

How Do You Say, "I Love You?"



Theme: Jesus showed his love by his actions. - Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Object: A greeting card, a box of candy, or a bouquet of flowers. Something that says, "I love you."

Scripture: That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. Mark 1:32-34a (NIV)

There are times when I like to do something special to let my wife know how much I love her. I might give her a gift, take her out to eat, or I might give her some flowers. My wife really likes it when I give her flowers.

Flowers or a gift is a nice way to show someone that you love them, but do you know what is even better? It is better to show our love for someone by the nice things that we do for them each and every day. When someone is sick, a visit from a friend might do them more good than a dose of medicine. When someone is sad or having a bad day, a smile and a friendly "hello" would surely brighten their day. Have you ever seen someone sitting all alone at school who doesn't seem to have very many friends? If you sat down and talked to them, it just might make them feel as if someone cares about them. A simple act of kindness can say a lot more than a gift.

Jesus was always kind and helpful to the people he met. One day he was in the home of Simon Peter. Peter's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a fever. Jesus went into the room where she was and took her by the hand and helped her out of bed. When Jesus touched her, the fever left her immediately. Later that evening people brought everyone who was sick and those who were demon-possessed so that Jesus could heal them. The Bible says that the whole town was gathered around outside the door. Jesus healed the sick and drove out evil spirits. Jesus showed his love by caring for those who needed his healing touch.

The next time you want to let someone know how much you care for them, remember that we show others we care, not just by sending flowers and gifts, but by showing acts of kindness each and every day -- just like Jesus did.

Dear Jesus, you showed us how to love. May we follow your example and show our love by acts of kindness toward others. Amen.

Looking for Jesus



Theme: Only Jesus can forgive sin and give us eternal life. (Epiphany 5B)

Object: "Where's Waldo?" book (see note following sermon)

Scripture: Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed:
"Everyone is looking for you!" Mark 1:36-37 (NIV)

A few years ago, "Where's Waldo?" books (also known in some places as "Where's Wally?") were very popular. You still see them in bookstores and libraries. How many of you have seen a "Where's Waldo?" book? If you have, you know what Waldo looks like. He always wears a red and white striped ski cap and a matching sweater. Waldo has a rather goofy smile and wears thick, black-rimmed glasses. In these picture books, Waldo is always in every picture, but he is very hard to find. You can spend a lot of time looking for Waldo. Can you find Waldo in this picture? (Allow the children to look for Waldo if time permits.) Look! There he is!

Looking for Waldo can be a lot of fun, but in real life, looking for someone can be much more serious. Our Bible lesson today tells about a day when a lot of people were looking for Jesus. They were looking for Jesus because they needed something that only he could give them.

Jesus had been traveling around the countryside teaching, preaching, and healing the sick. He had become very popular, and everywhere he went there were great crowds of people. They came to hear him teach about God's love and to be healed of their diseases.

One day Jesus went to visit in the home of Simon Peter. When he got there, Peter's mother-in-law was sick in bed with a fever, so they told Jesus about her right away. Jesus took her by the hand and helped her up. Immediately the fever left her. She was healed and went in and began to fix dinner for everyone. When the people heard that Jesus was at Peter's house, a large crowd of people began to gather outside the door. People brought their sick friends to Jesus, and he healed many people who had all different kinds of diseases.

The next morning, Jesus woke up before anyone else. He went outside to spend some time alone with his Father in prayer. Later, Peter and the other disciples went looking for Jesus. When they found him, they said, "Everyone is looking for you."

Jesus answered and said, "Let's go to the nearby towns and villages so that I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So Jesus traveled all around Galilee teaching, preaching, and healing people.

People today are still looking for Jesus. They are looking for Jesus because they need something that only he can give them -- forgiveness for sin and everlasting life. Are you looking for Jesus? The Bible says "If you search for him with all your heart and soul, you can find him." (Deut. 4:29) You will find him right here -- in the Bible.

Dear Father, many people today are searching for Jesus. We pray that today will be the day that they find him. Amen.

HIDE AND GO SEEK: Children can divide into teams and take turns hiding and seeking. Play for a few minutes and then have children form a circle and sit down to discuss today's Bible Story.

WHERE IS ???: Let each child write their name on a piece of paper. One child can HIDE that piece of paper in a designated area while the rest of the class is in another room. Then all the children will attempt to FIND that child's name piece of paper. When someone finds it, everyone will say, "_____ everyone is looking for you!" Continue until all the children have had a chance to hide their own name paper and be found. Tell children today's Bible verse and ask questions about today's lesson or tell the story.

WHERE'S JESUS: Before class time, the teacher can draw a picture of Jesus or cut out a picture of Jesus and HIDE in a very secretive spot. When the time in our lesson comes to where the people are looking for JESUS, let the children walk around the designated area and call for Jesus ("Jesus, JESUS, where are you"). When the first child finds "JESUS", that

child will then take that picture of JESUS to the next part of the story as the teacher tells the story (which will be a picture of the countryside (fields, etc); then another child can take that picture of JESUS to a picture of a Home (of Simon Peter where Peter's mother-in-law was sick); then another child can take that same picture of JESUS to a picture of sick people, and other children can take turns taking the picture of JESUS to another "town/village" picture, and to a place where Jesus might be teaching. Each picture can be on various places on the classroom walls. All the children can get up and follow the child taking the picture to different places in our Bible lesson today.

EYES TO SEE ART: Give children construction paper, markers, glitter and small colored pieces of cut out felt, to make BIG EYES to "see Jesus". Tell children the bigger the eyes, the better! Children can write JESUS on their EYE art, to remember that others are LOOKING for JESUS every day.

FINGERPRINT EYES: Provide all the children with ink pads of various colored inks. Children will need construction paper to make pairs of EYES with their own finger prints. Tell children to make many "pairs" of eyes all around the paper. Children can add the eyebrows and eyelashes and write a title on their paper that MANY PEOPLE ARE SEARCHING FOR JESUS.

PAPER PLATE PRAYER: Each child can be given a paper plate and markers. Children can color the paper plate and draw a big happy face with very BIG EYES on the middle of the plate. Children can write Deut. 4:29, or Mark 1:37 (Everyone is looking for you), around the edges of the paper plate.

PAPER BAG PUPPET: Give children a lunch bag to color and the largest craft moving EYES that can be purchased. Children can glue those eyes on the flap of the lunch bag. Children can write words from today's lesson on their bag as they tell their class about today's lesson as they use the bag as their puppet to help others FIND and SEE Jesus!

FINDING JESUS SQUIGGLES: Each child can be given a piece of paper and colors to draw squiggly lines. They can write the word JESUS within some of their squiggly lines and color the spaces made from the squiggly lines. Then pass their paper to another child for that person to FIND JESUS. When everyone has found JESUS on that paper, they can continue to pass their papers to the right and let other children find JESUS on each paper. Tell children to HIDE JESUS name in between their squiggly lines so it is hard to see.

SING A SONG: EVERY DAY WITH JESUS; THERE IS A NAME I LOVE TO SING AND JESUS IS HIS NAME (SUNG to the tune of b-i-n-g-o)

Recharging Our Batteries



Theme: Jesus spent time in prayer and so should we. 5th Sunday after the Epiphany, Year B

Object: An iPod, cell phone, or another object which must be recharged with use

Scripture: Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Mark 1:35 (NIV)

Do you have an iPod? I got an iPod for Christmas last year and I love it. It seems that you see people

listening to their iPod everywhere you go. You see people jogging in the park sweating to the music, kids walking down the hall at school grooving to their favorite tunes, and others just sitting quietly relaxing to the music. As you probably know, an iPod runs on a built-in battery. Most iPods will play for about twenty-four hours before the battery has to be recharged. To do that, you have to plug your iPod into a charger. An iPod is really great way to listen to music, but it isn't much good if the battery isn't charged.

People need to recharge their batteries too. We work and play hard and if we don't get the proper rest, pretty soon we just don't have enough energy to do the things we need to do. It might come as a surprise to you that even Jesus had to recharge his batteries. In today's Bible lesson, we see a typical day in the life of Jesus.

Jesus traveled all around Galilee preaching, driving out demons, and healing people. After leaving the synagogue on the Sabbath day, Jesus and some of his disciples went to the home of Simon and Andrew. When they arrived, Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever. They told Jesus about it, so he went to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. All at once, the fever left her and she began to prepare a meal for everyone.

I don't know how the town's people found out that Jesus was at the home of Simon and Andrew, but that evening many people were brought to Jesus to be healed of all sorts of diseases. The Bible says that the whole town gathered at the door to watch. No doubt Jesus was very tired after a long day of teaching and healing people. I'm sure that when he went to bed that night, he slept like a baby.

Jesus got up early the next morning before sunrise and went out to find a quiet place to pray. You see, Jesus knew that just as our bodies need to be recharged, so does our spirit. Jesus knew that it was important for him to spend time each day talking to his Father if he was going to have the spiritual strength to do what his Father had sent him to do. When Simon and the others woke up, they didn't know where Jesus was, so they went looking for him. When they found him they said, "Everyone is looking for you."

Jesus had recharged his batteries and was ready to go. He said to them, "Let's go to other towns and villages so that I can preach to them too. That's what I came to do." So they traveled throughout the region of Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and healing and casting out demons.

If Jesus thought it was important for him to recharge his spiritual batteries, don't you think it is important for us to do it too? Sure it is. That is why it is important for us to spend time in prayer every day and that is why it is important for us to come to Sunday School and church each week -- to get our batteries recharged.

Heavenly Father, help us to remember that just as our bodies must be renewed by proper rest, our spirit must be renewed by spending time with you in prayer, Bible study, and worship. Amen.

PRAYER BALL CIRCLE: Let children sit in a circle and throw a beach ball to each other. Each time a child catches the ball, he should say something to PRAY about and then throw the ball to someone else. Encourage children to think ahead of time of very specific prayer requests.

PRAYER BALL WALL: Give children a tennis ball and stand outside and throw the ball against the building and everytime the ball bounces off the wall and back to the child, they can shout out something to PRAY for.

PRAYER BLOCK TOWER BUILDING: Give children alot of various colors of wooden or plastic building blocks and let children BUILD a prayer tower of blocks!! With each block, encourage children to name people to pray for, such a family members' names, children in their school classroom, teachers, neighbors, etc. When their TOWER falls down, let children know that things fall apart when we do NOT pray!!

PRAYER COLLAGE: Give children paper and magazine pictures to glue to their "collage page" of things to pray about (such as pictures of food, people, houses, school, weather, etc). Let children then tape or glue a large colorful CROSS on the top of all the pictures of the collage. Write PRAY on the cross.

PRAYER CHAIN: Let children make a "prayer chain" out of strips of paper to make loops to hook together. Write all the things that they can think of (one idea on each loop) to pray about or people's names. Hang the PRAYER CHAIN around the classroom and PRAY TOGETHER as a class.

PRAYER BOOKMARKER: Give children a bookmark size piece of construction paper. Let children use various colors of markers to write names of people and ideas for Prayer and use a bright marker for PRAYER EVERY DAY. Provide children with clear contact paper to cover their bookmarker to place in their Bibles as a reminder to PRAY! Add a ribbon at the top if desired!

PRAYER BOX: Give children a small box to cover with construction or wrapping paper. Cut a small slit in the top for children to put colored recipe cards with PRAYER REQUESTS and ways to WORSHIP and BIBLE VERSES for Bible Study, into the box. Children can decorate the outside of the box's paper with stickers and PRAY EVERY DAY!

"I'LL PRAY FOR YOU" TREATS: Let children choose a treat from the "treat box" and take that treat to another classmate and as they share their treat, encourage children to tell each other that "I'LL PRAY FOR YOU THIS WEEK". Make sure that all children get more than one treat. Encourage children to remember to PRAY for each other and for their teacher!!

SING A SONG: Whisper a Prayer in the Morning; or let children make up their OWN "Prayer" song, to the tune of a song that they already know! (Example: To the tune of Row, Row, row your Boat.... "pray, pray, pray today, praying all day long, Jesus will answer each prayer we pray and then we'll sing His song", etc.