

My Heavenly Father Loves Me

Week 1 (10-15 minutes)

Have children draw pictures of phrases to use as your visuals for this song. If Jr/Sr are separate, I'd have the Senior Primary draw the visuals for both them and the Junior Primary to use. If combined, just give the Junior Primary the easy phrases to draw.

You can write the phrase on the back of the paper and have children draw their pictures on the other side. That way the children don't become dependent on having the words in front of them. Remember, visuals are just a tool to teach. If you always use the visuals the likelihood of them memorizing the song goes down dramatically. Only use them for a few weeks!

Sing them the song before they draw the phrases so they can "visualize" the song and hear how beautiful it is. You could have your pianist play it continuously while they draw or put it on a CD on repeat. The music will help keep things calm and it will help solidify the melody in their minds.

Breakdown of phrases:

Whenever I hear the song of a bird
Or look at the blue, blue sky
Whenever I feel the rain on my face or the wind as it rushes by
Whenever I touch a velvet rose or walk by a lilac tree
I'm glad that I live in this beautiful world, Heavenly Father created for me.

He gave me my eyes that I might see the color of butterfly wings
He gave me my ears that I might hear the magical sound of things
He gave me my life, my mind, my heart
I thank him reverently
For all his creations, of which I'm a part, yes I know Heavenly Father loves me.

After visuals are drawn, post them on the board then sing the song a couple of times.

** If Jr & Sr are separate and Sr is drawing the visuals, then use the time in Jr to introduce the song. You can let them know that the Sr primary is drawing some pictures for them and you'll have them next week but you still want to sing them this beautiful song today. To introduce, you could sing it through using the actions (listed under "hints/helps"). Sing it through a few times and have the children join you in the actions. Then move onto another activity. At the very end, if you'd like, sing through the song one more time.

Week 2 (5 minutes)

Put the visuals on the board and sing through the song a couple of times, then move on to a Valentine's Day activity. (Ideas are listed at the bottom of this document)

You can use this song in either of the Valentine's activities (listed at the end of the document). To make it more challenging during the Valentine's activity, you could take down a few of the pictures before they sing it.

Week 3 (15-20 minutes)

Idea 1: Put the pictures in random order. Tell the children that your pictures got all mixed up and you need their help to put them back in the right order. Tape the pictures to a wall or put them along the bottom of the chalkboard. If you have a large Primary, you could hand the pictures out to the children and have them stand up front (obviously, NOT in order). Then start singing the song and tap a child and the child comes to the front and picks the first picture. After the first child is done, tap another child and let them come pick the 2nd picture, etc. They can do this while you are singing the song. I would recommend only do one verse at a time. After they've picked 5 pictures, tell them you are going to check and see if they got it in the right order. So, everyone sings it together. If they got it right, then move onto the next verse. If not, then stop where it gets mixed up and pick another child to come and correct it. Sing again and see if it's correct. Continue until all pictures, both verses, are in the correct order.

If they are still engaged, you could then take a few pictures down and have them sing it again. If they've lost interest in the song, then move on to another activity.

Idea 2 (for Senior primary): Prepare: Tape the pictures all on the back wall of the Primary room or in random order around the room or even just place on the floor in the back or randomly around the room. Bring a timer, magnets, tape.

Divide the children by classes or small groups. Tell the children that their group will need to put the pictures in order on the chalkboard as quickly as they can. While they are putting them in order, everyone else will be singing the song. The rules are that everyone in the group must participate (obviously make exceptions for specific children as needed) and only one child can be up at a time. So, when you start the song, you start the timer. The first child from the first group goes and picks a picture and hangs it on the chalkboard. They sit down and then the 2nd child from the group picks a picture and puts it on the chalkboard. Etc, Etc. until all visuals are on the chalkboard. (If they haven't completed the task and you've finished singing the song, just start from the beginning and sing the song again. Just let your pianist know to keep going over and over).

Stop the timer when the last picture is on the chalkboard and the **child is back in their seat**. At this point, stop singing and check the order of the pictures. If it's all correct, write their time on the chalkboard or a piece of paper. If they have 1 out of order, add 5 second, 2 out of order 10 seconds, etc. Then have that same group quickly come and take the pictures down and put them back on the walls/back of room/floor, etc.

Now it's time for the second group to go. Let all the groups go. Compare times. Hopefully by the last group their time is pretty quick since they've seen all the other groups go and heard the song so many times! If you have time, let the beginning groups go again and see if they can get a better time than before!

Week 4 (15-20 min)

Prepare: Collect pictures of animals or small plastic animals. Put animal pictures face down on table or put plastic animals in bag. Put visuals up on board.

Ask children what the song "My Heavenly Father loves me" is about. Tell them that part of this beautiful earth that Heavenly gave us is all the wonderful animals. Explain that we are going to use some of these wonderful animals to help us practice our song.

Have child come up and pick an animal. Then explain that when they sing the song you will hold up the animal picture and instead of singing they have to make the animal noise. When you put the picture down they have to sing the words again. When they do the animal sound, they should make the animal sound in time to the music, as if they were singing (not just random noises all over the place). Sing the song with the animal sound.

Pick another animal and sing again. Now you can vary which picture you hold up. Sometimes the 1st animal, sometimes the second, and sometimes the words.

Keep repeating until all the animal pictures have been picked. At the end, do it one time through with only animal sounds. See if they can keep up with you changing the pictures. You could "trick" them at the end by holding up a few signs at one time. Remember to take down the visual aids as you keep singing. Take down 1-2 pictures each time through the song.

Possible animals might include: cow (moo), snake (ssss), hummingbird (hum), owl (ooohhhh), sheep (baaa), etc, etc.

At the end, if they are enjoying it, you could try (esp. with Sr) laying all the animal pictures on the table in front of you. Divide the group in half, tell them that you will be holding up different pictures for each group. Their group will need to "sing" whatever you hold up. Then start the song and just randomly hold up pictures in both hands, changing them whenever and remember to have them sing the words sometimes too!

Other activities:

Write on slips of paper a phrase from the song. Hand out to each class (or small group of children) and have them stand and silently "act out" that phrase. Let the other children guess which phrase it is. Then, sing through the song and when each group comes to their assigned phrase, then they don't have to sing, but they have to act it out while everyone else sings. Some phrases may not be appropriate for the children to act out. So, don't assign those phrases and when you sing those lines, then everyone will sing them all together.

On week 3, the sharing time topic is "I have been sent to earth to gain a body and to be tested." You could have them "use" their bodies with the above activity. Another idea to use their bodies is to give each class/small group a slip of paper with a song title on it. They have to act out the song (no speaking) and then the others guess the song,

then everyone sings the song. Encourage them to think about the whole song and what it means, then act it out. Possible songs: I love to see the temple, Called to serve, Away in a Manger, Follow the Prophet, Faith, When I am Baptized, Search, Ponder, and Pray, etc.

Hints/Helps:

1. Use simple actions for Jr. children to help them remember the song. You can use these in conjunction with the visuals. Use actions for:

Verse 1: Hear (ear) Look (eyes) Feel (softly touch your cheek??)
Wind (wave one hand back & forth) Touch (point with pointer finger)
walk (use pointer finger & middle finger and with them pointing down make it look like they are "walking") glad (point to your smile) me (point to self)

Verse 2: eyes (eyes) ears(ears) mind (point to head) heart (hand over heart)
thank him reverently (fold arms like praying) loves me (give yourself a hug)

There's no need to teach the actions to the children. If you do them while you sing, the Jr. children will just automatically follow you. There are always some children who won't do the actions – remember never to force them. They are there to feel the Spirit and learn to love the music.

2. Remember to look at the sharing time booklet each week to see if there are other songs that will go with and reinforce what the children are learning each week. For February, here are some suggestions. I'm sure there are many others that would also work.

Week 1: Because God Loves me, pg 234 (a beautiful song that is never sung!); The World is So Lovely, pg 233 (this is would be an easy one to teach with actions); God's Love, pg 97

Week 2: Follow the Prophet, pg 110 (Adam verse)

Week 3: Hinges, pg 277; Do as I'm Doing, pg 276 and any other action songs

Week 4: Keep the Commandments, pg 146; I Know my Father lives, pg 5

Valentine's Day Activities

1. This is my favorite Valentine's Day activity—and I used it many time over the years when getting ready for the Primary program too. The children love it!

Cut out hearts from large pieces of felt, about 12" high by 12" wide or thereabouts. I sewed two together (just a quick stitch on top of the fabric - no turning the fabric or anything like that). Leave a decent sized hole at the top. For Sr. primary I made a heart for each class. I bought a bag of cotton balls to go with each heart.

Then I had a table set up at the front of the room and the teachers of each class came up front, got a heart and a bag of cotton balls and sat down at the table. I read a scripture about "songs of the heart". Then told them we were going to see if we could fill our hearts. For each song we sang the teachers put cotton balls into the hearts depending on how well their class was singing. If they weren't singing, not standing up straight, not looking at conductor, etc. then the teachers could take cotton balls out, etc.

For Jr. I just made one big heart and had one teacher at a time come up to the front to put cotton balls in/out for one song at a time then we'd change to a different teacher.

This is a fun activity. Just make sure to tell the teachers in Sr. Primary that the bag of cotton balls has to last the whole singing time though!

2. "Name that LOVE song".

Choose songs that your children know that have the word "love" in them. Cut out a heart for each song that you've selected. On your paper (and the pianist paper), number the songs 1-5 (or however many you have). Then on each heart write a number and then write a way to sing that song. For example, you could have the children sing in different styles – cowboy, opera, old man, baby, etc. Other options could be only sing the word "love", sing every other word, stop/go signs, flashlight (sing the words when the light is on, sing it in your head when the light is off), sing staccato, use actions, march, whisper, etc.

You could tape the hearts around the room (face down) or you could put the hearts in a bag and let the children pick. I just wrote on a brown paper bag "Name that LOVE song" and put the hearts in there.

Then, let a child come up and pick a heart. Tell your pianist what # is on the heart. Then you could have the child say how many notes they need to name that song or you could have the child's class hold up their fingers for how many notes they want to name that song. Have the pianist play that many notes and let them guess the song. Then sing the song however it says on the heart.

This activity can take the whole time or it could only take a few minutes depending on how many songs you pick.

Possible songs:

I love to see the temple, pg 95

I'm trying to be like Jesus, pg 78

I will follow God's plan for me, pg 164

I will be valiant, pg 162

Called to Serve, pg 174

Love one another, pg 136

My Heavenly Father loves me, pg 228