

GOD PROVIDES

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADER'S GUIDE

Theme: Seek First the Kingdom of God

Objective: To recognize and understand that during times of hardship, we can find peace by seeking first God's Kingdom and trusting that God provides.

Overview:

- Opening Prayer for Missions
- Icebreaker – OCMC BINGO
- Activity #1 – Read Matthew 6:25-34
- Activity #2 – Story from the Field
- Activity #3 – God Provides, Lily Activity
- Closing Prayer & Assemble OCMC coin boxes.

Materials: Prayer for Missions, BINGO cards, writing utensils (pencils, crayons, markers, etc.), and Lily handout.

Note to Teachers:

The Orthodox Christian Mission Center sends missionaries to bring the Good News of Christ to the ends of the earth. They are ordinary people who have followed Christ's commandment to "seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness." Amidst the challenges and turmoil our world faces, missionaries have answered God's call to bring healing of both soul and body to those seeking Him. God has prepared them for their ministry and will provide the tools needed to care for the whole person. By working alongside leaders within local communities around the world, missionaries help people find peace through God and His kingdom. Let us look to those participating in the mission of the Church as we transcend the troubles of our times. They are examples of how we can spread the peace of God to those in His kingdom around us.

GOD PROVIDES

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADER'S GUIDE

Opening Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, we pray for all people from all nations, that they may come to know You. Help us to care for the spiritual and physical needs of others around us and around the world. Teach us how to show Your love and peace to others. Grant us the courage to answer Your call. Amen.

Icebreaker: OCMC Scavenger Hunt BINGO

Make sure each player has an OCMC BINGO card and a writing utensil. When playing the game, the teacher or youth leader will randomly call items from the call list. Allow the players time to look around the room to seek the things you call on their card. Have them place a mark if they successfully found the item. When a player gets 5 in a row, either diagonal, horizontal, or vertical, they shout BINGO. Have available small prizes or treats for a job well done.

Modifications: Cut out each item on the call list and place them in a bag to draw the words randomly.

TIP: To customize your own BINGO cards, visit <https://bingobaker.com/>. Consider creating your own rules that best suits the environment when playing with your students. You can even change things up by moving locations. Use items around the classroom, house (for online classes), or even outside.

Activity #1: Read Matthew 6:25-34

Explain to your students that the reading for this lesson is from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, found in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus teaches His disciples and followers how to live a life dedicated to God. Our focus of this lesson is found in Matthew 6:33, seeking first the Kingdom of God. If possible, separate the sections into parts to have your students

GOD PROVIDES

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADER'S GUIDE

take turns reading the scripture verses out loud. If the full passage is too lengthy for your students, the following excerpt can be used instead:

31 Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Questions: With each question, allow the students time to think and formulate answers. Below are ideas of possible answers.

- **Who is Jesus speaking to in this passage?** *His Disciples, followers, and the crowd gathered to hear Him.*
- **What does it mean to worry?** *Sometimes we feel nervous or upset about a problem or something we need in the future. We can also feel afraid, scared, uneasy, anxious, angry, or even sad.*
- **Have you ever wondered, "What will I eat? What will I drink? What will I wear?"** *Have the children discuss even if they may not have felt this, ask them what they think it would feel like.*
- **How do we receive the things we need?** *By dedicating our life to Christ, by going to Church, praying, etc.*
- **Why do you think Jesus tells us, "Do not worry about tomorrow"?** *We should trust that God will bring us what we need every day.*
- **How has God provided for you?** *Family, friends, shelter, food, a prayer that was answered, courage, our priest, a day that made you happy, etc.*

GOD PROVIDES

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion: (Reflect on this rather than read to your students)

Explain to your students that life is like a road trip or journey. On this journey, we strive to reach our destination: God. Along the way, we encounter “speed bumps” that slow us down or keep us from reaching our goal. Sometimes these speed bumps can be things we need like food, water, or shelter. Other times they can be troubling situations like being bullied or afraid of the dark. We begin to worry about them or even become afraid of what will happen tomorrow. Maybe we rely on ourselves to get what we need and not God.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds us to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” (Matthew 6:33). This encourages us to focus on God and His Kingdom. God understands our worries. He knows what we need even before we ask for it. He gives us food to eat; water to drink; family, friends, teachers, and priests to help us when we are in trouble; and the Church to understand His will. God loves us, and we trust Him. This is where we find peace, knowing that God is with us in every moment of our journey.

As we direct our lives towards God, He calls us to share His peace with those around us and throughout the world. Missionaries are sent to serve as witnesses and stewards of our Faith to those yearning for His Kingdom. They are ordinary people who trust that God has prepared them for their ministries. Some are clergy and seminarians, doctors, educators, and even craftsmen, each with the purpose to unite people to Christ. Today, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center supports over 25 OCMC missionaries serving in the field. They are in places like Albania, Romania, South Korea, Guatemala, and more. Ask the students to keep the missionaries in their prayers this coming Lenten season.

GOD PROVIDES

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADER'S GUIDE

Activity #2: Story from the Field

Seeking God For Healing

Read to your students the story from Fr. Juvenal, OCMC Missionary to Guatemala. Discuss how he witnessed God bring healing to someone seeking Christ and His Kingdom.

Discussion

- **Who was the story about?** *Fr. Juvenal and a young woman in Guatemala.*
- **What happened?** *The young woman was sick and needed help. Medicine was not working.*
- **Where did her father go for help?** *To Church, seeking God through prayer.*
- **How did Fr. Juvenal react?** *He visited her several times and offered her the sacraments of the Church. Prayers to God, Holy Communion, and Holy Unction.*
- **Do you think God was with the young woman?** *Yes, He was!*
- **When did the young woman start to feel better?** *After receiving the Sacraments and allowing God to work in her life.*
- **How does Matthew 6:25-34 help us to view this story?** *Allow the students to discuss. Try making a connection to the reading or to their lives.*

Activity #3: God Provides, Lily Activity

As we read from Matthew, God does not want us to worry. He takes care of us, just like He does the birds, the plants, and all of creation (Matthew 6:25-29).

Hand out copies of the lily activity to your students and let them color the flower. Discuss how God takes care of it. He may provide enough sunlight and rain to help them grow. He may even bring bugs like worms or bees to take care of the soil and allow it to pollinate. Have them draw what comes to mind.

GOD PROVIDES

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEADER'S GUIDE

Next, have your students write down one worry or trouble they need help with on each leaf. Label the sunlight, rain, bugs, soil, etc., as ways God can provide for them. Lastly, explore ideas on how they can help others around them seek God. Write them on the petals. If you have time, allow a few students to share their pictures.

Closing:

Discuss how God is working in your students' lives and encourage them to participate in the ministry of missions. Have them assemble and take home OCMC Coin Boxes to fill and return at a time you decide. Share that these funds will be used to support the ministries of the Mission Center. Thus, they are supporting those who are working to bring God's provision to the whole world. Remind your students of their role in spreading the peace found in Christ and His kingdom.

Closing Prayer:

Prayer of Saint Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow

This prayer is a wonderful way to end the class and start the week. It helps us to align ourselves towards Christ and place in Him our trust to guide us through the day.

O Lord, grant me to greet the coming day in peace. Help me in all things to rely upon Your holy will. In every hour of the day reveal Your will to me. Bless my dealings with all who surround me. Teach me to treat all that comes to me throughout the day with peace of soul, and with the firm conviction that Your will governs all. In all my deeds and words guide my thoughts and feelings. In unforeseen events let me not forget that all are sent by You. Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering or embarrassing others. Give me strength to bear the fatigue of this coming day with all that it will bring. Direct my will, teach me to pray, pray You Yourself in me. Amen.

STORY FROM THE FIELD

SEEKING GOD FOR HEALING - GUATEMALA



One day in mid-August, a man came to the church where Fr. Juvenal - one of OCMC's missionaries serving in Guatemala - serves, requesting prayers for his sick daughter in the local village. When Fr. Juvenal went to see the young woman, she was resting in bed. She had a large, red welt on her face which had been there for some time. She had gone to a government hospital six months

earlier and was given some medicine, but it did not cure her. A doctor from the local clinic who visited her could not find out what was wrong. To get a diagnosis, she would need to be hospitalized for tests, which would be expensive.

Fr. Juvenal visited her several times to bring her the sacraments of the Church. He prayed with her, gave her Holy Communion, and anointed her with Holy Unction. During his last visit, Fr. Juvenal went to check in on the young woman to see how she was feeling. As he arrived at the house, there was a girl up and actively walking around. He thought the child was her sister, but it turned out to be her! She was much better, and the red spot was gone. "Seeing this, I marveled at the power of the prayers and sacred mysteries of the Church!" exclaimed Fr. Juvenal.

OCMC missionaries, like Fr. Juvenal, remind us to follow Jesus's teaching to seek first God, His Kingdom, and His righteousness. By helping the young girl receive the Holy Sacraments, Fr. Juvenal was able to see God work in her life during her time of sickness. Glory to God for bringing healing to all who are sick and to all who call on Him!

