The road, and the mosaic

Unit 0 · The Hypothesis: The governing image of the whole year, given openly in the first week: the same tiles make a king or a fox, and the picture they are for decides.

Richard Verver, JCL · Canon Lawyer

This plan is written for a parent who did not design the year. The week opens with a game on the weekend and a feast on the Monday. Luke 24 is read as *lectio divina* one day and argued about another, and the week ends with one card on a wall. The parent's whole script is about six sentences, and they are all below.

The week at a glance

DAY	WHAT	TIME
Saturday 12	The game: the *Secret of Kells* story in Unlock! Kids: Irish Folklore, played together, siblings in, with the tutorial first if the game is new. Then the film, that evening or on Sunday. Nothing is said about either.	About 20 minutes, then 75
Monday 14	The Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Mass if you can, then Session A in the late afternoon or after supper.	55 minutes
Tuesday, Wednesday	Nothing set. The child may add to the Tile Board or the commonplace book unasked.	—
Thursday 17	Session B, the argument.	35 minutes
Friday 18	The video *The Story of the Bible*, if it was not watched on Thursday. The week's line read back from the commonplace book.	15 minutes

In another year, choose any two days with a clear day between them. The order is fixed: the reading comes before the argument.

Before the week

- **Read, alone, the weekend before:** Luke 24, twice, and Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I.8.1, a single paragraph. Don't prepare a talk. Prepare to be quiet.

- **Gather:** a Bible on a stand; one candle; a cloth, red for Monday's feast and green after; the images and music below; the game, or a tangram set if you have no game; the child's commonplace book; card stock for the Tile Board.
- **Know your one sentence.** The only framing all week is Irenaeus's image: the same tiles can make a king or a fox.

The reading corner

A small place kept for the Word, in the spirit of an atrium's prayer table. It takes ten minutes to set up and is used for nothing else.

- **The table.** Low enough to sit at, with a cloth in the colour of the season, the Bible open on a stand, one candle and one image. Nothing else.
- **The light.** Lamps low. The child lights the candle before the first word and puts it out after the last silence. If the family has a baptismal candle, this is a good week for it, and nothing is said about why.
- **Sound, if any.** Music before the reading and in the silence after it, never under the voice.
- **Phones.** Out of the room.

Five principles are borrowed from the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd:

- The adult is a co-listener, not the teacher. You sit under the same Word.
- Few words, and only the essential ones. The text does the work.
- Open questions, never quiz questions. There is no right answer to find.
- Time to respond: silence, prayer, drawing, copying out a line.
- Nothing is measured.

If you have an atrium, use its prayer table and Bible stand, and let the child set the table.

Music

Any of these, or nothing. The test is whether it makes the silence easier.

- Arvo Pärt, *Spiegel im Spiegel* (1978), about ten minutes: for the stillness at the start.
- Arvo Pärt, *Für Alina* (1976). The well-known recording runs about eleven minutes, and it can be faded out whenever the silence after the reading is ready.
- Arvo Pärt, *Fratres* (1977), in the version for violin and piano, about eleven minutes: for the contemplation at the end.
- Chant: *Mane nobiscum, Domine*, which is Luke 24:29 in Latin, "Stay with us, Lord." Any recording, or simply say it.

Images

One at a time, printed if you can rather than on a screen.

- **For the ten seconds on Monday:** a mosaic of Christ as king. Christ enthroned among angels at Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna (sixth century) is ideal, or any Pantocrator mosaic. Show it, then put it away.
- **For the table all week:** an icon of Christ, such as the sixth-century Pantocrator at Sinai; or the road to Emmaus, in Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus* (1601, National Gallery, London) or Rembrandt's darker, quieter one (1648, Louvre). Ravenna has a sixth-century mosaic of the road to Emmaus too, in the same church. If you use it, say nothing about the mosaic and the road being one picture.

Session A · the reading, as lectio

About 55 minutes. The four movements of *lectio divina* are for the parent to know, not to announce: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation, as the monk Guigo II set them out in the twelfth century. The first word spoken is Luke's.

MINUTES	MOVEMENT	WHAT HAPPENS	THE PARENT
0–5	Stillness	The child sets the table and lights the candle; music if you use it	Sits down first, says nothing
5–15	*Lectio*	Luke 24:1–35, read aloud slowly, once	Reads, with no introduction
15–18	Silence	Nothing	Waits longer than is comfortable
18–25	*Lectio* again	The child reads 24:13–35 aloud	Listens
25–30	*Meditatio*	One open question: which word or line stays with you?	Answers too, briefly, as a co-listener; corrects nothing
30–40	The Father	The mosaic shown for ten seconds; Irenaeus read aloud	Says the one sentence, then stops
40–45	*Oratio*	"Stay with us, for it is toward evening" (24:29), said or sung; the child may add a prayer	Prays, but doesn't lead
45–50	*Contemplatio*	Silence, or music; then the candle is put out	Nothing
50–55	Response	The first Tile Board card, *The road to Emmaus*, with the passage and today's date; a line copied into the commonplace book, or a drawing	Lets the child choose

The rest of Luke 24 waits for week 2. The video belongs to Session B, never to this one.

What the parent says, and nothing more

Six sentences for the whole session. Everything else is Luke, Irenaeus, or silence.

1. Nothing, when the child sits down. The candle is the beginning.
2. After the first reading and the silence: "Read it again, from 'That very day two of them'."
3. The one open question: "Which word or line stays with you?" Then your own answer, in one honest sentence, and not a better one than the child's.
4. Holding up the mosaic for ten seconds: "A bishop called Irenaeus, writing about the year 180, said the Scriptures are like a mosaic of a king, made of precious stones. The people he was arguing with took the same stones and made a dog or a fox, and then said that had always been the picture." Then read his paragraph aloud.
5. The prayer: "Stay with us, for it is toward evening." Said, or sung if you have the chant.

6. At the end: “Make the first card.”

When it goes sideways

If the child says “nothing” or “I don’t know” to the open question, that is an answer. Say “All right,” give your own line, and move on. Don’t ask again. The question returns every week, and a child who was let off the hook in week 1 often answers it by week 3.

If the child asks what the mosaic means, say “I’m not going to tell you. Not this year,” and smile. That sentence is the method. Don’t be surprised to hear it quoted back to you in June.

Session B · the argument

About 35 minutes, on another day. Under it sits one shape that is never named: pieces, the links between them, and an end that decides where they go. Every example below has that shape. Later weeks, and the Benedict Year’s The end first, give it its names.

MINUTES	STEP	WHAT HAPPENS
0–5	Looking back	The game from Saturday: which cards turned out to matter, and how did you know? Without the game, use a tangram: make an animal, then a person, from the same seven pieces. Either way, say nothing about Irenaeus.
5–8	The question	Said once, plainly: “What did Jesus actually say on the road? Luke knows and won’t tell us. Why?”
8–25	The argument	The child proposes an answer, and the parent takes the other side, whichever side that is
25–30	The close	No verdict. Each says the best reason they heard from the other
30–35	Writing	One line in the commonplace book: the best reason I heard today. The video now, or on Friday

The game, and why it fits

The *Secret of Kells* story in Unlock! Kids is the week in miniature, though the parent never says so. A boy of about the child’s age learns to make an illuminated Gospel book. The players search a scene for what is hidden in it. Two cards combined make a third, so the pieces point to one another. And what decides which combinations matter is the end: getting out. Afterwards, draw no line to the mosaic. The looking back on Thursday is the only time the game comes up.

Optional: the film. *The Secret of Kells* (2009) on Saturday evening or Sunday, with nothing said about why. One film a week is chosen this way; the list is on the year’s page.

The parent's four moves

These are enough to argue well without being a debater.

1. **Follow it to its end.** "If that's right, what else would have to be true?"
2. **Count the tiles.** "Which verse doesn't fit that?" Any reading has to keep verses 27, 32 and 45.
3. **Steelman.** "Say my side better than I did."
4. **Look for a third way.** "Is there an answer neither of us has said?"

How the moves sound

These exchanges are not a script, only the sound of the moves working. Real children rarely land it this neatly, and they don't need to.

The first move: following it to its end.

Child. He didn't write it down because it was too long.

Parent. Okay. If that's right, what else would be true? Luke had room for the whole of Acts.

Child. So it wasn't too long.

Parent. Or it was, and he cut something else to make room. Look: how long is the part where Jesus explains everything?

Child. ...One verse. Twenty-seven.

Parent. And the supper, and what happened after?

Child. Like eight.

Parent. So Luke spent his room on the bread.

The second move: counting the tiles.

Child. Luke didn't know what Jesus said. He wasn't there.

Parent. Which verse doesn't fit that?

Child. What do you mean?

Parent. Verse 32: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?" Luke knew that much.

Child. So he knew they were on fire about it, and he still didn't write it down.

Parent. That's a better problem than the one you started with.

The fourth move: a third way, with one example to break a stall.

Child. I don't know. It's just how he wrote it.

Parent. Fair. Different thing. You know the seven stars, the Plough?

Child. The Big Dipper.

Parent. Same stars. A plough in England, a dipper here, part of a bear to the Greeks. Which one is the real picture?

Child. None of them. Or all of them. The stars are just the stars.

Parent. Then what makes one picture better than another?

Child. ...Whether it helps you find north.

Parent. Keep that. Now: what did Jesus say on the road?

Child. Whatever helps you find north in the Bible.

If a child gets somewhere like that last line, say nothing about it. Write it in the commonplace book, in the child's own words.

Lines a child may take

These are examples, never answers. Confirm none of them.

- Luke wants us to go and find it ourselves.
- It was too long for one book.
- The rest of the New Testament is the lecture, written down in pieces.
- The point was the bread, not the lecture (24:30–35).
- If Luke had written it down, nobody would read the Old Testament for themselves.
- Luke didn't know.

If it stalls

Offer one example, no more:

- **The stars.** The same seven stars are a plough, a dipper or part of a bear. Which is the picture?
- **A detective's wall.** Notes pinned up, string between them. Where does the string go before the case is solved?
- **A game's lore.** A world's history pieced together from item descriptions, because the game won't tell it.

- **A jigsaw without the box lid.**

The rules of the room

- **Examples, not authorities.** An argument may use any example from life. None may be ended by who said it: not a saint, not a parent, not a book. A Father of the Church is heard in Session A, not wielded in Session B.
- **Every reading keeps every tile.** A theory has to account for all the verses.
- **The parent argues the other side.**
- **Changing your mind counts as winning.**
- **The question stays open.** It comes back in June.

What not to do:

- Explain the mosaic, or tie the game or the puzzle to it.
- Answer the unanswerable question.
- Preview Genesis 22, the Vigil, or the word "type".
- Talk about graphs, causes or the essays. The shape sits under the lesson, not on it.
- Praise the clever answer over the honest one.

Siblings, and the atrium

Younger siblings join the game, the film, Session A's reading and silence, and the card. They sit out Session B, or join only for the opening. A younger child who wants to make a card makes one; the Tile Board is not graded.

Two children of the age argue with each other, and the parent only referees, with the four moves. This is better than parent against child, and it is how Mr. Benedict's children worked.

In an atrium, with a group: Session A is a presentation at the prayer table, the catechist reading and the children responding; Session B moves to a work table with the cards and the images. The atrium's rule holds: nothing is measured.

One page for Thursday

Print this, and nothing else, for Session B.

Look back. Five minutes on Saturday's game: which cards turned out to matter, and how did you know? (No game: a tangram, an animal and then a person from the same seven pieces.)

Ask once. What did Jesus actually say on the road? Luke knows and won't tell us. Why?

Argue. The child proposes; you take the other side, whichever it is.

Four moves. If that's right, what else would be true? · Which verse doesn't fit? · Say my side better than I did. · Is there an answer neither of us has said?

If it stalls, one example: the same stars, three pictures · a detective's wall of string · a game's lore pieced from item descriptions · a jigsaw with no box lid.

Close. No verdict. Each of you: the best reason you heard from the other.

Write. One line in the commonplace book: the best reason I heard today.

Rules. Examples, not authorities. Every reading keeps every verse. Changing your mind counts as winning. The question stays open.

Books this week

- A Catholic Bible with the deuterocanonical books
- Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies

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