

Adventures with GOD!

MY PAST IS A GIFT FROM GOD (B.3.WINTER.8)

Biblical Reference	Psalm 139:13-16, Genesis 45:1-9
Key Verse	Psalm 139:14
Key Concept	Each experience in my past can help me to know God better because my life is a gift from God.
Educational Objectives	At the end of the class today, the children will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draw a picture of a situation from the past that made them happy and another one that made them unhappy. 2. Say the Key Verse. 3. Express what they feel when they know that God was with them even in the past.

Life Application

God lives outside the limits of time. God knows our past. As difficult as this is to understand, it's important to help the children remember that our lives are a gift from God, and God has been present in our lives. Many of the children may have experienced difficult situations in their younger years, and we need to be sensitive to this. Throughout Scripture we are reminded that even in the difficult moments of our past, God was with us and never abandoned us. This comes through in the Psalms. Through this lesson the children will have the opportunity to thank God for their lives up until now.

Possible Activities and Class Plan

Activity	Materials	Time
My GROW Adventure	GROW Adventure materials	5 minutes
Opening Prayer	Candle	1 minute
Bible Reading	Bible	5 minutes
Introduction	Clay or playdoh	5 minutes
Bible Exploration	Bible, gift, sign	10 minutes
Activity	Activity sheet, crayons	10 minutes
Craft	See instructions	10 minutes
My GROW Adventure	Review	5 minutes
Closing Prayer	Candle	1 minute

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INSTRUCTIONS

It is important to remember that some children may not have had any traumatic experiences in their past. But many times we learn that they've suffered abuse, illness, a tragic family event, etc. It is difficult to understand that even in those circumstances God loves us and is with us, never abandoning us. Be sensitive to the reaction of the children. Be prepared to stop and pray. Be prepared to follow-up with the conversations that happen during this class time.

My GROW Adventure with God Weekly Review: As children enter, take time to have them reflect on their adventure with God booklets, and either discuss or use art materials to express their journey during the past week. You may wish to add any art work, written poems, prayers or songs to a GROW wall in the room. You can find my GROW Adventure with God materials at CovChurch.org/children/adventures-with-god.

Opening Prayer: Gather children around a candle. Light the candle, and explain that we are entering into a special time with God. Encourage the children to hold their hands out in front of them, palms up, as a sign they are ready to receive what God has for them today.

Prayer Example: Lord God, thank you for making us, for loving us, for forgiving us, and guiding us. We know you are here with us right now. As we enter into your word, the Bible, help us draw close to you, to understand and to listen to what you have to say to us. Amen

(For safety sake, you may wish to extinguish the candle after the prayer.)

Bible Reading: Explain that as we read the Bible we do that first to spend time with God. Children can remain with hands out stretched palms up to receive the word as it's being read. Alternatively they can be invited to draw what they hear. Read Psalm 139:1-4 two times, and ask children to respond.

Question examples: What did you notice in this passage? How does it make you feel? Was there anything you would ask God about that you didn't understand or was confusing? Is God saying anything to you through the passage?

Introduction: Before class, spend some time decorating the room. Make a big long time line that can be displayed somewhere in the class space (see pages 5-6). This will be used for the next couple of weeks. You will find arrows that will serve as markers on the timeline. On the

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walls, continue to put up signs and illustrations related to the “gifts” that they are learning about each week.

Before entering into the Bible story, give each child a piece of modeling clay or playdoh. Ask them to make a baby. As they are forming the baby, start a dialogue using open-ended questions. “I wonder if these babies have names? Who are the people in their family? Are they healthy? Do they sleep a lot or are they very active?” Allow the children to answer.

Then take out of the gift box a small sign with the word “past.” Ask the children, “When were you babies? What do you remember about your past?”

Bible Exploration: Open the Bible to Psalm 139, where the Psalmist talks about God creating us. Imagine what it was like for God to create us. Say to the children, “I wonder what God was thinking when he made my body, my eyes, my hands, and my skin? Did God have fun making me?” While you ask these questions take out the illustrations of the boy and girl and hang them on the wall.

Remembering the words of the Psalm, our past is a gift from God. God made us. God gave us families. God saw me as I was growing up. God had a plan for my life before I was born. (Put up the illustrations of the families with the illustrations of the boy and girl). I wonder if this boy and this girl are happy in their families. Listen to what the children have to say. We know that God is a God who heals our hearts, and it is possible that some of the children might be carrying some deep hurt.

Remind them of the story of Joseph. His brothers hated him, and they sold him as a slave. Joseph grew up far from his family and was put in prison. But the Bible tells us that God was always with Joseph. And even in those most difficult moments, God was with Joseph, and God used his experience to make him a great ruler. (Genesis 45:1-9)

Activity: Give each child two pieces of paper, or give them one page and ask them to draw a line down the center. Ask them to draw a picture of something that made them happy as a child and another picture of a circumstance that was difficult for them. Talk about the pictures as they are drawing them. Using the timeline, place the illustration of the baby (page 7) in the first section of the timeline. Explain that the line is like looking at our life. At one time the children were babies. Now they are older, and they will continue growing and maturing, and one day they will be adults. Each phase of our life is special, and God promises to be with us. Have the children use short phrases to give thanks to God for the experiences in their past.

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Craft: See page 9.

Today's GROW Adventure with God Review:

G= God's Word: What is the story? (Give children an opportunity to express their understanding of the story).

R= Relationships: Is there anything in today's Bible story that shows us how we should or shouldn't share God's love with others? (Remind children that sometimes God uses the stories of the Bible to show us how we shouldn't act toward God or others. Give children a chance to consider how we might show God's love instead).

O= Outward Action: Is there anything in the Bible story that shows us how we should help or serve God or others? Explore concrete ways the children could live this out in the coming week.

W= Worship: Is there anything in the Bible story that shows us how we should accept God's love for us and others? Ask: How do you feel about God? What would you like to say to God?

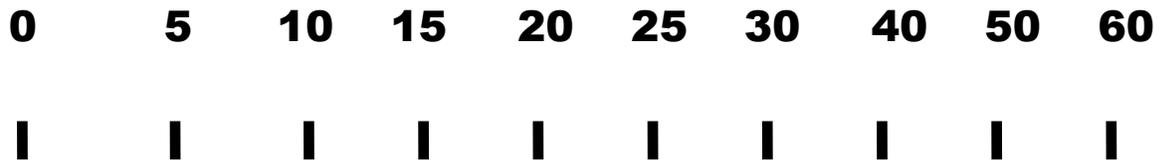
Closing Prayer: Gather children around the candle again. As you light the candle explain that the flame is something that is present in the light and the darkness. The candle reminds us that God is always with us. Is there anything anyone wishes to say to God? After children have responded, close the prayer time.

Prayer Example: Lord God, we thank you that you are always with us and always love us. It's good to be with you. Thank you for what we have learned today. Thank you for being with us and for teaching us through the Bible. Help us to remember what you have taught us today and to live it out when we leave. Amen

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ILLUSTRATION

You will make a timeline that will be used over the next three weeks. Each week you will place an arrow over the “time” they are talking about (ex., past, present, future). The arrow that points left will be placed above the ages 0-2, which represents the past. The vertical arrow will represent the future, and the arrow that points right will represent the future.



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VISUALS



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VISUAL

Baby



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CRAFT

Make four frames, like the ones below, using white or colored paper, for each child. Have the children cut them out and connect them with tape. In the first frame, write out the Key Verse: Psalm 139:14. In the second one, have children draw/color a picture of a boy or girl that represents them. In the third, have them draw a picture of their family. And in the last frame, have them draw a picture of a child that is happy because God is with him or her. Tell children to take this home and hang it somewhere where they will see it and can remember how God has been with them and promises to always be with them.

