

Homes Afar

Description:

missionary 'play houses' from around the world

Aim: teach that missionaries live in many different types of homes and teach kids to pray

Audience: 2-5 year olds, any size class with enough helpers

Time: 10-15 minutes

Equipment: large cardboard appliance boxes, paint, blankets, tents, crayons

Scripture to Study:

Matthew 19:29

1 Timothy 6:8



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Leader's Instructions:

Pre-class Preparations:

1. Construct the play houses all at once for a mission conference or Vacation Bible School, or do them one at a time and feature a different home each week, month or year in your classroom. Remember, a play house doesn't have to be perfect or professional for preschoolers to love it. (One church in Oregon was blessed with a builder-type who constructed a durable yurt from PVC pipe and canvas. Maybe your church has someone like that, too? If not, anyone can convert cardboard into these simple play houses below.)
2. If your church, class or family supports a missionary, research and find out their specific style of home. Personalizing always gives opportunity to pray for your missionary. Some have given up big homes to live in far away countries. (See Matthew 19:29). Recent prayer letters will give you hints as to their needs. The list below gets you started. Expand it with your imagination!

Homes to build:

1. **Pitch a tent.** Use real camping tents or construct them by throwing a blanket over tables, chairs pushed together, etc. If you know a missionary who works with nomadic people, move the tent from week to week in search of fresh water and grass for the animals. While inside the tent, pray for your tent-dwelling missionaries in places like Northern and sub-Saharan Africa.
2. **Sail in a ship.** Pretend to staff the Logos II or the Mercy Ship, as crew members, taking the gospel and physical aid around the world. Construct your ships by laying large cardboard appliance boxes lengthwise on the floor, cutting out the top and bringing the front to a point. Voila! Some missionaries live on ships for years at a time, only getting off now and then when the ship docks at a port.

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3. **Build a city of modern homes.** Complete this set with houses, store, and gas station. Tempura paint does wonders for an old cardboard box. Many missionaries live in modern cities all over just like the ones here in the USA.
4. **Bend a Turkish yurt.** Make a round yurt like the ones used by nomadic Mongols of Siberia. Bend heavyweight wire into a large circle of 4-6 foot diameter. Thread it back and forth every 12 inches through long strips of 3 foot high cardboard walls. Use a wire at the top and at the bottom, making sure not to leave any sharp ends exposed. Cover ends with electrical or duct tape and attach a cardboard or cloth roof. Some missionaries in Siberia live like this.
5. **Perch a house on stilts.** Look for a preschool slide set at garage sales. The large square platform at the top makes a perfect frame for your house on stilts. Simply leave a doorway where stairs go up and run cardboard walls all around the rest of the platform. (You will have an inoperable for that time.) A blue plastic tarp or cloth makes believable water below. Cardboard or cloth makes a good roof here, too. Missionaries to Papua New Guinea often live in these stilt houses. Sometimes there is no water below, only the families' pigs and chickens who eat the food scraps dropped from above!
6. **Hang a hammock or stretch a cot.** Some missionaries travel through the countryside and sleep outdoors under the stars with no house around them at all! Set up a camping cot with a sleeping bag on top, or a low-slung hammock and you'll have some interesting conversations for sure. Add mosquito netting and an artificial ficus tree or plants for an even more realistic setting. Missionaries in South American rainforests and in parts of Africa live this way, especially when travelling into new areas for the first time
7. **Turn a wagon into a travel trailer.** Cut the bottom out of a cardboard box and set it in a large wagon. Cut windows and a door. Have a helper or sturdy child pull one or two

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others inside. Some missionaries travel with nomadic groups in this way throughout Africa and parts of Europe. Medical teams also serve large areas all over the world by travelling from village to village with Bibles and medicine.

Class Time:

1. Let children play house in their own way with the different styles of homes. They will cook, sit and sleep, look in and out of the windows, and generally explore all on their own. Little instruction from teachers is needed. Try to have a helper assigned to each house for good supervision.
2. Display a large picture of a missionary you support on the outside of each home, possibly near the doorway.
3. Have a brief prayer time as children sit inside various houses. Keep it short. Ask them questions that will help them learn how to pray. For instance, you might ask if anyone ever got seasick on a boat. Then lead them in praying that (missionaries) won't get seasick, but that they'll feel well so they can tell others about Jesus. Or pray that the people with which your missionaries live will understand about Jesus and accept Him as their Savior and Lord. Check to see if your missionaries have specific requests and praises in their most recent prayer letters. Then, pray about those, too. Keep up-to-date on your missionaries' needs.