



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

LESSON 26

Who Does Jesus Say He Is?

Summary of Today's Story

In these passages from John's Gospel, Jesus talks about himself and who he is, using images from daily life.

The people, mostly the Jewish authorities ("the Jews"), are angered by his talk and by his claim to come from God as the Christ, and they seek to have him arrested. In the later verses (John 7:33-52), the people disagree among themselves about how to see him, and about whether to arrest him.

Where You'll Find Today's Story

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible.

John 6:32-58 (Bread of life)

John 8:12 (Light of the world)

John 10:1-16 (Good Shepherd, sheep gate)

John 15:1-6 (Vine)

John 11:25 (Resurrection and the Life)

John 7:28-32 (and 33-52) (Hostility of the people to Jesus)

In Children's Bibles

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space provided.

In Our Sunday Lectionary

Today's story is told in church on the following Sundays:

Year A: Fifth Sunday in Lent (RCL); Fourth Sunday after Easter

Year B: Fourth Sunday after Easter; Fifth Sunday after Easter (RCL); Proper 14 (RCL); Proper 15

Year C: Fourth Sunday after Easter (RCL);



Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

This lesson includes the great “I AM” passages in which Jesus describes and identifies himself as God. He uses images from everyday life but emphasizes “I AM,” which since Moses has been known as the holy name of God.

People did not understand Jesus, so he had to use images and pictures to tell his stories. Be open to these images. We often dismiss them or may not really think about them because we have heard them so many times. But read carefully and ponder anew.

Jesus—the ultimate bread, the ultimate light, the protective shepherd, the resurrection and the life.

How do we respond to Jesus as bread, as light, as vine to our branches, as protector? How can he transform us? How are these images pictures of love?



The Episcopal Thread

Episcopalians are sacramental people. We understand sacraments as “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace.” (BCP, p. 857)

So it is with these images of Jesus. They are sacramental images—visible signs of an inward essence. So in a way, the idea is familiar: the metaphors are spotlights that illuminate and lead us to what is beyond—Jesus himself.

The sacramental images of Jesus appear in many hymns about the Eucharist, for example, #335 in the *Hymnal 1982*: “I am the bread of life,” or #343, “Shepherd of souls.”

On the fourth Sunday of Easter each year, Episcopalians, along with much of the wider Church, celebrate Good Shepherd Sunday, a recognition of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who gave his life for his flock.



Gathering

As the children enter the room, engage them in a simple activity that relates to today's lesson.

For younger children, a puzzle or coloring activity will help to focus them on today's story. Alternatively, give each child a lump of clay or play dough to play with or shape. To make a connection to the story, suggest to the children that they shape a figure of Jesus or something related to Jesus. Or they may make the stick figures described on page 31 to use during Telling the Story.

Older children may be given a few minutes for renewing bonds of friendship with each other. They may enjoy completing the word game Gathering activity Who Is Jesus? on page 10.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer:

- Most loving God, you bring us here to worship you, to learn your stories, and to learn how to follow you. Send your Spirit on us as we learn about your Son Jesus Christ. Help us to be good disciples of Jesus in church school and in our lives.

We ask this in his name. *Amen.*



Telling the Story

Read aloud the passages for today's lesson from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, tell them in your own words, or read from the version we provide, found on pages 8-9. The passages aren't a story but a series of sayings by Jesus that give us a sense, from him, of who he is. Only one, the parable of the Good Shepherd, is like a story. You will therefore need to "tell the story" in a different way. Here are some ideas:

- Bring props that illustrate what Jesus said about himself, like bread, or candles or a lantern, a stuffed sheep or shepherd's staff, a growing vine in a planter. As you read the verses, show the props. A fun idea would be to put all of these items in a large bag and have children take turns finding the correct item as you read the verse.
- Give each child a blank piece of paper and some crayons, markers or colored pencils. As you read each passage, have them draw the images.
- If children have been playing with play dough, have them shape the image with their dough as you read or tell the story.
- If the children made stick figures (p. 31), they may use the props as you read or tell the story.

Let the children hear the story without analyzing it for them or discussing it. For now, simply let the story sink into their minds and hearts. Later, while having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it and explore its message.



Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your room.

Materials:

small table with a cloth to cover it
2 candles or a single large Christ candle
matches
Bible
cross
optional: flowers (real, artificial or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read a verse from today's scripture from a Bible so that the children connect the story they heard with the Bible, which is the word of God. If working mainly with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Suggestions for the readings:

For younger children: John 10:11

For older children: John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7-9; 11:25-26; 15:1-2 (You may have the children take turns reading each verse.)

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

Reader: A reading from the book of John:
(Read the selected passage.)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself, then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite children to bring to the Lord their prayers of thanks or of need. Ask if they can see where God has been present in their lives during the past week, in big or small ways. Encourage them to think of how they have been guided by God and to thank God for those times.
- Ask for any prayers for those in need, either for themselves or for their family or friends.
- Recognize birthdays or other special occasions and give thanks to God for these special times.
- End with the Lord's Prayer, prayed together.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace, such as:

- Loving God, for the food which is set before us, and for the people who prepared it for us, we give you thanks, in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Or have children share a special grace from home. If everybody knows the prayer, say it together.

This is an excellent time, while sharing a snack, to begin talking about the story that the children have just heard. Ask questions such as:

- What do you think Jesus meant when he said he was like bread, or light, or a vine?
- What are different ways that he would be like these things?
- Because Jesus is like these things, what are we? How do we connect to Jesus as bread, or light, or vine?
- Can you think of any other images for Jesus?
- Why did people react to Jesus as they did?
- Can you tell what they did not like about what he said?
- What do *you* think about his sayings, and about the crowd?



Activities: Arts, Crafts, Games, Drama, etc.

After Sharing, begin an activity to supplement and enhance today's story. While the children are doing an activity, talk about the story so that they make the connection.

Suggested story-related activities are provided at the end of this lesson on pages 10-38.

Additional activity ideas can be found on pages 3-6 in the Appendix (also downloadable) where we've provided suggestions and directions for a variety of general activities that can be adapted to any lesson. Also included are outreach and service projects that can be done at any time.



THREADES Take-Home Paper

At the end of this lesson you will find a two-page take-home paper for families called *Threads*. *Threads* provides parents with a briefer version of the information on scripture and Episcopal faith found in the introduction to the lesson, as well as multiple suggestions for household activities and prayer. Parents can use *Threads* to continue each child's classroom experience at home throughout the week. We suggest duplicating and distributing these two pages to children and/or their parents at the end of each lesson.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS WEEK'S SESSION



Memorization

Good passages to memorize from this lesson are any verses in which Jesus identifies who he is—the Bread of life, the Resurrection and the Life, etc.

Suggestions for ways to help the children with their memorization can be found on page 15 in the Appendix at the back of this document.



Weaving the Family of God

As your time together draws to a close, take a few minutes to help the children summarize the lesson and say what they learned

today by asking questions such as:

- Who did we talk about today?
- What are some things that Jesus said, that told about what he is like?
- What do we receive by believing in Jesus?

Alternatively, give them a brief synopsis of the story, using the *Summary of the Story* above, if you wish.

Encourage the children to remember key words and themes from the lesson, such as: *Jesus is the Bread of life, Good Shepherd, Vine, Light of the world, Resurrection and Life.*



Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or back to their homes with God's love and blessing. The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:

- O God, we thank you for being here with us today and always. Send us back to our families with your blessing that we may love and serve you with all our hearts, and love everybody around us. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

End with a dismissal used in church, such as:

- Let us bless the Lord.

The children respond:

- Thanks be to God!



**John 6:32-28 (Bread of life);
8:12 (Light of the world);
10:1-6 (Good Shepherd, sheep gate);
15:1-6 (true vine);
11:25 (resurrection and life);
7:28-32 and 33-52 (people hostile to Jesus)**

Some people around Jesus wonder whether he is Elijah or Moses, come back from the dead. Some wonder whether he is a prophet like the ones they have heard about, like Amos or Micah. Others ask if he is the Messiah who will come and save them from the evil Romans. John the Baptist calls him the Lamb of God. Peter says he is the Holy One of God.

But who does *Jesus* say he is? Jesus tells us who he is by giving us pictures. Here are some pictures of Jesus, words from Jesus himself. Listen to what he says about himself.

Jesus says, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” Jesus gives us life by feeding us himself. Remember this when we have the bread and wine, Christ’s body and blood, in church.

Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness. They will have the light of life.” Jesus gives us the light that comes with love, life and understanding God.

Jesus says, “I am the gate for the sheep. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find green pastures.” Jesus will protect us the way a gate protects the sheep from wolves and thieves.

Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd. I know my own sheep, and my sheep know me. And I will give my life for my sheep.” Jesus knows us and loves us, and he will give his life for us.

Jesus says, “I am the true vine, and God my Father is the vinegrower. I am the vine, and you are the branches. As a branch, you need me in order to bear good fruit.” Jesus is the one we depend on, to be good followers of God. We are branches of Jesus, and as the vine, he feeds us and holds us up.

Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life. If you believe in me, even though you will die from this earth, you will live forever in eternal life.”

When Jesus speaks like this, people wonder, “Is this the Christ, the Messiah? He talks like God!” And the leaders are angry because Jesus is stirring up the people, and they are beginning to see him as the Messiah, who will save the world. The leaders say to each other, “That man cannot call himself the Messiah! He cannot say he is like God, or the Son of God! That is against our law!” So some of the leaders start planning to have Jesus killed. That is the best way to get rid of him and calm the people down, they think.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

GATHERING ACTIVITY: WHO IS JESUS?

Jesus gives us a lot of pictures of himself.

Unscramble the words below, then match them with the pictures.

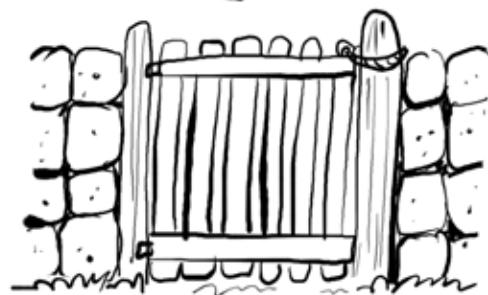
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WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

JESUS MOBILE

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make a mobile illustrated with Jesus' *I AM* images.

Materials:

poster board

paper

string

small shapes for mobile templates (for example, circles from juice cans; triangles, octagons or pentagons, squares, rectangles. If you can't find shapes, make them yourself from cardboard or poster board.)

scissors

crayons, pencils, markers

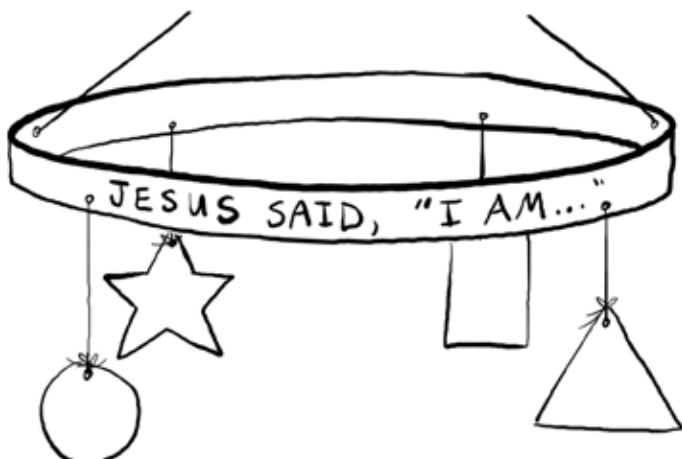
tape

optional: glue gun

Directions:

Invite each child to make a mobile as follows:

1. Cut a strip of poster board that is 1" wide and the entire length of the poster board. On one side of this strip, write the words *Jesus said, "I AM..."*
2. Use tape or glue gun to seal the ends together, making a circle. This is the mobile base.
3. Figure out how many images Jesus used to describe himself. Using the small shapes as a template, draw as many shapes as images, and cut out.
4. On the shapes, draw pictures symbolizing Jesus' images.
5. Cut a length of string for each picture. Tape the string to the back of the picture and then to the mobile base. Space the pictures to balance to mobile.
6. Cut a long length of string and tape each end to opposite sides of the mobile, for hanging.





“JESUS IS LIKE...” BOOK

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make a book containing images from John’s Gospel about who Jesus is.

Materials:

- white paper
- construction paper, 9" x 12"
- thin ribbon or embroidery thread
- scissors
- hole punch
- decorative items, such as acrylic jewels and sequins, for the book cover
- decorative items for the book, such as fabric, sequins, cotton balls
- pencils, crayons, markers, colored pencils

Directions:

Invite each child to make a book as follows:

1. Fold the paper in half crosswise and cut. Then fold in half crosswise again, to make a two-page sheet.
2. Put three or four half-sheets together to make the book pages.
3. Fold a piece of construction paper in half for the book cover.
4. Punch two holes in the pages at the fold. Cut a length of ribbon and thread through the holes, tying the ribbon in an attractive knot or bow on the outside of the book.
5. On the pages, draw your interpretation of how Jesus described himself and who he is, according to John. You may use any decorative items to embellish your pictures. For example, if you draw sheep, you may use cotton balls for the sheep wool.
6. Write your title on the book cover and decorate.



SHEEP AND WOLF

for Elementary, Intermediate

In this game, children as sheep try to leave and return to the safety of their pen without getting caught by the wolf.

Materials:

green construction paper, torn in pieces

Directions:

1. Choose one child to be the *wolf* and 1-3 children to be *sheep*, depending on the size of your group. Everyone else is the *sheep pen*.
2. Have the *sheep pen* hold hands in a circle. The *sheep* are inside the *pen*. The *wolf* is outside.
3. Scatter the green paper—*grass*—outside the *pen*, a few feet away from the *pen*.
4. The *sheep* are to go outside the *pen* and try to pick up the *grass*, then return to the *pen* without being tagged by the *wolf*. If the *wolf* tags them, they are out (“dead”).
5. The role of the *sheep pen* is to protect the *sheep* on the inside and to help the *sheep* on the outside. The *wolf* may not go inside the *pen*. When the *sheep* are outside the *pen* and are trying to get back inside, the children who are the *sheep pen* may lift up their arms (still holding hands) to let the *sheep* back in. But they may not let go of their hands. If they let go of their hands, the *wolf* may run into the *pen* at that point and tag the *sheep* inside.
6. The *sheep* keep going in and out of the *pen*, until all of the *grass* is gathered or all of the *sheep* are “dead.” Then you may pick another *wolf* and other *sheep*.



LOST SHEEP

for Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children as shepherds form teams and race to gather their sheep into the sheep pen.

Materials:

emery boards

clothespins

straws

cotton balls (a whole bag)

grocery bags

Directions:

1. Divide the group into two or more teams.
2. Use as many grocery bags as you have teams. These bags are the “sheep pen.” Open the bags and put them on one side of the room, at intervals of three feet. Assign the sheep pens to the teams.
3. Give each child either an emery board, a straw or a clothespin. These are the “shepherd’s crooks.”
4. Scatter the cotton balls along the floor. These are the “sheep.”
5. At your signal, the children must gather *one sheep at a time* and put it into their team’s “sheep pen,” using nothing but their “shepherd’s crooks.” They must not touch the sheep with their hands, and they must not pick up more than one sheep at a time.
6. When all of the “sheep” have been herded into their “sheep pens,” empty out the bags and count the sheep in each bag. The team with the most “sheep” wins.



HERDING SHEEP
for Elementary

In this game, children move a balloon across the floor using only a rolled-up newspaper.

Materials:

newspaper
balloons
optional: electric fan

Directions:

1. Give each child a newspaper and a balloon.
2. Blow up the balloon. This is your "sheep." Roll up the newspaper. This is your "shepherd's crook."
3. All children go to one corner of the room with their balloon. Their task is to herd their sheep to the opposite corner, using their shepherd's crook and without using their hands.
4. For a challenge, turn on a fan!



JESUS, THE BREAD OF LIFE

for Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children taste bread from various cultures and make loaves of pumpkin bread to share and to take home.

Materials:

different kinds of bread to show (pita, pocket, multigrain, tortilla, croissants, pumpernickel, Jewish challah or matzohs, etc.)
ingredients for pumpkin bread cake (see p. 17)
copy of final directions (p. 18)
quart-sized zip lock bags
bowls for mixing
mixing spoons and measuring spoons
cup measures

Preparation:

Make copies of the cake recipe—at least two per child.

Directions for the activity:

Show the children the different kinds of bread that people around the world eat. When Jesus says that he is the “Bread of Life,” this means that he is the mainstay, the essential thing in any life. Just as bread is important in almost every culture, so Jesus is important in every life, in every person.

You may share this bread around, so everyone can have a taste of the different breads for our physical life, while talking about the Bread of our spiritual life.

In this activity, children will be making a pumpkin bread cake. They will make one batch to take home and one batch to give away. Just as the Bread of Life gave his life to us, so we can give away our bread and share it with others.

Directions for making bread:

A fun way to make this mix is to have an assembly line. One or two children will measure the flour and put it in a bag, then pass the bag to the next group to measure the sugar, and so on.

1. Make two bags for each child. Each bag will contain:

1½ cups flour
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
1 copy of the recipe

2. Put the ingredients in the bag and seal it.

PUMPKIN CAKE FOR YOU

Pour this cake mix into an ungreased 9" square pan. Add 4 tablespoons vegetable oil, 1 tablespoon white vinegar, and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Then add 1 cup cold water. Stir well. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes.

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Pour this cake mix into an ungreased 9" square pan. Add 4 tablespoons vegetable oil, 1 tablespoon white vinegar, and 1 teaspoon vanilla. Then add 1 cup cold water. Stir well. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 minutes.

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WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

PLANT A VINE

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children decorate a clay pot and plant a vine to care for at home.

Materials:

small clay pots or planters, 1 per child

acrylic paints

paintbrushes

small potted vines

potting soil for transplanting

large spoons or small trowels

Directions:

Invite each child to decorate a clay pot as follows:

1. Paint on the top edge of the pot the words *Jesus said, "I am the vine."*
2. On the rest of the pot, paint a pretty picture, or paint a picture of a vine with branches and leaves.
3. Transplant a vine into the pot, adding potting soil as needed.





CRAYON RESIST PICTURE

for Primary, Elementary

Children make crayon drawings that resist black paint. So Jesus also shines through the darkness.

Materials:

construction paper (any color; black would be interesting)
black tempura paint mixed with water or black watercolor paint
paintbrushes
crayons

Preparation:

Lay newspaper on the table to protect it. If using tempura paint, mix it with a little water to make a light and runnier paint.

Directions:

Invite each child to make a picture as follows:

1. With crayons, draw an image from today's lesson—Jesus as the bread of life, the light of the world, the good shepherd, the vine, the resurrection and the life.
2. Cover the entire picture with black paint, including the crayon drawing. The crayons will resist the paint, and the light of the crayons will show through.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

LIGHT OF THE WORLD CANDLE

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary

Children use beeswax to decorate a candle and secure its base.

Materials:

colored beeswax
small, thick candles, 1 per child
small paper plates
tacky glue

Preparation:

Cut the colored beeswax into small pieces.

Directions:

Invite each child to decorate a candle as follows:

1. Put a candle on a paper plate, which is the base.
2. Cover the sides of the candle with small pieces of beeswax in various designs and colors. These pieces of beeswax may be molded into various shapes before applying. Push the beeswax onto the candle to flatten it.
3. If the beeswax does not stay on the candle, use a little tacky glue to hold it.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

CROSS PUZZLE

for Primary

Children decorate puzzle pieces and put them together to form a cross.

Materials:

cross puzzle parts (p. 23)
construction paper, 9" x 12", various colors
scissors
glue
crayons

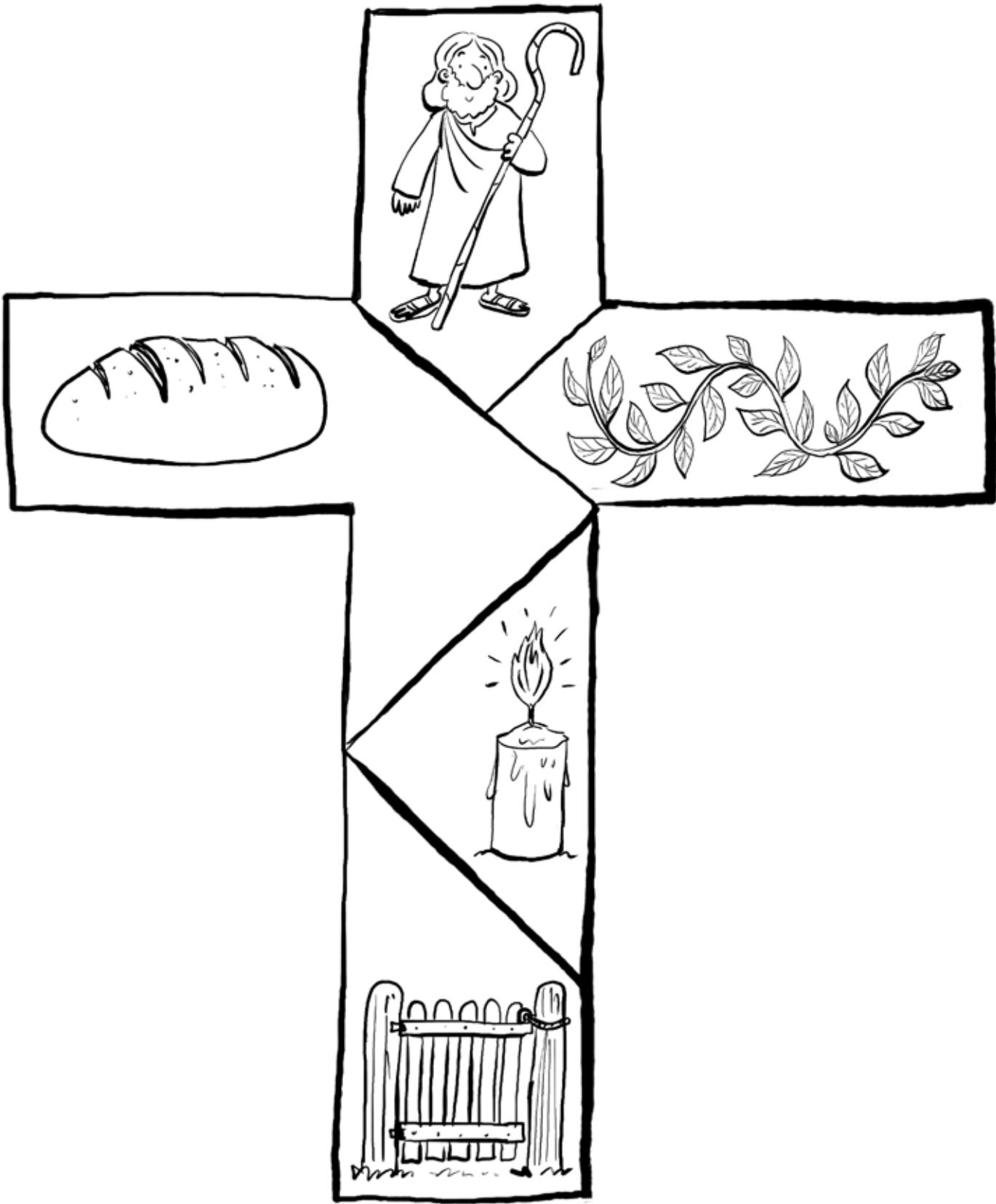
Preparation:

Make a copy of the cross puzzle parts, one copy per child.

Directions:

Invite the children to make the puzzle as follows:

1. Cut out the cross puzzle parts. Color the cross and the symbols.
2. Put the puzzle together and glue them to a piece of construction paper.





“HAVE YOU SEEN MY SHEEP?”

for Preschool

In this game, children guess the child “Jesus” is describing.

Directions:

1. Pick one child to be *Jesus*. All others sit in a circle, while *Jesus* stands outside the circle.
2. *Jesus* walks around the circle, then stops behind one child.
3. *Jesus* asks that child, “Have you seen my sheep?”
4. That child asks, “What does your sheep look like?”
5. *Jesus* describes one of the other children in the circle, describing the color hair, the clothes, etc. When the child guesses, he or she becomes *Jesus*.

The other children must not give away the answer!



HEART PILLOW OR SHEEP PILLOW

for Elementary

Children make a pillow with a message to Jesus inside.

Materials:

precut red felt, 2 pieces per child (if a heart) (See pattern, p. 26.)

or

off-white or black fleecy fabric (if a sheep) (See pattern, p. 27.)

fabric pens

paper

pens

pillow fluff

hot glue gun (leader only)

scissors

Preparation:

For each learner, cut two pieces of felt in the shape of a heart (or sheep). If the children can do this themselves, let them.

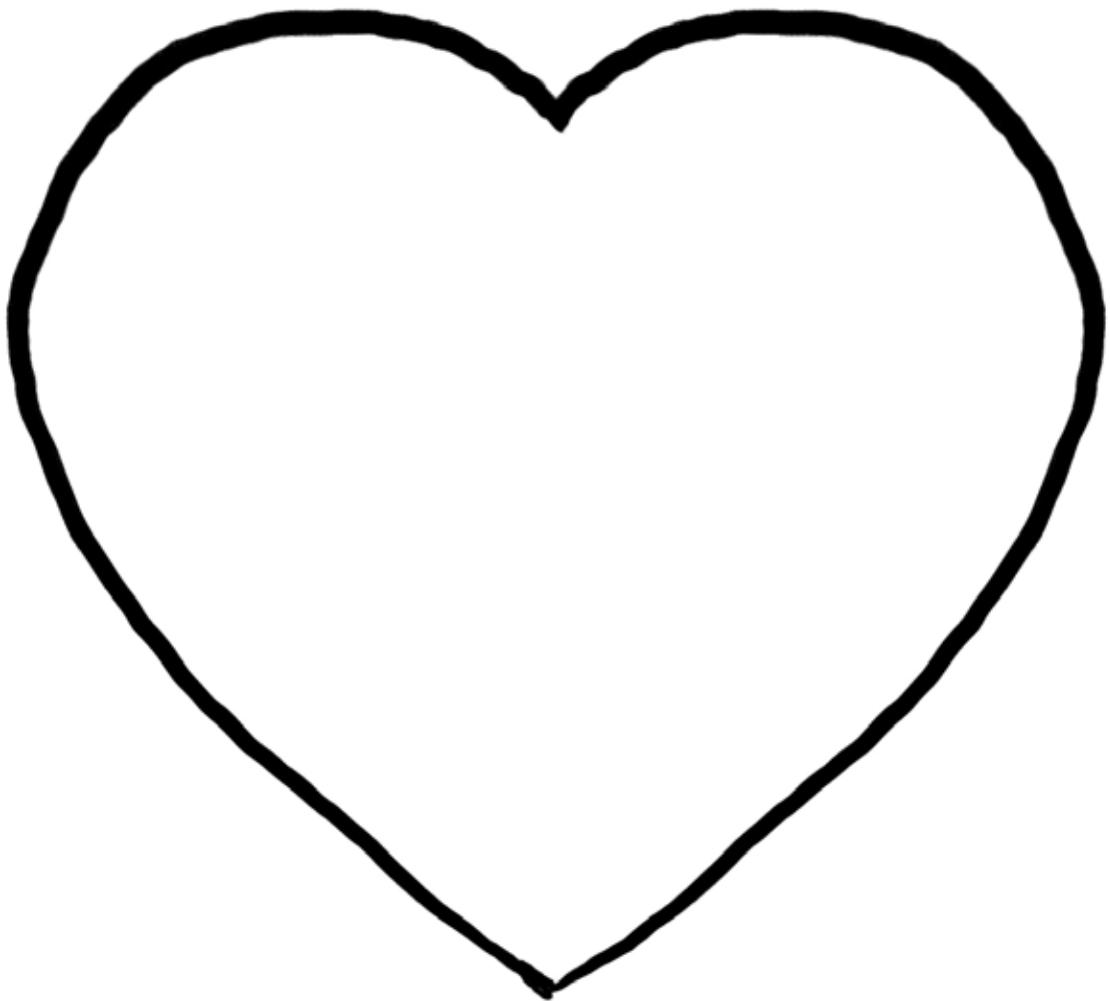
Directions:

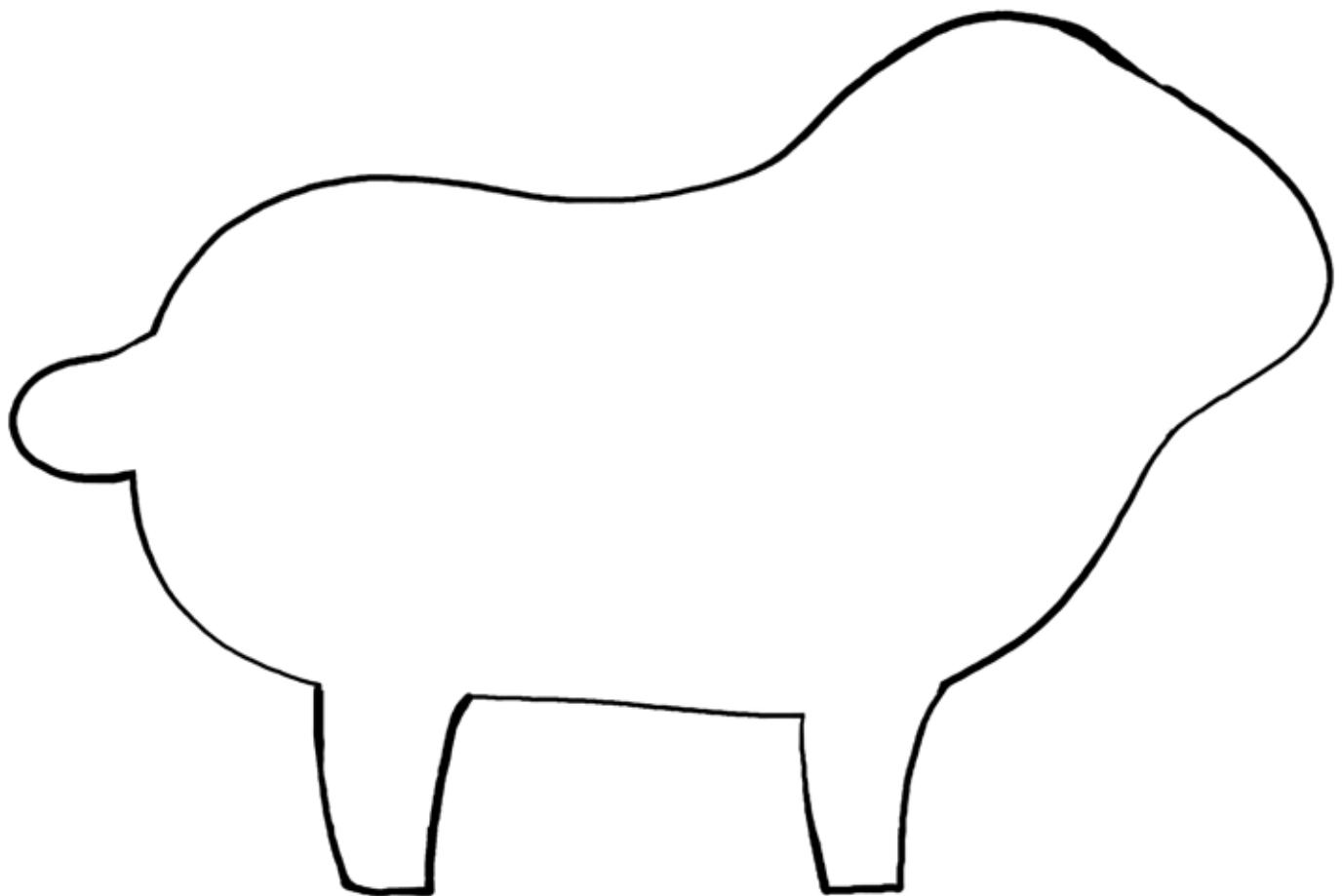
Invite each child to make a pillow as follows:

1. Decorate one side of each heart shape, using fabric pens.
2. Cut a small piece of paper. On it, write words like *To Walk with Jesus with All My Heart*.
3. Use a hot glue gun to seal the bottom $\frac{2}{3}$ of the pillow.
4. Stuff the inside of the pillow with pillow fluff. Add the paper message to Jesus.
5. Seal the rest of the pillow with the glue gun.

Variation:

Make a sheep pillow instead. Use off-white or black fleece or fur. On the message, write *To Jesus, My Good Shepherd*.







BEADED "LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

for Intermediate

Children make beaded star shapes to hang up.

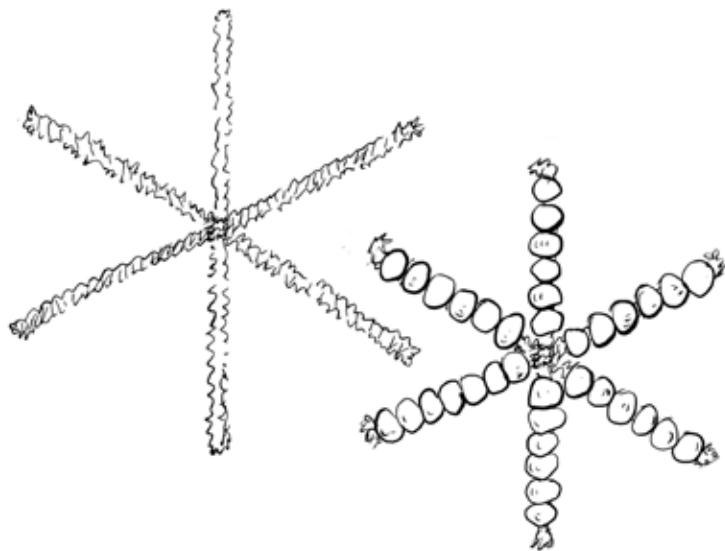
Materials:

yellow transparent beads, any shape
white, yellow or metallic gold pipe cleaners
scissors
liquid glue
thread

Directions:

Invite each child to make a beaded shape as follows:

1. Cut the pipe cleaners into three 6" lengths, or longer if a larger star is desired. Twist them together in the centers to make a spoke shape.
2. Thread the wire through the beads. Before threading the last bead, add a tiny drop of glue to the pipe cleaner, then add the bead. This will hold the beads in place. You can also twist the pipe cleaner around the last bead to hold it in place.
3. Thread the beads onto all six wire spokes.
4. Cut a length of thread and tie it around the center for hanging.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

JESUS BANNER

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make a banner with images of Jesus' "I AM" sayings to hang in their classroom.

Materials:

felt material, 3-4' in length	scissors
precut felt, various colors	rope for hanging banner
tacky glue or hot glue gun	pencils or pens
dowel rod	<i>optional:</i> alphabet stencils

Preparation:

Cut the large piece of felt to the desired banner shape. Ideas are shown below.

Directions:

Invite the children to work together to make the banner as follows:

1. Fold the top of the banner over a dowel rod and glue in place, using a glue gun or tacky glue.
2. On the top of the banner, write with fabric pen "JESUS: I AM"

Or you may use stencils and cut the lettering out of felt, then glue them onto the top or sides of the banner.

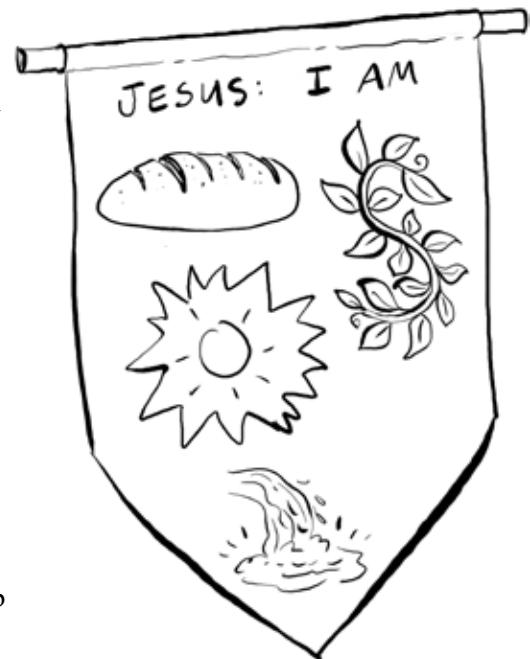
3. On the precut felt, design and cut out pictures that symbolize Jesus, as he described himself in this lesson. Pictures may include: bread, water, light, and vine. They may also include more abstract ideas such as resurrection that children can imaginatively illustrate.

Children can make one picture or several. More than one of the same picture can be used.

4. Glue the pictures onto the banner.
5. When you have finished with the banner, cut a length of rope and tie onto the dowel rod for hanging. Hang your banner in your classroom or in a church hallway.

Variation:

Using a smaller piece of felt, you may have learners make individual banners. Let them take their banners home, or hang all of the banners up for display.





“JESUS IS _____, SO WHO AM I?”

for Intermediate

In this game, children consider who they are in relation to who Jesus is.

Materials:

hat or bag
paper

Preparation:

On pieces of paper, write down various descriptions of Jesus, especially the concrete ones such as “Bread of Life.” Use the formula, “Jesus is _____, so who am I?”

Directions:

1. Put the papers into a hat or bag.
2. Have the children draw a piece of paper out of the hat. Let them think of an answer. They may get help or hints from others.

Examples:

Jesus is bread, so who am I? (peanut butter, butter, jam, dip)

Jesus is light, so who am I? (the moon, a shadow, a mirror, a kaleidoscope)

Jesus is love in my heart, so who am I? (hands to serve, feet to go out and proclaim, brains to think about him)

Jesus is the foundation of faith, so who am I? (the bricks, the windows so people can see through me to Jesus, the lights inside the building)

Jesus is the great Shepherd, so who am I? (first response: a sheep. But Jesus teaches us to be shepherds like him. Maybe we can be “assistant shepherds.”)

Jesus is the Word, so who am I? (the pictures that illustrate the word, the cover for the Book)



STICK FIGURES FOR STORYTELLING

for Preschool

Children make images from today's lesson to use during storytelling time.

Materials:

story pictures (p. 32)

crayons

scissors

glue

craft sticks

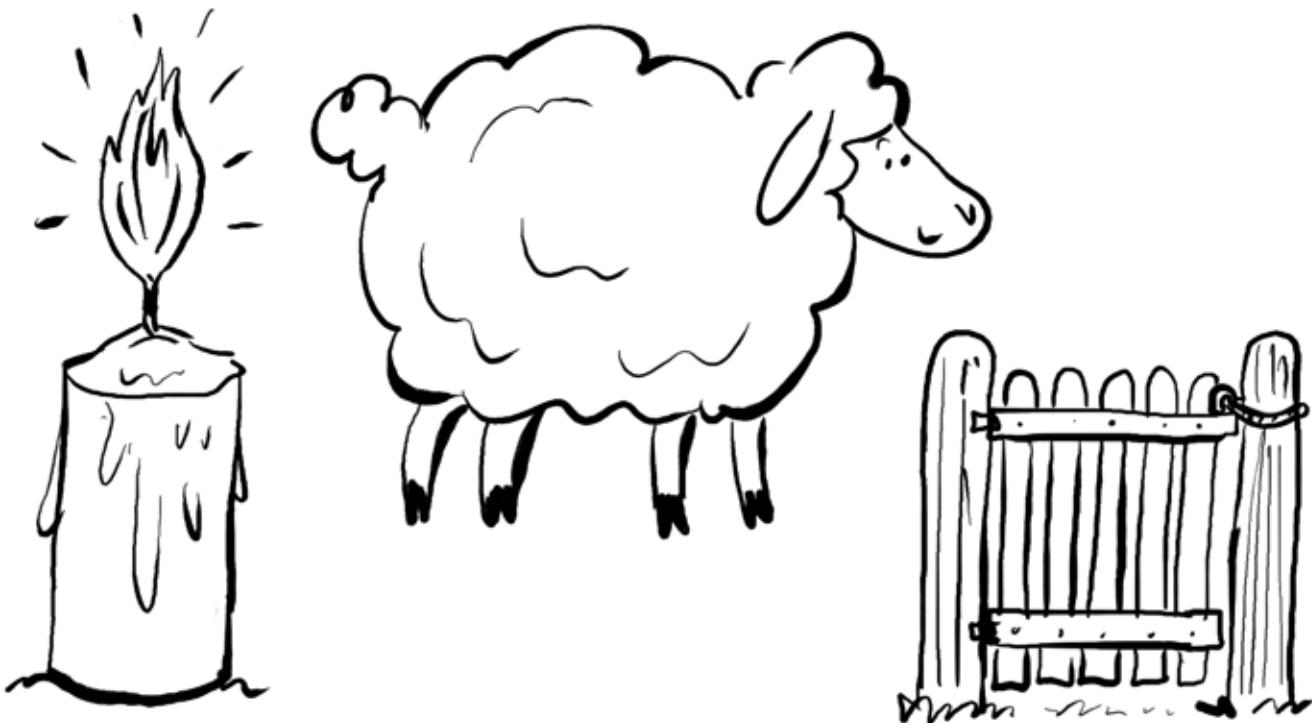
Preparation:

Make a copy of the story pictures for each child.

Directions:

Invite each child to make a figure for the story as follows:

1. Color the pictures and cut out.
2. Glue a craft stick to the back of each picture.
3. Use these props during storytelling time.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

HANGING TILE PLAQUES

for Intermediate

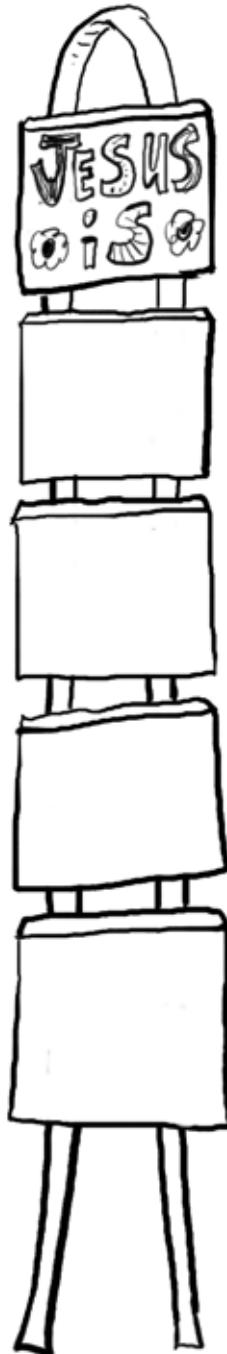
Children decorate tiles with images from Jesus' "I AM" sayings and glue them onto a ribbon for hanging.

Materials:

ribbon, $\frac{1}{2}$ " to 1" wide, 1 6' length per child
6" white or light colored tiles, 5 per child
hot glue gun
pencils
acrylic paints
paintbrushes

Directions:

1. On one tile, write in pencil *Jesus Is...* Then use paint to fill in the lettering and decorate the tile, if desired.
2. On the other tiles, draw an image of Jesus in pencil. This can be an image that he described of himself (Bread of life) or an image that you have of him (for example, "Prince of Peace").
3. Paint the pictures and let them dry.
4. Cut a length of ribbon 6' long. Fold the ribbon in half and lay the two half lengths side by side, around 1" to 2" apart. The top of the hanging is the folded part of the ribbon.
5. Lay the tiles on top of both ribbons and glue in place. Use enough glue to hold the tiles to the ribbon. Leave at least 1 foot at the top.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

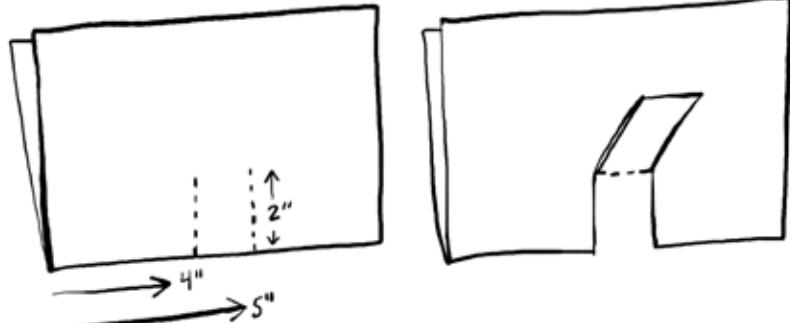
POP-UP HEART

for Preschool, Primary

Children make a pop-up card with a message about Jesus' love.

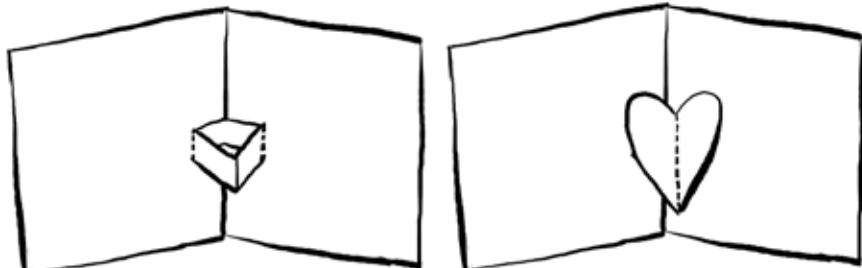
Materials:

red construction paper
other construction paper, any color
that goes well with red (9" x 12")
scissors
glue
pencil
ruler(s)
crayons or markers



Preparation:

Make one heart ahead of time to use as an example.



Directions:

Invite each child to make a heart as follows:

1. Fold the red paper in half and cut out hearts, around 4" tall.
2. Fold another piece of construction paper in half.
3. Place a ruler along the fold. Make a mark in pencil at 4" and at 5". Then from the fold toward the opposite edge of the paper, draw 2" lines at these marks. (See illustration.)
4. Cut these lines. Fold the resulting tab, then unfold.
5. Unfold the page. Push the tab outward so that it sticks up from the page.
6. Put glue on the tab and glue on the heart. Align the folds of the tab and the heart and glue them together.
7. Close the page. On the front cover, help the children write *Who Is Jesus?*
8. On the page with the heart, help children write *Love*.



“JESUS IS LIKE . . .” STORY CIRCLE

for Preschool, Primary

Children make a wheel with pictures of Jesus' *I AM* sayings.

Materials:

story pictures (p. 36)

crayons

white paper plates

posterboard

scissors

glue

paper fasteners

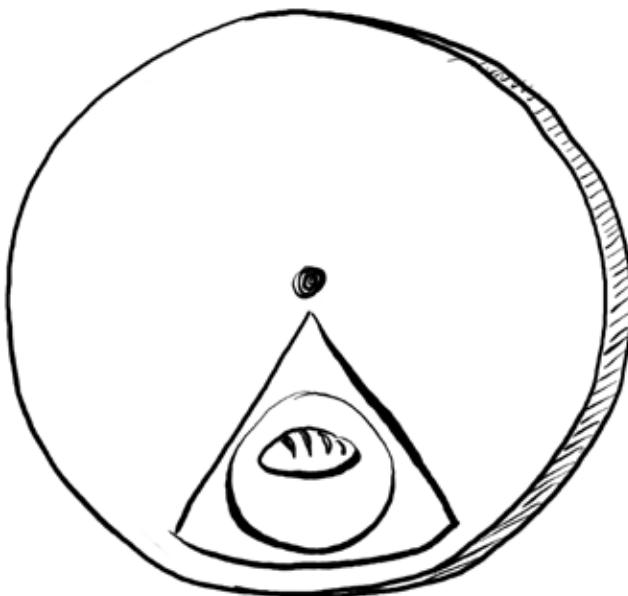
pencils

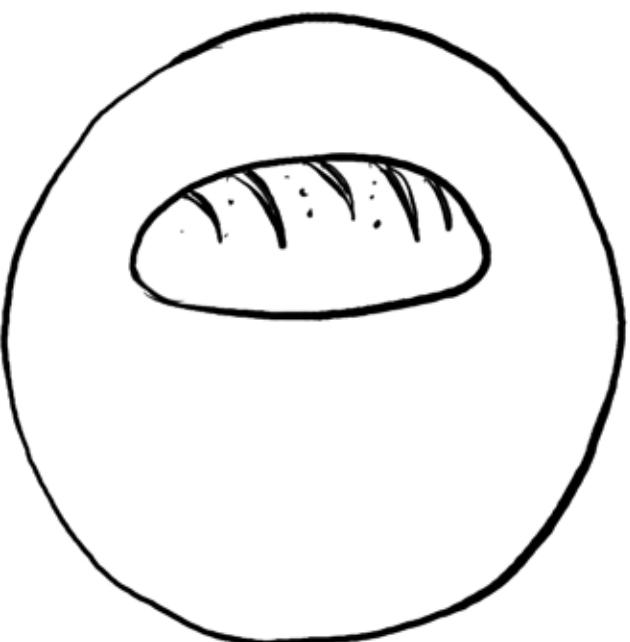
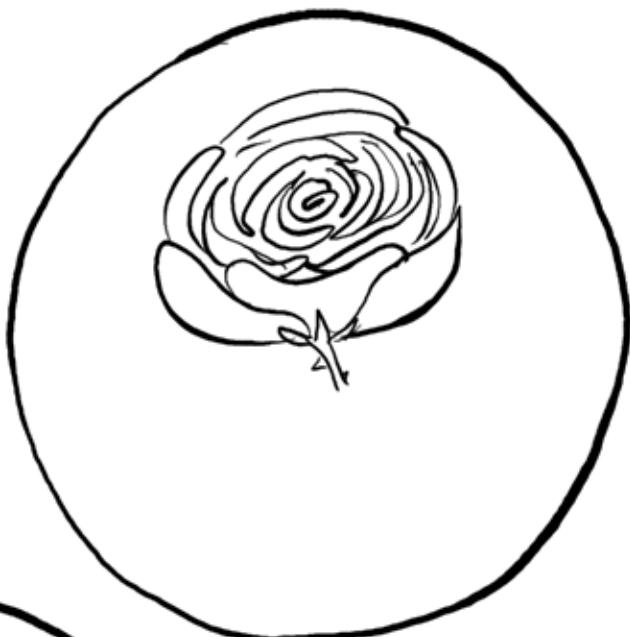
Preparation:

1. Make a copy of the story pictures for each child.
2. Put a paper plate on the posterboard and outline the shape, then cut out a circle, one per child.
3. On the posterboard circle, draw a circle lightly in pencil around 1" from the edge.

Directions:

1. Distribute a poster board circle and a set of story pictures to each child. Invite the children to color and cut out the story pictures.
2. Glue the pictures along the penciled line. You may need to help the children space the pictures along the circle.
3. Put a paper plate on top of the posterboard circle. Have an adult carefully punch a hole through the center of both circles and push a paper fastener through.
4. Cut a pie-shaped wedge in the paper plate, with the point of the wedge stopping about $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the center.
5. At the top of the plate, write *Jesus Is Like*.







WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

RIBBON BOOKMARK

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make a bookmark that can be used for marking their places in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Materials:

½" wide ribbon, various colors (at least 5 different colors)

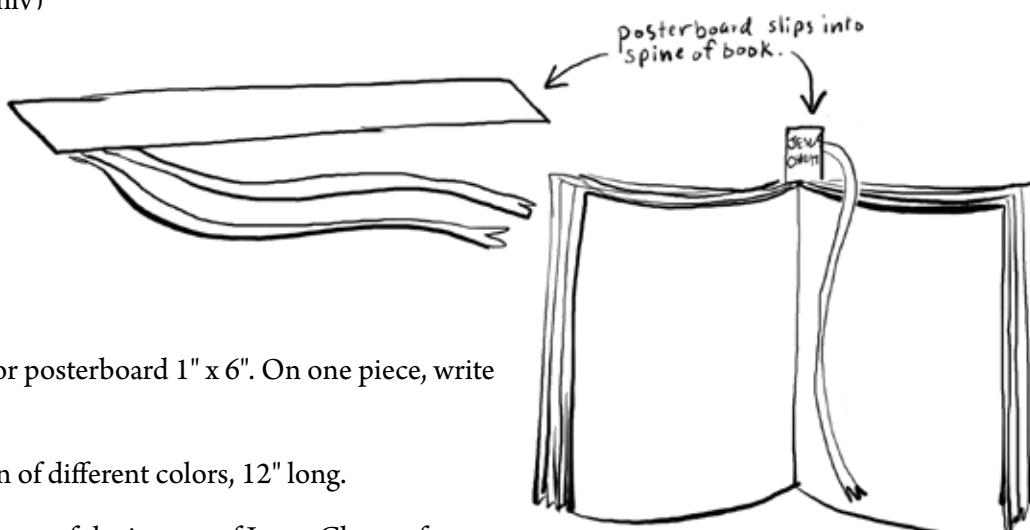
hot glue gun (leader only)

tape

felt or posterboard

scissors

markers or fabric pens



Directions:

Invite each child to make a bookmark as follows:

1. Cut two pieces of felt or posterboard 1" x 6". On one piece, write the words *Jesus Christ*:
2. Cut 5 lengths of ribbon of different colors, 12" long.
3. On each ribbon, write one of the images of Jesus. Choose from bread (or bread of life), vine, light of the world, sheep gate, good shepherd, the resurrection and the life.
4. Glue the ribbons to the top back of the posterboard or felt that has the writing on it. Then tape the ribbons to hold them more securely.
5. Glue the other piece of felt or posterboard to the back of the first piece, sandwiching the glued part of the ribbons in between. Let the bookmark dry.

Related Ideas:

- Use ribbon colors that coordinate with the images of Jesus: brown for "bread of life," green for "vine," yellow for "light of the world," white for "resurrection and the life," etc.
- Make a lot of these bookmarks and leave them in the Prayer Books in the pews for the congregation to use.



“WHO IS JESUS?” for Preschool

Children learn an action song about Jesus and his friends.

Directions:

1. Sit or stand in a circle, holding hands.
2. Teach these words sung to the tune of “Ten Little Indians.”

Who is Jesus? He's our friend.

Who is Jesus? He's our friend.

Who is Jesus? He's our friend.

Jesus is our friend.

Jesus has a friend named _____.

(Repeat two more times.)

Jesus is our friend.

3. When you say “Jesus has a friend named...” point to a child and sing that child’s name. That child moves to the center of the circle.
4. Each time you sing a verse, point to another child. Those children also move to the center of the circle, holding hands with each other. Soon, the outside circle will get smaller while the center circle will get larger.
5. Sing this song until everybody has been picked.

LESSON 26: WHO DOES JESUS SAY HE IS?



We Believe . . .

Episcopalians are sacramental people. We understand sacraments as “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace.” (BCP, p. 857)

So it is with these images of Jesus. They are sacramental images—visible signs of an inward essence. So in a way, the idea is familiar: the metaphors are spotlights that illuminate and lead us to what is beyond—Jesus himself.

The sacramental images of Jesus appear in many hymns about the Eucharist, for example, #335 in the *Hymnal 1982*: “I am the bread of life,” or #343, “Shepherd of souls.”



Today's Story



John 6:32-58; John 8:12; John 10:1-16; John 15:1-6; John 11:25; John 7:28-32 (and 33-52)

This lesson includes the great “I AM” passages in which Jesus describes and identifies himself as God. He uses images from everyday life but emphasizes “I AM,” which, since Moses, has been known as the holy name of God.

The people, mostly the Jewish authorities (“the Jews”), are angered by his talk and by his claim to come from God as the Christ, and they seek to have him arrested. In the later verses (John 7:33-52), the people disagree among themselves about how to see him, and about whether to arrest him.

Because people did not understand Jesus, he had to use images and pictures to tell his stories. Be open to these images. We often dismiss them or may not really think about them because we have heard them so many times. But read carefully and ponder anew.

Jesus—the ultimate bread, the ultimate light, the protective shepherd, the resurrection and the life.

How do we respond to Jesus as bread, as light, as vine to our branches, as protector? How can he transform us? How are these images pictures of love?



Words of Faith

Bread of Life – an image Jesus uses to describe himself, suggesting that we need him for our spiritual life as much as we need bread (food) for our physical life

Good Shepherd – an image Jesus uses to describe himself, suggesting that he loves us and watches over us as carefully as a shepherd watches sheep

Light of the World – an image Jesus uses to describe himself, suggesting that he brings truth and guidance to all people

Resurrection and Life – an image Jesus uses to describe himself, suggesting that he is the source of new and eternal life

Jesus is the ultimate bread, the ultimate light, the protective shepherd, the resurrection and the life...



Sharing

Read two or more of today's sayings/stories about who Jesus is from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or from your family Bible.

- Here are several suggestions for presenting these "images" in a different way:
- Bring to the story-telling props that illustrate what Jesus said about himself, like bread, a lantern, a stuffed sheep, a growing plant. As you read the verses, show the props. A fun idea would be to put all of these items in a large bag and have family members take turns finding the correct item as you read the verse.
- Give each family member a blank piece of paper and some crayons, markers or colored pencils. As you read each passage, draw the images.
- Bring out the play dough or modeling clay and have each family member shape an image as you read or tell the story.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES for Children



This Week at Home

- **Sing a hymn based on one of these images of Jesus.** Use the scripture index in your hymnal to find hymns linked to today's verses from John. Here are several possibilities:
 - "I am the bread of life" (#335, *The Hymnal 1982*)
 - "Muchas resplandores/Many are the light beams" (#794, *Wonder, Love, and Praise*)
 - "O blessed spring" (#765, *Wonder, Love, and Praise*)
 - "The Lord Is My Shepherd" (#104, *Lift Every Voice and Sing II*)
- **Imagine other images for Jesus.** What other pictures of Jesus besides bread, and shepherd, and vine, might describe how Jesus gives us life? Brainstorm, exploring common elements around you, and share how other things might also describe a dimension of Jesus. For example, might Jesus compare himself to a telephone, or a blanket, or a map? You may be creative and reverent at the same time. Draw a picture of this image, and describe how Jesus is like it. Share your thoughts with each other. Does sharing lead you to think of other images?
- **Talk about the various images of Jesus.** Which one appeals to you the most? Why?
- **Jesus as Bread of life, Good Shepherd, etc. suggests different ways in which Jesus brings God's love to us (see the part under "Words of Faith").** Talk about other ways in which Jesus shows God's love and care, God's salvation or God's forgiveness. Then think of images that represent these facets. What does forgiveness remind you of? a flower come back to life after not being watered? a piece of music that makes you cry for joy or always makes you feel better?
- **Look up the hymn "I want to walk as a child of the light" (*The Hymnal 1982*, #490).** The refrain describes the City of God: "In him there is no darkness at all..." What do you think it would be like to live in the City of God? Either as a family or individually as family members, draw a picture (or pictures) of what you imagine the City of God is like.



Household Prayer

O God, we thank you for being here with us today and always. Bless our family that we may love and serve you with all our hearts, and love everybody around us. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

