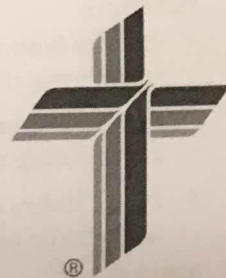




Early Childhood DEVOTIONS



FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7

LIFE TOGETHER

FOCUS: GOD ACTS AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME

"Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock" (Is. 26:4).

The Wedding at Cana

BIBLE STORY: JOHN 2:1-11

BEFORE YOU TEACH

It is time for Jesus to begin His ministry, and the story of the wedding at Cana introduces children to the first of 37 miracles recorded by the Gospel writers. In *Miracles*, C.S. Lewis defines a "miracle" as God doing up close and personal what He is and has been doing since the beginning of creation. This *first* miracle of Jesus does a couple of important things. On one level, it demonstrates that God's provision for His people is beyond anything we can ask or imagine (SEE EPH. 3:20). Who needs 180 *extra* gallons of wine for a wedding party? But Jesus' answer to our need is not bound by our small-minded accounting.

On a more profound level, this extravagant gift from Jesus is a sign of the heavenly banquet that God has promised and prepared for all people (SEE IS. 25:6). As Jesus did at Cana, God is still stepping into the lives of His people, and each miracle narrative is an opportunity to teach and affirm again God's extravagant love for all people. We who know the love and power of God may well be — like Mary — His agents to put people in touch with Jesus, so that they may know and love Him as we do.

Greeting

Make it a priority to joyfully welcome each child as they enter every day. It is easy to be distracted, but these few seconds are critically important for altering whatever has



occurred prior to the child's arrival and establishing the tone for the school day. Say, **"Good morning, child of God. I am looking forward to [name activity] with you today."**

Gathering

Gather children in or around your established worship center, using a known song, chant or signal.

Tell the Story

You will need: tall clear drinking glasses, two large pitchers of water, red food coloring and a clear plastic container.

Before you begin, place the drinking glasses in the clear plastic container and add two drops of food coloring to the bottom of each. Then read the following to the children.

Note: Throughout the year, you will need the songbooks *Little Ones Sing Praise and Songs of God's Love*, both available from Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.
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PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO, GETTY IMAGES, THINKSTOCK

Jesus; His mother, Mary; and His disciples had been invited to a wedding celebration. People in Jesus' time did not have root beer, 7-Up, Gatorade or other drinks that we enjoy. They usually drank water or wine. At that time, it was very important that invited guests have plenty to eat and drink because celebrations could last for a whole week. Mary, noticing that all the wine was gone, said to Jesus, "They have no more wine." Jesus replied, "Dear woman, why are you telling me this? My time has not yet come." Mary then went to the servants and said, "Do whatever he tells you." Nearby stood six giant water jars. A lot of water was needed because wedding celebrations at that time could last for days and days, and the wedding guests washed their hands over and over again. Jesus then said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." So the servants filled them to the brim.

Slowly pour water into the glasses, allowing the water to overflow into the plastic container.

Then, according to His will, Jesus told them to take some of the water to the master of the banquet. The servants did as they were told, and the master of the banquet tasted the water. Amazingly, the water had turned into the best wine ever! The master of the banquet did not know where the wine had come from, but the servants knew. The master then called the bridegroom to him and said, "Everyone brings out the very best wine first, but you have saved the best wine for last." This was the very first miracle of Jesus. Here, Jesus revealed His glory and His disciples put their faith in Him. We can trust Jesus to provide us with even more than we ask for or can even imagine, and as always, He provides at just the right time! His love for us is extravagant!

PRAY: Dear Jesus, fill us up with Your great love sent to us from heav'n above. Help us all Your love to share, so others know of Your care. Amen.

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

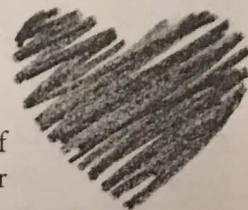
Pre-K & K: "Trust in [the Lord] at all times ... pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us" (Ps. 62:8).

Grades 1 & 2: Grades 1 & 2: "Trust in [the Lord] at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us" (Ps. 62:8).



Activities

CREATE: Heart rubbings. You will need: paper-free crayons, white paper, double-sided tape and heart patterns of various sizes cut from old file folders or tag board.



Using double-sided tape, adhere heart templates to tables or desktops. Show children how to place white paper over the template and, with a paper-free crayon held sideways, rub over the template where it can be felt. Demonstrate moving the paper and repeating the process using different colors or varied shades of warm or cool colors. Encourage experimentation.

SING: "I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus" (LOSP, P. 24).

DO: Substitute a Valentine's Day party and card exchange with a "Share the Love" family service day. Invite school families and congregation members to join together to address identified community needs. Fold heart rubbings into "care cards" and add "Jesus loves you" messages. Distribute the cards to those you serve. Return to celebrate this sharing opportunity with heart-shaped cookies and punch. Be sure you have more than enough for everyone!

Live the Story

Set aside quiet time for personal reflection. What do you run out of or run low on? What fills you up? What have you been given than is more than you ever imagined? Celebrate the extravagant love of Jesus!

Sending

Remind children that we can trust Jesus to provide for our needs and the needs of others according to His will and at just the right time. Jesus' love is extravagant. He loves you *all* the time!



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