EMPATHY: Lesson One

BACKGROUND: Our chapel lesson last week for our 3s, 4s & K students centered around the story of The Good Samaritan found in the book of Luke, chapter 10, verses 25-37. This story provides the best possible setup for discussion about what we’re currently living in light of COVID19! Social Distancing is a VERY abstract concept that is hard for children to understand because they are such concrete thinkers. Right now, you may be entertaining questions like:

• Why can’t I go to school?
• I’m not sick, why can’t I play with my friends?
• I’m bored...
• Why can’t we go someplace FUN?

This can get exhausting quickly for parents – know you’re not alone! Our goal over the coming days will be to help use this time to foster the growth of empathy in our children and use this unprecedented circumstance to help them begin to understand how they are connected to people outside of their own family and around the world. We’ll begin each lesson with some possible responses to likely questions from your child/ren and then move into how those responses may be connected to a story or concept that we’re living in real time. Each lesson will conclude with a suggested home-based activity that requires little or no supplies that you will need to purchase.

Before we get to the empathy conversations, here are some possible responses to the aforementioned questions (responses correlated to order of questions above):

• We can’t go to school right now because school is closed for everybody. There are some yucky germs going around and the people who work at your school want to be sure the school is clean and safe for us to go back when it’s time.
• I know you’re not sick and that’s part of why we are staying home. We are going to use this time to play here so we don’t share germs with our friends and they don’t share germs with us. This is kind of a weird time (just name it). I’ve never had to do this before either, but we’re going to make the best of it! And – your teachers are going to share ideas with us about things we CAN do while school is closed.
• Sometimes I get bored too. But then I start thinking about what I can do at home!
  o What if...we build a blanket fort and read your favourite story book?
  o What if...we pick out a yummy dinner and you help me make it for the family?
  o What if...we tape paper UNDER the dining room table and you pretend you’re in outerspace. You can draw what you see in space on the paper
  o What if...we make some cards to send to people in retirement homes who may not have their families with them? Your artwork would brighten their day!
  o What if...we go on a nature walk?
  o What if...you draw a picture to send to your teacher/give to your teacher when we are back in school?
  o What if...we go outside and see if we can find some earthworms and make mud pies?
  o What if...you help me make some homemade playdoh?
• Part of not sharing germs is making sure we don’t go to places where there are big crowds. I know you’re used to being out and about and we have to get used to be home more than usual. It’s an adjustment for me too. But let’s make this our own adventure! What/who could we pretend to be?
Now – back to our story – the story of The Good Samaritan is found in the book of Luke, chapter 10, verses 25-37. (if you’re reading this to your children, I encourage you to read from a children’s Bible because of its simpler word choice). If you’d like to watch a cartoon version of the story, click [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osfQg4yKtq8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osfQg4yKtq8)

Read or watch the story of the Good Samaritan (NOTE: they refer to the injured man as ‘half-dead’ – be prepared to address that if your child asks).

Follow up with these questions:

Who are our neighbors?

Name your actual neighbors – who are they? What are their names? What do they do? What do you like about them?

In the story, the Good Samaritan didn’t live next door to the man who got hurt. How was he his neighbor?

Talk about how we can be neighbors to people who live far away (grandparents may be a good example) and even to people we have never met (examples: people who will be in their same elementary school that they don’t know yet, parents – did you ever have a pen pal?). Ask your child who they like to think of as their neighbor. Then ask them how they can be kind to neighbors without being able to play with them or see them in person. Suggest that your child make a card for someone they think of as a neighbor who lives far away and then mail the card to that person.

Before mailing the card(s), ask your child/ren:

- How do you think getting your card in the mail will make the recipient feel?
- How does it make you feel to think about how you brightened someone else’s day?
- Who do you know that makes you feel special and like you’re their neighbor?

Follow Up Activity:


Take turns with your child acting out different emotions with your facial expressions and body language. See if you each can guess what the other is demonstrating. Then ask your child to show you how they would feel if they experienced the following:

- Reached out to give a hug to someone and the person turned away
- Your goldfish died
- You won a prize
- You found ants in the bag of candy you were saving for later
- Your friend got a toy that you had really been wanting for a long time
- You saw yourself on TV
- You got a card in the mail from a friend who lived far away

Close by asking which emotions feel more positive than others. Why do some feel more positive? What kind of friend do we want to be? Celebrate that sending a card to someone far away will make them feel good and name that it usually feels good to be kind and loving toward others.