

# Jesus' Last Supper – Moved by the Spirit

## At a Glance

Children will write words to a communion song, which will be sung by the congregation at an upcoming communion service.

Note that this lesson refers to hymns and hymnals. If your church tradition uses praise songs or other music, the same principles apply, but there may not be a way to identify the meter. If that is the case, eliminate this part of the lesson.

## Outcome Objectives

1. Children will create a communion song which will be used by their congregation in worship.
2. Children will look carefully at the Biblical text and identify the most important words of the story.
3. Children will increase their hymn literacy by learning how to read words of a hymn and learn about the metrical index for hymns.
4. Children will engage the Christian practice “Singing our Lives to God” and will learn that the direction of their heart is more important than the sound of their voice when offering a song to God.

## Supplies Needed

Paper easel and marker, blackboard, white board or some other way of writing what the kids say so that all can see.

CD player and CD of selected hymn (or musician in attendance)

Rhyming dictionary OR online access and an online rhyming dictionary. (There are numerous free options that you can find by typing “free rhyming dictionary” into your favorite search engine.

Hymnals

Bibles

Pencils and paper

## Advance Preparation

Arrange either for a recording of the selected hymn or to have a musician join you for the session. If it is a recording, ask for the song to be played through 3-4 times.

Coordinate with pastors and church musicians to ensure that the hymn the children create can be used with the next communion service. Prepare flyers with information about the service when this hymn will be sung to hand out or send to families. If children don't normally attend worship, make preparations so that they can be in worship that day.

Familiarize yourself with the metrical index of tunes located at the back of most hymnals.

## Opening Activity

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Background: The earliest hymnals were psalms that were altered slightly so that the words fit the meter. Usually there were only a dozen or so musical tunes that were known and used all the hymns were written to fit the meter of one of those few tunes. That tendency to have many different sets of words fit the same tune continued throughout the history of hymnody, and traces of it can still be found in our lessons today. For this lesson, two hymns will be talked about -- Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee (HYMN TO JOY or ODE TO JOY) and "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (WHAT A FRIEND or ERIE) -- because they are well known. There are many other combinations that share a common metrical index, and which can be substituted for the ones used here. (Substitutions are also possible with non-church songs. A favorite story in seminary is that Amazing Grace can be sung to the theme song from Gilligan's Island, and vice versa.)

Pass out hymnals. Help the children find "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee." Explain, or ask them to explain how we sing a hymn -- reading the first line to the end of the stanza, then jumping down to the next stanza and reading the first line and so on. Then continue with the second verse.

Read the first verse collectively as you listen to the hymn play. Make your reading match the meter of the song.

Before you sing, talk about singing as a Christian practice. Explain that while we always try and sing our very best to God, what is most important to God is the feelings in our hearts when we sing. What kind of feeling do you think we should hold in our heart when we sing this song? (Allow for various answers, but in this case, the first two words of the song, "joyful," is the best answer.)

### **Main Lesson**

Read the Bible story verse by verse. At the end of each verse, or every couple of verses, ask what the key words are. List them on your paper/board on the left with space to write to the right and below. If using the easel, use extra sheets of paper rather than trying to fit everything on one.

### **Life Application**

Using the word list you have generated, try and write a verse (or more) of a communion hymn to the music HYMN TO JOY.

Sing what you have written and make adjustments so that the meter fits.

### **To take home**

A paper explaining when this song will be sung as part of the communion liturgy.

### **Adjustments for age levels and abilities**

Younger children can come up with rhyming words -- it is a phonetic awareness skill that is very much promoted in most pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs -- but they may find it more difficult to form their words into metered music. If they are being taught this early in the rotation, they can generate a long list of rhyming words for key words in the story and older children can use their list and skip ahead to the writing stage. Be sure to explain that they are an

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important part of the process, and that the song being written will use a lot of their words. If they are being taught this lesson later in the rotation, after the older groups have created verses to the hymn, the emphasis can be on learning the verses that were written. Because this will make up a longer part of the lesson, bring out rhythm instruments (egg shakers -- plastic eggs filled halfway with beans or rice and then glued absolutely shut -- are a good quick instrument if you don't have any) or ribbons and scarves for dancing to the lyrics after you've practiced them once or twice through.

### **Be creative**

Keep this song with the names of the children who authored it and used it occasionally when you celebrate communion. It would be particularly meaningful to use it several years from now with Confirmation class -- they could rewrite it, or it could be used in worship when they are confirmed.