

“CARING FOR EACH OTHER WITH LOVE”

Workshop for Children with 4 lessons
Adapted for Children from Sister Care materials
IGLESIA ANABAUTISTA MENONITA “CAMINO DEL SEÑOR”
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Lesson 1: We are Very Dear Children to God

*My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!*

Psalm 139:15-17

General objective: That children—boys and girls—understand and experience in a creative way God’s love for them and their responsibility to care for one another.

Prepare ahead:

- Recorder and CDs with appropriate background music
- Mirror
- Write the scripture, Psalm 139:15-17 on a large paper or chalkboard.
- Bring photos of a baby in the womb in different stages of growth or create a PowerPoint to show the different stages of a baby’s growth in the womb.
- Snack
- A bowl for each child and a piece of cardboard
 - Bag of flour, water, salt, oil, soup spoon, damp cloth to clean hands
- ¼ page of colored construction paper for each child with the words:
 - I AM A GIRL BELOVED BY GOD
 - I AM A BOY BELOVED BY GOD

Lesson:

1. **Introduction:** We gather in a circle and ask children to look at their hands, move their fingers, grab something, open their hands and close them, etc. What do you love about your hands? What can you do with your hands?

Ask the children to look into a mirror and observe their faces. Does anyone know what these eyebrows or eyelashes are for? Why don’t we breathe through our ears or eat with our eyes? What do you like about your face? While we are all different we are all handsome and pretty.

We conclude: We are perfect. God made us this way! Thank God for our bodies.

- 2. Exercise:** Show the children the photos of the baby in different stages in the womb. After each photos, read: Psalm 139: 15 -17.

Reflection: Can you imagine God Almighty forming us in our mother's womb and with our father's seed? You and I, all of us, are the product of God's love at the very beginning of our lives. God was present in some way while we were taking shape inside our mothers' wombs. God allowed us to be born, each different from each other, but yes, well done! Isn't that right?

Tall and short; white/brown/black/yellow; plump/skinny, big eyes /small eyes; blue/green/brown/black eyes, etc.

We conclude: This teaching that the Bible gives us is super! Great! God loves everyone. God formed us in the womb of our mothers. God put us there where the sperm and egg (mom and dad's seeds) could develop. Warm, protected, safe.

A love so great!

He sees everything, knows my veins, kidneys, the pores of my skin, my hair, everything! My thoughts and feelings. When I get up or sit down. When I sleep or speak. He listens to what I say.

We cannot hide from God ever! Even if I climb to the top of the mountain or a tower very, very high, He is there. Or if I get in a subway or into a bomb shelter, God is also there. God can see everything. God loves me and wants me to learn to take care of myself, to love myself and not to do anything that can harm me (tell lies, disobey, envy, drink alcohol, take drugs, watch violent TV programs, etc)

Lead in a prayer of thanks to God for our bodies.

Say together: Thank you God for shaping my body and taking care of me until today!

- 3. Snack:** Let us pause and take a tasty snack / lunch
Have everything ready and ask children to serve one another.
We thank God for the food. Eating well, things that nourish us and not junk food is also taking care of our bodies. Let us eat.
- 4. Application:**
Give each child a bowl with: ½ cup of flour, a little water until the dough is pliable –not watery-- we add one tablespoon of oil and one of salt. Have them stir everything. Explain that at first the dough will stick in their hands. Some flour may be added until a proper consistency for molding is obtained.

While children stir their dough, play background music and explain:

As we stir this formless mass, let us imagine when mom and dad met, and married. Then God put us in their thoughts. When each of us began to form we were like this flour,

formless. Hidden there were my cells, my body, my brain, head, nails, heart, blood. Can you see that? Of course not! But the great love of God, made possible that all those elements (not the flour, but the egg and sperm) had life.

They were mixed, as we now mix the dough. God was there participating cheerful and excited, waiting to see how I would turn out.

When the dough is ready to shape:

And then? Well let's imagine how God with his love and power created us.

Let's take our piece of cardboard and place our shapeless piece of dough on it. Begin to shape your body allowing everything to be there (Attention! If one of them adds a penis or vagina, affirm him/her. Don't allow them to be put to shame or to mockery) Great! God made us whole.

All that work! But our God did not mind because God loves us. Let's show others how wonderfully each of us is made. (You may wash your hands if needed, but return quickly to show others your work.)

5. **Closing:** One by one each child shows their "creation" and affirms that God loves us amidst our differences. That is why we should not make fun of anybody, or hit them, or talk nonsense, etc. If we do that, our Papa God feels sad because we do not respect his creation.

Each child is invited to place their "creation" on a table.

Reflection:

-We observe that there are many adjectives to describe us: intelligent, kind, quiet, sensitive, creative, etc.

-We express: We are different but we are all Beloved of God

-We all deserve respect and love because God created us

-To harm the body of another person is like harming God.

-Let us care for others with love.

Each child is given a card that says I AM A GIRL/BOY BELOVED BY GOD and asked to put the card with their creation. (Option: You may help the children write positive adjectives about themselves on the cards.)

We gather in a circle hand in hand. The leader reads a sentence and the others repeat.

**"Together we care for each other
In so doing we love one another
Because God's love created us
I take responsibility
To care for my body
And also to care for others."**

Lesson 2: We Remove the Masks

“Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 4:14

General objective: That children—boys and girls—understand and experience in a creative way God’s love for them and their responsibility to care for one another.

Prepare ahead:

- One mask for each child – have a variety of masks on the table with different emotions such as anger, fear, sadness, shame.
- Mask for facilitator (or facilitator may choose to create different masks for the different parts of the Bible story)
- A trashcan
- Snack

Lesson:

1. Introduction:

Review the first week: Did you like knowing that every one of you is special to God? And everyone of you is special to someone? Can someone tell me what you liked the most about the lesson last week?

Today we'll talk about masks. Masks are a mystery. Do you think the Bible speaks of masks? Where do you see masks? (You may wish to remind children of characters from cartoons, but tell them that these characters do not actually exist.) Sometimes people wear a costume or a mask when they are acting a story.

Note to the Facilitator: The idea is that the children can understand that the mask or costume are used for acting. They are not real people. Be careful that you don't talk about those wearing masks as heroes because there is a risk of thinking that when we wear a mask, we are a hero!

Sit in a circle and have each child hold the clay model of their body which they made last week. Remember that God made each of us in our mother's womb with the seed from our father. God made us each unique, special. Not one of us is alike.

Pray and have the children repeat: God, thank you that you made each of us unique and special and that you love us forever. In Jesus name. Amen.

2. Mask exercise:

Move to a table that has masks placed in the center. No one takes a mask yet. The facilitator puts a mask on and asks, “How do I look? Am I real?”

Bible Story: The Bible tells us a very beautiful story. Jesus, the son of God, our Savior, teaches us something very precious through his encounter with a woman, "the Samaritan woman." Some of you may remember this story.

Jesus must go to Jerusalem to the main temple. He tells his disciples that instead of taking the road they usually take, they will instead walk through the area where the Samaritans live. The disciples do not like this idea because Jews do not talk or relate with Samaritans. Since Jesus wanted to go that way, they all went that way.

On the road through Samaria, Jesus became very tired and thirsty. I wonder if it was as hot there as it is here. The disciples went to buy food – maybe some burritos (ha-ha) something good to eat - and Jesus sat under the shade of a small tree very close to the well. Women usually went to the well early in the morning, but now it was noon time. What was Jesus thinking? How would he get water? But then he saw a woman coming to the well carrying a jug.

When the woman got closer she realized there was a man at the well. She felt her tummy churn with nervousness. Why? Women were not supposed to meet with men - much less with a Jewish man.

(For the next part of the teaching the facilitator models different masks or shows the expressions on her face.)

Anyway, she had to draw water and as she approached she put on a **mask of shyness**. Jesus knows the woman's heart and he wants her to learn to be a confident, fearless, happy woman.

Jesus approaches the woman and asks her for water. Then he begins to talk with her. The woman was very surprised and has a **mask of surprise and shame**. As they talked, the woman realized that it was Jesus' intention that she take off her mask, but she had another mask.

It seems that the woman thought that all men were "bad" and she wanted to keep her mask on because she was talking to a man. So she put on her **mask of anger**. As Jesus kept talking to her with much respect and affection, she kept that mask off.

But she had another mask: **the mask of shame**. Why was she ashamed? Because she had 5 husbands. Since Jesus knew everything about her life, she had no choice but to admit the truth to him that the man she was now living with was not her husband. Ah! But Jesus did not treat her badly. Instead, he gave her the opportunity to say what was going on in her life. This was her opportunity to finally let go of the mask of shame! The joy she felt was that she did not need to hide anything! She felt the love of Jesus and his respect.

But there is one more mask. It was the **mask of doubt and confusion**. The woman did not know how to truly worship God, but Jesus very calmly explained it to her. He said, "Those who worship God must do so with all their heart and with sincerity." He said, "I am giving you living water." The woman realized that she had worn the mask of doubt and confusion for a long time. She realized that Jesus gave her the opportunity to remove that mask also.

That is not like the cartoon characters that put on a costume and a mask and invent many things that are not true. They are the products of someone's imagination. Jesus loves us for who we are as real people.

Do you have questions about the masks?

Conclusion: After the woman had taken off so many masks she also learned that Jesus is a real person who answers all our needs, forgives us, and invites us to confess our mistakes. Jesus wants to learn to know our true thoughts and our heart. When the woman removed the masks, she felt happy and free and able to be who she really was.

3. Snack

We pray and give thanks for the person who brought the food.

4. Application

Invite children to the table where the masks are. Ask the children to take a moment in silence to think about the masks they might be wearing. Play background music if possible.

Explain the exercise:

Here there are many masks with different expressions. What is this mask feeling? This one? Facilitator offers real life examples of times when she was a child and felt these feelings. She invite invites the children to think of a personal experience when they felt fear, shame, sadness, guilt, embarrassment or anger.

Sometimes it is possible to have the **mask of shame or guilt** for something we have done and that no one knows about because we have not confessed it to anyone, or to God. We hide and do not want to talk to anyone because we feel that if we say it others will think badly about us. If someone asks us, we don't actually say the truth and we respond no, that is not true! Increasingly, this mask becomes more and more hard and more difficult to remove. But Jesus who is so loving and kind invites us to confess, to say what we have not done well. Jesus offers forgiveness to each of us.

Or, perhaps we feel **sadness** because we don't like something about ourselves, and we begin to think that others are better than me. Then I feel less than others so I become angry at everyone. Does anyone feel that they are wearing this mask? And then perhaps we have the **mask of envy**. Or, do we feel better than others because we are most beautiful, white, tall, intelligent, etc.? Sometimes we insult others because they are not like us, Hmmm... This can be the **mask of false pride**.

Or, perhaps we have the **mask of the anger or fighting**. You know that today many children wear this mask. They become bullies. The bully is a very ugly mask because children who assault other children do this because they need love from their parents and other people. They feel insecure, little, and are angry with everyone. They believe when they fight with others and show that they are the best and most powerful, they will feel better. But NO! They don't feel better. They become more lonely. Their mask and their hearts get harder and they think that it is right to be aggressive and they may think they are powerful. But no, they are really very weak children whose heart is hurting. Have any of you worn that mask?

Invite each child to take a mask.

We know that we are like the woman who met Jesus and received his love and respect and he gave her a new heart. A heart of joy and not sadness or shame. Look at each other. Everyone here has a mask. How does Jesus want to see us?

Pray: "Lord Jesus, you made me special and unique. I'm growing and learning that we all wear masks sometimes. I don't need a mask. I want to be a healthy free child. I know that you love me just the way you created me."

Bring the trashcan and ask the children to remove their masks one at a time and throw them in the trashcan. Instruct them to have a sincere smile of joy on their faces as they do this. Help each child to say: "God, You love me and you made me unique and special. Please help me to grow freely and without masks. I worship you with all that I am."

5. Closing: Gather in a circle hand in hand.

Facilitator prays:

**Jesus we found today that we are happy
because you have helped us
remove our masks
just as you helped the Samaritan woman.**

Bless each child here today...

Facilitator prays for each child.

Amen.

Lesson 3: Telling Our Story

General objective: That children—boys and girls—confirm and experience in a creative way the love of God toward them and the responsibility of caring for one another.

John 4:23 "The true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth."

Prepare ahead:

- Cut a long strip of paper for each child (about 6 inches wide and about 18 inches long).
- Divide each strip into 3 sections by drawing a vertical line at 6 inches and 12 inches on each paper.
- Have pencils, crayons, glue, and markers available.
- 3 hearts cut for each child (optional)
- Quiet music that can be played while children are working

Lesson:

1. Introduction: Last Sunday we saw the story of a woman who was called "the Samaritan woman". She had a sad history, we don't know exactly what. But she was in pain and shame and maybe a little afraid of meeting people, especially men. What had happened in her life? How had others treated her?

Perhaps some women made fun of her or gave her mean nicknames that made her feel bad. Have you ever been called a nickname that made you feel bad? Or have you ever been teased because you were different from other children - perhaps a little shy or grouchy?

Probably some people did not want to talk to her. That's mean, isn't it? Maybe when she went to the store to buy her food and she talked to someone, women whispered about her behind her back.

It is quite possible that when she got home she felt very lonely and sad. Or perhaps she was afraid if her husband arrived angry about something, or a little drunk. I wonder if he yelled at her and she was afraid he was going to hit her. The truth is that when things like this happen to us, especially when we are young like you are, we feel hurt in our heart. Sometimes we have fear and can't sleep. Our hands become sweaty and sometimes we are filled with anger or shame. Has anything like that happened to you?

The story of this woman is important for us. It tells us that Jesus is the only person who can change those feelings (fear, sadness, grief, shame, anger—our inner masks—). Jesus wants us to know that even when we are children we may trust that he will help us turn those feelings into peaceful and happy feelings with confidence in him. We feel love and can worship and serve God.

This story helps us identify our feelings when we find ourselves in situations like this.

2. Exercise: Identifying my feelings.

Sit at a table with the children and show them the strips of paper divided into three sections. Give each child a strip of paper.

Facilitator demonstrates: Let's take a paper and here at the beginning we will draw a heart and draw a face like when we were little children. Then we will draw something nice like a toy or a star, or the sun if we think that when we were babies we were happy. But if we have any memories that cause us sadness, then we will draw some tears or a sad face if we have some sad or scary memories. Facilitator gives the children time to draw their pictures on the first part of the strip.

On the next part we put another heart. We grew up; perhaps we are already 5 or 6 years old. How did we feel around that time? Draw a face on the heart that shows how you felt when you were 5 or 6 years old. Draw something next to the heart that explains what made you happy or sad or afraid or angry.

We go ahead to the time when we were 6-11 years old. We put another heart and do the same as before. How was that time of your life? Did we experience happy situations at home, school, church, that made us feel loved? Or maybe we did not...

Let us be honest and express truthfully about our lives. This is an opportunity to meet Jesus as the Samaritan woman did.

Allow time for the children to work on the second and third parts of the strip. Encourage them, especially the smaller children, to have confidence to express their true feelings at each stage. Assure them that they are special and that God loves them. God wants to help them heal the sad or scary memories.

Let them work in silence. Facilitator can play quiet music (optional).

When the children have completed their work, invite them to sit in a circle and ask them to share about what they have drawn. This time is very special. Encourage all of the children to have an attitude of respect and care for each other which will help each child to feel genuine confidence to share. Ask the children to be quiet and listen to each other as each child takes a turn.

After listening, invite them to pray. Say something like:
Jesus knows all these feelings that you have in your heart and now we will pray and ask for healing of memories (fear, sadness, anger, shame, etc)

3. Snack

4. Application

We return to our life story and ask the following questions:

- When you felt _____ do you remember if someone hugged you or showed you that you were loved? God it is always present and we often see God through a hug from someone or through a loving word or a prayer.
- Do you remember a Bible verse, a story, or a song that you learned at church? These can be very comforting to remember during difficult times and help us to know that God loves you and wants to comfort you.
- What a joy to know that God made each one of us special and loves you and loves me, and to know that God is with us all the time and to know that God sent Jesus into my life to change my heart.

5. Closing:

Guided Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for your presence with us.

Now we ask you to please heal our hearts.

**Hold our hearts in your great love
so that we may serve you with joy,**

like the Samaritan woman.

Thank you Lord.

Lesson 4: Taking Care of Each Other with Love

General objective: That children—boys and girls—confirm and experience in a creative way the love of God toward them and the responsibility of caring for one another.

Scripture for Unit 1 – I Am Loved

“You created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you because I am wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” Psalm 139:13-14

Scripture for Unit 2 – Removing Our Masks

“Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 4:14

Scripture for Unit 3 – Telling Our Story

“The true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.” John 4:23

Prepare ahead:

- A blank book for each child
- Cardboard covers the size of the papers in the book
- Paint, stapler, glue, pencils, markers, scissors
- 10 x 10 circles for each child
- A heart with the words, “God loves me and formed me.” Psalm 139
- Each of the scriptures above for each child on a small piece of paper
- A mask for each child

Lesson:

Lesson 4 will draw on what the children learned in the other three lessons in order to conclude the theme of “Taking care of each other with love”.

Specific goals:

- That children will remember that God loves them and has always been and will continue to be involved in their growth and transformation each day.

For this to happen they need to:

- Always to be ready to “remove their masks” and stay close to God.
- Open their ears and lives to Jesus Christ to experience the love of God and his tenderness.
- Ask for help when they feel things are not going well (fears, lies, anger, shame, low self-esteem, etc.)

1. Introduction:

Welcome children and explain that this is the last session. Review and summarize the previous three lessons. Have you liked what we did? What have you learned? Encourage them to make comments. (Write these down to share with others later.)

Today we begin with an activity. I'll give each of you a circle. You will draw your face on it and tell us how you are feeling today. Then please say your name or your favorite nickname. Also tell us your age and your grade in school. Also, tell us the thing that you do best."

When the children are ready, they can stand up and one by one share about their face and answer the questions.

Oh, how good that we are all different... but each is special, right? And we are all special. Do you remember why? Yes, because God made us that way. That was the first thing we talked about.

Now let's continue with our workshop. I will distribute materials for a final activity. We will make a little book that reminds us it is important to remember each day that to love God, we need to take care of ourselves and also our brother and sister.

Exercise:

Children will make a book about "Taking care of each other with love". The idea is that each child will do his/her own book. On the cover the facilitator or the child can write the title that the child wants. Encourage the children to be creative.

General instructions:

Lesson 1 teaching:

- Each child is given a heart, cut large enough to draw and write on. On the heart is written: "God loves me and formed me." Psalm 139
- Staple or glue the heart into the book and if possible let dry. Then cut and place the verse for Unit 1 below or to one side of the heart.
- Mention that it's important to care for ourselves (food, sleep, wholesome fun, good hygiene, positive thoughts, how we feel, etc.)
- Repeat the scripture for Lesson 1 and lead a short prayer.

Lesson 2 teaching:

- Then turn to the second page. Ask them to hold the masks they recognized the other time. Ask them if they remember what they learned from the lesson about masks.
- Then bend the mask in half and glue or staple it to the next sheet and repeat what we did above (text, prayer)

Lesson 3 teaching:

- On the third sheet, the theme was “telling our story”. Do you remember what you said about your story and what the happy and sad memories were? Draw a picture of what you remember.
- Have the children add a face showing how they are feeling now.
- Have the children add the scripture text and pray.

Snack

Pause for a snack and then return to finish the book. Pray, thanking God for this beautiful and joyous time! Have you liked it?

Application:

Give the children time to finish their books and to add any additional pictures they want to draw. Invite the children to share about their books going around the circle saying what in the book they like the best. Ask them how this will help them to care more others. Tell them that as we realize how much God loves us, it helps us to be more loving to others.

Closing:

End with the whole group going to the church sanctuary for a prayer of gratitude.

Invite children to say what they are thankful for and what their needs are.
When everyone is there,
pray for each child to be an instrument of the Lord.

May the Lord bless you.

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