

Everyone Can

FOCUS: Special Friends Ministries

Showing Love to God's Special Friends – Special Friends Retreats

SESSION OVERVIEW:

Through this study children will:

- Discover how the Special Friends Retreats minister to a very special group.
- Learn how our giving to the Mary Hill Davis Offering (MHDO) will support the Special Friends Retreats.
- Learn how EVERYON CAN be a part of Texas Missions.

How to use this material:

This material is designed to be used in children's programs such as: Sunday School, TeamKID, Girls in Action®, Royal Ambassadors, Children in Action®, and children's church, or in a home-school setting. This lesson plan can be taught in a one-hour session, or individual activities and resources can be used to supplement any program or schedule.

Children's Memory Verse

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." Ephesians 2:10 NIV

Prepare to Teach

1. Display the week of prayer poster at children's eyelevel with your church's goal written on it.
2. Read through the material and adapt the lesson to fit your group.
3. Gather and purchase necessary supplies, prepare the items listed, and make the copies you will need.

Introduction

Ephesians 2 tells us that we are hand-made by God and chosen to do His good work. This lesson will help children see that EVERYONE CAN be a part of Texas missions and support ministries such as the Special Friends Retreats. This curriculum is meant to give helpful information and suggestions that can be adapted to your current program.

Special Friends Retreats

Many churches in Texas have special classes for children. Some are divided into classes for preschool and elementary. Others have more specific groups such as nursery, pre-k, kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade, 4th grade, 5th grade, and 6th grade. Churches have these grade-level classes because each

group learns differently. Another type of class some churches have started is classes in different languages. They are in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and many other languages. Why is it important for churches to have so many different types of classes? It is because God wants everyone to know how much He loves them and how special they are to Him.

The Special Friends Retreats were created to help churches meet another very special need—sharing God’s love with friends who have mental challenges. There are two Special Friends Retreats in Texas. One is located in Floydada, outside of Lubbock; and one at Mt. Lebanon, outside of Dallas. The retreats are designed to give special attention to the campers, their parents, and teachers of persons with special needs. The first Special Friends Retreat in 1985 was able to take place because of Mary Hill Davis Offering allocations. There were about 200 people at the first camp which was held at Mt. Lebanon. Now, there are over 450 people from 40-45 churches that participate. That’s more than twice as many people! This retreat has continued to grow because churches just like yours continue to give to the Mary Hill Davis Offering.

At these retreats, friends with special needs, ages 12 to adult, come together with other special needs friends and their families to learn about God. All year long campers look forward to seeing their friends. Because the campers in this retreat often have mental challenges, this retreat has many volunteers from all over Texas who come to teach them about God in a way they understand. Just like the classes in special languages and age groups need to make sure that they use words, examples, and games their classes will understand, these teachers work hard to make sure the people in the Special Friends Retreats will be able to understand and enjoy what they are learning. The money provided by the Mary Hill Davis Offering helps to make sure the retreat has enough leaders to make every camper feel important. Campers also participate in craft activities, a talent show, and even a missions project. Just like you can do missions, our friends with special needs like to know they can help show God’s love to others. The Special Friends Retreats help campers to know that EVERYONE CAN be a part of missions.

The Special Friends Retreats are also great times for families of friends with mental challenges to come together and share. These families have a lot in common, and it is very helpful for parents and siblings, or brothers and sisters, to be able to get together, encourage one another, and have fun! Teachers of friends with special needs also enjoy this retreat. This retreat allows them to learn how to best share about God’s love with persons who have special needs. Teachers love to learn new ideas and share about what they have done in class with others.

Family Activity – MHDO Poster

Supplies needed: one piece of construction paper or cardstock per child and markers or crayons

The goal of this activity is to empower children to take ownership of their own MHDO giving. Explain that your family will be designing your own MHDO poster. Remind children that your home church has a goal for giving and work with them to determine a family goal. After setting your family goal and making your poster, designate a prominent location for your poster and talk about it frequently. Discuss ideas of how your family can work together to achieve your goal. It is important for every child to see how EVERYONE CAN be a part of missions!

Children’s Art Auction – giving/doing activity

Supplies needed:

- cardstock for each child
- tempera paint
- various sizes of paint brushes
- containers for the paint
- (optional) frames for the cardstock, can be found at the dollar store or brought by the individual child

dren if parents are notified prior to class session. If children bring frames, be sure to purchase a few extra in case someone forgets or does not have the information.

- Newspaper
- Masking tape
- Smocks (an option is to invite parents to send an old t-shirt to wear over their clothes).

Preparation:

- Discuss the idea of an art auction with your pastor or children's minister. Explain the purpose of involving the children in the MHDO experience. Determine the best date, location, and process for your church to conduct the auction. A good idea would be to have a silent auction, allowing buyers to write down how much they will pay for the artwork. This will avoid hurt feelings over who made the most or least money and emphasize the collaborative effort of your group.
- Cover tables in newspaper, use masking tape to secure the paper in place.
- Pour various colors of tempera paint into containers and place on tables.
- (optional) Purchase frames or notify parents what size frame to bring.
- List ideas on a poster board or whiteboard for children to use as they brainstorm and decide what they will paint.

Explain:

Explain to the children that they will be artists for your church's Children's Art Auction. Inform the children that all proceeds of the auction will go to the Mary Hill Davis Offering to support ministries such as the Special Friends Retreats they learned about.

Ask: Who remembers one thing the campers get to do at the Special Friends Retreats?

Guide children as they brainstorm ideas for their masterpiece. Remind children that EVERYONE CAN do something to help in missions. Encourage students who may not have confidence in their artistic abilities. Remind them that they can use words or a Bible verse as a part of their artwork. As the children paint, continue to discuss how the MHDO continue to help many ministries such as the Special Friends Retreats. Instruct children to add their name to the bottom corner of their artwork. Inform children that their pieces of art will be framed and displayed for an auction after they dry.

Give each child an invitation (with details decided on by your leaders and yourself) to take home for parents to attend the auction.

Announce the grand total raised to the children and celebrate their efforts. Emphasize that EVERYONE CAN be a part of Texas Missions.

Bible Verse activity

Supplies Needed:

- Old CDs or paper plates (enough to write out the verse, one word per CD or plate).
- A basket or bucket
- Permanent marker

Preparation:

- Write out Ephesians 2:10, one word per CD or paper plate. If your group is large, split into smaller groups and make multiple sets.
- Write Ephesians 2:10 on a poster board or whiteboard.

Invite children to read the verse out loud with you in various groups:

- All the boys
- All the girls
- Everyone whispering
- Everyone while jumping on one foot

Be creative! If your surroundings allow, you can make it a competition between two sides of the room or boys and girls.

Once the group is familiar with the verse, place a bucket or basket in the center of each group. (If the group is large, divide the children into smaller groups to allow everyone to participate.)

Hand out the CDs or paper plates to each child and invite them to try to toss them into the basket or bucket in order.

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10 NIV

Closing- Prayer walk

Supplies needed

- First Aid Kit
- Bible
- Printed dollar or play money
- Picture of Special Friends Retreat campers

Preparation

Place the items (First Aid kit, Bible, play money, and picture) along a hallway or in the four corners of your room.

Explain to the children that they will be going on a prayer walk. For older groups, consider attaching a note to remind them of the meaning of each item.

- The First Aid kit is a reminder to pray for the safety of all the campers while they travel to and from camp as well as during the retreat.
- The Bible is a reminder to pray for the leaders who will teach the campers about God’s love.
- The play money is a reminder to pray for the families to have the money needed to attend the Special Friends Retreats.
- The picture of Special Friends Retreat campers is a reminder to pray for the ministries, like the Special Friends Retreats supported by the Mary Hill Davis Offering.

End the prayer walk by leading the children in a closing prayer and giving thanks to God that EVERYONE CAN be a part of His mission.

