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a resource in:

Sunday School

Change & Transition Lessons Middle School



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Change & Transition

Life Changes, But God Stays the Same

Recommended Age/Class: **Middle School** (6th-8th grade)

Lesson Objectives:

1. The student will understand changes in life are normal, but God never changes.
2. The student will understand transitions are when you move from one familiar place in life to something unfamiliar.
3. The student will understand any transition can be unsettling, because it is moving from something known to something unfamiliar.
4. The student will understand we can put our trust in God to help us in any type of transition.

Scripture:

Deuteronomy 31:8, "And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed."

Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

Malachi 3:6a, "For I [am] the Lord, I change not."

Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and forever."

Content:

- Everyone encounters change in life – change is normal and needed.
- Transitions are moving from where you currently are to a new place in life.
- Transitions are often uncomfortable because people prefer what they know, or what is familiar.
- Transitions can be more typical, everyday occurrences (e.g., beginning a new school year or moving from elementary to middle school).
- Some transitions are larger, but planned for changes (e.g., moving to a new house or a new town).
- Other transitions are not asked for and can be hard to go through (e.g., best friend moves away or a death of a family member).
- We can trust God to help us through any transition.
- God gives us strength and courage to go through transitions in life.

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Discussion Questions:

1. What does the word “transition” mean to you?
2. How do you feel when something changes or life is different?
3. What are examples of ways life can change or transition? What are transitions you have experienced in your life?
4. What are transitions or changes you want to experience in life?
5. What are transitions or changes we need to experience in life? (e.g., growing up, moving on from elementary school to middle school)
6. What are transitions we might not want to experience? Why not?
7. Do we like it when we don’t know what might happen next? How might this make us uncomfortable?
8. Who should we put our trust in during times of change or life transitions? Why?
9. What are promises God gives us to help us put our trust in Him during times of transitions?
10. Sometimes people say “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.” What might be a better way to say this thought to show how God wants us to think? (e.g., Don’t Worry, Trust God or Don’t Worry, God is in Control).
11. Give an example of a time when God helped you do something you found hard to do.

Activity:

1. **Activity 1: A Time for the Word**
 - a. Read *Ecclesiastes 3:1-11* out loud to the students. Have them listen for all the times of life in the verses.
 - b. After reading it once, tell them you will ask them to see how many they can remember the next time you read it. Have students each read a verse of the passage and take notes as they listen.
 - c. After reading, see how many of the times of life from the verses the children can remember and list them on the board. Title the list “A time to...”
 - d. As you write each one on the board, discuss what each one means and the ones that God prefers us to do as we treat others with His love.
 - e. Read the verses one more time and add other times of life not remembered on the list.
 - f. As students feel comfortable, have them share examples from their own lives of times they have experienced the various seasons listed on the board.

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2. **Activity 2:** Guess the Season Pictionary

Materials needed: cards with each season of life written on it from *Ecclesiastes 3:1-11*, paper and markers/pencils/pens, or dry erase board and markers

- a. Review the seasons of life if this is a subsequent lesson from Activity 1 and write the seasons on the board if you think this would be a helpful support for your students in playing this game.
- b. Introduce Pictionary by drawing a card from the stack and having them guess the season of life.
- c. Divide the class into two teams. Be sure writing surfaces and implements are available for each team.
- d. Have a volunteer for each team come forward and show them the same card. Have them begin drawing the season of life for other students in their team to guess.
- e. The first team to guess correctly will receive a point.
- f. If time allows, continue playing until each student has had a chance to draw a season of life for their team.

3. **Object Lesson 1:** Worry and Trust Don't Mix

Materials needed: 1 large container, 2 smaller containers, water, cooking oil, food coloring, masking tape, sharpie marker

- a. Talk to students about how when we face transitions in life, we choose to either worry or trust in God. Ask students what is more natural for them – worry or trust. Put masking tape on one smaller container and label it “worry.” Put masking tape on another container and label it “trust.”
- b. Pour some of the cooking oil into the worry container. Pour some water into the trust container and put in a few drops of food coloring.
- c. Ask students if they think we can trust in God when we are worrying about how life is different or changing. Pour both the worry and trust liquids into the larger container. At first it will look like they mix and then they will separate. Talk about how we cannot trust in God when we are worrying about transitions in our lives. God wants us to trust Him completely because we know He cares for us.

4. **Object Lesson 2:** A Penny for Your Thoughts

Materials needed: pennies and other coins or dollar bills

- a. Have students examine the money and find what is the same across all the money. Focus on noting the similarity of the phrase “In God We Trust.”
- b. Talk about how we could trust in many things in our lives – people, money, power, etc. Ask students how each of these things could change and we may not be able to fully trust on them. Yet, we can always trust in God, because he never changes!

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Redeeming Transitions

Recommended Age/Class: **Middle School** (6th-8th grade)

Lesson Objectives:

1. The student will understand God can use redeem transitions by using them for good in our lives.
2. The student will understand transitions can be used to bless others.
3. The student will understand transitions can lead us to worship God through prayer and praise.
4. The student will understand God gives us hope to make it through difficult times.

Scripture:

Lamentations 3:22-24, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."

Isaiah 43:19, "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."

Isaiah 26:3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Jeremiah 20:13, "Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers."

Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Hebrews 6:19a, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast."

Content:

- Transitions we experience in life, even if unwanted, can be learning experiences.
- We learn more about how God loves us and wants to take care of us through transitions.
- We can learn how to better help others who might go through similar transitions, because we know what it feels like and what helped us.
- When we look away from our own self to how we can help those around us, we can bless others during our times of transition.
- When we worship or praise God in the middle of life transitions, we are pointed to His faithfulness rather than ourselves.
- Praying to God during times of change helps us think about God instead of ourselves.
- Praying to God helps us to trust Him to help us, rather than relying on our own knowledge or strength.
- Rather than thinking about what could happen, God wants us to remember that He is there and already in the future.
- When we are going through changes, God gives us hope for the future.

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Discussion Questions:

1. How can God use transitions in our lives for good?
2. What can we learn from life transitions?
3. How does the acronym of JOY (Jesus First, Others Next, Ourselves Last) help us understand where our focus should be during both good times and times of change in our lives?
4. What are things you can do to focus on God and others during times of transition?
5. How might we be better able to help other people who are going through similar transitions in their lives?
6. How does praise or worship help us when we go through times of transition?
7. How does prayer help us when we go through times of transition?
8. What is hope? Who gives us hope?
9. How does hope help us get through times when life feels different or uncomfortable?

Activity:

1. **Activity 1:** Acrostics

Materials needed: Papers and Pencils/Markers

- a. Write one focus word from this lesson on the board – Hope, Trust, Praise, Faith, etc.
- b. Have students create an acrostic poem in which they write words or phrases that reflect the focus word and today's lesson. For example: HOPE – Help from God, Others before ourselves, Putting trust in God, Eternal life

2. **Activity 2:** Ebenezer Journal

Materials needed: Lined paper for each student, pencils/pens

- a. Have students write a journal entry about a time in their life where they experienced a transition and how it made them feel. Have them write how God helped them through the transition, and how knowing God is always there for them will help them in the future. (Optional: have students also draw if that is their learning style.)
- b. Encourage them to keep the journal entry to look back in another time of transition as a reminder God is always there to help them through something new in life.

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3. **Object Lesson 1:** When Things HEAT up, God is up to something GOOD

Materials needed: unpopped popcorn, popcorn maker

- a. Show students the unpopped popcorn. Ask students if they would like to eat this popcorn. Compare this to how we are like these kernels of popcorn – we are dried pieces of corn that God knows can become something better.
- b. Put popcorn in the popcorn maker and start popping it. Talk about how for us to become something better, we often must go through changes or transitions in our lives. Just like the popcorn is being heated to be changed, sometimes God gives us transitions in our lives to help us become something better. Sometimes these transition moments may be uncomfortable for us, but we can trust God to teach us.
- c. After the popcorn is popped, discuss how it smells and how many would like to taste the popcorn. The transition the popcorn went through blessed us with a wonderful smell and treat. Compare this to how when God’s children go through life transitions they can bless others by how God is changing their hearts. Encourage them to remember when life becomes uncomfortable during a moment of transition, to trust in God through the “heat” so He can use it for good.
- d. Optional: Have students brainstorm other elements from creation that go through “heat”/time/etc to become something better. (e.g. gems, diamonds, volcanos, etc)

4. **Object Lesson 2:** Praising God in Good and Bad Times

Materials needed: dog treats

- a. Tell the students you brought along some treats to share. Show the dog treats and ask who would like one.
- b. Discuss who really want the treats – dogs. Talk about how dogs will do anything for a treat – roll over, fetch a stick, play dead, etc. When dogs do tricks, we train them to do it by giving them a treat. In this way, the dogs are doing the trick really for themselves so they can get the treat.
- c. Compare this behavior to sometimes how we pray to God or praise God. Sometimes we do it just because we want God to bless us with good things in our lives. However, God wants us to pray and praise Him in both the good and the bad times. Review the story of Job and how Job praised God in all his trials (*Job 1:21*). No matter how hard transitions in life may be, God wants us to praise Him and focus on His goodness.
- d. Optional: Use Ebenezer Journal (see Activity 2) or separate journal to write or draw follow-up times in their lives currently...continue this throughout Sunday School year and have them take home as an end-of-the year memento.
 - i. Praise for good
 - ii. Prayers for hard