

My Life in Jesus

Teachers Guide

Written by Diane Grebing

Edited by Edward Grube and Edward A. Engelbrecht

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Introduction

As You Begin

This curriculum introduces preteen students to the truths of God's Word as explained in Luther's Small Catechism. An integral part of each session is a skit set at Camp Wonderment. The plot line of each skit runs parallel to the Bible truths explained in the Six Chief Parts of the catechism.

These skits are designed to be the bridge to catechism instruction in each session. They can be presented in your classroom in several ways:

1. Following a first reading for basic information, students in your classroom can reenact each session's skit themselves.
2. A group of junior high or high school students can form a "traveling troupe" that comes to your classroom each session to present the skit. Your preteen students would then watch each skit. An option would be to videotape the skits in several sessions.
3. If you have a small class (four students or less), each skit can be read like a story without playing separate parts. The plot line can also be summarized in monologue form by you, the teacher.
4. You, the teacher, can play the part of camp counselor Abby in each skit with six of your students playing the parts of the campers.

Skit Presentation Suggestions

1. Designate an area of your classroom where the skit will be presented in each session.
2. Hang a simple backdrop of pine trees and a "Camp Wonderment" sign to act as scenery in the skit-performing area. The trees and sign can be drawn on a large sheet of newsprint or a muslin banner. This backdrop can be suspended from the ceiling or hung on a wall or bulletin board.
3. If you have a large group of students (more than seven) or a large number of students who don't like to read aloud, encourage everyone to be a part of the skit by playing inanimate objects (e.g., pine trees, signposts, bunk bed posts, rocks, flagpole, or other camp equipment). By doing so, students are actively involved in the skit without having to speak.

The Catechism—What's That?



LifePoint

God gives us eternal life through faith in Jesus, the Savior. The Small Catechism is a guidebook that helps us understand this and the other important truths of God's Word on which our Christian faith and life are based.

Welcome, Welcome!

Materials

None

Procedure

As this is likely the first time you and your students are meeting as a class, play this name game to get acquainted. Say to the group, **It's often easier to remember someone's name if it is paired with some kind of physical movement. For example, I could introduce myself as Mrs. (raise your right hand) Smith (stomp your left foot). Think of two different movements you could do as you say your first and last name.** Give students a few minutes to think of two different movements. Then let students take turns introducing themselves by standing up, saying their names, and performing their movements. Have the class respond to each introduction by saying "Welcome" and repeating the person's names and movements.

Getting Acquainted

Materials

Student Leaflet 1; clipboard; whistle; 2 sheets of paper (1 labeled *Camp Wonderment Rules* at the top); yo-yo; several backpacks, duffle bags, and sleeping bags; backdrop of camp scene (optional)

Procedure

Introduce the skit as follows: **As we meet together in the coming weeks, we'll explore what our life in Jesus is all about. We'll study Bible truths that will help you now and throughout your life. Along the way, we'll meet a group of sixth graders who face many of the same challenges and who may have some of the same questions you do about your faith. These six young people are summer campers at a place called "Camp Wonderment." Today's episode begins as the students arrive at camp.**

Move to the classroom area you've designated for the skits. Distribute Student Leaflet 1. Read through the skit on pages 2 and 3 together to help students get an idea of the plot and to meet the characters. Then choose volunteers to play the parts of the campers and counselor. Distribute props as described. Perform the skit.

Following the skit, discuss the questions at the bottom of page 3. The third question will give you some valuable information as to where your students are in their walk with Jesus. Talk together about the fact that no matter where we are in life, Jesus is with us. We can be sure that He hears our prayers, that He always loves and forgives us, and that He guides, protects, helps, and comforts us.

Guidebooks

Materials

Travel guides, school handbooks, Luther's Small Catechism, telephone directories, Student Leaflet 1

Procedure

Set out the guidebooks you've collected on a classroom table. Be sure to include a copy of the catechism in the display. As the students look at the collection, ask, **What is similar about these books?** Talk about how each book gives information about places or things.

Then ask, **When and where might each of these books prove useful?** As you focus on the catechism, students might give a vague answer, such as church. A lot of your fifth- and sixth-grade students may have seen a catechism before but have no idea why we study it or why it was written.

Hand out Student Leaflet 1. Direct students to page 4. Use this information to provide students with a basic overview of what the catechism is and who wrote it. Emphasize that all the information in the catechism is taken from the Bible, which is God's Word for our Christian faith and life. Martin Luther wrote the Small Catechism to help parents and pastors teach the Christian faith and life. The most important point of the Bible and the catechism is that the one way to eternal life and heaven is through faith in Jesus, the Savior.

Let students know that in the sessions to come you will study the truths of God's Word by examining each of the Six Chief Parts of the Small Catechism.

My-Life-in-Jesus Time Line

Materials

Index cards, drawing paper, markers

Procedure

On 10 index cards, print the following ages, one per card: *1 month old, 1 year old, 3 years old, 5 years old, 10 years old, 13 years old, 16 years old, 21 years old, 30 years old, 65 years old.* Place the cards faceup on a table or desk. **Note:** If you have a large class, add additional age cards.

Say to the group, **The central theme of the Bible is that God gives His people eternal life through faith in Jesus, the Savior. One place where this truth is stated is 1 John 5:11: "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."**

Eternal life can begin at any time, at any age. It may start in a baby through Baptism. It may start later when older people hear God's Word and the Holy Spirit works faith in Jesus in their heart.

Think about your life in Jesus so far and about what your life in Jesus might be like in the future. Select an age card from those on the table that reminds you of something important in your Christian life that Jesus did for you or will do for you. Then illustrate this event on a sheet of drawing paper.

Many of the age cards require students to speculate about their future and events that their Christian faith will influence (e.g., college, careers, marriage, childbirth). Emphasize that the Holy Spirit works in their hearts throughout their lives, causing their faith to grow and mature. What they learn in Sunday school, midweek school, and confirmation classes is just the beginning of the lifelong, Spirit-led discovery of the truths and joys of God's Word.

When students have finished their drawings, have them stand in chronological order with their pictures. Invite volunteers to tell about the event they've illustrated. Display the finished pictures in time-line form to remind students of Jesus' constant presence in their lives. (**Note:** Save the time line for use in Sessions 15 and 30.)

Snack

Choose a camp snack option from those suggested in the back of this guide.

In Conclusion

Ask students to take Student Leaflet 1 home to review and discuss with their families. Close the session with a prayer like this: **Dear heavenly Father, You have given us eternal life in Jesus, our Savior. Thank You for this gift that affects every event in our lives. As we live each day, guide us with the truth of Your Word and the love and hope we have in Jesus. In our Savior's name we pray. Amen.**

A special note: Many of the skit props suggested will be used several times throughout this course. Keep them on hand for future use.

2

The First Commandment— Whom Do You Worship?

LifePoint

We worship God alone as we live under His love and goodness.

Rules, Rules, Rules

Materials

Large sheet of newsprint and marker (or chalkboard and chalk), red self-adhesive circular stickers (3 or 4 per student)

Procedure

Before students arrive, print the word *Rules* at the top of the newsprint or chalkboard. As the session begins, say, **Rules (laws) are an important part of our world. Think of some rules you have at home, at school, in your neighborhood, in your community, and in our nation. Let's see how many rules you can name in five minutes.**

As students suggest rules and laws, print them on the newsprint (or chalkboard). Student comments should range from specific, individual rules (e.g., curfew at 9:30 P.M.; no television until homework is completed) to national rules (e.g., a red light means "STOP"; equal opportunity in the workplace).

After five minutes, stop listing rules and give each student three or four red self-adhesive circular stickers. Say, **Look carefully at the rules we've listed. Place a red sticker next to the three or four rules that you feel are the most important and necessary.** Have small groups of three or four students mark the list at one time.

When everyone has had a chance to mark the list, say, **After this session's episode at Camp Wonderment, we'll refer back to our list of rules. You'll remember at our last session that the campers arrived at Camp Wonderment for a two-week camp experience. Alex, Sean, T. J., Stephanie, Kara, and Jess met Abby, their camp counselor. As the first skit ended, Abby was hammering a piece of paper with the title "Camp Wonderment Rules" to a tree. Let's find out what happens next.**

Who's in Charge?

Materials

Student Leaflet 2; clipboard and whistle for Abby; crutch for Kara; yo-yo for Sean; sheet printed with Camp Wonderment rules (see skit); several backpacks, duffle bags, and sleeping bags; backdrop of camp scene (optional)

Note: If you are reading the skits without props, the only item you will need for this activity is Student Leaflet 2.

Procedure

If you are using props as you act out each skit, list the Camp Wonderment rules as shown on page 1 of Student Leaflet 2 on a large sheet of paper. Pin this paper to a tree on the backdrop scenery you have previously created. You will want to have this ready before the class session begins.

If you have any new students in attendance, introduce the skit characters and briefly summarize the plot of the skit from Session 1. Then move to the classroom area you've designated for the skits. Distribute Student Leaflet 2. Read through the skit on pages 2 and 3 together to help students get an idea of the plot. Then choose volunteers to play the parts of the campers and counselor. (**Note:** You may wish to use the same students each session or, if you have a large group, have several different students rotate to play each part on a session-by-session basis.) Next, perform the skit.

Following the skit, discuss the questions at the bottom of page 3. The leaders and counselors at Camp Wonderment wrote the rules to keep the campers safe and to help them treat each other, the counselors, and others with care and respect. The rules were designed with a caring and fair attitude. Encourage students to mention rules and laws they follow that were designed with safety in mind and those that were written in fairness, care, and concern.

People react in different ways to rules. Some follow rules blindly. Some follow them with understanding, trusting that those who made the rules wrote them for people's benefit and protection. Some, like Jess, rebel against rules and the authority they represent. People may rebel against rules because they view a rule as unfair or because they don't want anyone telling them what to do. Such defiance can spring from a sinful, disobedient heart or from one that has been treated unjustly or cruelly in the past.

The formal name for God's rules is God's Law, or the Ten Commandments. Invite students to recite commandments they know. As necessary, complete the list for the group. God gave these commandments out of love for His people. They are a guide for behavior, both toward God and toward others. For some students, setting rules may seem like a strange way to show love. You'll discuss this further in the next activity and with the catechism information found on page 4 of the Student Leaflet.

Given in Love

Materials

List of rules from the beginning of this session, Student Leaflet 2, Bibles

Procedure

Remind students of the rules they formulated at the beginning of the session. Say, **Take a close look at the rules marked with red dots. These**

are the ones you decided are the most important and necessary. What are some similarities about the rules you marked? Hopefully, a number of marked rules will pertain to people's safety while others will relate to strengthening relationships among people in positive ways.

Distribute Student Leaflet 2. Direct students to page 4. Say, **Earlier we talked about the Ten Commandments—God's Law. Jesus said the summary of all God's commandments is love—love for God and love for other people. How can setting up rules and laws show love?** Discuss how rules and laws help keep people safe. They give people boundaries and a plan for their behavior. **How does God's Law show His great love for us?** God, being almighty and all-knowing, knows what is best for us. We can trust His wisdom because God is perfect and cannot lie. All of His Word is truth. God's Law establishes boundaries and guidelines so that we can show love for Him and for other people.

Hand out Bibles and help the group locate Exodus 20. Note that this part of the Bible tells about God giving the Ten Commandments to His people at Mount Sinai. Read aloud verses 1–17. Note that verses 2–11 focus on our love for God while verses 12–17 focus on our love for others.

Reread verse 3. Then read the First Commandment, its explanation, and the other information from the box on page 4 of the Student Leaflet. Ask, **Why do you think God made this the first commandment?** Lead students to see that their trust needs to be in the triune God in order to be saved from sin, death, and Satan. Our God is the one, true God. He is the only way to salvation from sin and eternal life. As we trust in God through faith, He will direct us in all things. God is the source of our faith, our life, and our strength for Christian living.

Knowing we are sinful and unable to keep any of God's commandments perfectly, how can we trust only in God or do anything else that God requires? Emphasize that on our own, we cannot. Jesus, however, kept God's Law perfectly for us. Jesus' perfect keeping of the Law was part of His saving work. Through faith in Jesus, we are considered righteous (pure and holy) by God. It is only through faith in Jesus that we are able to receive eternal life and love God's Law.

Read together Matthew 4:10 from page 1 of the Student Leaflet. Ask, **What does serving only God mean?** Help the group see that this means we place God first above all things. It means we honor Him, trust Him, and love Him above anything else. It means we rely on Him to give us the strength, power, and desire to serve and follow Him only.

My-Life-in-Jesus Priority Posters

Materials

A selection of current teen magazines, small sheets of poster board, markers

Procedure

Divide the class into small groups of two or three students. Have the groups look through the magazines for advertisements and articles that show young people in situations that suggest they make things other

than God their first priority. Examples include material goods, friends, school, sports, and social activities.

Then ask, **Suppose someone said to you, “Serving God alone takes all the fun out of life.” How would you respond?** Help students to see that serving God alone and putting Him first does not mean living a joyless life on earth. God wants us to have nice things and good friends. He wants us to enjoy activities at school and in our communities.

What are some ways you can enjoy life and still honor and respect God? Suggested ways include recognizing that all good things come from God and thanking and praising Him for His gifts.

Distribute a sheet of poster board to each small group. Challenge each group to design a poster that illustrates the joys they’ve experienced as they’ve put God first. They may use pictures, slogans, and Bible verses. Display the finished posters as a visual testimony of the students’ fear, love, and trust for the Lord.

Snack

Choose a camp snack option from those suggested in the back of this guide.

In Conclusion

Ask students to take Student Leaflet 2 home to review and discuss with their families. Close the session with this responsive prayer, rehearsing the students’ part several times before beginning:

Students: Worship the Lord, your God, and serve Him only.

Leader: Heavenly Father, Your love is so great, and we know that love is for us.

Students: Worship the Lord, your God, and serve Him only.

Leader: We confess as sinners that we often don’t follow Your commandments or respect Your authority and wisdom.

Students: Worship the Lord, your God, and serve Him only.

Leader: We thank You for sending Jesus to keep Your Law perfectly and to pay the price for our disobedience on the cross.

Students: Worship the Lord, your God, and serve Him only.

Leader: Help us, Lord, amid the temptations and things of this world, to keep You first in our hearts. Give us the strength, through faith in Jesus, to fear, love, and trust in You above all things.

Students: Worship the Lord, your God, and serve Him only.

3

The Second Commandment— What Is God's Name and How Do We Use It?

LifePoint

We call God our good Father with love and respect because He cares for us and gives us all good things in Jesus.

What's in a Name?

Materials

Index cards (1 per student), pencils

Procedure

As students arrive, give each person an index card and a pencil. Say, **On one side of the card, print a nickname you've been called that has made you feel happy. On the other side of the card, print a name you've been called that has been hurtful. Don't put your given name on the card, and do not mention any names out loud.**

When students have completed this task, ask, **How can names or nicknames have a positive effect on people?** (They can show affection, amuse, or accentuate a positive quality or talent a person possesses.) **How can names or nicknames have a negative effect?** (When used in taunting, teasing, or disrespectful ways, they can hurt feelings and undermine self-confidence. They can point out faults and imperfections. They can embarrass and shame.)

As we visit Camp Wonderment today, note the effect Jess's names for Abby has on them both.

Sticks and Stones ...

Materials

Student Leaflet 3, crutch for Kara, backpacks, duffle bags, sleeping bags, pillows, 4 camp cots or 16 folding chairs, large empty box, backdrop of camp scene (optional)

Procedure

Make a camp cabin setup by using camp cots or folding chairs for bunks. Use stacking camp cots, if available. Or, just set four folding chairs in a row to serve as each bunk. Spread an opened sleeping bag and a pillow on top of each cot or set of chairs.

Gather students in the skit area. Distribute Student Leaflet 3. Read through the skit on pages 2 and 3 together to help students get an idea of the plot. Then choose volunteers to perform the skit.

Following the skit, discuss the questions at the bottom of page 3. It is important that we seek God's help to control our words because words have powerful effects. They can uplift and help or degrade and hurt. Our sinful nature uses words in destructive ways. Sometimes even words and names used in innocent, teasing ways can hurt feelings. We need God's help so that we choose our words wisely.

Name-calling undermines authority because it shows lack of respect. God is the ultimate all-knowing, all-powerful authority. Using His name in reverent ways shows the honor and respect He deserves. We praise, honor, and revere God because He is ruler of the universe and because of His love through Jesus Christ, our Savior. The love we have for God makes us want to treat Him in respectful ways.

God has placed various people in positions of authority in our families, schools, communities, and nation. By using proper names and titles, we show respect for their God-given power.

The third question is for the students' personal reflection. We all need help in controlling the words we say. The Holy Spirit gives us self-control and wisdom to help us show God's love and care through our words.

I AM Mosaic

Materials

13 index cards, Bibles, construction paper, glue sticks, scissors, markers, large sheet of poster board

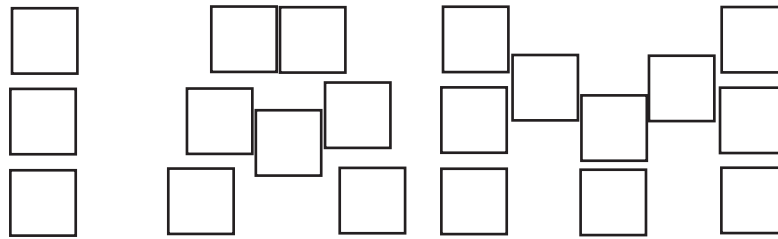
Procedure

On the index cards, print the following Bible references, one per card: Exodus 3:14; Psalm 47:7; Psalm 48:14; Psalm 62:2, 7; Isaiah 9:6; Jeremiah 23:6; Matthew 1:21; John 1:1; 1 Timothy 6:15; Hebrews 4:14; Revelation 1:8, 18. Divide the class into small groups. Give each group one or two index cards and a Bible. Say, **Names are a way we use to identify each other. Many names in the Bible have specific meanings that tell about a person's special qualities. This is especially true of the names used for God. Look up the Bible passage on your card. Find all the names for God in each passage.**

The students should find 20 different names for God within the Bible passages. As each group reports its findings, print the names on the chalkboard or on a large sheet of paper. Then say, **Each of these names describes one aspect or quality of God. All of them, when considered together, give us a picture of who God is. This is a lot like a mosaic. This art technique uses small, separate pieces to form a whole picture. As you look at the names we've listed, what qualities of God do you note?** (God is powerful, eternal, peace, our righteousness, our Savior, our King, our guide, our fortress, the Word, and so on.)

Now assign each small group one or two names. Provide construction paper and markers. Challenge each group to illustrate the name for God they've been given using words and drawings. All 20 names need to be illustrated on a separate sheet of paper. Be sure each name from Scripture is printed somewhere on the paper next to the illustration. Glue

the completed pictures to a large sheet of poster board in a pattern that spells "I AM." Display the finished mosaic in your classroom.



Second-Commandment Concentration

Materials

Student Leaflet 3, 24 index cards, large table

Procedure

Before you begin this activity, prepare the index cards for the concentration game. On one side of each card, print the number as shown on the list below. On the other side, print the statement or word that corresponds with the number.

1. Use
2. Oh, God, I can't believe the dog ate my homework.
3. Misuse
4. Oh, God, I'm so worried. Please help me calm down. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.
5. The Lord declares, "The world will end on January 9, 2032."
6. Misuse
7. Good Lord! Can't you ever remember to clean your room?
8. Use
9. Heavenly Father, please help my grandma feel better.
10. Misuse
11. Misuse
12. Jesus Christ! That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard!
13. Raise your right hand and repeat after me. I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.
14. We pray for all these things in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
15. Let's get out the Ouija board and see what it says about tomorrow's math test.
16. Use
17. Use
18. Thank You, Lord, for protecting us from the storm last night.
19. Misuse
20. Use
21. Misuse
22. Libra: Today you'll get rich and meet a mysterious stranger.
23. Misuse
24. In the name of God, I call on the spirit of Aunt Edna to give us wisdom.

Arrange the cards in rows, number-side up, on a large table. Place four cards in each horizontal row to form the concentration board.

Distribute Student Leaflet 3. Turn to page 4. Have volunteers take turns reading the information about the Second Commandment. As you read about the misuses of God's name, explain each item carefully.

Cursing includes speaking evil of God, mocking Him, or calling down God's anger or punishment on any person or thing.

Swearing is when we take an oath where we call on God to witness the truth of what we say or promise to punish us if we lie or break our promise. We are permitted to swear by God's name in courts of law, when taking an oath of office, and in wedding vows.

Using satanic arts is using God's name to cast spells, call up spirits, tell fortunes, and consult the dead, as well as worshiping Satan and depending on horoscopes to foretell the future.

Lying or deceiving by God's name includes teaching false doctrines by saying they come from God as well as pretending to be a Christian.

Following your discussion, gather around the table where you have placed the concentration board. Students are to take turns calling out pairs of numbers to identify statements as being uses or misuses of God's name. Each statement must be correctly paired with a use or misuse card in order to be a valid match. These statements are correct uses (4, 9, 13, 14, and 18). All others are misuses.

Snack

Choose a camp snack option from those suggested in the back of this guide.

In Conclusion

Ask students to take home Student Leaflet 3 to review and discuss with their families. To close, spend a few moments in silent prayer, directing students to recognize God's greatness and love for them, to confess their misuses of His name, and to ask for help to use His name in praise and to uplift others. At the end of the prayer, joyfully read the words of Psalm 103:1 (Student Leaflet 3, page 1) together.