

Day 3—Break Down Walls: Build Bridges

Welcome Kids!

Today play a form of the “Duck-Duck-Goose” game to continue to familiarize children with each other. The child chosen as “It” goes around the circle and taps on each person’s head saying their name rather than saying “duck.” When they get to the person they want to have chase them, they say, “Jesus loves YOU,” and the child tapped gets up and chases the other around the circle to the empty spot. Keep playing until everyone has had a chance to be “It.”

“Break Down Walls” Story

Share the book (also used in worship) *The Coconut Monk* by Thich Nhat Hanh, illustrated by Vo-Dihn Mai (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2005), ISBN 1-888375-53-1. This story is about the late Vietnamese monk of peace, Dao Dua, known as the Coconut Monk. On his way to the presidential palace to try to end the Vietnam War, the monk is thrown in jail, behind walls. Yet he finds a way to spread a message of peace despite his captivity with his friends: a cat and a mouse. This is a story about overcoming fears and can inspire kids to share the peace of Jesus. Discuss after reading.

Invite kids to gather in pairs to create a skit they can share with the class about peacemaking. If they need help, give them index cards with these starter ideas. Some are based on Aesop’s fables.

1. A lion gets a thorn in his paw, and the only one around to help is a tasty mouse.
2. A bunny needs a ride across a pond where an alligator swims.
3. A hungry fox needs help getting grapes from a tree where a snake lives.
4. Two animal friends are competing in the same race.
5. An older brother bear is taught how to catch the best fish in the creek by his father. The younger brother is not.

Break Down Walls: Build Bridges

Read today’s scripture, recorded on poster board. Have kids copy it into their scrapbooks.

“For Jesus is our peace; he has made both groups into one, and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (Ephesians 2:14 NRSV adapted).

Most of the time, the “walls” that come between us and others cannot be seen. They may be walls that are created by the way we think we are supposed to act, the things we want, or the prejudices we have against others. One way to break these walls down is to show friendliness and resolve problems with others.

Hold up two different-colored strips of paper, about five or six inches apart. These strips represent two people who are different from each other. Ask kids, “How can two people be different from each other?” (They may speak two different languages, like different sports, have different voices and dialects, or look different.) Any way that we are different from others can cause a wall to be built between us. We may think our differences mean that we can’t be friends. But when the peace of Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, blows between two who are different (blow steadily between the two strips of paper), they come together. When the peace of Jesus blows between us, we come together. [What happens in the demonstration is that the blowing causes an area of low pressure between the papers, and the outer air forces the paper together.] Kids may want to try this for themselves.

In the same way, when we have problems with others, the peace of Jesus can bring us back together.

Play a reconciliation game, a game of forgiveness. Draw a large rectangle on the floor (following the Peacemaking Pattern below). This can be done with chalk or masking tape, indoors or outdoors. Use the sentences from the Peacemaking Pattern to play. Take kids through the steps below, teaming them up with a partner. Using the dramas from the previous activity, have them try to reconcile the problem in their “story.”(i.e. the lion and the mouse, etc.) How do they reconcile their problems or the walls that separate them? Do it with each pair in the class.

Peacemaking Pattern:

I show up.
I listen.
I share.
I hear you.
I understand.
We’re friends.
I understand.
I hear you.
I share.
I listen.
I show up.

1. Stand both kids at opposite ends of the Peacemaking Pattern on the “I show up” rectangles.
2. Thank each one in turn for “showing up.” Ask if they’d like to take the next step forward to listen.

3. If they do, thank them for both being willing to listen. (The two kids move to the “I listen” box.) Ask one child to step forward onto the next rectangle (“I Share”). Ask that child to share their story (remember, they are being the characters in the fable: the fox, the snake, the bear, etc.). Thank them for sharing their story.
4. Ask the second child if they wish to also share. If so, have them step onto the “I Share” box. Ask that child to share their story (representing their character from the fable). Thank that child for sharing.
5. Ask both children if they really listened and heard each other. If so, they can both step on the “I hear you” rectangle. Each step they take brings them closer together.
6. Ask each child separately if they understood the other child’s point of view and story and feelings. They don’t have to agree, but did they understand how that child felt and why they did what they did? If so, they may both step forward onto the “I understand” box.
7. The last step is to ask the children if they could now be friends. If they can, they may step together into the center box (“We’re friends.”) They may hug, shake hands, give a “high five” or whatever.

After taking all of the kids through this process, discuss:

1. How did you feel about resolving your problem this way?
2. Do you think this would work with a friend you are having a conflict with?
3. Do you wish to talk about a conflict you are having with a friend?

Have kids copy down the forgiveness pattern into their scrapbooks, and write the name of someone that they will try this method of reconciliation with when they get home from reunion.

“Breaking Down Walls” Story and Movie

If possible, find the movie or story of “The Selfish Giant” by Oscar Wilde. The movie may be difficult to find; it may be available on VHS at a local library. There are several children’s book versions, or go to www.planetmonk.com/wilde/happyprince/selfishgiant.html Web site for the printed story. You might invite children to add their own art to the story.

Make a Bridge

When catastrophes happen—such as floods and other disasters—people sometimes form “human bridges” to pass supplies, sandbags, or other materials from one to another. Find something in the

classroom that kids can pass to each other. Play a game so kids can form a bridge. See how much easier it is to work together than alone.

Give one kid a soft ball, snack box, or whatever is being passed, and have them take it from one side of the room to the other. Give another item to the next kid, etc. Use a stopwatch to keep track of times. Then form a long line with the kids, and have them pass the items from one to another (like a bridge). Clock this time also, and compare the two. Discuss:

1. Which is faster?
2. Which is more fun?
3. Why is it important to build bridges sometimes, rather than do things alone?

“Breaking and Building” Craft

This craft requires a lot of careful attention. Give each kid a pillowcase or other soft container. Place breakable dishes, a flower pot, or other breakable items inside. With their shoe or a soft mallet, kids may break the items by hitting the bag until everything feels like it is broken into small pieces.

Alternative: Give kids sheets of tissue paper and construction paper to tear apart. Include some that is shiny and glittery. Have them imagine these are walls they are breaking down.

They may glue these pieces onto a clean plastic or glass container, such as an empty peanut-butter jar. Use a clear glue, creating a stained-glass effect. When dry, a votive or tea-light candle may be placed inside. During Peace Prayers, these candles can be lit with the lights turned off, creating a beautiful sanctuary for prayer.

Peace Prayers: Good Walls

There are peaceful places in the world. One is the Wailing Wall, a prayer wall in the city of Jerusalem. Here, Jews from all over the world travel to pray. They write their prayers on little slips of paper and slide them into the cracks of the stones in the wall.

Find a “prayer wall” somewhere on the campgrounds where children could experience a similar activity. If one is not available, create a prayer wall in the classroom on a bulletin board or wall. Attach brick façade or thick cardboard squares or circles, like stones, onto the bulletin board or wall. These should be thick enough that kids can stick wadded papers with prayers written on them in between. After children have done this, say a blessing on the children’s prayers that God will be with the children and continue to nurture them as they share the peace of Jesus.