

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB



***CLOSE ENCOUNTERS
WITH THE ME***

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.

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

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE

WEEK #12:

SHOW OFF NIGHT! COME AND ENJOY THE SHOW!

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY
NOT FOR USE
PLEASE PURCHASE

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB SIX YEAR PLAN

YEAR #1

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

YEAR #2

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

YEAR #3

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

YEAR #4

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

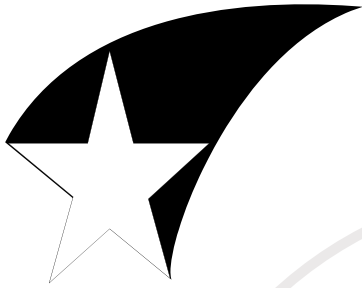
YEAR #5

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

YEAR #6

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

LET'S GET READY!



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

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

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

RECRUITING LEADERSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

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

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR RECRUITING LEADERS

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

RECRUITMENT TIME LINE

MARCH AND APRIL

Present midweek program to church for Board approval

MAY

Interest meeting with parents. Discuss leaders and funding.

JUNE AND JULY

Recruit leaders. Publicize!

AUGUST

Register students

SEPTEMBER

Close Encounters Club begins!

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

IS EACH LEADER IMPORTANT?

AM I PUTTING MY EFFORTS IN THE RIGHT PLACE?

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

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

CARE AND FEEDING OF CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB LEADERS

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

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

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

**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB
LEADER'S COVENANT**

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

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

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

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

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

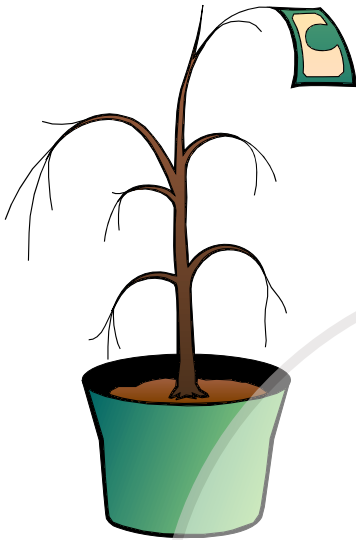
***I will try to the best of my ability to live a Christian testimony** that will most likely encourage others to want to be like me because I am Christ filled.*

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

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

Signed _____

FINANCING CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB



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

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

CHURCH BUDGET

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

REGISTRATION FEE

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

WEEKLY DUES

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

CHURCH SPONSORS

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

ADOPT A CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB KID

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

FUND RAISING

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

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

DENOMINATION SUPPORT

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

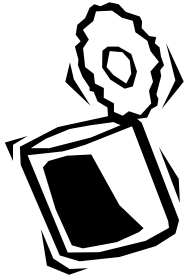
ANOTHER FINANCIAL ISSUE: CHECK THE CHURCH INSURANCE PLAN!

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

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

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

THE SNACK AND YAK PACK



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

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

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

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

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

A GENTLE SUGGESTION

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

Resist the temptation to provide alternative snacks.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ANOTHER GENTLE SUGGESTION

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

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

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

YET ANOTHER GENTLE SUGGESTION

Do not keep old, beaten games with missing parts.

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

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

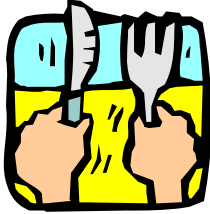
If the weather is nice, take SNACK AND YAK outdoors!

Games become more active.

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

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

SNACK AND YAK FOOD SUGGESTIONS



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

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

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

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

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

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

SNACK RECIPES

ICE CREAM CAKE

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

1 can Hershey Fudge Topping
1 large container Cool Whip

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

GOB CAKE

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

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

GOB ICING

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

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

PUMPKIN LOG

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

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

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

DUMP CAKE

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

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

PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH FUNNEL CAKES

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

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

FIVE CUP FRUIT SALAD

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

Mix together and put in refrigerator overnight.

TWENTY FOUR HOUR SALAD

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

Mix well and chill.

CHEERIOS NUGGETS

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

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

MONKEY BREAD

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

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

NOTE: Remove from pan immediately!

NACHOS

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

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

PUPPY CHOW

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

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

PINEAPPLE UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

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

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

GOOD GRIEF, IT'S GOULASH!

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

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

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

JELLO AND PRETZEL SALAD

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

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

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

TACO SALAD

1 lb. Ground beef 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.

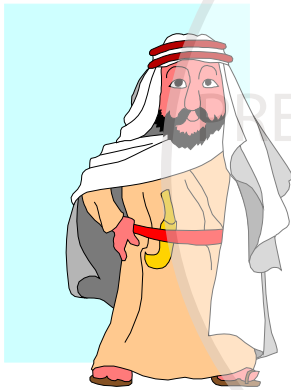
Each hole should be marked with a flag as in regular golf and tees should also be designated. Set par for each hole, print up some scorecards and have a GOOFY GOLF TOURNAMENT.

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.*

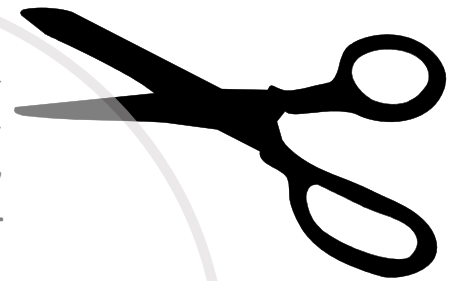
The task of THE LEARNING CENTER team is to follow curriculum instructions in presenting the current theme. Quiet learning activities may include story telling, scripture memorization, crafting, decorating the activity area and role playing. Each week, the teaching method changes. Have fun while presenting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

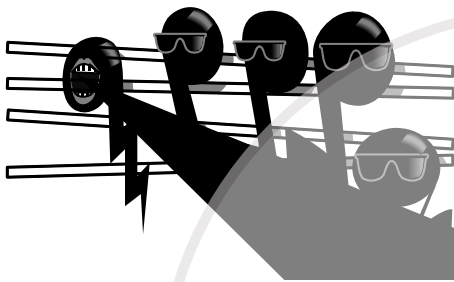
If saving space is an issue, consider making this area mobile. Set up one corner of a room or hallway and decorate using cardboard backgrounds and moveable items. Hide them away in a storeroom or closet between club sessions.

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.



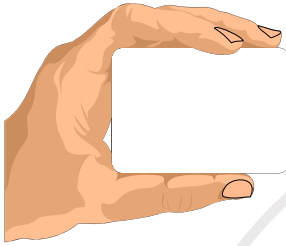
CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS is open to students AND adult leaders. There is an important message communicated in mixing adult and child voices in the same group. The adults see music from the child's perspective and are a support system for discipline. Students see how much the leaders care about them. As they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

THE LEARNING CENTER

One by one we have been created in the image of God and He has a grand plan for our lives. Let's discover what makes us unique in God's eyes.



WEEK #1: FAMILY NIGHT DINNER

WEEK #2: Who Am I? Me...Myself...And I

WEEK #3: Why Am I Here? Me and My World

WEEK #4: Where Am I going? Me and My Journey

WEEK #5: What Should I Be Doing? Me and My Job

WEEK #6: What does Jesus Expect Of Me? Gulp!

WEEK #7: Do I Like Me? Talent and Skills

WEEK #8: Just Like Me! Red and Yellow, Black and White

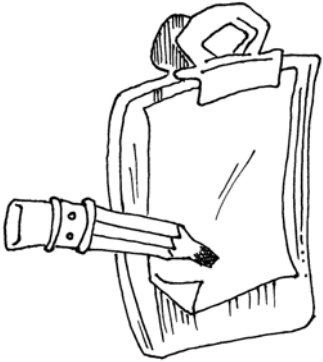
WEEK #9: Building A Better Me! Throw Me That Brick

WEEK #10: Keeping Me Strong! Exercise For The Soul

WEEK #11: Just Jesus And Me!

WEEK #12: SHOW OFF NIGHT!

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



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

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

DECORATE!

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

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

BE CREATIVE!

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

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

TELL A STORY!

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

DISCIPLINE!

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

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

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

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

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

BE DEPENDABLE!

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

ENJOY YOURSELF!

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

USING SCRIPTURE

Use a scripture translation accepted by your church. Make biblical concepts child friendly. Use a version you know they will understand. Feel free to change “read aloud” and “memorization” portions as desired.

WEEK #1:

FAMILY NIGHT DINNER

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

BASIC GOALS FOR CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH ME

1. By the end of all sessions, each student will know 5-10 Bible verses that encourage God's opinion that he/she is special.
2. By the end of all sessions, each student will carefully consider their attitudes about people who are different. They will hear stories and perform activities to reinforce kindness and tolerance as a foundation for their own actions.
3. By the end of all sessions, each student will have an opportunity to 'shine' by performing a talent or exhibiting a skill for the group.
4. By the end of all sessions, each student will know their true identity as a Child of God and follower of Jesus.



WEEK #2:

WHO AM I? ME, MYSELF AND I

TEACHER PREPARATION

Before CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH ME begins, decorate The Learning Center with items that will remain in place for the entire program.

Decorate The Learning Center with mirrors, pillows, throw rugs, soft lights, signs. Make the space as comfortable and cozy as possible. Students should feel that they are entering a familiar, homey place where they are loved, respected and safe.

Toss the pillows where students can lean on them. Mirrors are present to reflect the smiles and beauty of each person. Print signs between mirrors and on mirrors that read:

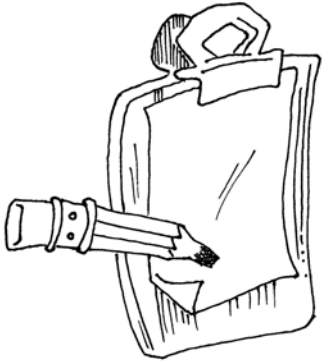


GOD MADE ME!
I AM SPECIAL!
I AM GOD'S KID
GOD LOVES ME
I AM LOVABLE
GOD THINKS I'M TERRIFIC!
I AM SMART
I AM FUNNY
I AM KIND
I AM SWEET
I AM A CHRISTIAN
I AM A GREAT KID

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH ME! In The Learning Center we are going to figure out who “me” is.

Who are you, really? I’ll ask a few questions and you raise your hand if the statement is true for you!



1. I live in a big house. I live in an apartment. I live in a small house.
2. I am a country kind of kid. I am a city kind of kid.
3. I have brothers and/or sisters.
4. I like school. I hate school. School is just okay.
5. I love the color red.
6. I enjoy eating tuna fish. My favorite gum is pink bubble gum.
I do not like milk at all. I like to drink bottled water.
8. I would rather eat pizza than anything else in the world.
9. I am a funny kid. I am a serious kid. Sometimes I’m funny.
10. I am trying to be someone that everyone likes and respects.
11. I wish I could know more about who I am.

If you think you’d like to discover more about “Who Am I”, this is the place for you! We are going to have lots of fun figuring out our personalities and we are going to learn how much God loves us.

ACTIVITY: Find any mirror in this room and look into it. Give these instructions once students find a place in front of a mirror:

Smile, frown, stick out tongue, wrinkle nose, make a funny face, make an ugly face, stick your finger in your nose, look guilty, look sweet.

It’s fun to look in a mirror. We can even use a mirrors to make ourselves look better each morning—combing hair, brushing teeth!

There are some things about you the mirror does not reflect. Can you think of a few things a mirror cannot see? (Kindness, love, hurt, fear, mean, evil, sickness)

THE STORY OF JULIE

Let me tell you about a girl I know. Julie is a girl who lives in a blue house on the corner. She has red hair, freckles and green ribbons in her hair.

Every time I drive by her house, Julie whistles and waves at me. I love to see Julie. It makes my day every time she says hello. Some of our neighbors were talking about her the other day. They all said Julie is so pretty and so nice. They all agreed she would be the perfect daughter.

I just found out that Julie didn't feel very pretty or very nice not so long ago. Her mother and dad yelled at her all the time. They told her she is ugly and that her behavior is bad. Because Julie loves her parents, she believed them. Julie never did anything very wrong but her parents have serious problems and it is easy to yell their troubles away in her direction. Sometimes her parents forget that they mistreated their girl.

Julie had a hard time talking to kids at school. After all, if she was ugly and bad, who would want to be her friend? She was very quiet. All the kids thought she was 'stuck-up' and 'snooty'.

What do you think? *Lead a short discussion that focuses on the fact that Julie looks different on the outside than how she feels about herself on the inside. She has been told she is bad by the very important people in her life that she trusts. Her "Me, Myself and I" feeling is bad.*

ASK: How can Julie begin to feel better about herself? How can the kids at school help Julie? How can her parents help her?

I have some great news! Julie came to Close Encounters Club not long ago and learned some very important information about "Who Am I?".

CONCLUSION

Preparation: Print 5 small theme signs to tape on the wall as you talk. Decorate the signs with small red hearts.

I AM GOD'S CREATION

The Close Encounters Club teacher told Julie and all the kids that the Bible says when God was completing His creation of the earth, He felt something was missing so...He created people! Julie learned a Bible verse all of us should learn too... "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him." Genesis 1:27

Julie decided she must be a person that God loves very much. He must because He took the time to create her. Even if Julie isn't perfect, she knows God loves her and wants her to be happy.

I AM GOD'S CHILD

Julie found out something else about God. He did not create her and then walk away. The Bible says we will have troubling times but God provided a way for us to feel better as His children. We can PRAY, READ GOD'S WORD and be with PEOPLE WHO KNOW HIM!

Julie knows she is God's child because she asked Jesus to come into her life, forgive her sins and help her feel better about herself.

I AM LOVED

There may be times when you feel no one loves you. Some days you are in trouble all the time even when you are doing your best to be good. The good news is that Jesus loves you so much He died on a cross. He did this even though we really are sometimes bad. We do thoughtless things and we sin (do things we know disappoint God) against God.

Knowing I AM LOVED gave Julie a lot of hope about who she is. Even when Julie does fail and her parents tell her about it, she knows she can ask Jesus to forgive her. If she gets blamed for something she didn't do, she can ask Jesus to help her find the right words to help in any situation. Julie knows that no matter what anyone says or does, she is LOVED!

I AM FORGIVEN

Julie thought her parents knew her inside and out. If they said she was ugly and bad, it must be so. Sometimes we all need to FEEL FORGIVEN. Julie needed to feel forgiven by her parents. She talked to them one day and even cried a little. She said, "I'm sorry for being ugly and bad. I will try to be a better daughter."

Her parents looked at each other and at their girl, Julie. They knew the truth. Julie was not ugly and she was not bad. A big change took place in the blue house on the corner in my neighborhood.

Julie and her parents had a long talk. Her parents were very sad that they caused their special girl so much pain. They talked to pastor and found out how all of them could FEEL FORGIVEN. Julie smiles a lot now. She thinks forgiveness is a great feeling!

I AM SPECIAL

I am happy to tell you that Julie made two very good friends in school this year. They giggle and whisper and laugh together. The other day, Julie and her friends were playing in her yard. I drove by and honked my car horn. Julie waved and winked at me. Knowing Jesus has helped Julie know I AM SPECIAL.

THINK ABOUT THIS: THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT ME THAT GOD CANNOT RESIST!

IF TIME REMAINS: Memorize Genesis 1:27. Pass the small signs around the group and ask students to say each one aloud.

WEEK #3:

WHY AM I HERE? ME AND MY WORLD



TEACHER PREPARATION

Students enter The Learning Center and relax for a few minutes. Talk with them in a friendly way about their day at school and at home. Serve a small snack and encourage them to find a comfortable pillow while they rest and chat.

INTRODUCTION

I have a great question to ask you today: WHY ARE YOU HERE? Oh, I know, your parents made you come, your friend is here, snack and yak is always fun, there's nothing on television. I know the usual reasons you come to CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB.

I am asking the big question, "Why are you here?". Why are you here on this earth, in this town, living in your house. Why are you really here?

ALLOW STUDENTS TO RESPOND

(They may say to do good for other people, to help provide for someone else, to make money, to get a good job....)

THE STORY OF A GOOD MAN: THE GOOD SAMARITAN I NEED A FEW VOLUNTEERS. Let's have some fun with a story in Luke about a good man. I need a: ROBBER, PRIEST, LEVITE, SAMARITAN, INNKEEPER, WOUNDED MAN, DONKEY. (Provide Holy Land costumes for the volunteers as available.)

Luke 10:30-37: As we read this story act out your part in your best Hollywood actor personality. In the end we may learn the answer to the question: WHY AM I HERE?

Jesus told this story: there was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. (Pretend to walk along a path.)

On the way he was attacked by robbers! They took his clothes, beat him up and went off leaving him half dead. (Robber pretends to attack the man. The man falls down wounded.)

Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road. (Priest walks quietly with hands folded beside the fallen man.)

When the priest saw the wounded man he angled across to the other side. (Priest steps over the man and walks away.)

Then a Levite religious man showed up: he also avoided the man. (Levite steps over the man and walks away.)

A Samaritan traveling the road came upon him. (Walk up to the man and act surprised to find him on the ground.)

When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. (Look so sad. Put hand over heart.)

He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. (Pretend to take care of him.)

Then he lifted him onto his donkey. (The donkey gets on all fours to carry the poor, wounded man.)

The Samaritan led him to an inn and made him comfortable. (Pretend to put him in a safe, comfortable spot with a pillow under his head.)

In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. (Innkeeper pretends to get paid by the Samaritan.)

He told the innkeeper, "Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I'll pay you on my way back." (Pretend to give instructions.)

TURN TO THE GROUP: What do you think? Which the three people became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?

"The one who treated him kindly", said the person Jesus was speaking to. So Jesus said, "Go and do the same".

ALL ACTORS MUST NOW TAKE THEIR BOWS WHILE THE REST OF THE GROUP APPLAUDS AND WHISTLES.

CONCLUSION

Please do not think the answer to WHY AM I HERE? Is to get as much as you can for yourself. Anyone can do that. Your world becomes very small if you cannot give *yourself* to others. The Samaritan was came from the country of Samaria and Jews hated those guys. It was amazing to be called 'good'. This lowly of the low helped someone out of the kindness of his heart.

You may say, "Hey, I'm only a kid. I can't do very much!" That's true but someone once said:

I can't do everything, but I CAN do something.

What I CAN do, I OUGHT to do.

What I OUGHT to do, by the grace of God,

I SHALL do!

Name some things kids can do to help other people.

God's Word says, "*Everything in heaven and earth will pass away but My Word will not pass away.*" Mark 13:31. If you are a Christian, a Jesus believer, do not waste your life wondering WHY AM I HERE and chasing after things that pass away.

Instead, love God! The best way we show our love for God is to help those who cannot help themselves, be kind, keep your mind and body pure and clean, be all you can be, tell others about Jesus. Enjoy God in good times and bad times. Love and trust Him to know what is best for you. When you do these things you will know the answer to WHY AM I HERE?

CLOSE IN PRAYER.

WEEK #4:

WHERE AM I GOING? ME AND MY JOURNEY

TEACHER PREPARATION

Cover the floor of The Learning Center with maps. Hide an open Bible underneath all the maps. Open them to make the area look messy with maps. Sit in the middle of the mess with a pencil behind your ear and a puzzled look on your face.

Before Class: On one side of a map print the word HEAVEN in huge letters (black marker). Tear the map into 8 large pieces. On each torn piece, print one of the scripture references for the lesson.

BALLOON WORSHIP: Balloons, small slips of paper, pencils. For younger students, prepare compliments before they arrive so they can roll and put them inside the balloons. Leaders may need to help blow and tie balloons at the right time.

INTRODUCTION

Hi kids! Come in and sit down. Maybe you can help me. I have not had time to study the lesson. I'm still working on today's big question: WHERE AM I GOING?

I have been searching these maps and I cannot figure out how to get there. Do you know where I am going? (Students may look at maps with you. Do not be in a hurry to tell them you are trying to get to Heaven.)

Maybe I'll get there if I go through Ireland. No, that's not right. I have to turn left at New York City. No, not there. I have to fly through Mexico and then on to South America. I am so confused! Just how DO I get to Heaven?

FINDING HEAVEN...ONE STEP AT A TIME

I think I have been looking on the wrong maps. There is no travel map listing HEAVEN in the index. I wish I had studied for today. You will all think I have no idea where I am going.

TEACHER PREPARATION: *As you talk about each of the scripture references, tape the pieces together as a puzzle. When completed, turn the map over to reveal the word HEAVEN on the back.*

Here are a bunch of old torn maps with something printed on each one. Let's see if we can fit this puzzle together. (Scripture references are New American Standard Version.)

ROMANS 3:23: I don't like hearing that I am a sinner. I'm a very nice person. If everyone is a sinner, we better journey on to find out what to do about it.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

ROMANS 6:23: I like this verse. I have a feeling it would be bad to miss this part of our journey. It says the free gift of God is eternal life—living forever! You mean we don't have to pay to get into Heaven?

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

JOHN 11:26: It appears that getting into Heaven has something to do with believing in Jesus. Well, our journey seems to be moving quickly.

Jesus said, "And everyone who lives and believe in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

JOHN 3:16: This Bible verse is the Good News (Gospel) in a nutshell. If we lost the whole Bible and only knew this one verse, we could still get to Heaven.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

MATTHEW 6:33: Jesus wanted to give people a big hint about getting to Heaven. We must look for things to thing and do that please God. Then we get a reward-Heaven!

*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,
and all these things will be added to you.*

I CORINTHIANS 9:24: Running a race? Oh my aching bones. Can't I just walk to get to Heaven? Maybe I can run the first part and rest at the end of the journey. NO? Let's read that verse again.

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

ACTS 20:24: Paul said it is important to FINISH the journey...my life. Hey! Heaven must be at the end of my life here on earth! That's were Heaven is! I knew it had to be somewhere!

But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

JOHN 14:1-3: Jesus says He is preparing a place for us so we can live with Him. That's Heaven!

*Do not let your heart be troubled;
believe in God, believe also in Me.*

*In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so,
I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.*

*If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again
and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*

After piecing the entire map together, turn it over to reveal the word HEAVEN on the back. Attach the map to the wall to remind students each week of their journey's destination.

BALLOON WORSHIP

As time allows, organize a balloon worship. Instruct students to print something nice they might say to someone else. (I love you, you are great, you are special, etc.) Roll it up and put in inside the balloon. Blow up and tie the balloon.

If time is short, balloons can be totally prepared by leaders before class and brought out to toss and read at the right time. For non reading, young students, prepare their balloons before class.

Toss the balloons around the group. When the signal is given, stop and hold one balloon. Pop each balloon and read the nice compliment aloud.

Caution: Very young students are afraid to pop balloons. Do it for them. If they want to take one home, bring extra so they can pop one and keep one!

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WEEK #5:

WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING? ME AND MY JOB

TEACHER PREPARATION

Place items connected with various occupations around the room. Search your home for sample items. Suggestions: hammers, books, nurses' cap, golf club, etc.

Fill a basket with small items suggestive of specific occupations. Suggestions: thimble, spoon, flower vase, hammer, etc.



INTRODUCTION

Take a tour of The Learning Center to look at and touch the items I have brought today. Once you get to look at these things, let's sit and talk about them. (Talk about each item's purpose.)

Pass the basket around the room. Students choose an item that represents a career they might like to pursue. Talk about their choices.

MEMORY VERSE

TEACHER PREPARATION: *Print one word on separate note cards before class. Say the verse together aloud, mix up the cards, put the verse in the right order. This is appropriate for all reading students.*

Younger students say the verse aloud. Assign one word per child. Point at them, they say their word. Go around the circle faster and faster until the verse sounds like it is being read by one person.

*If anyone will not work,
neither let him eat.
// Thessalonians 3:10 B*

THE STORY OF A LAZY KID

From Luke 15:11-32: I know of a young man who hated work. He really hated it because he worked on a farm for his dad. Every day was like the day before it. Work, work, work. Chores and jobs piled up and he hated getting up in the morning. Every time he turned around, his father thought of a new job.

He daydreamed about living the good life. What would it be like to lay around all day, eat great snacks, enjoy friends and never work again? He tried to get out of his farm jobs by hiding in the barn. He discovered he could make his brother do his work if he pretended to have a headache.

Finally he talked to his father. "I know you have a lot of money, Dad. I'm sick of this farm. Let's do us both a favor. Give me my half of your estate before you die. I will go away and start a new life. You don't have to keep searching the barn for me."

"Son," said his Dad, "I'm sad that you don't want to work with me and your brother. It's a good life and we have many friends and quite a bit of money. I will agree to give you the money but don't forget that you have to find work when you get to the city."

"Sure, sure. Someday I will get a job but I hate working." The young man took his money and with a song in his heart, left the farm.

He found a great apartment in the city and soon made many friends. They came over to eat and play games. He was living his daydream and he was one happy guy. No work for him! He put his feet up on the couch and took a long nap while his buddies ate the last of the cheese and crackers.

When he woke up, he discovered his so called friends had run off with the rest of his food and also took his neat new wardrobe of city clothes. No problem! He would just buy more. After all, he was rich. He didn't have to work.

Checking his bank account, the shocked young man discovered he had exactly \$5.32 left and the landlord was knocking at the door for next month's rent.

It hurts to get kicked out on the street with no money, no clothes and no food. He hunted around the city for a job but there was a recession and no one was hiring kids who didn't like to work.

He slept in the park and his stomach growled. He finally found a job on a little pig farm by mentioning his father was a wealthy farmer in the country. He was given the job of cleaning out the pig pen. It didn't pay much but he needed the work.

Day after day, he cleaned the mud and muck out of that pen. And the pigs didn't like him very much so they kept knocking him over! He was so hungry. He began snitching some of the pig food to hold body and soul together. What a way to live!

This boy had lots of time to think about how good life was on dad's farm. Sure it was hard work but he ate delicious food, not this pig slop. He thought of his favorite leather coat that was probably still in his bedroom at the farm. He could see his older brother working in the field, laughing and talking with dear, old dad.

He decided life on the farm wasn't all that bad and farm work was a noble occupation. Time to go home!

He didn't even get to the farm when his dad came running to meet him. Food, new clothes, friends, family and, yes, WORK were waiting for our formerly lazy boy. God taught him a valuable lesson: "If you don't work, you don't eat."

CONCLUSION

Let's consider some questions:

1. If mom asks me to do the dishes, what do I say most of the time?
2. If dad says, "Time to clean the car", how do I feel inside?
3. When my family says I must do chores to get my allowance, how do I do those chores? Quick and sloppy, or carefully.
4. What do you want to be when you grow up? What will you have to do to meet your goal?
5. Do you believe the words, "If you do not work, you should not eat." What does that mean?

Someone once said, "Discover what you love to do and then figure out a way to get paid for it." It is a glorious thing to spend a life time working at what you love.

God gives each of us unique skills and talents to do work no one else can do. Ask Him to help you figure out what you do best!

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK #6:

WHAT DOES JESUS EXPECT OF ME? GULP!



TEACHER PREPARATION

Bring a few scary things to class. Examples: Halloween mask, pictures of lions, gorillas, snakes, rubber bug or snake, etc.

INTRODUCTION

These are items to remind me that there are frightening things in this world. I must decide what is scary and what is not scary. There are also things that are dangerous that do not look scary at all.

PHYSICAL SCARY: Drinking, drugs and smoking are very dangerous to our health. Why do you think people keep doing these scary things?

MENTAL SCARY: Many things can go through our minds that are scary. Sometimes scary movies stay a long time in our minds. What are some other scary things that go through our minds? (Thinking about the future, bad things that could happen, death, sickness, losing someone we love, losing a pet, etc.)

SOCIAL SCARY: Everybody wants to have friends. That's natural and normal. However, there are kids that want friends so much that they choose the wrong friends. Give us a few examples of the wrong kinds of friends. (Those who encourage us to be dishonest, disobey parents, steal, hurt others, bully kids that are different or weak, etc.)

There are enough scary things we cannot do anything about but we can arrange our lives in such a way as to keep lots of these scary things away by our **choices to do what is good, what is right and what is honorable.**

In fact, that is exactly what Jesus expects of us! GULP!

MEMORY VERSE

What does the Lord require of you but to **do justice**,
to **love kindness**
and to **walk humbly** with your God.
Micah 6:8

***YOUNG STUDENTS** say this verse aloud as a ball or beanbag is tossed around a circle.*

***OLDER STUDENTS:** Print the verse on a dry erase/chalk board. Erase one word at a time to see if everyone can say it together until all the words have been erased.*

DO JUSTICE: to be fair when we deal with people.

LOVE KINDNESS: To be kind to others every chance we get. To like being kind so much that we are kind without being asked.

WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD: To love God, to know He is much bigger than we are and to obey what He says because He knows what is best for each of us.

THE STORY OF KIND HEARTED FRIENDS

From Luke 5:18-26: Let's try an experiment! I need one volunteer willing to let a friend help him/her out of a jam. Now I need one volunteer willing to help that friend.

It seems this friend is in a jam. There was a crack in the sidewalk and he/she fell. Now his/her ankle is really hurting. This other friend wants to help. See if you can lift your friend and carry him/her to the door. (Student tries to completely carry the hurt friend...hopefully it will be an unsuccessful attempt!)

Now we need 3 more volunteers. It's time to be kind to this friend who is hurt. Can you figure out between all of you, how to carry your friend to the door? (Four students carry the hurt friend..hopefully it will be a successful attempt! Provide a blanket so they can lift each corner for an easy carry.)

Our experiment reminds me of a story about four kind hearted friends who had a very sick friend who was in BIG trouble! It all started one day when Jesus tried to speak to a group of people.

Wherever Jesus went huge crowds followed Him. They pushed through the streets and even discovered the homes He stayed in and crowded around the windows and doors. Some of the people were friends, others were interested in His words, others were enemies who wanted to hurt Jesus. Still others were those who needed help because they were sick.

One day in Capernaum, Jesus met many people who came to the house where He was staying. Those friends, curious, faultfinders and sick folks totally filled that house. Not one inch of space was open for one more person.

Jesus healed the sick and preached about the Kingdom of God. As they listened, they heard strange noise from the roof. They looked up to find a hole getting bigger and bigger. Soon a face appeared and shouted, "Hey! We got a sick guy up here. Coming down!"

The four friends grabbed ropes and lowered the sick man to the floor right in front of Jesus. It was the only way they could think of to get through the crowd!

The people wondered what Jesus would do. He looked up at the four carriers and saw how desperate the sick man was. He not only healed the man but He forgave the man's sins too.

CONCLUSION

This story is the perfect example of what our memory verse teaches. What does God expect of us? One of the important parts of serving God is being kind. What does that verse say? "We are to do justice, LOVE KINDNESS and walk humbly with your God".

Let's talk about ways we can serve God—and please Him too—by being kind. (Have students suggest practical ways of being kind to the following groups of people.)

PARENTS SIBLINGS TEACHERS
KIDS AT SCHOOL BULLIES SICK/HUNGRY
OLDER FOLKS STRANGERS

CLOSE IN PRAYER

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY

BIG ANNOUNCEMENT!

Next week we are going to feature the skills and talents of...YOU! If you play an instrument, come prepared to play for us. If you enjoy singing, plan a song. Some of you may have wonderful collections to show us. Do you draw? Bring some pictures you have drawn.

Make a list of students willing to share their talents, skills or collections. Consider asking some of the leaders to participate as well.

WEEK #7:

DO I LIKE ME? TALENT AND SKILLS NIGHT

TEACHER PREPARATION

The Learning Center will be filled with the talents and skills of the students. It will work if everyone participates. Assure that there will be some talent by telephoning specific students during the week and reminding students and parents to bring something share.

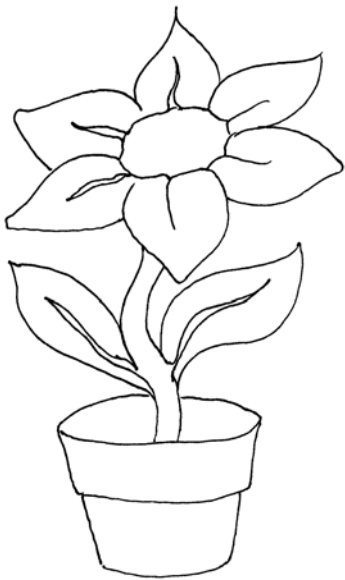
Consider asking teen and adult leaders to share some of their talents and skills too. It can be anything from singing a song to crossing your eyes while sticking out your tongue. Collections of dolls, cars, stamps, cards, etc. qualify as well.

Fill the time slot with these special efforts. Be informal and put each child at ease as they share what God has given them in the form of their skills.

Praise them liberally and encourage applause.

CONCLUSION

As you can see, God has given each of us something special. When you are tempted to think you don't like yourself, consider the unique talents God gave you and know for sure that God not only likes you, He's absolutely crazy about you!!!



WEEK #8:

JUST LIKE ME! RED, YELLOW, BLACK, WHITE

TEACHER PREPARATION

Place pictures of people from a variety of races on the wall. Bring items that people use in other cultures: Mexican sombrero, wicker basket, colorful blanket, etc.

INTRODUCTION

If you know it, teach this children's chorus:

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.

MEMORY VERSE

The most famous verse in the Bible is today's Memory Verse. You may know it but if you do not, let's learn it!

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

Did you notice the verse says God so loved the world? Does that mean the land or the people? Does it mean American? Hispanic? African? It means everyone! Any color, any language is included in God's special love. Look at the items on the wall and on our table. They remind us that people who look different and live differently than us are loved by God just like us.

THE STORY OF "PLAN B"

From Genesis 3: God's Word tells the story of how God created our world and everything and everyone in it. His plan for us was to enjoy His outstanding creation while we loved and obeyed Him.

But...Adam and Eve were convinced by a 'snake in the grass' to disobey God. God said they could eat the fruit of every tree in the Garden of Eden except for one. You know what they did...they just had to have a bite from the fruit of that one forbidden tree.

We can feel bad for them and for us but God is a fair and just God and does not tolerate disobedience. Because of their disobedience, God changed his plan for the people of earth.

Plan B, you might say, included a Savior. Jesus became our Savior for one reason: GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD!

He loved the world (you and me) so much that he sent: HIS ONLY SON (JESUS) be our Savior. We know the story of Jesus' wonderful birth in Bethlehem. We know Jesus lived among us for 33 years and then died on a cross, was buried and rose from the grave. PLAN B was a miracle of love that only God could provide.

JUST LIKE ME SCAVENGER HUNT

Divide into teams. Each team must have a leader. Teams must gather in their own specific area away from each other. The OLD SCAVENGER stands in the middle as a judge. If there are four teams, they stand in each corner of the room with the OLD SCAVENGER in the middle.

The OLD SCAVENGER calls out a human quality or experience (see list) and the teams must find one person to send to the OLD SCAVENGER to win one point.

INTRODUCTION: I hope there are some pole here who are alike and some who are different. God bless our differences! How borint life would be if we were all alike!

I MUST FIND SOMEONE WHO:

1. Has blue eyes and brown hair.
2. Received all A's your last report card.
3. Wanted to receive all A's on your last report card.
4. Received an A anytime in your life on your report card.
5. Took a vitamin today.
6. Kissed your mom today.
7. Watched TV cartoons last Saturday.
8. Likes Broccoli.
9. Memorized a Bible verse. (Say it aloud)
10. Is wearing Nike sneakers.
11. Never owned Nike sneakers.
12. Never had a cavity.
13. Is wearing a ring.
14. Owns a cat.
15. Did not do all your homework last week.
16. Likes math.
17. Made your bed today.
18. Have never made your bed in your life!
19. Have perfect attendance at CE Club.
20. Just loves being anywhere!

Adjust the specific questions to your group. If doing this with younger students, adjust all questions to their abilities.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Thankful that people around the world are different because that's how God created us!

WEEK #9:

BUILDING A BETTER ME THROW ME ANOTHER BRICK!



TEACHER PREPARATION

Scatter sets of Legos, Lincoln Logs, blocks, etc. around the room.

INTRODUCTION

Assign students the task of building a cozy 'block' house from the materials available. Give 5-7 minutes to finish the houses. When time is up, observe each house with all groups. Give liberal praise for each effort. Leave the small houses intact for this lesson.

Did you find these houses in perfect condition when you entered The Learning Center today?

What did you have to do to build your house?

(Take inventory of materials, talk to group members, work, work faster, be satisfied with the finished house.)

These are important steps in the building of a house. Do you realize that you are building a better YOU very day? Each decision you make will form the "human house" you become when you are fully grown.

Make smart choices and become a strong, fine person. Make dumb choices and struggle to recover for a long time.

THE STORY OF THE WISE AND FOOLISH MEN

From Matthew 7:24-27: *Ask two people dressed in Holy Land costume to enter The Learning Center discussing their situation.*

Wise Man: But, friend, I must tell you, it is not wise to build your house over there on the beach. Remember that big storm last month? If your house had been there it would be washed out to sea by now. Trust me. Come and be my neighbor over here on the rock.

Foolish Man: Will you give me a break? I hate this rock! It is hard and gray and lumpy and ugly. It is too far from the beach. Now that's a view to die for! Hey, if the storm was that big a month ago it will be a long time until another storm comes to my beach. Trust me! I'll be safe and so will my house. Come and be my neighbor at the beach!

Wise Man: I love you, friend, but I must tell you I think you are being foolish. This is your opportunity to make the right choice. Build on the rock. Be safe. If you still choose to build on the sand, I'll be here to help you.

Foolish Man: I won't need your help. I will get my house done in half the time and cheaper too! You must use that strong timber and drill into the rock. It costs money that isn't necessary. We'll see who has the last laugh when our houses are done!

The two people leave The Learning Center with the Wise Man's arm over the shoulder of the Foolish Man in a sympathetic, caring way.

CONCLUSION

This is the story of wise and foolish men who each had the same chance to build strong houses. They each picked their property and the kind of material they would use to build.

Each one knew about the terrible storms in their part of the country. The wise one took this under consideration and built a strong house on a strong foundation.

What did the foolish person do? I can see him now stroking his beard, telling his workmen, "Oh, just build it over there on the sand. I know it rains hard but it won't rain on MY house. Let's shop the sales for the cheap wood. The wind won't dare to blow MY house.

Jesus told this story to remind us that Jesus is the ROCK SOLID FOUNDATION for our lives. Jesus is the one who will be strong when bad things happen in our lives. He is there in every situation.

What should we do? Build our lives on Jesus. Learn as much as we can about Jesus. Be ready to turn to Jesus when the storms of life come.

CLOSE IN PRAYER.

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WEEK #10:

KEEPING ME STRONG EXERCISE FOR THE SOUL



TEACHER PREPARATION

Set out a few pieces of exercise equipment. If none is available, make your own. Bring cans of vegetables for weights, straight back chair for leg lifts, mat for tumbling.

INTRODUCTION

Let's talk about exercising our bodies and our minds. We cannot be strong unless we keep in shape. Let's start by having some fun.

Spend 5-7 minutes doing group exercises. Plan a few large muscle exercises like sit ups, leg lifts, running in place, arm circles. Do the exercises to cheerful Christian kid's choruses.

Now that we are strengthening our bodies, let's discover how to keep our minds strong.

THE STORY OF A STRONG MAN

Choose two students to portray Samson and Delilah.

From Judges 14-16: Who remembers a guy in the Bible named Samson? Was he strong? Was he smart? Samson was certainly strong in muscle but I have to question how smart he was.

Samson's downfall was a beautiful woman named Delilah. She was evil. She tricked Samson into telling her the secret of his strength. Because Samson had been killing a lot of men, their families were upset. They wanted to rob Samson of his great strength if they could.

DELILAH: Oh sweet Samson, you know how much I love you! Tell me how you got such strong, handsome muscles.

SAMSON: Oh my little hunny bunny, I would not be strong if you had strong men tie me up.

So Delilah waited for Samson to fall asleep and called in some big men to tie him up. When he woke up, Samson tossed off those ropes like they were tiny strings.

DELILAH: Oh, you naughty guy. You didn't tell me the truth! Because I really love you, sweetie, you must share your great secret with me.

SAMSON: Okay, my little country cutie. This is it. If the ropes are brand new, I will become weak when tied up.

Once again the big men came while Samson slept and tied him with new ropes. When Samson awoke, he tossed off those new ropes in a moment's time. You would think our Samson would catch on to Delilah's tricks but he didn't seem to notice.

DELILAH: I'm beginning to think you don't really love me, Ducky dear. If you really, really love me, stop playing games and tell me the real secret of your strength.

Now, let's stop right here and talk about what Samson should do. Should he tell her the truth? Should he keep his secret? (Let students respond.)

SAMSON: Oh my little foxy one, you are so cute I will tell you the truth. If you cut my hair, I will be as other men.

What do you think Samson's little lady did when he fell asleep? Yes! She cut off all his hair and he became weak.

Samson's life ended miserable. He was blinded by evil men and made to work like an animal, grinding wheat. When his hair began to grow back, Samson prayed and asked god to help him get revenge. Finally Samson began using his brain. At a huge party, Samson pulled down the entire house when tied to two pillars. Sadly, he died but so did everybody else.

CONCLUSION

QUESTION: What does Samson's downfall teach us about staying alert?

ANSWER: Samson let down his guard and trusted people who were untrustworthy. Just like we keep our bodies strong, we must keep our minds strong.

To do this we must obey God's commands. He tells us (because He loves us) that to stay alert we must read God's Word for wisdom and take time to pray to get to know our Heavenly Father. We must come to church where other Christians will help us grow in our faith in the Lord.

CLOSE IN PRAYER.

WEEK #11:

JUST JESUS AND ME



TEACHER PREPARATION

Place a large picture of Jesus and a mirror in the center of the room.

OPTION: Ask someone to draw a life sized picture of Jesus. Or, ask a real man to portray Jesus. Take pictures of each child standing next to Jesus and give it to them.

INTRODUCTION

Ask each student to look in the mirror beside the picture of Jesus. It will give the effect of each individual being right next to Jesus.

Has everyone looked at themselves beside Jesus? Today's theme is JUST JESUS AND ME. We have learned a lot about ourselves and we have learned what Jesus wants us to be.

Being ME is very special. Being ME means you can do things on one else can do. You can meet needs in the lives of people around you.

What are some things you think you do well?

Take a few minutes to talk about each student. If the individual cannot think of something, ask the group. Come up with one characteristic that is special about that person.

This is an important session for the students. Print the characteristic on a small card as the group talks and give it to the student. We often forget to tell children the good things about them in our effort to train out the negative aspects of their personalities. As you prepare, list each child's name and write yourself a note so that something good will be said about each one.

THE STORY OF JESUS IN ME

How many of you have decided that praying is very helpful when troubles come along in your life? Jesus thought so too! He prayed a lot while He lived here on earth. One time He prayed:

I'm praying...for those who will believe in Me...the goal is for all of them to become one heart and mind-just as you, Father, are in Me and I in You....then the world might believe that you, in fact, sent me.

From John 20-23 The Message

Jesus said He is in ME! How can this be? When each of us asks Jesus to be our Lord and Savior, we are given a special gift. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit, God living in us forever. It isn't scary, in fact, Jesus said the Holy Spirit is our Comforter.

The ME part of my relationship with God comes when I realize I have a big responsibility to live like a true child of Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Let's make a list of our responsibilities to God. I think you'll learn a lot from this list found in Ephesians 4-6.

LIVE UP TO YOUR POSITION. Be humble, gentle, patient, loving and united. (4:1-3)

USE YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS (4:7-16) You have been given special gifts from God. Use them in the church.

PUT OFF THE OLD LIFE. (4:17-19) Don't sin anymore.

PUT ON THE NEW LIFE. (4:20-24) Live the way you know Jesus wants you to live.

LOVE OTHERS (5:2) Love even the people who are hard to love.

STAY AWAY FROM BAD PEOPLE. (5:5-7) They will drag you down with

them.

WALK IN THE LIGHT. (5:8-9) Learn about Jesus and please him.

WALK WISELY. (5:15) Don't waste your life. Plan and work for good.

LET THE HOLY SPIRIT FILL YOU AND GUIDE YOU. (5:18-21) Let Jesus take full control of your life.

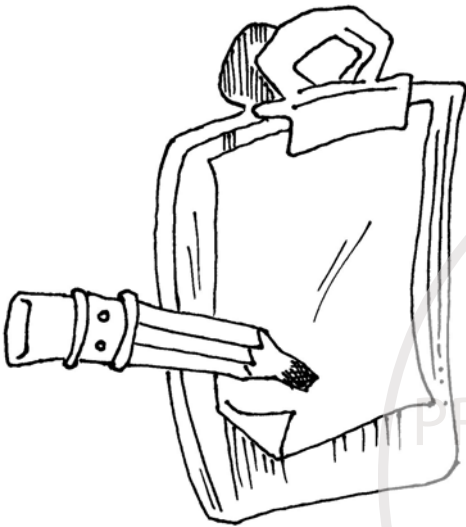
PUT ON THE ARMOR OF GOD. (6:10-17) We need to be protected from Satan's attacks against us.

PRAY CONTINUALLY. (6:18-20) Talk to God everyday.

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WEEK #12:

SHOW OFF NIGHT

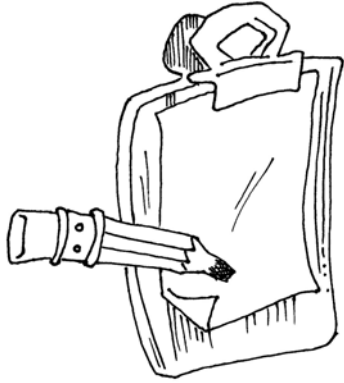


The Learning Center will not be open for this program. Set up the area for parents to pop in and visit. Place props used during the sessions in the room. Stay in the area to answer questions and meet parents.

Most of this event will be spent together as a large group. Attend the program cheerfully and be available to anyone who may want to speak to you.

If asked to participate, choose the best event of the sessions and recreate it for the audience. You may want a return visit of the wise and foolish men. The Good Samaritan story acted by students is fun.

THE SURPRISE SHOPPE



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH ME is a twelve week relationship series focusing on building up the life stories of each student. Students complete a 'picture' of themselves. This is a creative effort directed by the Surprise Shoppe staff. There is room for creativity and individualism but all the projects should be similar in size and content.

WEEK #1: FAMILY NIGHT DINNER

WEEK #2: Who Am I? Me...Myself...And I

WEEK #3: Why Am I Here? Me and My World

WEEK #4: Where Am I going? Me and My Journey

WEEK #5: What Should I Be Doing? Me and My Job

WEEK #6: What does Jesus Expect Of Me? Gulp!

WEEK #7: Do I Like Me? Talent and Skills

WEEK #8: Just Like Me! Red and Yellow, Black and White

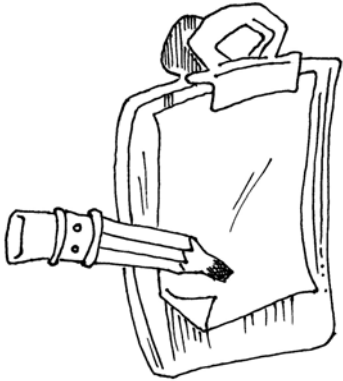
WEEK #9: Building A Better Me! Throw Me That Brick

WEEK #10: Keeping Me Strong! Exercise For The Soul

WEEK #11: Just Jesus And Me!

WEEK #12: SHOW OFF NIGHT!

You Are The Surprise Shoppe Leader ...DON'T PANIC!



Twenty minutes seems like an eternity while leading a children's activity. Time flies so be prepared to move the group through each session.

Planning ensures the event runs smoothly and gives the leaders a calm attitude. Getting students seated, quiet and involved is of utmost importance. Do it kindly and with efficiency.

SET UP: Long tables and chairs are needed for the entire series. Seat students on one side of the table. They will work with large piece of poster board. If students are seated across them each other, there won't be room to work.

Before students arrive, place materials at each seat. If markers, scissors, tape, glue are needed, place the items close. Plan enough supplies to be shared by 3-4 students.

Setting up has a hidden benefit. If certain students pick on each other, are good buddies who poke each other or are shy loners, choose their seats carefully. Take the opportunity to split troublemakers and place shy students with friendly children who may be potential friends.

Change the seating each week so everyone gets to know each other. The teacher controls the mood of the group by knowing which personalities work well together and which ones are best separated.

DECORATE: There is no special decoration needed for this Surprise Shoppe. This is a work room designed to make an end product.

CREATE: Build on the ideas we offer while learning important Bible truth. Learning is fun and the results will last a lifetime with a little preparation.

DISCIPLINE!

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

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

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

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

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

BE DEPENDABLE

It is frustrating to have someone promise to participate and then not show up. There are times that illness interferes with responsibility. As much as possible be there and be prepared. If you cannot be present, arrange for someone to take your place and give them time to be prepared.

ENJOY YOURSELF!

Have a wonderful time, enjoy the material, prepare with prayer and study, smile—even laugh out loud. What a communication tactic! Much of what is learned is caught and not taught. Be the kind of person you would like to see each child become. Be a role model that has an effect on your church and community for years.

WEEK #1:

FAMILY NIGHT DINNER

After dinner, explain what will be happening in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH ME Surprise Shoppe sessions.

BASIC GOALS

- Each student is confronted with clear concepts of what it means to be themselves. They complete a project designed to make them think about the different areas of their lives.
- Each student talks with other students and begins to build friendship relationships to last a lifetime.
- Each student understands their true identity as a Child of God and follower of Jesus through an enjoyable creative artistic outlet.

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HOW TO ORGANIZE 'MY LIFE POSTER'

Students create a poster to represent a “picture” of themselves. From session to session, under your specific direction, the group adds one section to their poster. By the end of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH ME, they have a take home project that tells the story of their lives and expresses their hopes and dreams for the future.

SUPPLIES: Basic materials include ½ sheet of white posterboard. Before the first session, punch two holes near the top of each sheet so twine or ribbon can be added.

See specific lesson plans for materials needed from week to week. Make a list and shop for supplies before they are needed.

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BEFORE THEY ARRIVE

Cut posterboard in half. Punch two holes near the top. Use the sample picture to lightly pencil in the sections. This provides equal space for each small project. To save time and effort, do not have students do this. They will have difficulty making sections straight and equal.

Between session, store all posterboard projects in a dry place. Lay flat. If glue has been used, do not stack projects until thoroughly dry.

OPTION: It may be helpful to complete each project on separate paper and glue into place on the posterboard. That's up to you.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH ME SURPRISE SHOPPE EXTRAS

Depending on scheduled time, any given group may have extra time when they complete their segment of the 'My Life Poster'. Be prepared with fun activities to keep students "surprised" each week. Use these ideas or plan your own.

1. SECRET MESSAGES: Write a Bible verse backwards. Include the reference! Trade verses with a friend to decode them. Supplies: Bibles, paper, pencils.

2. MUSICAL CHAIRS: Set up chairs (minus one) for the group. Walk around the chairs until the music stops. Left over student is OUT. Remove a chair and repeat until a winner is 'crowned'. Supplies: Chairs, CD or audio tape of Christian music.

3. BUCKET TOSS: Line up 3-4 containers in a straight line. Student has three chances to make as many points as possible. Supplies: Containers (buckets/wastebaskets/baskets), Beanbags (balls), labels on containers with points. 25-50-100-200-500

4. WORD SCRAMBLE: Two teams unscramble a word that is handed each team, one letter at a time. They can lay the cards on the floor to put the words together. First team to put the word in the proper order, wins. Supplies: 2 sets of each word on 3-5 cards in sandwich bags.

SAMPLE WORDS: CHOIR, CHURCH, GENESIS, JESUS, JERUSALEM, BIBLE,

GOD, CLUB, PASTOR, PRAYER

WEEK #2:

WHO AM I? ME, MYSELF AND I



TEACHER PREPARATION

Supplies: ½ posterboard with sections penciled in, ribbon or twine (pre-cut 24-30"), tape or reinforcement circles (4 per student).

Place supplies at individual seats before students arrive. This saves time and sends the message for the group to get to work!

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY

INTRODUCTION

We are about to create the story of our lives and our hopes and dreams. How? The empty project in front of you is the beginning. By the time we finish filling in the empty spaces, people who see your sign will know a lot about you.

HERE WE GO!

1. Lick and place reinforcement circles over the pre-punched holes. It is possible to use clear tape to reinforce the holes. Place two on the front and two on the back.
2. String the ribbon or twine through the holes and tie a knot at the ends for hanging.
3. Write student name in pencil at the bottom of both sides. This helps for identification from week to week. Encourage them to write their name clearly in the lower left corner so you will not have to search the entire sheet each week.

4. Each student draws a self portrait in the middle of the posterboard between the pencilled lines. Sample shows this as Week #2.

SPEAK TO THE GROUP WHILE THEY WORK

Some people find it easy to draw a picture of themselves. Others have no idea what they look like even though they look at themselves in a mirror each morning.

Look in the mirrors that are nearby. Draw yourself in the center of the poster while you think about what you really look like.

Do you have short or long hair? Is it curly or straight? Is your skin light or dark? What color are your eyes? Do you wear glasses? If you have freckles, don't forget to add them in all the right spots!

Stay within the center square because each week we are going to add to the "My Life Poster" a little more about the Story Of Me!

Each completed poster will be different cause we are unique in God's eyes. He created us to be just who we are. Don't feel bad if you are not like your best friend. You aren't supposed to be! You are created to be the best you possible. You are God's child—created to be just what He planned!

CONCLUSION

Show off each picture by having the group display their self portrait so everyone can see the finished product.

WEEK #3:

WHY AM I HERE? ME AND MY WORLD



TEACHER PREPARATION

Place posterboard projects on the tables before the group arrives. Scatter scissors, markers, crayons, pencils, red construction paper, glitter, stickers paper doilies, ribbon, glue within easy reach.

INTRODUCTION

Today we add another section to our MY LIFE POSTER. This time we focus on one question: WHY AM I HERE?

Let's think about that question. Why are we here? Is it to enjoy ourselves and make a lot of money? Is our purpose to be very important people and make a name for ourselves?

Long ago believers pondered our question. They wondered how knowing God should make a difference in their lives. This is what they came up with:

"The chief end of man is to love God and enjoy Him forever."

How can we show we LOVE God?

- Talk to God in prayer.
- Learn His message to us.
- Learn how to please God.
- Go to church.
- Tell others about Jesus.

How can we show we enjoy God?

- Serve Him by serving other people.
- Spend time with God.

LET'S GET TO WORK

1. Cut out a large red heart to place in Week #3 section. Not too big and not too small!
2. Print WHY AM I HERE? TO LOVE GOD AND ENJOY HIM FOREVER. In the center of the heart. Helpers are available to help younger students print the words.
3. Decorate the heart to look like a fancy Valentine. Use glitter and stickers.
4. OPTION: Back the red heart with a paper doily and glue it in place. Use just a little glue.
5. Glue the red valentine into section for WEEK #3.

CONCLUSION

In The Learning Center you learned the answer to the question "Why Am I Here?" is to "Love God and enjoy Him forever". That is why we made our small heart. May you always be reminded that this becomes part of the picture of you. When we learn to love God, we want to enjoy Him forever and serve Him.

Today this small valentine reminds us to love God. Make it your love message to God. Never forget why you were born:

To love God and enjoy Him forever.

WEEK #4:

WHERE AM I GOING? ME AND MY JOURNEY



TEACHER PREPARATION

Place posterboard projects at each place. Set up the posters in a variety of places so students get to know each other.

Cut old road maps apart so that each student has enough of an old map to fill section WEEK #4 on the posterboard. Scatter glue, cotton balls, markers, glitter on the tables.

PREVIEW PROGRAM ONLY

NOT FOR SALE INTRODUCTION

Where are we going in this life? I don't know about you but I think I am going to Chicago. Does that sound like a worthy life goal? It's fun to visit many places but our final destination is Heaven.

Jesus said, *"Don't let this (the fact that Jesus would die on a Cross) throw you. You trust God, don't you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Father's home. If that weren't so, would I have told you that I'm on my way to get a room ready for you? And if I'm on my way to get your room ready, I'll come back and get you so you can live where I live. And you already know the road I am taking."*

John 14:1-3 The Message

The big question is if my journey ends in Heaven, how do I get to Heaven? On earth we use road maps to get from one place to another. Sometimes our cars are equipped with GPS (Global Positioning System) and that is very helpful.

To get to Heaven, God has provided His own road map. Can you

guess what that is? Yes, the Bible. That special book is our guide, our conscience, our textbook, our road map.

The Bible tells us God's directions to get to Heaven. It says:

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved...."
Acts 16:31

I want to follow God's road map. To remind ourselves that God has prepared a road map, let's fill our spot with a map that leads right to Heaven.

LET'S GET GOING

1. Glue a portion of a map to section #4.
2. Once the map is glued, take one or two cotton balls and pull them apart to resemble a fluffy white cloud. Glue the cloud to the top, right on the map.
3. Draw a route around the map with a marker. The route must end right at the cloud.
4. Sprinkle glitter on the cloud and set with hair spray or a spray glue.

CONCLUSION

As we think about our road maps to Heaven, let's think about ways we can spend more time reading God's Word. As you learn to read, it gets easier to understand the words. We will continue to talk about little sections of God's Word here and you continue to read it at home.

You will be amazed how much God will help you understand as you think about Heaven and how to get there!

CLOSE IN PRAYER

WEEK #5:

WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING? ME AND MY JOB

TEACHER PREPARATION

Place the projects at each seat. Bring lots of old magazines and catalogs. Glue, markers, pencils, scissors should be scattered on the tables.



INTRODUCTION

- What do you want to do when you grow up?
- How do we know how to choose our career?
- Do you know what kind of school is necessary?

These are important questions people start asking when kids are very young. You may say, "I don't know what I want to become." That is fine but it is never too early to start thinking about it.

God has given each of us special gifts and abilities. He expects us to use them. You are not too young to begin developing your skills. Your skills may be very different from the skills of the person sitting next to you. You may be good in music and that person may be good in art. Another person may be very good at putting things together and taking them apart. Sometimes people love to talk in front of others and yet their friend may be frightened to do it. Still others are good at organizing collections or reading books.

Whatever you are good at is God's way of saying, "Go out do that!" Even if no one you know can do what you do, do not stop! Follow God's plan for you!

LET'S GET GOING!

1. Look through the magazines to find pictures of people doing jobs you are interested in.
2. Cut out a few of the pictures.
3. Glue the pictures into Week #5 section.
4. It could be you have more than one interest. Girls, you can be mothers and fire chiefs. Boys, you can be fathers and car racers.
5. Use just a little glue. Too much glue will make the pictures messy and will ruin your project.

CONCLUSION

There will come a day when you will choose something to do with the rest of your life. Let God in on your plans. Ask Him to lead and direct you in the right path. It's important...and it's fun too!

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WEEK #6:

WHAT DOES JESUS EXPECT OF ME? GULP!



TEACHER PREPARATION

Place the projects at each spot. Scatter glue, markers, crayons, scissors on tables. Print today's scripture verse in small print on a piece of paper. Make one copy for each student:

"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8

INTRODUCTION

You are not going to believe what I am going ask you to do today. I want everybody to take off their shoes and socks. Stuff your socks into your shoes.

Make a big deal of this! Pull out a clip clothespin for your nose and the noses of all helpers. Clip your noses and pretend to pass out. Spray a room spray. Assign one or two helpers to go around and steal all the shoes to pile in one huge mixed up stack in one corner.

LET'S GET GOING!

Take the paper at your seat and draw all the way around your foot. Be sure you can see all the words of the verse in the middle of your foot. No giggling allowed. Any gigglers will get their feet tickled!

Cut out your foot and glue it into section Week #6. Color your foot any color. Some might like blue feet or purple feet. Some might like hairy feet or dirty toenails. You decide!

CONCLUSION

BAREFOOT WALK: Have you ever walked barefoot in the church? Line up and let's go! We'll walk through the sanctuary and the hallways and maybe a few surprise spots (like the pastor's office). What a treat to walk barefoot in a place where people are usually dressed up.

SHOE SCRAMBLE: When the walk is complete, seat everyone in a circle around the jumbled pile of shoes. Countdown from 10 and have a Shoe Scramble. The first student who gets socks and shoes on the right feet and tied wins a hip, hip, hooray cheer from everybody in the group!

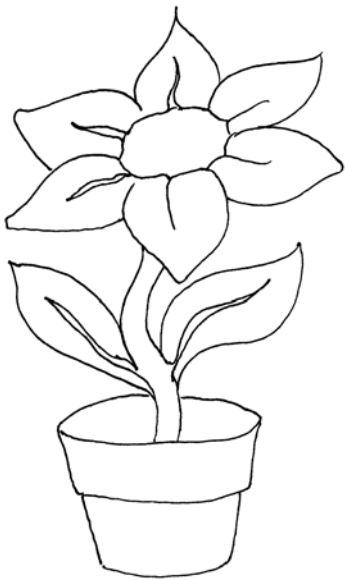
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WEEK #7:

DO I LIKE ME? TALENT AND SKILLS NIGHT

TEACHER PREPARATION

Provide a variety of art supplies on each table scattered near student projects.



INTRODUCTION

This is a fun time in the Surprise Shoppe! You may fill in section Week #7 any way you please. Since it is Talent and Skills Nights, you may choose your favorite expression.

Color a fancy design or write a short poem in the space. Make a collage from the old magazines or get everyone's autograph. Draw a picture or do math problems. It's your time! It's your skill!

CONCLUSION

When everyone has completed filling in their space, go around the group showing off what each student has created.

WEEK #8:

JUST LIKE ME! RED, YELLOW, BLACK AND WHITE

TEACHER PREPARATION

Place the projects at each seat. Scatter only crayons on the tables. The only marker available should be black.

INTRODUCTION

Today we learn about another kind of love that pleases God. This is the love for people who are different than we are yet are really JUST LIKE ME!

It does not matter what color skin we have. God loves everybody just the same.

LET'S GET GOING!

All of today's work will be in section Week #8. Make a rainbow that fills the entire section using the crayons on the table.

When coloring is completed, write in large place letter over the colors:

I LOVE YOU
TE AMO
JE TAIME

These are ways to say I love you in several languages.

Helpers will need to assist younger students with the printing.

CONCLUSION

Review all sections completed. Remind them of the themes.

WEEK #9:

BUILDING A BETTER ME THROW ME ANOTHER BRICK

TEACHER PREPARATION

Set out the projects. Copy the page of bricks included with the curriculum for each student. Scatter crayons, scissors, glue.



INTRODUCTION

Today's story in The Learning Center is about a wise man who builds his house on a solid foundation and a foolish man who builds his house on sand. When the storms came, the house on the rock stood firm and the house on the sand fell flat.

What we learn from this Jesus story is that if we build the foundation of our life on Jesus, we will stand firm. If we build our life on the shifting sands of fads, television, games, bad friends and food we will fall flat.

LET'S GET GOING

Color and cut out the page of bricks. When you have a stack of individual bricks, glue them into the shape of a small house to remind you of building your life on a firm foundation. You may want to print the name JESUS on one of the bricks. Leave space for a door and a window. Draw a roof on top!

CONCLUSION

Never forget that what you do today affects tomorrow. If your foundation starts leaning you will have a crooked house. If you build your life on anything or anyone other than Jesus, you will have trouble bearing up under the storms of life.

WEEK #10:

KEEPING ME STRONG EXERCISE FOR THE SOUL



TEACHER PREPARATION

Place the projects at each seat before the group arrives. Scatter scissors, glue and lengths of jute, twine or yarn for each student.

INTRODUCTION

Take a look at the twine in front of you. It is much like a length of rope. Rope reminds us of Samson who thought his strength would last forever.

He used the physical strength God gave him but he forgot to the strength of his brain. When you see this rope on your MY LIFE POSTER, remember that we are to remain strong in body and in mind as Christ's followers.

LET'S GET GOING

Run a stream of glue over the section like a small snake. Lay the twine on top of the glue and press down firmly on the twine.

Print the words I WILL BE STRONG at the bottom of Week #10 section.

CONCLUSION

Samson regained his strength but he lost his life. His story is a remarkable reminder to use what God has given us in the way He intends. Be strong of body and mind and your life will be happy and fulfilled.

WEEK #11:

JUST JESUS AND ME

TEACHER PREPARATION

This is the last week to complete the MY LIFE POSTER. Be sure all projects are glued and complete. If students were absent and have empty spaces, allow them to fill in the spots with left over materials. Be sure all names are in place for viewing on SHOW OFF NIGHT.

Purchase stickers with the face of Jesus. The type of sticker determines the extent of today's project. Larger stickers are more expensive so fewer are available.

Cut strips of construction paper into 1 ½" x 8" strips. A variety of colors work well.

INTRODUCTION

Today we end our sessions on ME! Choose a strip of paper in one of your favorite colors. Print on the strip as neatly as possible:

JUST (Jesus Sticker) AND (Fill in your own name.).

When the strip is completed, glue it into place just under your face in the middle of the poster. Now everyone know that the best part of being ME is that my life is truly a partnership with Jesus.

LET'S GET GOING

Find some other Jesus stickers on the table and place them anywhere on the poster that is empty. Maybe you have space for one or maybe there is room for more. Look and see how many stickers we have left.



CONCLUSION

Our MY LIFE POSTERS are complete. When you step back and look at it, it should tell the story of who you are and who you will become as a believer in Jesus.

Remaining time can be used to have a parade. Ask students to carefully hang their projects around their necks.

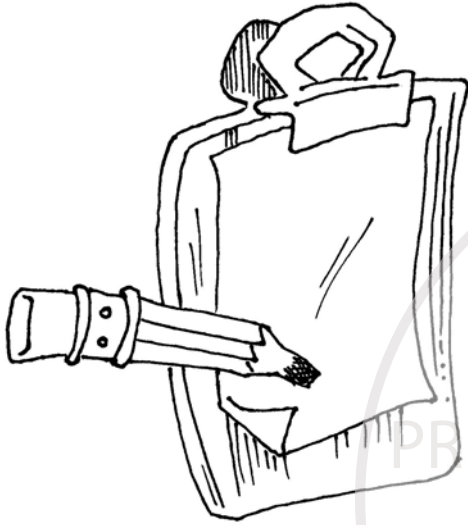
Play music and ask the group to march in a circle so everyone sees the completed posters on display. March outside the church if it is a pleasant day.

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WEEK #12:

SHOW OFF NIGHT

Hang the MY LIFE POSTERS around the room.
Place more on the tables.



Greet parents and visitors with a smile and handshake. Play music in the background.

Students may take their posters home at this time.

If asked to participate in the program, do not panic! Tell everyone exactly what the Surprise Shoppe theme was. Show one of the projects and explain each section.

Did something funny happen? Was there a particularly fun time that everyone enjoyed and was different? Share these moments with the guests. Keep your presentation to five minutes or less.

CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS

This is a 30 minute music session with a variety of options for musicians and leaders.

Since the theme of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS CLUB changed every twelve weeks, change the music themes too. Choose lively music that is easy to learn. Teach quick choruses to the youngest students and choose a few more challenging songs for older students.



This effort could provide a Church Youth Choir if desired. The group will be able to present a song during the Sunday worship service one Sunday each month.

NOT FOR USE MUSIC CHOICES

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS MINISTRIES offers several music book/cd/audio tape choices. Order directly from us. One of the nice options of the program is that the music crew can choose their own music. Tailor the music to ages and abilities of the students.

HERE'S AN IDEA!

Open CLOSENCOUNTERSINGERS to all adult leaders. There is an important message given when mixing adult and child voices.

Adults see music from the child's perspective and become a support group to the music team. The children see how much adult leaders care about being involved. The church sees a mixture of folks reaching their community for Christ in a personal way. To experience a singing group like this is inspiring.

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

The piano is the main instrument. Add keyboards, guitars, CD's as available.

MUSIC PEOPLE

It is important to choose a director who is in charge and a second person who plays the piano. Some churches may not have that many leaders so one person can double as leader and pianist. Adults who are singing also double as discipline people. If kids are getting restless, a firm hand on a shoulder or "one of those" looks help tremendously.

LEARNING THE MUSIC

Be casual. It's nice to form a perfectly tuned group singing every syllable correctly but let's fact it, the charm of a group like this is in the attempt. Mix music knowledge with just plain singing fun.

Print music sheets for each student. They get wrinkled but after a few weeks everyone knows the words anyway. Even if little ones cannot read, they like holding their music.

DISMISSAL

Dismiss on time. This is the last event of the day and parents will be waiting.

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