

Christian or Messianic Mezuzah Craft

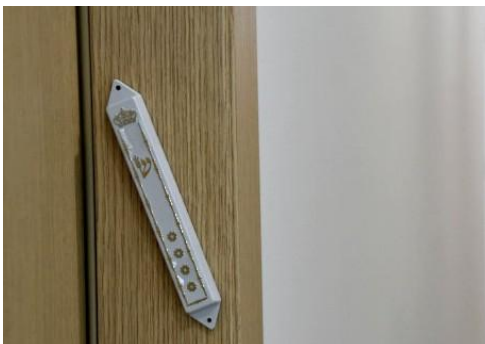
Centering on our Faith

A mezuzah is a scroll inscribed with the Shema from Deut. 6:4-9 (i.e., “You are to love the LORD your God with all of your heart...” The scroll is enclosed in a decorative case and attached to the doorways of Jewish houses. While a literal application of Moses’ instructions to write his words “on the doorposts (mezuzoth) of your houses” (6:9), which many understand as a protective ritual, the mezuzah with the words of the Shema is not magic. It can, however, become a centering passage to remind God’s people that they are to love Him with their whole selves. The Vocati mezuzah craft allows students to create or decorate their own mezuzah cases while considering what it means to love the Lord with your whole heart. Students are also encouraged to inscribe their own “centering” passages on a scroll that will be kept inside the case.

Mezuzahs are typically placed vertically (often angled) on the right doorpost entering a room. When passing through the doorway, many touch a finger to the mezuzah. Many mezuzahs show the Hebrew letter Shin (ש) for Shaddai (usually translated “Almighty”), one of the descriptions of God in Hebrew Scripture (e.g. Gen. 17:1). On their personal mezuzah, students may want to include the Shin (ש), or the name “Jesus” in Hebrew (ישוע).

Jesus says that the Shema is the greatest commandment (Matt 22:35-40; Mark 12:28-34), and a second is to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18). Jesus also said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15), an allusion to the Shema. Keeping commandments is the context of Moses’ instructions in Deuteronomy. In Luke 10, a lawyer asks Jesus what he could do to inherit eternal life (cf. 18:9-34, where a rich ruler has the same question). Jesus asks the lawyer how he reads the law, to which he answers, “Love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.” To Jesus’, “You have answered correctly,” the lawyer responds, “Who is my neighbor?” In his reply, Jesus tells the parable of the “Good Samaritan,” perhaps the best-known and most moving of Jesus’ parables. To this, Luke intentionally adds the story of Jesus’ interaction with sisters Mary and Martha, characterizing Mary as loving God, listening/learning at the feet of Jesus. For Luke, loving God is following Jesus.

Considering these scriptures, it is clear that in all that we do, we are instructed to love God, to seek him, and to serve him. The mezuzah helps us keep this in mind today: centering our hearts on Christ. ***See the back of this handout for instructions on implementing this with your students.***



Reflective Questions

What does it mean to love God with all your heart, your whole self?

How can you love your neighbor as yourself? List some ways.

What does Jesus mean when he says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments?”

Can scripture play a role in reminding you of your commitment to follow Jesus?

Do you have a favorite Bible passage, story, or song?

Is there a Bible passage, story or song that has special meaning to you, that reminds you of who you are in your relationship with God?



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Supplies & Steps

1. Discuss mezuzahs and the significance of having physical reminders that help us live intentionally and remember our relationship with God. Show examples for inspiration.
2. Give students 1oz of polymer clay (Sculpy III) and have them soften it by kneading it on their table or squeezing it until soft. Students can create their mezuzah case in whatever shape and style they prefer simply by pressing the clay (like you would with Play-Doh), but they need to keep all “walls” between $\frac{1}{4}$ ” and $\frac{1}{2}$ ” thick, or it will need to bake for a very long time. If you want to provide extra supplies, clay tools or toothpicks will do the trick.
3. As they make, students need to leave space on the back of their mezuzah case so they can place a centering scroll inside. This can be done with pinching or by pushing in an object (like a wooden dowel) to keep the space they need. Be sure to remove extra objects before baking!
4. Clay can be added, cut, or carved simply by pushing and smoothing. Some may need up to 2oz of clay, so buy extra.
5. Be sure students think about how they want to hang it up when finished (double-sided tape, command strips, nails, etc.). This needs to be planned for as they make.
6. When finished, follow the instructions on the polymer clay package for baking the mezuzahs. Once cooled, paint.
7. Finally, students can create their own centering passage on a “scroll” (any type of paper is fine) to go inside their mezuzah case. Share images of illuminated manuscripts and Bible journaling to give inspiration. These can be simple or decorative, but the intention is to create something meaningful as a reminder for our daily living. We want to “breathe life” into scripture and live it out! Students may want pencils, pens, paints, or Sharpies.

Activity Variations

Purchase undecorated wooden mezuzah cases online ahead of time rather than making them with clay.

Instead of making their own centering passage, students can be given a provided passage and add to it.

Possible Centering Passages

Deuteronomy 6:4-9
 Psalm 46:10
 Philippians 4:7
 2 Corinthians 3:18
 Matthew 22: 35-40