

**Wednesday, March 20<sup>th</sup> 2019**

**1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Lesson Plan: Life After Death (Q16)**

- **Welcome** children to the small group as they arrive. Take attendance.
- **Opening Prayer (10-15 minutes)**
  - Gather around your prayer table- turn on the candle, bless the children with holy water if you'd like
  - Opening Song- Give Us Clean Hands- follow this link (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onGbkeWkA64>) for the youtube video. You can also find it in the 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grade Small Groups Playlist. Encourage your small group to sing along!
  - Scripture Reading: John 11:25-26  

Using the Catholic Children's Bible, find this scripture reading together and have someone read it out loud. Ask your group: What do you think it means to "live and believe" in Jesus? How does someone who lives as a believer in Jesus act and treat others?
  - Write down any prayer intentions for the basket
  - Read the following prayer or do a spontaneous prayer. Begin and end with the sign of the cross. *Loving God, today we learn about your promise of eternal life. We are thankful that we believe in a loving God who promises us that death is not the end. Just as death on the cross was not the end of the story for Jesus, death is not the end of the story for any of us. Thank you for your promise of unity with you in heaven. Help us to have fun, stay safe, and grow in relationship with you in our session today. Amen.*
- **Check-ins (5-10 minutes)**
- **Journey of Faith (15-25 minutes)**
  - Before diving into this chapter, I think a few important things to emphasize are that 1) nobody who is alive knows exactly what happens after we die. We don't know the details of what heaven is like, but since we have faith and hope in Jesus, we believe that death is not the

end for us. And 2) when we talk about heaven, hell, and purgatory, we are not talking about physical places. This may be difficult for kids to grasp, but I think it's better to teach this when kids are young rather than correcting it later. Traditionally, we think of heaven as being above us and hell as below us but really heaven is union with God who is a spiritual being and hell is separation from God.

- Another thing to be aware of for you is that this can be a very sensitive subject to teach. My advice for you is to come at it from a very hopeful and positive place. We don't want kids to leave this lesson afraid of death or afraid of going to hell for making the smallest mistake, but instead hopeful that since we believe in a loving God and we believe in loving others like Jesus taught us, death is not the end and we will be united with our loved ones and God when our time on earth is ended.
- Begin with the dialogue on the front page and the question at the top of the first inside page. Emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers to this question; it's okay to use your imagination to think about what heaven is like! Or if you want to reframe the question around the idea that heaven isn't a physical place, you could ask "what do you think it means/feels like to be united with God forever?"
- Because of how sensitive this topic is, I would recommend you or your helper reading the text this time and taking time to stop and clarify things or answer questions as necessary. And that way, if there's something that comes up that might be a little bit too much for your particular group, you can either skip it or reframe it a bit. I think the sections on particular and final judgment might be a bit harsh for some kids. If you can find ways to soften the language of those parts while still getting the point across that God wants us to make good decisions so that we can all be united some day, go ahead and do that.
- The sections on hell and purgatory are pretty good. If children are having trouble understanding purgatory, give an example of things we have to prepare for here on earth. For example, you have to go through Middle School before you get to High School and you have to learn the basics of music before you can play an instrument in front of people.

- Skip the prayer section for now- we'll come back to it and use it as a closing prayer.
- Be sure to do the activity on the bottom right of the second inside page. It's good to come back to this idea that this is not about judgment and fear, but about making good, loving choices and showing our love for other people.
- You can choose if you'd like to do the activity on the back page or not. Some groups may really like to visualize how they imagine heaven, hell, and purgatory to be. Or you could focus on just heaven and have them do it on a separate piece of paper to hang up or bring home.
- **Activities (to fill the rest of the time you have)**
  - Group Lenten Observance- 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>

If your group came up with a group Lenten observance, be sure to catch up on that this week. Or if you sent something home for each child to do during Lent, ask them how it's going and if they've been keeping up with it. *Also, if you saved the Stations of the Cross for later, this week could be a good week to do that. Or you could save it for the week when we learn about Holy Week, that could also be a very appropriate lesson for it.*
  - Discussion on our experiences with death- 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>

If you're feeling brave and confident that you can redirect this conversation if necessary, you could have a bit of a discussion in your group about their personal experiences with death. These are the types of conversations we tend to avoid but they can be really powerful if people are comfortable sharing. *Be very clear that no one has to share if they don't want to.* Start by sharing something from your own life. Then invite the children to share their own stories, whether it's about a grandparent or a goldfish or a classmate. Feel free to encourage people to write down prayers for the prayer basket as this conversation happens, whether it's prayers for the people who passed away or for their loved ones who are mourning them. Some children may prefer to just write down prayer intentions instead of sharing out loud and that's fine too.
  - John 3:16 Coloring Sheet- 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>

I found a really beautiful coloring sheet with the famous Bible verse about eternal life. I think it's meant for older children, but first graders could probably still use it. You can find it under additional resources on the website.

- Wisdom from Pope Francis- Video- 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>

This clip includes some good wisdom from Pope Francis about the way we think about death and suffering. It's a very hopeful message.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0vPddYIIR4>)

- I Can Only Imagine- Video- 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>

This is the music video for a popular song that kids might know which is all about the wonder of what eternal life might be like.

([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N\\_lrrq\\_opng](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_lrrq_opng))

- **Closing Prayer (5 minutes)**

Pray the prayer from the second inside page of the text. When you get to the part where it says [name] invite children to say the names of anyone they know who has passed away who they would like to remember. If you'd like, you can pass around the candle from your prayer table as people are speaking people's names out loud.