



Recruitment Devotions for Middle Grades

I. WE CAN'T HELP SPEAKING

ACTS 4:18 - *For we cannot help speaking about the things we have seen and heard.*

Peter and John, two of Jesus' disciples spoke these words when they were standing trial for telling others about Jesus. *(Depending on your classroom, you may need to fill in a little more about the background from Acts 4)* When Peter and John were commanded not to preach or teach at all about Jesus, they spoke these words: *"We cannot help speaking about the things we have seen and heard."*

What were some of the things Peter and John had seen and heard? *(Either use this question rhetorically or have the students give some answers.)* For three years they had walked and talked with Jesus. They had seen him change water into wine, make the blind to see, heal the sick, and feed 5000 men with a few loaves of bread and a couple of fish.

But they had seen even more! Peter was in the courtyard during Jesus' trial. John stood at the foot of the cross and witnessed his death. Both of these men had looked into the tomb on Easter morning. They saw that Jesus wasn't there because he had risen. They were also there on Galilee's high mountain when Jesus gave the great command to *"Go and make disciples of all nations!"*

Peter and John had seen and heard some pretty amazing and wonderful things. Now nothing could stop them; they just had to share these things with others.

Suppose, after school today, you went outside and saw *(name two students or use yourself and the pastor or another teacher)* go up to my car, each grab one end, and lift it up over their *(our)* heads. Now I don't think they can do it, but let's suppose for a moment they could. I would be willing to say that when you got home from school today, even if no one asked, you would tell them, "You know what happened in school today? *(Name)* and *(name)* lifted a car over their heads!" That would be pretty amazing because it is something that you just don't see every day. You'd just have to tell others about something like that, even though it is possible that no one would believe you.

But when you really think about it, here at *(name your school)* we hear and see things even more spectacular than that every day when we study God's Word. We hear the wonderful news that even though each of us has sinned and deserves to go to hell, God still loves us. We hear the amazing truth that God's Son became a human being, a human being who lived a perfect life because we can't. We see how Jesus died the death that we deserve. We learn the good news that God calls each of us perfect or righteous for Jesus' sake.

That's *amazing!* That's a *miracle!* And it is what *we* have seen and heard.

It also is what many others still need to see and hear -- the message that Jesus is their Savior from sin. I think there are some of you here today who could share that message in a very special way some day... by becoming a Lutheran pastor or teacher. You know, if you have never thought about that before, today would be a good day to start thinking about it.

Let's be thinking, and let's be speaking -- speaking to others about Jesus. Because, just like Peter and John, we just can't help speaking about the things we have seen and heard!

Prayer: Gracious God, what wonders you show us in your holy Word as you teach us about Jesus, your Son. You sent him to save us and all the world. Make us ready, willing, and able to speak to others the Good News that your Word speaks to us! In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



II. GOD'S BRICKS AND BRICKLAYERS

Ephesians 2:21-22 - In Him (Christ) the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.

In 1989 the World Series of baseball was interrupted by a terrible earthquake. It happened in California where the Series was being played. As the earth shifted, sections of bridges fell, double-decker highways collapsed, and many buildings crumbled into dust. But not all of the buildings fell. Some of them had been built in such special ways that they were able to remain standing with little or no damage from the quake. These buildings had very fine foundations for their main supports and had flexible steel structures for their frames. It was a huge relief to see these structures still standing after such terrible shaking of the ground. What wonderful safeguards were designed by the architects -- the people who plan and supervise the building of these structures!

Our reading today talks about another building and another architect. The building is the holy Christian Church which is made up of all believers throughout the world. We cannot actually see this building with our eyes but we know that it is being well built because the architect is Jesus Christ. Under the guidance of this perfect planner, believers everywhere are being joined together by a common bond -- faith in Jesus for their salvation. Their foundation is God's Word, and Christ is the cornerstone of the building, giving it direction. What firmer foundation could anyone have!

Now usually a building is only as strong as the materials used to build it. We sinners aren't very good building materials. But with Christ as the planner and builder we know that THIS building will remain strong. That's because Christ has forgiven our sins and has made us strong by faith in him. If we fix our thoughts on Christ, our cornerstone, and have our faith founded in God's Word, even the earthquakes of our life caused by the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh will not shake our faith from its foundation.

Jesus made us the "bricks" of his church. Each one of us is a living brick that fits together with other bricks. What kind of a brick or building block are you in the temple Christ is building? Is your foundation the Word of God? Is Christ your cornerstone giving direction to your life? Does your life show that the Holy Spirit lives in you? Do you eagerly tell others about Jesus? Do you do your best in school so your pastor and teacher have an easier time doing their jobs for Christ? Do you pray for the work of all of our pastors, teachers, and missionaries wherever they might be? Do you ever think about entering the full-time work in God's kingdom as one of these special workers?

Many still do not believe in Jesus and aren't part of his church. There are still plenty of raw materials out there just waiting for someone to bring them God's Word so they too might become "bricks" to be added to the building of Christ's church. Lovingly, our Lord Jesus lets us serve as "bricklayers" in his

building process. How do we do that? We do by telling others about our Savior and showing that he is important in our lives by the way we speak and act.

But you can also be Christ's "bricklayer" in other ways -- special ways. By training to be Lutheran pastors or teachers at Martin Luther College you can become a full-time worker in God's kingdom. Think about it. Then pray about it. Put yourself in God's hands. He will lead you in the right direction for you and for his kingdom.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, you sent to us our church's one foundation -- Jesus Christ, our Lord. Give us the strength to withstand the earthquakes of our lives. But also, help us to be bricklayers for your church, first as Christians, through the example of our lives and our witness to others, and then, if it is your will, as full-time workers in your kingdom. Guide our lives so that we might fully see your plan for us. In Jesus' name. Amen.



III. LIVING IN THE SONSHINE

Isaiah 60:2-3 - See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Two of the most beautiful times of the day are sunrise and sunset. The Lord paints some beautiful, colorful, and spectacular views for us to see. The gray of the night leaving or coming, the pinks, reds, golds, purples, and blues of the rising or setting sun can fill our hearts with joy and wonder at our amazing Creator-God. As we watch the sun rise or set we can also be filled with peace and contentment at the reminder that the very same God is in control of all things, including our lives.

Try to imagine what your life would be like without God. It would be dark and empty. There would be nothing to bring you out of that darkness into the light. That calls to mind an old commercial slogan: "A day without orange juice is like a day without sunshine!" We could easily say that a day without Jesus is a day without Sonshine. But we are not talking of the light from the sun in the sky. Instead we are talking of the light from the son of God. That SONshine!

Our reading also refers to light and darkness. It is not just the darkness of the night but a complete darkness. To imagine this we'd have to think of how dark it would be in an underground cave where there is no light from the sun, moon, stars or any other source. It would be so dark you wouldn't be able to see your hand even if you held it in front of your face. You wouldn't know if there was a path ahead of you, or a wall, or a drop-off. You wouldn't be able to move safely.

In a place like that, how wonderful it would be to find a candle or a flashlight or some other source of light. With only a little light, you'd be able to find your way to the path and out of the cave into the sunshine again. How bright that sunlight would be after such darkness!

Believe it or not, we all were in deep darkness just like that. Before we had faith in Jesus, we were in the darkness of sin and death because of our unbelieving hearts. It was truly an outer darkness because it kept us out of God's presence and away from his goodness. But as we heard God's Word, the Holy Spirit worked faith in our hearts and we began to see the dawn of our salvation. Now the radiance of our

Savior shines before us and all other believers. How bright that light is that leads us out of darkness along the way of our redeemed and sanctified lives.

In contrast, how tragic it is to realize that there are many people in the world still living in that utter darkness. Perhaps even some of your neighborhood friends might be a part of this group. They have no light to guide their way. They could be lost forever.

Don't you want them to see the same SONshine you see? Won't you tell them about your Savior! Let them see his light. Pray for your pastors and teachers so that their teaching of God's Word won't fall on deaf ears. Or better yet, you could train to become one of God's pastors or teachers yourself! With training at Martin Luther College, you could become a full-time minister of Christ and reach many people with the light of God's saving Word. Think about this for your future while you continue to spread the light now.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, who gave your Son to shine as the light of the world, teach us to appreciate the knowledge of salvation which we enjoy. Help us to be useful instruments in the spreading of your Word not only as Christians but, if it is your will, as pastors and teachers in your kingdom. Help the light of your Son to shine on all people, that they also may be saved from the darkness of sin and unbelief and share with us the sure hope of heaven. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.



IV. A UNIQUE PULPIT AND CLASSROOM

Luke 5:1-3 - One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the people crowding around him and listening to the word of God, he saw at the water's edge two boats left there by the fishermen who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

What do we call the stand from which the pastor preaches on Sunday morning? (*A pulpit*) What do we call the place where teachers teach and students learn during the school week? (*A classroom*) Are all pulpits and classrooms the same? (*Discuss how pulpits might be on different sides of the church, some classrooms bigger or smaller than others, etc.*)

Today in our Scripture lesson we learn of a unique and special pulpit or classroom that Jesus used. Listen to *Luke 5:1-3*.

What was the pulpit or classroom that Jesus used for himself? (*A boat*) We are not used to hearing God's Word taught from a boat. That is a little different than the pulpits and classrooms that we know. But even though the pulpit was a little different, the message was the same. Luke tells us that the people crowded around Jesus to hear the Word of God and that, finally, Jesus taught them from the boat.

No doubt the message that Jesus shared with them was a simple message, the message of who he was and why he came. It's the same simple message that is shared today from the pulpits in our churches on Sunday and in our classroom here during the week. It is the message that Jesus is God's Son; the

message that Jesus came because you and I and all people break God's commandments every day; the message that Jesus died to redeem us all from the penalty of those sins.

Think for a moment of all the pulpits and classrooms there are around us, for us to use. Maybe that pulpit might be in a car on the way to the movies with a friend. Maybe that classroom might be a playground in the park after a ball game. Or it might even be in our bedroom when we have someone over to spend the night. There are many different pulpits and classrooms for us to share God's Word right here in our area, right now! And who knows... perhaps some of you one day might stand in a pulpit like the one in our church as a pastor, or maybe some of you will be in a classroom like this one, teaching others the message of Jesus, the Savior from sin.

Of course, where that message is spoken and even who speaks it are not the important things. What is important is the message -- a message that we can share whenever and wherever we tell others about our Savior.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you were always willing to preach and teach your Word to others. Help us to follow in your footsteps, always willing to tell others about you. And, if it is your will, guide us to serve you with our lives by filling pulpits and classrooms as pastors and teachers in your church. We ask it in our name. Amen.

