

THE
GOSPEL
PROJECT[®]
FOR KIDS

A People Restored

Older Kids Leader Guide

VOLUME 6



THE GOSPEL

GOD'S PLAN for US

The gospel is the good news, the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use these prompts to share the gospel with your kids.



GOD RULES. Ask: "Who is in charge at home?" Explain that because God created everything, He is in charge of everything. Read Revelation 4:11.



WE SINNED. Ask: "Have you ever done something wrong?" Tell kids that everyone sins, or disobeys God. Our sin separates us from God. Read Romans 3:23.



GOD PROVIDED. Explain that God is holy and must punish sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Read John 3:16.



JESUS GIVES. Ask: "What is the best gift you've ever received?" Say that Jesus took our punishment for sin by giving His life, and He gives us His righteousness. God sees us as if we lived the perfect life Jesus lived. This is the best gift ever! Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.



WE RESPOND. Explain that everyone has a choice to make. Ask: "Will you trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord? You can turn from self and sin and turn to Jesus." Read Romans 10:9-10.

THE GOSPEL PROJECT[®] FOR KIDS

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Write the dates for each session here!

*The Gospel Project for Kids:
Older Kids Leader Guide*

Volume 6

A People Restored

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Bible Study at a Glance

Leader Bible Study

Familiarize yourself with the content and context of the Bible story and how it relates to God's plan of redemption.

Preparation

Pray for your kids and contact families during the week. Gather and prepare session materials.

- Pray for your kids
- Send a parent email
- Print/download printables
- Assemble supplies
- Prepare videos

Introduce the Story

Build relationships with kids and introduce the day's Bible story through engaging activities.

- Opening Activities
- Activity Page

Teach the Story

Communicate the day's Bible story and discover God's big story.

- Big Picture Question
- Giant Timeline
- Bible Story
- Missions Moment
- Key Passage
- Sing

Say what?

Use the suggested "Say" dialogue to easily move between segments.

Apply the Story

Reinforce the Bible story for multiple learning styles and lead kids to apply what they learned as they take part in God's big story.

- Key Passage Activity
- Discussion & Bible Skills
- Closing Activities
- Journal & Prayer

Suggested times

The times provided allow you to complete the session plan in an hour and fifteen minutes. Lengthen or shorten the session as needed.



Missions Moment

Introduce kids to missions and encourage them to take the gospel to the nations with designated missions awareness activities.

Make it fit

Customize the session plan to fit the needs of your church or classroom.



Small Group Option

- 1) Kids arrive in small group rooms for "Introduce the Story." Welcome and build relationships with kids, help them work the activity page, and complete one of the activity options together.
- 2) Transition to an area in your room designated as the "Teach the Story" area. Watch the Bible story video or tell the Bible story. Utilize elements that fit your space, resources, and schedule.
- 3) Move to another area of your room for "Apply the Story." Reinforce the story point and Christ connection. Help kids apply what they have learned. Dismiss kids according to your kids ministry policies and procedures.



Small Group and Large Group Option

- 1) Kids arrive in small group rooms for "Introduce the Story." Welcome and build relationships with kids, help them work the activity page, and then complete one activity option together.
- 2) Use the countdown video or other transition to move to the large group room. Join the other small groups for "Teach the Story." Watch the Bible story video or tell the Bible story. Utilize elements that fit your space, resources, and time constraints.
- 3) Return to small group rooms to "Apply the Story." Reinforce the Bible story's story point and Christ connection. Dismiss kids according to your kids ministry policies and procedures.

Unit 16: Hope in Exile

Unit Description:

After years of living in sin, God's people were sent into exile. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was captured by Babylon. Daniel's visions of the future showed that God is in control at all times. God used faithful people to continue His plan to provide salvation through Jesus.

Key Passage:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Big Picture Question:

Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Session 1:

The Fiery Furnace

Daniel 3

Story Point: God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king.

Session 2:

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 4

Story Point: God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.

Session 3:

Daniel in the Lions' Den

Daniel 6

Story Point: God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel.

Christmas:

Jesus Was Born

Matthew 1; Luke 2

Story Point: God came to earth as a human baby to be with us.

Session 4:

Daniel's Dream

Daniel 7

Story Point: God is the eternal King who judges the nations.



The Fiery Furnace

God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.



Daniel in the Lions' Den

God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel.

Jesus Was Born

God came to earth as a human baby to be with us.



Daniel's Dream

God is the eternal King who judges the nations.

Use Week of:

Unit 16 • Session 1

The Fiery Furnace

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Daniel 3

STORY POINT:

God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)

PAGE 10



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 12



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 18



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

In 587 B.C., the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem, and God's people were exiled to Babylon where they would serve an enemy king for 70 years. (See Jer. 25:11.) Among the early exiles was a young man, Daniel, and three of his friends. About 20 years after arriving in Babylon, the three friends faced a test of their faith. King Nebuchadnezzar's law gave them a choice: worship a statue (against God's law) or face death by fiery furnace. (Dan. 3:6)

Three men from Judah—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—refused to bow down and worship the statue. They loved and worshiped the one true God. Only He was worthy of their worship. The Book of Daniel says that the Chaldeans—a group of astrologers and dream interpreters (see Dan. 2:2,4)—took this opportunity to go to the king and tell on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But not even the threat of death could convince the three friends to renounce their loyalty to God.

As you teach, lead kids to consider the possibilities: God could keep the friends from being thrown into the furnace. Or, once in the furnace, God could keep them from being harmed. Or if they perished, God would receive them into heaven. The friends' trust in God enabled them to stand firm no matter what—even as they were tied up and thrown into the fire.

Then something miraculous happened. Nebuchadnezzar saw *four* men in the fire! They were walking around, unharmed! The Lord not only rescued Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, He was with them.

On the cross, people mocked Jesus: "He saved others, but he cannot save himself!" (Mark 15:31). Jesus was not physically unable to save Himself. He chose to do His Father's will, and His love for sinners kept Him there. Jesus chose not to save Himself so that He could save others.

The BIBLE Story

The Fiery Furnace

Daniel 3

Nebuchadnezzar (NEB yoo kad NEZ uhr) was the king of Babylon. One day, **Nebuchadnezzar made a tall gold statue. His official announced to all the people of Babylon: “When you hear music, you must fall down and worship this statue. Anyone who doesn’t will be thrown into a fiery furnace!”**

So when the people heard music, they fell down and worshiped the gold statue. But not everyone bowed down and worshiped the statue.

Three friends from Judah—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—refused to bow down to a statue.

Some men complained to King Nebuchadnezzar. “You made a rule for all the people,” they reminded the king, “but some of the men from Judah do not bow down and worship your statue.”

This news made King Nebuchadnezzar angry! He called for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. “Is it true that you do not

serve my gods or worship the gold statue?” he asked. **“If you do not bow down when you hear the music, I will throw you into a fiery furnace! Then what god could rescue you from my power?”**

The friends answered, **“King, the God we serve is able to rescue**



Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Wear a costume:** Dress in Bible times clothes and tell the story from the perspective of one of the three friends. Or recruit three adults to act out the roles.
- **Use props or pictures:** Display the Bible story picture. Search study Bibles, Bible storybooks, or online for additional pictures of this story, such as the king's gold statue.

us from the fiery furnace. He can save us from you. **But even if God chooses not to rescue us, we won't serve your gods. We will not bow down and worship the statue."**

King Nebuchadnezzar was even angrier! He made the fire even hotter and told some of his soldiers to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then the soldiers threw the friends into the fiery furnace.

Suddenly, King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up. "Didn't we tie up three men and throw them into the fire? Look!" the king shouted. "I see four men walking around in the fire. They aren't tied up, and the fourth man looks like a son of the gods!"

Nebuchadnezzar quickly went to the door of the furnace. He called out, "Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego—servants of the Most High God! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. They had not been hurt by the fire at all—their clothes did not even smell like smoke.

Nebuchadnezzar praised God: "The God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego sent an angel and rescued His servants!" King Nebuchadnezzar made a new law for all the people. "Anyone who says anything against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's God will be punished! No other god can save people like this!" Then the king gave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego important jobs in his kingdom.

Christ Connection: God was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fire. Only He could rescue them. God rescues us too, through His Son, Jesus. Only Jesus can save us from our sin. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross provided the way for us to be rescued from sin and have eternal life.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Fiery Furnace

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 3

STORY POINT: God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think about a time when they had to make a quick decision. Invite the kids to share about that time and why they made their decision.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Surprising Finds” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete “Surprising Finds” on the activity page. Instruct kids to find the objects hidden in the picture.

SAY • Have you ever looked at a picture for a short time, walked away, and then come back and looked at it again to see new things you missed the first time you saw the picture? Today, we are going to hear a story about a time when a powerful king saw something he didn’t expect to see.

LOW PREP

- pair of sneakers or work boots
- stones or rocks

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Protected

Hold up a pair of shoes or boots. Ask the kids to think about why we wear shoes. Give the kids time to share their ideas. Emphasize that shoes protect our feet.

Scatter rocks on the ground. Put on the boots or shoes, and then walk over the rocks. Describe how they protect your feet and how it would feel if you walked on the rocks barefoot.

Ask kids to think of other things we might wear to protect ourselves. (helmet for riding a bike, shin guards for playing soccer, knee pads for skateboarding, and so on)

SAY • Today I am going to tell you a true story about a time God protected three men when they were thrown into a fiery furnace.

OPTION 2: Trust demonstration

Prior to the session, cut a sponge to fit snugly into the bottom of an opaque plastic cup. Use hot glue to secure it to the bottom of the cup to ensure it doesn't fall out during the demonstration.

Choose a volunteer and explain that you will test his trust in you. Guide the volunteer to hold out his hand and give him the cup with the sponge. Instruct him to continue holding out his arm so he will not look inside the cup. Pour a small amount of water into the cup. Ask him again if he trusts you. Announce that on the count of three, he must tip the cup over his head. Count to three. When he tips the cup, no water will spill from the cup.

SAY • Wow! Thank you, [*name of volunteer*], for being such a brave volunteer! Today, we will learn about three Hebrew men who trusted God to protect them from something much more scary than being splashed with water.

- sponge
- scissors
- opaque plastic cup
- hot glue
- bottled water

Tip: Practice before the session to determine the right amount of water to use.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Fiery Furnace

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 3

STORY POINT: God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Simulate a kid's bedroom. Arrange a table with a lamp on it. Place some toys around the room or inside a toy box. Hang posters or pictures on the wall. Consider positioning a small bed at the front of the room. You may also choose to display the theme background slide.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire

[Leader enters dressed in pajamas.]

LEADER • Hello there! I'm [*your name*]. [*Yawn.*] I didn't get much sleep last night. You see, there is a new movie coming out that I am really excited to see. The movie premiere is just a few months away, and the tickets went on sale last night at midnight! I knew tickets would sell out fast, so I tried to stay up so I could get a ticket. Around 11 p.m., I fell asleep. I even started dreaming! But my alarm woke me up just five minutes before tickets were released. I am really excited about going to the movie premiere, but now

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

I am so tired!

[*Pick up a Bible.*] Did you know there are some stories in the Bible about people who had dreams? Over the next few weeks, we are going to hear these stories and learn about how God used dreams to teach people about Himself.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • As we hear the Bible stories, we will answer a very important big picture question. The question is, ***Why do we pray?*** Huh. That's a great question. Well, sometimes we pray before dinner or at bedtime because we know it's something we should do, but have you ever really thought about why we pray? The answer to our big picture question is this: ***We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.***

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review. • Giant Timeline

LEADER • This timeline shows when stories from the Bible happened. Here is the story we will learn about today. [*Point to "The Fiery Furnace."*] The Bible is full of stories about things that happened a long time ago. All of these stories fit together to tell one big story of how God rescues sinners through Jesus.

Over the next few weeks, we will learn about God's people, who were living in exile. The Southern Kingdom of Judah had been captured by Babylon. God used faithful people to continue His plan to provide salvation through Jesus.

- Bibles
- "The Fiery Furnace" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Daniel 3. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "The Fiery Furnace."

LEADER • What a story! Why do you think King

Nebuchadnezzar built a gold statue? (*He was prideful and wanted his people to know he ruled over them. He thought he was more powerful than God; Dan. 3:15.*)

When these three men refused to bow down to the statue, did they believe God would save them? Look at Daniel 3:18. [*Allow time for kids to read the verse and respond.*]

The men chose to trust that God's plan was the best for them, even if they had to face something very scary. Do you remember our big picture question? ***Why do we pray?*** Well, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew the answer to this question. They prayed and ***we pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.***

One of the most incredible parts of this story is when King Nebuchadnezzar looked into the fiery furnace after the three men were thrown in and saw four men walking around! Scholars believe the fourth man was an angel or even God the Son!

God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king. How did King Nebuchadnezzar respond after he saw four men in the furnace? Look at Daniel 3:26. [*Allow kids to read the verse and respond.*] That's right! Nebuchadnezzar was so astonished by what he saw that he recognized the power of the Most High God.

Christ connection

LEADER • God was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fire. Only He could rescue them. God rescues us too, through His Son, Jesus. Only Jesus can save us from our sin. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross provided the way for us to be rescued from sin and have eternal life.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 17 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 16, Session 1" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about whether or not Samuel should have cheated on his test to get a good grade. Guide them to discuss times they chose to do the right thing even though it meant facing difficult consequences.

• "Unit 16, Session 1" questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

LEADER • God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king. God delivers us today through His Son, Jesus. That's what the Ukegbus (yoo-KAY-boos), a missionary family in Miami, Florida, want people to know. Miami is home to many different cultures and languages. The Ukegbus started a church there so people could hear about Jesus and grow in their faith.

• "Ukegbu Family Photo" printable

Show the Ukegbu family picture and introduce the members of the family. Invite kids to repeat the names after you: Muche (MOO-chee); Diamone (DIGH-ah-mon); Serenity, age 8; Joelle (JOH-el), age 7; Noah, age 5.

Ask kids who are the same age as any of the Ukegbu children to stand. Then pray, thanking God for missionaries. Display the picture to remind kids to pray for the Ukegbus and other missionaries your church supports.

- Key Passage Poster
- "Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks" song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

LEADER • Our key passage is found in the New Testament book of 1 Thessalonians. The apostle Paul wrote this book as a letter to a church to encourage the believers there to remain strong in the faith.

Our key passage reminds us that we should pray constantly. We can talk to God about anything at any time. ***Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.***

Lead kids in singing "Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks."

- "Always in Control (This I Know)" song

Sing (4 minutes)

Open your Bible and read aloud Psalm 100:4.

LEADER • Like Nebuchadnezzar praised God when he recognized God's power, we should live a life of praise and thanksgiving to God for sending His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from our sins.

Sing together "Always in Control (This I Know)."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, You are all-powerful and in control of every situation we face. We are so thankful that when we pray, You hear us. You are a faithful God. Thank You for showing us through Your Word how You have provided a Rescuer from sin through Your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Fiery Furnace

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 3

STORY POINT: God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- paper
- scissors
- tape
- marker

Option: For larger groups, print a verse set in red and one in blue. Hide the words throughout the room. Form two teams to collect words by assigned color and arrange them in order.

Before the session, make a copy of the key passage poster. Cut apart the words or phrases and tape them under random chairs in the room.

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Instruct kids to look under the chairs to find the words. Kids who find a word should bring it to the front. Challenge them to arrange the words in the correct order.

SAY • Great job! Our Bible story today reminds us to trust God always, even in hard situations. Our key passage reminds us that we can show our trust in the Lord by rejoicing always, praying constantly, and giving thanks in everything.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Daniel 3. Remind kids that the Book of Daniel is found in the Old Testament. Explain that Daniel's story takes place in Babylon, a large city that was ruled by a king named Nebuchadnezzar. [*Point out Babylon (F11) on the Old Testament Mediterranean Map.*] Remind kids

that God's people had been taken to Babylon after King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Judah.

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Daniel 3:17-18.

SAY • Even though the friends knew they would face death if they disobeyed the king, they chose to obey God. They trusted that God could save them from the fire and even knew He might choose not to rescue them. Still, they trusted that God had the best plan.

This story reminds us that God is our Rescuer.

God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king, and He rescues us from sin through Jesus—the only One who can save us.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Do you think it was easy for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to decide to disobey the king? Why? *Help kids realize that it would have been very hard to be the only ones disobeying the king's command, but these men decided to follow God, even if it cost them their lives. Emphasize that the friends knew the trials they endured on earth were only temporary and that one day God would reward them for their faithfulness.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read James 1:12.)

2. How can this story be an encouragement when we feel like we are the only ones obeying God? *Point out that God was with the men when they chose to obey Him instead of the king. Lead kids to connect that through the Holy Spirit, God is also with us.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 5:3-5.)

3. What are some ways you can choose to obey God in your life? *Give kids time to discuss. Explain that after Jesus' death and resurrection, His followers continued telling others about Jesus. They were put on trial. Like*

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Jesus' followers chose to obey God rather than people.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Acts 5:29.)

LOW PREP

- foam or paper cups
- marker

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Balance challenge

Challenge kids to take turns balancing cups on their heads. Kids should stack cups on their heads and take a few steps forward. Recognize the kid who is able to balance the most cups.

When kids complete the challenge, instruct them to sit and face you. Write the following words or phrases on separate cups: *family, neighbors, church, community, ministry, friends, time with God, school, work*. Stack the cups in a way that each word or phrase is visible.

SAY • These are just some of the things that missionaries, and many other Christians, have to balance. Each of these things is important and requires their time. Let's pray that the Ukegbu (yoo-KAY-boo) family will follow God as they balance all the things they need to do as they share the gospel in Miami. [*Pray.*]

OPTION 2: The impossible wall

Explain that walls often represent barriers or obstacles, but today we will use the idea of a wall as a reminder of how God is able to overcome any obstacle or barrier.

Distribute a small piece of poster board to each kid. Each piece of poster board represents a wall. Direct kids to write prayer requests and needs they or their friends and family members currently have that seem impossible.

Encourage kids to cut out pictures from magazines or draw pictures next to their need that remind them of God's

- small pieces of poster board, 1 per kid
- kid-friendly magazines
- markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- glue sticks
- scissors
- Bibles
- Bible concordance

promises. Help kids use a concordance to find out what the Bible says about specific topics.

SAY • Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego trusted God when they faced punishment from the king. **God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king.** God is all-powerful. When we need help, we can pray to Him. ***Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.***

This week, pray about the things you wrote on your wall. God hears your prayers, and He does everything for His glory and your good.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to be our all-powerful Rescuer who delivers us from sin and death.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Crossword Challenge" on the activity page. Kids will use details from the story to complete a crossword puzzle.

• pencils
• Journal Page
• "Crossword Challenge" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.



Use Week of:

Unit 16 • Session 2

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Daniel 4

STORY POINT:

God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)

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TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

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APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

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Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar had witnessed the power of the one true God when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered—unscathed—from the fiery furnace. (See Dan. 3.) Daniel 4 records a proclamation from the king, a first-person account for all nations of a dream and its life-changing fulfillment.

Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about a strong, mighty tree that was cut down. Only the stump and roots remained. God got Nebuchadnezzar's attention. His wise men could not explain what the dream meant, but Daniel—who came to Babylon with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—was able to interpret the dream. Like the tree, Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would be taken away. But the dream gave an element of hope to the king: His kingdom would be restored when he acknowledged God as ruler over everything.

A year later, just when everything seemed to be going right for Nebuchadnezzar, the dream came true. He was walking on the roof of his palace making prideful statements when God suddenly spoke to him. Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance and pride resulted in his humiliation. He was driven away from people, he ate grass like cattle, his hair grew long, and his nails were like birds' claws. After some time, Nebuchadnezzar experienced complete transformation. He looked up to heaven and praised God. He acknowledge God as "the King of the heavens" (Dan. 4:37).

As you teach kids, emphasize that pride steals God's glory. Point out how God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that God is in control. Nebuchadnezzar learned the lesson we must remind ourselves daily: God is God, and we are not. He alone deserves honor and glory. Rather than proudly seeking our own fame and glory, we seek His fame and glory.

Nebuchadnezzar was a sinful man who exalted himself, and God humbled him. Point kids to Jesus—the sinless, eternal Son—humbled Himself, and God exalted Him. We can trust Jesus as King and live for God's glory.

The **BIBLE** Story

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Daniel 4

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, shared a message to tell everyone who would listen about the wonderful things God had done for him.

One night, Nebuchadnezzar had a frightening dream.

He called for all the wise men in Babylon to explain what the dream meant, but they did not understand the dream.

Finally, Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel about the dream:

"I saw a big, strong tree.

Its top was in the sky, and everyone could see it. The tree had beautiful leaves and fruit, and animals lived in and around the tree. An angel came down from heaven and said, 'Cut down the tree! Take off its leaves and fruit. Let the animals hurry away.' The angel said only the stump and roots would be left in the ground.

Then the angel said the tree's mind would change from a human's mind into an animal's mind. He said this would happen so that people would know God is ruler over human kingdoms."

The dream frightened Daniel too, and he told King Nebuchadnezzar what it meant. "The tree is you," Daniel explained. "You are great and strong, and your greatness reaches the sky." Then



Daniel said, **“Like the tree was cut down, you will be driven away from people. Instead, you will live with wild animals and eat grass. Like the stump was left in the ground, your kingdom will not be completely destroyed; it will be restored when you acknowledge that God rules over everything.”**

A year later, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream came true. He walked on the roof of his palace and said, **“Babylon is great! I built this kingdom with my power and for my glory!”**

Suddenly, the king heard a voice from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, you will be driven away from people. You will live with wild animals and eat grass until you acknowledge that God rules over everything.” Nebuchadnezzar was driven away from people. He ate grass like cattle, his hair grew like eagles’ feathers, and his nails grew like birds’ claws.

After some time, Nebuchadnezzar looked up to heaven and praised God. He acknowledged that God rules over everything. His kingdom was restored to him, and Nebuchadnezzar gave glory to God.

Christ Connection: Pride steals God’s glory. God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar so he could see that God alone deserves glory. Jesus is the King of kings who humbled Himself by coming to earth and dying on the cross. Jesus saves sinners so we can live for God’s glory.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use dramatic voice:** Help kids distinguish between King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel, and God by altering the tone in your voice as you read spoken words in the story.
- **Use visuals:** On a chalkboard or dry erase board, draw a tall tree with many leaves and fruit hanging off its branches. When you tell about the tree cut down in the dream, “chop down” the tree, erasing its branches and fruit. Leave only the trunk.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 4

STORY POINT: God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think about the characteristics of a good king. Does a good king need to be wealthy? Look a certain way? Act a certain way? Why?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "DREAM" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "DREAM" on the activity page. Kids will fill in the blanks using words that begin with each letter of the word *DREAM*.

SAY • Do you like having dreams while you sleep? Why or why not? Today, we are going to hear about how God used a dream to warn a powerful king and show him that God is in control.

LOW PREP

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Animal round-up

Choose a number of noisy animals based on your group size. Plan to assign animals so each set of animals has approximately the same number of kids. Whisper the name of an animal into each kid's ear without the other

kids hearing. When you say go, kids will move around the room making their assigned animal's sound. Kids will need to listen to the sounds others are making and gather into groups of like animals. The first group to gather with all their correct animals wins.

SAY • Each of you made an animal noise, and you also had to listen carefully to hear the sounds others were making so you could find kids who were making the same sound as you. Do you ever find it hard to listen? Is it important to listen when God speaks? Why? Today, we are going to hear how God spoke to a king through an interesting dream.

OPTION 2: Who am I?

Write the names of animals on index cards, one per kid. Tape a card to the back of each kid's clothing. Challenge kids to ask one another yes-or-no questions to figure out what animal they have.

- index cards
- marker
- tape

SAY • What was the most important part of this game? (*asking good questions and listening carefully to the answers*) What would happen if you went around the room asking questions but never listened to the answers? [*Lead kids to discuss.*]

Listening is very important. Today, we are going to learn about a time when God spoke to a powerful king who chose not to listen.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 4

STORY POINT: God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Countdown

· countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

· leader attire
· pillow
· Bible

[Leader enters dressed in pajamas and clutching a pillow and a Bible.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! I'm [*your name*]. How many of you have dreams when you sleep? [*Allow kids to respond.*] I had a crazy dream last night! In my dream, I could fly! I was flying all around my house and all around town. I even dreamed that I flew here, to church. Could you imagine that really happening?

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Today we are going to hear a story in the Bible about a king who had a dream. His dream wasn't as fun as mine. The king had a scary dream that he didn't understand, but God used a man named Daniel to help the king understand. I cannot wait to tell you all about it!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Do you remember our big picture question?

[Allow kids to answer.] That's right! ***Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.*** God is the King of kings who rules over all, and He listens to His children when we pray. Through prayer, we can talk to the One who will reign forever.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

· Giant Timeline

LEADER • Remember last week when we heard the story of three faithful men—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? [*Point to “The Fiery Furnace” on the timeline.*] They chose to honor God rather than bow to King Nebuchadnezzar’s gold statue. **God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king.**

Our Bible story today takes place some years after the story of the fiery furnace. King Nebuchadnezzar was still the king of Babylon. [*Point to this week’s story on the timeline.*]

The Bible is made up of many stories, and they are all true! They all fit together to tell the one big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Daniel 4. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream.”

LEADER • At the beginning of today’s story, King Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed all that God had done for him. But Daniel 4:8 says that Nebuchadnezzar

· Bibles
· “Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream” video
· Big Picture Question Poster
· Bible Story Picture Poster
· Story Point Poster

still worshiped other gods, and therefore did not recognize the Lord as the one true God. God didn't want to be just one of the many gods King Nebuchadnezzar worshiped; He wanted the king to recognize Him as the only God. God used the king's dream to get his attention.

Why do you think Daniel was frightened after he heard the king's dream? [*Allow kids to respond.*] Daniel knew God is all-powerful and in control. After hearing the dream, Daniel knew this meant God was going to punish King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel told the king to stop sinning and do what is right. (*Dan. 4:27*) Did King Nebuchadnezzar listen to the warning? [*Allow kids to respond.*] No, he did not. Daniel 4:29-30 tells us that the king continued to be prideful. Because the king did not repent, **God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.** At the end of the story, why was Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom restored? [*Allow kids to respond.*] King Nebuchadnezzar finally recognized God as the King of kings.

Christ connection

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 33 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

LEADER • King Nebuchadnezzar was controlled by his pride. Even after his dream and Daniel's warning, the king continued in his sinful pride. God punished the king to get his attention and to urge him to turn from his sin.

Pride steals God's glory. God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar so he could see that God alone deserves glory. Jesus is the King of kings who humbled Himself by coming to earth and dying

on the cross. Jesus saves sinners so we can live for God's glory.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 16, Session 2" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about what talents and skills God has given them. Guide them to discuss how sharing what God has done for us can help others know and love Jesus.

· "Unit 16, Session 2" questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

LEADER • God was in control in Bible times, and He is in control now. Missionaries want people to understand that nothing and no one is greater than God. The Ukegbu (yoo-KAY-boo) family moved to Miami, Florida, because many people there don't know and love God. Many people in Miami try to control their own lives instead of giving control to God. Let's learn more about this missionary family in Miami.

· "Missionaries in Miami" missions video

Show the "Missionaries in Miami" missions video, and then close in prayer.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

· Key Passage Poster
· "Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks" song

LEADER • Our key passage says that we should rejoice always. How can we rejoice even in hard times?
[Allow kids time to respond.]

Today's Bible story reminds us that God is in control. The Bible says that when we trust in Jesus, we can always be full of joy and thanksgiving. If we don't understand what is happening, we can pray.

*Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God,
and we know He hears us.*

Lead boys and girls in singing the song “Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks.”

Sing (4 minutes)

Open your Bible and read aloud Luke 8:25.

LEADER • This verse reminds us who is in control of everything. Jesus “commands even the winds and the waves, and they obey him!” **God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.** We can praise God as the One who controls all things and who alone deserves glory.

Sing together “Always in Control (This I Know).”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Thank You, Father, for being the One who controls everything. Help us to trust You even when we face hard times, knowing that You are the One who created and controls everything. Thank You for Your Word, which reminds us of who You are. You alone deserve all glory, honor, and praise. May our lives bring You glory. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

• “Always in Control
(This I Know)” song
• Bible

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 4

STORY POINT: God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- paper
- clipboards, 1 per group
- pens

Instruct kids to sit in a circle. If your group is large, form two or more groups. Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 together.

Give one player in the circle paper, a clipboard, and a pen. When you say “go,” the first player will write the first word of the key passage on the paper, pass the clipboard and pen to the next player who writes the next word, and so on around the circle until kids write the entire key passage and reference. Play additional rounds as time permits.

SAY • Wow! You already remember the key passage so well! Keep practicing this week. What do these verses tell us to do constantly? (*pray*) That's right! And *why do we pray? We pray because we trust God and we know He hears us.*

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Daniel 4. Explain that the Book of Daniel is found in the Old Testament and is named after the man in today's story—Daniel—who interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel was taken to Babylon with God's people

some time after King Nebuchadnezzar conquered the city of Jerusalem. [*Point to Jerusalem (G10) and Babylon (F11) on the Old Testament Mediterranean map.*]

Explain that many of the stories in this book remind us that God is the Ruler over all. Then choose a volunteer to read aloud Daniel 4:37.

SAY • King Nebuchadnezzar finally recognized God for who He is: “the King of the heavens.” God humbled Nebuchadnezzar by taking his kingdom and even his mind.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Why didn’t God let Nebuchadnezzar continue in his pride? Does God always punish sin? Why? *Lead kids to recognize that God is loving, just, and righteous. He always punishes sin. It would be against His nature to leave sin unpunished.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Jer. 9:24.)

2. What can I do when I sin? *Invite kids to share their ideas. Emphasize that we must confess our sin to the Lord. In the Bible, 1 John 1:9 says “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Psalm 86:5 says God is eager to forgive.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 32:5.)

3. How can you practice humility in your life? How can humility help point others to Jesus? *Encourage kids to share their thoughts. Prompt them to consider examples of showing humility that involve putting others first, being open to correction and instruction, and not thinking of themselves as better than other people.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Pet. 5:5.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- poster board
- markers, crayons, or colored pencils

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Bible story murals

SAY • Art is an important part of the culture in Miami, Florida. People communicate through drawings, paintings, pottery, music, and dance. You can see large, colorful murals painted on many buildings in Miami.

Did you know you can use art to tell people about God? Let's make our own murals to tell people what we are learning about God.

Distribute art supplies and encourage kids to work together to make colorful posters depicting recent Bible stories or favorite Bible verses. Display their murals in the classroom or church hallway.

OPTION 2: T-shirt notes

Use a permanent marker to label one large T-shirt *Pride* and another *Humility*. Display the shirts at the front of the room. Point to each shirt and invite kids to discuss characteristics of a person who is “clothed in pride” versus a person “clothed in humility.” Consider sharing these suggestions:

Pride

- arrogant
- unthankful
- defensive
- disrespectful

Humility

- teachable
- quick to forgive
- patient
- respectful

Lead kids to write some characteristics of pride and humility on sticky notes and stick them to the corresponding shirts.

SAY • Today's Bible story reminds us that pride steals God's

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

glory. **God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.**

Jesus is the King of kings who humbled Himself by coming to earth and dying on the cross. Jesus saves sinners so we can live for God's glory.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God that He is in control. Pray that kids will remain humble before God and bring glory to Him through their lives.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "To the Point" on the activity page. Kids will use the key to decode today's story point.

• pencils
• Journal Page
• "To the Point"
activity page,
1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.



Use Week of:

Unit 16 • Session 3

Daniel in the Lions' Den

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Daniel 6

STORY POINT:

God shut the mouths of the lions
to save Daniel.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Why do we pray? We pray because we
trust God, and we know He hears us.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)

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TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

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APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 50



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

The fifth chapter of Daniel ends with the death of King Belshazzar when the Persians took over Babylon and Darius was put on the throne. Babylon was on the decline—no longer the powerful, prosperous empire it once was. By this time Daniel was an old man, probably in his early 80s. He served the new king as one of the three leading supervisors in the kingdom.

Daniel was very good at his job—so good, in fact, that King Darius planned to put him in charge of the entire kingdom. The other supervisors and governors were jealous of Daniel. They watched for him to do something wrong so they could complain to the king. Read Daniel 6:4. Daniel was “trustworthy, and no negligence or corruption was found in him.”

Through the malevolent persuasion of the king’s leaders, King Darius passed a law that no one could pray to anyone but him, the king, for 30 days. But Daniel continued to pray boldly to God.

Guide kids to imagine how Daniel might have felt. Was he worried about getting caught? Did he have nightmares about being eaten by lions? Even the king’s threat of death did not stop Daniel from praying. The jealous officials turned him in, and Daniel was thrown into the lions’ den.

As you teach kids, emphasize that Daniel was faithful to God—the true King—and God rescued Him. God’s protection of Daniel served to show all the people that the God of Daniel “is the living God, and he endures forever; his kingdom will never be destroyed, and his dominion has no end” (Dan. 6:26).

God also calls us to trust and obey Him no matter what. God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from something much more dangerous than lions. Jesus rescues us from sin and death. Pray that through your faith, and that of the kids you lead, “may the name of God be praised forever and ever” (Dan. 2:20).

The **BIBLE** Story

Daniel in the Lions' Den

Daniel 6

King Darius (duh RIGH uhs) was the new leader in Babylon. Babylon was a large kingdom, so the king picked men to be leaders over small parts of Babylon. The king picked Daniel to be one of the leaders.

Daniel was very good at his job, so Darius **decided to put Daniel in charge of all of Babylon.**

When **the other leaders** heard about this, they **were jealous.** They watched Daniel and waited for him to do something wrong so they could get him in trouble. But Daniel did what was right.

The leaders knew Daniel obeyed God, so they made a plan to get Daniel in trouble for praying. They said to King Darius, “King, all of your leaders think it would be a good idea to pass a law: For the next 30 days, no one may pray to any god or man except to you. Anyone who disobeys the law will be thrown into the lions’ den.” King Darius agreed to pass the law.

Daniel knew the law meant he was not allowed to pray to God. Still, Daniel went into his house and prayed to God three times a day, just like he had always done.

The jealous leaders saw Daniel praying, and they told the king



that Daniel had broken the law. King Darius was upset. He didn't want to punish Daniel. The king thought all day about how he could save Daniel from the lions. "The law can't be changed," the men reminded King Darius.

So King Darius ordered Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den. "May the God you serve save you," he said. The king went to his palace for the night. He did not eat and he could not sleep. He thought about Daniel with the lions.

As soon as the sun came up the next morning, the king hurried to the lions' den. He cried out, "Daniel, has your God rescued you from the lions?"

Daniel shouted back, "God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouths! I am safe!"

The king was so happy! He ordered for Daniel to be taken out of the lions' den. Daniel wasn't hurt because he had trusted in God.

King Darius made a new law: everyone must respect God. King Darius wrote, "He is the living God ... he has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."

Christ Connection: God showed His power to rescue Daniel from the lions, but Daniel was just a small part of a much bigger story. God ultimately rescued us from a much bigger problem—sin and death—through His Son, Jesus.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Create a "den":** Use chairs and bedsheets to create a "lions' den." Make it large enough so the whole class can join you in it when you tell the story. If your class is large, turn the entire classroom into a "den" by covering the windows with black paper or fabric.
- **Act it out:** Assign kid volunteers a part: Daniel, King Darius, and the other leaders. Tell the story as the narrator. Direct the kids to act out the scenes of the Bible story.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Daniel in the Lions' Den

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 6

STORY POINT: God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to tell about a time when they heard something unbelievable. Maybe they heard news that was so good it was hard to believe or perhaps they saw something amazing that they had never seen before.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Devoted Daniel" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Devoted Daniel" on the activity page. Kids will use the key to color the picture.

SAY • Today we are going to learn about a man named Daniel who was obedient to God even when he knew he would be punished for it. I cannot wait to tell you how God rescued Daniel and used him as a part of a much bigger story.

LOW PREP

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Hear me roar

Direct the kids to form a circle. Ask for a volunteer to be *It*. The kid who is *It* will walk around the circle and roar at each person, trying to make him or her laugh. *It* can do silly

movements or make a funny face while roaring. The kids around the circle should try not to smile or laugh at the roar. If a player smiles or laughs, she is the next *It*.

SAY • This is a fun and silly game. Today we are going to hear a story from the Bible about a man named Daniel who faced real lions—lions that did not make anyone laugh; in fact, they were very scary. We will see how God took an impossible situation and displayed His power through it.

OPTION 2: An impossible situation

Form groups of two to five kids and invite them to play a game. In this game, each kid will take turns removing one block from a tower of blocks without making the tower fall. The first layer should include three blocks laying in one direction. Arrange blocks on each subsequent layer perpendicular to the blocks on the previous layer.

• tumbling tower block game, 1 per group

After a kid chooses a block and removes it, she should position it onto the top of the tower. The game ends when a player knocks over the tower. Allow kids to play several rounds, as time permits.

SAY • How long do you think someone could play this game without knocking down the tower? [*Allow kids to respond.*] Do you think it would be impossible to go on and on without knocking down the tower? Today, we will hear a Bible story about a man who faced a situation that seemed impossible, too.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Daniel in the Lions' Den

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 6

STORY POINT: God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Countdown

· countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

· leader attire
· Bible

[Leader enters dressed in pajamas.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! I'm so glad you are here! Last night, I had trouble going to sleep. I was thinking about something that happened yesterday. I went to lunch with some friends and before I ate, I prayed and thanked God for my food. I do this every time I eat, but yesterday, something happened. My friends looked at me and started laughing and whispering to one another. They thought it was weird that I prayed before I ate. I am going to keep on praying because I want to talk to God and thank Him, but it is hard when I know other people might think it's weird.

Do you know there is a story in the Bible about a man who was punished for praying? I cannot wait to tell you how God used this man's obedience and displayed His power in an impossible situation.

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Do you remember our big picture question that we've been thinking about each week? [*Allow kids to respond.*] Yes! Our question is, ***Why do we pray?*** And the answer is, ***We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.*** Today, we are going to talk about a man named Daniel who knew the importance of trusting God through prayer.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • Last time, we talked about King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In Daniel 4, God gave Daniel the ability to explain the dream's meaning to the king. [*Point to the story on the timeline.*]

Our Bible story today is also about Daniel, but it took place some time after Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In fact, there was a new king on the throne in Babylon. [*Point to this story on the timeline.*] In this story, God used Daniel again to show His power to save. God would save not only Daniel, but ultimately, all who trust in Him.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Daniel 6. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Daniel in the Lions' Den."

• Bibles
• "Daniel in the Lions' Den" video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster
• Story Point Poster

LEADER • Did the jealous leaders ever find anything they could use against Daniel? Look at Daniel 6:4. Daniel glorified God through his life by serving Him faithfully. Look at the next verse, Daniel 6:5. What

did the leaders know they could do to get Daniel in trouble? [*Allow kids to respond.*] They knew Daniel was a man of God and that he would obey God's laws. Daniel chose to pray, even though he would be punished. He trusted God and knew that God heard him when he prayed.

What do you think Daniel's night was like in the lions' den? [*Allow kids to respond.*] We can imagine that Daniel was afraid, but God protected Daniel. [*See Dan. 6:21.*] **God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel.**

What do you think Daniel's faith and God's protection over him taught King Darius? [*Allow kids to respond.*] After seeing that God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel, King Darius acknowledged the Lord as the living God who rescues and delivers. [*See Dan. 6:26-27.*]

Christ connection

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 49 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

LEADER • The question we've been asking ourselves over the last few weeks is, ***Why do we pray? We pray—*** and Daniel prayed—***because we trust God, and we know He hears us.*** God showed His power to rescue Daniel from the lions, but Daniel was just a small part of a much bigger story.

God ultimately rescued us from a much bigger problem—sin and death—through His Son, Jesus.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 16, Session 3” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about what they should do when someone asks them to do something wrong. Guide them to

• “Unit 16, Session 3” questions from kids video

discuss how God can use their faithfulness to Him as a way for others to learn about Jesus.



Missions moment (3 minutes)

LEADER • God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel. God can protect His people and use them to tell others about Him. Muche (MOO-chee) and Diamone (DIGH-ah-mon) Ukegbu (yoo-KAY-boo) are missionaries who tell people about God in Miami, Florida. They started a church in Miami called The Brook.

People in their church come from many different countries and speak many different languages. They want everyone to feel welcome and to be able to grow in their faith.

Show “The Brook Photo” printable and close in prayer for this church in Miami.

• “The Brook Photo”
printable

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

• Key Passage Poster
• “Rejoice, Pray, and
Give Thanks” song

LEADER • How can someone pray constantly? You have to go to school, talk with other people, and sleep; so how is that possible? This passage is about living a life of prayer. Praying should be a natural part of our daily life. When something exciting happens, we should pray. When something bad happens, we should pray. Prayer shows our trust in the Lord.

We can trust God with the big things and the little things. When we pray, we can bring everything to Him. Because we can trust God, we can give thanks in everything. Let’s sing.

Lead kids in singing “Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks.”

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Always in Control
(This I Know)” song

Open your Bible and read aloud Psalm 18:2.

LEADER • God was Daniel’s rock as he chose to honor the Lord even when he would be punished. God was Daniel’s fortress, shield, and stronghold when he spent the night in the den surrounded by hungry lions. God was Daniel’s salvation when he came out of the den unharmed. God is still all those things for those who know and trust Him.

Sing together “Always in Control (This I Know).”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, thank You for listening when we pray. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves from sin, so thank You for providing the Savior, Jesus. Help us tell others about You so that they might trust in You as their Savior. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: Daniel in the Lions' Den

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 6

STORY POINT: God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- gloves or oven mitts, 1 pair per team
- dry erase board or large sheets of paper
- marker

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 together.

Form two or more teams of kids. Explain that each player will take turns writing one word of the key passage. Before a player writes, he must put on the gloves or oven mitts. The team that finishes writing out the key passage first wins. Play again as time allows.

SAY • Great job! I hope that the words of our key passage are easier for you to remember each week. God loves it when we memorize His Word. This verse helps us remember why we pray and how we should pray.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Daniel 6. Explain that the Book of Daniel is in the Old Testament. Challenge kids to name the book immediately before and immediately after the Book of Daniel. (*Ezekiel, Hosea*) Tell kids that Daniel was taken from Judah to Babylon when King Nebuchadnezzar conquered the city of Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. [*Point to the Jerusalem (G10) and Babylon (F11) on the Old Testament*

Mediterranean Map.] Point to the timeline and explain that this story happened about 600 years before Jesus was born.

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Daniel 6:10.

SAY • In today's story, King Nebuchadnezzar was no longer king of Babylon. King Darius (duh RIGH uhs) was now the king, and he appointed Daniel as an important leader in the government.

Look at Daniel 6:10 again. Why did Daniel continue to pray if he knew he would be punished? Daniel trusted God and knew God would hear him when he prayed. This is why we pray too!

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. How did Daniel's obedience to God point others to God? *Invite kids to discuss. Point out that after **God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel**, King Darius realized that God is the "living God" who "rescues and delivers."* (See Dan. 6:26-27.)

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Gal. 1:3-4.)

2. Is everything in life easy if we just obey God? *Invite kids to share their ideas. Emphasize that obedience leading to an easy life wasn't true for Daniel and it is not true for us. The Bible says following God will cost us, but He is worth it.*

(Option: Choose a kid to read Matt. 16:24-25.)

3. How can you trust God when facing something hard? *Assure kids that even when we face difficult times, we have a loving heavenly Father. Jesus prays for us according to God's will. God will use each situation in our life for His glory and our good. He cares for us, sees us, knows us, and loves us.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 8:26-28.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- paper
- pencils

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Write a song

Explain that kids will have a chance to write their own worship song. Music is a powerful tool in missions. Missionaries all over the world sometimes write songs to help people understand the gospel and grow in their faith.

SAY • Diamone (DIGH-ah-mon) Ukegbu (yoo-KAY-boo) is a musician. She leads music at The Brook church in Miami, Florida. People from many cultures attend their church and live in their community, so she writes music that will help them connect with God. Let's work together to write a song that tells others about Jesus.

Distribute paper and pencils. Choose a familiar tune that kids would know, such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb" and encourage kids to write lyrics to that tune. They may work independently or in small groups. Some kids might prefer to create their own tune as well.

As kids work, discuss some of the music your church uses and how it reminds people of the gospel or other truths about God.

OPTION 2: Make prayer journals

Direct each kid to create a prayer journal by folding several pieces of paper inside a piece of construction paper. Invite kids to decorate the outside cover of their journal.

Encourage the kids to use their journals to write down anything they want to pray about, to write out prayers, and to keep track of when or how God answers their prayers.

SAY • Daniel knew the importance of prayer and lived it out in his daily life. ***Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.***

- paper
- construction paper
- stapler
- pens or markers
- stickers

It is so exciting and encouraging to look back and remember ways God has answered prayer. We see God's power and remember that Daniel was just a small part of a much bigger story. God ultimately rescued us from a much bigger problem—sin and death—through His Son, Jesus.

Challenge kids to commit to using their prayer journals and to pray every day this week.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking the Lord for the gift of salvation from sin and death through His Son, Jesus.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "In the Lions' Den" on the activity page. Kids will identify a "lion" or problem they are facing and how they can trust Jesus with that problem.

• pencils
• Journal Page
• "In the Lions' Den" activity page,
1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.



Use Week of:

Christmas • Session 3

Jesus Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Matthew 1; Luke 2

STORY POINT:

God came to earth as a human baby to be with us.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)

PAGE 58



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 60



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 66



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

Throughout the Old Testament, God reminded His people through the prophets of His promise to one day send a Rescuer. People cannot save themselves; instead, God planned to save sinners by sending His Son. God revealed that He would come from the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and He would bless the nations. (Gen. 12:3; 17:19; 28:14) He would come from David's family, and His kingdom would last forever. (2 Sam. 7:12-13) He would be born in Bethlehem to a virgin (Micah 5:2; Isa. 7:14).

But after God's people returned home from exile in Judah, God was silent. For 400 years, God remained quiet. The silence was broken in Luke 1 when an angel told Zechariah he would have a son—John. John would be the forerunner of the Messiah, preparing people for the Promised One. At just the right time, Jesus was born. The Old Testament whispers, “He’s coming ... He’s coming ... He’s coming ...” and the declaration of Luke 2 is, “He’s here!”

Help kids understand the significance of Jesus' birth. Jesus' birth is not just the beginning; rather, it is a pivotal fulfillment in the story of God's rescuing sinners. God's people could not save themselves, so God came to them. This tiny baby was the hope of the world. He would grow up to show people what God is like and to lay down His life to provide forgiveness and eternal life to all who trust in Him.

After Jesus was born, an angel appeared to the shepherds and said, “Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is Messiah, the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11).

Jesus' birth was God's gracious gift to us—God with us, for His glory and our peace.

The BIBLE Story

Jesus Was Born

Matthew 1; Luke 2

Joseph found out Mary was going to have a baby, but Joseph knew it was not his baby—Mary and Joseph were not married yet! Joseph decided to quietly break his engagement with Mary so she would not be publicly disgraced. Soon after Joseph thought these things, **an angel appeared to him in a dream.**

The angel said, “Don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife. Her baby was put there by the Holy Spirit. Mary is going to have a son; name Him Jesus because He is going to save His people from their sins!”

This happened just like the prophet said it would: “See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name Him Immanuel,” which is translated “God is with us.” When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel commanded.

During the time Mary was pregnant, the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, announced that everyone needed to be registered for a census. Since **Joseph** was a descendant of King David, he **and Mary traveled to Bethlehem,** the city of David.

While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. Mary and Joseph looked for a safe place to stay, but every place was



full. So Mary and Joseph found a place where animals were kept, and that is where Mary had her baby. Joseph named the baby Jesus. Mary wrapped Him tightly in cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough.

In the same region, some shepherds were out in the fields watching over their sheep. All of a sudden, an angel of the Lord stood before them. A bright light shone around them, and they were terrified! But the angel said, “Don’t be afraid! I have very good news for you: Today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David.” Then the angel said, “You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a feeding trough.”

Suddenly, a whole army of angels appeared, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors!”

So the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby who was lying in the feeding trough. The shepherds went and told others about the baby Jesus. Everyone who heard about Jesus was surprised and amazed. Mary thought about everything that was happening and tried to understand it. The shepherds returned to their fields, praising God because everything had happened just as the angel had said.

Christ Connection: Jesus’ birth fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy. God the Son came into the world as Immanuel. Jesus was born to be “God with us” and to save people from sin.

Bible Storytelling Tips

• Display figures:

Invite one or two volunteers to move people and animal figures around a nativity scene as you tell the story.

• Active listening:

Instruct girls to stand and then sit when they hear the name Mary and boys to stand and then sit when they hear the name Joseph.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Jesus Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 1; Luke 2

STORY POINT: God came to earth as a human baby to be with us.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share about the most special gift they have ever received. What made it special?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "A Wacky Christmas" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "A Wacky Christmas" on the activity page. Kids should fill in the 12 prompts and then copy the words or phrases into the corresponding spaces.

SAY • Does that story sound familiar to you? I'm not sure those details you came up with ever happened, but today we will hear a story about a surprising thing that really did happen long ago.

LOW PREP

- paper plates, 1 per kid
- pens

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Nativity scenes

Give each kid a paper plate and a pen. Then direct kids to follow your instructions to draw a scene on their plates.

Give the following prompts:

1. Put the paper plate on top of your head.
2. Draw a rectangle in the middle of the plate.

3. Draw a triangle roof above the rectangle.
4. Draw square inside the rectangle.
5. Draw a baby inside the square.
6. Draw a star above the roof.

Give instructions for more details as time allows. Then invite kids to compare their drawings.

SAY • We're not exactly sure what the scene looked like when Jesus was born more than two thousand years ago, but the Bible does tell us a lot about His birth! We will find out more today.

OPTION 2: Christmas card hangers

Open five or more Christmas cards to stand horizontally on a table like a tent. If your group is large, set up multiple sets of cards for players to participate simultaneously.

• Christmas cards,
5 or more
• stopwatch or timer

Choose a volunteer to play first. Each player will have one minute to blow the cards toward the edge of the table so they hang off the edge by an open half of the card without falling to the floor.

After one minute, award a point for each hanging card. Then choose another player to take a turn.

SAY • Many people send Christmas cards to friends and family members as a way of celebrating Jesus' birth. Christmas is a time to rejoice! Let's find out why.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Jesus Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 1; Luke 2

STORY POINT: God came to earth as a human baby to be with us.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

• room decorations

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Decorate for Christmas over the existing theme. Use simple decorations such as string lights, garland, or a nativity scene.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

[Leader enters wearing festive attire. He or she may choose to wear Christmas accessories over existing themed attire.]

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

LEADER • Welcome, everyone! It is so good to see you. If you're new here, let me introduce myself. I'm [*your name*], and I am so excited because Christmas is one of my favorite times of the year. Christmas isn't just a time to visit family and give presents; Christmas is about celebrating the birth of God's own Son.

People celebrate Christmas in different ways. Some set up nativity scenes or decorate a Christmas tree. Others focus on serving others in their community. Some people cook big meals to share with friends and family members. Even giving and receiving presents can remind us of the greatest gift of all.

I can't wait for you to hear the story of Jesus' birth. Whether this is your first time hearing it or your one hundredth time, there is always something new to learn in God's Word. Let's get started.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • As you hear the Bible story today, think about our big picture question and answer: ***Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.*** Jesus' birth is evidence that God hears our prayers and keeps His promises. Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah and the answer to many prayers for a Savior.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review. • Giant Timeline

LEADER • Did you know Jesus' birth is not the beginning of God's plan to save sinners? God was working out His plan all along. The Bible stories in the Old Testament point forward to Jesus, and at just the right time, God sent His Son into the world.

The stories we've been hearing about Daniel are important because they show how God was with His people even when they were in exile. God had a plan to bring His people back to their land. Daniel's visions of the future showed that God is in control at all times. God used faithful people to continue His plan to provide salvation through Jesus.

The Old Testament is full of reminders that a Savior would come. God planned to send His Son, Jesus, into the world through the nation of Israel.

Many years later, God kept His promise. Jesus was born into the world as the promised Messiah. One of Jesus' names is *Immanuel*, which means "God is with us." God the Son has always existed, but let's listen closely to today's Bible story about the day He came into the world as a baby boy.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
- "Jesus Was Born" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Open your Bible to Matthew 1; Luke 2. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Jesus Was Born."

LEADER • Some people might think of Jesus' birth as the beginning of God's story. As we study the Old Testament, we see that Jesus was God's plan all along. God promised Eve that one of her descendants would defeat Satan. [See *Gen. 3:15*.] He promised Abraham that through his family, all the peoples on earth would be blessed. [See *Gen. 12:3*.]

When Jesus was born, most people didn't notice. He wasn't born in a palace to a well-known family. He came humbly. An angel announced His birth to shepherds in a field: "I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). The angel told the shepherds where to find Jesus, and they hurried to Bethlehem and found Him. When the shepherds returned to their fields, they gave glory to God and praised Him.

Sin separated people from God, but God did not leave us on our own. We cannot save ourselves, so **God came to earth as a human baby to be with us.**

Christ connection

LEADER • Jesus' birth fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. God the Son came into the world as Immanuel. Jesus was born to be "God with us" and to save people from sin. Jesus' birth was God's gracious gift to us. Jesus came as God with us—for His glory and our peace.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 65 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Christmas, Session 3" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about why Jesus has so many names. Guide them to discuss what words come to mind when they think about Jesus.

• "Christmas, Session 3" questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Remind kids about missionaries Muche (MOO-chee) and Diamone (DIGH-ah-mon) Ukegbu (yoo-KAY-boo) in Miami, Florida. They started a church called The Brook. Members at this church speak many different languages.

• "Christmas Story in Other Languages" missions video

LEADER • As we celebrate that Jesus was born, let's listen to people read the story of Jesus' birth from the Bible in different languages. Jesus came to earth to save people of every nation from their sins. We celebrate Christmas with people from many languages, cultures, and countries!

Play the "Christmas Story in Other Languages" missions video and praise God for Christians all over the world who celebrate His birth.

• Key Passage Poster
• "Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks" song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read

together 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

LEADER • Because God the Son came to earth to be with us, we can know God. Joy comes from knowing God. We can rejoice! We can pray to God as our heavenly Father. Every good thing comes from Him, and He is always in control; so we can give thanks in all circumstances.

Lead boys and girls in singing the song “Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks.”

Sing (4 minutes)

Open your Bible and read aloud Luke 1:68.

LEADER • God has come! **God came to earth as a human baby to be with us.** God is faithful to keep His promises. Jesus brings light to people living in darkness. He saves us from our sin. Let’s sing. Sing together “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, You always keep Your promises. As we think about Jesus’ birth, help us understand the wonder of God’s coming to earth as a human. You sent Your Son for us. Jesus is the Savior of the world. You deserve all glory and praise. We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

• “Great Is Thy
Faithfulness” song

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: Jesus Was Born

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 1; Luke 2

STORY POINT: God came to earth as a human baby to be with us.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- self-adhesive gift bows
- permanent marker
- gift bags, 2

Tip: Write the word on the paper covering the bow's adhesive.

Before the session, write words or phrases of the key passage on separate gift bows. Prepare two sets.

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 together.

Form two teams of kids and instruct them to stand at one side of the room. At the other side of the room, put a set of word bows in each gift bag. Explain that the first player on each team will race to his team's gift bag, retrieve a bow, and return to his team. Then player 2 will do the same. Players continue until they retrieve all the bows. Each team should race to arrange the bows so the words are in order. The first team to arrange the bows correctly wins.

SAY • God came to earth as a human baby to be with us.

Jesus' birth is one reason we can rejoice always!

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Matthew 1. Explain that Matthew is one of the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—that tell the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Remind kids that Mary and Joseph were from the town of Nazareth.

[Point to Nazareth (E5) on the New Testament Israel Map.]

They traveled to Bethlehem (I4), where Jesus was born.

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 1:22-23.

SAY • Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Micah said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. The prophet Isaiah said He would be called Immanuel. **God came to earth as a human baby to be with us.** Every prophecy about Jesus' birth came true.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What news did the angel share with the shepherds? Why was it good news? *Lead kids to recall that the angel announced the birth of a Savior and Messiah. This was good news because God the Son had come into the world to rescue sinners.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Mark 1:15.)

2. How did people celebrate Jesus' birth? How do you celebrate? *Review that the angels and shepherds praised God and shared the good news with others. Invite kids to share their own family traditions for celebrating the birth of Jesus. Encourage them to spend time this week praising God and telling someone else the good news about Jesus.*

(Option: Choose a kid to read Rom. 16:25-27.)

3. How can we follow Jesus' example of humility? *Point out that Jesus came to earth humbly—not as a strong earthly king, but as a baby. He did not come demanding others to serve Him; rather, He served others. He humbled Himself to the point of death, giving up His own life for sinners. Challenge kids to consider ways they can show Jesus' love through humility.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Phil. 2:5-11.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Share the story

- Bibles
- Christmas storybooks
- "Ukegbu Family Photo" printable

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Show the family photo and remind kids about the Ukegbu family. Remind them that Serenity is 8 years old, Joelle is 7, and Noah is 5.

SAY • The Ukegbu kids are learning about Jesus, too, and growing in their faith. Just like He can use you, God is using them to show His love to others. One way you can tell others about Jesus is to tell the story of Christmas. Let's practice telling someone about how Jesus came to earth as a baby.

Distribute Bibles and storybooks. Form small groups of kids and lead them to tell the Christmas story to one another. Guide them to turn to a picture of the manger scene or another picture from the Christmas story and describe what is going on. Let them use their Bibles, but encourage them to tell the story in their own words.

LOW PREP

- large pieces of paper
- pencils
- Bibles

OPTION 2: Mural race

Instruct kids to sit around a table. If your group is large, form teams and sit at separate tables. Give each kid a pencil, and provide a large piece of paper for each team.

Supply Bibles for kids to find Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 2:1-20 if they need help recalling details of the Bible story. Explain that when you say go, the first player on each team will begin drawing a nativity scene. After about 10 seconds, call out "Pass!" Players must pass the paper to their left. Then the next player will draw, adding details to the existing drawing.

Continue around the circle as time allows or until everyone has a turn. Then call time and invite kids to share what they drew. Kids may pass the paper back around the

circle and describe their own contributions to the scene.

SAY • After Jesus was born, an angel told the shepherds where to find Him: “You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12).

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were in a stable because there was no other room available in Bethlehem.

God came to earth as a human baby to be with us.

Jesus’ birth fulfilled Old Testament prophecy. God the Son came into the world as Immanuel. Jesus was born to be “God with us” and to save people from sin.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, asking God to help kids treasure the gift of His Son and to tell others about Him.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Heavenly Birth Announcement” on the activity page. Kids should use the word list to fill in the blanks.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “Heavenly Birth Announcement” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week’s *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Use Week of:

Unit 16 • Session 4

Daniel's Dream

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Daniel 7

STORY POINT:

God is the eternal King who
judges the nations.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Why do we pray? We pray because we
trust God, and we know He hears us.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)

PAGE 74



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 76



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 82



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

Daniel 7 is considered one of the most important chapters in the Old Testament. This chapter and the chapters that follow describe a series of visions and prophecies about the future of God's people. This message gave hope to God's people in captivity.

Today's Bible story takes place in the first year of King Belshazzar's reign. (Dan. 7:1) Belshazzar was the son of King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel encountered Belshazzar in chapter 5. Daniel was about 82 years old when he was thrown into the lions' den; chapter 7 rewinds the clock to tell of a dream Daniel had when he was about 67.

In a vision parallel to Daniel 2, Daniel saw four beasts. Each beast represented an earthly kingdom. The first creature was like a lion but had eagle's wings. This creature represented the kingdom of Babylon. The second creature was like a bear, and it had ribs in its mouth. This creature represented the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. The third creature was like a leopard with four wings on its back and four heads. This creature represented the kingdom of Greece. Finally, the fourth creature was strong and destructive. It had 10 horns, and this creature represented the kingdom of Rome.

Then Daniel saw God—the Ancient of Days—sitting on His throne. Daniel watched as God killed the fourth creature and took away the power of the others. As complicated as it may be, Daniel's vision reveals an ultimate reality: "These huge beasts ... are four kings who will rise from the earth. But the holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom and possess it forever" (Dan. 7:17-18).

Emphasize to the kids you teach that they will see all sorts of rulers and powers and authorities in the world, but the Bible is clear: God is ruling over them all. The kingdoms of earth will last for a short time, and the kingdom of Jesus will come and last forever.

The BIBLE Story

Daniel's Dream

Daniel 7

In the first year that Belshazzar (bel SHAZ uhr) was the king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream. In the dream, Daniel saw a big windstorm on the sea. Four big creatures came up from the sea, each different from the others. Daniel had never seen animals like these before.

The first creature was like a lion, but it had wings like an eagle. The second creature was like a bear.

It had three ribs in its mouth.

The third creature was like a leopard, but it had four wings on its back and four heads. The fourth creature was strong and scary; it had large teeth made of iron and destroyed everything in its path. This fourth creature had 10 horns.

Then Daniel saw a place in heaven with thrones. God sat down on a throne to judge the creatures. His hair and clothing were white like snow and His throne was like fire. God took away the creatures' power.

God allowed the first three creatures to live for a little while, but the creature with horns was killed.

Suddenly, the Son of Man came. God gave Him power to rule over everything. He was the king, and people of every nation and language served Him. His kingdom would last forever; it would



never be destroyed.

Daniel was frightened by his dream, but **God gave Daniel the ability to understand what the dreams meant. The four creatures were four kings who ruled on earth. Their rule would not last forever. God would give His people the kingdom forever and ever.**

Daniel did not tell anyone about his dream, but he wrote down everything he saw.

Christ Connection: Jesus is King over all things. God allows people to rule for a short time, but one day Jesus will return and set up His perfect kingdom. Everyone who trusts in Jesus will be welcomed into His kingdom, and His kingdom will last forever.

Bible Storytelling Tips

• Display art:

Show the Bible story picture and point to each creature from Daniel's dream as you describe it in the story.

• Listen and draw:

Provide paper and colored pencils for kids to illustrate the story as they listen. Challenge them to imagine what each creature looked like.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Daniel's Dream

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 7

STORY POINT: God is the eternal King who judges the nations.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to share about the silliest or most surprising dream they have ever had.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "How Long Does It Last?" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "How Long Does It Last?" on the activity page. Kids will look at the objects in the chart and take their best guess on how long each would last.

SAY • Almost everything has a beginning and an end, a certain amount of time it will last. But today I am going to share with you about the King who will rule forever! His kingdom will never end.

LOW PREP

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: The perfect kingdom

Kids will sit in a circle. The first kid will say, "If I were king, I would ..." and then give a short answer to fill in the blank. For example, a kid could say, "If I were king, I would build a huge playground for the kingdom."

The next kid gives his answer to fill in the blank, but

must also say the first kid's answer. ("If I were king, I would have candy for every meal and build a playground for the kingdom.")

Kids will continue around the circle until everyone gets a chance to share what he would do if he were king.

SAY • Many kings have ruled on the earth, but no king has been perfect. They have all made bad decisions. Every king reigns for a while, and then his reign ends. Today we are going to learn about the only eternal King who will one day set up His perfect kingdom and reign forever.

OPTION 2: Draw a dream

Direct kids to think about the best, most exciting, or most memorable dream they have ever had. Provide paper and markers, crayons, or colored pencils and invite kids to draw pictures of their dream. If kids cannot think of an actual dream they have had, encourage them to illustrate a dream they would like to have. As time allows, let kids share their drawings with the group.

· paper
· markers, crayons, or
colored pencils

SAY • You all drew some really interesting dreams! Did you know that several stories in the Bible are about God's speaking to people through dreams? Can you think of any? (*Joseph in Gen. 37; Pharaoh in Gen. 41; Solomon in 1 Kings 3; Mary's husband, Joseph, in Matt. 2; Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4; and so on*)

A couple weeks ago, we heard the story of how God talked to King Nebuchadnezzar through a dream. Today we will hear about an important message God told Daniel through a dream.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Daniel's Dream

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 7

STORY POINT: God is the eternal King who judges the nations.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• Bible

[Leader enters dressed in pajamas and carrying a Bible.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! I'm [*your name*]. I'm so glad you are here. Over the last few weeks, we have heard some amazing stories from the Bible about dreams and how God used them to show people who He is. Have any of you had a crazy dream before, a dream that you didn't quite understand? [*Allow kids to respond by raising their hands.*]

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Not every dream has a special meaning, but today, we are going to hear a story from the Bible [*hold up a Bible*] about a man who had a dream he didn't understand. But don't worry; God told him what his dream meant. I can't wait for you to hear all about it!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • First, do you remember our big picture question? [*Allow kids to respond.*] That's right! Our question is,

Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

God told us to pray, and Jesus taught how we should pray. [Read aloud Matt. 6:5-8.] Notice that Jesus didn't say, "If you pray, ..." He said, "When you pray, ..." God wants prayer to be a consistent part of believers' lives. We can pray about anything at any time.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review. -Giant Timeline

LEADER • Do you remember the last story we heard about Daniel? [Allow kids to respond.] That's right! God had rescued him from the lions' den. **God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel.** [Point to "Daniel in the Lions' Den" on the timeline.]

In today's story, Daniel had a dream in which God showed Himself as the only eternal King, who judges the nations. This story actually took place *before* Daniel was thrown into the lions' den. [Point to *this week's story on the timeline.*]

Let's review. First, we saw King Nebuchadnezzar, who put the three friends into the fiery furnace. **God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king. Then God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.**

Next, Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar became king. He was the king when today's story took place. Then Darius (duh RIGH uhs) overthrew Belshazzar; Darius was the king who threw Daniel into the den of lions.

- Bibles
- “Daniel’s Dream” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Daniel 7. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Daniel’s Dream.”

LEADER • Wow! What a dream! How would you feel if you had a dream like Daniel? [*Allow kids to respond.*] The Bible says Daniel felt terrified and confused.

Look at Daniel 7:15-16. What did Daniel do because he was confused? (*He asked for help in understanding, and God allowed him to see what his dream meant.*) God showed Daniel in the dream that **God is the eternal King who judges the nations.**

Look at Daniel 7:9. Who is the Ancient of Days? What does this name mean? (*The Ancient of Days is a name for God. It is also seen in Daniel 7:13,22. This name is used to point to His eternity—God has always existed and His power lasts forever.*) Revelation 1:8 describes God as “the one who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Do you remember what happened to the four creatures? (*God allowed the first three creatures to live for a while, but the creature with the horns was killed.*) What do the four beasts represent? (*four kings*) What does this tell us about God? (*He is the King over all kings. He decides when kings rise and when they fall.*)

Christ connection

LEADER • God used Daniel’s dream to show that Jesus is King over all kings. God allows people to rule for a short time, but one day Jesus will return and set up His perfect, eternal kingdom. Daniel had seen many men rise to power as rulers and then fall. He knew

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 81 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

God was in charge over them all. God “changes the times and seasons; he removes kings and establishes kings” (Dan. 2:21). **God is the eternal King who judges the nations.**

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 16, Session 4” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about whether or not it’s OK to skip parts of the Bible they don’t like. Guide them to discuss teachings in the Bible that they have a hard time understanding or believing.

• “Unit 16, Session 4”
questions from kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Introduce the missions video by reminding kids about the Ukegbu (yoo-KAY-boo) family and their church in Miami, Florida.

• “The Brook in Miami”
missions video

LEADER • God is the eternal King who judges the

nations. He wants all nations to know Him and follow Him. Miami is home to people from many nations. At The Brook church, people from all over the world worship together. Let’s watch a video to learn more about this church.

Play “The Brook in Miami” missions video. Discuss ways that your church is similar to and different from The Brook. Close in prayer, praising God that He is the God of all nations.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

• Key Passage Poster
• “Rejoice, Pray, and
Give Thanks” song

LEADER • Our key passage reminds us that we can pray anytime. ***Why do we pray? We pray because we***

trust God, and we know He hears us.

Daniel did not understand all that he saw in his dream, so he prayed for understanding. We too can ask God to help us understand His Word and how He wants us to respond to what we learn.

Lead boys and girls in singing “Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks.”

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” song

Open your Bible and read aloud Revelation 11:15-17.

LEADER • God is the eternal King who judges the nations. His kingdom will never end. He is the God who was and who is. He has always been and will always be, and He is faithful. Let’s praise our God, who will reign forever and ever.

Sing together “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, You are the King over all kings. We never have to fear because You are in control of everything—even the leaders of nations. Thank You for the promise of Your return and Your never-ending reign. May we glorify You with our lives. You are worthy of all worship! We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: Daniel's Dream

BIBLE PASSAGE: Daniel 7

STORY POINT: God is the eternal King who judges the nations.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- pieces of paper or sticky notes
- marker
- pillowcases, 1 per team
- masking tape or painter's tape

Before the session, write each word of the key passage on separate sticky notes. Prepare multiple sets—one per team of up to six players.

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Form teams of up to six players. Tape a starting point on the floor for each team. Across the room from each team, position a pillowcase with the prepared sticky notes inside. When you say go, one kid from each team will race to the pillowcase and pick out a word, race back to the starting line, and put the word on the floor. The next player will retrieve another word, and so on. The first team to arrange the key passage in order wins.

For an added challenge, require kids to pull the words from the pillowcase in order.

SAY • Isn't it amazing that we can talk to God freely, at any time? When we pray, He hears us.

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Daniel 7. Explain that several chapters in Daniel focus

on historical events. Other chapters, such as Daniel 7, focus on prophecy. Daniel points to the coming Messiah, Jesus, as well as events that will happen around the time God establishes His eternal kingdom.

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Daniel 7:14.

SAY • Through his dream, Daniel learned that **God is the eternal King who judges the nations**. He will establish a kingdom greater than any earthly kingdom and will reign over “those of every people, nation, and language” forever.

Jesus is King over all things. God allows people to rule for a short time, but one day Jesus will return and set up His perfect kingdom. Everyone who trusts in Jesus will be welcomed into His kingdom, and His kingdom will last forever.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What is the difference between earthly kingdoms and God’s kingdom? *Invite kids to share their ideas. Point out that earthly kingdoms are temporary but God’s kingdom will last forever. Earthly kingdoms are ruled by imperfect men but God’s kingdom is ruled by the perfect King—Jesus!*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 46:6.)

2. Who is always in control? *Assure kids that we can be confident that no matter who is ruling or what chaos is happening in the world, God has and will always be in control. All rulers are ultimately under God’s control, and one day all rulers will serve and obey Him.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Dan. 7:27.)

3. How should we live, knowing God is the eternal King? *Guide kids to conclude that if we have trusted Jesus as our Savior, we will live differently. We will be*

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

more concerned with eternal things, knowing that one day, the eternal King will take his throne and we will be with Him in glory.

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Col. 3:1-4.)

LOW PREP

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Learning language

If any of your kids speak Spanish, invite them to help teach their friends some Spanish words or phrases. Also consider inviting a Spanish-speaker from your church or community to visit your class.

SAY • Many people in Miami speak Spanish. The Ukegbu (yoo-KAY-boo) family is learning Spanish so that they can tell more people about Jesus. When we know another language, God can use us to share His story with more people! More than 350 different languages are spoken in the United States. Let's practice a few Spanish words.

Invite kids to repeat the following Spanish phrases. Also consider playing a Spanish worship song from the Internet.

- Hello: "*Hola*" (OH-lah)
- Good morning: "*Buenos días*" (BWEH-nohs DEEH-ahs)
- Good afternoon: "*Buenas tardes*" (BWEH-nahs TAR-des)
- Good evening: "*Buenas noches*" (BWEH-nahs NOH-tchehs)
- Jesus loves you: "*Jesús te ama*" (HEY-zoos tay AH-mah)

OPTION 2: Fallen kings

Form multiple teams of kids. Direct each team to use blocks to build a "king." Kids may use the paper and markers, crayons, or colored pencils to make the king look royal by adding a crown and robes.

- building blocks
- paper
- markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- small foam balls

Allow teams to take turns throwing foam balls at the other teams' kings. The last team whose king is standing wins.

SAY • God is the eternal King who judges the nations.

No earthly king will reign forever. Today we learned about the only true King who will rule forever. Jesus is King over everything. God allows people to rule for a short time, but one day Jesus will return and set up His perfect kingdom. Everyone who trusts in Jesus will be welcomed into His kingdom, and His kingdom will last forever.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, praising God as the King over all kings who welcomes into His kingdom everyone who trusts in Him.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Royal Word Roundup" on the activity page. Kids will hunt for "royal" words within the word search.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Royal Word Roundup" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Unit 17: Return to the Land

Unit Description:

After the Israelites' disobedience led to 70 years of exile in Babylon, God kept His promise to bring His people home to Judah. Prophets encouraged the people to rebuild the temple. The prophet Zechariah told of a future King who would come humbly on a donkey. God later kept His promise to send King Jesus.

Key Passage:

Jeremiah 29:11

Big Picture Question:

How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Session 1:

Obadiah the Prophet

Obadiah

Story Point: God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.

Session 2:

The Captives Came Home

Ezra 1–3

Story Point: God kept His promise to bring His people home.

Session 3:

The Temple Was Rebuilt

Ezra 4–6; Haggai

Story Point: God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.

Session 4:

Zechariah the Prophet

Zechariah

Story Point: Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.



Obadiah the Prophet

God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.

The Captives Came Home

God kept His promise to bring His people home.



The Temple Was Rebuilt

God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.

Zechariah the Prophet

Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.



Use Week of:

Unit 17 • Session 1

Obadiah the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Obadiah

STORY POINT:

God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.

KEY PASSAGE:

Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)

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TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

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APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 100



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

The conflict between Edom and Israel originates in the story of Jacob and Esau. The twins struggled in the womb, and their mother Rebekah asked God why. God explained that from her womb would come two nations, and the older would serve the younger. (Gen. 25:23)

The nation of Israel descended from Jacob (the younger), and the nation of Edom descended from Esau (the older). God promised to Jacob the same promises He made to Abraham (Gen. 28:15), but Esau was a godless man who despised God's promises. (Heb. 12:16)

For centuries, the two families were at odds. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the king of Edom refused to let the Israelites pass through his country to get to the promised land. (Num. 20:14-21) Edom fought against Israel on several occasions. (See 2 Chron. 20:2; 28:17; 2 Kings 8:20-22.)

The Book of Obadiah is God's message about Edom in response to their sin—specifically their gloating over the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem. When the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem, the people of Edom didn't help. Like an envious brother, Edom was glad to see Judah overcome. In fact, Edom was a guilty participant in the action against Judah. (Obad. 11)

The prophet Obadiah detailed the charges against Edom, announced their guilt, and handed down the sentence from the Lord: Edom would be totally destroyed. No remnant of Esau's family would remain. On the other hand, Obadiah said God's people would be restored.

God said the people of Edom would get what they deserved. "As you have done, it will be done to you; what you deserve will return on your own head" (Obad. 15). God's rule is just. The fate of the Edomites might as well be ours. But here's the reality: As you have done, it was done to Christ; what you deserve was returned on His head. Jesus is King, and one day He will deliver His people from their enemies once and for all.

The **BIBLE** Story

Obadiah the Prophet

Obadiah

God sent a message to Obadiah (oh buh DIGH uh) the prophet in a vision. **God had news about a country called Edom (EE duhm). The people who lived in Edom were like brothers to the people in Judah.**

Both groups were descendants of Isaac's twin sons, Jacob and Esau. The people in Edom came from the family of Esau; God's people came from the family of Jacob.

The people of Edom didn't love God. They worshiped false gods. They lived in the mountains and trusted the mountains and their own strength to protect them. The people thought they were better than everyone else.

The Edomites didn't get along with God's people in Judah. When the Babylonians took over the city of Jerusalem, the people in Edom just sat back and watched. They didn't try to protect Judah. The people of Edom even went into Jerusalem and took things that didn't belong to them. **God said He was going to punish Edom.**

"Listen up!" God said. "Out of all the nations, you will be the least important. No one will like you. You were proud, and I will punish you. You thought you were safe, but I will bring you down."



Obadiah's message for the people of Edom was bad news. God was going to allow Edom's enemies to take away everything they had. Even the people who were their friends would steal from them. Many people would be killed.

God said to Edom, "You were cruel to the people in Judah, so you will be punished. When Judah needed your help, you stood back and did nothing. You laughed and were happy that they were attacked. Every bad thing you did to others will be done to you."

"The Day of the Lord is near," Obadiah warned.
"Every evil thing you did to others will be done to you."

God said that the bad things that were happening to His people in Judah were only for a little while. God would deliver His people. "But when I punish you, Edom," God said, "everything will be destroyed."

Obadiah's message from God had good news for God's people. "My people will have the land that belongs to Edom," God said. God's people would return to their homes and God would take care of His people, but Edom's punishment was forever.

Christ Connection: Like God's people were mistreated by the people of Edom, Jesus was mistreated by His own people. God will punish sin. Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment we deserve for our sin. We can trust Jesus to make wrong things right.

Bible Storytelling Tips

• Active listening:

Assign key words (*God, Edom, bad news, good news*) a motion or a verbal response. Instruct kids to listen closely during the story and respond to each of the assigned words.

• Change position:

Stand at one side of the room when telling about the bad news for Edom. Move to another spot to tell the good news for Judah.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Obadiah the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE: Obadiah

STORY POINT: God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think of some good news or bad news they have heard. As each kid shares news, give a thumbs-up if it is good news and a thumbs-down if it is bad news.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Map Mania" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Map Mania" on the activity page. Kids should follow the instructions to label the map.

SAY • The two groups in today's Bible story were descendants of brothers. These families were separated by the Jordan River and the Dead Sea, but they were bitter rivals. When one family was being overtaken, the other family watched and even stole from them. We will find out what happened.

LOW PREP

- small object (ball, box, coin, etc.)

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Steal your brother's bacon

Form two groups of kids. Instruct one group to line up shoulder to shoulder on one side of the room and the other

group to line up shoulder to shoulder on the other side of the room. Each group should face the other.

Announce that although the players are two groups, they are brothers. Assign each player a number. (Each group should have a 1, 2, 3, and so on.) Place an object (the “bacon”) in the middle of the room. Call out a number.

The players from both teams with that number rush to get the bacon first and take it back to his team before the other player (the “brother”) tags him. Play again as time permits.

SAY • The goal in this game was to steal your brother’s bacon. We know this is not how God wants people to treat one another. In today’s Bible story, two groups were like brothers; but one group didn’t protect the other, and they even stole from them! God had an important message for both groups.

OPTION 2: Rebuild structures

Before the session, create a simple structure built out of building blocks. Position the structure in the middle of the room. Form two groups of kids, and give each group enough blocks to create the structure. Explain to each group that its pieces were once just like the provided structure, but now they are in pieces. They need to be rebuilt to look like the model structure.

• building blocks

SAY • Before, your blocks were just a mess; after, they were restored to look like they should look. Today we are going to learn that God’s people were in a big mess, but **God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.**

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Obadiah the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE: Obadiah

STORY POINT: God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Simulate an airport terminal by creating a flight status board. Include destinations such as Edom, Judah, Jerusalem, and so forth. Line up some chairs like the waiting area. Stack luggage and hang a baggage claim sign above it. You may also display the theme background slide.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire
- suitcase
- watch

[Leader enters wearing a watch and carrying a suitcase. He or she sits down as if waiting on a flight and looks at watch.]

LEADER • I can't believe it—another delay announcement!

I am so tired of bad news today. I'm [your name], and I've spent the last year traveling the world. I'm just ready to get home! I don't think that family over there [point across the room] can take any more delays either. Those brothers are already fighting.

Speaking of family disputes, I'd love to share a Bible story with you. This story is about God's people—the people of Judah—and the people of

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Edom. Both groups descended from Jacob and Esau; surely they could treat each other like family, right?

Actually, God sent a messenger with bad news for the people of Edom because of the way they treated His people. The messenger had good news for God's people, too.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • In today's Bible story, Obadiah was the prophet God sent to deliver His message. Although God had chosen Obadiah for the job, Obadiah was not perfect. Is there any such thing as a perfect prophet? There is—it's Jesus! Let's take a look at our big picture question and answer: ***How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.***

• Big Picture Question Poster

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • Remember when we talked about the brothers Jacob and Esau? [*Point to the story of Jacob and Esau.*] The people of Judah were descendants of Jacob, and the people of Edom were descendants of Esau. Though they were related, they did not treat each other like family. The Edomites mistreated God's people, so God sent a message through the prophet Obadiah.

This story is just one piece of God's greater story, the gospel. All the stories of the Bible fit together to tell the one big story of how God rescues sinners through His Son, Jesus.

- Bibles
- “Obadiah the Prophet” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to the Book of Obadiah. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Obadiah the Prophet.”

LEADER • The two groups were practically family, yet the people of Edom refused to help another nation. The people of Edom trusted in their own strength. Look at Obadiah 3-4. [*Pause for kids to find Obadiah 3-4 in their Bibles. Suggest they refer to the table of contents. Choose a volunteer to read the verses aloud.*]

Edom was so far from God that they chose to laugh at the pain of another nation instead of helping them. [*Choose a volunteer to read aloud Obad. 12-13.*] God sent His messenger—the prophet Obadiah—to deliver bad news. God would make the wrong things right. Edom was about to learn the hard way that their opinion of God didn’t change the truth about who He is.

God is God whether or not people choose to worship Him. **God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.**

Christ connection

LEADER • God’s people were treated unfairly by their brother Edom. In a similar way, Jesus was mistreated by His own people. Like Edom, we too are guilty of idolatry—trusting in and worshiping things or people that are not God. This is sin and God will punish sin. Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment we deserve for our sin. We can trust Jesus to make wrong things right.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 99 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 17, Session 1” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about whether or not they should pray for God to punish people who do bad things. Guide them to discuss how praying for their enemies or showing kindness to them could change how they feel about them.

• “Unit 17, Session 1” questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Show the Adoniram Judson photo and explain that you will be learning about a missionary who lived a long time ago. He was born in Massachusetts in 1788. Challenge kids to guess who became president of the United States a few months after Adoniram was born. (*George Washington*)

• “Adoniram Judson Photo” printable

LEADER • Adoniram (a-doh-NIGH-rum) Judson was one of the first American missionaries. He went to a country called Burma, which is now called Myanmar.

He learned the Burmese language and translated the Bible so the people there could read God’s Word. Life was hard for Adoniram and his family, but he faithfully shared God’s promises and the good news about Jesus.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Jeremiah 29:11.

• Key Passage Poster
• “A Future and a Hope (Jer. 29:11)” song

LEADER • God’s people found themselves in a difficult situation. Their country had been invaded and their brother nation did nothing to help them. Our key passage is found in the Book of Jeremiah. This Scripture reminds us that God knows everything we go through, and He has a plan. The verse doesn’t promise that life will be easy, but it does show us that

God's plans are good.
Lead boys and girls in singing "A Future and a Hope
(Jer. 29:11)."

Sing (4 minutes)

Open your Bible and read aloud Jeremiah 20:13.

LEADER • God's people were in trouble, but we are learning
that God rescues His people. He sent His Son, Jesus,
to rescue us! The Lord is faithful. Let's sing.
Sing together "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Dear God, Your Word tells us about prophets
You sent to deliver bad news and good news.
Although those prophets were not perfect, Your
Son, Jesus, is the perfect Prophet. Jesus came and
fulfilled all that the prophets said. Through His life
and death, You rescue us from sin. We thank You and
love You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: Obadiah the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE: Obadiah

STORY POINT: God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- building blocks
- adhesive labels
- permanent marker

Before the session, write the key passage on adhesive labels—one or two words per label. Put each label on a separate building block. Make two sets of key passage building blocks.

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading Jeremiah 29:11 aloud together. Then form two groups. Hide or cover the key passage poster. Give each group a set of key passage blocks and challenge them to build a tower with the words of the key passage in order. The first word should be at the bottom, and groups can build their verse upward.

As groups finish, invite them to say the key passage aloud together. For an added challenge, remove some of the blocks and let kids say the key passage, supplying missing words from memory.

SAY • Building that tower revealed an important message from God's Word. God has a plan. In today's Bible story, God revealed His plans to people through the prophet Obadiah. **God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.**

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to the Book of Obadiah. Explain that Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament—just one chapter! Obadiah wrote the book, and his name means “worshiper of Yahweh.” Choose a volunteer to read aloud verse 21.

SAY • God saw that His people needed help that only He could give. **God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.**

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What consequences did Edom face for their mistreatment of Israel? Will we face what we deserve for our sin? Why? *Lead kids to recall that God said the people of Edom would get what they deserved. (Obad. 15) We deserve death for our sin, but Jesus took the punishment we deserve by dying on the cross. On the third day, He rose from the dead. When we trust in Him, God forgives our sin and gives us eternal life.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Cor. 3:19-20.)
2. A lot of the problems from today’s story happened because the families of two brothers didn’t get along. What could you do this week to get along with your brothers, sisters, or friends? *Invite kids to share their ideas. Point out that not only does God call us to love our siblings, He even wants us to love our enemies.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 5:44.)
3. Do you think God can fix this broken world? Why? *Allow kids to share their thoughts. Then emphasize that we do live in a broken world where many unfair things happen, but God promises in His Word that one day, Jesus will return and make all things new.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rev. 21:5.)

• Bibles, 1 per kid
• Story Point Poster

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- marker
- index cards

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Bible story charades

Ask for volunteers to act out a story from the Bible while the others guess which story or person it is.

Write descriptions of Bible stories on index cards for volunteers to read. Use this list or choose other Bible people your group would know: *God created the world; Noah built the ark; David killed the giant Goliath; Jonah was swallowed by a fish; Jesus was born; Jesus died; Jesus rose to life.*

SAY • When missionaries don't know the language of the people, they can act out Bible stories to teach people about God. Missionaries can use actions, pictures, things in nature, and even sounds to help people understand the stories from the Bible. God helps missionaries communicate His love to others even before they have learned the new language. Like the prophets told the people God's words, we can tell people about God.

OPTION 2: Restore pennies

Form small groups of kids. Give each group an old penny, a paper cup, a plastic spoon, and a paper towel. Point out how dirty the pennies are. Ask if they have any ideas about what you could use to clean the pennies.

Pour $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vinegar and add 1 teaspoon of salt into each group's cup. Instruct kids to stir their liquid until the salt dissolves. Then guide groups to place their penny in their cup. Invite them to watch the penny as it sits in the liquid. What do they see happening? After several minutes, invite kids to take the penny out of the liquid and wipe the penny clean with a paper towel.

SAY • How do your pennies look now? [*Allow kids to share*

- Allergy Alert
- pennies, 1 per kid
- paper cups, 1 per kid
- plastic spoons
- paper towels
- vinegar
- salt

Tip: While kids wait, spend five minutes practicing saying the names of the Minor Prophets in order (from Hosea to Malachi).

observations.] We had some dirty pennies before we restored them. *Restore* means “to bring something back to its former condition.” The longer the pennies soak, the more they are restored.

In today’s Bible story, God’s people were mistreated. They needed help. The great news is that **God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.** There is great news for us as well. Like God’s people were mistreated by the people of Edom, Jesus was mistreated by His own people. God will punish sin. Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment we deserve for our sin. We can trust Jesus to make wrong things right.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to rescue and restore.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Fill In” on the activity page. For each blank, kids should circle the word that fits best.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “Fill In” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week’s *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Use Week of:

Unit 17 • Session 2

The Captives Came Home

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Ezra 1–3

STORY POINT:

God kept His promise to bring
His people home.

KEY PASSAGE:

Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 108



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 110



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 116



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

God's people had been living in Babylon for 70 years. Some of God's people had died in Babylon. Some of their children and grandchildren were born in Babylon and grew up there. But Babylon was not their home.

Before the people of Judah were exiled, God had spoken through the prophet Jeremiah. These are the words of the Lord: "These nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years" (Jer. 25:11). Then the Lord said, "When seventy years for Babylon are complete, I will attend to you and will confirm my promise concerning you to restore you to this place" (Jer. 29:10). The time had come for God's people to go back home.

2

Cyrus, the king of the Persian empire, had overthrown Babylon. Cyrus took over the kingdom, including the lands of Israel and Judah. In the following year, the Lord did something miraculous in Cyrus's heart. He prompted Cyrus to issue a decree: All the Jewish exiles are free to return to their ancestral homes.

The exile was over! God's people were free to return to their own land. They were free to live as God's special people. The first group of Judean exiles returned home under the leadership of Zerubbabel (zuh RUHB uh buhl). Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoiachin, who had been taken to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. (See 2 Kings 24:8-13.)

Ezra 2:64-65 says nearly 50,000 people traveled back to Judah. When they got to Jerusalem, they began working to rebuild the temple that the Chaldeans had destroyed. (See 2 Chron. 36:19.)

Explain to kids that the temple was the place where God met with His people. Jesus came to earth to rescue God's people from sin. When Jesus returns, He will restore the earth and will dwell with His people forever.

The BIBLE Story

The Captives Came Home

Ezra 1–3

Many years before God's people were taken to Babylon, God promised the prophet Jeremiah that the exile would last 70 years; then God would bring His people back home. God always keeps His promises.

Cyrus, king of Persia, had taken over Babylon. God gave Cyrus an idea. **Cyrus said, “Let all of God’s people go back to Jerusalem so they can rebuild the Lord’s temple.**

Give them gold and silver and animals. Give them gifts for God’s temple.”

The exile was over! God’s people were free to go back to their homes. God’s people got ready, and their neighbors gave them gifts—gold and silver and animals and other expensive things.

Zerubbabel (zuh RUHB uh buhl) **and the high priest led God’s people back to Judah.** They

had been away for 70 years. Many of the people were born in Babylon; they had never seen the land God had given their parents and grandparents. In all, thousands of people went back to Judah. **They settled in their hometowns and set up their houses. Then the people met together in Jerusalem to rebuild the Lord’s temple.**



Bible Storytelling Tips

• Listen and draw:

As you tell the story, instruct kids to draw what they hear. After the story, review kids' drawings and invite them to explain details that they remember.

• Guess what's next:

As you tell the story, stop at various points and allow kids to guess what happens next. Consider providing two scenarios, one true and one false.

First, the priests rebuilt the altar in the same place it used to be. They followed all the laws of God for building. **When the altar was finished, they offered burnt offerings to God.** The people also obeyed the law about special celebrations. They had a festival like God had told them to do, and they made sacrifices to God.

Then God's people gave money to stonecutters and carpenters who would work on God's temple. They paid people to bring cedar logs to Jerusalem. Finally, when everything was ready, the people started to work. **They laid the foundation of the temple.** The foundation was important; it would make the building strong.

When the foundation was finished, the priests put on special clothes, and the people praised God. They sang, "The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever." Then the people shouted and praised God. They were so happy! The foundation of the temple was complete!

Not everyone was happy though. Some of the older people remembered what the temple had looked like 70 years ago, before it had been destroyed. They cried. The noise of the crying and shouting was so loud that the people could be heard far away.

Christ Connection: Zerubbabel led God's people back to the temple to rebuild it. The temple was the place where God met with His people on earth. Jesus came to earth to rescue God's people. One day Jesus will return to restore a greater home for all of God's people, and we will spend eternity with Him.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Captives Came Home

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezra 1–3

STORY POINT: God kept His promise to bring His people home.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think what they love best about where they live. Invite them to share what they like best about returning home after being away.

SAY • Today we will hear about God's people who had been away from home for 70 years. They finally got to return home! Can you imagine being away from home for 70 years?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Set the Scene" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Set the Scene" on the activity page. In the first space, kids should draw a few people who are happy. In the second space, they should draw a few people who are sad.

SAY • In today's Bible story, we will see that **God kept His promise to bring His people home.** Not only did they get to return home, they got to rebuild something that was very special to them. Any guesses what it was?

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Praise God

Form groups of three or four kids. Challenge each group to make a tune to these words for a worship song: “The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever.” They may also choreograph movements with their new song.

Give kids a few minutes to work, and then invite volunteers to share their songs with the class. Challenge the kids to listen today for any time you say the phrase “praise God.” When kids hear those words, they should say, “The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever.”

SAY • In today’s Bible story, God’s people had many reasons to praise God. [Pause.] His people sang praises to Him, saying “The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever.” God is faithful; He keeps all His promises. **God kept His promise to bring His people home.** And to that we say, “praise God!”

OPTION 2: Pack up, head home

Form two groups of kids. Line up each team at one side of the room. Give each kid an overnight item. Position a suitcase across from each team.

Explain that kids will pack their bags so they can head home. When a kid places an item into the suitcase, he should shout something he can praise God for. The first team to completely pack and close its suitcase wins.

SAY • After 70 years, God’s people returned home. They knew God had kept His promises. They praised Him! Not everyone was happy though. Some were shouting and crying. Let’s find out why.

- overnight bags or suitcases, 2
- overnight items, 1 per kid (T-shirts, toothbrushes, toothpaste, pairs of shoes, socks, books, and so on)

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Captives Came Home

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezra 1–3

STORY POINT: God kept His promise to bring His people home.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• suitcase

[Leader enters, smiling and carrying a suitcase.]

LEADER • Home sweet home! I can't believe I am finally back after a year of traveling the world. I missed so many things about home: the smells, the food, my friends and family. There is always something special about coming home, isn't there?

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

If I am this happy to be home, imagine how God's people felt returning home after being away for 70 years! Some had been born in Babylon and had never even seen their home. **God kept His promise to bring His people home.** Right away, God's people got busy rebuilding something that was very important to them. Any guesses what it is? *[Allow kids to respond.]* They worked so hard; you would think everyone would be thrilled. Well, that was not the case. Oh, I can't wait for you to hear about it! Let's get started.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • First, let's review our big picture question and answer: ***How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.***

Listen for the name *Zerubbabel* in today's Bible story. Zerubbabel led God's people to rebuild the temple, but Jesus did something even greater.

Jesus came to earth to rescue God's people. He told the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it up in three days" (John 2:19). Jesus was talking about His body as a temple. He would die and then rise on the third day. One day, Jesus will return to restore a greater home for all of God's people.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review. -Giant Timeline

LEADER • We can trust God to keep His promises. This timeline is full of true stories about times when God kept His promises. God sent the prophet Obadiah to talk to the people. **God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.**

Did God keep that promise? Yes! Our story today goes back to a promise God made to the prophet Jeremiah. Who can find Jeremiah on our timeline? *[Allow a volunteer to point to "Jeremiah, Prophet to Judah" from Unit 15.]*

Many years before God's people were taken captive, God told Jeremiah that the exile would last 70 years. Did God keep that promise? Of course. In today's Bible story, we will see yet again that God

keeps His promises. **God kept His promise to bring His people home.**

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
- "The Captives Came Home" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Open your Bible to Ezra 1–3. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "The Captives Came Home."

LEADER • Have you ever felt disappointed when something didn't turn out like you thought it should?

There were so many feelings and emotions in this story! Some people were excited because they were getting to go home and celebrate God's keeping His promises. Some people were nervous because they were traveling to a place they had never seen but had heard stories about for years and years.

God's people had started to rebuild the temple. When the people finished the foundation, they celebrated. But some of the older people, who had seen the temple that Solomon had built, cried. Why do you think they cried? [*Allow kids to respond.*]

I'm sure it was sad to think about the beautiful temple that had been torn down. They had memories of how their home used to be, but it no longer looked the same.

Sin has consequences. The Israelites had endured 70 years of consequences for their sin. **God kept His promise to bring His people home.**

Christ connection

LEADER • Zerubbabel led God's people back to the temple to rebuild it. The temple was the place where God met with His people on earth. Jesus came to earth

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 115 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

to rescue God's people. One day Jesus will return to restore a greater home for all of God's people, and we will spend eternity with Him.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 17, Session 2" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about ways to worship God. Guide them to discuss their favorite ways to worship.

• "Unit 17, Session 2"
questions from kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

LEADER • God kept His promise to bring His people home. God always keeps His promises. Adoniram Judson was a missionary to a country called Burma (now known as Myanmar) more than 150 years ago. Adoniram isn't alive anymore, but God is still faithful to the people who live in that country. [*Point to Myanmar on a map.*]

Let's learn more about the Karen (kah-REN) people who live in the place where Adoniram Judson told people about Jesus.

Play the "Karen People of Myanmar" missions video. Close by praying for the Karen people and for the missionaries working in Myanmar.

• "Karen People of
Myanmar" missions
video
• world map

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Jeremiah 29:11.

LEADER • After 70 years of exile, God kept His promise to bring His people home. What God says is true. He has a plan, and He keeps His promises.

Sometimes you may find yourself waiting on God's promise. God's plan doesn't always happen right

• Key Passage Poster
• "A Future and a Hope
(Jer. 29:11) song

away, but God's plan always happens at just the right time.

Lead boys and girls in singing "A Future and a Hope (Jer. 29:11)."

Sing (4 minutes)

Open your Bible and read aloud 1 Chronicles 16:34.

LEADER • The God we serve today is the same faithful God His people worshiped after they returned home. He is good, He is faithful, and He is worthy of all praise. Sing together "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, You keep Your promises. Because You are faithful, we can trust You. God, we confess that we are often unfaithful. Thank You for sending Jesus to rescue us. We look forward to the day He comes back so we can live with You forever. You will make everything right again! We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Captives Came Home

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezra 1–3

STORY POINT: God kept His promise to bring His people home.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- music note cutouts
- marker

Before the session, write words or phrases of the key passage on separate music notes. Prepare two sets.

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Jeremiah 29:11. Form two groups of kids. Give each group a set of music note cutouts. Challenge them to arrange the notes in order. Consider inviting kids to sing the words of the key passage.

SAY • That was great! We can praise God because He knows the plans He has for His people. We can trust Him because God keeps His promises. What a joy it is to praise Him.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Ezra 1–3. Explain that the Book of Ezra is in the Old Testament. No one knows for certain who wrote it, but some believe it was the scholar and scribe named Ezra. The events in this book happened between 450 and 500 years before Jesus was born.

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Ezra 3:11.

SAY • After the people praised God, they gave a loud shout.

Let's hear you give a shout after I say "The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever." Ready? The Lord is good. His faithful love will last forever.
[Encourage kids to shout and cheer.]

God kept His promise to bring His people home. God's people returned home to rebuild the temple. They laid the foundation and praised Him. God is faithful, He has a plan, and we can trust Him.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What promise did God keep for His people? *Prompt kids to recall that **God kept His promise to bring His people home.** God spoke this promise to the prophet Jeremiah more than 70 years before the exile.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Jer. 29:10.)
2. How do we know we can we trust God to keep His promises? *Point out that over and over again, God not only makes promises, but He keeps them. Many of us make promises but are guilty of not keeping our promises. God isn't like us. He is always faithful. We can put our trust in Him.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Heb. 10:23.)
3. Will you trust God when things don't make sense? Why? *Emphasize that there will be times in kids' lives when things just don't make sense. They may not know why something happened or didn't happen. Remind kids that God's Word tells us to trust Him and not lean on our own understanding.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Prov. 3:5-6.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Cultural greetings

SAY • People all over the world are different and

have different ways of showing respect. For example, we might shake hands with someone we are greeting. [*Demonstrate shaking hands.*] This is considered polite. Let's find out more about the culture of the Karen (kah-REN) people.

Direct kids to slowly walk around the room and respond to the following commands as you give them:

- When you walk past someone, bow your head lower than his or her head.
- Don't look at anyone's eyes. This is considered rude.
- Find something to give to another person, but make sure you use two hands.
- Stop to talk with someone and cross your arms in front of you. This is a sign of respect.

OPTION 2: Building snack

Before the session, assemble snack bags for each kid that include pretzel sticks, mini marshmallows, and an index card with the words *I promise to pray for you* written on it.

Distribute the bags and invite kids to write any specific prayer requests they have on the back of the index card. They are welcome to sign their name but may feel more comfortable not signing their name. Collect the cards.

Guide kids to build a foundation (a strong square or rectangle structure) for a temple using pretzel sticks and marshmallows. As they work on their foundations, play music in the background. You may choose to allow kids to snack on their "building supplies" as they build.

SAY • Your temple foundations look great. In Bible times, the temple was the place where God met with His people on earth. Jesus came to earth to rescue God's people. One day, Jesus will return to restore

- Allergy Alert
- mini marshmallows
- pretzel sticks
- snack bags
- index cards
- markers
- pens
- "Always in Control (This I Know)" song (optional)

a greater home for all of God's people, and we will spend eternity with Him. ***How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.***

Thank you for sharing with me some ways I can pray for each of you. I promise I will pray for you this week. Always feel free to share with me how I can pray for you. God is faithful, and we can trust Him with any problem, fear, worry, or joy we have!

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, acknowledging God's faithfulness and love.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "The Long Way Back" on the activity page. Kids should use the key to decode the special message.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "The Long Way Back" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Use Week of:

Unit 17 • Session 3

The Temple Was Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Ezra 4–6; Haggai

STORY POINT:

God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.

KEY PASSAGE:

Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 124



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 126



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 132



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

At last! God's people returned to Jerusalem, the home of their ancestors. God had given them another opportunity to live as His special people. They got to work right away, completing the foundation of the Lord's temple.

Many of God's people had been born in Babylon, but they had likely heard the stories of their parents and grandparents, stories of a life in the land God had given them. They probably heard of their families' mistakes: ignoring God, worshipping idols, and mistreating the poor. But the Lord had been gracious! He kept His promise to bring His people back to Judah.

Life in Judah wasn't exactly what they had imagined. It was difficult. Their national wealth was gone. The work of rebuilding the temple and the city of Jerusalem was hard. The land was desolate, and crops failed. Their neighbors opposed their efforts. (See Ezra 4:6,11-16.)

God's people were disappointed and discouraged. Rather than fight their enemies, God's people gave up. The temple of the Lord sat unfinished for 16 years. The people made excuses. "Maybe it's not time to rebuild the temple," they reasoned. If that was what God wanted, wouldn't He make it easier for them? (See Hag. 1:2.) God's people moved on to building their own homes.

The prophet Haggai stepped onto the scene and rebuked the people for their misplaced priorities. (Hag. 1:4) He brought words from the Lord, commanding them to finish the work they started. God promised to fill the temple with His glory, and comforted His weary people with this promise: "I will provide peace in this place" (Hag. 2:7,9).

God promised to be with His people and bless them—and not only them, but the whole world through them, keeping the promise He made to Abraham long ago. (See Gen. 12:3.) Through God's servant, Zerubbabel, God would send His Son, Jesus—the greater Servant who is God with us.

The BIBLE Story

The Temple Was Rebuilt

Ezra 4–6; Haggai

After living in Babylon for 70 years, God's people were home! A group had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild God's temple. They had started the work, but their neighbors didn't want them to rebuild the temple, so they stopped building. The people

made excuses. "Maybe it isn't the right time to rebuild the temple," they said. They thought that because the task was difficult, maybe God didn't want them to do it.

God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the people. So the leaders—Zerubbabel and Joshua—started working on the temple again. At this time, Darius (duh RIGH uhs), the king of Persia, ruled over the land of Judah. The king was in charge of so much land, he put governors in charge of some of the land. A governor named Tattenai (TAT ih nigh) noticed God's people had started to rebuild the temple again.

Tattenai talked to Zerubbabel and the others working on the temple. "Do you have permission to rebuild this temple?" Tattenai asked. The workers said, "We do."

Tattenai sent a report to King Darius. This is what Tattenai's



letter to King Darius said: “To Darius the king—This letter is to tell you that **the people in Judah are building the temple of the great God. They said King Cyrus gave them permission to rebuild the temple. Please search the royal records to see if this is true.**”

King Darius’s officials searched the royal records for Cyrus’s order. They found it—a scroll with a record from King Cyrus. This is what was written on the scroll: “Let God’s temple be rebuilt. It will be a place to offer sacrifices. Let its foundation be rebuilt.” King Cyrus had also ordered for the cost of building the temple to be paid for out of the royal treasury.

So King Darius sent a letter back to Tattenai. He gave this order: “Stay away from the workers in Jerusalem. Don’t bother them or try to stop them. Give them whatever they need.”

Tattenai and the other officials obeyed King Darius’s order. The Jewish leaders kept building, and they finally finished the temple of God! The people celebrated and made offerings to God. They chose priests and assistants to serve in the temple.

Then God’s people celebrated the Passover. God’s people were so happy. Now the temple of God was finally complete.

Christ Connection: God’s people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now God dwells not in the temple, but directly with His people. Jesus provided something better than the temple; He gives us Himself.

Bible Storytelling Tips

• Building blocks:

Before telling the story, write several main points of the story on masking tape. Attach the tape to large building blocks and distribute to kids. At each point in the story, invite the kid holding that block to come up and build upon other blocks.

• Listen and cheer:

Explain that each time kids hear the word *temple*, they are to cheer. Pause briefly for response and then direct kids to stop as you continue telling the story.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Temple Was Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezra 4–6; Haggai

STORY POINT: God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think of a time when something they loved broke. How did they feel? Were they able to put it back together again?

SAY • We have all had something that broke that we wish we could fix and make perfect again. When God's people were taken into exile, the Babylonians destroyed their temple. Today, we will hear how God's people rebuilt the temple 70 years later.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Order of Events" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Order of Events" on the activity page. Kids should number the Bible stories in the order they happened. Then they will arrange each corresponding letter to discover the name of a place in today's Bible story.

SAY • In the Old Testament, the temple was a place where God's people worshiped Him. The temple in Jerusalem had been burned down, but Zerubbabel led God's people back to the temple to rebuild it.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Playing card temple

Demonstrate how to build a structure out of playing cards. Form two or more groups of kids. Give each group a deck of cards. Challenge them to build a structure. Assign each group a leader to cheer on the group and encourage them as they build. After several minutes, examine the structures.

SAY • Great job building! How helpful or encouraging was your leader? When God's people were rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, God sent two prophets—Haggai and Zechariah—to encourage the people. Today we will learn more about how and why God's people rebuilt the temple.

**LOW
PREP**

• decks of playing
cards, 1 per group

OPTION 2: Hard work matches

Before the session, create two matching sets of cards describing actions that require hard work (*raking the leaves, doing the dishes, vacuuming, folding laundry*, and so on). Distribute the cards among the kids so each player has someone else in the class with the match.

• index cards
• marker

On your signal, kids must walk around the room silently and find their matching partner by only using motions to describe what their hard work action is. Matching partners must complete their action and then take a seat.

SAY • Those actions took some work to complete. Today we will hear a story about how God's people returned home and worked hard to rebuild the temple.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Temple Was Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezra 4–6; Haggai

STORY POINT: God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Countdown

· countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

· leader attire
· suitcases
· slip of paper

[Leader enters with a large suitcase and a baggage claim ticket.]

LEADER • Hey! It's me, [*your name*], still at the airport.

You are not going to believe what happened.

When I tried to get my big suitcase from baggage claim, someone else tried to take it. He thought it was his suitcase, but I knew it was mine. He kept questioning me about my suitcase. I'm so glad I had my claim ticket. This ticket proved to that other traveler that this suitcase is really mine.

That reminds me of part of today's Bible story. Last time, we left off with God's people having completed the foundation of the temple. Today, we will hear that people living nearby were beginning to question if God's people had permission to rebuild the temple. Don't worry; just like my ticket, they had what they needed to prove that they had permission to build.

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

You will see how God provided proof so His people could complete the temple for His glory.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • God's people must have been so thankful for the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, who were sent to encourage them. Our big picture question tells us about a prophet even greater than these men: Jesus. ***How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.***

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • Last week we were in the first couple of chapters in Ezra and learned that **God kept His promise to bring His people home.** God's people were so excited. They began rebuilding the temple. Some of God's people praised God, and some of them were sad about the temple foundation.

Today, we are here [*point to "The Temple Was Rebuilt" on the timeline*] and we will see that even though it was hard work and people questioned them, **God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.**

We will learn that after God sent Jesus to earth, His people didn't need a temple anymore.

• Bibles
• "The Temple Was Rebuilt" video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster
• Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Ezra 4–6. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show

the Bible story video “The Temple Was Rebuilt.”

LEADER • God’s people were excited about rebuilding the temple so they could worship Him. You can see they had one focus: God. When people questioned them, they kept on building so they could celebrate the one true God. God’s people didn’t allow others to discourage or distract them from their goal.

Not only did they keep their focus when they were building, they made sure God was the focus of the celebration when they completed the temple. They didn’t pause to make a name for themselves. As soon as they were done, they made offerings to God and celebrated the Passover.

We see God’s faithfulness throughout this story. The workers found God’s Word on a scroll, God changed a king’s heart, and God sent leaders to encourage His people. God deserves our worship and celebration.

Sometimes we allow ourselves to focus on things we think God should have done but didn’t, and we miss out on the truth that God keeps His promises. Can you think of a time in the last year when God was faithful to you? Were you thankful for His faithfulness at that time?

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 131 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • God’s people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to worship God. Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now God dwells not in the temple, but directly with His people. We don’t need a temple anymore. Because of Jesus, we can have eternal life with God forever.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 17, Session 3” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about why we go to church. Guide them to discuss how the church has helped their understanding of and love for Jesus.

• “Unit 17, Session 3” questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Ask for several volunteers to read a short story from the life of Adoniram Judson. Give each child one section of the Adoniram Judson stories. Let them read aloud while the group listens.

• “Adoniram Judson Stories” printable

LEADER • Our Bible story teaches us that **God’s people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.** Adoniram and Ann Judson chose to glorify God even when they felt scared. They remained faithful to God and continued to tell people about Jesus.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Jeremiah 29:11.

• Key Passage Poster
• “A Future and a Hope (Jer. 29:11)” song

LEADER • Nothing was going to stop God’s plan to rebuild His temple. Governor Tattenai questioned whether or not God’s people had permission to rebuild the temple. God had a plan to show they had permission all along.

As you sing the key passage song, remember that this same God calls you to trust Him today.

Lead kids in singing “A Future and a Hope (Jer. 29:11).”

Sing (4 minutes)

Open your Bible and read aloud Romans 8:28.

• “Always in Control (This I Know)” song

LEADER • I am sure God’s plan didn’t always make sense

to His people, but God did everything for His glory and their good. The Lord is always in control. Sing together “Always in Control (This I Know).”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Dear God, You work all things together for our good and for Your glory. Help us to see Your glory in our broken world. Help us to believe that whatever the circumstances, You are good. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Temple Was Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezra 4–6; Haggai

STORY POINT: God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- plastic cups
- permanent marker

Before the session, write words or phrases of the key passage on separate plastic cups. Prepare two matching sets.

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Jeremiah 29:11 together.

Form two teams of kids and instruct them to spread out across the room in two lines. Stack each team's key passage cups in random order at the far end of the room. Explain that at your signal, the first player from each team will reach down to grab the first cup in the key passage. She will pass the cup down the line to her teammate at the other end.

The first player will pick up the next cup, pass it down the line, and repeat for all the cups. Continue until players collect all the cups and arrange them in order. Lead kids in saying the key passage together again.

SAY • This key passage tell us that God had a plan for His people. He has a plan for us too. We can always trust His plan because He is all-powerful and good.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Haggai 1. Explain that the prophet Haggai recorded four

messages to the Jewish people. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Haggai 1:1-2.

SAY • God used the prophet Haggai to deliver His message to rebuild the temple. This was an important message for God's people, and Haggai was faithful to deliver the message that would result in God's glory.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. How did rebuilding the temple bring glory to God?
Help kids conclude that God's people were determined to rebuild the temple so they could worship God. Seeing the temple rebuilt showed God's faithfulness. Hundreds of years later, God would send Jesus to dwell among His people so they would no longer need the temple.
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 1:14.)
2. The Bible tells us that we are God's temple. How should that impact the way we relate to one another or see ourselves? *Emphasize to kids that if we are in Christ, our bodies are the temple to the Holy Spirit. We should honor our bodies and treat others with respect.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Cor. 6:19-20.)
3. Why is God the best foundation for our lives? *Invite kids to discuss how we can often be tempted to build our foundation on other things (relationships, popularity, etc.), but Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ is the only firm foundation. All other ground is sinking sand.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Cor. 3:11.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Make a hut

Make simple "huts" by draping blankets over chairs. Invite kids in small groups to sit under the blankets.

SAY • When Adoniram and Ann Judson arrived in Burma,

• Bible
• blankets
• chairs

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Note: Burma is now commonly known as Myanmar.

they built a hut and asked people to come to hear stories from the Bible. People in Burma commonly lived in huts. Today, many people still do.

Explain that you will have a time of prayer for missionaries sharing about Jesus in the huts. Lead kids to discuss ways to pray for missionaries. Ask for volunteers to pray aloud for missionaries all over the world. Thank God for the work of missionaries like Adoniram and Ann Judson.

LOW PREP

- paper
- pens
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- mirrors (optional)

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

OPTION 2: Then and now

Give each kid a piece of paper and a pen. Guide the kids to turn the page sideways and draw a line down the middle of the page (top to bottom across the shorter length). Instruct kids to label the left side of the page *Temple Then* and the right side *Temple Now*.

Show the Bible story picture and encourage kids to refer to the picture to draw the temple on the left side of the page. Then instruct kids to draw a self-portrait on the right side of the page. Consider providing mirrors for kids to look at their own faces.

SAY • Your pictures represent the temple then and now.

God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.

The temple gave them a place to worship God.

Years later, God sent His Son, Jesus, to be with His people. Now God dwells not in the temple, but directly with His people. Jesus provided something better than the temple; He gives us Himself.

Let's say our big picture question and answer together: ***How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.***

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for sending Jesus to dwell among us. Pray that kids would recognize their need for a Savior. Ask for ears to hear and hearts to respond to the Holy Spirit's guidance.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "To Build Again" on the activity page. Kids should find and circle the words of today's story point in the picture. Challenge them to also find the hidden scrolls.

· pencils
· Journal Page
· "To Build Again"
activity page,
1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.



Use Week of:

Unit 17 • Session 4

Zechariah the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Zechariah

STORY POINT:

Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.

KEY PASSAGE:

Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

INTRODUCE THE STORY

(10–15 MINUTES)

PAGE 140



TEACH THE STORY

(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 142



APPLY THE STORY

(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 148



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

Zechariah was a priest who had been born in Babylon. He had returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel. At this time, the prophet Haggai was bringing God's message to His people. The Judean exiles were struggling to finish rebuilding God's temple. In fact, several years had passed without progress on the temple when God called Zechariah to prophesy to His people.

Zechariah's message was twofold: first, look back and remember the past. Second, look forward and prepare for the future. God wanted His people to learn from the mistakes of their parents and grandparents who had ignored the prophets' warnings. Zechariah set out to encourage the people.

The Book of Zechariah is organized into eight visions, four messages, and two oracles. The visions Zechariah saw each symbolized something God would do—such as rebuild Jerusalem, judge Israel's enemies, and remove national sin. (See Zech. 1–6.) A couple of years later, God spoke to Zechariah again. This time, God spoke four messages to respond to a question the people had about fasting. (Zech. 7:3)

In the last six chapters, Zechariah changed the subject to the future of God's kingdom. Chapters 9–12 are rich with Messianic prophecy; the words are quoted often in the New Testament. Compare Zechariah 9:9 with John 12:15; Zechariah 11:13 with Matthew 27:9; and Zechariah 12:10 with John 19:37.

As you teach kids about Zechariah, emphasize God's promise: "A king is coming." Zechariah's visions were significant to the reality of God's people at that time, but a greater reality awaited. Zechariah pointed to Jesus, the coming deliverer who would be struck and pierced to take away sin. God would deal with His people's enemies. He would cleanse His people. "They will call on my name, and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is our God'" (Zech. 13:9). Under the rule of King Jesus, our future is incredibly bright.

The **BIBLE** Story

Zechariah the Prophet

Zechariah

When God's people stopped rebuilding God's temple, God sent prophets to give His people a message. **Zechariah** (ZEK uh RIGH uh) was one of the prophets who told the people what God said.

This was God's message: "Return to Me, and I will return to you." God reminded the people

about their parents and grandparents and great-grandparents. "The prophets told them to stop sinning, but they did not listen." So God had punished the people for their sin. "Don't be like them," God said.

One night, God gave Zechariah some messages through visions. Zechariah saw eight visions; each was a different message from God about something that was going to happen. In the first vision, Zechariah saw a man riding on a red horse. Behind him were other horses. They had been patrolling the earth. Everything was calm and quiet. But soon the Lord would punish His enemies. The Lord's house would be rebuilt, and His cities would be blessed again.

In the second vision, Zechariah saw four horns—these stood for Israel's enemies. Zechariah also saw four craftsmen, who would defeat those enemies. Next, Zechariah saw a man going out to



measure Jerusalem, but the city could not be measured because it was too big for walls. Instead, the Lord would be a wall of fire around it.

In the fifth vision, Zechariah saw a solid gold lampstand, which showed how all the Lord's plans would happen because of His Spirit. **Then Zechariah saw a flying scroll**, which was a curse on everyone who disobeyed God. **In the seventh vision, a woman sat inside a basket**. She represented the wickedness of those who worshiped false gods. She was lifted up and taken back to Babylon. **In the eighth vision, Zechariah saw four chariots**. Like the horses of the first vision, they would patrol the earth.

God told Zechariah to collect silver and gold from the people. "Use the gold and silver **to make crowns**," He said, **"and place them on the head of Joshua, the high priest."**

Joshua's crowns meant that a special king was coming to bring peace for everyone. "Look, your King is coming to you; He is righteous and victorious, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey," Zechariah said. God promised to bless His people and punish the rest of the nations for their sin. One day everyone will worship the Lord.

Christ Connection: God was going to help His people and give them a different kind of king. Jesus is the King who came and rode humbly on a donkey, just as Zechariah said. Because Zechariah's prophecy came true in Jesus, we can have hope and forgiveness of sins when we trust in Jesus.

Storytelling Tips

- **Echo the story point:** Invite the kids to listen closely as you tell the story. Each time you say the name *Zechariah*, challenge them to say today's story point: "Zechariah said the Messiah is coming."
- **Incorporate art:** Create signs with symbols for the eight visions God gave Zechariah. Distribute the signs among the kids. When you mention that vision during the story, instruct the kid holding that sign to stand up.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Zechariah the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE: Zechariah

STORY POINT: Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to think of someone they'd like to come visit them at home.

SAY • How exciting it is when someone special in our life comes for a visit! Just the news of his or her upcoming arrival is enough to keep us thinking about it for days. In today's Bible story, the prophet Zechariah had some great news: someone was coming. We'll find out more soon.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Set 'Em Straight" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Set 'Em Straight" on the activity page. Kids should unscramble the Bible book names of the Major and Minor Prophets. Guide them to use the table of contents in the Bible if they need help.

SAY • These prophets were messengers of God, and they played important parts in God's story. There is one prophet who is unlike any other prophet. ***Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.***

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Categories game

Form small groups of kids and give each group a piece of paper and a pen. Invite kids to play a category game. Call out a category (food, animals, states, and so on). Challenge kids to list as many items from the category as they can in 30 seconds. Play several rounds. The final category should be “things that will happen in the future.”

SAY • Which category was hardest? Do you know what will happen in the future? We can’t predict the future with certainty, but God gave the prophet Zechariah eight visions to explain what would happen in Israel’s future.

OPTION 2: Vision matching

Before the session, cut index cards in half to create smaller cards. Write the following phrases on eight cards: *horsemen, four horns and craftsmen, surveyor, high priest and branch, gold lampstand, flying scroll, woman in a basket, four chariots*. Then write them on eight more cards to make matching pairs. Prepare a set of 16 cards for every group of four to six kids.

Form groups of four to six kids and distribute the cards. Instruct kids to mix up the cards and place them facedown in a grid. Kids can play a matching game, turning over two cards at a time to look for matches. If cards match, keep them. If they don’t match, turn them facedown.

SAY • All of these things are part of our Bible story today.

God gave the prophet Zechariah eight visions about the future. We’ll find out what each vision meant.

LOW PREP

- paper
- pens
- stopwatch or timer

- index cards
- marker
- scissors

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Zechariah the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE: Zechariah

STORY POINT: Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• suitcase
• cell phone

[Leader enters with a suitcase and pretends to look at the map on his or her phone.]

LEADER • I have all my bags and am finally ready to head to my house. I'm using this map on my phone to figure out the fastest way to get there. But this map is full of new symbols that are pretty confusing. I guess some things have changed while I was gone. Some of the streets are red, and there are some arrows and even warning symbols on some places. It sure would help if understood what all this meant.

In today's Bible story, you will hear about eight visions God gave Zechariah. These visions included some interesting messages, and each of the visions meant something important. God gave Zechariah an important message to share. Let's find out what it was.

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • God used Zechariah in amazing ways to get His messages to His people. Zechariah was faithful to share the messages God had given him, but like the prophets before him, Zechariah was not a perfect prophet. There is only one perfect Prophet: Jesus. *How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.*

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • We've talked about so many different prophets! See if you can find them on the timeline when I name them: Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Obadiah. [*Allow volunteers to point out the stories.*]

Great job. Today we will learn about the prophet Zechariah. God sent Zechariah and Haggai to encourage God's people as they rebuilt the temple. Zechariah was faithful to tell God's people that God was going to help them and send them a King forever. Jesus was coming, and He is the perfect King and prophet. *Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.*

• Bibles
• "Zechariah the Prophet" video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster
• Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to the Book of Zechariah. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Zechariah the Prophet."

LEADER • Zechariah had great news to share: The Messiah was coming to God's people! That's not all Zechariah had to share. Let's see if you can remember what each vision was about.

Name each vision and allow kids to describe its meaning. Give Scripture references and encourage kids to refer to the Bible to check their answers.

- Horsemen—The Lord would punish His enemies. The Lord's house would be rebuilt, and His cities would be blessed again. (Zech. 1:8,17)
- Four horns and craftsmen—Israel's enemies would be defeated. (Zech. 1:18,20-21)
- Man with a measuring tape—God would be a wall of protection around Jerusalem. (Zech. 2:1-3,10)
- Joshua the high priest—God's people would rebuild the temple, and God would remove their guilt. (Zech. 3:1,9)
- Gold lampstand—All the Lord's plans would happen because of His Spirit. (Zech. 4:2-3,6)
- Flying scroll—There would be a curse on everyone who disobeyed God. (Zech. 5:1-3)
- Woman in a basket—Those who worshiped false gods would be taken away. (Zech. 5:5-11)
- Four chariots—God's anger and wrath would be calmed. (Zech. 6:1,8)

LEADER • God's message did not end with the visions. God told Zechariah to gather silver and gold and make a crown for Joshua. This crown would represent that King Jesus was coming. This was an important prophecy for God's people. **Zechariah said the Messiah is coming!**

Christ connection

LEADER • God was going to help His people and give them a different kind of king. Jesus is the King who came and rode humbly on a donkey, just as Zechariah said. Because Zechariah's prophecy came true in Jesus, we can have hope and forgiveness of sins when we trust in Jesus.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 147 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 17, Session 4" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about why God waited so long to send Jesus. Guide them to discuss how waiting for something could be better than getting it right away.

• "Unit 17, Session 4" questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Display a world map. Show kids how far away Myanmar (in Southeast Asia, west of Thailand) is from the United States. Explain that Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, is home to about 54 million people. Ask a volunteer to come to the map and name some of the countries that are near Myanmar.

• world map

LEADER • **Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.** Today, we tell people that the Messiah *has* come! Jesus is the Messiah! Many people in the world have never heard about Jesus. That's why missionaries go and tell them about Jesus.

Adoniram and Ann Judson were missionaries who went to Myanmar many years ago to tell people about Jesus. Most people in Myanmar are not Christians. Even today, missionaries are still in Myanmar to tell people the good news of the gospel: Jesus came to rescue sinners! He died on the cross for

our sins and rose from the dead. When we trust in Him as Lord and Savior, we have forgiveness and life with God forever.

Key passage (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- “A Future and a Hope (Jer. 29:11)” song

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Jeremiah 29:11.

LEADER • God’s plan all along was to bring Jesus into the world to rescue sinners. **Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.** God planned for Jesus to reign forever. One day, Jesus is coming back again and those who believe in Him will live with Him forever. Jesus is worthy of our praise.

Lead kids in singing “A Future and a Hope (Jer. 29:11).”

Sing (4 minutes)

- “Always in Control (This I Know)” song

Open your Bible and read aloud Revelation 17:14.

LEADER • Jesus is the King His people were waiting for. One day, everyone will worship the Lord. Let’s worship Him together now.

Sing together “Always in Control (This I Know).”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Dear God, Jesus is the King we need. Thank You for providing for our need for a Savior by sending Your one and only Son. Help us share the great news of Jesus with others. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: Zechariah the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE: Zechariah

STORY POINT: Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.

KEY PASSAGE: Jeremiah 29:11

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- beanbags
- marker
- poster board or large sheet of paper

Before the session, write all the words and phrases from the key passage in random order on poster board. Position the poster board on the floor.

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Jeremiah 29:11 together.

Invite kids to take turns tossing a beanbag onto the words of the key passage in order. When a player's beanbag lands on the first word, the entire class will say that word aloud. When a player lands on the next word, kids will start at the beginning and say each word in order up to the current word. Continue word by word until kids say the entire key passage.

SAY • In our story today, **Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.** God sent Jesus so His people could have a hope and a future in Him. When we trust in Jesus by faith, He welcomes us into God's family and gives us life with Him forever.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to the Book of Zechariah. Remind kids that Zechariah

was sent to encourage the people to finish rebuilding the temple, but he also encouraged the people to rebuild their relationship with God and truly worship Him. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Zechariah 9:9.

SAY • Zechariah said the Messiah is coming. This was great news for God's people but bad news for God's enemies. If you were expecting a king to arrive, what would you look for? [*Allow kids to respond.*] We may have certain ideas about how a king should arrive, but this king—the promised Messiah—was not like other kings. King Jesus would come on a donkey, and He would reign forever.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What was the main message Zechariah came to deliver? *Guide kids to recall that **Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.** Jesus was coming to be the King of kings, Lord of lords, and Prince of peace.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Isa. 9:6.)
2. Describe a time when you tried to do the right thing when everyone around you was doing the wrong thing. *Invite kids to share. Point out that Zechariah had some stern messages for those who disobeyed God. God told the people to return to Him. God calls us today to come near to Him and turn away from sin.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Jas. 4:8.)
3. How can we be encouraged to obey God even when it's difficult? *Affirm that obeying God may not always be the popular choice, but it is always the right choice. God must punish sin. We show we love God when we obey His commands.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 15:14.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- individually-wrapped tea bags
- cardstock
- colored pencils
- tape
- stamp or stickers with church info (optional)

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

- Bibles
- paper plates
- markers
- string
- scissors
- tape

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Tea tags

Distribute the supplies. Ask kids to write *The Messiah has come. He is Jesus!* on pieces of cardstock. Explain that they will decorate a card, tape a tea bag to it, and give it to a friend at church or at school.

SAY • People in Southeast Asia love to serve tea to their guests. We'll share a tea bag with our friends and tell them about Jesus. This is a way that we can be on mission.

Give kids time to decorate their cards. Let them choose a tea bag and tape it to the card. If available, include a stamp or sticker with your church's information.

OPTION 2: Prophecies fulfilled

Before the session, write the following references on separate paper plates: *Genesis 3:15; 1 John 3:8; Genesis 12:3; Acts 3:25-26; 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Matthew 1:1; Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:14-15; Isaiah 40:3-4; John 1:23; Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:8-10.*

Arrange the plates in a circle. Provide string, tape, scissors, and Bibles. Challenge kids to work together to match each prophecy from the Old Testament with the passage in the New Testament that describes the prophecy's fulfillment. Kids should cut lengths of string to stretch between the prophecy and its fulfillment, taping the ends of the string to the paper plates.

SAY • More than 500 years before Jesus was born, Zechariah gave God's people a message of hope. God was going to help His people and give them a different kind of king. But Zechariah's messages were not just for the people of that day, they were also for us. **Zechariah**

said the Messiah is coming.

Jesus is the King who came and rode humbly on a donkey, just as Zechariah said. Because Zechariah's prophecy came true in Jesus, we can have hope and forgiveness of sins when we trust in Jesus.

Jesus is the perfect Prophet! ***How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.***

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, acknowledging God as the one eternal King. Declare that Jesus will rule forever; and one day, all will worship Him. Ask God to help kids follow Jesus and share with others the good news that Jesus saves and is coming again.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Vision Drawings" on the activity page. Kids will read each set of verses in the Bible and draw pictures to show Zechariah's visions.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Vision Drawings" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Unit 18: The People Restored

Unit Description:

Even after returning home, the Israelites struggled to obey God completely and to worship Him. Nehemiah led the people to rebuild Jerusalem's walls and Ezra began teaching God's Word again. Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, warned the people to repent because the Messiah was coming soon. The stage was set for the arrival of Jesus.

Key Passage:

1 Peter 5:10

Big Picture Question:

Who is in control of everything?
God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Session 1:

Esther Saved Her People

Esther

Story Point: God made Esther a queen to protect His people.

Session 3:

God's People Repented

Nehemiah 8–13

Story Point: God's people repented and promised to be faithful.

Session 2:

The Walls Rebuilt

Nehemiah 1–6

Story Point: God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

Session 4:

Malachi the Prophet

Malachi

Story Point: Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah.



Esther Saved Her People

God made Esther a queen to protect His people.

The Walls Rebuilt

God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.



God's People Repented

God's people repented and promised to be faithful.

Malachi the Prophet

Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah.



Use Week of:

Unit 18 • Session 1

Esther Saved Her People

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Esther

STORY POINT:

God made Esther a queen to protect His people.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Who is in control of everything?
God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 158

TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 160

APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 166



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

The Babylonian captivity ended when Cyrus, the king of Persia, took over Babylon and let God's people go home. Some of God's people—now called Jews (people from Judah)—traveled back to Judah to rebuild the temple, the city, and their lives. Others, however, stayed in Persia where life among the pagans was relatively comfortable.

The king of Persia was now Ahasuerus (uh haz yoo EHR uhs), also known by his Greek name, Xerxes (ZUHRK seez). Esther was a young Jewish girl who became queen of Persia. The former queen had defied the king and was promptly replaced.

Esther had been an orphan, so her cousin Mordecai adopted her. Mordecai kept in touch with Esther while she lived in the palace. One day, the king gave Haman the Agagite a very important position in the kingdom. The king even commanded the people to bow down to Haman. But Mordecai refused.

Haman was a descendant of Agag, king of the Amalekites. The nations of Israel and Amalek did not get along. Haman was angry, but instead of just punishing Mordecai, he planned to kill all the Jews in the kingdom.

In today's Bible story, Mordecai turned to Esther for help. After all, she was in a position of power, and the Jews were her people. The stakes were high, but Esther approached the king and explained her people's plight. Review the details in Esther 7.

Note how Esther described Haman: "The adversary and enemy is this evil Haman" (Esth. 7:6). We too have an adversary—the Devil. He prowls around like a lion, seeking people to devour. (1 Pet. 5:8) He loves nothing more than to destroy believers and hinder the work of God. Satan thought he had succeeded when Jesus died on the cross, but God—who often works behind the scenes—raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all. (See Heb. 2:14-15.)

The **BIBLE** Story

Esther Saved Her People

Esther

King Ahasuerus (uh haz yoo EHR uhs) was the king of Persia. Many years earlier, when Cyrus was king, he sent some of God's people back to Judah to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Some of God's people stayed in Persia. God's people were called Jews because they

were from Judah. **The king of Persia chose Esther to be his queen. Esther didn't tell the king that she was a Jew.**

One day, Mordecai heard that **Haman**, an important leader who worked for the king, **was planning to kill all the Jews. Mordecai was upset! He was a Jew; he didn't want all the people he loved to be killed.** Mordecai and all the Jews cried.

Esther didn't know what was wrong. She **sent a messenger to ask Mordecai why all the Jews were upset. Mordecai told Esther about Haman's evil plan.**

"You have to do something!"

Mordecai said. "Ask the king to stop Haman. Ask him to save the Jewish people."

Esther sent a message back to Mordecai. **"No one can approach the king unless the king calls for that person first," Esther said. "The punishment is death—unless the king holds out his scepter; then you may live."**



Bible Storytelling Tips

• **Hand motions:**

Keep kids engaged by giving them a hand motion to do each time they hear a key word. For example, when they hear *Esther*, they use their hands to make a crown on their head.

• **Thumbs up:**

Instruct kids to give a thumbs-up when something good happens in the Bible story and a thumbs-down when something bad happens. Afterward, ask kids to explain their ratings.

“You’re a Jew,” Mordecai said. “If you don’t stop Haman, he will kill you too. Maybe this is why you are the queen.” Maybe God put Esther in the palace to save her people!

Esther asked Mordecai and the Jews to fast for three days. Then Esther would go to the king, even if it meant she might die. **On the third day, Esther went to the king. He saw Esther and held out his golden scepter. “What is it, Queen Esther?” the king asked.** “What do you want to ask me? I’ll give you anything—up to half of my kingdom.”

Esther said, “Would you and Haman come to a feast?”

So Haman and the king went to Esther’s feast. After eating, the king said, “What do you want, Queen Esther? I’ll give you anything—up to half of my kingdom.”

“Come to my feast tomorrow,” Esther said.

The king agreed. The next day, Haman and the king went to Esther’s feast. After eating, the king said, “What do you want, Queen Esther? I’ll give you anything—up to half of my kingdom.”

Esther spoke up, “There is a plan to kill me and my people.”

The king replied, “Who is responsible for this plan?”

“This evil enemy—Haman!” Esther said.

The king was angry! He punished Haman and made a law to keep the Jewish people safe from their enemies.

Christ Connection: God was in control over Haman’s evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to ruin God’s plan and destroy believers. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all. All who believe in Jesus are rescued from sin and death.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Esther Saved Her People

BIBLE PASSAGE: Esther

STORY POINT: God made Esther a queen to protect His people.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to discuss a time when they helped someone else. How did kids feel afterward? How did the other person react? Has helping someone ever been difficult or scary?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “When I’m in Charge” activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete “When I’m in Charge” on the activity page. Kids should use the blank area to draw a portrait of themselves as a king or queen. Then they can use the lines to list the top three rules they would enforce in their kingdom.

SAY • It’s fun to pretend to be in charge! Today we are going to learn about a woman who became queen and had the chance to save the Jewish people from harm.

LOW PREP

- paper
- pen

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Message mayhem

Write *Esther saved her people* on a piece of paper. Choose a kid to be *It*. Direct the rest of the kids to stand in a circle

around *It*. Fold up the paper and give it to one player in the circle.

Explain that players should pass the message behind their backs around the circle. Kids may pass a pretend message simultaneously to increase the challenge. *It* observes and calls out the kid he thinks has the message.

SAY • We have lots of ways to send messages: emails, text messages, notes, phone calls, and letters. Today, we will hear about an important message that a queen received and how she responded. When you listen to the story, pay special attention to how many messages are sent back and forth.

OPTION 2: Cup phone

Form pairs of kids to create phone cups. First, use a thumbtack or sharp pencil to punch a hole in the bottom of a cup, just small enough for a piece of string to go through. Thread the string into the hole and tie a knot to keep the string from slipping out. Tape the end of the string in place.

- plastic cups, 1 per kid
- 6-foot lengths of string, 1 per 2 kids
- sharp pencil or thumbtack
- tape

Thread the loose end of the string through the other cup. Knot and tape that end. Then the partners can take turns holding one cup to their ear while the other kid talks into the other cup. Make sure the string is tight!

SAY • When we are far apart from someone or in a different location, we can't just talk and expect her to hear us. We have to find a way to send her a message, like the cup phones we just made. In today's story, we are going to learn about an important conversation that happened through sent messages.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Esther Saved Her People

BIBLE PASSAGE: Esther

STORY POINT: God made Esther a queen to protect His people.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Simulate a home renovation site. Create a workbench using two sawhorses and a piece of plywood. Place a toolbox and a few tools around the stage. Use old window frames and doors as the background, or create models from foam board. You may also choose to display the theme background slide.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire

[Leader enters wearing a flannel shirt, tool belt, and hard hat.]

LEADER • Welcome to *Fix it Up!* I'm your host, *[your name]*.

Here on *Fix it Up!* we take an old house and *Fix it Up!* to be shiny and new. Over the next few weeks, we'll be working on an old farmhouse—or as I call it ... *[pause]* “Alarm House.” Get it? Because it is so worn down that it is alarming! *[Laugh.]* I crack myself up!

Anyway, we are all about taking old things and making them new here on *Fix it Up!* and that always starts with blueprints.

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Blueprints are the plan for the house. You know what? That reminds me of God; He always has a plan! I want to share a Bible story with you about a dangerous situation. In this story, God had a plan to protect His people. We'll find out how.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Has your life ever felt out of control? Sometimes life feels very out of control! We can't control everything; however, there is someone who is in control of everything. ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.***

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • God's people had been exiles in Babylon. The Persians had taken over Babylon. After the exile was over, the Israelites went back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. When the Israelites stopped rebuilding, God sent the prophet Zechariah to talk to them. God told Zechariah His plan for the Israelites, and Zechariah reminded the Israelites of God's good plan for them. Zechariah reminded the Israelites to return to God.

Many years went by between Zechariah and the story we will hear today. A group of God's people stayed in Persia while the temple was being rebuilt in Judah. Persia started to become a dangerous place for the Jewish people, but God had a plan to protect His people.

- Bibles
- “Esther Saved Her People” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to the Book of Esther. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Esther Saved Her People.”

LEADER • Can you imagine being in Esther’s shoes? She showed a lot of bravery in approaching the king. She could have been killed. Do you remember who helped Esther understand what she needed to do? Mordecai told Esther what Haman had planned. When Esther wasn’t sure what to do, Mordecai encouraged her to take a step of faith. Mordecai also fasted with Esther. Mordecai helped Esther understand that **God made Esther a queen to protect His people.** Mordecai was a loyal friend and relative who helped Esther make the right decision.

When Esther became queen of Persia, she did not know what her future would hold. But God had a plan for Esther and for His people. Esther was in a hard situation, but she had faith in God. Even when she wasn’t sure what God’s plan was, she trusted Him. ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.***

Christ connection

LEADER • God was in control over Haman’s evil plan to destroy the Jews. Like Haman, Satan wants to destroy believers. He thought he had won when Jesus died on the cross, but God raised Jesus from the dead and defeated Satan once and for all. ***God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.***

Just like God had a plan for Esther to protect the

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 167 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Jewish people, God has a plan for each of us. We do not know exactly what our future will look like, but we can trust that God does.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 18, Session 1” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to consider if God is involved in everything or if some things just happen by chance. Guide them to discuss how God’s involvement in everything might change their reaction to things that happen.

· “Unit 18, Session 1”
questions from kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Ask kids to sit in chairs and stand when they hear a phrase that describes their families. Read the following statements and wait for kids to stand. After they stand, instruct them to sit again before you read the next statement: *I have an older brother or sister; I am an only child; I am the oldest child; I am the youngest child; I love my family.*

· “Meet the Hite
Family” missions
video
· world map

LEADER • Every family is different, and every family is special. God uses families to reach others for Jesus. Let’s meet the Hite family. They are missionaries in a country called Taiwan, which is near China in East Asia. [*Choose a volunteer to point to Taiwan on a world map.*] The Hites follow God’s Word and believe in His promises, like God’s promise to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.

Play the “Meet the Hite Family” missions video.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Peter 5:10.

· Key Passage Poster
· “The God of All Grace”
song

LEADER • This verse describes God as “the God of all

grace.” God shows us favor and love we do not deserve. God does not promise that we will never suffer, but He does promise to restore us and heal us.

The Jews would have died at the hands of Haman, but God protected them through Esther’s bravery. God showed them grace and kindness by keeping them safe from Haman’s evil plan. Let’s sing.

Lead boys and girls in singing “The God of All Grace.”

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Always in Control
(This I Know)” song
• Bible

Open your Bible and read aloud Acts 16:25.

LEADER • In the New Testament, Paul and Silas were believers who praised God even when they were in prison. We can praise God when we are going through hard situations. God had a plan for Esther and for the Jewish people, and God has a plan for each of us.

Sing together “Always in Control (This I Know).”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, You are good and trustworthy. We confess that we do not always understand Your plans. We do not always want to follow You. Help us remember that Your plans are for Your glory and our good. You are in control of all things. Give us power to obey You by faith. We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: Esther Saved Her People

BIBLE PASSAGE: Esther

STORY POINT: God made Esther a queen to protect His people.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards, 2 colors
- marker

Before the session, write the key passage on two sets of index cards, one word per card. Hide the index cards around the room. Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Peter 5:10.

Create two groups of kids, and assign each group a color. Each team should look for its color of cards. Once a team finds all of its cards, players should arrange the words in order. The first team to correctly order the verse cards wins.

SAY • *Who is in charge of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.* Our key passage reminds us that God restores, establishes, strengthens, and supports. He is the God of all grace.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Esther 2. Explain that the Book of Esther is in the Old Testament, which means the events in the book happened before Jesus came to earth. We do not know exactly who wrote this book, but it was someone who had access to historical documents and cared about the Jewish people and their lives—perhaps Esther's cousin Mordecai.

SAY • The story of Esther took place in Persia, where many Jews were scattered. After the Babylonian exile, some Jews returned to Jerusalem, but some—like Esther and Mordecai—remained in Persia. The Persians had conquered the Babylonians, who had conquered Assyria. [*Point out Assyria (D12) and Babylonia (E11) on the Old Testament Mediterranean Map.*]

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Esther 2:10-11. Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. How was Esther able to save her people? *Guide kids to recall that Esther, a Jew, was chosen to be the queen of Persia. The king did not know she was a Jew, and Esther rose to a position where she could ask the king to protect her people.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Cor. 1:26-28.)
2. How does Esther remind us of Jesus? *Lead kids to recognize that God raised up Esther to save His people. Mordecai urged Esther to take action, and she was willing to face death for them. In a greater way, God sent Jesus at just the right time and Jesus willingly died on the cross to save sinners. Jesus rose from the dead. One day, He will come back to rule as King forever.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Phil. 2:5-8.)
3. How can you be part of God's plan? *Prompt kids to discuss ways they are uniquely gifted to serve and help others in their neighborhood or community. Talk about how God has a purpose for our lives now—right where we are—to advance the gospel. We might not know God's exact plan, but we can help others and faithfully share with them the good news about Jesus.*
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 138:8.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

- "Community Map" printable
- world map
- yarn
- tape
- colored pencils

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Country connections

Help kids find the countries of Ukraine, China, and Taiwan on a large world map. Also locate the state of Alabama in the United States. Ask for volunteers to tape yarn from Alabama to each of the other countries.

SAY • The Hite family obeyed God, and He used them in each of these countries. They adopted Karis from Ukraine. They served God in China and then went to Taiwan. God is using their family to share God's promises with others.

Distribute the community maps printable, colored pencils, and small pieces of yarn. Ask kids to tape pieces of yarn from the house to the other locations on the map. Remind kids that they can be obedient to God wherever they go. As time allows, let them color their maps.

Option: Tell parents that this month, you will be accepting donations of new crayons, colored pencils, coloring books, and other small classroom supplies to bring to a special needs class. If possible, ask a special needs teacher about specific classroom supplies her students could use. Kids will be involved in wrapping the supplies for this mission project later in the month.

LOW PREP

OPTION 2: The plan

This game will help kids understand that, while they may not initially understand God's plan, they can trust that His plan is good because He is good. Choose a volunteer and quietly assign her a task involving the rest of the class. Consider these tasks:

- Organize kids by the color of their clothing.
- Group kids based on style or color of shoe.

- Without speaking, guide the class to make paper airplanes.
- Line up kids in alphabetical order by their first name.

Allow time for the volunteer to arrange the class. When she finishes, challenge the kids to figure out what the plan was.

SAY • God has a plan for our lives, but His plan does not always seem obvious. In our Bible story today, we see that **God made Esther a queen to protect His people.** Esther did not realize that at first. One day, we will understand God's plans and see that everything He did was for His glory and our good.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, acknowledging that God has a plan for our lives. Praise Him for sending Jesus, and pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance in how we can live for God's glory.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Different Plans" on the activity page. Instruct kids to read each sentence and identify if it is part of Haman's plan or Esther's plan.

• pencils
• Journal Page
• "Different Plans" activity page,
1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Use Week of:

Unit 18 • Session 2

The Walls Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Nehemiah 1–6

STORY POINT:

God used Nehemiah to rebuild
Jerusalem's walls.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Who is in control of everything?
God is in control of everything
in heaven and on earth.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)

PAGE 174



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 176



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)

PAGE 182



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

Nehemiah was a Jew living in Persia. He served as the king's cupbearer. When the Persian Empire conquered the Babylonians, King Cyrus allowed God's people to return to Judah. Two or three million Jews had originally been deported, but only a remnant—50,000 people—returned. They set up their homes and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem.

But when God's people faced opposition in rebuilding the rest of Jerusalem, they stopped. Some 70 years passed, and the walls and gates around the city were still ruined.

2

City walls and gates were very important in Bible times. Thick walls protected a city from its enemies and provided a sense of safety and security. Gates were the center of city life, the meeting place for commercial and social transactions. Without these structures, the surviving remnant of God's people struggled and was vulnerable to attack.

Nehemiah traveled from Persia to Jerusalem to lead the effort in rebuilding Jerusalem's walls. His leadership was effective. Nehemiah 3 describes all the people working together to rebuild the gates and walls. But it wasn't long before Nehemiah met opposition from local governors. God's people armed themselves and kept working, completing the wall in just 52 days.

Note how their enemies reacted: "All the surrounding nations were intimidated and lost their confidence, for they realized that this task had been accomplished by our God" (Neh. 6:16).

Now God's people were protected from their enemies. Help kids see that God provided the way for us to be protected from our enemies, sin and death: He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins. When we repent and trust in Jesus, He frees us from sin and death. We still sin, but we are no longer slaves to sin. (See Rom. 6:17-18.) We may die a physical death as a result of sin, but we have eternal life. (See John 11:25-26; Rom. 6:23.)

The **BIBLE** Story

The Walls Rebuilt

Nehemiah 1–6

God's people had lived in Babylon for 70 years. Then King Cyrus, the king of Persia, took over Babylon and let them go home. Some of God's people went home to Judah, but some of them stayed.

Nehemiah (NEE huh MIGH uh) stayed and worked for the king of Persia.

One day, some men came from Judah. Nehemiah asked, "How are God's people doing in Jerusalem?" The men had bad news: "The people are in trouble. The walls around Jerusalem are broken down, and the gates have been burned down."

Nehemiah cried. Then he prayed and fasted. **The king** noticed Nehemiah and asked, "What's wrong? Why are you sad?" Nehemiah was afraid; no one was supposed to be sad around the king. **Nehemiah** said, "The city where my ancestors are from is in ruins, and the gates of the city have been burned down."

The king sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem.

Nehemiah inspected the walls and led the people to start rebuilding the walls and gates. The workers put in doors, bolts, and bars. They cut stones and lifted them into place on the wall, and they filled in gaps and holes. All around the city, people worked



side by side. Soon the wall was half as tall as it had once been!

Not everyone was happy that Jerusalem's walls were being rebuilt. Some men who lived nearby were angry. God's people kept working on the walls, but their enemies made a plan to attack them and stop their work.

God's people prayed and chose men to guard the walls all day and all night, but the people were discouraged. "Our enemies are everywhere," they said.

Nehemiah reminded the people that God was with them. "Don't be afraid. God is great and powerful!"

Nehemiah said. "Be ready. If our enemies attack us, God will fight for us!" Enemies could threaten God's people, but they could not make God's people stop building. Their enemies were not in charge of rebuilding the wall; God was!

So God's people went back to work. Some stood guard with weapons, and others worked on the wall.

Some men worked with one hand and held a weapon in the other. They were always ready to fight, just in case.

Nehemiah was a wise and good leader for God's people while they worked. **In just 52 days, the wall was complete!** The gates were repaired, and the wall was restored. When **all of Jerusalem's enemies** heard that the wall had been rebuilt, they **were afraid because they knew God was with His people.**

Christ Connection: Nehemiah led the people to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem to protect them from their enemies. Jesus came to protect us from our greatest enemy, sin and death. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to rescue everyone who trusts in Him.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use props:** Display a few simple tools and ask the kids to brainstorm what they could use them to build. Then lead kids to think about what it would take to build a wall around an entire city.
- **Invite participation:** Before you begin, give each kid a sticky note with a key word from the Bible story. Invite kids to place the sticky note on a focal wall when they hear their word.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Walls Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 1–6

STORY POINT: God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to talk about the hardest thing they have ever accomplished. (Examples: finishing a tedious chore, turning in a difficult school assignment, winning a basketball game, and so on)

How did they feel when they finished? What kept them from giving up?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Blueprint” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete “Blueprint” on the activity page. Kids should use the space provided to draw a blueprint of their home. Encourage kids to use the symbols to add doors, windows, and other features.

SAY • Today we will learn about a huge construction project in the Bible. Before any project, workers need a plan; in construction, this plan is called a *blueprint*.

Your house has walls to protect you from things like weather. In Bible times, people built walls around their cities to defend themselves from their enemies.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Rapid fire response

Form two teams of kids. Call for a volunteer from each team. Name an item. Volunteers must explain how it is properly used. Name items that offer protection: helmet, bug spray, mouth guard, sunscreen, sunglasses, raincoat, oven mitt, umbrella, shin guards, gloves, soap, winter coat, and so forth.

The first volunteer to answer correctly wins that round and earns a point for his team. Play several rounds. The team with the most points at the end wins.

SAY • What do those items have in common? (*They offer protection.*) In today's Bible story, God's people were in danger because the walls around Jerusalem had been broken down. We'll find out what God did to help keep them safe.

OPTION 2: Fingertip hoop

Form groups of six to eight kids. Give each group a hula hoop. Teams will walk across the room, carrying the hoop parallel to the floor. They may only touch the hoop with one finger, and their palm must face the floor. The first team to reach the opposite wall wins. Play again as time allows.

• hula hoops, 1 per team

SAY • You worked together to move the hoops from one side of the room to the other. Your team had to communicate, listen, and help one another. Today we will learn how **God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls** and how the Israelites worked together to accomplish their goal.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Walls Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 1–6

STORY POINT: God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

[Leader enters wearing a flannel shirt, tool belt, and hard hat.]

LEADER • Welcome back to another episode of *Fix it Up!*

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

I'm [*your name*], and I'm here to take an old house and fix it up! We are continuing our work on the "Alarm House" this week. Like many old houses, it has good bones but needs a reboot. Now that we've torn down the walls, it's time to start building them back up.

Hey, did you know that there is a Bible story about rebuilding walls? The walls around Jerusalem were broken down—kind of like the walls of this house. Walls in a house are important; they keep warm air in during winter, keep rain out during thunderstorms, give us places to hang pictures, and even keep rogue squirrels from finding their way in!

The walls around Jerusalem were important too. They helped keep God's people safe. Let's take a look

at this construction project. Maybe I'll even get some tips for my own project!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Nehemiah was heartbroken when he heard that the walls around Jerusalem had been destroyed and that God's people were in danger, but the king was kind to Nehemiah and allowed him to go to Jerusalem to help rebuild the walls. This was not a coincidence; God knew that His people would need help. ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.***

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review. -Giant Timeline

LEADER • Last week, we learned about Esther and the Jewish people who remained in Persia while the temple was being rebuilt in Judah. **God made Esther queen to protect His people** in Persia. Several years went by after Esther saved the Jews from Haman's evil plan. Some of God's people, including Nehemiah, continued to work for the king of Persia.

In today's Bible story, Nehemiah learned that the walls and gates around Jerusalem had been destroyed and were no longer keeping God's people safe.

Their enemies were a real threat, but God had a plan for His people. ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything on heaven and on earth.*** Today's story is called "The Walls Rebuilt."

- Bibles
- “The Walls Rebuilt” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Nehemiah 1–6. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “The Walls Rebuilt.”

LEADER • Have you ever watched a friend go through something hard but weren’t sure how to help? That is probably similar to how Nehemiah felt when he heard that God’s people were in danger. But the king of Persia was kind to Nehemiah and sent him to Jerusalem to help the Jews rebuild the wall around the city.

That was not the end of their trouble, though. Other people did not want the walls rebuilt. God’s people had to trust that rebuilding the walls was God’s plan for them. They trusted that God would keep them safe while they obeyed Him.

When God asks us to do something, He doesn’t guarantee that it will be easy or that everyone will agree. We can listen to God through His Word and trust that His words are true. When we trust God, we will obey Him—even when other people try to get us to stop. God’s people knew that they needed to rebuild the wall, even when their enemies were surrounding them. God empowered them to continue, even in a difficult situation. **God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls.**

Christ connection

LEADER • Nehemiah led the people to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem to protect them from their enemies. Jesus came to protect us from our enemies. He died on the cross and rose from the dead to

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 181 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

rescue people from sin and death. God had a plan to protect His people in Jerusalem and He has a plan to protect us. ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.***

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 18, Session 2” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about whether or not God protects us today. Guide them to discuss times in the past they have experienced or seen evidence of God’s protection.

· “Unit 18, Session 2”
questions from kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Display the Hite family photo and point to the member of the family as you introduce them. Remind kids that the Hites are missionaries in Taiwan.

· “Hite Family Photo”
printable

LEADER • Every family is unique in its own way. One thing that makes the Hite family unique is that three of the children have special needs. God loves everyone, and everyone is an image-bearer of God. God’s plan is to use everyone for His glory.

In our Bible story, we learned that **God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls.** God will use each of us, just like the members of the Hite family, if we are obedient to Him. [*Pray for the Hites.*]

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Peter 5:10.

· Key Passage Poster
· “The God of All Grace”
song

LEADER • Do you notice the word *restore* in the middle of the key passage? *Restore* means “to repair” or “to bring something back to what it originally was.” In today’s story, God helped Nehemiah restore the walls

around Jerusalem. But did you know that God can restore us too? Because of sin, people have a broken relationship with God. But God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins. When we trust in Jesus as our Savior, He restores our relationship with God. Lead boys and girls in singing “The God of All Grace.”

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Always in Control
(This I Know)” song

Open your Bible and read aloud Isaiah 25:1.

LEADER • Even when the walls were literally crumbling around the God’s people, God had a plan to restore them and keep them safe. **God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls.** We can praise God because His plans are always good.

Sing together “Always in Control (This I Know).”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, You have a plan for us. We praise You because You are faithful and trustworthy. We confess that sometimes we trust in ourselves instead of trusting in You. Help us remember that You are good and in control. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Walls Rebuilt

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 1–6

STORY POINT: God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- cookie sheets or lightweight cutting boards, 2
- puzzle (around 30 pieces)

Before the session, put the puzzle together and write the words of 1 Peter 5:10 in order on the back of the puzzle pieces. Break apart the puzzle and mix up the pieces. Then display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Peter 5:10.

Place one of the cookie sheets on a table and challenge the kids to assemble the puzzle with the words facing up. Put the second cookie sheet on top of the completed puzzle and flip it over so the kids can see the picture.

SAY • We can't always see the finished picture or plan for what happens in our lives, but God still calls us to obey Him. Even when we can't see the outcome, God gives us direction and reminds us that His plans are always good.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Nehemiah 1. Explain that the books of the Bible fit together to show the big story of how God saves sinners through His Son, Jesus.

Individually, the books of the Bible also teach us

unique lessons and themes. A book's theme is its purpose or meaning. The Book of Nehemiah's theme is that God protects His people, and His people should be obedient and faithful to Him. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 1:3-4.

SAY • When Nehemiah heard that God's people were in danger in Jerusalem, he was sad. Nehemiah wanted to help, but he was in Persia [*point to the area of Babylon (F11) on the Old Testament Mediterranean Map*], which is far from Jerusalem. [*point to Jerusalem (G10)*].

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What was the first thing Nehemiah did after hearing about Jerusalem? *Help kids find Neh. 1:4, which says Nehemiah "mourned and fasted and prayed." Nehemiah had the greatest tool of all—prayer! We can approach every situation with prayer. God hears us when we pray.* (Option: Choose a kid to read 1 Thess. 5:16-18.)
2. What feelings might prompt you to pray? *Suggest that kids can pray through all of their feelings—joy, sorrow, confusion, and so on. Point out that in his prayer, Nehemiah thanked God and praised Him. Nehemiah prayed even though he was sad and confused. God heard Nehemiah's prayers and answered them.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 34:17.)
3. What situation do you need to pray about this week? How can you remind yourself to "pray without ceasing"? *Encourage kids to share their thoughts. Emphasize that God wants us to pray about everything! God knows all things, but He welcomes us to come to Him with all of our questions, cares, and concerns.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Col. 4:2.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

- "Hite Family Photo" printable
- dry erase board
- markers
- paper bags
- small objects (spoon, toothbrush, stuffed animal, and so on)

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Doing things differently

Show kids the Hite family photo. Ask kids if they know people who have special needs like Karis, Nathan, and Owen Hite. Be sensitive to kids in your group who have special needs or have family members with special needs.

SAY • Sometimes people with special needs have to do things a little differently. For example, Nathan and Owen can't speak with their mouths, but they can communicate with special computers. In Taiwan, the Hites help kids with special needs know that God loves them and has a special plan for them.

Put small objects in separate paper bags. Challenge kids to do something in a different way. Ask for volunteers to reach into the bag and, without looking, feel the object and describe it to their friends. Let the others guess what it is. After the activity, remind the group that we should be like Jesus in caring for and including people with special needs.

Option: Tell parents that this month you will be accepting donations of new crayons, colored pencils, coloring books, and other small classroom supplies to bring to a special needs class. Kids will be involved in wrapping the supplies for a mission project later in the month.

OPTION 2: Wall ball

Form two teams of kids. Choose two kids from each team to be goalies. Give each pair of goalies a large piece of paper to hold between them. Position the goalies on opposite sides of the room.

Give each player on the team a piece of scrap paper. At your signal, the teams should crumple up their scrap paper and throw it at the opposite team's goalies, with the

LOW PREP

- large pieces of paper, 2
- paper balls, 1 per kid

goal being to get it behind the paper “wall.” The goalies should try to block the incoming paper balls. If a paper ball makes it past the wall, kids may not retrieve it. Once a team throws all of the paper balls behind the walls, instruct the teams can count them. The team with the fewest paper balls behind its goal wins.

SAY • Like the goalies tried to protect their team’s side from the paper balls, Nehemiah and the Israelites built walls to protect Jerusalem. ***God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth***, and He kept His people safe from their enemies.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for always having a plan and asking Him to help kids trust Him and His good plan.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Help Nehemiah!” on the activity page. Kids should fill in the words in the paragraph and use those words to help Nehemiah finish building the wall around Jerusalem.

• pencils
• Journal Page
• “Help Nehemiah!” activity page,
1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week’s *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Use Week of:

Unit 18 • Session 3

God's People Repented

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Nehemiah 8–13

STORY POINT:

God's people repented and promised to be faithful.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Who is in control of everything?
God is in control of everything
in heaven and on earth.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 190



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 192



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 198



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

Ezra was a priest in Babylon at the end of the exile. More than 50 years after the first group of exiles returned to Jerusalem and completed and dedicated the temple, Ezra led a second group back to Jerusalem.

Just as God had been with Nehemiah, He was with Ezra—granting him favor with the Persian king. The king gave Ezra permission to go to Jerusalem. He provided Ezra with a letter and access to resources to ensure safe travel. (See Ezra 7:11-26.)

Ezra traveled to Jerusalem with a purpose. God's people had spent 70 years in exile, and they needed to be reminded how to live. As a scribe, Ezra was an expert on the law of Moses, and he had "determined in his heart to study the law of the LORD, obey it, and teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

Under Nehemiah's leadership, the people had rebuilt Jerusalem's walls. They gathered together at the Water Gate to hear the law of Moses. Men, women, and children—anyone who could understand—came to listen to the reading of God's Word.

From early morning until midday, Ezra read from the book of the law of Moses. He stood on a high wooden platform where everyone could see and hear him. Ezra opened the book of the law, and everyone stood up. The Levites helped the listeners understand the words of the law. The people reacted strongly to hearing and understanding the law of Moses. Verse 9 says the people wept. The law revealed their sin, and they repented.

God's Word is powerful. The law reveals our sin and how short we fall of meeting God's standard. As you teach kids, help them recognize that we cannot meet God's requirements. We need a Savior. God sent Jesus to obey the law perfectly and die for our sins. We can trust in Him for salvation.

The BIBLE Story

God's People Repented

Nehemiah 8–13

The walls around Jerusalem were finished—at last! With God's help, the people finished rebuilding the walls and the city gates in just 52 days. **All the people in Jerusalem gathered together early in the morning at one of the city gates. Men, women, and children—anyone who could understand—came to listen to the reading of God's Word.**

As the sun was just coming up, Ezra (EZ ruh) the priest brought out the book of the law of Moses that God had given to His people. God's words were written on a scroll. Ezra stood on a high wooden platform and began to read.

Ezra read the law for hours, and all the people listened carefully. The people stood up; they had respect for God's Word. Ezra praised God, and the people lifted up their hands.

"Amen! Amen!" they said. The people in the crowd bowed down with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped God.

Some of the leaders there—the Levites (LEE vights)—explained the law to the people and helped them understand the words Ezra read. As the people heard the words of the law, they began to cry.



The law was God's rules for living, and **the people** had disobeyed God. They **realized they had sinned**.

Ezra, the Levites, and Nehemiah (NEE huh MIGH uh) the governor said, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not be sad or cry." Even though the people's sin made them sad, this was a happy day.

Then Ezra said to them, "Go home and prepare a feast! Eat rich food and drink sweet drinks. Share what you have prepared with those who have nothing prepared." And again Ezra said, "Today is holy to the Lord our God. This is not a day to be sad because the joy of the Lord is your strength."

The people obeyed Ezra. They prepared a feast. They were glad because they understood the words of the law that were explained to them.

Nehemiah led God's people to repent and confess their sin. They agreed to worship only God and promised to obey Him.

Christ Connection: God's Word is powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people loved God more and changed their ways. The Bible says that Jesus is "the Word." Jesus is God who came to live with people on earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts.

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use another language:** Invite someone from your church to tell the Bible story in a different language. Ask the kids if they understood. Point out that the Levites explained God's Word to the people who were listening.
- **Copy body movements:** Follow the cues of the people in the story. When you say the people stood up, lead kids to stand. When the story says they lifted their hands, lift your hands.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: God's People Repented

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 8–13

STORY POINT: God's people repented and promised to be faithful.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to discuss what brings out different emotions in them. What makes them happy? What makes them sad? How do their faces and their actions show those emotions?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Celebrate!” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete “Celebrate!” on the activity page. Kids should draw a line from each picture to the event that it celebrates.

SAY • Today we are going to learn about a special celebration that took place among God's people. We can celebrate special days and accomplishments in many different ways, and this activity reminds us of a few of them.

LOW PREP

- long piece of paper
- markers or colored pencils
- tape

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Celebration mural

Hang a long piece of paper on a wall and invite kids to draw pictures of their family's traditions for celebrating

different holidays or accomplishments. (Christmas, Easter, the Fourth of July, birthdays, first/last day of school, good report card, and so forth) Invite volunteers to share their drawings with the class.

SAY • Every family has different traditions for celebrating special days. In today's Bible story, the people of Jerusalem celebrated when the walls and city gates were finished. They celebrated by listening to the Scriptures and having a big feast. They were not only excited that the walls were finished, they were excited that they understood God's words! Let's get ready to hear more.

OPTION 2: Party time

Today's Bible story is about celebrating a special day. Help kids set the stage by decorating the classroom for a celebration. Decorations can be as elaborate or as simple as you want. You might have kids work together to make a *Celebration!* banner on a long piece of paper. Consider purchasing decorations from a party supply store, or provide materials for the kids to make decorations themselves.

- long piece of paper
- party hats, streamers, and decorations
- markers

SAY • We are going to learn about a time when God's people celebrated in a big way! The walls and gates around Jerusalem had just been finished. The people all gathered together and listened to Ezra, the priest, read God's words.

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: God's People Repented

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 8–13

STORY POINT: God's people repented and promised to be faithful.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

[Leader enters wearing a flannel shirt, tool belt, and hard hat.]

LEADER • We're back with another episode of *Fix it Up!*

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

My name is [*your name*], and I'm the host of this wonderful show. I recently introduced you to the "Alarm House." Initially, this house was so worn down, it was alarming! But over the last couple of weeks, we have taken it from old and falling apart to beautiful and almost like new!

This project has taken a lot of hard work and dedication from the entire team. One of our traditions here on *Fix it Up!* is to throw a big team party once we finish the final stage of a renovation. It's a way for us to remember what the house used to look like and celebrate what the house is now. It sort of reminds me of the Israelites' party when the walls around Jerusalem were finished. Let's listen to today's Bible story to find out more.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Do you remember the big picture question and answer from the last few weeks? Say it with me: ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.***

God knows when things will begin and when they will be finished. He cares about every part of our lives and works out all things for His glory and our good.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • Last week, we learned that the walls and gates around Jerusalem were destroyed. These walls were important because they kept God's people safe from their enemies. God's people often faced others who did not agree with them. Nehemiah was far away, still working for the king of Persia, but when he heard that God's people were in danger, he was sad. The king allowed Nehemiah to go back to Jerusalem. **God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.**

In today's story, we will fast forward 52 days to the time when the walls and gates were finally repaired. The people of Jerusalem gathered together to listen to God's Word and to celebrate.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Nehemiah 8–13. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "God's People Repented."

• Bibles
• "God's People Repented" video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster
• Story Point Poster

LEADER • Did you all notice how much respect the people showed for God's words? Men, women, and children came to hear Ezra read God's Word. What are some ways the people showed how much they loved God's words? (*They stood for hours, listened carefully, lifted their hands, and bowed their faces to the ground.*) The people did not even understand the words at first, but the people knew God's words were important. Some of the leaders explained God's words.

The words they heard were not all happy words. As the people heard the law, they realized that they had not followed God's rules; they had sinned. The people felt sad. Some of them even cried. They didn't make excuses for their sin or ignore God.

Ezra helped the people understand that God still loved them and that they could repent and follow God. So **God's people repented and promised to be faithful.**

When we repent, we turn away from sin and self, and we turn toward God and the things that honor Him.

Christ connection

LEADER • God's Word is powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people changed their ways and loved God more. The Bible says that Jesus is "the Word." Jesus is God who came to live with people on earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts.

Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth. He has power over everything!

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 197 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 18, Session 3” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about what they should do when they’ve done something wrong. Guide them to discuss why it’s often hard to confess that we’ve done something wrong.

• “Unit 18, Session 3”
questions from kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

SAY • In the Book of Nehemiah, we see that **God’s people repented and promised to be faithful.** God uses people’s faithfulness in big ways.

Taiwan Sunshine is the name of a school where kids with special needs learn and grow. Sometimes in Taiwan, special needs are only seen as a struggle, but the Hite family and workers at Taiwan Sunshine teach the kids that they are all a beautiful part of God’s story.

• “Taiwan Sunshine”
missions video

Show the “Taiwan Sunshine” missions video. Pray for the Hite family and the kids at Taiwan Sunshine.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Peter 5:10.

• Key Passage Poster
• “The God of All Grace”
song

LEADER • Our key passage says that God will support us.

Even when we make poor choices, God gives us the opportunity to repent and turn away from those wrong choices and turn toward Him.

In today’s story, we saw that the people of Jerusalem turned away from their sin. God supported them, restored them, forgave them, and showed them grace.

Lead boys and girls in singing “The God of All Grace.”

- “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” song
- Bible

Sing (4 minutes)

Open your Bible and read aloud Psalm 75:1.

LEADER • At the end of our Bible story, God’s people praised Him. They agreed to worship God alone. We praise God not only for what He has done, but for who He is. We can praise Him for His character, His love, and His faithfulness toward us.

Sing together “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, we praise You because of who You are. You are loving, powerful, and forgiving. We confess that we often turn away from You. Thank You for always forgiving us and welcoming us back when we repent. Help us follow You our whole lives, and help us lead others to find their joy and rest in Jesus too. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: God's People Repented

BIBLE PASSAGE: Nehemiah 8–13

STORY POINT: God's people repented and promised to be faithful.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- bottled juice or water,
1 per kid
- adhesive labels
- markers

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Peter 5:10. Give each kid a label to write the key passage on. Kids may decorate it however they desire. Say the key passage a few times together. Instruct the kids to stick the label on a bottle of water or juice.

SAY • In the Bible story today, God's people were sad when they realized they had turned away from God. They began to cry and mourn, but Ezra told them to make this a holy, special day and to celebrate with good food and sweet drinks. This week, remember God's promise to restore and support us.

Give this drink to a friend or family member, and use the opportunity to tell him or her what you've been learning about God and the Bible.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Nehemiah 8. Explain that the Book of Nehemiah is part of the Bible's Old Testament History division, which tells the story of God's people. The events from this book took place about 400 years before Jesus was born.

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Nehemiah 8:2-3.

SAY • God's people gathered to hear Ezra read the law.

When they heard God's words, they understood that they had turned away from God. They needed to repent and turn back to God. **God's people repented and promised to be faithful.**

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. How did the Israelites' view of God's Word help them make the right choice? *The Israelites trusted God's Word, stood when it was read, listened attentively, and praised God. They respected God's Word and trusted that it was true, even when it showed they needed to repent and make changes in their lives.*

(Option: Choose a kid to read 2 Tim. 3:16-17.)

2. How does God's Word change us today? *Lead kids to recognize that the Bible is inspired by God and can be used to teach, rebuke, correct, and train people to follow God. The Bible is trustworthy and can speak to every area of our lives. We can respect, follow, and trust the Bible because it comes from God.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Neh. 8:5-6.)

3. What are some ways people should respond to God's Word today? *Invite kids to discuss. Point out how people responded to God's Word in today's story. They responded physically by kneeling, but they also responded spiritually by repenting and turning away from bad choices and turning toward God.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 15:4.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Pray for Sunshine

Form two groups of kids. Give one group a sign

**LOW
PREP**

• paper
• markers

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

Option: Tell parents you will collect new classroom supplies for a special needs classroom. Next week, kids will wrap the supplies for a mission project.

- 10 to 12 hula hoops
- masking tape or painter's tape

that says *Hite Family*. Give the other group a sign that says *Taiwan Sunshine*. Explain that you will take time to pray for the Hite family and for their ministry at Taiwan Sunshine.

SAY • Praying for missionaries is an important way we can support their ministry. The Hites live in Taiwan and have a unique ministry to children and families with special needs. They understand these challenges, and God is using them to share His love. Let's discuss ways we can pray for the Hites and for their ministry at Taiwan Sunshine.

Ask kids in each group to list ways to pray for the Hite family or their ministry. Encourage them to discuss things they remember from the videos and missions times.

Allow each group to share the requests they've written down, and then take time to pray. Ask for volunteers from each group to pray aloud.

OPTION 2: Extreme rock-paper-scissors

Prepare the playing area by arranging 10 to 12 hula hoops in a path on the floor. (Option: Use tape to mark 10 to 12 spots on the floor.)

Form two teams. Instruct teams to line up single file at opposite ends of the path. The first player in each line will hop on one foot along the path until the two players meet in the middle. The two kids will play rock-paper-scissors. The player who loses will hop off the path and return to the end of his line. At the same time, the next player from his team begins hopping forward along the path. The winning player continues hopping toward the opposing team.

Again, when players meet, the kids play rock-paper-scissors. A team wins a round by reaching the other team first. Then reset players and continue as time allows.

SAY • When you lost rock-paper-scissors, you had to turn around and go back to your team. When we repent, we turn away from sin and self, and we turn toward God and living in a way that honors Him.

God's Word is powerful. When Ezra read God's Word, the people loved God more and changed their ways. **God's people repented and promised to be faithful.** The Bible says that Jesus is "the Word." Jesus is God who came to live with people on earth. Jesus has the power to change our hearts.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for giving us the Bible to help us follow Him. Ask Him to open our eyes to where we need to repent and turn away from sin and self.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Join the Party" on the activity page. Kids should use the information they learned today to create an invitation for the reading of God's Word at the city gate.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Join the Party" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Use Week of:

Unit 18 • Session 4

Malachi the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Malachi

STORY POINT:

Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah.

KEY PASSAGE:

1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Who is in control of everything?
God is in control of everything in
heaven and on earth.

INTRODUCE THE STORY
(10–15 MINUTES)
PAGE 206



TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 208



APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
PAGE 214



Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/gospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

After many years living as prisoners in Babylon, God's people had returned to Judah. They had worked hard and overcome opposition to rebuild the temple and the walls around Jerusalem. Surely God would restore them ... finally! But nothing happened. As they waited, they faced drought and economic uncertainty. God's people probably didn't feel like God had blessed them at all.

"It is useless to serve God," they said. "What have we gained by keeping his requirements?" (Mal. 3:14). Did God still care? It wasn't long until God's people fell back into the same patterns of sin that led to their exile in the first place: idolatry, covetousness, hypocrisy, arrogance, and abuse of the poor.

But God *did* still love His people. He had been working out His divine plan of redemption, and He never gave up on them. God sent a message to His people through the prophet Malachi.

Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets. He spoke to God's people approximately 100 years after the end of the Babylonian captivity. Malachi's message from God was a wake-up call.

God communicated through Malachi that the people's lack of blessing didn't mean that God didn't care. God exposed His people's sin and made clear that their actions merited a curse. God's people needed to repent and turn back to God. "But for you who fear my name," God said, "the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings" (Mal. 4:2).

Explain to kids that 400 years of silence followed Malachi's prophecy; God did not communicate to His people. This period brings us to the New Testament, when the silence would be broken by the last prophet before Jesus, John the Baptist. His words about Jesus in John 1:29 offered hope to all who heard: "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

The BIBLE Story

Malachi the Prophet

Malachi

The Jewish people had returned to the promised land, and they were ready for God to bless them. The people waited, but nothing happened. **Sometimes their lives were hard, and they wondered if God really loved them.** The people became lazy in how they worshiped God.

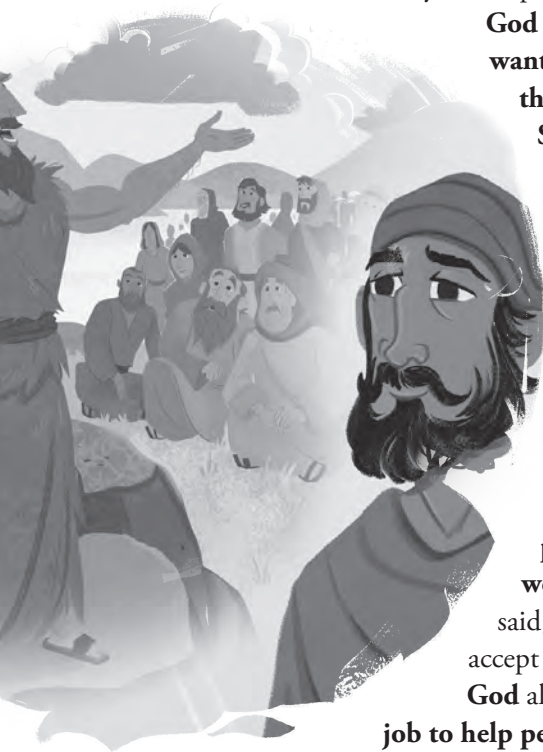
God loved His people, and He wanted them to be holy. He wanted them to obey Him completely.

So God sent a message to His people through the prophet Malachi (MAL uh kigh). God's message told the people about their sins and called them to turn back to Him.

The priests had disobeyed God. They were supposed to lead the people in worship, but instead of offering God the best animal sacrifices, the priests offered animals that were stolen, lame, or sick. God said, "I'm not pleased. I will not accept your offerings."

God also said to the priests, "It is your job to help people follow Me; they look to you for instruction. But you have turned them away from Me. You taught them wrong things."

God warned the people that a day of judgment is coming when God will punish sin and reward righteousness. God said, "I am



going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me.” **The messenger would have a very important job: to get the people ready for God’s promised Messiah.**

Next, God talked about some of the wrong things the people were doing. “You are robbing Me!” God said. The people were not offering to God a share of their wealth.

But everything they had was a gift from God. “Bring a tenth of your wealth to Me,” God said. “And test Me! See if I will not give you even more blessings—more than you can count!”

Some of the people were saying things about God that weren’t true. “It is useless to serve God,” the people said. “People who live however they want to are better off than we are.”

But other people did honor God, and God noticed them. “They will be Mine,” God said. “I will have compassion on them.”

He said, “A day is coming when everyone who is wicked will be destroyed. But those who honor Me will go out and playfully jump like calves.”

Malachi told the people to be patient. God had not forgotten about them. Life was not easy, but if they served God and followed Him, they would be happy on the day when God would keep His promise to rescue His people.

Christ Connection: Malachi was a messenger—a prophet—who told God’s people to repent. Malachi also told about another messenger God would send. This messenger, John the Baptist, would call people to repent and get them ready for a final Messenger, Jesus Christ. Jesus would bring good news of salvation.

Bible Storytelling Tips

• Ask questions:

Write review questions on index cards and pass them out to the kids. After the story, invite each kid to read the question and share the answer.

• Vary your tone:

When speaking dialogue in the story from God, alter your voice so the kids can differentiate between God’s words and the rest of the story.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Malachi the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE: Malachi

STORY POINT: Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to discuss what it takes to get ready for guests to stay at their house. How does their family prepare to make them feel welcome? Why is being prepared important?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "A Messenger" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "A Messenger" on the activity page. Kids should complete the maze from Malachi to John the Baptist and then to Jesus.

SAY • The maze you completed involved a few different people. You started at Malachi, and then passed by John the Baptist; finally, you finished the maze at Jesus. Today we are going to learn how Malachi prepared the way for John the Baptist, and John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus.

- large pieces of paper
- markers or colored pencils

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Map it out

Instruct kids to create a map of their neighborhood.

Encourage them to mark special places, like their favorite playground, their friends' houses, or their school. Guide them draw paths from their home to the other destinations.

Invite volunteers to share their maps with the class.

SAY • A map helps us get from one point to the next. It shows us which way to go and helps us recognize our final destination.

Today we are going to learn about a messenger whom God sent to help His people stay focused on where He wanted them to go and what He had planned for them. This messenger helped them get ready for Jesus.

OPTION 2: Help or hinder

Blindfold a volunteer. Spin him around three times and then challenge him to walk across the room, but do not give him any more instructions. (Walk alongside for safety.)

After he stumbles around, bring him back to the starting point. Again, instruct him to walk to the other side of the room, this time giving detailed instructions of which direction to move in. Allow other volunteers to take a turn.

SAY • Which way was easier to do what I asked—when I let you wander around the room with no directions or when I gave you careful, detailed directions?

Today we are going to learn about some priests in the Bible who disobeyed God and did not lead His people well. God sent a messenger to set them straight.

**LOW
PREP**

• blindfold

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Malachi the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE: Malachi

STORY POINT: Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

[Leader enters wearing a flannel shirt, tool belt, and hard hat.]

LEADER • Welcome back, everyone! I'm [*your name*], and this is *Fix it Up!* The last episode of a project is often bittersweet, but I'm excited to look back on where we were and see how far we've come. You'll remember, we called this house the "Alarm House" because it was absolutely alarming that it was even still standing! Today, we are going to show the final outcome of all of the hard work our team has put into taking a worn down house and turning it into a beautiful home for a family to enjoy.

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

This project took a long time and required a lot of hard work. It would have been easy to give up or cut corners. But it is important to follow the plans exactly and do things the right way. Even a restored house can fall back into disrepair if homeowners don't work to maintain it.

Today you'll learn about a time when the Jewish people grew lazy in their worship. They had been waiting on God a long time and began to doubt that He really loved them. We will see that just like we had a plan for the restoration of this house, God had a plan to turn His people back to Him.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • First, it's time for our big picture question!

Do you all remember the question we have been answering the past few weeks? ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.*** Even when it seems like God is silent, He has a plan and is in complete control.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review. -Giant Timeline

LEADER • A few weeks back, we learned that the walls and gates around Jerusalem had been destroyed and that God's people were in danger from their enemies. Nehemiah went to Jerusalem, and **God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.** Fifty-two days later, the walls were completed and the people celebrated! Ezra read God's Word, and the people recognized their sin. **God's people repented and promised to be faithful.**

God told the Jewish people that He would bless them, but time passed and the people began to doubt. God sent Malachi to remind His people that God keeps His promises. Malachi said that God is faithful. Listen closely to Malachi's story.

- Bibles
- “Malachi the Prophet” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to the Book of Malachi. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Malachi the Prophet.”

LEADER • In today’s story, the Jewish people wanted God to bless them when *they* thought He should bless them, but God knows what is best and knows exactly when to bring about blessings in our lives.

The Jewish people grew impatient and made wrong choices. Do you remember some of the wrong choices they made? (*They grew lazy in their worship, doubted God’s love, and offered sick animals as sacrifices.*) When we do not trust God, we are tempted to make sinful choices.

But God still showed compassion. He loved His people and wanted them to follow Him. God sent them a messenger named Malachi, and Malachi reminded them of God’s character.

What are some things that Malachi told them? (*Be patient, God has not forgotten you, God will come to rescue His people.*) **Malachi called God’s people to repent to prepare for the Messiah.**

Ultimately, Malachi reminded the Jewish people that they can trust God, even when they do not hear His voice or see Him moving. We can trust God, even when He seems silent.

Christ connection

LEADER • Malachi was a messenger—a prophet—who told God’s people to repent. Malachi also told about another messenger God would send. This messenger, John the Baptist, would call people to repent and get

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided on page 213 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

them ready for a final Messenger, Jesus Christ. Jesus would bring good news of salvation. Malachi, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ all remind us that God keeps His promises and that He is trustworthy.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 18, Session 4” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about what they can do if a friend or family member doesn’t believe in God. Guide them to discuss ways they can show God’s love to their friends and family members.

• “Unit 18, Session 4”
questions from kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

LEADER • Malachi called God’s people to repent and prepare for the Messiah. God told the Hite family to go to Taiwan and tell people about Jesus—who is the Messiah! Living in another country isn’t always easy. The Hites have to make new friends, get to know new teachers and neighbors, and try different foods! Let’s listen as Logan Hite describes living in Taiwan.

Play the “Hey from Logan Hite” missions video. Lead kids to pray for the requests Logan mentioned.

• “Hey from Logan
Hite” missions video

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Peter 5:10.

LEADER • Our key passage reminds us that God has promised to restore, establish, strengthen, and support us. God keeps His promises. God has a purpose and a plan for our lives. This verse also tells us that our life will have suffering and hard times.

• Key Passage Poster
• “The God of All Grace”
song

In today's story, the Jewish people questioned whether God loved them because they did not hear His voice. We can still trust that God keeps His promises, even when life is hard or it seems like God is silent.

Remind kids that God speaks to us through His Word. Then lead boys and girls in singing "The God of All Grace."

Sing (4 minutes)

• "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" song

Open your Bible and read aloud James 1:2-3.

LEADER • Even when we face trials and difficult times like God's people in the Book of Malachi, we can still find joy in Jesus. We can praise God during good times and bad times because no matter what we are going through, God's character does not change. He is always faithful.

Sing together "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, You are faithful. When we are going through trials, we can trust You. Your character does not change. We confess that like the people in the story today, we can grow lazy in our worship of You. Thank You for never leaving us. Even though we cannot see You, You are there. Help us trust You and follow You closely. We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



SESSION TITLE: Malachi the Prophet

BIBLE PASSAGE: Malachi

STORY POINT: Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah.

KEY PASSAGE: 1 Peter 5:10

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- ball of yarn

Direct kids to stand in a circle. Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud 1 Peter 5:10.

Give one kid a ball of yarn. She should say the first word of the verse, hold the end of the yarn, and then toss the yarn ball to another kid. The next kid will catch it, say the next word, pinch the yarn between his fingers, and then toss the ball to someone else. Continue forming a web until kids say the entire key passage.

SAY • Each time you said part of the verse, you passed the yarn onto another kid. Now look at the web! When we share Scripture with one another, it might not feel like a big deal, but it can have a big impact. God has called us to be in relationship with Him, and He will continue to restore and fix His people.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to the Book of Malachi. Explain that Malachi the prophet wrote the Book of Malachi. The name *Malachi* means “my messenger.” God sent Malachi to remind His people that God still loved them and expected them to obey Him.

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Malachi 3:17-18.

SAY • God's people made wrong choices and became lazy in their worship, but God still loved them and cared for them. God showed compassion, treating them with kindness even though they did not deserve it.

Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah. God also shows us kindness, even though we do not deserve it.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Why do you think the people offered God their sick animals instead of their healthy animals? *Point out that we sometimes try to make shortcuts to obey God because we don't trust Him like we should or we act selfishly. But God wants us to obey Him completely, offering Him our very best. The people were supposed to make a sacrifice to worship God, but they gave Him their leftovers instead of their best.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read 1 Sam. 15:22.)

2. What does it mean to sacrifice something? *Help kids recall that to sacrifice means offering God our very best of everything. The people in the story were supposed to be making a sacrifice to worship God. Sacrifice expresses love, thanksgiving, or the need for forgiveness; and sacrifice often comes at great cost to ourselves.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Ps. 51:16-17.)

3. What is something you can give to God this week? *Encourage the kids to think beyond belongings, such as toys, and to think about sacrificing time or effort. For example, they may give God 10 minutes a day to read the Bible and pray.*

(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Rom. 12:1-2.)

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- new school supplies
- white paper bags
- crayons
- stickers
- tissue paper

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment from Teach the Story.

- air mattress
- air pump
- bedsheets
- blanket
- pillow
- watch or timer (optional)

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Missions collection

Invite kids to wrap new school supplies in tissue paper and decorate gift bags. Plan to bring the supplies to a special needs class in your church or at a nearby school.

SAY • We've been learning about the Hite family, who are missionaries in Taiwan. They have three children with special needs, and they work with other kids who have special needs. We can serve kids around us and show them the love of Jesus by bringing them supplies they need and by being their friends.

Option: If possible, plan to deliver the supplies with your kids and their families. Encourage interaction between your group and the children with special needs. Also consider holding a future party or event for them at your church or a nearby location.

OPTION 2: Make the bed relay

Set up an air mattress but leave the sheets, blankets, and pillows folded to the side. Form teams of three or four kids. Give each team a chance to make the bed as fast as possible while you time them. The team with the fastest time wins.

SAY • When an overnight guest comes over, we prepare a bed for him. What other things do we do to prepare for guests? Today's Bible story reminds us to always be prepared for whatever God asks of us.

The Jewish people became lazy and in how they worshiped. God sent Malachi to prepare the way.

Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah. Malachi was a messenger—a prophet—who told God's people to repent. Malachi also told about another messenger God would send.

This messenger, John the Baptist, would call people to repent and get them ready for a final Messenger, Jesus Christ. Jesus would bring good news of salvation.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God's glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, thanking God for having compassion on us. Ask Him to help kids obey Him completely in everything He asks.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "The Next Letter" on the activity page. Kids should decode the message.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "The Next Letter" activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.

Volume 1: In the Beginning

Unit 1: God Created Everything

Session 1: God Created the World (*Genesis 1*)

Session 2: God Created People (*Genesis 1–2*)

Session 3: Sin Entered the World (*Genesis 3*)

Session 4: Noah and the Ark (*Genesis 6–9*)

Session 5: The Tower of Babel (*Genesis 11*)

Session 6: The Suffering of Job (*Job*)

Unit 2: God Formed a Nation

Session 1: God's Covenant with Abraham (*Genesis 12; 15; 17*)

Session 2: Abraham and Isaac (*Genesis 22*)

Session 3: Isaac and Rebekah (*Genesis 24*)

Session 4: God's Promise to Isaac (*Genesis 25–26*)

Unit 3: The Nation Grew

Session 1: Jacob and Esau (*Genesis 27–28*)

Session 2: Jacob and Rachel (*Genesis 29–31*)

Session 3: Jacob's New Name (*Genesis 32–33*)

Volume 2: Out of Egypt

Unit 4: God's People in Egypt

Session 1: Joseph Sent to Egypt (*Genesis 37*)

Session 2: Joseph Explained Dreams (*Genesis 39–41*)

Session 3: Joseph Saved His Family (*Genesis 42–46; 50*)

Christmas: Jesus Was Born (*Isaiah 9; Luke 2*)

Session 4: Moses Was Born and Called (*Exodus 1–4*)

Session 5: The Plagues and the Passover (*Exodus 5–12*)

Session 6: The Red Sea Crossing (*Exodus 13–15*)

Unit 5: Toward the Promised Land

Session 1: Bread from Heaven (*Exodus 15–17*)

Session 2: Jethro Helped Moses (*Exodus 18*)

Session 3: The Ten Commandments (*Exodus 19–20*)

Unit 6: Worship in the Wilderness

Session 1: The Golden Calf (*Exodus 32; 34*)

Session 2: The Tabernacle Was Built (*Exodus 35–40*)

Session 3: Rules for Sacrifice (*Leviticus*)

Volume 3: Into the Promised Land

Unit 7: Wandering in the Wilderness

Session 1: Joshua and Caleb (*Numbers 13–14*)

Session 2: The Bronze Snake (*Numbers 20–21*)

Session 3: Balaam and Balak (*Numbers 22–24*)

Session 4: Moses' Farewell (*Deuteronomy 31–34*)

Unit 8: Conquering the Land

Session 1: Crossing the Jordan (*Joshua 1–4*)

Session 2: The Battle of Jericho (*Joshua 2; 6*)

Session 3: Taking the Land (*Joshua 10–11; 24*)

Easter: Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection (*Matthew 26–28*)

Unit 9: The Cycle of Judges

Session 1: Israel's Unfaithfulness (*Judges 1–3*)

Session 2: Deborah and Barak (*Judges 4–5*)

Session 3: Gideon (*Judges 6–8*)

Session 4: Samson (*Judges 13–16*)

Session 5: Ruth and Boaz (*Ruth*)

Volume 4: A Kingdom Provided

Unit 10: Samuel and King Saul

Session 1: Hannah and Samuel (*1 Samuel 1–3*)

Session 2: The Ark Was Captured (*1 Samuel 4–6*)

Session 3: Israel's First King (*1 Samuel 8–15*)

Unit 11: Great King David

Session 1: David Was Anointed (*1 Samuel 16–17*)

Session 2: David Showed Mercy (*1 Samuel 24*)

Session 3: God's Covenant with David (*2 Samuel 6–7*)

Session 4: David's Kindness (*2 Samuel 9*)

Session 5: David Sinned and Was Restored (*2 Samuel 11–12; Psalm 51*)

Session 6: David's Psalm (*Psalms 23*)

Unit 12: Wise King Solomon

Session 1: Solomon Asked for Wisdom (*1 Kings 2–3*)

Session 2: Wisdom for God's People (*Proverbs; Ecclesiastes; Song of Songs*)

Session 3: Solomon Built the Temple (*1 Kings 6–8*)

Session 4: The Kingdom Divided (*1 Kings 11–12*)

Volume 5: A Nation Divided

Unit 13: Elijah and Elisha

Session 1: Elijah and the Widow (*1 Kings 17*)

Session 2: Elijah at Mount Carmel (*1 Kings 18–19*)

Session 3: Elijah and Elisha (*2 Kings 2*)

Session 4: Elisha and the Army (*2 Kings 6*)

Unit 14: The Northern Kingdom of Israel

Session 1: Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh (*Jonah*)

Session 2: Hosea, Prophet to Israel (*Hosea*)

Session 3: Israel Taken Captive (*2 Kings 17*)

Unit 15: The Southern Kingdom of Judah

Session 1: Isaiah, Prophet to Judah (*Isaiah 6; 53*)

Session 2: Hezekiah and Josiah (*2 Chronicles 29; 34–35*)

Session 3: Jeremiah, Prophet to Judah (*Jeremiah*)

Session 4: Habakkuk the Prophet (*Habakkuk*)

Session 5: Judah Taken Captive (*2 Chronicles 36*)

Session 6: Ezekiel Gave Hope (*Ezekiel 37*)

Volume 6: A People Restored

Unit 16: Hope in Exile

Session 1: The Fiery Furnace (*Daniel 3*)

Session 2: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (*Daniel 4*)

Session 3: Daniel in the Lions' Den (*Daniel 6*)

Christmas: Jesus Was Born (*Matthew 1; Luke 2*)

Session 4: Daniel's Dream (*Daniel 7*)

Unit 17: Return to the Land

Session 1: Obadiah the Prophet (*Obadiah*)

Session 2: The Captives Came Home (*Ezra 1–3*)

Session 3: The Temple Was Rebuilt (*Ezra 4–6*; *Haggai*)

Session 4: Zechariah the Prophet (*Zechariah*)

Unit 18: The People Restored

Session 1: Esther Saved Her People (*Esther*)

Session 2: The Walls Rebuilt (*Nehemiah 1–6*)

Session 3: God's People Repented (*Nehemiah 8–13*)

Session 4: Malachi the Prophet (*Malachi*)

Volume 7: Jesus the Messiah

Unit 19: Into the World

Session 1: From Adam to Jesus (*Matthew 1*; *Luke 3*; *John 1*)

Session 2: John Was Born (*Luke 1*)

Session 3: Jesus Was Born (*Luke 2*)

Session 4: Jesus Was Dedicated (*Luke 2*)

Session 5: Jesus as a Child (*Matthew 2*; *Luke 2*)

Unit 20: Prepare the Way

Session 1: Jesus' Baptism (*Matthew 3*; *Mark 1*; *Luke 3*; *John 1*)

Easter: Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection (*Matthew 26–28*; *1 Corinthians 15*)

Session 2: Jesus' Temptation (*Matthew 4*; *Mark 1*; *Luke 4*)

Session 3: John Pointed to Jesus (*Matthew 3*; *John 1*; *3*)

Session 4: Jesus Called Disciples (*Matthew 4*; *9*; *Mark 1–3*; *Luke 5–6*)

Unit 21: Among the People

Session 1: Jesus' Early Miracles (*Mark 1*)

Session 2: Jesus Taught in Nazareth (*Luke 4*)

Session 3: Jesus and Nicodemus (*John 3*)

Session 4: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (*John 4*)

Volume 8: Jesus the Servant

Unit 22: Jesus the Healer

Session 1: Jesus Healed Ten Men (*Luke 17*)

Session 2: Jesus Healed a Woman and a Girl (*Mark 5*)

Session 3: Jesus Healed a Man Who Was Lame (*John 5*)

Session 4: Jesus Healed a Man Who Was Blind (*John 9*)

Unit 23: Jesus the Teacher

Session 1: The Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5–7*)

Session 2: The Cost of Following Jesus (*Matthew 8; 16; Luke 9; 14*)

Session 3: Jesus Taught About Prayer (*Luke 11; 18*)

Session 4: Jesus Taught About Possessions (*Luke 12*)

Session 5: The Good Shepherd (*John 10*)

Unit 24: Jesus the Miracle-Worker

Session 1: Jesus Calmed a Storm (*Matthew 8; Mark 4–5; Luke 8*)

Session 2: Jesus Fed a Crowd (*Matthew 14; Mark 6; Luke 9; John 6*)

Session 3: Jesus Walked on Water (*Matthew 14; Mark 6; John 6*)

Session 4: Jesus Showed His Glory (*Matthew 17; Mark 9; Luke 9*)

Volume 9: Jesus the Savior

Unit 25: The Kingdom to Come

Session 1: Kingdom Parables (*Matthew 13*)

Session 2: Three Parables (*Luke 15*)

Session 3: Jesus' Hard Teachings (*John 6*)

Session 4: Jesus Raised Lazarus (*John 11*)

Unit 26: To the Cross

Session 1: Jesus' Triumphal Entry (*Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19; John 12*)

Session 2: Jesus Was Questioned (*Matthew 22; Mark 12; Luke 20*)

Session 3: The Last Supper (*Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 13*)

Session 4: Jesus Was Arrested (*Matthew 26–27*)

Session 5: Jesus' Crucifixion (*Matthew 26–27; John 18–19*)

Unit 27: Out of the Grave

Session 1: Jesus' Resurrection (*Matthew 28; John 20*)

Session 2: The Emmaus Disciples (*Luke 24*)

Session 3: Jesus Appeared to the Disciples (*Luke 24; John 20*)

Session 4: Jesus Returned to Heaven (*Matthew 28; Acts 1*)

Volume 10: The Mission Begins

Unit 28: The Holy Spirit Empowers

Session 1: The Holy Spirit Came (*Acts 2*)

Session 2: Peter Healed a Man (*Acts 3–4*)

Christmas: Jesus Was Born (*John 1*)

Session 3: Faithful in Hard Times (*1 Peter 1–2*)

Session 4: Living Like Jesus (*2 Peter 1*)

Unit 29: The Early Church

Session 1: Ananias and Sapphira (*Acts 4–5*)

Session 2: Stephen's Sermon (*Acts 6–7*)

Session 3: The Good News (*Romans 5–6*)

Session 4: Doers of the Word (*James 1–2*)

Unit 30: The Church Grew

Session 1: Philip and the Ethiopian (*Acts 8*)

Session 2: Paul Met Jesus (*Acts 8–9*)

Session 3: New Life in Jesus (*Colossians 2–3*)

Session 4: Guarding the Truth (*2 Corinthians 11*)

Volume 11: The Church United

Unit 31: From Jews to Gentiles

Session 1: Peter and Cornelius (*Acts 10*)

Session 2: Barnabas in Antioch (*Acts 11*)

Session 3: Jesus Is Better (*Hebrews 1–8*)

Session 4: The Hall of Faith (*Hebrews 11*)

Easter: Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection (*Matthew 26–28; John 20*)

Unit 32: Making Disciples

Session 1: Peter Escaped from Prison (*Acts 12*)

Session 2: Paul's First Journey (*Acts 13–14*)

Session 3: The Church Divided (*1 Corinthians 1–6*)

Session 4: Letters to Church Leaders (*1–2 Timothy; Titus*)

Unit 33: A Firm Foundation

Session 1: The Jerusalem Council (*Acts 15*)

Session 2: Paul's Second Journey (*Acts 15–18*)

Session 3: No Other the Gospel (*Galatians 1–3*)

Session 4: Paul Gave Hope (*1–2 Thessalonians*)

Volume 12: All Things New

Unit 34: Fight the Good Fight

Session 1: Paul's Third Journey (*Acts 18–21*)

Session 2: Paul Was Arrested (*Acts 21–23*)

Session 3: Together in Jesus (*Ephesians 2–3*)

Session 4: Running the Race (*Philippians 3*)

Unit 35: Finishing Strong

Session 1: Paul Before Rulers (*Acts 24–26*)

Session 2: Paul's Shipwreck (*Acts 27–28*)

Session 3: Brothers in Christ (*Philemon*)

Session 4: Children of God (*1 John 2–3*)

Session 5: Defending the Faith (*Jude*)

Unit 36: Come, Lord Jesus

Session 1: John's Vision of Jesus (*Revelation 1*)

Session 2: Letters to the Seven Churches (*Revelation 2–3*)

Session 3: Before the Throne (*Revelation 4–5*)

Session 4: Jesus Will Return (*Revelation 19–22*)

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From Adam to Jesus
Matthew 1; Luke 3; John 1



Jesus' Temptation
Matthew 4; Mark 1; Luke 4



Jesus' Early Miracles
Mark 1

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