

Exploring L.I.F.E.

(Living In Faith Everyday)

**A Midweek Resource designed to be used in conjunction
with Exploring Faith Sunday School**

My Life and Creation

5 lessons available on this theme

Written by **JOYCE BROWN**

Illustrated by Dan Brown

Editorial/Design Team

Linda Ray MillerDevelopment Editor

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Roy Wallace.....Designer

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Publications

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Exploring L.I.F.E. Tips

Tips for making your Exploring L.I.F.E. program run smoothly

Exploring L.I.F.E.:

- °Uses small group relationships to help kids grow in faith.
- °Offers options --- six 20-minute components. After participating in the Good News Gathering, small groups rotate through activity centers you choose to use:
 - Craft Corner
 - Music & More
 - Games Galore
 - Snack Shack
 - Mission Possible
- °Offers life links. These reflection/discussion ideas are sprinkled throughout to help kids connect Bible stories to their own life experiences.
- °Offers teaching tips. Provides a bit of on-the-job-teacher-training by telling WHY we have suggested some activities.
- °Uses the same cycle as Cokesbury's Exploring Faith Sunday School Curriculum, but can be used by churches using another curriculum on Sunday mornings.
- °Honors the theory of multiple intelligences (first postulated by Howard Gardner), telling us that everyone is born with the capacity to learn in many ways but that each of us has preferred ways of learning. Verbal learners enjoy written and spoken words; logical learners enjoy reasoning and problem solving; visual learners often draw or paint and enjoy guided imagery; musical learners enjoy singing and playing instruments; physical learners enjoy sports, dance, games, and building; social learners enjoy talking, leading, and working in groups; self-smart learners enjoy working alone and reflecting quietly.

Written by Joyce Brown, who teaches children on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights at Western Hills UMC in Fort Worth, TX. Joyce also volunteers for a multi-cultural elementary school and a latch-key kid program. As a Cokesbury Curriculum Representative, Joyce helps churches choose and use curriculum resources for children, youth, and adults.

Staff Needed

- °Greeters – to welcome and register kids
- °Guides – one adult leader for each group of 10 children
- °Good News Guru – a person comfortable leading large groups of kids
- °Activity Center Leaders – choose the centers you wish to use, then recruit adults who enjoy a specific activity.

Teaching Tip: Caring adults are your most important resource. Kids sometime forget what we teach them, but they seldom forget how we treat them.

Color Code for Crowd Control

Assign each group a color. Try this rainbow-related system:

- red – kindergarten
- orange – grade 1
- yellow– grade 2
- green– grade 3
- blue– grade 4
- navy – grade 5
- purple – grade 6

Teaching Tip: This color-code system gives children tools to help them find their leader and the reserved seating for their group each week, thus encouraging responsible behavior.

Give each guide a canvas bag in the correct color for the age-level. Guides will carry the color-coded bags as the small groups move through activity centers. The bags will store copies of the week's EXPLORING L.I.F.E. curriculum, attendance records, a pencil, and a legal pad of paper.

Have greeters give kids name tags with color-coded ribbons on the first day the children attend. . (At the end of each group meeting, each guide will collect the group's name tags and store them in the bag for use in subsequent meeting.)

Clear the gathering room of chairs, so that everyone can sit on the floor. Designate a place for each small group to sit by stuffing color-coded plastic table cloths in five-quart ice cream buckets and placing the buckets on the floor.

Begin each week with a gathering of all participants---kids, guides, activity center leaders---to introduce the theme and present the Bible story. Using a soft voice, guides (who have arrived early, donned their personal color-coded name tags, and are sitting beside their color-coded buckets) will welcome each kid to the reserved area and help everyone get settled by talking to them informally.

Teaching Tip: Seeing all their adult leaders in the gathering sends kids the message that this time of hearing the Bible story has special importance.

My Life and Creation

5 lessons available on this theme

Lesson 1:

Our Awesome God

Genesis 1-1-5; 14-19 (God created light, day, and night)

Key Verse: Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds!” (Psalm 66:3)

Main Idea: God created our awesome universe.

Good News Gathering

- Begin each week with a gathering of all participants—kids, guides, activity center leaders—to introduce the theme and present the Bible story.
- Small-group guides (*who have arrived early and are sitting in the gathering area*) will use a soft voice to welcome members of their groups and will help everyone get settled by talking with them informally. Try asking, “**What was the best thing that happened to you today?**”

Before gathering time, ask your music leader to be prepared to lead the group in singing the song “Shout to the Lord” (many children will know the song because they listen to Christian music radio stations).

Teaching Tip: Seeing all their adult leaders in the gathering sends kids the message that this time has special importance.

Teaching Tip: Modeling the behavior we want from kids solves many discipline problems. If we want kids to sit still in the gathering time, adults should be sitting quietly.



Life Link

Resources/Supplies:

paper and pencil for guides

As children gather in small groups, ask guides to act as the scribe (writer) for their groups. Ask each group to list things that happened to them this week that “created” happiness for them.

Then ask them to list things they did to “create” happiness for others. (*Note to guides: after the children list things done for people, you may want to stimulate a longer list by asking what they did to “create” happiness for animals or plants.*)

Let a child from the group with the longest list (*total of both lists*) bring the list to the front of the gathering area. Read the list aloud.

Say:

It’s good to read such a long list from creatures who created happiness this week. We are created to be creatures who can create. Created, creatures, create—those words sound alike. Can you think of another word that sounds much the same (*creator, creation*).

Pantomime Players

Resources/Supplies:

twelve 9" strands of round elastic

thirty 12" black crepe paper streamers

thirty 12" yellow crepe paper streamers

Supplement 1A

Before gathering tie the strands of elastic into twelve 2 ½-inch diameter bracelets. Tie black crepe paper streamers to six of the bracelets and yellow crepe paper streamers to the other six bracelets. These props will be used by pantomime players to depict light and darkness.

At gathering time hold up your Bible and say:

Today’s Bible story is the very first story in the very first book in our Bible. Can you name the book? (*Genesis*) Do you know the meaning of the word Genesis? (*beginning*)

Teaching Tip: By reading only the longest list, you are encouraging all groups to work without wasting time.



Today's story is about a creator and the beginning of a creation. Who is our awesome creator? (*God*)

For hundreds of years, long before they had created an alphabet, and long before they had begun to write things down, people looked into the night sky and wondered. They wondered about the softly glowing moon. They wondered about the velvety darkness which stretched up and away and around and around. They wondered about the tiny dots of light sprinkled in that velvety darkness.

They wondered at the mystery of it all. And deep down inside themselves, in a quiet, still space, they knew—knew with all their hearts, and souls, and minds, that something more powerful than people was responsible for the velvety darkness, the softly glowing moon, and the glittering, shimmering stars.

Gathered around their nighttime campfires, the people told the story of the beginning of time. They told the story for hundreds of years. And finally, when the people had created an alphabet, the people began to write the story down.

Let a strong reader read aloud Genesis 1:1-5. Let a second child read aloud Genesis 1:14-19.

Let's tell the story again. Our words will be different, but the story will have the same meaning.

We will use pantomime players to help tell our version of today's Bible story. When you pantomime something, you act it out without saying a word. You act the story with the way you move your body and with the expressions on your face, but you never say a word. Pantomime Players must be really good listeners. They must listen carefully as I tell the story and they must act out the story. But they must never say a word.

Today's story includes darkness, lots and lots of darkness (*hold up one of the black bracelets*). Today's story includes light, lots and lots of light (*hold up one of the yellow bracelets*).

For the pantomime players today, we will need:

- some people to be the whirling, swirling, hovering darkness
- some people to be the shimmering, sparkling, twinkling light

Listen as I read the story and imagine some hand and face actions you could make to pantomime the story.

Read aloud “Hovering Darkness, Shimmering Light” (*See Supplement 1A on page 17*)

Next, choose six pantomime players from children who volunteer. Use these ideas to form two lines facing the audience:

1. Have three children stand in a line at the front of the stage, facing the audience. Have them stretch out their arms so that they are standing fingertip to fingertip with the persons on each side (this will keep players from invading the space of another player). Then have them sit down.
2. Have the other three children stand in a line behind the seated players and stretch out their arms to create personal space.
3. Give black bracelets to the middle player on the front row and to the end players on the second row. Give yellow bracelets to the remaining three players.

Remind the players that they are to use only the expressions on their faces and the movements of their hands and heads to pantomime today’s story.

Read the story “Hovering Darkness, Shimmering Light” again. (*If necessary pause your storytelling to encourage the players to act out the words*).

If time permits, choose another set of pantomime players and read the story again.

Prayer

Before sending groups to centers, pause for prayer, giving thanks for our awesome God who is with us in the light of day and in the darkness of night.

Craft Corner

Darkness and Light Pictures

Resources/Supplies:

12 x 18" black construction paper
white glue poured into jar lids
paint brushes
glitter
a CD of classical music
CD player

Use these ideas with younger children:

- Give everyone a sheet of paper.
- Ask them to keep their eyes on the dark paper as you read aloud Genesis 1:1-5; 16.
- Tell them to use a brush to paint swirls of glue on the paper.
- Tell them to add glitter to create shimmering light on the darkness of the paper.
- Play classical music while the children create their pictures.
- Show them how to recycle glitter by pouring glitter that did not stick onto a paper plate so that it can be rebottled and used later.
- Children love glitter, so be prepared to let them paint additional pictures.

Use these ideas with older children:

- Give everyone a sheet of paper.
- Ask them to keep their eyes on the dark paper as you read aloud Genesis 1:1-5; 16.
- Encourage them to create the orbiting planets in our solar system for their pictures, by painting with glue, then adding glitter.
- Play classical music while the children create their pictures. They can paint the orbits with glue, then add glitter

Teaching Tip: Creating pictures based on our solar system will appeal to many types of learners. Visual learners will enjoy the way the glitter looks against the velvety darkness of the paper. Logical learners will enjoy using their interest in science. Social learners will enjoy the discussion. Musical learners, physical learners, and self-smart kids will respond to the dynamics of the music.

Discuss these ideas as older children work:

- The solar system that orbits around our sun belongs to a giant galaxy of about 100 billion stars. Can you name that galaxy? (the Milky Way.)
- What keeps the planets of our solar system in orbit? (the sun's gravity.)
- Can you name the planets of our solar system in order of their distance from the sun? (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto)
- When seen from outer space, what color is the earth? (Mostly blue, because about 70% of the earth's surface is covered with water.)
- What color does Mars appear to be? (red because of iron oxide in the soil.)
- Ours is not the only planetary system in the universe. How awesome our God must be.

Teaching Tip: Creating pictures based on our solar system helps kids subconsciously connect what they are learning at school and what they are learning at church. Such subconscious connections will help them Explore Living In Faith Everyday.

Music & More

Resources/Supplies:

FaithSongs CD

FaithSongs Singer's Edition

FaithSongs Leader/Accompanist Edition

CD Player

music scarves (make by cutting various colors of tulle into 24-inch squares)

an autoharp

This center offers

- *Five songs for the five-week unit*
- *Lesson-specific suggestions each week*
- *Suggestions for "anthemizing" one song so that the children can sing it for a congregational worship service.*

Song:

Praise the Lord, All Creation

.....
(#28 on CD-1, p. 33 in Singer's Edition, p.46 in Teacher Edition)

Give these instructions:

1. Everybody sit in a circle.
2. Listen for the claps as the CD plays (*Play #28 on CD-1*)
3. Now, using only the index finger of your right hand to clap your left palm, try to add the claps as you listen. (*Play CD*)
4. One set of claps in the middle of each stanza was a bit tricky, can someone clap that for us? (*You may need to clap measure 14 correctly.*)
5. This time clap with your right hand's index finger and middle finger. Sing along.
6. The end of the song has a clap pattern that is a bit tricky, can someone clap that for us? (*Be prepared to clap measure 23 correctly.*)

Teaching Tip: Clear this room of furniture and slippery rugs. Kids are energetic and need to do more than sit still and sing along. Make your room safe for children to move and groove as you make music together.

ANTHEMIZE; If you plan to let the children sign this song as an anthem for congregational worship, schedule that with your pastor. Tips for "anthemizing" this song will be included in next week's lesson plan.

Song: The Heavens Are Telling

(#19 on CD-1, p. 23 in Singer's Edition, p. 33 in Teacher Edition)

Lead the children in a scarf dance to this song. Have everyone (including you) stand in a circle. Toss the music scarves (made from 24-inch squares of tulle) on the floor in the middle of the circle.

Use these instructions:

1. Everyone take a scarf and hold it in your right hand.
2. Grasp your neighbor's scarf with your left hand.
3. Listen to the music with your ears, watch me with your eyes, and copy my actions with your bodies.

As you play #19 on CD-1 lead them in this round dance:

- measures 1-4 – circle right
- measures 5-8 – circle right
- measures 9-10 – still holding scarves, lift hands and walk into center of circle
- measures 11-12 – still holding scarves in lifted hands, move hands to left, then to right
- measures 13-14 – still holding scarves in lifted hands, walk backwards into original circle.
- measures 15-16 – still holding scarves in lifted hands, move hands to left, then to right

The song is repeated three times on the recording, so you can dance the steps three times.

Teaching Tip: Kids are quick. Don't bore them by telling them the steps of the dance. Just do the actions as the recording plays and they will follow you.

Teaching Tip: Practice this round dance before center time. Just put the CD in and dance. If you don't like our dance tips, create your own.

Life Link

Use these ideas to help kids reflect on the nature of God's love:

- Sometimes when we look at the night sky we think, "WOW!" Why do you think that happens?
- Our key verse for today's lesson is Psalm 66:3a---Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!"
- Can you think of a time in your life when you saw something "awesome" and wanted to say thank you to God? (If the children do not respond, be prepared to tell about a "goose bumps" event in your life.)

Song:

How Majestic Is Your Name

.....
(#11 on CD-1, p. 15 in Singer's Edition, p. 21 in Teacher Edition)

Many kids know this song because they listen to Christian music radio stations.

Divide into two groups, and sing the song this way:

- Group 1 sings the first sentence
- Group 2 echoes by singing the second sentence.
- Group 1 sings the third sentence.
- Group 2 sings the fourth sentence through "Prince of Peace, mighty God."
- Both groups sing to the end of the song.

Song: God Is So Good

.....
(#10 on CD-1, p. 14 in Singer's Edition, p. 20 in Teacher Edition)

Children love to play instruments. Let them take turns using an autoharp to provide accompaniment as they sing the traditional words and melody. Use only the simple melody today; older children may be able to add the descant melody in a later session.

Use these tips to help kids succeed:

- Have the accompanist play only on the first beat of each measure, except on the next to last measure, when it feels natural to add the A7 chord on beat three of the measure.
- This way you will only need to use three chords: D, A7, and G. (Substitute A7 for the A printed in measure 1 and substitute D for the D7 chord printed in measure 4; everyone will be able to sing the song with those substitutions.)
- Playing only on the first beat of the measure helps both accompanist and singers feel the pulse of the rhythm.
- If you point to each chord as the accompanist is to play that chord, you can help the children hold a steady beat.
- For a group of younger children, you may want to press down the chord buttons and let a child strum the autoharp.

Song: Shout to the Lord

.....
(#32 on CD-1, p. 37 in Singer's Edition, p. 52 in Teacher Edition)

Give everyone a tulle scarf and have them kneel in their personal space. Tell them to remain kneeling as they use the scarves to add motions while singing the song.

Prayer

Give thanks for awesome events that happen in our lives. Give thanks that our God is awesome. Ask God to help members of your group look for awesome moments.

Games Galore

Star Tag Game

Resources/Supplies:

yellow construction paper
scissors
masking tape

Cut large stars from the construction paper (one less star than kids in the group). Scatter the stars in the room. Secure the stars to the floor with loops of masking tape.

At center time choose a child to be IT, then give these instructions:

1. The stars are safe places in the room.
2. A player moving between stars is traveling through the darkness and can be tagged.
3. No one can stand on a star for more than ten seconds.
4. Two players may not occupy the same star. If a person comes to a star, then the player who is there must travel to another star.
5. If IT tags a player traveling in the darkness between the stars, they exchange places.

Swirling Stars Game

Resources/Supplies

a CD of classical music
CD player

Give these instructions:

1. While the music plays, you are to move through space.
2. When the music stops, you must freeze.
3. I will call out a letter of the alphabet.
4. If your name includes that letter, raise your hand. You are to tell our group something you know about God.
5. When the music starts again, all the stars must swirl.

Orbit the Sun Game



Resources/Supplies
an inflated yellow balloon.

At center time give these instructions:

1. Everyone stand in a circle and hold hands.
2. This is the brightly shining sun (show balloon).
3. Always holding hands, you are to orbit around the sun and keep the sun in the sky. You may use head, shoulders, hands, knees, feet to keep the sun in the sky. Talk as you do it so you don't crash into one another!
4. If the sun touches the ground or if two players disconnect their hands, the round will end.

Life Link



Use these ideas to help children connect the Bible passage to their daily lives.

- God created an orderly world. An orderly world helps us realize that we can depend on God.
- What is your favorite time of day? Why?
- What is your favorite time of year? Why?

Snack Shack

Darkness and Light Pudding.....

Resources/Supplies

instant chocolate pudding mix (one box for each 6 kids)
2 cups cold milk (for each box of pudding mix)
a 1-quart leak proof container
a large spoon
water
yellow food coloring
a water bottle cap (individual size)
a medicine dropper
paper plates
plastic teaspoons
napkins

Before center time, fill the bottle cap about 2/3 full with water. Add 10 drops of yellow food coloring.

At center time, use these ideas:

1. Help the group prepare instant chocolate pudding according to the shaker method directions on the package. Encourage them to take turns shaking the mixture.
2. Let each child spoon a serving of pudding onto a small paper plate.
3. Give everyone a small plastic spoon and tell them to spread the hovering darkness of the pudding on the plate.
4. Give everyone a large marshmallow and say, "Add this body of light in the center of the hovering darkness of your pudding."
5. Use the medicine dropper to place a drop of yellow food coloring on the marshmallow on each child's plate. As you do so, say, "God said, 'Let there be light;' and there was light. And God saw that the light was good."
6. If kids want more light, let them add miniature marshmallows to the hovering darkness of the pudding.

Prayer

Give thanks for the mm-mm-good food you have enjoyed.
Give thanks for the creative people creatures who worked together to prepare the food. Give thanks that we can depend on God, our awesome Creator.

Mission: Possible

This center offers a simple project and a mission promise to help children care for God's creation.

Life Link



Use these ideas to help children consider working with God to care for people:

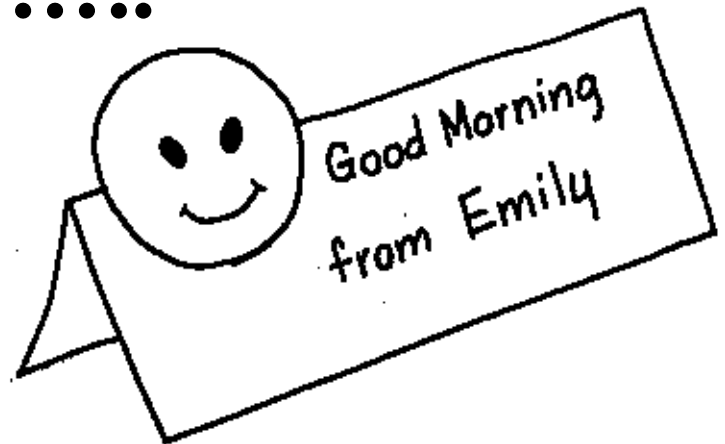
- When God created light, God created night and day. Name some things you do at a certain time every day. (*Wake up at a certain time; go to bed at a certain time; eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner; study at school, play at recess, attend church on Sundays, cheer at softball games, talk with friends, do chores at home.*) These things make our days interesting.
- What it would be like if you could not leave your home and no one came to visit you? (boring, sad, might forget what day it is)
- Many older adults live alone or in nursing centers. Many are lonely. Many could use a message to brighten their day. Let's make good morning place cards.

Good Morning Greetings



Resources/Supplies

- 3 by 5 cards
- plastic milk jug lids
- pencils
- scissors
- clear tap
- yellow highlighters
- ball point pens
- crayons



Give these instructions:

1. Fold a 3 by 5 card in half lengthwise to make a card 1 ½ by 5".
2. Unfold the card and use a milk lid to draw a circle that crosses the fold line.

3. Cut a slit from one edge of the card, then cut around half of your circle.
4. Use tape to repair the slit you cut.
5. Fold your card. Half of the circle will stand above your card.
6. Use the highlighter to color your circle.
7. Use the pen to draw a smiling face on the circle and to write a “good morning” message and to sign your first name.
8. Use crayons to decorate the rest of your card.

Help the children follow the instructions to make good morning cards for a nursing center or for homebound members of your congregation.

Be sure to collect the cards and let your pastor or some member of your congregation who visits older persons take the cards this week. Ask that person to visit your Mission Possible Center next week, and report comments from people who received the good morning cards.

Life Link



Have the children sit in a circle on the floor.

Use these ideas to help children consider working with God to care for the earth’s resources:

- How many windows do you have in your bedroom? In your bathroom? In you kitchen? In your living room? How dirty are all those windows? Who cleans those windows?
- How many light bulbs do you have in your bedroom? In your kitchen? In your living room? In your bathroom? How dirty are all those light bulbs? Who dusts those light bulbs?
- How many television sets are in your house? How many hours do you watch television or use the television to play electronic games each day? How dirty are those television screens? Who cleans them?
- How many computers are in your house? How many hours do you use the computer each day? How dirty is the computer screen? Who cleans those screens?
- Let’s think of some things we could do to use less electricity in our homes. If you have an idea, pick up the light bulb and share your bright idea with us. *(Add these ideas if kids need help: Turn off lights when we leave a room. Open the curtains and read a book by the window. Offer to dust the*

light bulbs or to help clean the windows. Spend less time watching television or playing electronic games. Talk to your family about switching to compact fluorescent bulbs, which use only ½ the energy of a regular bulb and last 10 times as long.)

Mission Possible Promise



Resources/Supplies

copies of Supplement 1B

pencils

crayons or markers

Encourage the kids to decide on at least one thing they will do this week to help conserve electricity, then let them complete the Mission Possible Promise form. Younger kids could draw a picture about their promise and let an adult add words.

Hovering Darkness, Shimmering Light

Use in Good News Gathering Center

In the beginning of time, the absolute beginning of time, there was emptiness and darkness. There was swirling, whirling, hovering, hovering darkness.

In the beginning of time, the absolute beginning of time, there was emptiness and darkness, hovering, hovering darkness. Oh, yes...in the beginning of time, the absolute beginning of time, when there was emptiness and darkness...there was God! Our great almighty God!

God saw emptiness and darkness, whirling, swirling, hovering darkness. But the darkness was changing, for the breath of God, the gently blowing breath of God, was moving across the face of the darkness.

Then God said, "Let there be light! Shimmering light, sparkling light, awe-inspiring, eye-blinding light! And let the light shine in the darkness, the whirling, swirling, hovering darkness. Let the light shimmer and sparkle and shine brighter until the hovering darkness can no longer be seen."

And God saw that the light in the darkness was good. But God did not ban the darkness from creation. Instead, God named the light Day and God named the darkness Night.

God created two great lights to separate the day and the night. The greater light was made to rule the day, when the brightness of the light made the darkness disappear. The lesser light was made to rule the night. The lesser light glowed softly in the velvety darkness. And God liked the look of the night sky so much, that God decided to add some twinkling, sparkling lights. God gave the twinkling, sparkling lights a name. God named them stars.

And God saw that the creation of night and day was good. So God created a never-ending cycle of evening (when the darkness frames the shimmering light) and of morning (when the brightness of the light makes the darkness seem to disappear).

And to this very day, when people creatures look up into the sky, we see darkness and we see light. And we know that God, our awesome creator, is with us, in the swirling, whirling, hovering darkness and in the twinkling, sparkling, shimmering light.

Mission: Possible Promise

Use in Mission: Possible Center

Mission Promise-----

Because I am glad that God created light, and because God has given me a mind filled with bright ideas, I will do the following this week to help my family reduce the use of electricity in our home:

-----**Bright Idea**

Mission Promise-----

Because I am glad that God created light, and because God has given me a mind filled with bright ideas, I will do the following this week to help my family reduce the use of electricity in our home:

-----**Bright Idea**