mixture of live and artificial plants. *(Group these plants in a spot so students can be the ones who arrange them in the garden wherever they like.)*

Supplies: Tissue paper in various colors, pipe cleaners or twist ties. *There are other ways to make flowers but this is an easy version that even young students can try.*

Directions for simple tissue flowers: Cut a few pieces (about 4-6) of tissue paper about 8 x 10 inches (the exact size doesn't matter). Put the paper in a pile and fold it like an accordion. Tie the center of the folded paper with a pipe cleaner or twist tie. Gently pull each piece of paper toward the top center of the flower, separating each sheet of paper from the others, forming the petals of the flower. This can also be done with Kleenex or another brand of facial tissues.

SURPRISE!

Our garden is getting more lush each week. Today we add green plants and flowers. We have lots of choices. Place the plants and flowers wherever you think they look best.

Could we live without flowers? Yes, except fruit bearing flowers.

Why did God take time to create flowers? He made the world beautiful as well as useful. In God's wisdom, He created flowers in many shades of color. People who become blind say one of the things they miss seeing most are flowers. When I see a flower I am reminded how much God loves me!

Jesus talked about God's care for us when He said, "...walk out into the fields and look at the wild flowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them. If God gives such attention to the appearance of wild flowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you?" *Matthew 6:28-30 (The Message)*

WORK AREA: Set the work table area for the type of flower craft chosen by leaders. Save a few minutes for student to "plant" their flower creations in the garden.

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

God created flowers and other green plants for the same reason He made us. When He created the earth He looked and saw that it was good. On this earth He gave humans everything needed for enjoyment, good health, food, sight, companionship, satisfying work.

Adam and Eve were told to take care of the earth, the animals and everything in it. Flowers are part of God's Creation. He gave them to us to enjoy and tend.

Isn't it wonderful that He gave us the ability to smell them? Flowers are bright splashes of happiness and beauty that are free and growing all around just for our enjoyment. That's why even the lowly dandelion is so beautiful each spring.

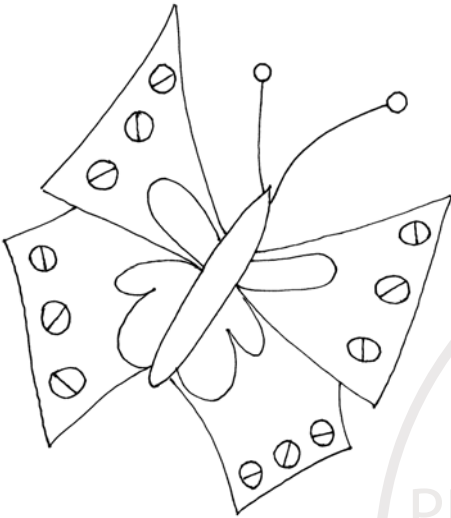
CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK #6:

GOING BUGGY!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Play Dough (many colors), tools to help form bugs (spoons, knife, fork, scissors, rolling pin). Place the Lightning bug letter in an empty canning jar. The jar sits in the middle of the sand mound when students enter.



SURPRISE!

Who loves bugs? What kind of bugs are best? What kind of bugs are awful? Why did God create those tiny creatures that fill our garden?

Look! Someone must have left a message for us! What do you think it says? Who left it in the garden? Let's find out.

What is the deal with Lightning bugs? I mean, here is this rather ordinary looking flying insect, but wait...it has a glow-in-the-dark rear end! What was God thinking?

I'm sure science has all kinds of explanations about how this fluorescent fanny is useful for all kinds of stuff, but why did God choose to make the lightning bug glow? I wonder if when God was creating all the animals and everything around us, He came up with the idea of the Lightning bug and said, "The kids are gonna love this."

We know that God loves us enough to create all the things we need to survive, but does God love us so much He created some things just to make us smile?

Just seeing Lightning bugs takes me back to those warm summer nights of my youth. I'd be running around the back yard with my empty Mason jar, racing toward the flashing lights all around me. I can still feel the joy and hear the laughter echoing through my memories. Lightning bugs were as much a part of summer and fireworks, fresh tomatoes, and big ice cold slabs of juicy watermelon.

God created so much diversity in this world, much more than is needed for mere survival. He made all of this for us, and He wants us to enjoy it. We can get so busy surrounding ourselves with man-made goods that we don't notice the living tapestry God has laid out all around us.

I guess Lightning bugs do have a purpose after all. They are a reminder of a creative God who loves us so much, He'd even paint the rear end of a bug... Just to see us smile....
Signed....A Friend With Questions

God isn't just the God of big stuff. He also made the small creatures. He created an entire world of tiny bugs and animals. If I didn't know what God said about the tiniest animals in the Bible, I might think these little ones were unimportant. Listen to God's word picture in Matthew 10:29-31 (The Message):

What's the price of a pet sparrow? Some loose change, right? And God cares what happens to it even more than you do. He pays even greater attention to you, down to the last detail—even numbering the hairs on your head! So don't be intimidated by all this bully talk. You're worth more than a million sparrows.

Let's create our own tiny bugs to place in our garden.

WORK AREA: Use the materials on the table to make your own colorful creatures. Before we are done, we'll go buggy together!

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

Students place their bug creations anywhere they want within the garden.

We have been adding many creations to our version of the Garden of Eden. As you go home this week, look around your backyard and see what is there that could have been in the very first garden!

CLOSE IN PRAYER

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
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WEEK #7:

BIRDS CAN FLY! WHY CAN'T I?

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Colorful markers, wall mural paper.

SURPRISE!

God made fish and birds in one day of Creation. We are going to concentrate on birds. Birds can fly! Why can't I? Have you ever dreamed you could fly? What was it like in your dream?

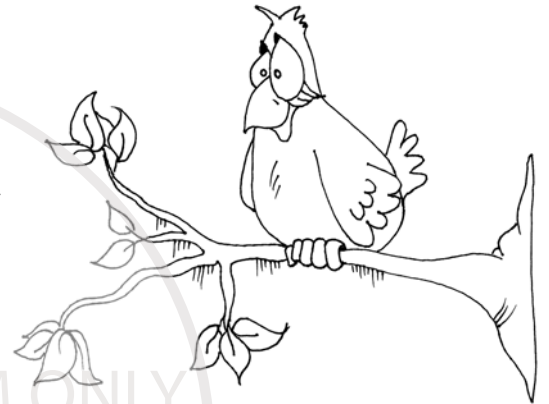
There are many reasons why birds can fly and you cannot. Let's name a few:

1. You do not have wings.
2. Your skeleton is too heavy.
3. You do not have a tail.
4. Your muscles are not strong.

BIRDS GOTTA FLY...YOU GOTTA WALK! Birds have a lightweight skeleton; your body is too heavy. Flying birds have strong muscles to control their flight; your muscles tire too easily. Birds have air sacs, light beaks, small lungs and wings designed for flying. Your body is simply shaped all wrong for flight. The main reason birds can fly and humans cannot is that God created birds to fly from the beginning.

Even if you could cover your arms with feathers, you still couldn't fly. Your arm bones may look like a bird's wing, but they just can't hold you up in the air. Try it! Flap your arms and see what happens!

You don't have a bird's beak. You have a mouth with a heavy jaw. God created the beak to be light.



Let's suppose you somehow had wings. You still couldn't fly like a bird! You don't have air filled bags in your body. The bird's air sacs are connected to its lungs. During flight air flows through them.

One outstanding feature of birds is their feathers. Feathers keep a bird warm when it's cold and cool when it's warm. Feathers keep birds from getting too wet. Tail feathers help the bird balance in the air, steer its flight and act as a brake when it is slowing to land.

Today we add birds to our garden. Grab a marker, find a spot on the mural and create the most beautiful bird the world has ever seen.

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

Here's a puzzle to consider: What came first, the chicken or the egg? (Allow students to discuss.)

This age old questions really has a simple answer. Attempts to answer it, however and attempt to get around reasons for the simple answer get mixed up.

According to the Creator of chickens, chickens came first! It was on the fifth day of Creation week that God created "every winged fowl after their kind" (Genesis 1:21) complete with the ability to have baby birds. Then God blessed them, saying, "be fruitful and multiply" (1:22). For chickens this meant lay chicken eggs. Problem solved!

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK #8:

LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS! ...OH MY!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Stuffed animals—as many as possible.



SURPRISE!

“Countless are the things you have made, Lord. By your wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.” Psalm 104:24

Let’s talk animals! I love ‘em...you love ‘em. Is that true? (Students discuss their joys and fears of animals.)

PLAY A GAME: Everyone who wants to let us guess what animal you are thinking about will get a chance. Stand up and do something with your body that will help us to know the animal you are thinking about, or just make a sound like the animal. When you have done that, we will guess what kind of animal it is.

WHY DO SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE HUMANS CAME FROM MONKEYS?

Many people believe that human beings changed over time from apelike creatures millions of years ago. This is known as the theory of evolution. There are three reasons people believe this:

1. They do not want to believe God created Adam and Eve and that all people came from those two people, so they need to make up another explanation.
2. Many scientists say the fossils prove that people came from monkeys and make it seem true.
3. So many other people believe people came from monkey that lots of folks just think it’s true.

God created human beings at a certain time and He created them “in His own image” . Humans are not just smart animals. Every human being is a special Creation of God, from a tiny unborn baby to the oldest person on Earth. The Bible says that only God was there at the beginning of Creation.

“God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27

TEACHERS ONLY-FYI-For Your Information: Evolution is merely a theory—one way of explaining the past. Many textbooks and teachers today present it as fact, but it is not. Explain this to your children so they will be prepared for discussions in school.

HOW DID ADAM KNOW WHAT TO NAME THE ANIMALS? Life in the Garden of Eden was wonderful. Adam and Eve had delicious food to eat, beautiful flowers to see and animals to enjoy.

God gave Adam the job of naming the animals, much like when your parents say, “We have a new puppy! What shall we name him?”

Adam named the animals whatever he wanted. Adam didn’t speak English, so the names he used are not the ones we use today. Adam lived long ago. Today each language has its own words for the animals in our world.

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

It is time to place a few animals in our Garden. Just outside the door you will find stuffed animals to remind us of some of the animals God created and Adam named. Let’s take turns placing our animals in the garden.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK #9:

THERE'S A SNAKE IN MY GARDEN!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Snake Bracelet cardstock copies. Scissors, white glue, crayons or markers. Make one very large paper snake and wind it into the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil before class.



SURPRISE!

Look inside the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. What do you see? There's a snake in my garden! We know the story of the Garden of Eden has a sad ending. And it begins with a snake in the garden.

A talking snake? Can we really believe Eve and a snake had a conversation in Genesis 3?

The serpent was clever, more clever than any wild animal God had made. He spoke to the Woman: "Do I understand that God told you not to eat from ANY tree in the garden?" Genesis 3:1

The snake twisted God's command. What did God really say? Eve told the snake: *"Not at all. We can eat from the trees in the garden. It's only about the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'Don't eat from it; don't even touch it or you'll die.'"* Genesis 3:2-3

Oops, Eve was stretching the truth! God didn't say one word about 'touching' the tree. Oh Eve, you're in big trouble.

The snake said, *"You won't die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you'll see what's really going on. You'll be just like God, knowing everything, ranging all the way from good to evil."*

Let's think about this talking snake. It was Satan speaking through the snake. Eve didn't know what we know about animals. To her, it may have seemed perfectly normal to be talking to a snake. For all she knew, animals did speak from time to time.

Sadly, Eve believed the snake and ate the apple. Then she convinced Adam to taste it. Soon each was blaming the other for their sad condition.



"God told the serpent: 'Because you've done this, you're cursed, cursed beyond all cattle and wild animals, cursed to slink on your belly and eat dirt all your life.'"
Genesis 3:14-15

Adam and Eve were punished too. God brought death to earth and to people. He made them leave their beautiful garden and become dirt farmers. It was a terrible day for all creation, for all time.

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

Work Area: Students make snake bracelets at the work table. They may wear their bracelets or hang them on the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. See pattern.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

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WEEK #10:

ADAM AND EVE... THIS IS YOUR LIFE!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: Serve baskets of simple foods Adam and Eve would have eaten in the Garden of Eden. (Fruit, vegetables, nuts, honey)

Actors: Choose two people to portray Adam and Eve in a surprise comedy sketch complete with an apple.

SURPRISE!

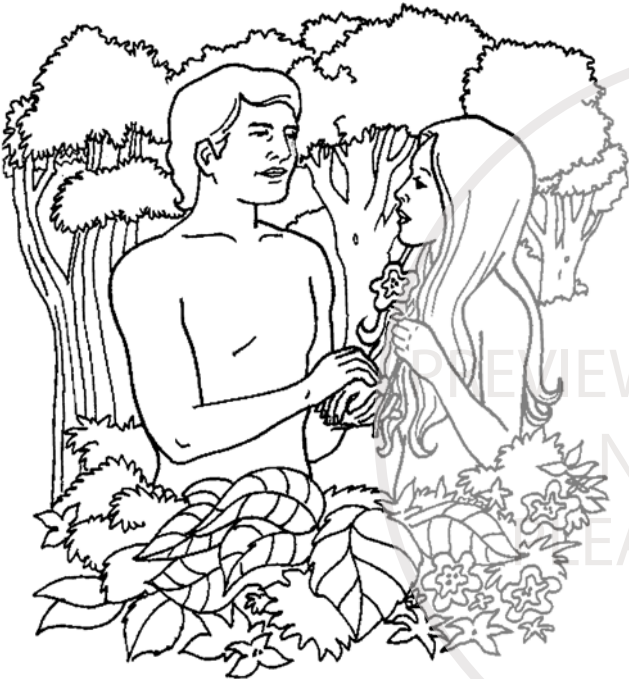
Finally! It's time to enjoy our Garden of Eden. Let's taste the wonderful creations God provided. Eat, rest, talk, enjoy the food and enjoy each other. We have absolutely nothing to do! It's Rest Day!

Adam and Eve appear out of nowhere in the Garden of Eden. (Hide actors before the event so their appearance is a surprise.) They should come strolling into the Garden arm in arm.

ADAM: *(Looking surprised)* Who are you? What are you doing in our private garden?

EVE: We thought we were the only two legged creatures in God's creation. What a surprise it is to meet you here. Are you angels? Are you bugs? Are you, what did you call them dear, ant eaters? No? What are you? *(Wait for response.....PEOPLE!)*

ADAM: Well, well, so God kept creating people even though we blew it. Even though we gave all this away for what...for a bite of fruit.



EVE: Sshh, dear. Don't tell them our secret. It's kind of embarrassing you know.

ADAM: Perhaps I should just do my job and name these creatures. Stand up, you. Hmm. It looks like a freckle faced, barn swallow television to me. And this one, a short limbed, climbing door knob. Why are you all laughing? I'm the one who gets to name things, not you! God said so!

EVE: I think you are having an 'off' day, dear heart. Let's sit down and visit with these, what are you again, oh yes, people.

ADAM: Let me tell you what I remember. I woke up over there in the dirt. I was so tired. I didn't know who I was or where I was. And there He was. God was smiling at me. He helped me sit up and the stand. I was pretty wobbly on my feet. God just kept smiling at me.

EVE: I wasn't there that day, my darling man. I'm not sure where I was.

ADAM: God showed me the most marvelous things. There were rivers of water and gorgeous mountains. I climbed a tree and looked out over the land. And the animals...what beauties!

EVE: (Pulling an apple from the Tree of Knowledge) Would anyone like to join me in a piece of fruit? Mmmm, looks good. (Take large bite) Adam! Sweetheart! Want a bite? It's delicious!

ADAM: Sure, I'm hungry! (Take bite and offer students a bite) Want to taste some of the most delicious fruit in God's Creation?

EVE: Oops! Did we do something wrong? Too late now.

ADAM: Where was I? Oh yes, the animals had other animals to keep them company but I had no one to talk to—except God—but He is very busy. God came by one day and said, "You look lonely, Adam. Let me make a helper for you." And I fell asleep.

EVE: That's where I come in. We both woke up and looked at each other. There were stars in our eyes. Adam helped me stand and we

took a tour of the beautiful Garden of Eden. What a glorious place!

ADAM: We were partners right from the start. Eve has been a wonderful friend.

EVE: I'd like to think I'm a wonderful friend but something happened the other day that I'm sorry I did. I was here...right here....walking in the garden. The snake called me. He said, "Psst, hey Eve! Come over here, Good Lookin'. What a doll face. How about a piece of fruit?"

I knew this was the tree God told my Adam to leave alone but the fruit looked so good. I think God said we would die if we ate it, but, what's 'die' anyway. What could it hurt?

ADAM: That's when she did it, she ate it! Oh man, I can't believe she did it! She took a great big juicy bite and it dribbled down her chin.

EVE: Adam, my manly man, what are you talking about? As soon as I asked you to take a bite, you chomped pretty fast! You could have said no. Don't blame me!

ADAM: Think about it, Eve. Who else is there to blame? Seen any other humans around lately?

EVE: Now calm down, sweetie. Everything will work out. It always does. If we think real hard, we'll figure a way to convince God to let us stay in the Garden. He loves us. He won't make us go out into the cold, cruel world.

ADAM: Right away I knew we had done wrong. I'm not sure how I knew but I had this odd feeling in the pit of my stomach. I think God said it was 'guilt'. We disobeyed God's only command. We ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

EVE: God found Adam hiding in the Garden and boy was He mad. He asked how we knew we had done wrong. Adam said, "I don't know, it was Eve." Thanks honey!

ADAM: Well, here we are. Our last walk in the Garden of Eden. I don't

know what will come next but I think I will name it, 'Farming'. If God doesn't give us food I will have to dig the dirt myself.

EVE: God made us the cutest set of leather and leaf clothes you ever saw. Does it make me look fat?

ADAM: Don't answer that. I think I'll name it 'Fashion'.

EVE: God did say we'll have to leave our lovely Garden of Eden but I still don't believe it. He'll come around. We'll see you 'people' next week. I'm sure of it.

ADAM: Maybe so, Eve. Anyway, these fine young creatures will discover our fate next week here in the Garden. We must continue our walk until God calls us.

EVE: Fare thee well, young creatures. Perhaps we'll meet again someday.

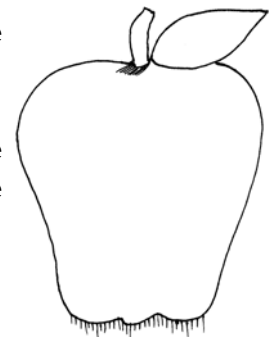
Adam and Eve wave goodbye and leave the room arm in arm.

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

It is good to hear the story from the people it happened to. I've read the end of this story. I think Adam and Eve are going to have a hard life. The Bible says they have several children. Cain kills Abel and has to run away. Another son, Seth, continues the human race.

Adam and Eve will eventually find out what it means to 'die'. How sad. This is the story of the Fall of man. We are still paying for their sin.

There is good news! God gave all people another chance to become friends with Him. He sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior. But that is a story for another day!



CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK #11:

THERE'S AN ANGEL IN MY GARDEN!

TEACHER PREPARATION

Actor: One angel costumed man or woman portrays the angel-cherubim God stationed at the path to the Tree of Life. Speak in a loud, mean voice. Be threatening. No sugar coating this part!

Carry a sword replica and add flashing strobe light against a dark Garden of Eden room. The large sword can be made from cardboard, covered with aluminum foil.

TEACHERS ONLY-FYI (For Your Information): Churches across the nation tell us this Garden session, more than any other, touches the hearts of children and staff. Students understand the story of the Fall and their personal responsibility to accept Jesus as Savior. They feel the sense of loss when their Garden is shut down. Present the gospel in an easy, non threatening way. The opportunity is yours. The choice belongs to them!

SURPRISE!

Meet students outside the Garden of Eden. Seat them for a short, serious discussion in the church sanctuary or classroom before taking the group to the garden area.

This is the last time we visit our Garden of Eden. We have had fun filling our garden with many of the same things God created. Can you name a few? What are your favorites? (Light-Heaven and Earth-Plants, Flowers-Universe-Fish and Birds-Animals-People-Rest)

What did you think of our stroll through the garden with Adam and Eve? What did you learn about them that you never knew before? How do you feel about the snake episode?

*Let students talk about their Garden experience.
Ask questions about the Creation story.
Lead students to the Garden of Eden.*



The door should be closed and the Garden should be dark.

TEACHER: That's strange. I left the door open just a few minutes ago. Has anybody been here? Did you see anyone? (KNOCK ON DOOR)

ANGEL: Go Away!

TEACHER: What was that? Did you hear that? (Students respond) Well, nobody can keep us out of our Garden of Eden. We love it. We own it. We have tended this garden for many weeks. We'll just walk in. (OPEN DOOR AND LET EVERYONE ENTER.)

ANGEL: (Stand defensively with sword) Do you not see my flaming sword? Do not enter the garden. You are not welcome here.

TEACHER: Who are you? Why are you in our Garden of Eden?

ANGEL: I am the Angel-cherubim God sent to guard the path to the Tree of Life. No one comes near the tree. Get out, now!

TEACHER: I remember the story now! God threw Adam and Eve out of the garden and sent them to work the ground. God stationed angel-cherubim and a revolving sword of fire east of the garden, guarding the path to the Tree of Life. I remember the day we created that path! Are Adam and Eve nearby? Maybe we can work something out.

ANGEL: Mighty Lord God banished them from the Garden. The man and woman sinned against God and against all mankind.

TEACHER: Where are they? Help us find them.

ANGEL: God cursed mankind and the very soil of earth. All his life Adam will struggle to make a living from the dirt. The soil will only produce thorns for the man who disobeyed God.

TEACHER: We'll help feed them. We have leftover snacks!

ANGEL: No! God commanded they shall eat grass the rest of their lives, die and return to the ground from which they came.

TEACHER: Why? We loved Adam and Eve. We don't understand.

ANGEL: Leave the Garden of Eden or suffer the consequences. You will understand sin all in good time.

TEACHER: We better leave before we get into big trouble with this serious angel. Run back to our meeting spot as quickly as you can. Wait for me there! *(Everyone runs away!)*

UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN!

Calm students and seat them for a hushed, serious discussion before leaving the area. Allow opportunities for student interaction.

I'm sorry that we will never be able to enter our Garden of Eden again. How does that make you feel? We should have guessed trouble was ahead for Adam and Eve even though they tried to be cheerful.

We got kicked out because of SIN. Sin is anything that separates us from God. What did Adam and Eve do to separate themselves from God? (They believed that snake, Satan, and ate the forbidden fruit.) Why was that such a big deal? (They disobeyed God.)

If Adam and Eve had passed God's test, the world would be a different place. We would live forever. Jesus would not have had to die on the cross to save us from sin.

Sin forced God to make a new plan. God sent His Son, Jesus, to earth. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He shouted God's kingdom message, healed sick people.

He promised we will live forever if we believe in Him. It's not the good stuff we do that gets us to Heaven. We only go to Heaven when we trust Jesus as our Savior. Do you understand?

God makes it easy. He says we must believe Jesus is our Savior and died and rose from the grave. We must ask Jesus (in prayer) to become our Lord and Savior. And...that's it! There's not a long list of do's and don'ts. Just believe.

Once we are Jesus believers, our lives change. Suddenly we want to be God's friend. We want to go to church and live honestly. We study God's Word and grow in Jesus. Jesus promised to come back to earth and get us. Maybe He will come soon or maybe it will be a long time. We don't know. God wants us to become believers today.

If you have never asked Jesus to be your Savior, there is no better time than this moment. Pray these words silently while I pray them aloud:

Dear Jesus, I know I am a sinner. Forgive me of my sin. Come into my life and make me a Christian, a Jesus believer. Thank You for being my Lord and Savior. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

If you prayed that prayer and meant it with all your heart, you are now a true Christian! It is a happy day in Heaven. The Bible says angels rejoice when a sinner repents! I love these song words:

*At the completion of the Golden Gate, the angels did not celebrate
And when the Wright boys flew their bird, no angelic shouts were heard.
When the light bulb first lit up the town,
the angels did not dance around.
And when the man stepped on the moon,
they didn't sing a victory tune.*

*Heaven doesn't strike the band for any old occasion at hand.
It's gotta be a special thing to make those angels sing.
When the Model T first hit the street,
it didn't bring all heaven to it's feet.*

*And when the first computer was born, they didn't blow Gabriels' horn.
When the United States became a nation,
there was no angelic celebration.
But when one lost sinner comes back home,
they jump for joy around the throne.*

*There's only one thing that we're sure about,
that will make those angels jump and shout.*

*It's when a sinner makes the Lord his choice
-that's when the angels rejoice.
("That's When The Angels Rejoice" The Legacy Five)*

WEEK #12:

SHOW OFF NIGHT

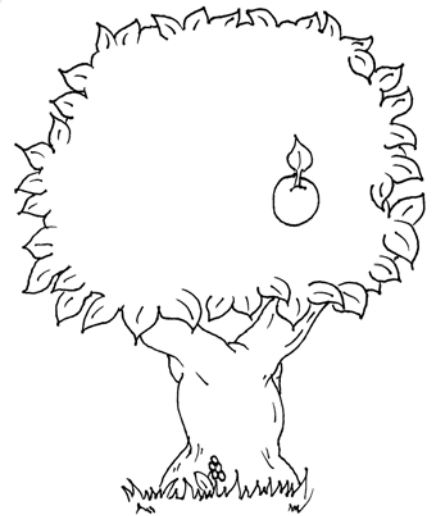
THE SURPRISE SHOPPE will not be open today. Set up the Garden of Eden for parents to pop in for a short visit. Display all artwork, decorations used during the sessions in the garden.

Stay in THE SURPRISE SHOPPE to meet and greet parents and answer questions as desired.

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 anyone who wants to speak to you.

Choose the best Garden event and recreate it for the audience.

Ask Adam and Eve and the Angel to stand in the Garden of Eden. They stay in character and answer questions as



their character would respond.

Projects may be taken home with the students.

CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS

This 30 minute weekly music session gather 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 each month.

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY

MUSIC CHOICES

The curriculum suggests songs and 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.

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 should or “one of those” looks help 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. This is the last event. Parents are waiting. Avoid chaos of children running around a they wait for their ride home. Do not dismiss early.

MUSIC SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH CREATION

All options listed have 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 CD, Book and Split Track Tape.

(Current prices available at www.cemlife.com)

All Creatures Great and Small

Everything Was Mad By God

God Made Me

God Made the Animals

God Saw All

He’s Got The Whole World in His Hands

+many more!

GREAT BIG PRAISE FOR A GREAT BIG GOD, Book 2 Older Students
Available: Book Only, Book and Split Track CD, Book and Split Track Tape.
(Current prices available at: www.cemlife.com)

*A Great Big God
All Things Bright and Beautiful
Beautiful, Wonderful, Gorious Things
Can You Imagine?
How Majestic Is Your Name
+ 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 set, Book and split track audio
tapes. (Current prices available: www.cemlife.com)

*All Creatures of Our God and King
Creature Praise
God Made Our Wonderful World
God's Night Light*

*It's A
+ many*

*Miracle
more!*

