**Lent 2023: Growing Closer to God through Journaling**

Lent is a time of spiritual growth, where we use prayer practices (tools that help us intentionally focus our minds, bodies and souls on God’s love). And as we use these tools, we trust that we will discover a deeper relationship with God. And that is the relationship that guides and transforms us throughout our lives and into eternity.

Growing Closer to God uses the spiritual practice of Journaling. We will be reflecting on six words during Lent (Feel free to use whatever words you would like your kids to reflect on)

**Where can you use this?**

* **As the lesson at Children’s Worship or Sunday School:** This can be used as your lesson each week (tell the story which demonstrates the word to ponder) or use it without a Bible story along with your regular curriculum
* **As the Children’s Time during worship:** You could use the candle and word for the week as the Children’s Time and skip the journaling part.
* **In addition to your regular curriculum:** This could be used as a opening or as the gathering time before you begin your regular curriculum.

**Suggested Stories and words to ponder and journal about**

* **Feb. 26:** Lent 1 - Peace
  + Jesus teaches us to pray
    - The Lord’s prayer
    - On a mountain
    - For others
* **Sun, March 5**: Lent 2 - Sacrifice to others
  + Mary and Martha
* **Sun, March 12**: Lent 3 - Compassion
  + Jesus heals the blind man
* **Sun, March 19**: Lent 4 - Joy
  + Jesus feeds 5000
* **Sun, March 26:** Lent 5 - Patience
  + The Lost Sheep
* **FYI:** (JCPS and Oldham County: SPRING BREAK: March 31- April 7)
* **Sun, April 2:** Lent 6 (Holy Week) - Forgiveness
  + Palm Sunday/Holy Week events and forgiveness on cross - Forgiveness
* **Sun. April 9:** EASTER and for the 50 days of Easter… Light your Easter each week and read the words.
  + Explain that these are 6 ways of living. Remind the children that these are all things Jesus wants for us… and Jesus asks us to carry these things into the world!

**What you will need:**

* A White Prayer Candle (see samples below)
* A Lighter
* A place to display the 3 questions
  + White board or poster
* Optional (See “Bridging to Home” below): Electric Candles for each child and a word or image sticker to add to their candle each week.

**Prepare:**

* Decorate the white prayer candle for Easter or write each Journaling Word on it.
* Write one of the Reflection Words on one sheet of the purple paper.
* Wrap the paper on the candle: each sheet covering the other. (Each week you will be removing a sheet of the paper to reveal the new reflection Word for that week.)
* A pen, pencil or markers for each child
* Journal Materials:
  + Option One: (Group Journal)
    - A sheet of white three hold punched paper for each child each week of Lent.
    - 3 Ring Binder which will make one journal containing the collection of all responses.
  + Option two:
    - A journal for each individual child

**The Reflection Ritual**

Explain Lent

Review past words… show todays word that we are going contemplate…

Enter Sacred Space

* Body Prayer (see attached)
* Sit to light candle
* Candle lit

**Introduce the 3 questions:**

1. What is (word of the day)?
2. Where have I experienced (word of the day)?
3. How can I bring (word of the day) into the lives of those around me?

**Reflection/Journal time:**

* Personal Journals
  + Each child can have a person al journal to write in (OR)
* Communal Journal/Class Journal:
  + Each child is given a sheet of paper as they enter (3 hole punched and might have the word and question for the day on it)
  + After they finish, they can place it in the class journal and it can become a reference for parents, you and others to begin to “get inside” the minds and souls of the children of your congregation.
* NOTE: Children can write or draw pictures depending on their age and interest.

**Share time:** Each child can share what they discovered in the reflection time.

**Bridging to Home:** Creating our own candle to light at home for the 50 days of Easter.

* Each child will have an electric candle of their own in the classroom.
* Each week, after the time of sharing, they will be invited to place a sticker with the word of the day on their candle.
* On Easter the children will be invited to take their candle home and light it each day for the 50 Days of Easter.

Samples of Prayer Candle

<https://www.amazon.com/Hyoola-White-Prayer-Candles-Pack/dp/B07RN2DH9V/ref=sxts_rp_s_a_1_0?content-id=amzn1.sym.eff26b9b-e255-411b-a40d-eccb21f93fe4%3Aamzn1.sym.eff26b9b-e255-411b-a40d-eccb21f93fe4&cv_ct_cx=Prayer%2BCandles&keywords=Prayer%2BCandles&pd_rd_i=B07RN2DH9V&pd_rd_r=4f94cfb6-481b-4505-9a76-f123b47c121a&pd_rd_w=Fr1x2&pd_rd_wg=aniTC&pf_rd_p=eff26b9b-e255-411b-a40d-eccb21f93fe4&pf_rd_r=T1DHYFD2EY4Z7GRREB4B&qid=1673919162&sr=1-1-5985efba-8948-4f09-9122-d605505c9d1e&th=1>