



The Shoebox Gift That Gives Hope Lola's Lion

TEACHER/PARENT GUIDE



Use this guide designed for preschool through elementary-age children to help them learn the importance of prayer and also inspire the packing of Operation Christmas Child shoebox gifts by watching the Samaritan's Purse short film, "Lola's Lion."

MATERIALS NEEDED

- A stuffed animal. (Consider using your childhood favorite if you still have it.)
- If time allows, ask the children to show their favorite stuffed animal.
- Sheets of paper, pens, pencils, markers, crayons.

BEFORE VIDEO

Discussion: 5-7 minutes

Show the children your stuffed animal.

Ask: Tell me about your favorite stuffed animals. (*Affirm answers given.*)

Ask: Why are stuffed animals so special to us? *Because they are good listeners, they help us to not feel alone at night, they are always there for us, they were given to us by someone special, etc.*

Say: Stuffed animals are a good reminder that we are loved even when the people who love us cannot be there with us.

Ask: Who else is:

- Someone special?
- A good listener?
- Someone who helps us to not feel alone at night (because He IS with us)?
- Always there for us no matter what (in fact, He never leaves or abandons us)?

JESUS!

Say: I love my stuffed ____ but I know it is only a toy. Still, it can be a good reminder of God's love for me!

Let's watch this video together to see what happened with a very special stuffed lion.

PLAY VIDEO

Video length: 12 minutes

Tip: Give YOUR attention to the video (as much as you can while maintaining order) to help the children keep focus also! When you are distracted, they will be too!

AFTER VIDEO

Discussion: 7-10 minutes

Ask: What was the most special thing in the shoebox gift that Lola received? *The lion.*

Ask: Why was the lion special?

- He was just what she wanted.
- The note talked about the lion.
- The lion was the coolest toy.
- The lion wanted to be her friend.
- The lion reminded her that she was never alone and that Jesus loved her.
- God was able to show her that He knew the deepest desires of her heart and that He heard her prayers!

Ask: How did the lion get to Lola? *It came in a shoebox gift.*

Ask: Did Emily, who packed the shoebox, know that it was the perfect gift for Lola and that she had a picture of a lion on her wall? *No, but God did!*

Ask: So how did the lion's box get especially to her? *Emily prayed that it would be the perfect gift for the child who received it.*

Ask: What is prayer and how does it change things?
Prayer is talking to God. Prayer itself (just saying words) can't change anything, but GOD can! When we pray to God, trusting that God hears us, we know that He will listen to us and that He will do what is best. Emily prayed and trusted God to do what she could not do. She trusted God to know who the right child was to get her box with the lion. The Bible says that things that are impossible for us, are possible with God. Jesus was talking about a difficult thing in Matthew 19:26 when He said, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (NASB).

ACTIVITY

Time: 10-15 minutes

Say: Let's do an activity! We are going to write a prayer for a child who will receive a shoebox. We are going to see that when we send our prayers to God, He is able to hear our prayers and change things for someone else! We sometimes call that kind of prayer "intercession." The Bible has a lot of examples of people praying for other people to know God's love, feel His hope, or have deep joy!

Read: "May the God who gives hope fill you with great joy. May you have perfect peace as you trust in Him. May the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with hope" (Romans 15:13, NIRV).

As you give out supplies, ask: Do you know that the most important thing to put into a shoebox is hope, joy, and love? How do you put hope, joy, and love into a shoebox? Can you buy it at the store? "One gallon of love please?" No! We put hope, joy, and love into a shoebox gift through prayer! God's Spirit can fill all of the nooks and crannies of a shoebox with hope, joy, and love if we ask Him. Even if we have already packed our shoeboxes, God's love, His joy, and His hope can sneak down into every single place so that a child who opens the gift feels loved by God. And, when we write our notes in shoeboxes, we can tell the children who get them that we love them too!

So, we are going to write a prayer for a shoebox recipient. How do we start a prayer? Let's look at an example from the Bible.

Read: "May His Holy Spirit give you His power deep down inside you. Then Christ will live in your hearts because you believe in Him." (Ephesians 3:16-17, NIRV).

Instructions:

- Give each child a sheet of paper and have them write a prayer on it. If they are too young to write, encourage them to draw their prayer. Allow the children to spread out and do this quietly. OR, work together to write one prayer as a group.
- OPTIONAL: Demonstrate how to fold the prayer into a basic paper airplane shape. Send it on a flight to the other side of the room. Have someone pick up the prayer(s) and then send them on to somewhere else.
- Review again how our prayers help us send hope, joy, and love to another person.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

(As Time Allows)

God Answers Prayers: Video testimonies from a child who prayed for a specific item and it came in their Operation Christmas Child shoebox gift:

- [Livia's story](#)
- [Kwale's story](#)
- [Dania's story \(animated\)](#)
- [Yuliya's story](#)
- [Terry's story](#)
- [Luis' story](#)

Free Resources:

- ["Let's Be Friends" Sheet](#)
- [Children's Resources](#)

Challenges:

Scripture Memorization—Jesus teaches us how to pray. Encourage the children to memorize the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13.

Pack a Special Shoebox—Challenge the children to return the following week with one item that God has put on their heart that a child should receive, and pack a shoebox gift as a group.



ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

Read: *"O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways."* (Psalm 139:1-3).

Watch: "Lola's Lion"

Share: The Lord knows all things and works in all things. He knows exactly where you are and exactly what you want and need before you even say it! All of those things matter to Him, and His greatest desire is to share His love with us. That's why He sent His Son—because He so loved the world, He gave His only Son so that whoever believes in Him would receive the greatest gift of all—adoption into the family of God!

He can use something as simple as a lion to show us how He cares for us, like He did with Lola. And, we can be a part of sharing His love through prayer and giving like Emily! Think about a time when you needed something like a hug, a present, or a Band-Aid®, and someone else in your life met that need. You can meet that need for another little boy or girl across the world by packing a shoebox gift and praying that it would be the perfect gift for the child who receives it.

The most important thing you can put into a shoebox is hope, joy, and love! How do you put those things into a shoebox? By praying!

Activity: Let's do an activity! We are going to write a prayer for a child who will receive a shoebox. We are going to see that when we send our prayers to God, He is able to hear our prayers and change things for someone else!

Instructions:

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