



# 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).*

### Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

BIBLE STORY: MATT. 26:36FF; MARK 14:32-42; LUKE 22:39-46



#### BEFORE YOU TEACH

This month's story is a most significant moment, both in the biblical narrative and in the history of the universe. Gethsemane begins the last day of Jesus' life. It is the beginning of the heart and soul of the Christian message: Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. In this auspicious

moment, Jesus says to His disciples, "The hour has come." We have prepared for the phrase throughout this season's lessons. We have seen God step into the lives of His people to rescue them at just the right time.

The biblical narratives have been leading us to this final journey to the cross. At this critical moment, Jesus places this awesome "time" into His Father's hands. "Not my will, but Yours be done," He says. This "hour" — God's hour — redeems all people for all time and at just the right time according to His will. Our time is in God's hands too. We are God's redeemed children. Let us use the time God gives us to do what He has planned for us from the beginning of the world — honoring Him and serving each other in Jesus' name.

#### Greeting

Welcome each child into the classroom every day. Say, "Good morning, child of God! I am so happy you are here to learn and play again today."

#### Gathering

Signal children to gather in or around your worship area. Teach and sing "Gather 'Round the Cross." (Tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Ga-ther 'round the cross, fold our hands, be still,  
Jesus calls us, Jesus loves us. Let us do His will.

#### Tell the Story

Each time the children hear the bold words spoken, guide them to engage in the corresponding actions: "Jesus" (cross index fingers), "pray" (fold hands) and "watch" (hand, palm down, touching forehead).

Jesus and His disciples went to a place called Gethsemane. He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I **pray**." Taking Peter, James and John along with Him, He began to be deeply distressed and troubled. "My heart is filled with sadness," Jesus said to them. "Stay here and keep **watch**." Going a little farther, Jesus fell to the ground and **prayed**, "Father, everything is possible for You. Take this suffering and death from me, if it is Your will." What Jesus dreaded was not dying, but taking the sin of all people upon Himself. After **praying**, Jesus returned to His disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," He said to Peter, "Are you asleep? Could you not keep **watch** for one hour? **Watch** and **pray** so that you will not be tempted to be unfaithful during this frightening time. Your spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

**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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Once more Jesus went away to pray the same thing. When Jesus came back, He again found them sleeping because they were very tired. They had not watched and did not know what to say to Him. Once again Jesus went away to pray. Returning a third time and finding that they were not keeping watch, Jesus said, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look! Here comes my betrayer." Then Judas, one of the disciples, came forward and kissed Jesus so His captors would know which one was Jesus. Jesus was arrested and later died on the cross, taking with Him your sins, my sins and the sins of the whole world for all time. Then three days later, something amazing happened. Jesus rose from death according to God's plan and at just the right time. Jesus is alive!

PRAY: Dear Jesus,  
For me You died my life to save.  
Surprise! You rose up from the grave.  
Forgive me for the wrong I do.  
Help me to live my life for You. Amen.

## Remember the Story

### BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K: "[Christ] died for all"  
(2 COR. 5:15A).

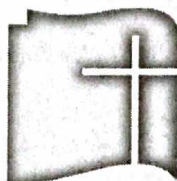
Grades 1 & 2: "[Christ] died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 COR. 5:15).

## Activities

CREATE: You will need 9-by-12-inch black construction paper, 9-by-6-inch white construction paper, varied sizes of cross patterns, scissors, glue and pencils.

Children trace patterns and cut crosses from white construction paper. They then arrange and glue crosses on black construction paper to create a pattern. Black and white offer a striking contrast when used together, creating a strong visual image as together you reflect on the darkness of Jesus' death (Good Friday) and the light of His resurrection (Easter).

Note: For younger children, precut white construction paper crosses of various sizes.



SING: "Jesus Came from Heaven" (LOSP, P. 92) and "Do You Know Who Died for Me?" (LOSP, P. 93)

DO: Engage children in speaking and dramatizing the finger play "Who Could Take Our Sins Away?" (From *Fingers Tell The Story* © CPH, 1989)

Who could take our sins away?  
Not you, not you, not I.  
(Point to one another then self.)

For our sins we could not pay —  
Not you, not you, not I.  
(Point to one another then self.)

Jesus took our sins away —  
Yours and yours and mine.  
(Point to one another then self.)

Thank You, Jesus, thank You!  
(Make the sign of the cross and fold hands.)



## Live the Story

Although willing in spirit to follow the commands of Jesus, our sinful nature causes us to "fall asleep" like the disciples. When once asked which of the commandments is the most important, Jesus states that second only to loving our Lord is the command to love our neighbor (MARK 12:33). In many schools today, character development is being taught as a curricular subject. We in Lutheran schools must be vigilant in helping students recognize that our character is shaped by the love and forgiveness we have in Jesus. We teach and apply God's commandments to our actions, framing all behaviors in light of the Gospel.

## Sending

As each child exits, say, "Jesus died and lives again for you and all people! Tell this good news! Share the joy you have in Jesus with others!"



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Writer: Dr. Judith Christian Designer: Lisa Moeller

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