

Object Lessons/Talks for Preschoolers

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For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:20, NIV)

God has revealed Himself to *all* people in and through His creation. Young children - infants thru preschool - are no exception. So if God has revealed Himself to all people through nature (creation), why do we need to help young children know God? Simply stated, we must help make God real to the children with our loving words and caring actions. We also lay the groundwork for these young children as we introduce them to Jesus and how, through Him, they can have their own personal relationship with God. We help children move along a path that starts with a *general understanding* of God (what nature reveals) towards a *special understanding* (knowing about God's love and forgiveness and the promise of eternal life). Knowing God exists is not enough. Children need to learn that God is loving. They need to understand what God did to demonstrate His love for us (*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8, NIV)*). And the great news is that children are capable of learning these things. By looking at how young children learn, how the brain develops and some different teaching techniques we can equip ourselves with all the knowledge and tools we need to help children learn about and know God.

Let's begin by understanding **how** children learn.

- First, young children are concrete, literal thinkers. Have you ever heard someone say, "*Open your heart and let God in...*"? This statement, taken in a very literal sense, is crazy. How do you open your heart? And if you could open your heart, wouldn't that kill you? If you can't see God how do you let Him into your heart? Abstract statements/concepts do not make sense to young children unless these concepts are explained in a way that they can understand.
- Second, children learn through active play and exploration. While adults might be perfectly capable and content with sitting through a sermon or listening to a Bible-based lecture, the same is not true for young children. Children greatly benefit from a Bible story/truth that is brought to life; that directly and actively involves them in the message.

- Third, children learn through relationships. The people in a child’s life have a tremendous impact on what a child learns about himself and his value. Relationships with others give meaning to words like “love” and “kindness”.
- Fourth, young children learn through their physical senses – this is their avenue of discovery for the world around them, a world full of God’s creations. Take, for instance, an apple. The apple is red; round; hard; tastes sweet or sour; smells sweet; the inside feels rough on the tongue while the skin feels smooth. A child will use all of his senses to investigate the apple. And when he is done we can simply say, “Thank *you God for apples.*”

Now that we have a better understanding of the **how**, let’s look at the **why**. Quite simply, young children are biologically prepared to learn (Pam Schiller). Research on brain development over the last few years has illuminated the human capacity to learn. Consider these facts about brain development that should inspire us to maximize this time of learning in a child’s life:

- Most of the brain’s cells are formed before birth; however, most of the connections among cells (synapses) are made during infancy and early childhood.
- Early experience and interactions with the environment are most critical in a child’s brain development
- A 3-year-old’s brain is two and a half times more active as an adult’s brain.
- Children’s brains have more synapses and the density of synapses remains high throughout the first ten years of life. Children are biologically prepared to learn. (Pam Schiller).
- Brain development is non-linear, it’s an ongoing process, but there are certain times when the brain is particularly efficient at specific types of learning.

We would be foolish not to capitalize on this small window of opportunity for learning. With deliberate planning and preparation we can help young children learn about and know God. Toddlers and Preschoolers aren't grown-ups so let's not try to teach them about God the way that we teach grown-ups. Jesus often used everyday objects – rocks, birds, seeds, flowers – to teach. Object lessons give children (and adults) tangible ways to view abstract ideas and messages from the Bible; they create an emotional connection to the abstract concept. Object lessons give you the ability to do more than just *tell* about what you are teaching because they *show* what you are trying to communicate in a way that’s easy to understand. Consider the following reasons for using object lessons:

- Learning Retention – Object lessons help in the retention of learning/understanding a concept because they allow the children to hear, see and experience it. This gets the brain more fully engaged and active in the learning process.
- Simplifying Concepts – When working with children it is very important to take complex lessons/concepts down to the child’s level of understanding. Object lessons let this happen because they take the message being taught and connect it to something with which the child is already familiar.
- Increased Involvement – Involving the children in a Bible story helps them learn and retain God’s Truth. Children have a short attention span, especially when they’re being asked to merely sit and listen. Object lessons engage and maintain a child’s interest by involving them in the “story telling” process.

It’s easy to see that object lessons are a valuable teaching tool. They provide a readily accessible way to reach children in a very tangible fashion. The following lessons are just some examples of ways to use object lessons to share Scripture with children. Hopefully these ideas will inspire you to step out of the box and try something new with the children in your ministry.

Acts of Kindness – Paper Cross

Supplies: sheet of construction paper (9X12), Bible

Scripture: *Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. (1 John 3:18, NLT)*

What to Do: Say, “God has instructed us to give of ourselves to meet the needs of others. We have each been given the greatest act of kindness that we’ll ever be given when Jesus died on the cross for us. What Jesus did needed no words to communicate to us how very much He loves us. This blank sheet of paper is like each one of us. When we’re born we’re like a blank piece of paper, no writing, no crinkles or folds—we’re waiting for life to happen. And God has a plan for each of us. He will put people and situations in our lives to help shape, mold, and form us into the people He wants us to be. Sometimes we experience easy times and sometimes life gets very challenging, but we can always trust that God has a plan, a plan for good, a plan to prosper us. And we can take from what we’ve been given, whether it’s material things or life lessons, and give back to others in kindness.” *(As you talk, fold the paper, showing how the paper continues to change. Talk about how as we get older, some people try to hold onto what they have, as if they just don’t have enough to share or give away. Soon, you’ve got the paper folded into a shape that’s much smaller than how it started out. Then begin to talk about acts of kindness and how we can trust God to make sure we have what we need, even when we give away to others. Each time you describe an act of kindness, tear another small piece from the paper. Soon you will be left with an oddly shaped, folded paper but in all of that giving away, you never ran out of paper. Tell the kids that what you were left with, this small, torn, folded paper, helps you remember the greatest act of kindness that has ever been given to you – to anyone. Then slowly unfold the paper to reveal a cross.)* Say, “When Jesus died on the cross, He showed us the most magnificent act of kindness that we will ever receive.” *(Nothing else needs to be said. Seeing the cross take shape from that small, folded, torn piece of paper says it all.)*

Other ideas for this object lesson:

- Don’t pretend, really love (Romans 12:9, NLT)
- Help those in need (Romans 12:13, NLT)

Goodness in our words

Supplies: Bubble wrap approx 4 ft (bigger bubbles), bubble juice, Bible

Scripture: *Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (Ephesians 4:29, NLT)*

What to Do: *(Goodness insists on that which is good. In other words, our heart's desire should always be seeking after God's goodness above all else. That is much easier said than done! Sometimes we are put into situations that make it very challenging to "do and say good to others". And sometimes we get so focused on pursuing what we know is right in God's eyes that we find ourselves correcting and "fixing" others to show them where they are going wrong in their own pursuit of God's goodness. That's why it helps to take a breath, step back and remember that whatever we say or do to someone else (great or small), it is like we are doing that to Jesus Himself (Matt 25:40). Are our words and actions truly reflecting how you would be treating our Savior if He were standing right in front of us?) Say, "Everything God created is good (1 Tim 4:4); we are all precious in His eyes. And we need to remember to see each other through God's eyes and treat each other with God's goodness. What do you do when you need to ship something that is very fragile, delicate, and precious? (Allow responses) Right, you protect that item: wrap it up in bubble wrap, put in the packing peanuts, securely tape the box and make sure your precious treasure is safe and secure before sending it on its way." (Have a volunteer – another teacher, DO NOT use a child for your volunteer (see "NOTE" below) – come sit down in a chair in the front and wrap the bubble wrap around her like a robe/shawl) Say, "Now picture each one of us wrapped up in a robe of bubble wrap because we are each special and precious – just like I wrapped up my friend here. But what happens when you treat someone else with mean words or actions?" (Allow responses) "What happens when what you do and say to others is not showing God's goodness and love?" (Allow responses) "It's like you're popping a bubble in that robe of protective bubble wrap each time you treat someone with anything other than God's goodness." (Look at your volunteer) "Miss Friend, I am going to say some very mean things to you, but I am just pretending. I don't really mean any of these things. Remember, I am just pretending, okay? (Let your teacher volunteer respond and then continue. Now give three or four examples of things the children might say to one another by saying those things to your volunteer. For instance, "you're not my friend", "why do you wear clothes like that", "you're not invited*

to my party”, or “why doesn’t your mommy pick you up from school”. You know your children so choose examples that you are hearing in your class/school. Each time you say the yucky words, pop a bubble in your volunteer’s robe.) Say, “Oh my goodness, do you see how say Miss Friend is? I have really hurt her just by using mean, ugly words. Do you know what is even sadder? You can’t fix those bubbles, once a bubble is popped it stays popped, the damage is done. You have hurt a friend with your words. BUT - You can go back and admit that you made a sad choice. You can show love and kindness and try to make the situation right again. You can try to fix those hurt feelings. Yeah! First, you need to apologize to God and tell Him that you are sorry for using such mean words. *(Stop and say a quick prayer to God to apologize for being mean to another person)* Then you need to apologize to the person you have hurt. *(Stop and look at your volunteer)* “Miss Friend, I am so sorry for saying such mean, ugly things to you. I didn’t mean to hurt you and I will try to never do this again. Will you please forgive me?” *(Allow your volunteer to forgive you then give each other a big hug. The children need to see you both mend your relationship.)* “When we admit our mistakes, our sad choices, we are showing God’s goodness. Even though we can’t put air back into the bubbles we have popped, we can try to make things right again with a friend and put a smile on their faces with kind words. It’s sort of like this... *(Now say some kind things to your volunteer. Each time you say something kind blow some bubbles into the air to put a smile back on her face.)* See, we can always go back and try to fix a relationship. It’s never too late to stop popping the bubble wrap and start blowing some bubbles!

NOTE: Never use a child as a volunteer for this lesson. No matter how many times you say that you are pretending, the mean words will hurt. The children will be shocked when they hear you say “mean things” to your teacher volunteer and will learn so much from you modeling an apology to your teacher volunteer and seeing you both mend your relationship.

Other ideas for this object lesson:

- Kind words are like honey (Proverbs 16:24, NLT)
- Words support those who stumble (Job 4:4, NLT)
- Gentle words (Proverbs 15:4, NLT)
- Gracious words (Colossians 4:6, NLT)

Put God First

Supplies: Mason jar, Rice (enough to fill mason jar), golf ball, a pitcher (for pouring the rice), Bible

Scripture: *Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. (Matthew 6:33, NLT)*

What to Do: *(Before you begin, put the rice into the pitcher so that the mason jar is empty. We need to remember to put God first each and every day. As we accept God's gift of forgiveness, we need to remember to also thank God for all He has done for us. We need to have an attitude of gratitude. We all have busy lives. In fact, sometimes we get caught up in the idea that in order to be successful we MUST be busy. Often our children get pulled into this whirlpool of busyness too. They have school, play dates, gymnastics, dance, sports, etc.—before you know it, the day is over and you are all exhausted. Was it a successful day? Perhaps, but did we remember to include God in our day? Did we remember to put God first?)*

Say, "The Bible tells us that we should spend time with God every day. When we do spend time with God we grow closer to Him – God wants to spend time with us; He wants to be close to us every day. But sometimes we get really busy and try to squeeze God in at the end of our day. Let me show you what I mean." *(Hold up the empty mason jar)* "Pretend that this jar is like one day in our lives. Each day when we wake up in the morning our day is just about to begin so it's still empty, just like this jar." *(Hold up a pitcher)* "See this pitcher? It's filled with rice. Let's pretend that rice is all of the stuff that fills our day, all of the busy things that we do every day." *(Hold up the golf ball)* "And let's also pretend that this golf ball is our time with God. The ball is not God, it's just helping us see what it's like to have time with God in our day. So, in the morning when we first wake up, before we even get out of bed, our day is empty, like the jar." *(Now get the pitcher of rice and as you describe things that the children probably do in a normal day, pour rice into the jar. You want to end the day with the child getting into bed and the last of the rice going into the jar.)* "First we get out of bed. Then we say 'good morning' to our family, have breakfast, brush our teeth, get dressed, get ready for school, load up our backpacks, drive to school, go to our class, say 'hi' to our teachers and friends, have circle time, go to music, go to the playground, have lunch, play in our classrooms, get picked up from school, have a snack at home and play, have dinner, take a bath, brush our teeth, read a book, and finally, at the very end of our very busy day, we climb into bed. And just as we're about to fall asleep we

remember something very important. We remember that we were supposed to spend time with God! So as we lay down on our pillows, we quietly start a prayer to God, 'Dear God, thank You for this day, thank You for....' (*Quietly let your prayer stop as you pretend to fall asleep*) "Wow – before we know it, we fall asleep and we didn't even get to finish our prayer to God because we were so tired from such a busy day. It's great to get to end our day with God and to fall asleep spending time with Him. But we didn't really set aside time in our day for God. We waited until the very end of the day and tried to squeeze in some time with God. That's not so good. Really we should put God first and squeezing Him in at the end of the day is not putting God first. It's like this." (*Get the golf ball and put it in the very full mason jar on top of the rice. Now try to put the lid onto the mason jar and screw it closed. The lid should not be able to screw on because it's too full.*) "Oh, that's not good. See, we didn't leave room for God in our day. By trying to squeeze Him in at the end of the day, He just didn't fit. God deserves much better than this, doesn't He?" (*Hold up the mason jar again*) "What if we could try this day all over again – get a 'do over'? Sometimes we all need a do-over. Everyone shout, 'DO-OVER!!!!'" (*Let the children shout it out*) "Great! I love do-over's. Let me pour all of the rice back into our pitcher to make our jar empty again." (*Take the golf ball out and set it on the table. Pour the rice back into the pitcher and get ready for the do-over.*) "Now we're ready for our do-over. It's morning again, and our day is empty like this jar." (*Hold up the empty jar*) "Before we do anything else – before we even put our feet on the floor, let's spend time with God. Let's put God first in our day. Let's start our day by talking to God and making Him first." (*Quietly say a little prayer to God thanking for a new morning, thanking Him for what the day holds, and asking Him to help us show His love and kindness to others. Then put the golf ball into the empty mason jar.*) "Whew! That feels awesome! I love putting God first! Now let's keep going with our day." (*Repeat all of the things that you did before to fill your day, pouring rice into the mason jar as you talk. Pour carefully, shaking the rice down a little bit. It should all just barely fit into the jar.*) "Wow, that's a lot of stuff we do every day. We're at the end of our busy day with the same busy stuff that we did the first time. But now look what we can do." (*Pick up the lid and screw it tightly onto the mason jar. Tip the mason jar to show the children that the lid was able to close tightly.*) "Whoa! We did all of the same busy stuff but we put God in our day first." (*Point to the golf ball on the bottom of the jar*) "God fit in our day with all of our busy stuff because we put Him in first. When we tried to squeeze God in at the end of the day, there just wasn't room.

But when we start the day with God, when we remember to put God first, spending some quiet time with Him at the beginning of our day, everything else falls into place and still fits in. And God, above anyone or anything else, deserves that first place every day.”

Other ideas for this object lesson:

- Praise God each morning (Psalm 59:16)
- God is great (Psalm 70:4)
- Love the Lord (Mark 12:30)
- Cannot serve two masters (Luke 16:13)

Patience: Slow to Anger (You can find several references to this story on the internet)

Supplies: a piece of wood, several nails, cup (big enough to hold the nails), hammer, Bible

Scripture: *Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city. (Proverbs 16:32)*

What to Do: *(Patience seems to scare so many people, yet it is a God-given strength that we do have within each one of us. Have you ever heard someone say, “Don’t ever pray for patience!!!” That’s just crazy. Pray for it and watch God give you opportunities to develop and strengthen the patience within you and see how you change. Grow that patience and let others see God at work in you. This lesson will show children how a quick, angry response to someone can have a very lasting impact.)* Say, “One kind of patience that God gives us is the kind that means ‘slow to anger’. Being slow to anger can be a huge challenge but I know that God can help us with this. Let me tell you a story about a young boy. This boy had a real problem with losing his temper quickly with his friends and family. One day he came home from school and asked his father to help him with his temper. The father told the boy that every time he lost his temper with someone, the boy had to go hammer a nail in their fence. The boys agreed. So each evening the boy would come home, go out back to the fence and hammer a nail in the fence for each person with whom he lost his temper. The first day, the boy nailed more than 20 nails into the fence.” *(Stop and take some nails and hammer them into the wood.)* “That means that he lost his temper more than 20 times that day. The next day was about the same – 20 more nails in the fence.” *(Hammer a few more nails into the wood.)* “After several days of hammering 20 nails, the number the boy had to hammer started to go down. For a few days he only had to hammer 15 nails, then 10, and then 5

nails. Finally, one day the boy came home and told his father that he didn't need to hammer any nails into the fence. He was so excited! He had not lost his temper with anyone. His father was very happy for him but then told his son there was one more thing he needed to do. Now the boy had to go out and pull all the nails from the fence. It took a few hours, but the boy pulled every single nail out of the fence. The boy filled a big bucket with the nails and brought them inside to show his father.” *(Stop the story and pull the nails from the piece of wood and put them in a cup.)* “Again, the father was very proud of his son. Then the father said, ‘Son, now I want you to come outside with me to the fence.’ They both went outside, stood by the fence, and the father said, ‘Son, look at the fence and tell me what you see.’ The boy looked and said, ‘I see a bunch of holes in the fence from where I hammered the nails.’ The father said, ‘You have done well my son, and have learned to slow your anger. But look at the holes – this fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, your words hurt others and leave scars just like these holes.’” *(Now lift up the piece of wood and let the children see the holes. You don't need to say anything else as this is a very visual lesson. Let the children touch the wood and the holes.)*

Other ideas for this object lesson:

- Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Endurance (James 1:2-3)
- Control your temper (Ecclesiastes 7:9)
- Clothe yourself in patience (Colossians 3:12)

Gentleness – A Pliable Heart

Supplies: play-doh, a wooden building block, Bible

Scripture: *And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9a, NKJV)*

What to Do: *(Having gentleness in our hearts means being ready and open to having God transform us. So often the characteristics of gentleness are associated with weakness. And in today's world, weakness is not seen as a strong or desired characteristic. However, gentleness is a “softness” that is needed for God to be able to mold and change us. This addresses a transformation in the area of our will. We need to have a soft, pliable, gentle heart and mind in order for God to transform our will.)* Say “Look what I have with me today, play-doh and a block!” *(Show the children the play-doh and the block)* “The Bible tells us that God wants to transform us. Do you know what

transform means?” *(Allow responses)* “Transform means to change something or make something different. So God wants to change us. I don’t mean He wants to turn us into monkeys or something silly like that.” *(Children may want to chime in with some other silly ideas – give them that opportunity.)* “I mean God wants to change the way we think so that we are thinking about Him and living in a way that shows others God’s love for all of us. But God can’t do that unless we let Him. Let me show you what I mean.” *(Hold up the block)* “See this block – it’s very hard.” *(Bang the block on the floor or table)* “And it doesn’t really bend.” *(Try to bend, squeeze, and squish the block – exaggerate your efforts and show the kids your “muscle face” as you try several different ways to change the block.)* “Whew – that’s tough. I can’t bend the block or change its shape. The block is hard and not willing to change. If we are like this block – hard and unwilling to be transformed – God can’t help us change the way we think. But...” *(Put down the block and hold up the play-doh)* “This play-doh is very different than the block. It’s much softer.” *(Bang the play-doh on the floor or table)* “Oh yeah – that was much quieter than the block. And the play-doh is much softer than the block – the play-doh likes to be changed and transformed into new things.” *(Squeeze, squish, bend, roll, and twist the play-doh all different ways)* “Wow! That was way easier than the block. I didn’t even use ALL of my muscles and I could change the play-doh into any shape I wanted. The play-doh is soft and willing to change. This is what God is telling us in the Bible. He wants to be able to change, or transform, the way we think – but we have to be willing to let Him change us.” *(Hold the block in one hand and the play-doh in the other)* “If we are more like the block – hard and unbending – then we aren’t willing to be changed. But if we are more like the play-doh - soft, gentle, and bendable - then we are willing to let God change us and shape us. God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness, doesn’t that make weakness a very powerful tool?! Are you more like a stubborn, wooden block or a gentle, soft piece of play-doh?” *(Allow responses)* “I don’t know about you, but I want to be like the play-doh so God can transform me!”

Other ideas for this object lesson:

- Plans to prosper (Jeremiah 29:11) or Spirit of Gentleness (Galatians 5:22-23) – *At the end of the lesson modify the words to focus on not just having a pliable will but on the plans God has for us.* “When we are like the play-doh, God can shape and change us to conform to His plans for our lives.” *(Show the children how you can shape the play-doh into several different forms – ball, square, ‘snake’)* “Just

like us, the play-doh needs to be softened before we can discover its purpose. When we are filled with the spirit of gentleness, we are softening our hearts and our wills—ready to expose God’s plans and purpose for our lives. God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness, doesn’t that make weakness a very powerful tool?!” *(Hold the block in one hand and the play-doh in the other)* “Are you more like a stubborn, wooden block or a gentle, soft piece of play-doh?”

Holy Spirit Within Us

Supplies: glove (fun, bright colored one if you have it), Bible

Scripture: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. (Acts 1:8a)*

What to Do: *(God gave us the Holy Spirit to live in us when we invite God into our hearts.*

God empowers us and guides along His path through the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit, we can live a life for Him.) Say, “I have this great, new glove. Don’t you just love it?” *(Lift up the glove to show the children)* “Watch what my glove can do.” *(Walk over to one of the children)* “Give me a high-five!!” *(Use the empty glove and try to give a high-five. It won’t work well).* “Wait a minute. Let’s try this instead.” *(Walk over to another child)* “Let’s shake hands!” *(Try to shake hands using the empty glove - and that won’t work so well.)* “Okay – maybe that didn’t work so well either. But watch this awesome glove hold a piece of paper!” *(Hold a piece of paper in one hand and try to get the empty glove to hold onto the paper - and that won’t work so well.)* “Maybe if you tell the glove to hold the paper it will listen. When I count to three I want everyone to shout ‘HOLD THAT PAPER!’ Ready? One-Two-Three: ‘HOLD THAT PAPER!’” *(Again, try to get the empty glove to hold onto the paper. Let the paper just fall to the floor.)* “I thought this glove would be so cool but it can’t even hold a piece of paper, shake a hand, or even give a high-five to a friend. Why can’t this glove do anything?!!” *(Allow responses – some of the children will most likely tell you to put your hand into the glove.)* “That’s a good idea. Let me try putting my hand into the glove first. Let’s try this again.” *(Go back to the first friend and give a high-five, then shake the hand of the second friend and finally, try to hold the piece of paper.)* “Wow! That worked!! The glove could do lots of different jobs once I filled it with my hand. When it was empty, it was powerless but when the glove was filled – whoa! It was awesome! My glove just needed to be filled with the power to do its jobs.” *(Take your hand back out of the glove)* “The Bible tells us that we’re like an empty glove until we let God’s love into our hearts. And when we do that…” *(Put your hand back into the glove and wiggle your*

fingers around) “God gives us the Holy Spirit to live in us, to stay with us, and to help us. God fills us up with the Holy Spirit to give us the power to live our lives the way God wants us to - just like filling the glove with your hand gave the glove the power to do its jobs.” *(Now give the children a little example of letting God’s love into their hearts because that’s an abstract concept that we need to help make concrete for them.)* “Do you know how we let God’s love into our hearts?” *(Allow responses)* “Maybe we can go to the “God aisle” at Walmart and take a box of “love” off of the shelf? Then we can just pour the love into our hearts.” *(They’ll laugh and shout “NO!”)* “What if I go into the office and ask for the “love folder” and get love that way?” *(They’ll laugh and shout “NO!”. Soften your voice to explain this part.)* “All we need to do to get God’s love into our hearts is ask God. We pray to God and know that He always listens when we pray. So we can pray and ask God for His love right now. He will hear us and He will give us His love and it will be in our hearts forever. No one can ever take God’s love from us. Let’s try. Close your eyes, fold your hands together, and bow your heads so we can focus on God with our prayer. God – thank you for loving us and thank you for always listening to us. God, right now we ask you to fill our hearts with your wonderful love. In Jesus’ Name we pray – Amen.” *(Look up at the children)* “Wow – that was pretty easy. Did you know it would be so simple and easy to let God’s love into our hearts? How awesome!!

Other ideas for this object lesson:

- Created in Jesus to do good works (Ephesians 2:8-10)
- Do all things through Christ (Philippians 4:13)
- God’s power at work within us (Ephesians 3:19-20)

Unity in Christ

Supplies: roll of toilet paper (a double roll works best - before the lesson tear off a square of toilet paper for each child in the class), Bible

Scripture: *Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)*

What to Do: (We are called to work together as one even though we are many different parts. We are one body in Christ. This sounds like a simple concept, but it can sometimes be

very challenging to work together. However, that unity that God has given to us, the bond through Christ Jesus, is where we will find strength.) Say, "I'm going to teach you something from the Bible with this!" (*Show the children the roll of toilet paper*) "Crazy, huh?! I know you don't usually think of the Bible when you see a roll of toilet paper, but just wait and see. This toilet paper will help us understand what it means to have unity, which is strength in togetherness, in the body of Christ. You see, a roll of toilet paper is actually made up of lots of little squares connected together." (*Unroll the toilet paper a little bit and tear off three or four squares*) "When the squares are connected together they form one large roll that is very strong. But, if you take a square off of the roll, it loses its strength and can be easily torn." (*Tear off a square and show the children how easily you can tear it in half*) "I want you to try it too. I'm going to give everyone a square of toilet paper that has been taken off of the roll. After everyone gets a square we're going to our squares in half with just our fingers." (*Hand a toilet paper square to each child*) "Hold your square in front of you with just your fingertips. When I count to three we are going to tear our squares. Are you ready? One, two, three and tear!" (*Tear the squares*) "Wow! That was so easy. We didn't have to use anything but our fingertips to tear the squares of toilet paper. That's because these squares have been separated, or taken off, from the big roll of toilet paper." (*If the children want to keep tearing their squares, let them. It's easy to clean up the pieces of paper. The extra tearing reinforces the message and it provides great fine motor development.*) "Now I want to show you what happens when I try to tear the toilet paper that is still connected together." (*Get the roll of toilet paper and try to tear the whole roll in half. Try really hard, exaggerate your efforts, pretend to get really tired from trying. You shouldn't be able to tear the roll of toilet paper at all - make sure you don't - it's too strong.*) "Whoa! I'm using all of my muscles and no matter what I do, I just can't tear this toilet paper!! It's way too strong when all of the squares stay connected together. That is so cool. We are like the little squares of toilet paper on this roll. When we're connected together, we are stronger, but when we are separated, torn off, from the roll, we are weaker. That's what the Bible tells us. When we're connected together through Jesus, we form a unified whole—one body in Christ. When we stay connected and function as one body in Christ we find strength through God and can fulfill God's plans for our lives. We are so much stronger and can withstand the challenges that life in this world brings to us when we are connected together through Christ Jesus. Thank you God!"

Other ideas for this object lesson:

- Live in unity (Psalm 133:1)
- Living as one (John 17:22)
- Unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3)
- Bear with each other (Colossians 3:13-15)
- Live in harmony (Romans 15:5-6)

Thankfulness: Focus on the doughnut and not the hole (original idea from Andrew Hewlett)

Supplies: doughnut (real one with icing and sprinkles or a pretend one; if possible, have a doughnut for each child to share after the lesson), Bible

Scripture: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6, NIV)*

What to Do: *(It is important to remember what we have instead of looking to the things that we do not. This lesson applies to adults just as much as children—as do any of our Bible lessons. There are times when you might find yourself focusing on what you don't have. Sometimes it is pure envy, where you covet the "stuff" someone else has. But other times you're actually worried about what you don't have or what might or might not happen. In either case your attention is drawn away from the many blessings that God has already lovingly placed in your life. The most precious gifts God has given to each of us are His mercy and grace. There is a cute quote/lesson from Andrew Hewlett and it goes like this, "As you go through life make it your goal—to focus on the doughnut and not the hole." Add some movements to that and now it's a simple, little fingerplay that will help us remember to focus on the things with which we've already been blessed instead of looking to what we think we need/want.)* Say, "Guess what I have today?! Check it out!" *(Show the children your doughnut. ALL of the kids know what a doughnut is.)* "Doesn't this doughnut look so yummy?" *(Allow responses)* "If I wanted to give you this doughnut would you take it?" *(Allow responses – they probably all want the doughnut.)* "Are you sure you'd want this doughnut? There's a big hole in the middle." *(Put your finger through the hole and allow the children to respond.)* "When someone gives me a doughnut I don't look at it and get upset because there's a hole in the middle. Do you?" *(Allow responses)* "In fact, I'm usually pretty excited about getting a doughnut. Aren't you?" *(Allow responses)* "That's exactly how life should be. Each day we can focus on what we have. God promises that He will always take care of us. He blesses us each day in so many ways. But, when our focus is on the "hole" that means that we're thinking about what we don't have or we're worrying about what

might come next. When we focus on the “hole” then we often miss blessings - moments we can enjoy and things for which we can be thankful. That’s kind of sad, isn’t it?”
(Allow responses) “God promises that when we give all of our worries to Him, He will take care of us. And God always keeps His promises. God wants us to focus on what we have, the doughnut, and not the “hole”, what we don’t have. I want to teach you a little rhyme to help you remember to focus on the doughnut and not the hole.” *(Teach the children the rhyme with movements. If possible, provide a doughnut for each of the kids at the end of the lesson – they will love that.)*

As you go through life *(point out for “go”)*

Make it your goal *(hold your arms up like a “goal” for football)*

To focus on the doughnut *(make a big round circle with your arms overhead)*

And not the hole! *(make a small circle with your hands and shake your head “no”)*

Other ideas for this object lesson:

- Do not worry (Matthew 6:27)
- Focus on today (Matthew 6:34)

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Other Great Resources:

iTunes

<http://www.stevespanglerscience.com>

<http://www.creativeyouthideas.com>

<http://www.kidssundayschool.com/>

<http://www.sharonministries.org.za/KidsObjects.htm>

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

<http://ministry-to-children.com/category/object-lessons/>

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