

A Special Meal for God's Family, the Church

PRESCHOOL



We are grateful to Dr. Mimi Larson for her work in developing *A Special Meal for God's Family*. Mimi has served more than 25 years in church ministry and is now a visiting assistant professor at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois.

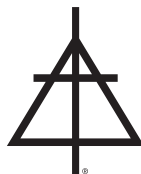
We are also grateful to Tim Foley for drawing the illustrations in this unit.

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A Special Meal for God's Family, the Church: Preschool Session on the Lord's Supper © 2016 Faith Alive Christian Resources, 1700 28th Street SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508-1407.

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Christian Reformed Church
**Faith Formation
Ministries**

PRESCHOOL

A Special Meal for God's Family, the Church

SCRIPTURE

Luke 22:7-8; 14-20








FOCUS

The Lord's Supper reminds and promises us that Jesus died and rose for us and we are part of his family.

FAITH NURTURE GOALS

- Children will understand that in this meal Jesus promises to love and forgive us.
- Children will feel sure that eating the bread and drinking the juice shows us that Jesus loves us and forgives us.
- Praise God for this meal that reminds us of Jesus' love.

A NOTE ABOUT LEARNING STYLES:

Next to each activity you'll find one or more of the following descriptions: **Aa** Word Smart,  People Smart,  Music Smart,  Number Smart,  Earth Smart,  Self Smart,  Body Smart, and  Picture Smart--with an icon beside each one.

These descriptions and icons refer to "multiple intelligences," a term developed by Dr. Howard Gardner to describe the different ways in which people learn. We use them here to indicate to you which intelligence each step/activity taps into the most. For example, some people are visual; others are musical; some learn best when they are physically engaged; some favor a combination of several "smarts"; and so on. For more information on each of the multiple intelligences, along with a fun quiz you can give your students (and one you can take yourself!), visit dwell.faithaliveresources.org/downloads (click on "Topics for Leaders" and open the "Learning Styles Quiz").

REFLECTION: GETTING INTO THE STORY

Family meals can be busy events. People are cooking. Some are hard at work setting the table. Everyone is arriving at different times. Yet family meals provide an important opportunity for people who love each other, but are busy with life, to connect intimately with one another over food.

In this passage, Jesus says that he "eagerly desired" to eat this Passover with his disciples. This Passover celebration was a special one. It was the very first celebration of the Lord's Supper, a meal that would serve as both a sign and a seal for many generations to come, and to intimately connect the church with God and one another.

The Lord's Supper is a sign of our salvation that we can see and hold and taste. Like most signs, the Lord's Supper points out something to us. It points to the saving work of Christ on the cross, and to the God who loved the world enough to save it. It also points us to the unity that we have with one another as the family of God, sisters and brothers saved through the work of Christ on the cross.

The Lord's Supper also serves as a symbol. Like many symbols, it sends a big message through a smaller one. The Lord's Supper symbolizes the big message that Jesus died and rose for all who turn to him as their Savior. It also shows that, as we participate in the Supper together, we are part of a bigger family that includes people from all around the world--everyone who turns to Christ as their Savior. That's one big family!

Through the gift of the Lord's Supper, we are assured that we belong to God and each other. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper together, we see that we are all members of one, big family--God's family. That is an important message for all of us to remember.

Although your little ones are still concrete thinkers and won't be able to understand that symbolism, they do know something about gathering around a table to eat a celebratory meal with loved ones and it's that sense of celebration that you'll want to evoke during this session.

WONDERING






- Why is it important that the Lord's Supper is both a sign and a seal?
- What is the role of gratitude in the celebration of the Lord's Supper?
- How does eating the bread and drinking the wine help you remember Jesus' love?



TEACHING

- When Jesus tells the disciples in verse 15 that he has been looking forward to eating this meal with them, he says so strongly. At this meal, he is both mourning the end of his time with them and pointing forward to the heavenly banquet that he will one day enjoy with all of his friends in eternity. Jesus' love for the disciples and the importance of this meal is clear. It's likely that your little ones have experienced looking forward to a special occasion. Connecting the Bible story to their own experiences will help them live into it.
- The Reformed teaching on the meaning of the elements in the Lord's Supper is significant. Reformed teaching tells us that it is not the bread and the wine that are transformed, but that they symbolize the transformation of all of us who gather around the table as the family of God. We need not approach the table with fear, but as those who belong to God, as members of God's family, forgiven and loved. It's our prayer that through this session the children will understand that Jesus warmly welcomes them to the table. He loves to see them there!

—Rev. Shannon Jammal-Holleman

SESSION AT A GLANCE

| Steps | Minutes | Activities | Session-Specific Materials | Multiple Intelligences |
|---------------------------|---------|--|--|--|
| Gathering for God's Story | 10-15 | Welcome Jesus Loves Me! heart activity | <input type="checkbox"/> Posterboard <input type="checkbox"/> Red paper cut into heart shapes <input type="checkbox"/> Markers or crayons <input type="checkbox"/> Tape or glue sticks | Aa    |
| Entering the Story | 10 | Story Snack | <input type="checkbox"/> Bible <input type="checkbox"/> Unsliced loaf of bread or a large bun <input type="checkbox"/> Crackers <input type="checkbox"/> Clear pitcher of grape juice <input type="checkbox"/> Tablecloth <input type="checkbox"/> Cups, one per person <input type="checkbox"/> Plates, one per person <input type="checkbox"/> Folding table <input type="checkbox"/> Picnic basket or similar container | Aa   |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Living Into the Story | 10-15 | Communion cut and paste craft | <input type="checkbox"/> Items used for serving communion: serving tray, cup, pitcher, banner, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Timer <input type="checkbox"/> Coloring page (reproducible page 1), one per child. <input type="checkbox"/> Scissors <input type="checkbox"/> Gluesticks <input type="checkbox"/> Markers or crayons |  |
| Living Out of the Story | 5-10 | Praising Jesus for his love! | <input type="checkbox"/> Dear Family letter (reproducible page 2), print (or email) one per child |  |

Step 1 Gathering for God's Story

Note: Before class begins, create a bulletin board or poster entitled "Jesus Loves Me." Cut out one heart shape for each child and leader.

Welcome the children and gather them around you at the table. Give them each a heart shaped piece of paper. Tell them how happy you are that they are here today to learn more about Jesus' love!

Wonder aloud what a heart might remind the children of. Then spend a few moments wondering together using the following questions as a guide and giving each child the opportunity to share his or her thoughts:

- I wonder who you love.
- I wonder who loves you.
- How do you show love to each other?

Explain that today we are learning about a special meal called the Lord's Supper that shows us how much Jesus loves us and forgives us. Draw the children's attention to the poster and point to the words, "Jesus Loves Me" as you read them. Set crayons on the table and encourage the children to choose a color and write their name inside their heart. Or, if they prefer, to draw a picture of themselves instead.

As each child finishes, help him or her place their heart on the poster. As they do so, affirm that Jesus loves them by saying, "Jesus loves you, _____."

When the poster is full of hearts, ask the children to stand and join you in singing the song "Jesus Loves Me." When you get to the chorus, personalize the song by replacing "me" with each child and leader's name. Like this:

Yes, Jesus loves Meg!
 Yes, Jesus loves Xavier!
 Yes, Jesus loves Tavon!
 The Bible tells me so.

Yes, Jesus loves Ava!
 Yes, Jesus loves Ian!
 Yes, Jesus loves Ashley!
 The Bible tells me so.

Repeat the chorus until you have sung the last person's name, then end with "The Bible tells me so."

TIP

If this is your first meeting with the group, begin with a time of introductions. Tell everyone your name; then go around the table, giving each child time to say their name and their favorite food to eat.

TIP

Preschoolers are just learning their letters and often love to write their own names. Some may need your help; others may prefer to draw a picture of themselves. Be sure to offer crayons that include a variety of skin tone colors.

After singing, join hands and pray, thanking Jesus for loving us so much. Ask Jesus to help the class understand the special meal he has given us to remind us that he loves us and forgives us.

Step **2** Entering the Story

TIP

If using a folding table is not an option, simply place a tablecloth on the floor. When it comes time to fill the cups with juice, fill sparingly. Consider using a vinyl tablecloth for easy clean up. If anyone in your group has limited mobility, use the regular table instead.

Note: Before class begins, create a low table by laying a folding table on the floor with the legs tucked away. If the children usually sit on carpet squares, place them around the table to use as seats. Have a tablecloth ready to drape across the table, tucking the edges under it to prevent it from sliding. Put the following items in a picnic basket or bag next to the table to use for telling the story: cups, plates, and napkins for each person, bread/bun, a pitcher of juice, and crackers.

If you aren't already gathered around the low table, invite your group to find a place to sit around it now. Tell them that today's story took place around a low table like this one. Explain that God has given us special ways to remember him. Ask the children to mimic your actions as you say:

God gave us ears to hear (**point to ears**),
hands to touch (**hold up your hands**),
a noses to smell (**point to nose**),
eyes to see (**point to eyes**),
and mouths to taste (**point to mouth**).

God loves us very much and we have hearts to love God back (**place hand over heart**).

Point to your ears and explain that now we are going to hear what God has told us in the Bible.

TIP

Always check for allergies before serving any food to your group.

Explain that the Bible is God's word and today you are sharing a story found in the Bible. Show the children where the story of a very special meal between Jesus and his friends is found in Luke 22.

Invite the children to point to their ears and ask if they are ready to use them to listen to what Jesus tells us about his love.

The story follows:

This was a special day. Tonight there was going to be a celebration and a special meal.

God's people did not want to forget his love for them, so every year, they gathered together to eat a special meal and celebrate what God had done. Families would sit around the table, just like we are now, to share the special meal and tell the story of how God saved his people from Pharaoh. They would listen (**point to your ears**) to the story again, eat special food (**point to mouth**), sing songs, and thank God for his love and care (**place hand over heart**).

Jesus was looking forward to eating this special meal with his friends. On the day of the celebration, Jesus asked Peter and John, two of his friends, to get everything ready for their feast. Will you use your hands to help me prepare the table for the feast? (**With the help of the children, drape the tablecloth on the table, smooth it out and tuck the edges underneath together. From the picnic basket, remove the following objects and set them on the table: pitcher of juice, one cup, bread or bun, one plate.**)

When it was time to celebrate the feast, Jesus warmly invited his friends to come and sit around the table. He was so happy to see them there. Jesus knew that he would be sharing this feast with his friends, and he wanted them to eat this special meal again and again. But he also knew this would be the last time he would celebrate this meal with them.

As they were sitting at the table, Jesus said to his friends, “I have wanted to eat this meal with you before I go. This is the last meal we will share before I have to leave you.” Then Jesus poured wine into a cup and held it up for them to see. **(Hold up the pitcher of juice.)**

After Jesus held up the wine, he thanked God for it and gave it to them. **(Pour the juice into the cup.)** The disciples watched Jesus pour the wine, just like you are watching me pour this juice. Then Jesus said, “This wine will help you remember that I love you. Every time you taste this wine, it will remind you that I suffered and died for you. This wine is a reminder that I promise to love **(place hand over heart)** you and forgive you.”

Then Jesus held up the bread for them to see. **(Hold up the bread for the children to see, then break it into pieces and place the pieces on a plate as you continue to tell the story.)** Again, Jesus thanked God for it, broke it into pieces, and said, “This bread is another reminder that I love you. Every time you eat it, you will remember that I suffered and died for you. This bread is a reminder that I promise to love **(place hand over heart)** and forgive you.”

Peter, John, and the other disciples all looked at each other. Could this really be the last meal that Jesus shares with them? Why was Jesus going to leave them? As they sat around the table, they had ears **(point to ears)** to hear Jesus’ words, hands **(hold hands palm up)** to receive this special meal, noses **(point to nose)** to smell the bread and the wine, eyes **(point to eyes)** to see the wine that was poured for them, and mouths **(point to mouth)** to taste the bread that was broken for them. God gave them all this so that each time they ate this special meal they would remember that Jesus loves them **(place hand on heart)** and forgives them.

Ask the children to mimic your actions as you say:

God has given us ears to hear God’s word **(point to ears)**,
hands to receive this special meal **(hold up hands)**,
noses to smell this special meal **(touch nose and sniff)**,
eyes to see the juice being poured **(point to eyes)**,
and mouths to taste the bread that was broken for us **(point to mouth)**.
God wants us to remember that Jesus loves us and forgives us **(place hand over heart)** and we have hearts to love him back.

Celebrate Jesus’ love as you enjoy a snack of crackers and juice together, using the items in your picnic basket. As you eat, wonder about the story together. Here are some questions you might use:

- I wonder how you feel when you know someone loves you.
- I wonder if Jesus’ friends felt that way as they ate with Jesus.
- I wonder if you know that Jesus loves you and welcomes you into his family.
- Is there anything you wonder about the story?

When you finish your snack, invite your children to help you clean up the dishes and put away the table so you’ll have space for the next activity.

TIP

Don’t worry about having all the answers to questions your children ask you. Letting children know that “I wonder about that too” demonstrates that faith means not having all the answers, but believing anyway.

Step 3 Living Into the Story

TIP

If you're unable to access the Lord's Supper items used during your worship services, search the Internet for images which you can print and hide.

Note: Congregations celebrate communion and welcome children to the table in different ways at different ages. Before today's session, review the process by which children are welcomed to the table in your congregation. Then use the activities in this step to talk with the children about how your church celebrates the Lord's Supper; and either when and how they can participate or what they have experienced if they have already participated in the Lord's Supper. Before class begins, hide a cup, tray, pitcher, banner, or any other recognizable items used in your church during the Lord's Supper, somewhere in your classroom. If your room lacks good hiding places, stand books on end to conceal the objects, or place them in plain sight above the eye level of the children.

TIP

If a child in your group is visually impaired, ask him or her if they would prefer to be paired with a leader for the search, or if they would enjoy helping the leader collect each item as it is found.

Gather the children around you and tell them that sometimes, when we enter the sanctuary for worship, our eyes (**point to eyes**) see something special sitting on the table up front. Then give them a brief description of the communion items you've hidden, and ask them to use their eyes (**point to eyes**) to find them somewhere in the room. If the serving items are delicate, encourage the children to call for a leader to bring the item back to the table when they find it. Set a 2 minute timer for their search.

When the timer goes off (or all the items have been discovered), invite the kids back to the table. Allow the children to take turns carefully holding and examining the items as you wonder about them:

- I wonder if you have seen any of these items before?
- What do you think they are used for?
- I wonder if they remind you of anything that happened in the story we just heard?

Explain that people your church, and people in churches all over the world, still eat the special meal that Jesus ate with his friends in today's story! It helps us to remember that Jesus died and rose again because he loves us (**put your hand on your heart**) and wanted us to be part of his family! Explain how the items you brought are used during communion; briefly describing how the bread is broken and shared and the juice or wine is poured and distributed in your congregation.

TIP

Depending on the time you're able to spend on this activity and the ability of your children to cut with scissors, you may wish to cut out all or some of the shapes in advance.

Then give each child a copy of the reproducible page. Read the words on the heart, "Jesus loves me and forgives me." Invite the kids to color the heart, cup, and bread; then cut out each piece, and glue the bread and cup to the center of the heart.

As the children work, join them at the table. Some of the best conversations happen while working side-by-side with the children in your group. Depending upon the practice of the Lord's Supper in your congregation and the experiences of your children, their responses might be varied and include participating, observing, receiving a blessing, or not yet having seen it at all. Take this opportunity to talk

with them about what they have seen/heard/experienced during the celebration of the Lord's Supper at church. You might start the conversation by asking questions like the following:

- Who and what do you **see** when the Lord's Supper is celebrated at our church?
- What do you **hear** when the Lord's Supper is celebrated at our church?
- What do you **smell**?
- What does the meal **taste** like?
- What does it feel like to be part of this special meal?
- I wonder if eating the bread and drinking the juice reminds you of something important.

Wrap up the conversation by asking everyone to hold their heart project up high. Tell them that Jesus hopes that whenever you eat the bread and drink the juice of this special meal you will remember that he loves you (**place hand on heart**), forgives you, and welcomes you into his family! (**point to each person**)

Step 4 Living Out of the Story

Invite the children to stand and step away from the table to praise Jesus for his love! Ask them to demonstrate different ways we can praise Jesus with our mouths, our hands, our feet, and our whole bodies. Then invite the children to play a simple game of Simon Says, explaining that when you say “Simon Says” before giving them an action to do, they should do the action but if you don’t say “Simon Says” before describing the action, they should not move. Ask the children if they are ready to go and begin playing.

Simon says praise God with your hands. (**Encourage children to clap, wave, raise or do another movement of their choosing with their hands.**)

Simon says praise God with your feet. (**Encourage children to stamp their feet, run on the spot, tap their toes or any other foot movement of their choosing.**)

Touch your nose.

Simon says touch your nose.

Touch your ears.

Simon says touch your ears.

Simon says praise God by shaking the hand of someone near you.

Smile.

Simon says praise God by smiling at someone near you.

Simon says praise God with your mouths. (**Encourage children to shout or sing their praise!**)

TIP

Modify the actions in the Simon Says game as necessary in order that all children in your group may participate equally. For example, if there is a child who is sensitive to touch, replace hand shaking with hand waving.



Invite the children to raise their hands high and wiggle their fingers in praise as you say a closing prayer, thanking Jesus for his love.

As each child leaves, whisper in his or her ears, “Remember that Jesus loves you, _____!” If you’ve printed copies of the Dear Family message, be sure to send one home with each child.

EASY EXTRAS

1. Making Unleavened Bread

Note: This activity could be done at the beginning of the session and then enjoyed together at the end of the session.

| | |
|--|---|
| TIME 35 minutes | |
|  Body Smart  Number Smart | MATERIALS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 3 cups all-purpose flour <input type="checkbox"/> 2 tablespoons butter or cooking oil <input type="checkbox"/> 3 large eggs <input type="checkbox"/> ½ cup water or milk <input type="checkbox"/> 1 teaspoon salt <input type="checkbox"/> Measuring cups and spoons <input type="checkbox"/> Mixing bowl and mixing spoon <input type="checkbox"/> Small bowl <input type="checkbox"/> Three 8-inch square baking pans |

Make unleavened bread together, allowing the children to do as much of the measuring, pouring, scooping, and stirring as possible. As you work, explain that this bread is like the kind of bread that Jesus ate with his disciples when he lived on earth.

Directions:



- Preheat oven to 450° F (230° C).
- Grease baking pans.
- In a mixing bowl, combine the flour and salt. Stir well.
- In a separate bowl, beat together eggs and oil.
- Add to dry ingredients.
- Add milk. Beat with a mixing spoon or fork for 2-3 minutes.
- Mixture should be relatively smooth when finished.
- Pour batter into three pans.
- Bake for 20 minutes.

As the bread bakes, work through the session steps. Once the bread has baked and cooled, enjoy tasting it together.

TIP

Consider freezing the rest of the bread to use for the next time your church celebrates communion. Or, send home a ziplock bag of bread with each child. Encourage them to share the bread and today's story with their family, reminding them that in this special meal Jesus promised to love us and forgive us!

2. Play Dough

| | |
|--|--|
| TIME 5-8 minutes | |
|  Body Smart  Self Smart | MATERIALS <input type="checkbox"/> Play dough <input type="checkbox"/> Plates, optional |

Pass out play dough and invite the children to shape the things found on a communion table. As you work together, talk about the special meals they have attended (birthday celebrations, baptisms, picnics, etc.) and the family members who were there. Point out that when we celebrate the Lord's Supper at church it's also a family celebration. It's for God's family and they are part of that family too!

3. Lord's Supper Praise Song

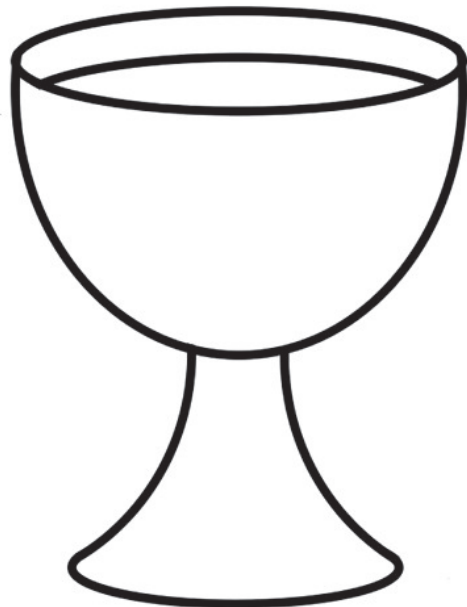
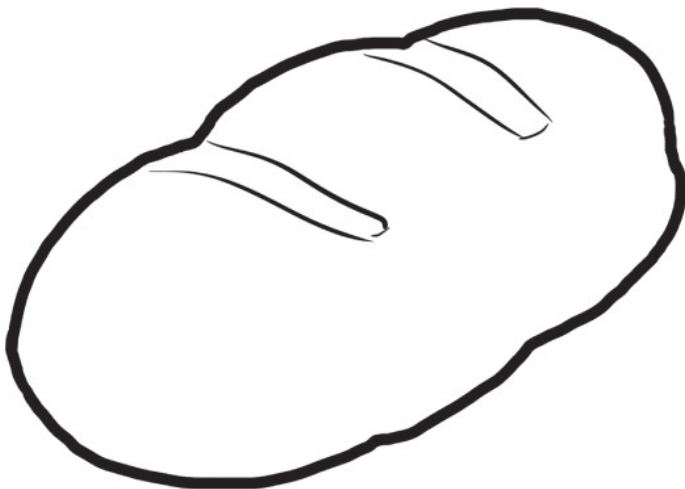
| | |
|--|--|
| TIME 5 minutes | |
|  Music Smart | MATERIALS <input type="checkbox"/> None needed |

Sing this song of praise to the tune of *Are You Sleeping, Brother John?*

Jesus gave us, Jesus gave us
 A special meal, a special meal
 Jesus loves us so much! So we want to praise him!
 Thank you Lord! Thank you Lord!

Encourage each child to share one thing for which they would like to praise Jesus. Then sing the song again.

*Jesus loves
me and
forgives me!*



Dear Family,

Has your preschooler ever helped you prepare for a special family dinner—a birthday party, Thanksgiving dinner, or another celebration meal?

Today's story about Jesus' last supper with his disciples is just like that. It is a special family dinner. The children learned that when we celebrate this special meal in our congregation we remember that Jesus loves us and forgives us.

Spend some time this week with your preschooler remembering that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead because he loves us and forgives us. He wanted us to be part of God's family! If your child hasn't yet participated in the Lord's Supper, talk with him or her about when it will be their turn to share in the feast, and what you'll do together to prepare for that special day.

Sincerely,