

Chapel Talks Introduction

Your Hearts for Jesus project for this school year is Helping Hands Eastern European Ministries. This program helps people in Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Moldavia, and Greece learn about Jesus. The pastors in Romania need a new van because the one they have is older and the pastors drive many miles each month to bring God's Word to many places. You will be raising money to buy this van.

With your prayers and contributions, you are helping us teach them about Jesus. One of the main ways we help children learn about God is by showing them Bible stories that are animated, that is, in a cartoon format. We've dubbed *Little Shepherd* into Bulgarian. This has been broadcast many times throughout the entire country of Bulgaria. Many children there loved this story and their parents wrote to tell the television station how much they liked it. Because of that, the station usually shows it every weekend until spring. We also dubbed the movie *Easter Is*, so that the children could learn about Easter.

Eleven Bible stories for Children have been written and translated into Bulgarian, Ukrainian, and Greek. They are in the process of being translated into Romanian. Three of those stories are Christmas stories. We hope to make podcasts of each of these. Those that are translated have already been emailed to the pastors for the children in those countries.

In the weeks ahead, you'll be learning about how children in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Ukraine live. Many of those living in this part of the world have a difficult life, and it is especially hard for them because they don't know about God's great love for them. In other ways, life really isn't very different from that of kids who live in the U.S. They may play different games or learn about European history instead of American, or eat foods you've never eaten, but they go to school, usually don't like to do their chores or their homework, would prefer to eat ice cream rather than broccoli, and enjoy playing with their friends and their pets. Like kids in the U.S., they sometimes feel scared or lonely, left out, picked on, or sad. And like all people, they need to know Jesus died to save them and that He cares about them and hears their prayers. That's a pretty wonderful gift to give them, isn't it?

Chapel Talk #1

The Biggest Pumpkin

Invocation: We begin in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Song: Spread oh spread Thy mighty Word

Suggested Bible reading: Matthew 13:3-9

Bible verse: I Kings 12:8

Object lesson: Two pieces of fruit or vegetables, one big and one small to illustrate the difference good care can make.

Iosif (pronounced I-oh-siff) and Sorin (pronounced Sore-in) are 11-year-old boys who live in southeastern Romania. They are friends but sometimes they don't act like friends. When they learned about a contest in their town, with an award and money to be given to the student that grew the biggest pumpkin, it turned them into serious rivals.

Iosif was very sure of himself and planned how he would spend the money before he even planted any seeds. He put off the planting far too long because he was sure he would come up with the perfect plan to make his plants grow quickly. When he finally got around to planting the seeds, he grew impatient for them to break through the soil and asked one of his friends what he should do to speed up the process.

His friend told him eggs were supposed to build muscles so maybe they were good for plants too, but that didn't help. When the seedlings sprouted, the raw egg made them slimy and they died. Iosif planted more seeds and decided he'd water these with a cola drink. Those seedlings also died. By the time the third set of seeds broke through the soil, it was already July. He had only one tiny little pumpkin by the time the contest ended in September. Iosif thought about buying a big pumpkin, but the rules specified that a picture of the pumpkin on its vine showing his yard was required.

Before Sorin planted his pumpkin seeds, he asked his grandfather what type of soil he should use, where to plant the seeds, and how to care for his pumpkin plants. He followed all his grandfather's advice and planted the seeds right away. His plants thrived and Sorin won the contest. He used the money to buy his grandfather a young walnut tree.

Sorin may not have been the best farmer, but by getting advice from someone who knew how to grow pumpkins and then following that advice, he was successful. After he won the contest, he told Iosif he'd share all his advice from his grandfather. The following year, he taught Iosif about growing things. More important, he showed Iosif what true friendship is.

When you are young, it is common to get lots of advice. Some children regularly ignore all the advice they get and often have problems because of that. But parents and teachers usually know a lot more than young people, and tell their children so they don't make a mistake or have bad things happen. It is especially important to hear what they tell you about God to help you become strong in your faith and live a life that produces many good things.

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, I know you have given me a lot of good advice so that I can avoid making mistakes that could hurt me or others. Please help me to be grateful for

the guidance of my parents and teachers. Thank you for giving us Your Word, which shows us how to live and tells us how Jesus died to save us. Amen.

Chapel Talk #2

The Apple Orchard

Invocation: We begin in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Song: Blessed be the ties that bind

Suggested Bible reading: Romans 12:9-21

Bible verse: I Thessalonians 5:14

Object lesson: A cut flower in a vase and another in a shallow bowl. Put one flower in the vase and try to make the other flower stand up in the bowl, to illustrate the need for support.

Many years ago, in the northern part of Bulgaria, just south of the country of Romania, two families bought a new orchard and divided it into two, one half for each family. The Christoff family put up supports for the young trees, pruned their trees every year, and made sure they had enough water if it hadn't rained for a while. The Todoroff family never bothered to put up the supports and never pruned their trees. They did water the trees occasionally, but that was about all they did to help them.

Five years later, the Christoff family had hundreds of apples to pick but the Todoroff family had very few. Several of their trees had a lot of fruit on some branches but the branches broke when the fruit became large because they didn't have enough support. The Todoroff's had such a small crop they decided to prune their trees and water them more often.

The Todoroff's trees did a little better the following year. But then a very harsh winter storm came up the following November. The Christoff family had no problems. But the Todoroff family lost half their trees during that storm. They had a very small crop the following spring.

The Todoroff family had trouble paying their bills the following summer. They thought about giving up but the Christoffs lent them some money and put stakes and wires around their remaining trees to provide better support. They also helped the Todoroffs plant some new apple trees and that spring, started a garden with plants that would produce a crop they could sell the following autumn. They told them that they wanted to support them as well as their trees.

God wants us to help others. Sometimes it seems like people are suffering because they are lazy or careless. Even if that is true, reminding them of this will not help them. What does help them is being kind and giving them our assistance if they need it. This type of support may make it possible for them to turn their life around and do better. More important, it will help them understand what God's love is all about. They may even be more willing to learn what a great gift God gave them when He died for their sins and to trust in Him as their Savior. Just like a cut flower cannot stand up without the support of a vase, so people need support.

PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, help me to be kind to other people and to help them if I can. Help me to tell them about Jesus so that they can have the best support of all. Amen

Chapel Talk #3
The Wise Sunflowers

Invocation: We begin in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Song: Jesus will reign wherever the sun

Suggested Bible reading: Psalm 1:1-3

Bible verse: Psalm 119:105

Object lesson: A scarf that is thin and can be used to tie over the eyes. Have an older child try to read something with it on, and then try to read it after the scarf is removed.

Sunflowers are grown in Romania and the northwest part of Bulgaria. They are grown because they can be picked and crushed to make sunflower oil. Even though the sunflower plants start from just a small seed, they produce many seeds. They are called sunflowers because they face the sun. Seeing a large field full of sunflowers is a beautiful sight. The plants almost seem happy! Sometimes sunflower seeds drop onto a shaded area and don't do very well. If they survive, they don't produce many seeds. Without enough light, they can't grow properly.



God's Word is like the sun, giving light to our life so that we can thrive. God wants all of us to follow His Word. When we do, we are like sunflowers. Your family brings you to church and tells you about God's love for you so that you can grow in your faith.

Some children don't know about Jesus. They are like sunflowers seeds that are accidentally planted in the shade. They don't know that Jesus loves them and wants to help them. When you help other children learn about Jesus, it is like moving a sunflower plant from the shade and into the sun. You will help them have the most important thing in the world, faith in Jesus.

PRAYER: Dear Jesus, thank you for giving me family members and teachers that help me learn about you and grow in my faith. I am like a sunflower planted in a sunny field. Please help me to share your love with other people. Amen.

Chapel Talk #4
The Vineyard

Invocation: We begin in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Song: With the Lord begin thy task

Suggested Bible reading: Matthew 18:10-14

Bible verse: John 15:5

Object lesson: A lamp with the light bulb removed, plugged in and turned on. Hold up the light bulb and ask why it isn't shining. Turn the lamp off and put the bulb back in the socket and turn the light back on and ask why it now shines.

The climate on the plains of Bulgaria is very good for growing grapes. The soil on the Thracian plain is rich, so the grape vines can get what they need to grow. Still, grape growers have a lot to do to keep the grape vines strong so that they can continue to produce grapes for many years. A strong grape vine can produce fruit for fifty years.

Izkra and her brother Radko live on the Thracian plain in south central Bulgaria. Their parents have a large vineyard. Izkra and Radko like to play in the vineyard. There are long rows of special fences that keep the vines upright and support the clusters of grapes. Sometimes Izkra and Radko pretend the long rows of plants are the walls of a house. Other times they make believe the rows are dividers for lanes in an Olympic race. They race each other down the paths between rows. Every now and then, they'll invite their friends to a vineyard race. They can only do that when their parents aren't busy pruning the plants or picking grapes.

One day when Izkra was about seven years old, she wondered if she could start a grape vine from a part of a vine. She broke a branch off from one of the vines, brought it home, filled a glass with water and put it on her dresser. She put the branch in the glass.

Every day she checked to see if the branch had roots on it. But the branch didn't grow any roots and a week later all the leaves were dried. When she told her father about this, he laughed and explained that branches can only survive if they stay connected to the vine. He told her that a branch that is disconnected from the plant is like a lamb that runs off and is no longer cared for by the ewe or protected by the shepherd.

Christians are able to truly love and care for others because we are spiritually connected to Jesus. We have to continue to study His Word and pray. This will keep us growing in our faith and strong in it.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank you for making me your child. Please help me to stay connected to you my whole life. Help me to share your Word and your love with others so that they too can have your love and protection throughout their life. Amen.