

Family Sunday School Lesson 4 - Sharing

Introduction: The wait is almost over! It is time to celebrate the gift we have been given of Jesus Christ being born in Bethlehem for our salvation. This week we acknowledge this gift by giving gifts to others. Since God also gifted us nature, we will focus on the living creatures around us.

Start the Fun!

Make a Card with a Nature Theme:

Materials:

White card stock, brown craft paint or marker, red tissue paper or thin construction paper, glue stick, black marker, Christmas ribbon

Directions: Paint a branch on a plain card with brown craft paint. Tear a bird shape from red tissue paper and glue to the card just above the branch, leaving enough room for legs. Once dry, use a fine point black marker to draw on legs, a wing, an eye, and a beak. Glue a piece of ribbon along the fold edge of the card for extra flair.

OR

Materials:

Tree template (http://clv.h-cdn.co/assets/cm/15/09/54eb1bb3515bb_-_tree_plain_download.pdf), sequins, buttons or stickers to decorate, white 8 ½ x 11 cardstock, glue

Directions: Download the illustration, and print in color onto 8 1/2- by 11-inch card stock. Fold the stock in half lengthwise, creasing well. Attach decorations to the tree using craft glue.

Now think of someone you can send your card to!

Read together

Part 1:

Making the House Ready for the Lord by Mary Oliver

Dear Lord, I have swept and I have washed but
still nothing is as shining as it should be
for you. Under the sink, for example, is an
uproar of mice — it is the season of their
many children. What shall I do? And under the eaves
and through the walls the squirrels
have gnawed their ragged entrances — but it is the season
when they need shelter, so what shall I do? And
the raccoon limps into the kitchen and opens the cupboard
while the dog snores, the cat hugs the pillow;
what shall I do? Beautiful is the new snow falling
in the yard and the fox who is staring boldly
up the path, to the door. And still I believe you will
come, Lord: you will, when I speak to the fox,
the sparrow, the lost dog, the shivering sea-goose, know
that really I am speaking to you whenever I say,
as I do all morning and afternoon: Come in, Come in.

Discuss Part 1:

Ask: The speaker in Mary Oliver's poem seems to have a problem with animals invading her home! Why doesn't she set traps and get rid of them?

Discussion points: The speaker seems to care about the animals. He or she understands that the mice need a safe place for their babies, the squirrels need shelter and the raccoon, who is limping, needs food. The speaker also feels that by helping these animals he/she is showing love to the Lord. This idea is similar to Matthew 25: 31-46 <https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=Matthew+25%3A31-46&ver=niv>

Part 2:

Titus 3:4-7 (NIV)

4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Discuss Part 2:

Ask: What do you think is the main idea of these verses?

Discussion points: The word “Savior” or “saved” appears four times in this short passage. The main idea is that God sent us Jesus to save us from our sins. Another important idea is that we don’t earn that gift; it is freely given to us.

Ask: How can we repay God for this gift?

Discussion points: There is no way we can repay God for making us co-inheritors with Jesus and being adopted into God’s family (John 1:12-13; Romans 8:15, 23; Galatians 3:16; 4:4-6; Ephesians 1:5; Revelation 21:7). But we can use the gifts God gives us in a way that would please the gift-giver. We can share our possessions and our talents with others, for example.

Pray

Thank God for the love and kindness that was sent to us in the form of Jesus in a cradle. Thank God for our own rebirth through baptism. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you share your blessings with others in a generous way.

Participate

Craft Time!

The Advent Wreath (Continued)

Materials:

- A wreath with evergreen boughs,
- three blue or purple candles,
- one pink candle
- (Optional: a white candle in the center; holly)

Fourth Sunday of Advent- light all four candles around the wreath. Save the white one for Christmas Day. If you have holly on your wreath, focus on the sharp edges of the leaves, which remind us of the crown of thorns that Jesus wore when he was crucified, and the red berries that represent his blood. Remember that Jesus was born to sacrifice himself for our sins. If you don’t have holly, you can think about the wreath itself as an uncomfortable crown.

A Gift for the Birds

This advent season, we focused on our advent wreath and on nature. As a culminating activity, let's make a wreath for the birds!

Materials:

- 1 package unflavored gelatin
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 3 tablespoons light corn syrup
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 cups bird seed
- Dried and/or fresh cranberries (optional)
- Bundt pan
- Nonstick cooking spray

Directions:

Step 1: Mix Up Edible Glue

In a small disposable bowl, stir the gelatin into the warm water until dissolved. Whisk in corn syrup and flour. This will become a gooey paste.



Step 2: Stir in Birdseed

In a large bowl, mix seeds and dried cranberries to fill four cups of mix. Stir the edible glue into the seed mixture until all of the seeds and fruit are coated. Make sure the seed is well mixed with the edible glue to keep the wreath from falling apart.

Step 3: Mold Wreath

Spray the Bundt pan with nonstick cooking spray. Using the spoon, press the seed mixture into the pan. Press firmly until the mixture is well packed and even. Set the pan aside overnight. The mixture will harden and turn white, and the surface will be firm and dry when ready. Test readiness by gently pressing on the surface. It should be hard. If not, allow more time to set.

Step 4: Add Finishing Touches to the Wreath

Once the wreath is hard, gently remove it from the mold by turning it upside down onto a plate. Tie a wide ribbon (one to two inches) for hanging outside for the birds to enjoy. To add a more decorative touch, place fresh cranberries in every other channel of the Bundt pan after spraying with a nonstick cooking spray and before adding the coated seed mixture.

Wrap Up

Because of the grace of God, we have the hope of an “eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:15)—a “city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10)—“a better country, that is a heavenly one,” a city prepared for us by God (Hebrews 11:16). God doesn’t just promise us a never-ending life, but a beautiful one, that starts here and now.

Take a Moment to Breathe

Heart Breath

Find a comfortable seated position on the floor or in a chair. Rest one or both of your hands over your heart. As you breathe in, feel your chest rise. As you breathe out, feel your chest and body relax. As you breathe in, focus on something you are hopeful for (whether that is something that will happen in the next day, week, or year), as you breathe out, focus on the knowledge that you are loved.

Repeat as many times as you would like, each time opening yourself up to the wonder of hope as you breathe in and grounding yourself in the knowledge that you are enough and you are loved as you breathe out.