



Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7

JOYFULLY LUTHERAN 1 THESS. 5:16-24

FOCUS: Jesus. Others. You.

Ascension (Joyfully Sharing the Good News)

(MATT. 28:16-20; MARK 16:14-19; LUKE 24:50-53)



Before You Teach

Although Jesus removes Himself physically from the presence of His disciples, He leaves them with a mission that, as it is fulfilled, spreads His presence throughout the world. That Great Commission is passed on through His disciples to the whole church in every generation. Passing on the faith of the church to the children in our care not only fulfills *our* role in that mission, but also prepares *them* to also take up the mission, both now and as they grow to take our places.

Greeting

Welcome each child upon arrival, even on the busiest of days. **Good Morning, child of God! Today we are going to learn about the most important job Jesus has for us to do.**

Gathering

Signal children to gather in your worship area.

Teach and sing “Jesus! What a Name” (*LOSP*, p. 47).
Introduce the biblical narrative.

Tell the Story

YOU WILL NEED: A tongue depressor or similar stick; a cut-out of a cloud; an image of Jesus.

DIRECTIONS: Affix the image of Jesus to the tongue depressor. Cut a slit in the cloud to allow the image of Jesus to pass through it.

Do: Use the image of Jesus and the cloud where appropriate as the narrative is told.

The disciples went to a mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him. Jesus said to them (point to children), “You are witnesses to all that has happened, and all that I have said and done. Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to do all that I have commanded. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. And, I am with you always.”

After Jesus had spoken to them, He lifted up His hands and blessed the disciples. While He was blessing them, Jesus rose into heaven where He sat at the right hand of God. The disciples worshiped and then returned to the city of Jerusalem. Going to the temple church every day, the disciples praised God, joyfully sharing the Good News of Jesus' love even when a man told them to be quiet. Then the disciples did as Jesus told them to do. They went out and preached everywhere. And, our Lord God was with them all the time.

We also follow and worship Jesus. We are also disciples, followers of Jesus. Jesus wants us to tell others the Good News of His saving love. And, Jesus promises to be with us at all times ... wherever we are, and wherever we go.

Pray: *Have children repeat each phrase.*

Dear Jesus, You came for all from heav'n above. Help me to tell of Your great love. You promised to be always near, so that I need not ever fear. Wherever I go, You are there. Forgiving, caring everywhere. Thank You, Jesus! Amen.

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (MATT. 28:19A).

Grades 1 & 2: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (MATT. 28:19).



ACTIVITIES

Create: Make a "Good News" chain.

YOU WILL NEED: a glue stick and precut strips of colorful paper to make a paper chain.

Ask: What can you tell about Jesus? Print responses on paper strips and place in a basket in your worship area. Each day have a child (or two) select a strip. Read the wording aloud. Then, with the printed words facing outward, create a chain, using the glue stick to adhere edges. Display in your worship center. Plan so each child has a turn to select at least one link.

Do: Invite the pastor to talk about Baptism, as children surround the baptismal font. Invite parent/family participation. Be mindful of those children (and parents) who may not yet have been baptized.

Sing: "This Little Gospel Light of Mine" (LOSP, p. 103).

Sending

Gather the children in the "Sending Circle." Remind children: **Jesus promised to be with the disciples all the time. Jesus promises to be with you and me all the time.** Pass a cross, inviting children to pray as it is received and then to quietly pass it along. As children exit say, **Jesus loves you and is with you always!**

Live the Story

Be the Gospel light for the children and families you teach and serve. Bless them with your words and actions. Speak your faith. Freely forgive. Embraced in the loving arms of our Savior, set aside personal time for study, prayer, reflection and renewal. Celebrate life lived in His grace!



Early Childhood Devotions

VOL. 24, NO. 9 // MAY 2020

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

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NOTE: You will need the songbook: *Little Ones Sing Praise (LOSP)*, copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.

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Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod // 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 // 314-965-9000 // lcms.org

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Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



“Rejoice always ...” (1 THESS. 5:16–24)

Bible Story: Jesus returns to heaven (MATT. 28:16–20; ACTS 1:1–11).

Focus: Jesus finished His saving work (perfect life, suffering, death and resurrection) and it was time for Him to return to heaven.

What it teaches us: Just before Jesus returned to heaven, He promised to be with us and help us as we share the message of His saving work.

Prepare to teach

- › **Read** the story from various translations and, if possible, a study Bible.
- › **Think:** We have the privilege and responsibility to share the story of Jesus’ saving work for all people. Not only our words but also our actions “tell” others what it means to be part of His family.
- › **Pray:** We thank You, Jesus, for Your love. We’re thankful You came from heaven high above. We’re happy that You came to be the Savior promised. Help us share the story with everyone we see — so they can become part of Your big family. Amen.



WORSHIP TIME AND BIBLE STORY PRESENTATION

You will also need

- › *Little Ones Sing Praise (LOSP)*, copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House
- › Picture of Jesus (find one doing an internet search)
- › Pictures of Jesus: 1) with disciples; 2) ascending to heaven

Gather for Worship

Invite the children to the worship area. Sing (tune: “Are You Sleeping?”) **Come and sit down** (repeat) **on the floor** (repeat). **We will learn of Jesus** (repeat) **sing and pray** (repeat).

Invocation: Use the same melody and sing: **We begin now** (repeat) **in God’s name** (repeat) — **Father, Son and Spirit** (repeat). **Amen** (repeat).

Opening Song

Show picture of Jesus. **Jesus loves each of us. We learn about Jesus’ love in the Bible** (show Bible). Sing “Jesus Loves Me, This I Know” (*LOSP*, p. 42).

Bible Story

Show picture of Jesus and His friends, the disciples.

Jesus and His friends walked up a hill, then sat down and listened — all still.

Jesus told His friends, “It’s time for Me to go — back up to heaven, but I want you to know:

I’ll always be with you, though you won’t see Me. And, I’ll come back; just wait and see.

While I’m away there’s something you can do — Tell everyone “I love all of you.

I died and came alive again, so you can be — Part of God’s big family.”

Jesus blessed them all, smiled and started to rise — Then disappeared in clouds that floated by (show picture of Jesus ascending to heaven).

Jesus’ friends were sad to see Him go, but knew Jesus loved them, so-o-o much, and, that He would always be with them.

Song: “I Can Tell” (*LOSP*, p. 99).

What the Story Teaches: Even though Jesus was no longer with His friends physically, He promised to be with them and help as they shared His love.

Time to Pray

Dear Jesus, please help us remember You are always with us. Please help us tell our family and friends that You love them and came to be their Savior. **Amen.** Then blow kisses and say/sign “Jesus loves you.”

Closing/Benediction

Sing (same melody): **Time to go now** (repeat) **Time to play** (or whatever activity you do next) (repeat). **God is always with you** (repeat). **Loves you too** (repeat).



IDEA STARTERS for integrating the Bible story and theme into STREAMS (curriculum)

S Science and Nutrition

› **Clouds:** clouds float in the sky, hide the sun, bring rain, etc. Make a cloud to eat: gelatin or pudding topped with whipped cream or whipped topping.

T Technology

› **Going up:** Jesus could make Himself go up into the sky. How can we go up in the sky? (e.g., swings, climb slide, ladders, airplanes)

R Reading and Language Arts

› **Read:** *Little Cloud* by Eric Carle (World of Eric Carle, 1998) and *It Looked Like Spilt Milk* by Charles Shaw (Harper Collins, 1988).

› **Languages:** Teach sign for “Jesus loves you.” If you don’t know it, check online.

› **Finger Play:** Blow kisses; share “Jesus loves you” sign; little ones love “clicking” tongues: click, click! **Jesus loves me** click, click! **Jesus loves you.**

E Engineering

› **Blow up large balloons** as children watch. Invite them to think of ways to make the balloons go up (e.g., toss, kick).

CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

We are all familiar with separation anxiety with our children. When leaving your children, remind them of your love and that you will return. Remind them, too, of Jesus’ promise to always be with them.

A Arts (art, music and physical education)

› **Make cloud shapes:** put a spoonful of white tempera in the middle of a sheet of construction paper. Fold. Press. Open and look at the clouds.

› **Song:** “I’m with You” (*LOSP*, p. 32).

› **Pretend to be clouds** in the sky and blow to make a wind sound while moving about the large motor space or outside.

M Mathematics

› **Make 5 clouds** (print numerals 1–5; laminate; add adhesive-hook half of Velcro and use with felt board). **1 little cloud high in the sky — looks so pretty as it floats by.** Add a second and continue: **2 little clouds high in the sky — look so pretty as they float by ...**

S Social Studies

› **Friends:** Jesus had friends. We have friends too (e.g., friends in the classroom, in our neighborhood). We can tell our friends about Jesus, our best Friend and Savior.





Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



Really, There Is a Reason to Celebrate!

Coronavirus. COVID-19. The virus. Pandemic. Global situation. Quarantine. No matter which description you use, the past few months have likely been some of the most challenging times you have had as a professional educator and leader. The situations you have found yourself in are ones that have likely never been officially planned for, or even thought about. Lutheran schools around the world have been forced to be even more creative in their mission, ministry and educational delivery.

While there have been significant upheaval and change in recent months, there are some things that have remained constant: God loves you, God cares about you and God is with you. These three phrases sound simple, but they are the backbone of what you do in Lutheran school ministry. Because you know these three phrases are true, you share them with your students and families. While the lives of many children and families have been altered, the message of hope, grace, love and salvation that you share them is a reminder that some things never change.

Your students are likely not absent from your heart.

With many states closing school buildings for the remainder of the school year, the giggles, singing and playing that usually occur in your classroom or facility are absent. However, your students are likely not absent from your heart. Whether you are providing them with resources to pick up or be delivered, connecting via Zoom or other technology platforms or engaging in video and message sharing, you are continuing your educational ministry; it's what you do — you're a teacher!

During Jesus' time here on earth, He was always engaging in relationships; Jesus focused His ministry on making connections. You have done a ministry of





Pray for your students each day,
because God hears your prayers!

Rejoice Always!

There are blessings all around you — look for them. It is May, and flowers are likely blooming, birds are singing and the fresh air brings good reason to be outdoors. Rejoice in what your students have accomplished in the past school year, both in class and at home. Hopefully they have transitioned from separation anxiety and tears to eager arrivals in the classroom each morning; hopefully they have stayed connected to you during the time of home-based learning. Rejoice that parents in your school have been prepared in good ways to support their children's learning and development at home, in coordination with educational practices from school. Rejoice that your faculty and staff have contributed to planting the seeds of faith in students and their families that may be watered and fed by the Holy Spirit and others who come into their lives. There are many reasons to rejoice! Look through your calendar and find dates where you can pinpoint evidence of God's hand in your life and work. It's likely there are many!

Pray Continually!

Even Jesus prayed during His earthly ministry; this shows how important it is for you, and all Christians, to talk to God through prayer. Remember — prayer does not need to be any formal, lengthy printed material shared only at meals or bedtime; rather, prayer can be simple moments throughout the day when you talk to God, either in your mind, in your heart or by verbalizing your words. God hears your prayer! He always has, and He always will. Take advantage of the opportunity. Let your families and students know how prayer has been beneficial for you during this time; provide your families with opportunities and “starters” for them to engage in prayer, too, at home.

As you share words and thoughts of prayer with God, remember to give prayers of thanksgiving for the blessings He has bestowed upon you, your students, your colleagues and your school, even with the present challenges. Even in times of trouble, God does indeed send blessings — look for them! Satan wants you to look at the darkness, but Christ says that He is “the light of the world” (JOHN 8:12)!

relationships during this unique period of time too. Think for a moment of how many emails you have sent to students and families, videos you have made for Circle Time and storytelling or computer files and website resources you have shared with students, families and colleagues. You have worked hard to continue to tend the relationships you've made with students since the start of the year. These relationships are rooted in Christ; they will last and continue to grow, even in these challenging times.

As you think about your students, you may be wondering how they are doing, how they are managing with a new routine or how they are continuing their learning. Pray for your students each day, because God hears your prayers! While it may be easy to become downtrodden and anxious about being away from school, think of ways your students may be growing. How is this time a potential blessing for your students and their families? How can God use this time for His glory?

Throughout this past school year, many references in this publication, *Time Out for Directors*, have been shared in regard to the words the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians: “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances” (5:16-18). A positive mindset, focused on the gifts and blessings God has given, allows for opportunities of thankfulness and gratitude — two qualities that are especially important during this time. God does indeed equip you for the ministry work you do, even outside of the classroom walls. The psalmist shares, “Let the favor of our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands” (PS. 90:17). Indeed! Your hands do the work of Christ Jesus in an educational setting, wherever that may be!



Remember, too, that God knows the needs of others. Prayers need not be lengthy descriptions of someone's ailments; God knows the illnesses others suffer through, the loss of someone's family member and the needs of a family. Be strong in your faith and have confidence that God knows, listens and answers!

Give Thanks in All Circumstances!

It is easy to give thanks and be joyful when things are going well in your life, but it's during times of challenge that God often grows your faith. Yes, it is important to give thanks for the gifts, blessings and answered prayers you receive. Be sure to also give thanks for opportunities: opportunities to share the faith with a hurting parent, opportunities to comfort a child who is grieving the loss of a favorite pet and opportunities to support a co-worker who is ill. With a positive mindset, life is full of opportunities to serve. And, when you serve, remember that you are given the honor of serving Christ Jesus not because of anything you have done, but, rather, because of what He has already done for you with His death and resurrection.

Congratulations on the completion of another school year; it is certainly one to be remembered.

As you conclude this one-of-a-kind school year, ask those around you what they want to give thanks for. Take time with your faculty and staff (in whatever way you can) to converse on this topic. Urge others to reflect upon the blessings received during the school year and the progress that has been made in learning, ministry and relationships. Share these as words of support and encouragement with others. During this time, many people have been forced to slow down. Hopefully this has led to lives that are more reflective, connected with family and faith filled. If a family shares how they have been blessed through your school ministry, share that message with your pastor or other church leaders. If a parent recognizes the work and extra effort of a fellow teacher, share that with her. Know that there are both big and small successes in your ministry each day — blessings that are placed by God Himself.

Again, congratulations on the completion of another school year; it is certainly one to be remembered. Now is your time to celebrate — celebrate the ministry that has been accomplished, the lives that have been touched, the learning that has taken place and the opportunities that now hopefully exist (at least in some fashion) for rest, relaxation and rejuvenation. No matter what your summer plans are, know that a brand new year of ministry opportunity is just around the corner. And, that's something to celebrate too! God has chosen you to be His disciple on earth today!

Time Out for Directors VOL. 24, NO. 9 // MAY 2020

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