

Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Welcome to Stories of God's Love! | 6 |
|-----------------------------------|---|

Introductory Chapters • I Am Welcomed

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|----|
| Chapter 1 | Jesus Welcomes the Children | 34 |
| Chapter 2 | My Teacher Welcomes Me | 38 |

Unit One • God Knows and Loves Me

| | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|----|
| Chapter 3 | Jesus Is the Good Shepherd | 42 |
| Chapter 4 | My Name Is Special | 46 |
| Chapter 5 | The Good Shepherd Cares for His Sheep | 50 |
| Chapter 6 | My Family Cares for Me | 54 |

Unit Two • God Gives Us All That Is Good

| | | |
|------------|-------------------------------|----|
| Chapter 7 | God Made the World | 58 |
| Chapter 8 | I Help Take Care of the World | 62 |
| Chapter 9 | God Made People | 66 |
| Chapter 10 | I Take Care of Myself | 70 |

Unit Three • Jesus Is God's Own Son

| | | |
|------------|----------------------------|----|
| Chapter 11 | Jesus Is Born | 74 |
| Chapter 12 | I Have a Family | 78 |
| Chapter 13 | Shepherds Visit Baby Jesus | 82 |
| Chapter 14 | A Visit from My Family | 86 |

Unit Four • I Belong to My Church Family

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter 15 | Friends of Jesus | 90 |
| Chapter 16 | I Am a Friend of Jesus | 94 |
| Chapter 17 | Jesus Has Many Friends | 98 |
| Chapter 18 | My Church Friends | 102 |

Unit Five • I Tell God I Love Him

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter 19 | David Talked with God | 106 |
| Chapter 20 | I Pray Every Day | 110 |
| Chapter 21 | David Sang His Prayers | 114 |
| Chapter 22 | I Can Sing My Prayers | 118 |

Unit Six • I Celebrate Holy Days and Holidays

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter 23 | All Saints Day | 122 |
| Chapter 24 | Thanksgiving Day | 126 |
| Chapter 25 | Getting Ready for Christmas | 130 |
| Chapter 26 | We Celebrate Christmas | 134 |
| Chapter 27 | Valentine's Day | 138 |
| Chapter 28 | We Love God More and More | 142 |
| Chapter 29 | We Celebrate Easter | 146 |
| Chapter 30 | We Love Mary | 150 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Activity Masters | 154 |
|-----------------------------------|-----|

Jesus Welcomes the Children

Background for the Catechist

Growing in Faith

The Bible story for today's session is found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. In this story, people are pressing toward Jesus with their children but are rebuked by the disciples. Jesus, however, calls to the children and says, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the [K]ingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the [K]ingdom of God like a child will not enter it" (Luke 18:16–17).

So what does it mean to accept the Kingdom of God like a child? It means that we have a faith that is rooted in complete trust and abandonment to God's will. As a child looks with complete and total trust in those who care for them that they will be well protected and loved, so too are we called to such a level of trust and faith in God.

Jesus constantly calls us to deeper faith in his Father and reminds us that God is aware of all of our needs and is always providing for us. Jesus' very life is a model of trust in God the Father who is always reaching out to us with love.

For Reflection

*In what ways can I become more childlike in faith?
How might my actions and my own faith build trust
with the children I am working with this week?*

About the Children

The way we welcome children into our classrooms is very important. Our greetings and smiles will tell the children how much we enjoy being with them. As we welcome the children, it is also important to give a special welcome to their parents or caregivers. Invite them to stay in the classroom for part of the lesson or for the whole lesson. Share with the children that they can meet other new friends and do a fun activity in the Welcome Center. Take the time to explain the activity to both the children and their parents. Your joy and enthusiasm for helping these young children learn about God will encourage them to want to participate in the lessons.

A Few Suggestions . . .

One way we create a positive relationship with each of the children is by bending or kneeling down to their eye level to greet them. Ask each child to tell you something they enjoy doing, and share with them some fun things they will be doing in religion class. Encourage the parents or caregivers to help them make their name badges, and always share that you welcome their presence in the classroom.

More Background

For further reading and reflection see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* §§ 163–165, 301, 305; *Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church* § 27; *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* pages 37, 44, 59.

Lesson Planner

Faith Focus

Jesus welcomes all children.

Bible Story

"Let the Children Come to Me" (Based on Matthew 19:13-15, Mark 10:13-16 and Luke 18:15-17)

Enriching the Lesson

- RCL Benziger *Stories of God's Love* Music CD and companion Songbook, Song 1
- Visit our preschool Web site www.RCLBenzigerPreschool.com this week.

Chapter Objectives

After this week's lesson the children should be able to:

- recall the Bible story "Let the Children Come to Me."
- recognize that Jesus loves them.
- share with their family that Jesus loves them.

Materials Needed

In addition to the general supplies named on page 9 of this guide, you will need the following materials for teaching this lesson:

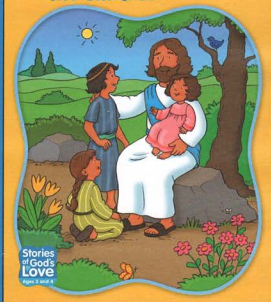
- name badge for each child made from stiff poster board cut into rectangles with edges rounded-off for safety
- glue and collage material or stickers for children to use to decorate name badges
- yarn to make name-badge necklaces
- closed Bible with bookmark placed at Matthew 19:13-15
- several washable markers of different colors

Prayer

God, Father of all,
you welcome us into your embrace
as Jesus welcomed the children.

Help me to grow in faith
so that I may share my faith and trust
in your great love
with the children in my care.
Amen.

1 Jesus Welcomes the Children



Let the Children Come to Me

Many people came to Jesus to listen to him. One day some people brought their children to Jesus. They wanted their children to be close to Jesus.

Some of Jesus' special friends and helpers told the people to stay back. They told them not to let the children get too close to Jesus and not to bother him.

When Jesus saw and heard what his helpers were doing, he stopped them and said, "Let the children come to me. Children are very special to God and close to him. You need to love and trust God as children do."

Jesus took the children into his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

BASED ON MATTHEW 19:13-15,
MARK 10:13-16 AND LUKE 18:15-17

Welcome

- Set up a Welcome Center each week. Include enticing materials that relate to the story for the week. This week provide fun art materials that the children can use to make or decorate a name badge.
- Bend or kneel down and greet the children as they enter. Introduce yourself and show the children your name badge. Direct the children to the Welcome Center and invite them to choose a marker for you or their parents to use to write their name in large letters on the name badge and then to decorate their name badge.
- Encourage the children to share the materials, and acknowledge children who display cooperative behavior with such statements as, "Sara, thank you for passing the green crayon to Nick."
- Assist the children in completing their name badges by punching holes in the corners of the name badges and using yarn to make name-badge necklaces that the children can place around their necks.

Gather

- As children begin to finish their work in the Welcome Center, begin to softly play song 1, the theme song, provided on the *Stories of God's Love* Music CD or another gathering song that you will regularly use to signal that it is time for the children to clean up and move to the Story Time Area.
- Encourage the children to tidy up the Welcome Center and help others if needed.
- Invite the children to the Story Time Area wearing their name-badge necklaces.

Teach

Introduce the Bible story.

- Sing the following welcome song to help the children learn one another's names to the tune of "Skip to My Lou," or create your own tune. Repeat the song until you have welcomed each child.

Hello (*child's name*). We're glad you're here!

Hello (*child's name*). We're glad you're here!

Hello (*child's name*). We're glad you're here!

Welcome to our class.

- Collect the name badges. Place them near the door for the children to pick up as they leave or save them for the next gathering.
- Show the children a Bible. Share with them that the Bible is a very special book that God gave us. The Bible is the holy book of our Church family. The Bible tells us many stories about God's love for us.
- Show the children the illustration on the teaching poster or the children's leaflet. Point to and name Jesus. Tell the children that Jesus told us the best stories about God's

love. Invite the children to listen closely to what Jesus told the children.

Tell the Bible story.

Invite a child to come up and open the Bible to the place marked by the bookmark, Matthew 19:13–15. Take the opened Bible, place the children's leaflet inside. Tell the children the name of the Bible story "Let the Children Come to Me." Refer to the teaching poster or the cover of the children's leaflet as you read the Bible story on the For My Family Page to the children.

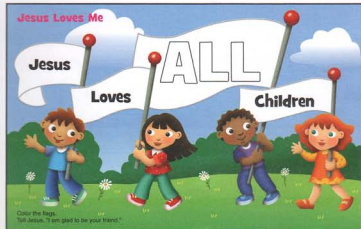
Recall the Bible story.

- Tell the children that you will play a game with them to help them remember the Bible story. Explain that you are going to say something from the Bible story but are going to leave out an important word. They will say the missing word. Model the activity. For example, while pointing to your shirt: I am wearing a _____. (*shirt*)
 - The people brought their _____ to see Jesus. (*children*)
 - The friends of Jesus told the people to _____. (*stay back*)
 - Jesus said, "Let the _____ come to me." (*children*)
 - Jesus took the children into his _____ and blessed them. (*arms*)
- Summarize by reminding the children that Jesus loves them as he loved the children in the Bible story.

Apply

Work on the children's leaflet activity.

- Distribute the children's leaflet. Give the children time to look at them. Talk about the different parts of the leaflet, explaining to them that the back page has a special message for their family.
- Call their attention to the picture on the center two pages and ask them to describe what they see. (*Children marching with flags.*) Tell them that the names of the children in the picture are Carlos, Kim, Abby and Jamal.
- Ask the children to listen carefully as you tell them what the flags say. (*Jesus loves all children.*) Have them color the



flags. Read all the words aloud together after they have completed the activity.

Connect with the child's life.

- Talk about how happy we are that we have the Bible so that we can hear stories about Jesus. Remind the children that today our Bible story told us Jesus loved the children. Point out to the children that the story also tells us that Jesus loves them. Encourage the children to tell their family, "Jesus loves me and Jesus loves you too!"
- Tell the children to take their leaflet home and share the Bible story on the For My Family Page and the activity with their family.

Pray

- Gather the children at the prayer table. Tell them that you will teach them a special prayer that they will say to begin their prayer at the end of religion class. Teach them: "My head I bow. / My hands I fold. / Now I talk to God." Note: Use this call to silence to prepare the children for prayer throughout the year.
- Introduce today's prayer by saying, "Today we will thank Jesus for loving the children and for loving us." Practice the prayer with the children.

Teacher: Thank you, Jesus, for loving the children.

Children: Thank you, Jesus, for loving the children.

Teacher: Thank you, Jesus, for loving me.

Children: Thank you, Jesus, for loving me.

Teacher: Together let us pray, "Amen."

All: Amen.

- Tell the children to quiet themselves for prayer as they quietly pray in their hearts "My head I bow . . ." (*Pause.*)
- Lead the children in prayer.

Additional Activities

Tell the Bible story using blocks.

Use this activity to help the children recall the Bible story.

- Tape the *Stories of God's Love* children punch-out figures to blocks to make stand-up figures.
- Put these figures and some additional blocks in the Story Time Area.
- Have the children use the figures to retell the Bible story.

Share your favorite things.

Use this activity to help the children share about themselves.

- Fold a piece of plain white paper into four sections.
- Write "My Favorite Things" on the top of the page.
- Invite the children to draw pictures of one of their favorite things in each square.
- Give assistance to children who need help.

My Teacher Welcomes Me

Background for the Catechist

Friends of Jesus

In the second part of the Great Commandment, Jesus calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves. (See Matthew 22:39.) When we love others as ourselves, our relationships with other people are characterized by caring, helping, sharing and communicating.

Jesus showed us the importance of communication with others as a basis of friendship. He told his disciples, "I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father" (John 15:15). Good communication is the foundation for any strong relationship.

We have been called together by God to be his Church, the community of the friends of Jesus Christ. We care about and for one another. We help one another. We share our material and spiritual blessings with one another. Together we experience, celebrate and communicate the love of Christ to all of those around us.

For Reflection

In what ways do I live out the call to love others as myself? What can I do to help the children reach out to others as friends?

About the Children

Three- and young four-year-olds use their growing mastery of language to engage with their environment and the people in their environment. They employ an increasing number of speech patterns that initiate and keep conversations going with others. Their growing awareness of self and others will enable them to begin to play simple games and participate for longer periods of time in small-group experiences. Most threes and young fours will enjoy sitting and listening to engaging stories for up to ten minutes but still need ample opportunities to move, interact and play with others.

A Few Suggestions . . .

Sharing and listening are key skills necessary for the development of social relationships. Modeling these skills and giving young children ample opportunities to practice them is important and can help children build new friendships with peers and adults. By asking children for their input and really listening to their responses, you will help children both learn how to engage in conversation and feel good about their contribution. Incorporating moments when children share with each other what they like or what they have done can begin to build the foundation for good listening skills.

More Background

For further reading and reflection see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* §§ 748–757, 787–789; *Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church* §§ 147–160; *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* pages 111–123.

Lesson Planner

Faith Focus

We gather as friends to learn about Jesus who welcomes us to be his friends.

Story

"Jamal and Abby"

Materials Needed

In addition to the general supplies named on page 9 of this guide, you will need the following materials for teaching this lesson:

- paper in variety of colors, weights and textures (construction paper, copy paper, card stock, sand paper) cut into the shapes of circles, squares, triangles and rectangles
- medium-sized soft ball
- punch-out figures of Jamal and Abby

Enriching the Lesson

- RCL Benziger *Stories of God's Love* Music CD and companion Songbook, Song 1
- Visit our preschool Web site www.RCLBenzigerPreschool.com this week.

Chapter Objectives

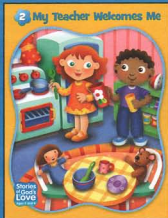
After this week's lesson the children should be able to:

- recall the story "Jamal and Abby."
- name some things that Jamal and Abby like about their religion class.
- share things they like to do in religion class.

Prayer

Lord God,
I love you with
all my heart, soul and mind.
Help me reach out in love to others,
welcoming all as friends.
May my example help encourage the children
to do the same.
Amen.

Jamal and Abby



Jamal tucked the fluffy yellow blanket around the baby doll in the toy bed. He was having so much fun playing in the family center during religion class. Abby was in the center with him. She was pretending to cook soup on the play stove.

Abby looked at Jamal and said, "I love to play pretend in the family center. Miss Diaz said we could play here for a little while longer. I'm going to make soup and lemonade for the dolls. Want to help me?"

Jamal smiled at his new friend and said, "Yum! I wish the lemonade was real. It's my favorite!"

Abby giggled and said, "It's just pretend, silly." "I know," he answered. "I like to pretend. I like to come to religion class so we can play together. What is your favorite thing here?"

"Ummm . . . I like Miss Diaz. She is so nice. And I like the way she tells us stories about Jesus," Abby said.

"Me too!" Jamal said. "And you know what Miss Diaz said? She said Jesus loves all of us!"

Abby smiled as she stirred her pretend soup. Stories about Jesus made her feel good inside. She wanted Miss Diaz to tell them more about Jesus. Abby couldn't wait to tell her Mom all about her new friend Jamal and the stories about Jesus Miss Diaz told them.

Welcome

- Provide crayons or markers; and paper of a variety of colors, weights and textures cut into shapes of squares, circles, rectangles and triangles large enough for the children to draw on. Note: Have the children wear their name-badge necklaces that they made in the previous session.
- Greet the children by name. Direct them to the Welcome Center and invite them to use the crayons and markers to draw and color a picture of something they like to do.
- Walk among the children as they are working. Address the children by name and invite them to talk about their favorite colors as they work on their drawings. Help the children get to know each other through conversation as they work, addressing one another by name.

Gather

- Play the gathering song that the children first heard last week to signal that it is time for the children to clean up and move to the Story Time Area. Have the children bring their pictures to the Story Time Area. After all the children have gathered in the Story Time Area, invite them to share their pictures or talk about who they played with during the welcome time.
- Tell the children that they are going to play a game that will help everyone get to know each other. Have them stand, hold hands to form one large circle and sit back down.
- Explain to the children that you are going to call out one of their names and roll a ball to that child, saying, "(Name), welcome to our religion class." Tell them that they will keep playing the game until everyone's name has been called out and the ball rolled to them.
- Begin playing the game.

Teach

Introduce the story.

- Show the children the teaching poster or the cover of the children's leaflet for chapter 2. Ask the children:
 - What do you think Jamal and Abby are doing? (*playing pretend at the family center*)
 - What might they be saying to each other? (*talking about their pretend play and their favorite thing in religion class*)
- Invite the children to listen carefully to discover what Jamal and Abby like about religion class.

Tell the story.

Tell the children the name of the story "Jamal and Abby." Tell the story using the punch-outs of Jamal and Abby to dramatize the dialog and actions of the story.

Recall the story.

Ask the children to raise both hands if they know the answers to the questions you ask them.

- Introduce Jamal and Abby once again using the punch-out figures. Refer to the brief description of each of the *Stories of God's Love* characters on page 16 of this guide. Hold up the punch-out figures of Abby and Jamal one at a time and ask the children to tell you the name of each character (*Abby and Jamal*) as you show them each punch-out.
- What did Miss Diaz tell Jamal and Abby about Jesus? (*Jesus loves all of us.*)



Apply

Work on the children's leaflet activity.

- Have several children assist you in handing out the children's leaflet for chapter 2. Have all the children look at the cover to recall the story and then open their leaflet to the activity pages.
- Provide crayons or markers and invite them to color the hearts next to their favorite things. Call upon each of the children by name and have them share their favorite things with the group. This sharing will help the children come to know each other better.
- Be sure to write the name of each of the children and the date on the back of their work.

Connect with the child's life.

- Call attention to the back page of the children's leaflet and tell the children that this page is for their family. Ask the children what things they will tell their families that they like to do in religion class.
- Remind the children to take their leaflet home and to share the story on the For My Family Page and the activity or ask their parents to reread the story with them.



Pray

- Gather the children at the prayer table.
- Introduce the prayer by saying, "Today we will thank Jesus for being our friend and for all of our friends."
- Quiet the children by having them repeat after you, "My head I bow. / My hands I fold. / Now I talk to God." (Pause.)
- Lead the children in prayer.

Teacher: Thank you, Jesus, for being my friend.

Children: Thank you, Jesus, for being my friend.

Teacher: Thank you, Jesus, for all of my friends.

Children: Thank you, Jesus, for all of my friends.

Teacher: Together let us pray, "Amen."

All: Amen.

Additional Activities

Use these activities as good ways for children to get to know each other, learn how to take turns and have some fun.

Build with blocks.

- Provide a variety of blocks in the Story Time Area in the room.
- Laminate the punch-out figures or cover them with clear contact paper, then tape them to blocks so they will stand.
- Hang the teaching poster near this area.
- Invite children to build structures for the "Stories of God's Love" children, such as a church, house or school.
- Talk to the children about making new friends and encourage them to work together as they build.

Play "Duck, Duck, Goose."

- Invite the children to sit in a circle on the floor. Select a child to walk around the outside of the circle, tapping each child gently on the shoulder saying, "duck."
- Whenever they choose, the child walking around will tap one child and say, "goose."
- The child tagged immediately gets up and chases the other around the outside of the circle. If the child being chased gets back to the other's spot before getting caught, the tagged child becomes the new person who walks around the circle choosing a duck or goose.