

THE
GOSPEL
PROJECT
FOR KIDS®

A People Restored

Younger 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:
Younger 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

Say what?

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

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

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 5:

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



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.

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 men to act out the roles.
- **Use props or pictures:** Display the Bible story picture. Search study Bibles, Bible storybooks, or online for other depictions of this story, such as the king's gold statue.

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 tell you about a time they had to make a quick decision. Is it easy to make decisions when you are in a rush?

SAY • It's not always easy making big decisions, and it's even harder when we have to decide something without much time to think about it. Today we're going to hear a story about three friends who had to make a big decision under a lot of pressure.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Flame Changes" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Flame Changes" activity page. Kids will try to spot seven differences between two pictures of the fiery furnace scene.

SAY • Some of those differences were really tough to spot. However, it's not hard to know the difference between the one true God and an idol. Idols have no power and cannot save us. The one true God is all-powerful and can save anyone who trusts Him. We'll learn more about that today.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Fire wise

Ask the kids to describe what they would do in case of a fire, such as remembering to stop, drop, and roll; calling 911; pulling a fire alarm; and so forth. Then go over your church's official fire safety guidelines. Run a real fire drill with your class.

SAY • In our Bible story today we'll hear the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were in a fiery situation but none of our fire safety tips would have worked for them. We'll learn what happened to them soon!

OPTION 2: Getting warmer

Hide a small toy or plastic treasure somewhere in the room. Challenge the kids to find the item. Give clues as kids move about the room, saying "getting warmer" or "getting colder" depending on how close to, or far from, the object kids move. As kids get very near to finding the object, use hyperbole such as "you are burning up!" or "you are on fire!" to emphasize how close they are.

- small toy or plastic treasure

SAY • Obviously, none of you actually caught fire or were burned by getting close to the hidden toy. In real life, fire can be very dangerous, and being on fire is often deadly. Today we will hear about three men who faced an extremely deadly fire. What do you think happened to them?

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: Decorate the room to look like the inside of a bedroom. Use sheets and blankets on a cot or table to simulate a bed. Hang appropriate posters of popular movie or TV show characters. Paint foam board to look like a chest of drawers or closet door. 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
- teddy bear

[Leader enters wearing pajamas and carrying a teddy bear.]

LEADER • Oh hey, everyone! My name is *[your name]*.

Are you kids having trouble sleeping too? I'm all ready for bed: I put on my jammies, made a warm cup of milk, brushed my teeth, and even read a bedtime story, but I can't fall asleep. I'm just too excited! Tomorrow I'm going to Robot Fun Land, the awesome robot-themed amusement park. My favorite ride is the Robot Roller, the tallest roller coaster within a 500-mile radius. It takes a whole minute just to ride up the hill before the first big

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

drop. What a thrill!

Just thinking about how tall the Robot Roller is reminds me of a Bible story about something else that was super tall. Not a roller coaster though. Those didn't exist in Bible times. This is a story about a giant statue. Do you guys want to hear it?

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • One thing we can do to help us stay on track while we hear our Bible story is to use a big picture question. During the next few weeks we'll answer this question: *Why do we pray?* Have you ever thought about that? Prayer is super important! As you listen to the story try to think of the answer to this question: *Why do we pray?*

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

LEADER • God's people, the nation of Israel, had split into two kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Both kingdoms were led by evil kings, and the people refused to obey God. As punishment for their unfaithfulness, God allowed the kingdom of Judah to be conquered by Babylon. God loved and cared for His people, and even during their time in exile He was still with them.

Today's story is from the Book of Daniel. Daniel was a man from Judah taken to Babylon when God sent His people into exile. Our story today is about three of Daniel's friends who were also from Judah. Check it out.

- 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 • God's people had been taken into captivity.

They now lived as strangers in Babylon. The people of Babylon didn't worship the one true God. They worshiped false gods and idols. The ruler of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar, set up a giant statue and demanded that the people worship it whenever they heard any music. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to bow down to the statue like everyone else. They could have blended into the crowd and no one would have known. But God would have known. The three friends loved God. They knew that worshiping anyone or anything else was sin. Only God deserves worship. The three friends were willing to die in order to obey God.

I love how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego responded to the king. They knew that God was powerful and able to protect them from the flames. But they also knew that if God didn't save them from the fire, He was still good. God allowed them to be throw into the fire, but they were not harmed, and they didn't even smell like smoke! **God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the king.** It is comforting to know that we can trust God even when we face danger. That reminds me of our big picture question. ***Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.***

Christ connection

LEADER • God showed Himself faithful to the three friends even though He did not keep them from being put in the fiery furnace. Instead, God showed His power to King Nebuchadnezzar and everyone who was watching that day. 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.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided 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 times we might be tempted to sin. Can you think of a time you chose to do the right thing even though it meant facing 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 a missionary family in Miami, Florida, wants people to know. The Ukegbu (yoo-KAY-boo) family lives in a city in the United States with many different cultures and languages. They started a church there so people could hear about Jesus and grow in their faith.

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, age 7; Noah, age 5. Ask kids who are the same age as any of the Ukegbu children to stand.

• "Ukegbu Family
Picture" printable

Pray, thanking God for missionaries. Display the picture throughout the unit to remind kids to pray for the Ukegbus and other missionaries your church supports.

Key passage (5 minutes)

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

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Then sing “Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks.”

LEADER • Our key passage comes from 1 Thessalonians in the New Testament, one of Paul’s letters. God wants us to remember to rejoice, pray, and give thanks to Him no matter what our circumstances.

Sing (4 minutes)

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

LEADER • The three friends were able to face the furnace because they trusted that God was good and could save them if He chose to. We can trust God for the same reasons! He is always in control. Let’s stand and sing to Him.

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

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, we praise You because You are good. We know that You love us and care for us. Thank You for never leaving us in hard or scary times. We are thankful that You have sent Jesus to save us from our sin and give us hope for an eternity spent with 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 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
- ball

Instruct the kids to stand in a circle. Give one kid a ball. The first kid will say the first word of the key passage then toss the ball to someone else in the circle. That child will say the second word before tossing the ball. Continue until kids have said the entire passage.

SAY • Are there ever times it's hard to praise God? Are there times that you don't feel thankful to Him? Our key passage teaches us that no matter what is going on in our lives we can still give thanks to God. He is good all the time! We may be confused by something difficult like how to deal with a bully at school, or being kind to your siblings, but we can trust that God has a plan for even the hard times!

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Daniel 3. Explain that Daniel is part of the Major Prophets. Help the kids understand that the Book of Daniel includes stories from Daniel's life during the Babylonian captivity and prophetic visions of the end times. Use the small group timeline and map set to point out Babylon (E11).

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What did King Nebuchadnezzar want people to worship? (*a large golden statue, Dan. 3:1*)
2. Which three men refused to bow to the statue? (*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Dan. 3:13*)
3. How did Nebuchadnezzar punish the friends? (*They were thrown into the fiery furnace, Dan. 3:21*)
4. What did the king see when he peered into the furnace? (*The three friends walking around with a fourth person who looked like a god, Dan. 3:25*)
5. Why do you think God allowed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to go through the fire? *Guide kids to see that God used this scary situation to build the friends' faith in Him and to show Nebuchadnezzar that God is mighty to save His people. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego went through the fire for God to be glorified.*
6. What are some idols that you are tempted to worship? *Guide the kids to see that good gifts from God turn into idols if we love them more than we love God. When we repent, God forgives us and changes our hearts to love Him more.*
7. How does knowing that God does everything for His glory and our good help us when we face scary situations? *Guide the kids to see that though God doesn't promise us physical safety, He promises that He will never leave us or forsake us. He will help us through hard times.*

SAY • God delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the king to show His glory. He blessed their faithfulness to Him when they refused to worship anything other than Him.

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

LOW PREP

- foam cups
- marker

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

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Stack cups

Explain that kids will take turns trying to balance cups on their heads. Challenge kids to stack cups on their heads and take a few steps forward. Congratulate the kid who is able to balance the most cups on his head.

When kids have completed the challenge, instruct them to sit and face you. Use a marker to write the following words or phrases on separate cups: *family, neighbors, church, community ministry, friends, time with God, school, and work*. Stand the cups so each word or phrase is visible.

SAY • The words on the cups represent just some of the things that missionaries have to balance. Each of these things is important and needs 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.

OPTION 2: Fire cup knockdown

- blue foam balls, 10–15
- red plastic cups, 3 per team

Form teams of three kids. Give each team three red plastic cups. Distribute blue foam balls evenly among the teams. The teams will stack their cups in a pyramid to represent flames. Teams will then take turns tossing “water” balls to put out the “flames.” For each cup a kid knocks down, that kid's team receives a point. Teams may rebuild their “fires” after each team's turn. The team with the most points after five rounds of turns wins. Mix up the teams and play again if time allows.

SAY • It may have been pretty easy for you to put out your “fires,” but it wouldn't have been easy to put out the fire in the hot furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego trusted God despite the fear they certainly

felt. They knew God was powerful enough to save them, but even if He didn't, they would never bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's statue. **God delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the king.**

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring
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
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APPLY THE STORY
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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 and Daniel by altering the tone in your voice as you read each person’s words in the story.
- **Use visuals:** On a chalkboard or dry erase board, draw a tall paper 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. Ask kids to describe their idea of a perfect king. What are some characteristics of a good king? What does a good king do?

SAY • Today we will hear a story about King Nebuchadnezzar. He was a powerful king who built a strong empire, but God had a very important lesson to teach him.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "The Dream Tree" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "The Dream Tree" activity page. Kids will fill in each section of the picture from Nebuchadnezzar's dream according to the color key provided.

SAY • Have you ever had a weird dream and you didn't know what it meant? Most dreams do not have special meaning, but today we'll hear a story about a dream King Nebuchadnezzar had, and it meant that God was going to teach him a very important lesson in a very unusual way. We'll learn more soon.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: “In my dream, there was a ...”

Invite the kids to sit in a circle. The first kid will start by saying, “In my dream, there was a _____” and will finish the phrase with a word that starts with the same letter as his name. Subsequent children will say the introductory phrase and then repeat what previous kids said before adding their own parts to the dream.

SAY • Sometimes dreams are silly or scary. Often dreams don’t really mean much of anything. In today’s Bible story, we’ll hear about a dream that did mean something. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was about something that would happen to him in the future!

OPTION 2: Animal pictures

Prior to the session, write animal names on small slips of paper and place the slips into a hat or jar. One at a time, call on a kid to draw a slip of paper. She must keep the animal secret. She will then draw the animal on the board for the other kids to guess. Whoever guesses correctly will choose an animal to draw in the next round. Play as time allows.

SAY • Can you imagine waking up one day as an animal?

Imagine that you had to eat what animals eat and live where they live. Would that be fun? Scary?

Let’s get ready to hear a story about a time when Nebuchadnezzar had to eat grass like an animal!

**LOW
PREP**

- slips of paper
- pen
- hat or jar
- poster board or dry erase board
- marker

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
• teddy bear

[Leader enters wearing pajamas and carrying a teddy bear.]

LEADER • Hey, everyone! Wow, it's pretty late for you kids to be up. Isn't it way past your bedtime? As for me, I can't sleep again. I keep having these crazy dreams. Picture this: I was flying up in the clouds [*flapping arms as if flying*], and I could see all the way down to the ground below. But the very next minute, I was suddenly on the ground, running with a herd of galloping wild horses. [*running in place*] It was just nuts—not to mention exhausting!

Dreams are funny sometimes, aren't they? I don't think dreams often mean much of anything. They are the result of my busy brain trying to organize my thoughts and feelings at the end of the day. But that reminds me of a Bible story about an interesting dream that King Nebuchadnezzar had. Do you want to hear it? [*Allow responses.*] Great, let's get started.

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

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Last week we answered our big picture question, *why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.* We can pray to God anytime, anywhere. We don't have to use special words when we talk to God. We don't have to use words at all! God knows our words before we say them. He even knows our thoughts before we think them. Let's find out what part prayer has to play in our story today.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

· Giant Timeline

LEADER • God's people were captives in Babylon because of their sin. Last week we learned that **God delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the king.** When they refused to bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar's statue, he threw them into the fiery furnace. After they came out unharmed, Nebuchadnezzar praised God for rescuing the three friends. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar even sent out a message through the kingdom saying that everyone everywhere must show respect to the one true God. Let's find out what happened next.

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 • Have you ever worked really hard to make something, and you wanted to take all the credit for

· Bibles
· "Nebuchadnezzar's Dream" video
· Big Picture Question Poster
· Bible Story Picture Poster
· Story Point Poster

it? That's just what King Nebuchadnezzar did. He wanted to take all the credit and give himself the glory for building the kingdom of Babylon. The king was prideful. Pride is when we think too highly of ourselves and refuse to praise God for what He has done. The Bible says that pride is a sin.

Nebuchadnezzar did not worship God alone. He believed that he was the most powerful king and that he deserved glory. God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to understand that only God deserves glory. No matter what power Nebuchadnezzar had, it all came from God, and God could take it away.

God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control. But God also showed mercy to Nebuchadnezzar because at the end of the seven years God restored his sanity and allowed him to rule over Babylon again.

In our lives, we are sometimes tempted to see ourselves as the most important people. We forget that God is the King of kings, the Ruler of all creation. He created all things, and all things belong to Him. Our pride may cause us to doubt that God can hear our prayers. We may even think that God cannot help us or that we can handle life without Him. But those are lies. We need God. He hears and helps us. ***Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.***

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • The Bible shows us that we are sinful and need God to save us. We are completely dependent on His grace, so it's silly for us to think that we can do

anything in our own strength. 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 the things we are good at, and where our talents and skills come from. How can sharing what God has done for you help others know and love Jesus?

· "Unit 16, Session 2"
Questions from Kids
Video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

LEADER • God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control. God wants people to know that there is no one greater than He is. Many people in Miami, Florida, don't have a relationship with God. The Ukegbus (yoo-KAY-boos) are a missionary family who live and serve in Miami. Let's learn more about them.

· "Missionaries in
Miami" missions
video

Play the "Missionaries in Miami" missions video. Pray for your group and the Ukegbu family.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Then sing "Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks."

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

LEADER • Our key passage is all about prayer. But what is prayer? Prayer is talking with God. We talk to God to praise Him, to ask Him for help, to tell Him how

we feel and what we think, and to confess our sins.

Prayer is important for building our relationship with God. Imagine if you never spent time talking to your friends. Do you think you would know them very well? No way! It's similar with God. ***Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.*** The more we read our Bibles and pray, the more we get to know God.

Sing (4 minutes)

• "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" song

LEADER • I'm so thankful we have a God who listens when we pray. He also listens when we sing to Him. Let's stand and worship God together now. Sing together "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, we thank You for Your Word. It is so special that we get to know You by reading the Bible. Thank You for the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and how You showed that You are in control of everything. You are powerful and mighty, God. We give You all our praise. 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: 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 (optional)
- scissors
- paper bag

Prior to the session, cut apart different phrases from a copy of the key passage poster and put them in a paper bag. You may choose to write phrases on strips of paper instead. One at a time, call on kids to pull out a phrase. Once kids have drawn all the phrases from the bag, help the kids assemble the passage in the correct order.

SAY • God loves it when we pray to Him, and He always hears us. God also answers our prayers, though not always in the way we expect. We can trust that God is good and faithful, and rejoice that He will glorify Himself and do what is best for us.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Daniel 4. Ask a volunteer to tell you which books come before and after Daniel. (*Ezekiel before, Hosea after*) As a class, name all the books in the Major Prophets (*Isaiah–Daniel*) and the Minor Prophets. (*Hosea– Malachi*). Remind kids that the Major Prophets are longer books, not more important ones. Discuss the fact that all of God's Word is necessary and important for helping us learn about God and ourselves.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What plant was in Nebuchadnezzar's dream? (*a large tree that an angel said would be cut down, Dan. 4: 10*)
2. What did the dream mean? (*God would force Nebuchadnezzar to live like an animal and take the kingdom away from him, Dan. 4:25-27*)
3. What did Nebuchadnezzar do when God restored his mind? (*Nebuchadnezzar praised God and said God is in control of all things, Dan. 4:34-37*)
4. Why do you think God did what He did with Nebuchadnezzar? *Help kids understand that God loved Nebuchadnezzar. God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know Him and see that He is all-powerful and in control. Nebuchadnezzar was prideful and living for his own glory, and only God deserves glory.*
5. Why do you think pride is such a bad thing? *Guide the kids to understand that pride tries to take glory away from God. He is the only One who deserves glory. Apart from God we are nothing. We owe Him everything, including our praise!*
6. What are some ways we struggle with pride? *Help kids come up with examples from their own lives. We show pride when we fail to love others well, and when we try to get our way instead of trusting God. We even show pride when we choose not to pray or praise God.*

SAY • God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control. God is a good God and He knows what is best. We can trust Him to do what is right. When God receives the glory He deserves, it is good for us. We can rejoice that God is in charge. We trust that He will bless us by glorifying Himself.

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

LOW PREP

- tape
- large sheet of rolled paper
- crayons, colored pencils, and markers

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

- Allergy Alert
- knee-high hosiery, 1 per kid
- potting soil
- grass seeds
- measuring spoons
- permanent markers
- foam cups
- ziplock bags

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Make a mural

Tape a large sheet of rolled paper onto the floor or table. Provide crayons, colored pencils, and markers.

SAY • Art is a very important part of the culture in Miami, Florida. People communicate through drawings, paintings, pottery, music, and dance. You can see murals on many buildings in Miami. Let's make our own murals to tell people what we are learning about God. Anyone can use art to tell people about God.

Distribute the art supplies and encourage kids to work together to make colorful pictures depicting recent Bible stories they have studied or favorite Bible verses. Display your murals in the classroom or church hallway.

OPTION 2: Growing grass heads

Post an allergy alert. Guide kids to measure and pour two or three tablespoons of grass seeds into the bottom of knee-high hosiery. Add potting soil and tie off the end to make a round "head." Encourage the kids to decorate the heads with markers. Place the heads in ziplock bags. Send each home with a foam cup. Instruct the kids to pour some water into the bottom of the foam cup when they get home and place the ball on the top of the cup. The dangling part of the hose will sit in the water and soak it up. Grass should begin to sprout from the head in about seven days.

SAY • King Nebuchadnezzar was forced to live in the wilderness eating grass with the wild animals for seven years. **God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.** The king had sinned against God, and God was right to punish him. At the end of the seven years, Nebuchadnezzar

understood that God is all-powerful. Nebuchadnezzar praised God as the ruler of all-creation. We don't know for sure, but it is possible that Nebuchadnezzar even put his faith in God and worshiped God alone. Even while God's people were in exile, God was working in and around them to bless the world through them.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring
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)

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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."

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.

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.

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. As kids arrive ask them to share the most amazing thing they have ever seen or experienced.

SAY • We learn about many miracles in the Bible. Miracles are amazing because they are wonderful things God can do that are not limited by the laws of nature. All the miracles in the Bible really did happen. Today we'll hear a story of God's miraculously saving Daniel from the lions' den. How do you think Daniel wound up there?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Dan's Den" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Dan's Den" activity page. Challenge kids to find the seven silly additions that do not belong in the Bible story art.

SAY • When you talk about stuff that belongs in a lions' den, there are some things that probably won't come to mind. In our picture, there were lots of silly things added that did not belong, but Daniel, the man in the lions' den, actually did spend a night there! How

would you feel if surrounded by hungry lions?

**LOW
PREP**

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Three thanks

Invite kids sit in a circle. Go around the circle and encourage each child to name three things she is thankful for. When everyone has shared, spend a minute thanking God for the way He has blessed everyone in the class.

SAY • Today we'll hear a story about Daniel. He loved God and prayed to God many times each day. What do you think Daniel did when the king made a law saying prayer to God would be illegal?

OPTION 2: Lion, lion, Daniel

Instruct the kids to sit in a circle on the floor. Choose one child to be *It*. *It* will walk around the circle, gently tapping each kid's head. With each tap, *It* will say "lion" until *It* gets to a kid of his choosing. Then *It* will tap that kid and say, "Daniel." The kid he chose will chase *It* around the circle and try to tag *It* before he sits in her spot. Play as time allows.

SAY • In our game, there was one "Daniel" surrounded by lots of lions. It would be pretty scary to be surrounded by hungry lions. Imagine if you were in a cage with even one lion! Today we're going to learn that Daniel was thrown into a den of lions, but **God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel.**

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
• teddy bear

[Leader enters wearing pajamas and holding a teddy bear.]

LEADER • Hello again, everyone. Wow, this is three weeks in a row that you kids are up super late with me. You would think after the day I've had I would be able to fall asleep tonight. I'm just as surprised as anyone else. I got to visit the zoo today, but this was a special trip. I actually got to go behind the scenes with the zookeepers and see some of the animals up close! Talk about exciting! I got to feed a giraffe and pet an elephant. My favorite part though was getting to see the baby lion. Even though he was small, I could see that he was really strong. I guess all that excitement has been keeping me up tonight.

The lion at the zoo reminds me of another Bible story about lions. But the lions in this story weren't little lion cubs, these were fully grown, hungry lions. Do you want to hear it?

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

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • You kids have done a great job answering our big picture question, *Why do we pray? We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.* The Bible tells us that we can pray continuously, or all the time! Prayer is simply talking to God. We can talk to Him no matter where we are or what we are doing. God loves it when we come to Him in prayer and He speaks to us through His Word, too.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • Let's take a look at our giant timeline. We've already heard two stories that took place while God's people were exiled to Babylon because of their disobedience. First we heard that **God delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the king** and the fiery furnace. Last week, we learned about Nebuchadnezzar's dream and how **God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control.** Even though God's people were in a foreign country with a king who didn't worship the one true God, it's clear that He was still with them. In each story we've seen God display His power. Let's find out what happens in today's Bible story.

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."

LEADER • Daniel was an honest man and worked hard

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

in his role within the kingdom. When he returned to his house to pray, Daniel wasn't trying to be rebellious against the king. Daniel knew that God was greater than any earthly king, and Daniel wanted to obey God rather than King Darius. Daniel was willing to risk being thrown to the lions to remain faithful to God. It might seem surprising that God allowed Daniel to get caught and thrown to the lions at all. But because Daniel went into the lions' den, God received glory. **God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel.** God showed King Darius that He is the living God who rules forever.

Sometimes it may feel like God isn't watching, especially when we are going through hard times. Maybe you have prayed, and it seems like God won't answer or that He doesn't hear you. But one thing we learn from this story is that God is always listening. He is always watching out for us. He uses even our scary situations to show His power! Remember, ***we pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.*** And God always answers our prayers, even when He gives an answer we do not expect. Whenever God does something differently from how we expect, we can trust that God's way is much better than ours.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • Daniel needed saving from the lions and we all need saving from a much bigger enemy: sin. 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 would do if someone told them to disobey God. How can God use our faithfulness to Him as a way for others to learn about Jesus?

• “Unit 16, Session 3”
Questions from Kids
Video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

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

• “The Brook Picture”
printable

Show the photo of The Brook church and close in prayer for this church in Miami.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Then sing “Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks.”

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

LEADER • Daniel knew how important prayer is. He had heard the law King Darius passed and yet Daniel still prayed. Prayer is talking with God to praise Him, ask Him for help, and confess our sins. Maybe Daniel was asking God for help when he was caught. We can ask God to help us in times of need too. **God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel.** He will rescue us from our greatest enemy too: sin.

• “Great Is Thy
Faithfulness” song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • Daniel was faithful to God despite the law saying no one could pray to anyone but Darius. God is always faithful to us. Let’s sing about how great His faithfulness is.

Sing together “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, You are incredible! We are amazed by Your power and strength. You saved Daniel from the lions’ den, and You rescue us from sin. Thank You for Your great love for us and for sending Your only Son, Jesus, to save us and make it possible for us to be part of Your kingdom forever. 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
- paper
- markers
- oven mitts

Form two groups. Write each word of the key passage on a separate piece of paper. Create two sets. Mix up each set and stack the sets on one side of the room. Instruct the teams to line up on the opposite side of the room from the papers. The first person in each line will put on oven mitts to be “lion paws,” run to her team’s stack, find and pick up the first word in the key passage, and run back. Teams must return the key passage words in order and lay them on the floor to display the complete key passage.

SAY • You guys are doing a great job memorizing our key passage! Let’s keep working on it for one more week.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Daniel 6. Ask a volunteer to tell you if the Book of Daniel is in the Old or New Testament. (*Old Testament*) Ask another volunteer to tell you which division the Book of Daniel is in. (*Major Prophets*) Ask kids to describe the difference between the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. (*The Major prophets are longer, not more important.*) Consider challenging kids to list all Old Testament books in order.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Why did the other leaders want to get Daniel in trouble? (*They were jealous of him, Dan. 6:3-4*)
2. What law did Darius create? (*For thirty days; people could not pray to anyone except him, Dan. 6:7*)
3. What was Daniel's response to the king's law? (*Daniel continued praying, Dan. 6:10*)
4. Why do you think Daniel obeyed God rather than King Darius? *Guide the kids to see that God is our ultimate authority. We are called to obey God above any earthly leaders. If Daniel were to obey the king's decree to pray to him, Daniel would have been sinning against God.*
5. Is it always easy to obey God? Why or why not? *Help kids understand that obeying God can be difficult. We have to fight against our own sin, and we may face persecution from non-believers. Jesus reminded His disciples that we will be blessed when people mistreat us for His sake. (Matt. 5:11-12; John 15:18-19) We can also remember that Jesus faced punishment and even death when He was obedient to God's plan to rescue sinners. (Heb. 5:7-9)*
6. How can your obedience to God point others to His goodness? *Explain that our obedience shows others that we really do trust God and believe the Bible. When we choose to follow God, especially when disobedience might seem easier, we demonstrate to the world that God is worthy of our obedience.*

SAY • God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel.

It's not always easy to obey God, but God is faithful and He cares for us. He is all-powerful and good. We can trust that obeying Him is best for us.

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 found in Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Write a praise song

Explain that kids will have a chance to write their own praise song. Talk about how 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.

Choose a familiar tune that kids would know. Distribute paper and pencils and encourage kids to write lyrics to that tune. They can work independently or in small groups. Some kids may 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 a prayer journal

Give several sheets of paper to each kid. Demonstrate how to fold the papers in half along the width, and staple them into a booklet. Provide markers or colored pencils, stickers, decorative tape, or other art supplies for kids to decorate their journals. Encourage the kids to write or draw three things they pray for each day throughout the week.

SAY • Even though the king passed a law making it illegal to pray to anyone other than him for thirty days, Daniel still prayed to God as he had always done.

- paper
- stapler
- markers or colored pencils
- stickers (optional)
- decorative tape (optional)

Daniel loved God and knew that obeying Him was worth any punishment he faced. The same is true for us. God is our Creator and King. We need Him each and every day!

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring 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)

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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

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

Tip: Steer the conversation away from secular traditions to focus on Jesus instead.

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. As kids arrive, ask them to tell you how they celebrate Christmas with their family.

SAY • Christmas is such an exciting time! We all have fun family traditions that we use to celebrate the birth of Jesus. While you give and receive gifts this year, remember that God has given us the greatest gift of all: His Son.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Journey to Bethlehem” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the “Journey to Bethlehem” activity page. Challenge kids to complete the maze from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

SAY • Today we will hear the story of Jesus’ birth. Do you know where you were born? Most of you were probably born in a hospital or maybe at home. I doubt any of you were born in a place where animals are kept. It may surprise you, but that’s exactly where Jesus was born!

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Sheep, thief, angel

Form two teams of kids and instruct the teams to line up on opposite sides of the room. You may use tape to divide the room. Behind each team, place a pile of cotton ball “sheep.” The kids must try to protect their own “sheep” while also trying to steal the other team’s sheep. If they are tagged by an opposing team member while they are on the other team’s side of the room, they are frozen. At any point the *angel* (leader or kid volunteer) may call out “Do not be afraid” to unfreeze all players. Whichever team has the most “sheep” at the end of the round wins.

SAY • In our story we’ll hear about a group of shepherds keeping watch over their flocks at night. They were surprised, not by thieves trying to steal their sheep, but by a whole army of angels who came to give them some special news.

OPTION 2: Baby gear

Place the items in the bag. One at a time, pull out an item from the bag. Ask the kids to tell you what each item is and what it’s used for. Could those items be used for more than one purpose? Ask the kids to discuss the items and decide which is the most important.

SAY • These days there are many bits of gear to help us take care of newborn babies. Today we’re going to hear the story of Jesus’ birth. He wasn’t born in a fancy hospital, and Mary didn’t have a special crib, bottles, or bibs for Him. Instead, Jesus was born in a place where animals were kept!

LOW PREP

- cotton balls
- tape (optional)

- baby gear (bottle, baby blanket, bib, pacifier, diaper rash cream, diaper, burp cloth, other baby items)
- paper bag

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.

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
• teddy bear

[Leader enters wearing pajamas and carrying a teddy bear.]

LEADER • *[yawning]* Hey there, friends! By now I'm sure you're not surprised to hear that I still can't sleep. I've really been trying, honestly I have. I'm even super sleepy tonight. The problem is that tonight a super bright light is shining right outside my window. My next door neighbors really go all out with their Christmas decorations. The lights are blinding!

So despite all my best efforts to go to sleep, here I am, awake yet again. Well, since we're all up together we might as well hear another Bible story. In fact, my neighbors' bright lights reminded me of a very special story, the story of Jesus' birth.

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

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • If you've been here the last few weeks, you might remember our big picture question: ***Why do we***

pray? Who can tell us the answer? [*Allow responses.*]
That's right! ***We pray because we trust God, and we know He hears us.*** God had promised to send a Rescuer to defeat sin, but the people did not know when that would happen. Throughout the years, God's people prayed to God, asking Him to keep His promise. God always keeps His promises, and He heard the prayers of the people. When the time was just right, God sent Jesus to fulfill His promise and answer the prayers of His people.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • God's people had been waiting for the Messiah to come for hundreds of years. Between the end of the Old Testament and when Jesus was born, 400 years passed in which no prophets received messages from God. Can you imagine waiting that long to hear from God? God's promise to send a Savior went all the way back to the garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve sinned, God said that one day the Savior would defeat Satan. Though thousands of years had passed, God did not forget His promise. Let's hear more!

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

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 • God's people were desperate for their Savior to come. They expected a strong political leader to set them free from the Roman government. But the

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

Messiah showed up as a tiny, helpless baby. There were a lot of unexpected things about Jesus. He was a King born in the family of David, but He was born in a place where animals were kept. He slept in a manger—a feeding trough! He was the long-awaited Savior, but His earthly parents, Mary and Joseph, were not rich or powerful. God’s plan may be surprising, but God knew exactly what He was doing.

Jesus’ birth brought glory to God. Remember the angels singing in the fields where the shepherds watched their flocks? The angels were giving glory to God because His only eternal Son had been born as a human. Even the shepherds went away praising God after they had seen Jesus in the manger. Because **God came to earth as a human baby to be with us**, we can give glory to God too. We can thank Him for sending Jesus for us!

Christ connection

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

LEADER • The details of Jesus’ birth may be surprising, but Jesus is the Savior we need. He didn’t come to earth because we needed just a little help. He came because we desperately need Him. Without Jesus we would have no chance for salvation. We would still be in slavery to our sin and without hope for eternity.

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.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Christmas, Session 3” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about Jesus’ various names and titles. What other words or names come to mind when you think of 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 all people from their sins. We celebrate Christmas with people from many languages, cultures, and countries! Play the “Christmas Story in Other Languages” missions video and thank God for Christians all over the world who celebrate His birth and tell others the good news.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Then sing “Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks.”

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

LEADER • Our key passage tells us to rejoice always. That might seem hard to do. I mean, how do you rejoice when something bad is happening? But when we remember the truth of our Bible story, that **God came to earth as a human baby to be with us**, we can have hope even in the hardest times. God the Son stepped down from heaven into our darkness to

bring light to the world. So even when we struggle, we can remember that Jesus is with us and rejoice!

Sing (4 minutes)

- “Always in Control (This I Know)” song
- Christmas songs of your choosing (optional)

LEADER • At Christmas, God’s plan became even more clear. He is in control of all things, even a Roman emperor who wanted to count citizens. Let’s sing to our sovereign God.

Sing together “Always in Control (This I Know)” or Christmas songs of your choosing.

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You for sending Your only Son to be with us. We know that we haven’t done anything to deserve this incredible gift. We are humbled by Your love for us. Remind us of the hope we have in Jesus even when things aren’t going the way we planned. Help us to trust You in all things. 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: 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
- Christmas wrapping paper (non-fantasy themes)
- scissors

Cut out three rectangles of Christmas wrapping paper and write the key passage on each. Cut each rectangle into puzzle pieces. Form three teams, and give each team a set of puzzle pieces. The teams will race to assemble the puzzles, and the first team to finish wins.

SAY • Who would you rather talk to: someone who loves you or someone who doesn't really care about you? Of course we would prefer to spend time talking with someone who loves us! We can look forward to our time in prayer with God because we know He cares about us deeply. He has demonstrated His great love for us by sending His only Son, Jesus, to earth to be with us!

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Matthew 1; Luke 2 in their Bibles. Explain that these are New Testament books and are two of the four Gospels. The Gospels tell the story of Jesus' perfectly sinless life on earth and the death He died to rescue us from sin. Ask kids to name the other two Gospels. (*Mark; John*)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Why did Mary and Joseph have to go to Bethlehem?
(Caesar ordered a census to be taken, Luke 2:1)
2. To whom did the angels appear? *(shepherds keeping watch over their flocks, Luke 2:8)*
3. What message did the angels give the shepherds?
(Jesus, the Savior, had been born and was lying in a manger; Luke 2:11)
4. Why was Jesus born? *Guide kids to see that Jesus was born to bring glory to God and to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Because of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection we can have peace with God and peace with one another. Through Jesus—Immanuel, "God With Us"—we can be united to God forever.*
5. How can we respond to God's gift of Jesus? *Help kids understand that we can praise and thank God for His gift. We can confess our sin and ask Jesus to be Lord of our lives. Then we can joyfully tell others about Jesus.*
6. Does focusing on Jesus change which parts of Christmas are most exciting to you? *Challenge kids to think deeper about the gifts, decorations, or other traditions they participate in with their families. Help them see that without Jesus, Christmas loses meaning. Remind that that His coming to be with us is, and should be, the most exciting part of Christmas.*

SAY • God came to earth as a human baby to be with us because He loves us. Jesus' birth should bring us great joy because we now have a way to be part of God's kingdom forever!

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

LOW PREP

- "Ukegbu Family Picture" printable
- Bibles

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

- paper
- markers
- emojis printed from the Internet (optional)
- tape
- Bible

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Tell the Christmas story

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

SAY • Missionary kids Serenity, Joelle, and Noah are learning about Jesus, too, and growing in their faith. Just as God uses you, He 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 Jesus' coming to earth as a baby.

Distribute Bibles to the kids. Form smaller groups and lead the kids to tell the Christmas story to one another. Guide kids to turn in their Bibles to the Christmas story and describe what is going on. Encourage them to tell the story in their own words.

OPTION 2: Emoji run

Print or draw different emojis (heart eyes, smiley face, scared face, excited face, sleepy face, and so forth). Hang them around the room. Read a sentence about the Bible story and encourage the kids to run to the emoji they think would match how they would have felt at that point in the story. If kids run to different emojis, ask them to explain their reasoning. Discuss how that person in the Bible story may have been feeling different emotions at once.

Sample sentences:

- Joseph found out Mary was going to have a baby, but Joseph knew it was not his baby.
- Joseph saw an angel in a dream.
- Mary was going to have a son and name Him Jesus

because He was going to save His people from their sins.

- Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem, the city of David.
- Mary and Joseph found a place where animals were kept, and that is where Mary had her baby.
- Some shepherds were out in the fields watching over their sheep. All of a sudden, an angel of the Lord stood before them.
- The shepherds went and told others about the baby Jesus.

SAY • The people in our Bible story probably experienced a lot of emotions, from fear to joy and everything in between. How does it make you feel knowing that **God came to earth as a human baby to be with us?**

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring
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)

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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

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. As kids arrive, ask them to describe the most unusual dreams they ever had.

SAY • We don't always remember the dreams we have, but most of us have had some very interesting dreams. A few weeks ago, we learned about a dream King Nebuchadnezzar had. Today we'll hear about another interesting dream from the Book of Daniel. This time Daniel was the dreamer, and we will discuss what Daniel's dream meant.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "King of Kings" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "King of Kings" activity page. Kids will draw what they imagine when they picture the most powerful king they can imagine.

SAY • These kings all look pretty mighty! Did you know that God is the mightiest King of all? He is the creator of the entire world, and He rules over it as the King over all other kings. We'll learn more about God's power and authority in our Bible story.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: The minute game

Instruct kids to stand up and close their eyes. Explain that during this activity kids cannot talk. When you say go, the kids must continue standing silently. When they think a minute has passed, they will sit down. The winner is the person who sat down closest to a minute. Play several rounds, and then talk about time.

SAY • In our story we'll hear about a dream Daniel had.

Part of Daniel's dream meant that God would rule the earth as King forever. We'll learn more about it soon.

OPTION 2: Art critic

Before the session, print copies of several kid-friendly paintings of various artistic styles. Hang up these paintings around the room. Give the kids a chance to look at each painting and rate the painting on a scale from one to five. Ask the kids to explain why they judged each painting the way they did.

SAY • We often judge art based on what we like. Each person in this room may have a different opinion about the paintings that we looked at today. But God is the ultimate Judge—and not just of paintings, but of everything. He judges wisely and justly. We're going to hear more about how **God is the eternal King who judges the nations.**

**LOW
PREP**

• timer

• paintings of various
artistic styles
• tape

Tip: Search the Internet for famous art that is in the public domain to print copies of famous paintings.

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
• teddy bear

[Leader enters wearing pajamas and a robe, carrying a stuffed teddy bear.]

LEADER • *[looking around nervously]* Hi, kids! I'm so glad to see all of you here. I can't seem to fall asleep again tonight, but I think I know why. Actually, you'll probably think it's silly. My aunt took me to an art gallery this afternoon. We saw all sorts of crazy paintings, and some of them were a little scary looking. You know, big monsters with fangs and horns and that sort of thing. Anyway, I keep seeing shadows on my walls and getting spooked. So naturally, I'm glad to have your company tonight.

I think hearing a Bible story will help me relax. In fact, those paintings in the art gallery remind me of another story from the Book of Daniel. Today we'll hear about Daniel's dream that included four scary beasts!

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

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • When I'm scared, the first thing I do is pray. Prayer is talking with God. I ask God for help when I feel scared or anxious. God already knows what scares me, and He reminds me that He is bigger than whatever it is. When you are scared or sad you can pray and ask God for help too. ***Why do we pray? 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 • Who remembers what book of the Bible we've been studying? (*Daniel*) The Book of Daniel is full of true, interesting stories that teach us about God's power and care for His people who were in exile in Babylon. We've heard that **God delivered Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego from the king** when the three friends refused to worship the king's statue. Then we learned that **God humbled King Nebuchadnezzar to show that He is in control**. Later, **God shut the mouths of the lions to save Daniel**. Today's story will show us that **God is the eternal King who judges the nations**.

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 • The beasts in Daniel's dreams would have been terrifying to see. They represented different nations,

- Bibles
- "Daniel's Dream" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

each one a powerful empire that controlled nearly the whole world at some point in history. But God had power above and beyond each of them.

God is the eternal King who judges the nations.

God is a good and fair Judge. God looks at the hearts of all people, including powerful human leaders, and sees that everyone is guilty. All people start out dead in sin. The Bible tells us that our sin deserves punishment and that punishment is death.

Thankfully, Jesus took the punishment we deserve so that we could have life with God. Someday, everyone will stand before God for His judgment. Everyone who has trusted in Jesus will live forever with God, free from sin. When believers stand before God, the perfect Judge, He won't see our sin. Instead He will see the perfect righteousness of Jesus.

The four beasts representing the four kingdoms in Daniel's dream were terrifying, but even they were not strong enough to defeat our great God. There will be times when the people who lead our city or country do not follow God. Many earthly rulers may openly disobey God's Word. We can continue to trust God and follow Him even when those around us don't.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • 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.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 16, Session 4” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about parts of the Bible that are difficult to understand or unpopular to obey. If we know the Bible is right and true, how should we respond to difficult parts?

· “Unit 16, Session 4”
Questions from Kids
Video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Remind kids about the Ukegbu (yoo-KAY-boo) family and their church in Miami.

· “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. People from many nations live in Miami. At The Brook church, people from all over the world worship together. Let’s watch a video to learn more about their church.

Play “The Brook in Miami” missions video. Discuss ways that your church is similar to and different from The Brook. Close in prayer, thanking 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. Then sing “Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks.”

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

LEADER • You kids have done a great job learning our key passage. Can anyone say it from memory? We can hold these words in our hearts to remind us to pray!

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • God has promised to judge the nations and get rid of all evil. He is always faithful.

· “Great is Thy
Faithfulness” song

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 You are stronger and better than any king who has ever ruled on this earth. We are thankful that You are in control. We trust Your plans, even when life is hard. Help us to be faithful to You as we journey through life. 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
- slips of paper
- marker
- pillowcases, 2

Write each word of the key passage on a separate slip of paper. Make two sets. Place each set in a separate pillowcase. Form two teams of kids and line up the teams across the room from the pillowcases. The first kid in each team must run down to his team's pillowcase, grab a slip, and run back to tag the next person. Once the team collects the slips, they will unscramble the key passage on the floor. The first team to put the passage in the correct order wins.

SAY • How can we “rejoice always” when life is hard? We can rejoice in God because we know that He is in control. Life might be hard, but we can rejoice knowing that God is on the throne and His kingdom will never end!

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Daniel 7. Ask the kids to tell you which Old Testament books come before and after Daniel. (*Ezekiel before, Hosea after*) Remind the kids that the first half of Daniel contains stories about his life in Babylon, and the second half contains explanations of Daniel's dreams and visions about the future.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What did Daniel see in his dream? (*four mysterious creatures that looked like animals, Dan. 7:3-7*)
2. Who was sitting on the throne? (*God, the Ancient of Days; Dan. 7:9*)
3. What did God do while sitting on the throne? (*judged the creatures, Dan. 7:10-12*)
4. Why do you think God gave Daniel this dream? *Guide the kids to see that God was showing that He is ultimately in control. God gave Daniel (and us) hope for eternity so we can know that no matter what kind of ruler we have, God is still on the throne. He is in charge. Someday, Jesus will return and destroy all evil, restoring the world. Those who trust in Him will live with God forever.*
5. What does this story teach us about what God is like? *Help kids understand that God is sovereign, or in control over all things. He is also good and righteous. He wants us to have hope for the future. Through Jesus, He gives us hope.*
6. What can you do when you feel scared? *Explain that even in scary times we can still trust God. If we have trusted in Jesus, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit for all eternity. (Eph. 4:30) Even though bad things sometimes happen while we wait for Jesus to return, we don't have to fear anything—not even death. God is bigger than anything we could ever fear, and He will destroy all evil someday.*

SAY • Daniel's dream showed him that **God is the eternal King who judges the nations.** His kingdom will go on forever, and everyone who trusts in Jesus will rule with Him in a perfectly restored world.

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

LOW PREP

- “Spanish Phrases” printable
- guest speaker (optional)
- Spanish worship songs (optional)

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

- paper
- crayons and markers
- tape

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Practice another language

Invite kids in your group who can speak Spanish to help teach their friends some Spanish words or phrases. Consider inviting a Spanish-speaker from your church or community to come teach the kids some phrases in Spanish.

SAY • Many people in Miami, Florida, 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! Even in the United States, more than 350 different languages are spoken. Let’s practice a few Spanish words and phrases.

Use the printable and ask kids to repeat the phrases. Also consider playing Spanish worship songs from the Internet. Encourage kids to continue to practice other languages they study at school. Pray that God will give them the opportunity to develop that skill for His glory.

OPTION 2: Make a story quilt

Give each child a piece of paper. Instruct kids to draw interesting animals, real or fictional. When time is up, gather all the sheets of paper and tape them on the floor in a quilt-like pattern. Form several smaller groups and instruct the kids to try to come up with a story using all the pictures. Allow time for groups to share what they came up with.

SAY • Daniel had a pretty confusing dream with four terrifying beasts. Our picture here could be confusing too, with all these different beasts. Daniel’s dream was a message from God. **God is the eternal King who judges the nations.** That means someday

God will send Jesus back to earth. Jesus will destroy evil and restore the world to perfection. Everyone who trusts in Jesus will live forever with God in the perfectly restored world.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring
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)

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

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.

• Vary 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. As kids arrive ask them how they would let their friends know when something really great happens to them.

SAY • We like to share good news. Telling other people about great things we have experienced comes naturally for us. Today we will hear about some news the prophet Obediah shared. It was good news for some, but not so good for others.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the “Getting the Message” activity page. Kids will use the picture code to reveal the story point.

SAY • We can communicate with our friends in lots of ways: texting, phone calls, or seeing them face-to-face. In the Old Testament, God often communicated through prophets, who heard God’s words and spoke or wrote them for God’s people to hear or read. Today we’ll learn about the prophet Obediah.

- “Getting the Message” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Cotton ball roundup

Give each kid a small handful of cotton balls and instruct the kids to stand in a circle. When you say “go,” everyone must throw the cotton balls in the air. When you say “round up,” everyone must race to collect as many cotton balls as possible. Count how many cotton balls kids collected. The kid with the most cotton balls is the winner. Play additional rounds as time allows.

SAY • It was fun to run around grabbing as many cotton balls as you could. But what if you were the only one doing it? It is a big job to clean up such a mess! It’s not always easy to put things back the way they should be. Our story today is about *restoration*—putting things back how they should be. We’ll hear how God promised to restore His people to where they needed to be.

OPTION 2: Wooden block tower tumble

Invite the kids to help you build a tower using wooden blocks. See how tall you can make it before it tumbles. Give the kids a few chances to build the tallest tower they can. When kids complete their tower, walk over to it and, using only your pinkie finger, knock it down.

SAY • The taller those towers got, the easier it was to knock them down. Pride is like that too. The more we think we can handle life without God’s help, the more likely we are to come crashing down. We’ll hear more about that in our story today.

**LOW
PREP**

• cotton balls

• wooden blocks

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: Decorate the room to look like the baggage claim area of an airport. Stack luggage on one side of the stage. Display a large map of your church building—or a local airport—with a big, red dot labeled *You Are Here*. Paint foam board to look like a departures and arrivals screen. Use roll paper and a table to simulate the appearance of a conveyor belt. You may 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
- travel pillow

[Leader enters with a suitcase and a travel pillow around his/her neck.]

LEADER• Hey, kids! Whoa, I wasn't expecting so many people to show up to pick me up from the airport. Are you sure we're all going to fit in the car? Oh, you must have brought a bus. But wow, you guys look pretty young. Do any of you have a driver's license? Haha, that's OK. I can drive us.

Unfortunately we might have to wait awhile for

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

my luggage to come through. There were so many people on my flight! It's been a long day of flying so I'm so glad to have my feet on the ground again. While we wait for my bags, do you all want to hear a Bible story?

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • This story comes from the Book of Obadiah.

Obadiah was a prophet of the Lord. Does anyone know what a prophet is? A *prophet* is someone who heard from God and told the people what He said. As we hear the story today let's think about this question: ***How is Jesus the perfect Prophet?*** We'll see what the answer is in a few minutes.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

LEADER • You may remember way back in the Book of Genesis we learned about Abraham's family. God had promised Abraham that his family would be so big, counting them would be like trying to count the stars in the sky. God's promises continued to Abraham's son Isaac. Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. God chose Jacob to inherit the promise. Esau was jealous of Jacob and the brothers fought. While the nation of Israel came through Jacob's family, the nation of Edom came through Esau's family. Many years later the people of Edom were cruel to the Israelites. They wouldn't allow them to travel safely through their land, and they fought with them. Today we will hear about God's judgment on the nation of Edom.

- 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 • I don't know about you, but when I was a kid, I often fought with my siblings. We argued, and our arguments often got one or both of us in trouble with Mom and Dad. But if I ever saw someone outside our family treating my little brother badly, things would always shift.

It didn't matter how angry I had been at my brother, I would always try to protect him. It's silly to think that I didn't mind being mean to him as long as no one else was, but in some ways that was true. Edom was like Israel's older sibling. When the people of Judah faced Babylon, Edom should have helped Judah, but they chose not to.

In the Book of Obadiah, we see that the nation of Edom was going to deal with the consequences of their choice to ignore Judah's trouble. The people of Edom were not faithful to the people of Judah. God planned to punish them for their unfaithfulness.

Obadiah's message for Edom was not happy news for the Edomites. They would have bad things happen to them, just as they had done bad things to Judah. But Obadiah's news was happy for the people of Judah. Though Edom failed to protect Judah, God would protect Judah. God was going to give Edom's land to Judah and make them a kingdom again. **God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.**

Christ connection

LEADER • The Book of Obadiah points us to Jesus. *How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.* When we are joined to Jesus we become part of God's promise to Abraham! We do not face the punishment our sin deserves, but instead, we are welcomed into God's kingdom forever! 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.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided 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 how we should treat people who do bad things. Discuss how praying for our enemies might change our thoughts towards 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 lived before we had television or cars or even electric lighting in houses!

• "Adoniram Judson
Picture" printable

LEADER • Adoniram (a-doh-NIGH-rum) Judson was one of the very first American missionaries. He went to the country Burma—now called Myanmar—to tell them about Jesus. He wrote the Bible in their language so the people could read God's Word. Life was very hard for Adoniram and his family, but he remained faithful to God so he could share God's promises.

- Key Passage Poster
- “A Future and a Hope” song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Jeremiah 29:11. Then sing “A Future and a Hope.”

LEADER • God promised to do good things for His people, and He did just that. When we trust in Jesus, we experience a similar promise. God gives us everlasting life with Him. No matter what hard times we face now, someday Jesus will return and fix everything sin has broken. At that time, we will fully experience all the joy of being with God forever; God’s plans are good and He is faithful to keep promises.

- “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King. God has kept His promise by sending His only Son, Jesus, to be our Savior and our King. Let’s sing praise to Him now.
Sing together “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You for giving us Your Word. We thank You for inviting us into Your kingdom. We are humbled to know that You do not treat us as our sin deserves. Instead You have shown us mercy and grace. Thank You for saving us. 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
- wooden blocks
- index cards
- marker
- tape

Write each word of the key passage on a separate index card and tape each card to a wooden block. Mix up the blocks. Give each child a block and invite the kids to work together to build a tower with the words in the correct order.

SAY • Our key passage was written by the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah's promise of a good plan was for the people of Judah, but we have similar promises through Jesus. God sent Jesus to die for us and make the way for us to be set free from sin. When we trust in Jesus, we get to experience all the wonderful things God has planned for His people, including living with Him forever in His perfect kingdom.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find the Book of Obadiah. Ask the kids to tell you if this book is in the Old or New Testament. (*Old Testament*) Explain that this book is considered one of the Minor Prophets. Ask a kid to explain the reason Obadiah is called a minor prophet (*because the Book of Obadiah is short*). You may use the Old Testament Mediterranean Map to show Edom's location. (*H10*)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. The prophet Obadiah wrote to which nation? (*Edom, Obad. 1*)
2. How had Edom disobeyed God? (*They had turned their back on Israel and not trusted God, Obad. 4*)
3. What was God's promise to Israel? (*They would be restored to their land, Obad. 19-21*)
4. Why do you think God punished the nation of Edom so severely? *Help kids understand that Edom was the nation of Esau's descendants. They should have been like brothers and sisters to Israel. If anyone understood God's love and plans for Israel, it should have been Edom. By ignoring Judah's trouble, they were actively going against God's plans.*
5. Do you think we should only help our siblings and family members? Why or why not? *Discuss the idea of loving our enemies. Remind kids that God adopts believers into His family, and that salvation is free to everyone who believes. This means everyone we meet is, or could become, part of our spiritual family.*
6. What does it show about God when we love our enemies? *Discuss what the Bible teaches about our standing towards God. Remind the kids that we are born in sin, and thus are enemies of God. (Romans 5:10) But He loves us anyway and sent Jesus for us. When we love those who treat us badly, it provides a picture of God's love for sinners.*

SAY • It's important to remember that the nation of Israel wasn't sinless. They needed God's forgiveness just as much as any other nation. God's promise to His children is evidence of God's grace. **God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.**

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

LOW PREP

- slips of paper (optional)
- marker (optional)

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

- large sheets of paper
- crayons and markers
- scissors
- Story Point Poster (optional)

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Act it out

Ask for volunteers to act out a familiar Bible story while the others guess the story or Bible person. You may write familiar Bible stories on slips of paper or be prepared to whisper suggestions in the volunteer's ear. Sample stories: God created the world; Noah built the ark; David killed Goliath; Jonah was swallowed by a fish; Jesus was born; Jesus died on the cross; Jesus rose again on the third day.

SAY • Acting out stories from the Bible is something missionaries sometimes have to do when they don't know the language of the people. 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 about God's Word, we can tell people about God.

OPTION 2: Story point puzzles

Form groups of three to five kids. Give each group a large sheet of paper with the story point written on it. Invite the kids to decorate their papers, illustrating the story point in their own way. Then give each group a pair of scissors to cut their paper into a few puzzle pieces. The groups will then trade puzzles and try to assemble a different team's puzzle.

SAY • **God promised to restore Israel and rule the earth as King.** God always keeps His promises. God kept His promise to restore Israel. Though they had been exiled from their land, God brought them back home. God has promised to rule the earth as King. God rules His kingdom now and one day He will

return to earth to rule completely over all creation.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring
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)
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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 www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

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.**



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.

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.

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. As kids arrive, ask them what is the farthest they have traveled from home. Where did they go? What was it like being so far away?

SAY • Traveling the world can be a lot of fun. It's a great way to learn about the world God created and experience the cultures of different people, all of whom are loved by God. But it can also be great to come back home after being away. That was especially true for the Jews, who had been forced to live away from their homes for 70 years.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “Build a Promise” activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the “Build a Promise” activity page. The kids will put the words of the story point in order using the shape of the blocks as a guide.

SAY • Today we'll hear a story about how **God kept His promise to bring His people home.** The Israelites had lived in a different country for 70 years, and it was finally time for them to return to their own land.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Treasure hunt

Prior to the session hide play money or gold-colored plastic coins around the room. During the session, encourage the kids to search the room to find the treasures. Once kids find all the objects, invite them to return to the center of the room.

SAY • We are going to hear a special story today about how God's people returned home from living in a foreign country for 70 years! We will hear that the people of Babylon gave God's people gold and silver coins, as well as other gifts, when they went home.

LOW PREP

- play money
- gold-colored plastic coins (optional)

OPTION 2: Build a tower

Provide a variety of building materials and invite the kids to form groups of two or three kids to work together to build a tower. Help them experiment with different foundations for their towers. Give the groups a chance to present their towers to the rest of the class.

SAY • For any building to stand tall and strong, it must have a solid foundation. Today our story is about God's people's return to the land God had given them. Not only did they return, but they also set out to rebuild the destroyed temple. Today we'll hear that they began by building a strong foundation.

- various building materials (blocks, interlocking bricks, interlocking logs, cups, cereal boxes, and so forth)

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
- small suitcase
- airport map
- travel pillow
- stuffed cow

[Leader enters carrying a small suitcase, an airport map, and a travel pillow around his/her neck.]

LEADER • Hey, friends! It's great to see you again. Thanks for picking me up from the airport again this week. I've been traveling so much it seems like I haven't been home in forever! Well, maybe not forever. I guess I've only been gone for five days. But even just a few days away from home makes me homesick. Do you ever get homesick when you travel? The thing I always miss the most is sleeping in my own bed. *[Pull a stuffed cow from the suitcase.]* Sir Loin here always travels with me wherever I go, but it's still nice to get home to my own bed.

You know, a five day trip away from home may seem like a long time, but the Bible story I have for you today makes it seem like the blink of an eye. You see, in this story God's people were away from

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

home for 70 years!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Before we begin, let's remember our big picture question, *How is Jesus the perfect Prophet?* Does anyone remember the answer? That's right. *Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.* That means that Jesus' words, thoughts, and actions were exactly in line with what God the Father wanted. Because Jesus is God the Son, He has all power and authority. Every prophecy in the Old Testament led to Jesus, and all God's promises will come true in Jesus.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah told God's people that because they repeatedly disobeyed God they would be sent into exile. Exile is when someone is forced to leave his or her country and move somewhere else. God's people were sent into exile to Babylon. The stories about Daniel in the lions' den and the three friends being saved from the fiery furnace all happened in Babylon during the exile. Jeremiah also prophesied that the exile would only last for 70 years. At the end of those 70 years, it was finally time for God's people to return to their homeland.

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

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

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 • God’s people had gone through some pretty rough times during their exile in Babylon. Do you think God had forgotten about them? No way! God never stopped loving His children. They were His chosen people, and He had long ago promised that He would never abandon them. In fact, God had been using their time in exile to glorify Himself and bless the world. Many kings and people who did not know God saw firsthand His power and love for His people.

God had told His people through prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah that the exile would not last forever. When God makes a promise you can believe that He will always keep it. **God kept His promise to bring His people home.**

The Bible tells us that “the Lord roused the spirit of King Cyrus” to allow the people to return to Israel. Clearly God was at work to bring His people home. Our God is in total control. He knows all things and has the power to make anything happen that He wants. King Cyrus even demanded that the people of Babylon give silver, gold, livestock, and other valuables to the Israelites. As a result, they had the money and materials they needed to begin rebuilding the temple and their homes. God provides for His people always, and sometimes He provides in surprising ways.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • During their time in exile, the people may have

felt hopeless. Over time they may have wondered if God had forgotten about them or if God was really going to keep His promise. But God's plan for His people was bigger than they knew.

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.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 17, Session 2" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about how people worship God. Discuss whether or not the kids have favorite ways to worship God.

• "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 Burma—now called Myanmar—a long, long time ago. He isn't alive anymore, but God is still being faithful to the people who live there. Let's learn more about the Karen (kah-REN) people who live in the same place where Adoniram Judson worked.

Play the "Karen People of Myanmar" missions video. Close by saying a prayer that people all over the world would hear about Jesus.

• "Karen People of
Myanmar" missions
video

Key passage (5 minutes)

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

• Key Passage Poster
• "A Future and a Hope"
song

together Jeremiah 29:11. Then sing “A Future and a Hope.”

LEADER • Jeremiah the prophet wrote these words to the exiles in Babylon; the exile would not last forever. Hundreds of years later, these words still comfort believers who are going through hard times. Jeremiah’s words remind us of a similar promise we have through Jesus. God has planned for Jesus to return someday. When He does, all evil will be destroyed and everyone who has faith in Him will live forever in God’s kingdom.

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” song

LEADER • In the Book of Psalms, King David wrote that he eagerly searched for God and that his soul thirsted for God. Our souls are thirsty for God too. We can worship Him and find that He quenches our thirst. Let’s sing praise to Him now.
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 Your plans are good. We are thankful that even during difficult times we know we can trust You. We are glad that You are in control of everything and that You always work everything out according to Your will. Thank You for hearing us when we pray and for always loving us. 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

Invite the kids to sit in a circle. Begin a pat-pat-clap-clap rhythm as you say the key passage. The kids should imitate the rhythm and repeat the phrases as you say them. Give the kids an opportunity to create their own rhythms to go along with the verse and let them lead the rest of the class.

SAY • You are doing a great job memorizing our key passage. Jeremiah was a prophet, and so is Jesus. ***How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.*** Let's keep working on our key passage this week, and when we come back together next week we'll see if anyone can say it from memory!

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help the kids find Ezra 1–3. Remind the kids that the Book of Ezra is found in the Old Testament History division. Ask a volunteer to name the other books in that division (*Joshua–Esther*). You may choose to display the Old Testament Mediterranean Map to help the kids understand the long distances traveled by God's people to reach Jerusalem (*G10*).

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Which king of Persia allowed God's people to return to Israel? (*King Cyrus, Ezra 1:1*)
2. What did the priests build first when they got back to Israel? (*the altar, Ezra 3:2*)
3. Why were some of the older Israelites crying? (*They remembered the first temple that had been destroyed, Ezra 3:12*)
4. Why do you think God allowed His people to live in exile for 70 years? *Guide the kids to see that God takes sin seriously. He wanted to purify His people; to punish sin and bring new life to the people who truly wanted to follow Him. God wanted to give His children a chance to recognize their sin and turn back to Him. He used the exile to glorify Himself in foreign nations.*
5. How can we know God loves us in difficult times? *Help kids understand that God's love for us never changes. We don't always understand why we face hard times but we can trust that God will never leave us. He will never stop loving us. Sometimes He allows us to experience pain so we can better understand how much we need Him. When we face hard times while relying on God, it glorifies Him and builds our faith.*
6. The temple needed a strong foundation. What is the foundation of our lives? *Help kids see that our faith is built on Jesus' sacrifice for us. We trust the Bible as God's Word, and it tells us what is true about God and ourselves. With such a firm foundation, our lives can stand up to various trials.*

SAY • God kept His promise to bring His people home.

The Israelites returned to their homeland and began rebuilding the temple so they could worship God.

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 found in Teach the Story.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Good manners

SAY • People all over the world are different and have different ways to show 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 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 to be lower than their head.
- Don't look at anyone's eyes. This is considered rude in Myanmar.
- 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: Roll lumber

Form two teams of kids and instruct them to line up on one side of the room. On the opposite side, place two piles of pool noodles, one per team. When you say go, the first kid from each team will race to the pile of noodles, grab a noodle, and roll it back to her team. Then the second kid on each team will do the same. The first team to get all their noodles to their side wins

SAY • The Israelites paid the people in Lebanon for lumber to rebuild God's temple. The people had to work hard to get all the necessary building materials, but they knew that the work was worth it. They were desperate to have a place to worship God.

• pool noodles

Thankfully, we no longer need to go to a temple to worship God. Because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, we can worship God anywhere. The Holy Spirit lives inside of believers, so in a way, our bodies are the temples!

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring
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)
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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 www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

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, worshiping 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. As kids arrive, ask them to share about a time they were doing something hard and they were tempted to give up.

SAY • Sometimes we have to do really hard things that we don't think we can do. Today we're going to hear a story about how God's people wanted to give up after they began building God's temple.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "Build It Back" activity page. Kids will match the shapes of the missing bits of the temple to the blocks that would fit there.

SAY • After God's people returned to their land, they began rebuilding the temple. Sadly, when enemies tried to prevent them from finishing, they gave up for a while, leaving the temple unfinished. Today we will hear about what God did to help them finish the temple.

- "Build It Back" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Message from the prophets

Instruct the kids to sit down in a line, each facing forward. Give the kid at the front of the line a piece of paper and a pencil. Write *BIBLE* on a piece of paper and give it to the kid at the back of the line. The kid at the back of the line will then trace with his finger the letter B on the back of the kid in front of him. The second kid will then trace the letter she felt onto the back of the kid in front of her and so on down the line. The first kid in the line will write the letter he feels on the piece of paper. Continue this way until the first kid writes all the letters. Did the kids communicate and write the word *BIBLE* successfully?

SAY • Was it hard to decipher the message just one letter at a time? In our story today, we will hear about a prophet named Haggai. Thankfully God didn't communicate with Haggai just one letter at a time! God's message to His people in today's story would encourage them to do something hard.

OPTION 2: Glory to God

Read a list of actions. Instruct the kids to jump up with their hands outstretched if they think the action glorifies God. Guide them to crouch down low if it doesn't. (Examples: sharing a toy with a friend, telling a lie, being a good listener to a friend, spreading gossip about someone else, and so forth)

SAY • Not everything we do brings glory to God. In today's story we'll hear that **God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.**

**LOW
PREP**

• paper

• pencil

• paper

• pen

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
• suitcase

[Leader enters dragging a suitcase and looking exhausted.]

LEADER • Man, am I glad to see you kids! My trip home today was awful! For starters, my first flight was super delayed. Mechanical issues or something. I thought we'd never take off. That flight was so bumpy, I thought my eyeballs were going to jiggle right out of my head. When we landed I was glad to be back on solid ground. Then I had a long layover in a strange city, and my next flight was overbooked, so I didn't even have a seat on the plane! I was just about ready to give up and set up a tent in the airport. But I wanted to get home, so I kept asking until they found another available flight. Now here I am: tired and hungry, but home at last!

You know, my crazy traveling day reminds me of another Bible story. It's a story about how God's people rebuilt the temple. It was a difficult process,

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

and they had so many enemies trying to stop them that they almost gave up, but God encouraged them to keep going.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Do you remember our big picture question? *How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.* Because Jesus is God the Son, His words, thoughts, and actions were perfectly in line with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus provided a perfect example of what God is like, because Jesus is God. Every prophecy in the Old Testament will come true through Jesus. Many of them already have!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

LEADER • Last week we learned that **God kept His promise to bring His people home.** The Jews had been in exile for 70 years, and finally it was time for them to return and rebuild the temple where they had once offered sacrifices to God. I can't wait to find out what happens next.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Ezra 4–6; Haggai. 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 • The Jews had a lot of enemies who didn't want them to rebuild the temple. These enemies were

- Bibles
- “The Temple Was Rebuilt” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

afraid the Jews would become too strong and rebel against the king of Persia. So the governor wrote letters to King Darius to warn him about what the Jews were doing. It may seem as though the king and the governors had all the power to stop God's people, but let's not forget who was really in charge here—God! God is the One who brought the Jews back to the land He had given them. God was the One directing their steps. **God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God** and give thanks to Him for the way He had provided for them.

Rebuilding wasn't always easy. In fact, the Jews faced so much opposition that they even gave up for a while! Sixteen years went by when they did no work on the temple at all. Thankfully, God sent the prophet Haggai at just the right time.

Haggai shared the word of the Lord with the people. He encouraged them by reminding them that God was with them and that God would be glorified through their hard work. The people were once again ready to pick up their work.

Have you ever felt like giving up because something was just too hard? Sometimes we all need a little encouragement. We can be comforted with the truth that even when things are difficult, God is still with us.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • God sent the prophet Haggai to encourage the people to keep building. That reminds me of our big picture question. ***How is Jesus the perfect Prophet?*** Does anyone remember the answer? That's right!

Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.

God's people rebuilt the temple so they would have a place to offer sacrifices 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. When we trust in Jesus for salvation, He sends the Holy Spirit to live in us. He encourages us and helps us love and obey God.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 17, Session 3" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about why we gather as a church if Jesus is with us everywhere. How has the church helped your understanding of and love for Jesus?

• "Unit 17, Session 3"
Questions from Kids
Video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Ask for several volunteers who are strong readers to read a short story from the life of Adoniram Judson. Allow volunteers to read one section of the Adoniram Judson stories. Let them read aloud while the rest of the kids listen.

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 things were scary. They remained faithful to God and continued to glorify Him and tell people about Jesus.

• "Adoniram Judson
Stories" printable

Tip: If your group
contains no strong
readers, read the
story to the kids
directly.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Jeremiah 29:11. Then sing "A Future and a Hope."

LEADER • Do you think it would have been encouraging

• Key Passage Poster
• "A Future and a Hope"
song

for God's people to remember the truth of this verse? God had a plan for them, plans for hope and a future. He knew the trials they would face in rebuilding the temple. God didn't promise to make the process easy for them, but He did promise to be with them along the way. A similar promise is true for us today. God has given us hope and a future through Jesus' perfect obedience, sacrificial death, and miraculous resurrection. Because of our Savior we have hope for eternity with God!

Sing (4 minutes)

• "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" song

LEADER • Psalm 107:1 says, "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his faithful love endures forever." We serve a God who loves us and has given us so many blessings. Let's sing praise to Him now.
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 Your faithful love. We are so thankful that You care for us even though we don't deserve it. You are so good and faithful. You give us strength when we are weak. You lift us up when we feel like giving up. Thank You for being with us always, especially through difficult times. 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 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
- ball of yarn

Display the key passage poster and lead the kids to read Jeremiah 29:11 aloud. Ask for volunteers to try to say the whole verse from memory. Instruct the kids to stand in a circle. Give one kid a ball of yarn. Explain that she will say the first word of the key passage then toss the ball of yarn to another person in the circle while still holding the end of the yarn. The second kid will say the second word before tossing the yarn ball to someone else while holding a bit of the yarn. Continue this way until the whole verse has been said. Then challenge the kids to untangle themselves!

SAY • Great job, everyone! Let's keep working on our key passage for one more week. Next time we'll all try to say it for memory!

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute Bibles to all the kids and help them find Ezra 4–6; Haggai. Explain that Ezra is in the Old Testament History division and the Book of Haggai is part of the Minor Prophets. Ask for a volunteer to discuss why it is important to know how to find information in our Bibles (*Everything in God's Word is trustworthy and true.*)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. To which city did God's people return? (*Jerusalem, Ezra 1:2*)
2. Who was the king of Persia when God's people began rebuilding the temple? (*Darius, Ezra 4:24*)
3. What festival did the Jews celebrate when the temple was complete? (*Passover, Ezra 6:19*)
4. How did building the temple bring glory to God?
Guide the kids to understand that the temple was meant to be a place where God's people worshiped Him. True worship of God glorifies Him. Additionally, enemies were trying to prevent them from finishing, so by overcoming those obstacles, God's people showed God's power to support and guide them.
5. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit lives inside of Christians. How does this change our behavior?
Help the kids see that everyone is made in God's image. We ought to respect one another and ourselves. We should treat each other with dignity, compassion, and love. Because we are vessels of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to love with God's love.
6. How can you encourage someone who is suffering and ready to give up hope? *Explain that we can offer encouragement from God's Word. Someday, Jesus will return to restore the whole earth and provide a perfect place for us to live and worship Him forever. We face difficult times with hope because of Jesus' promises.*

SAY • God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.

They almost quit, but God sent prophets like Haggai to encourage them to keep going. Thankfully, now that Jesus has come, the temple isn't necessary. We can meet with God anywhere simply through prayer!

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

- blankets
- chairs

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

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Prayer hut

Make simple “huts” by draping blankets over chairs. Invite kids in small groups to sit under the blankets. Explain that you will have a time of prayer for missionaries in Myanmar.

SAY • When Adoniram and Ann Judson arrived in Myanmar, they built a hut and asked people to come to hear the stories from the Bible. These huts were common for people to live in and still are for many of the people there. Most of them are very poor. While sitting under the blankets, ask for 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
- markers

OPTION 2: Story point scrolls

Form groups of three to five kids and instruct the groups to line up on one side of the room. On the other side of the room, stack paper and provide a marker for each group. When the leader says “go,” the first kid from each team will run to her team’s stack of paper, write the first word from the story point, roll it up like a scroll and bring it back to her team. Then the next kid will run the relay, writing the second word. The teams will continue in this way until each team has written the entire story point.

SAY • In our story, **God’s people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.** They had many enemies who didn’t want them to finish building. The governor of the land, Tattenai, wrote letters back and forth to King Darius making sure the Jews had permission to build the temple. Darius found a scroll in the archives that

said the Jews were allowed to return to their land to build the temple to worship God.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring 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)
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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.

Bible 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. As kids arrive ask them to share with you situations when people make predictions (weather, science hypotheses, sports outcomes, and so forth).

SAY • When it comes to weather or sports predictions, there's no way to know for certain that our predictions will be accurate. When it comes to God's Word, we know that every prophecy will be fulfilled. Today we'll hear that **Zechariah said the Messiah is coming**, a prophecy that Jesus fulfilled.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Spot the Visions" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Spot the Visions" activity page. Challenge the kids to find each of the hidden images in the Bible story picture.

SAY • In the Bible, God sometimes spoke to people through dreams or visions. Today we'll learn that Zechariah had several visions that had specific meanings about things that would happen in the future. What do you think he might have seen in his visions?

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: “I had a dream that I could ...”

Invite the kids to sit in a circle with one kid in the middle. Provide enough chairs for everyone in the circle but not the kid in the middle. The middle kid will say, “I had a dream that I could _____,” and state something that she is able to do, tie her shoe, play an instrument, or another activity. The kids around the circle who are able to do that activity will move to find another chair. The kid in the middle must sit in a chair that becomes empty. Whoever is left standing will be the next “dreamer” in the middle of the circle.

SAY • Sometimes we have strange dreams about things that are impossible to actually do. Other times dreams are very realistic. Our story today includes some visions that Zechariah the prophet had. His visions seemed really bizarre, but they actually pointed to future events.

OPTION 2: Pin the king on the donkey

Print the “Donkey and King” printable and cut out the kings. Make small loops of tape to place on the back of each king. One by one, blindfold each kid, spin him around, and allow him to attempt taping a king to the donkey. The kid who gets the closest after each kid has had a turn wins.

SAY • Zechariah prophesied about the coming Messiah by saying that Israel’s king would come into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. That doesn’t sound like a very grand entrance for a king. This exact prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.

**LOW
PREP**

• chairs

• “Donkey and King”
printable
• tape
• scissors
• blindfold

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
• travel pillow

[Leader enters pulling a suitcase and wearing a travel pillow around his neck.]

LEADER • Hey, friends! Wow, it's great to see you all again.

I've been traveling so much these last few weeks, and it's always so great to know I'll have some familiar faces waiting to greet me at the airport when I get home. I have just returned from visiting my grandparents. I always love going to their house. I have so many memories from my childhood about that place. While I was there, my grandma pulled out some old family photo albums and showed me pictures of her when she was a little girl. She told me lots of stories from long ago. Sometimes it's really neat to look back on where you've come from and think forward to where you're heading.

That actually reminds me of our Bible story today. It's about a prophet named Zechariah. He helped

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

remind the Israelites of their history; how they had forsaken God and God had punished them by sending them into exile in Babylon. But Zechariah also encouraged God's people by sharing with them the hope they had in the coming Messiah. Let's hear more!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • We've been talking about our big picture question these past few weeks, and I bet everyone knows the answer by now. ***How is Jesus the perfect Prophet? Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.*** Zechariah prophesied about the coming Messiah, Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of everything that we read about in the Old Testament. He is a perfect Prophet for us because He shows us what God the Father is like.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

LEADER • God's people had been taken captive by the nation of Babylon for 70 years as punishment for their sin. The people had turned their backs on God, but God hadn't turned His back on them. God remained faithful even when Israel was unfaithful to Him. At the end of the 70 years **God kept His promise to bring His people home** with instructions to rebuild the temple. **God's people rebuilt the temple to glorify God.** Building wasn't always easy and sometimes the people needed to be encouraged. God sent them Zechariah, a prophet

who heard the word of the Lord and shared it with the people. Today we'll learn that **Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.**

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
- "Zechariah the Prophet" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

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 • Have you ever felt something was impossible?

God's people felt that way about finishing the temple. They'd been away from their home for 70 years and now they were back in Jerusalem with this huge construction project. It was really hard work, and their enemies didn't want them to succeed. Life had been hard for the people for a long time, so Zechariah's message of encouragement came at just the right time.

Zechariah reminded the Israelites of the sin that led to their exile in the first place. He also encouraged the people to not be like their ancestors who turned away from God. **Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.** God's people had been waiting for generations for the promised Savior to come.

In fact, God's promise to send the Messiah goes all the way back to the garden of Eden. As the Lord was sending Adam and Eve away after they sinned, He promised that one day a Savior would come to destroy the serpent. This was the same Savior that Zechariah said was coming. This message gave the people great hope. Have you ever been discouraged and needed to hear some good news? That's just what

Zechariah did for the Israelites.

Christ connection

LEADER • The people may have thought that the Savior was coming right away, but it would actually be another 400 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. When Jesus came to earth, He wasn't the kind of king the people expected. They thought the promised Messiah would be a strong political leader. Instead Jesus was a humble King riding on a donkey.

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.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided 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 it took so long for God to send Jesus. When might waiting for something 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 (west of Thailand) is from the USA. Explain that today, it takes about 20 hours on a plane to get there. Ask a volunteer to come to the map and name some of the countries that are near Myanmar in Southeast Asia.

• world map

LEADER • **Zechariah said the Messiah in coming.** Today, we tell people that the Messiah has come! The Messiah is Jesus! Adoniram and Ann Judson were

missionaries who went to tell people about Jesus many years ago. Missionaries still travel all over the world to tell people that they can have hope and forgiveness of sins when they trust in Jesus.

Key passage (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- “A Future and a Hope” song

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Jeremiah 29:11. Then sing “A Future and a Hope.”

LEADER • Sometimes we need God to remind us of His promises. Our key passage reminds us that His plans are good. He keeps all of His promises, including the promise to bring us hope through our Savior Jesus.

Sing (4 minutes)

- “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” song

LEADER • Zechariah said that God rules from sea to sea.

Let’s sing praise to our God who rules everything on the earth!

Sing together “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, thank You for keeping Your promise when You sent Your One and Only Son, Jesus, as our Messiah. Help us to put our faith and trust in Jesus alone. 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
- sticky notes
- marker

Display the key passage poster and lead the kids to read Jeremiah 29:11 aloud. Ask for volunteers to try to say the whole verse from memory. Write each word of the key passage on a separate sticky note and put one note on each kid's back. Challenge the class to put themselves in order by working together.

SAY • You have done a wonderful job memorizing this beautiful key passage. It is a sweet reminder of God's care for us. God doesn't promise us that life will be easy or that things will always go how we plan. We know that things always go according to God's plan. We can trust Him because He always keeps His promises.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute Bibles to all the kids and assist them in finding the Book of Zechariah. Ask which division Zechariah is in. (*Minor Prophets*) Ask volunteers to name other books in the same division. (*Hosea–Malachi*) Discuss the importance of knowing what is in the Bible and how to find information in it. Remind kids that the Bible is completely trustworthy.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What did a prophet do? (*shared God's message with the people*)
2. What did God tell Zechariah to collect from the people? (*silver and gold to make a crown for Joshua, Zech. 6:9*)
3. What was the special message of hope to God's people? (**Zechariah said the Messiah is coming, Zech. 9:9**)
4. Why do you think God spoke this message of hope through Zechariah? *Guide the kids to see that God cares for us. The Israelites were struggling in rebuilding the temple and finding their identity as a people. God reminded them that they are His chosen people.*
5. How can we be encouraged to obey God even when life is difficult? *Help the kids understand that God has given us hope for a future eternity with Him, but we also get to be part of His kingdom here on this earth. Our obedience flows out of our love for Him and for what He has done for us.*
6. How do we know Jesus is the Messiah? *Guide kids to understand that Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, and God showed other people that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus perfectly fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, such as those found in today's story, and did miracles to prove His identity as God's Son. Jesus perfectly obeyed all the law, showing us exactly who God is.*

SAY • Zechariah had a message of hope for God's people. God had not forgotten His people. He would punish their enemies and keep His promises. **Zechariah said the Messiah is coming.** The people would be united with God and He would never forsake them.

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

LOW PREP

- index cards
- crayons and markers
- individually wrapped tea bags
- tape

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

- large piece of cardboard or wood
- variety of objects (cotton ball, toy car, paper towel roll, coins, so forth)

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Give tea

Distribute the supplies. Ask kids to write *The Messiah has come. He is Jesus!* on index cards. Give kids time to decorate their cards. Let them each choose a tea bag and tape it to their cards. Consider including a stamp or sticker with your church's information.

SAY • The people in Southeast Asia love to serve tea to their guests. We'll share tea bags with friends and tell them about Jesus. This is a way that we can be on mission.

OPTION 2: Roller races

Use a piece of cardboard or wood to form a ramp from the table to the floor. Provide a variety of objects for the kids to try rolling down the ramp. Let the kids make predictions about which items will get to the bottom of the ramp the fastest.

SAY • Some of these items rolled much slower than others. Sometimes it was easy to guess which things would get to the bottom first, but did any of the items surprise you? Sometimes we think we know exactly how God is going to make things work out. Sometimes He surprises us. God always keeps His promises, but we don't always know when those promises will be fulfilled. God is infinitely wiser than we are. His timing is perfect. We can trust God in all things.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring 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.

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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—working frequently 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."



“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.

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.

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. As kids arrive, ask them to share about a time they were asked to do something they thought was too difficult for them to do.

SAY • Today we will learn about a time when God helped His people when they were in danger. Through this story we can remember that even when we feel alone or it seems no one is able to help us, God is always there. He is our help in times of trouble.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- “The Queen Bee” activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete “The Queen Bee” activity page. Kids will examine the different women pictured and circle the woman they would choose to be queen. Invite a few kids to explain their thinking.

SAY • Our story today is about an unlikely girl who became a queen. We will learn how all of this happened according to God’s plan so that His people would be safe. God is always in control.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Host a dinner party

Invite the kids to throw a pretend dinner party. Allow them to set the table with the plates and utensils. They may also distribute food.

- toy food
- plastic plates
- plastic utensils
- napkins

SAY • If you could invite anyone you want to your dinner party, whom would you invite? What would you talk about? Do you think you would invite your greatest enemy? Today we'll hear how Queen Esther hosted a dinner party for the king, and she invited her enemy. Let's find out more!

OPTION 2: Queen (or king) for a day

Invite the kids to sit in a circle. The first kid will say, "If I were queen (or king) for a day I would _____," and complete the sentence with one thing she would do if she were a queen. The next kid will say the same phrase and repeat what the first kid said as well.

SAY • It might be fun to imagine what we would do if we were kings and queens. People naturally want to be in control. Sometimes it's hard to realize that we're ultimately not in control at all! ***God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.*** We'll hear a story about Queen Esther today. Her people were in danger, and God had put her in a place to help them. God was in control of the situation, but He still called Esther to step out in faith.

LOW PREP

Tip: For large groups, you may wish to restart after every seven or eight kids, so that each kid can remember all the phrases that were said before him.

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: Decorate the room to look like the site of a home remodeling project. Stack lumber on one side of the stage. Place a couple sawhorses near the front of the room. Use foam board to simulate things like drywall sheets, unhinged doors, or even windows. You may 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
- hammer

[Leader enters wearing a tool belt and safety glasses and carrying a hammer.]

LEADER • Hey, everyone! My name is [*your name*], and I'm so glad to have your help today. As you can see, I've been working on renovating my house, and it's a total mess! Walls need to be torn down, electrical wires need to be replaced, and even the foundation needs to be patched up. When I first bought this house as a fixer-upper, I didn't realize just how much work it was going to be to get it ready. I know it will be worth it in the long run, but whew! I'll take all

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

the help I can get. I hope you brought your hammers and screwdrivers!

One of the most important things I have for my renovation project is a blueprint. The blueprint is the plan for my house—what it's supposed to look like and all the things I need to consider when tearing out walls and rebuilding new ones. In any project like this one, it's necessary to have a plan.

Did you know that God has a plan too? Since the beginning of time, God planned to rescue His people from sin. Even before God created us He knew that we would sin and be in desperate need of a Rescuer. There is nothing that can stop God's plan from happening. I have a Bible story for us today that tells us more. Do you want to hear it? Great! Let's get started.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • I use blueprints to help me see the big picture of my house building plan. As we listen to our Bible story, it's also useful to have a big picture question to help us understand how the individual story fits in to the overall story of the Bible. Today let's try to ask the question: ***who is in control of everything?*** Think about this question as you listen to the story and we'll find out the answer in a few minutes.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • Long before our story took place, God made a promise to Abraham. God chose Abraham to

become the father of a great nation, the nation of Israel. God promised that through Abraham's family God would bless the entire world. For hundreds of years the Israelites battled against sin. Sometimes they followed God, but most of the time they were unfaithful to Him. Eventually, God disciplined the people by exiling them to Babylon. God promised that after 70 years in captivity the Israelites would finally return to their home. We've learned that the captives came home and the temple was rebuilt. But not all of God's people returned to Israel. Some stayed in the nation of Persia. That's where our story picks up today.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to 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 • We often think of queens as powerful women who live in the lap of luxury, surrounded by riches and nice things. However, becoming a queen in Persia was may not have been a luxurious or nice prospect for Esther. She would have been forced to become queen whether or not she wanted to marry the king. Esther's life likely would have been much easier if the king never decided to bring her in as a possible queen. But **God made Esther a queen to protect His people.**

The Jews needed someone to speak up for them—to rescue them. Approaching the king without being called in could have led to Esther's death. Although she was afraid, she was willing to do whatever it took

- Bibles
- "Esther Saved Her People" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

to protect her people. God's plan was to send Jesus through the family of Judah. God cannot be caught by surprise, and His plans cannot be stopped. By saving His people from death, God made His own name great throughout the land of Persia.

Christ connection

LEADER • Esther's life reminds us of Jesus, who was also willing to die to save God's people according to God's plan—and He really did die! Do you remember our big picture question? ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.***

God was not surprised by Haman's plot against the Jews. 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.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided 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 1" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about whether or not some things happen just by chance. How does it give us hope to know God is involved in all parts of history and our lives?

• "Unit 18, Session 1"
Questions from Kids
Video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Ask kids to sit. Kids will stand when they hear a phrase that describes their family. Read the following statements and wait for kids to stand. After kids stand,

• "Meet the Hite
Family" missions
video

Tip: Be sensitive to
possible trauma.

instruct them to sit again for the next statement. (Sample statements: 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.)

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 an island nation in Southeast Asia. The Hites follow God's Word and believe He is in control.

Play the "Meet the Hite Family" missions video.

Key passage (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster
• "The God of All Grace"
song

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Peter 5:10. Then sing "The God of All Grace."

LEADER • God planned the events in Esther's life, and He is still in control of what is happening now. God is the one who restores, establishes, strengthens, and supports us. He will never leave you on your own.

Sing (4 minutes)

• "Great is Thy
Faithfulness" song

LEADER • God wants us to know Him and enjoy being with Him. He is always faithful to us.

Sing together "Great is Thy Faithfulness."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Dear God, thank You for making a way for us to live forever in Your kingdom. Help us be faithful to 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

Tip: To increase inclusivity, use sign language in your motions.

Develop hand motions to help the kids learn the key passage. Stand in a circle with the kids and teach them the motions. Choose a kid to do the motion for the first word; then the kid to her right will do the motion for the second word, and so on until kids say the whole verse. Repeat as time allows.

SAY • Have you ever gone through something really difficult and you weren't sure if you would ever get through it? Our key passage reminds us that God will restore us and strengthen us. God knows that we are weak, but our weaknesses point us back to our need for Jesus. When life is hard we know that we can't do anything apart from God.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find the Book of Esther. Explain that Esther is in the Old Testament, and the last book in the History division. Ask for a volunteer to explain what this division contains. (*the history of God's people, from the time they first entered the promised land through their exile and return*)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What secret did Esther keep from the king? (*She was a Jew, Esth. 2:10*)
2. Why was Mordecai upset? (*He learned that Haman planned to kill all the Jews, Esth. 4:1-3*)
3. What could have happened to Esther as a result of her going before the king uninvited? (*She could have been put to death, Esth. 4:11*)
4. Why do you think Esther was willing to die to save her people? *Help the kids see that Esther understood that she had been made queen for this reason. She understood that God was working through her life and spent days fasting and praying about the issue. God gave her courage to stand up for her people.*
5. Esther spoke up for her people. Who speaks up for us today? *Explain that when we trust in Jesus, He speaks to God the Father on our behalf. When we are joined to Jesus, He gives us His perfect righteousness and obedience. (Heb. 7:25)*
6. How can you speak up for a friend in need? *Guide kids to think about situations where they may see people being mistreated, such as bullying at school. Remind them that God has commanded us to treat everyone with love and to protect those in need. Brainstorm things they could say to help others.*

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

SAY • God made Esther a queen to protect His people

from Haman's evil plan. 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.

LOW PREP

- "Community Map" printable
- world map
- yarn
- tape
- crayons

Tip: Tell parents that this month you will gather donations of new crayons, colored pencils, and other small classroom supplies to bring to a special needs class. Kids will wrap the supplies later in the month.

- "Paper Puppets" printables, 1 per kid
- scissors
- glue
- craft sticks

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Track on a map

On large world map, help kids find the countries of Ukraine, China, Taiwan, and 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, crayons, 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 obey God and tell others about Him wherever they go too. As time allows, let them color their maps.

OPTION 2: Paper people puppets

Assist the kids in cutting out the Bible story people from the printable. Instruct the kids to glue each person onto a craft stick. Form small groups of three to five kids and allow them to use their puppets to retell the story within their groups.

SAY • **God made Esther a queen to protect His people.** At the time, it seemed like all hope was lost for the Jews. They fasted to show they were depending on God's faithfulness, and God acted. God showed Himself to be faithful to His people and protected them from their enemies.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring 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 www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

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. They completed 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. As kids arrive, ask them to share about a time when they tried a new activity. Did anyone encourage and support them as they learned?

SAY • Sometimes when we try to accomplish something, we get a lot of encouragement from the people around us. Other times people might not be so encouraging. Today we'll hear how Nehemiah encouraged the Jews to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem despite some pretty scary enemies who tried over and over to get them to quit.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Name that Gate" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Name that Gate" activity page. Instruct kids to use the picture clues to figure out the names of the different gates.

SAY • Some of those might seem like odd names for the gate into a city, but each is a name that was really used when Jerusalem's walls and gates were rebuilt. We'll learn more about that today.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: One-handed relay

Form two teams and instruct teams to line up on one side of the room next to a pile of adult-sized clothing for each team. Both piles must have the same amount of clothes. The first kid on each team will put on the clothing using only one hand before running to the other end and back. She will then use one hand to remove the adult clothes and give them to the next kid. The first team whose players complete the relay wins.

SAY • Was it hard putting on the clothes with one hand?

In our story we're going to hear that the Jews rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, sometimes using only one hand. We'll find out what they were doing with other hands when we hear the Bible story.

OPTION 2: Create something new

Provide a pile of clean recyclable materials for the kids and invite them to try to make something useful out of it.

SAY • This pile of materials may have looked like trash at first, but you were able to create some really cool things out of it! In our story today we'll learn that Nehemiah wanted to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The walls had been completely destroyed in some places. Many people didn't think it was possible to make the city safe again. We'll find out what happened in a few minutes.

LOW PREP

• adult clothing
(button-down shirt,
pants, tie or scarf,
blazer, and so forth)

• clean recyclable
materials (cardboard
boxes, egg cartons,
paper towels rolls,
newspaper, string,
tape, so forth)

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
• hammer

[Leader enters wearing a tool belt and safety glasses and carrying a hammer.]

LEADER • Hey, friends! Glad to see you back this week.

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

We've got a lot of work to do on my house today. Last week we talked about using blueprints to help us know how to build a house. It's important to have a plan before you begin the work. Sturdy walls are also important when renovating a house. Walls keep rain, wind, animals, and bugs out of your house, but they also provide all the structural support for the roof! Weak walls mean a house that is unsafe from intruders, but also unsafe in general due to the risk of collapse.

Sturdy walls were important to God's people too. Their walls weren't house walls though, they were city walls. I have a story for you today about how God's people, the Jews, had returned to Jerusalem after

the exile in Babylon, but the city's walls had been destroyed. The people needed new walls to protect them from enemies. They needed to rebuild those walls, and fast! Let's hear more!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Last week we answered our big picture question.

Who is in control of everything? We learned that ***God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.*** That means that even when we face difficult or confusing situations, we can trust that God will work through them to glorify Himself and bless us. Nothing catches God off guard and all His plans succeed.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

· Giant Timeline

LEADER • The Jews, God's people, had been taken into exile in Babylon for 70 years. At the end of that 70-year period, many Jews returned to Jerusalem to begin rebuilding the temple. Some Jews remained in Persia, including a young girl named Esther. Last week we learned that **God made Esther a queen to protect His people.** Esther stopped Haman's evil plan to destroy the Jews living in Persia. Several years later a man named Nehemiah, the cupbearer to the Persian king, wanted to learn how his fellow Jews were doing in Jerusalem. That is where our story begins.

· 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 • Nehemiah had a special job that put him in close contact with the king of Persia. This is no coincidence! Because of that relationship with the king, Nehemiah was able to ask permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. God uses even small details, like Nehemiah’s job, to make His plans happen. ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.***

Throughout this story, Nehemiah prayed. He prayed when he heard the news that Jerusalem was still in ruins. He prayed before he spoke with the king. He prayed as the work on the wall began and when their enemies threatened them. Nehemiah knew that the work could not be completed without God’s help, so he begged God again and again to help the people build. God answered Nehemiah’s prayer and blessed the people working on the wall.

God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls.

The Jews were God’s chosen people. God had set them apart to receive a blessing and to be a blessing to the rest of the world. This promise goes all the way back to Abraham when God told him that he would be the father of a great nation. God hadn’t forgotten this promise, and He was going to rebuild His people.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Christ connection

LEADER • Nehemiah dealt with some pretty intimidating enemies. They continued to try to provoke Nehemiah and the rest of the Jews, hoping they

would be too scared to finish the work on the wall. 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.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 18, Session 2” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think of ways God protects us today. Can you think of a time God protected you in the past?

• “Unit 18, Session 2”
Questions from Kids
Video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Display the Hite family photo and point to each member of the family as you introduce him or her. 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 no matter what. 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 together for the Hites.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Peter 5:10. Then sing “The God of All Grace.”

• Key Passage Poster
• “The God of All Grace”
song

LEADER • Our key passage comes from 1 Peter. Peter wrote this letter to Christians who had been scattered

around the province of Asia due to persecution. Peter wrote to encourage them in their suffering, reminding them that God was still in control. We can take comfort in this verse too. No matter what kind of hard things we might face in our lives, we can believe that God is with us, and He is bigger than anything we could ever be afraid of. ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.***

Sing (4 minutes)

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

LEADER • No detail is too small for God, and no problem is too big for Him. No matter what we face, God is in control and will use our lives to glorify Himself and bless His people.

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

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, we know that You are the great awe-inspiring God who keeps His promises to those who love You. Thank You for Nehemiah and how You were at work through him to build the walls around Jerusalem. Help us to step out in faith this week and do the things You have called us to do 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: 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
- craft sticks
- markers
- masking tape

Provide craft sticks, markers, and masking tape. Help kids write the key passage on craft sticks. Then tape them together in the correct order.

SAY • God helped the Jews rebuild the wall. They could not have done it on their own. The Lord strengthened His people for the work He had called them to do. Sometimes God calls us to do hard things too. It could be something small like talking to the new kid at school and making her feel welcome. Or it could be something big like moving overseas to be a missionary. Either way, God always helps us do the things He has called us to do.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Nehemiah 1–6. Ask a volunteer to tell you if Nehemiah is the Old Testament or the New Testament. (*Old Testament*) Explain that this book is in the historical division of the Bible. It tells a true story that actually took place when the Jews returned to their homeland. Point out the city of Jerusalem on the Old Testament Kingdoms Map. (*H5*)

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. What was Nehemiah's job before coming back to Jerusalem? (*He was the king's cupbearer, Neh. 1:11*)
2. What was the biggest challenge the Jews faced in rebuilding the walls? (*Their enemies tried to intimidate them to make them stop, Neh. 4:1-4*)
3. How many days did it take to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem? (*52, Neh. 6:15*)
4. Why do you think it was important to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem? *Help the kids understand that a city's walls and gates were important for the security of the people. Without walls they would be vulnerable to attack.*
5. Why do you think it is significant that the Jews were all working together? *Explain that the people needed each other. They worked together and mutually encouraged one another along the way. As believers, God calls us to be united and work together for His kingdom. We need each other!*
6. How can you be an encouragement to someone this week? *Guide kids to think practically. Discuss ways they can cheer for their friends at sporting events, show kindness to their siblings, or help their parents by doing chores and obeying joyfully. Discuss why encouraging others is important and how it can demonstrate God's love for people.*

SAY • God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

Even though God was with His people while they rebuilt the walls, the work was still difficult. God doesn't promise that our lives will be easy. He does promise that He will be with us and He will supply the strength we need each day.

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

LOW PREP

• “Hite Family Photo”
printable

Tip: Tell parents that you will be gathering new crayons, colored pencils, and other small classroom supplies to bring to a special needs class. Kids will wrap the supplies for this mission project in the coming weeks.

• paper
• pen

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Guess the object

Show kids the Hite family photo again. 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 communicate with special computers. The Hites help kids in Taiwan with special needs to know that God loves them and has a special plan for them.

Remind the group that we should be like Jesus in caring for and including people with special needs.

OPTION 2: A remnant remaining

Instruct everyone to stand in a circle. Read a list of criteria, one statement at a time. Kids who meet that criterion must keep standing, and those who don’t will sit down. Continue reading the statements until only one person remains standing. (Sample criteria: born in this city, owns a pet, has a brother, can play a musical instrument, is on a sports team, and so forth)

SAY • Two to three million Jews were taken into exile in Babylon. But only about 50,000 people returned to Jerusalem. That’s not very many! A *remnant* is a small remaining number of people. Do you think it surprised God that only 50,000 people were left of the nation of Israel? Of course not. ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.*** God was even

in control over the number of Jews who returned to Jerusalem out of exile. He would work through those people to fulfill the promised blessing He had made to Abraham so many years earlier—sending the Messiah, Jesus.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring 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)
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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 www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject.

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

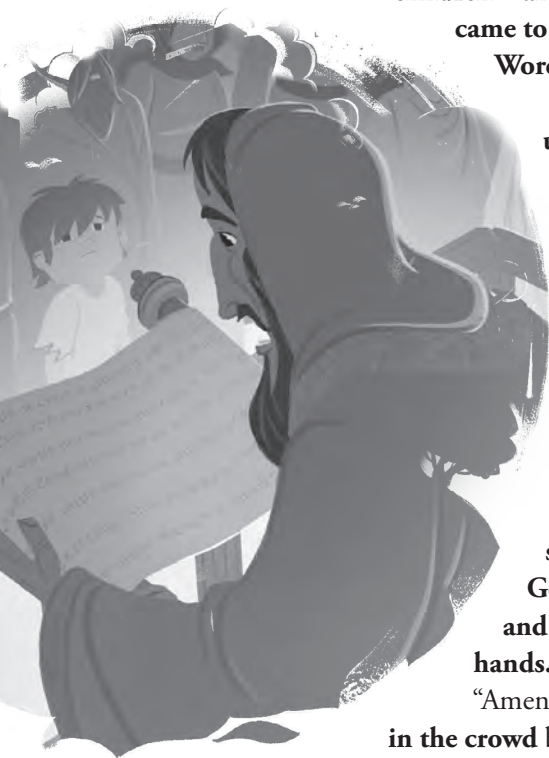
The walls around Jerusalem were finished—at last! With God's help, the people finished rebuilding the walls and the city gates in just 52 days. **All the people in Jerusalem gathered together early in the morning at one of the city gates. Men, women, and children—anyone who could understand—came to listen 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. As kids arrive, ask them to share some things that bring them joy.

SAY • A lot of things make us happy. Spending time with friends, playing a fun game, or getting to go somewhere special are all things that bring happiness to our lives. God is the ultimate source of our joy, and the Bible says that the joy of the Lord is our strength. We'll hear more about that in our story.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Turned to Joy" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Turned to Joy" activity page. Kids will change one letter at a time to transform the word *SAD* into the word *JOY*.

SAY • The Bible teaches that God is able to turn our sadness into joy. We know that He is in control of all things, which means He can use even sad situations to glorify Himself and bless us. In our story today, we will hear about a time God's people were very sad, but God wanted them to celebrate instead.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Party hats

Provide a sheet of construction paper to each kid. Help the kids draw a large circle on their papers. You may choose to use sturdy paper plates as templates for kids to trace around. Allow the kids to decorate their sheets inside the circles they drew. Instruct the kids to cut out their circles, and then cut a slit from the edge of the circle to the center. Form the slitted circles into cone shapes by overlapping the two sides of the circle and taping them in place.

SAY • Today we will hear about a time God's people had a big party. What do you think they might have been celebrating? We'll hear more in our Bible story.

LOW PREP

- colored construction paper, 1 sheet per kid
- scissors
- markers
- tape
- sturdy paper plates (optional)

OPTION 2: How would you respond?

Read different scenarios. Kids will draw a face on a small dry erase board to represent how they would feel. They may hold up their pictures for everyone to see. Invite kids explain why they picked that emotion.

Suggested scenarios: getting a cool gift for your birthday; getting sick during a day off from school, finding out your pet is sick; your best friend coming over to spend the night; finding a five dollar bill in your pocket; waking up from a nightmare; and so forth.

SAY • In our story, the Israelites heard the Word of God read. It made them cry because they realized that they had sinned against God. **God's people repented and promised to be faithful**, and Ezra told them that it was a happy day. They could celebrate because of how faithful God had been to them.

- small dry erase boards
- dry erase markers
- erasers

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
• hammer

[Leader enters wearing a tool belt and safety glasses and carrying a hammer.]

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

LEADER • Hey, friends! It's so great to see you again. Thanks for joining me to help with this renovation project. It's a lot of hard work, but I know it's going to pay off in the end. My house is going to be so inviting and such a wonderful place to entertain and care for people. I can't wait to host a party for all my neighbors and friends. I love having parties. It's so fun to prepare delicious snacks and decorate. Do you like having parties? What are some of your favorite things to eat at a party?

That reminds me of our Bible story for today. We'll learn that God's people repented and promised to be faithful. Then they had a huge feast to celebrate God's goodness to them!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Our big picture question is, *who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.* It's a good thing that God is in control! He knows what is best for us and for the world He has created. We can trust Him to lead us into good things. As you listen to the story try to think about how God is in control.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

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

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • We have been learning about the time when God's people were in exile in Babylon and when God allowed them to return to Jerusalem. We have learned that **God made Esther a queen to protect His people.** Several years later, God brought His people out of exile and helped them to return to their own land. **God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.** Today we are going to hear about when **God's people repented and promised to be faithful.**

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.”

LEADER • When Ezra read the Word of God to the people it was as if he was holding up a mirror for all the people. As they listened to the laws that God had given to His people, they realized they had disobeyed

• Bibles
• “God's People Repented” video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster
• Story Point Poster

God. Their sin made them very sad. How do you feel when you know you have done something wrong? **God's people repented and promised to be faithful.** They wanted to obey God because they loved Him.

One part of the story that might have been surprising was Ezra's response to the people's sadness. Ezra told the people not to be sad, but to celebrate instead. You see, feeling sad about sin is normal, and often that is the right way to feel. But when we know we have sinned, and we repent, we can also feel joy knowing that God has forgiven us and loves us. When we repent, God is ready to make us new and give us clean hearts. That is wonderful news!

When we repent and trust in Jesus, we're adopted into God's family! We don't need to feel guilty or ashamed of our sin, because God takes our sin away. We will still feel sad sometimes, but we can also take comfort in God's goodness to us. Now, we obey God out of our deep love for Him. We know that we are imperfect and we will still choose sin sometimes, but because of Jesus we are forgiven and set free from sin.

Christ connection

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

LEADER • 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.

That reminds me of our big picture question. ***Who is in control of everything? God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.*** God has the

power to change our hearts. That's not something that we can do on our own. We are completely dependent on God to be at work in us and to give us faith in Him.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 18, Session 3" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about confessing our sins. Guide them to discuss why God wants us to tell Him that we are sorry. Why is it hard to admit when you've done something wrong?

• "Unit 18, Session 3"
Questions from Kids
Video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

LEADER • Today, we learned that **God's people repented and promised to be faithful.** God uses His people's faithfulness in big ways. Taiwan Sunshine is 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 a beautiful part of God's story of faithfulness.

• "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. Then sing "The God of All Grace."

• Key Passage Poster
• "The God of All Grace"
song

LEADER • God has shown us incredible grace. We are sinners who deserve punishment, but God poured out punishment on Jesus instead of us. What a gift that is! Our key passage reminds us that we are called into eternity with Christ. One day we will see Jesus

face to face. We will worship at the throne of God forever and ever.

Sing (4 minutes)

• “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” song

LEADER • Psalm 115:1 says, “Not to us, LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory because of your faithful love, because of your truth.” We worship God because He alone deserves our praise. He has shown Himself to be faithful to us again and again. Let’s stand and sing to Him now.

Sing together “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, we are so thankful for Your Word. You have shown us who You are and what You are like within the pages of the Bible. It’s such a gift that we are able to read it and know You better. We pray that as we read Your Word, we would be changed. Transform us into the image of Jesus. Help us to love You more each day, and may our obedience flow out of our love for 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: 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
- paper
- markers
- string
- scissors

Distribute paper, markers, and a 6-inch string to all the kids. Instruct them to write out the key passage on their piece of paper and then roll it up like a scroll. Kids can tie it with the string.

SAY • Back in Ezra's day, the Bible wasn't bound all together as one big book like it is today. Instead they used lots of scrolls with God's Word on them. However it is written, God's Word encourages us today because it reminds us that God restores His people. Keep working to remember our key passage so you can always remember God's faithfulness to us.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Nehemiah 8–13. Remind the kids that the Book of Nehemiah is in the historical division of the Old Testament. Ask a volunteer to tell you which books come before and after Nehemiah. (*Ezra before, Esther after*) Remind kids that Nehemiah had led the people to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. Ezra was a scribe who had devoted himself to studying and teaching God's Word.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Who read God's Word to all of the people? (*Ezra, Neh. 8:2*)
2. How did the people respond when they heard God's words? (*They cried, Neh. 8:9*)
3. What did Ezra tell the people to do when they got home? (*prepare a feast and share with their neighbors, Neh. 8:10*)
4. Why do you think the people responded to the Word of God by crying? *Guide the kids to see that the people realized that they had sinned against God. They had fallen short of what God had called them to, and they knew that they deserved to be punished. Their sin separated them from God and that made them very sad. (Isa. 59:2)*
5. Why did God want the people to celebrate instead? *God had been incredibly kind to His people. He restored them to their land and revealed their sin so they could repent and obey Him. His faithfulness was greater than their sin, and He wanted them to be happy about His goodness. Their celebration honored God's work.*
6. What can you do when you realize that you have sinned? *Help kids understand that when we sin we must confess our sin and repent. Repent means to turn away from sin and turn to Jesus. God has shown us grace and has promised to forgive our sin when we come to Him with a repentant heart. (Acts 3:19)*

SAY • God's people repented and promised to be faithful.

When we sin, we can repent and confess our sin to God. And just like the Israelites celebrated God's faithfulness, we can celebrate because God has shown us mercy and grace!

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

LOW PREP

- paper
- marker

Tip: Tell parents that you will be gathering new crayons, colored pencils, and other small classroom supplies to bring to a special needs class. Kids will wrap the supplies for this mission project the following week.

- painting smocks
- washable paint
- large sheet of paper
- paintbrushes
- cups of water

Tip: Use washable markers for a lower prep, lower mess activity.

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Pray for missionaries

Form two groups of kids. Give one group a sign labeled *Hite Family*. Give the other group a sign labeled *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 that we can be a part of 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 that we can pray for their family and for their ministry at Taiwan Sunshine.

Ask kids in each group to make a list of ways to pray for either the family or the ministry. Encourage them to discuss things they remember from the videos and missions lessons. Allow time for each group to share the requests they've written down and then take time to pray. Ask for volunteers from each group to say a prayer aloud.

OPTION 2: Expected outcomes

Provide painting smocks to protect clothing. Set out jars of paint. Give each of the kids a large piece of paper and a paintbrush. Allow them to experiment mixing colors to make new colors.

SAY • Were you pretty confident that you knew which color you would get when you mixed yellow and blue together? Every time we mix those two colors, we get green. Depending on how much blue or yellow you use you might get a different shade, but it'll always be green. We can know some things for certain. We can also have confidence that God is going to keep

His promises. He has promised to make a way out of sin for us, and He has done that through His Son, Jesus. We know that when we confess and repent of our sin He is faithful to forgive us.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring 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)
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TEACH THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
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APPLY THE STORY
(25–30 MINUTES)
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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.

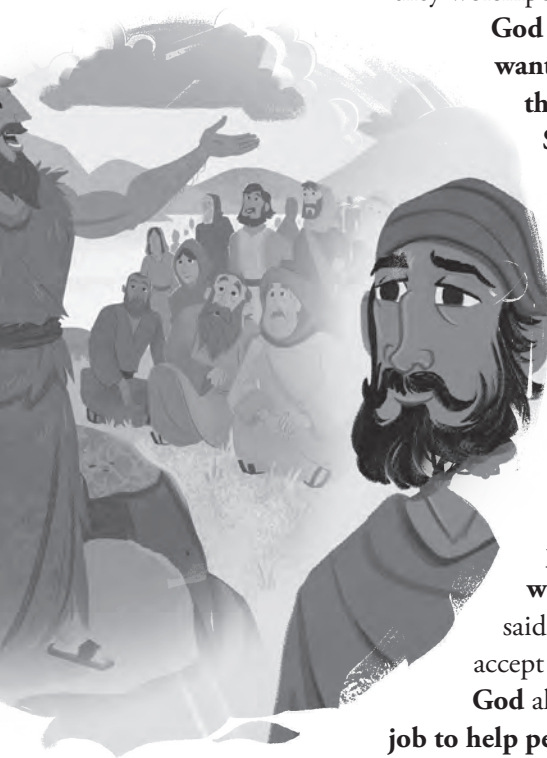
God loved His people, and He wanted them to be holy. He wanted them to obey Him completely.

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. As kids arrive, ask them to share about a time they helped prepare for company coming over.

SAY • It's important to prepare for someone who is coming to stay with you. You may even want to prepare a special meal. Today we're going to hear that **Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah**. This was no ordinary house guest! Let's get ready to hear more.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Who Is It?" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Who Is It?" activity page. Kids will draw lines connecting the dots in numerical order to reveal a picture of John the Baptist telling people about Jesus.

SAY • In our story today, we will hear about a prophet who told God's people about a messenger who would prepare people for the Messiah. Do you know who the messenger is? We will learn more about that soon.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Prepare the way

Invite the kids to draw pictures that represent reasons someone might not come to church. Then invite the kids to brainstorm ways to help people overcome those obstacles to attend church. Talk about ways we can try to prepare people to hear about Jesus.

SAY • There are a lot of reasons people might choose not to come to church. We can invite people and try to make it easy for them to come, but some obstacles might still remain. In our story we'll hear more about a messenger that Malachi prophesied about. This messenger was sent to prepare for Jesus' arrival.

LOW PREP

- paper
- markers

Suggested reasons:
live too far away,
too busy, too shy,
and so forth.

OPTION 2: Crazy directions

Create a sign with a large arrow on it. Instruct the class to stand on one side of the room. They must get to the other side, but they must follow the direction that the arrow is pointing. Continue directing them around the room by changing which way the arrow is pointing. After many twists and turns, let them reach the wall on the other side of the room. Play another round, but this time allow the kids to walk straight to the opposite wall with a straight path.

- arrow sign

SAY • Was it frustrating for you when I kept changing the direction of the arrow? In our story today, we'll hear that Malachi prophesied about a messenger who would come from God. This messenger would point people to Jesus and help make their paths straight.

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 tool belt and safety glasses and carrying a hammer..]

LEADER • Hey, everyone! Boy, am I glad to see you kids.

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

This house renovation project sure has been a huge job, and it's been so nice to have your company as I work. Sometimes I get so focused on the details of the building project, that I lose sight of the big picture. Sometimes it's helpful to take a step back and remember how all the different pieces will come together. Almost like working a giant jigsaw puzzle!

In our story today, God's people needed a reminder of the big picture that God had planned for them. They had begun choosing sin again, so God sent a prophet to speak to them and guide them to obey God. God wanted them to be ready for the coming Messiah, and He spoke through the prophet Malachi to help prepare His people.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Our big picture question has helped me understand our Bible stories these past few weeks. ***Who is in control of everything?*** Does anyone remember the answer? That's right! ***God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth.*** God's people had been through some pretty hard times, but no matter what, God was still in control. We might not always understand God's plan or His timing, but we can trust that ***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 • We have learned a lot about the time when God's people returned to their land after the exile. We know that **God used Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.** Last week we heard that **God's people repented and promised to be faithful.** As often happens, God's people chose sin once more. They turned away from God and turned toward selfishness instead. In our story today we'll learn that **Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah.**

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to 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 • Have you ever been in the car with your parents and saw a sign that said, "Warning: Road Closed

· Bibles
· "Malachi the Prophet" video
· Big Picture Question Poster
· Bible Story Picture Poster
· Story Point Poster

Ahead”? Do you think it would be very smart to keep driving? Of course not! You would probably end up crashing your car because of a big hole in the road. Warning signs are meant to keep us safe and help us make the right choice about what to do.

The Bible has warnings too. God loves us and wants us to make choices that honor Him. The Book of Malachi contains lots of warnings. People were sinning and had turned their backs on God. In this short book, God warned the people that a day was coming when He would judge them for their sin. He was essentially telling them that they faced danger ahead. It was time to stop and turn around—to turn back to God.

Malachi called God’s people to repent to prepare for the Messiah. God sent a prophet to point out the people’s sin because He loved them. God knew that the way His people were living was hurting them. Their hearts did not fully love Him. God knows what is best for us; He is best for us! He wants to restore our broken, sinful hearts and bring us back to Him.

Christ connection

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

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 them ready for a final Messenger, Jesus Christ. Jesus would bring good news of salvation. Four hundred years would go by between the last words of Malachi and the beginning of the New Testament. The next

time God spoke directly to people, it would be through angels proclaiming the births of two special babies.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the “Unit 18, Session 4” questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about people they know who may not love Jesus. How can we share the gospel with our friends and family?

· “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.

· “Hey from Logan
Hite” missions video

Show the “Hey from Logan Hite” missions video. Lead kids to pray for the requests Logan mentioned.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together 1 Peter 5:10. Then sing “The God of All Grace.”

· Key Passage Poster
· “The God of All Grace”
song

LEADER • It’s not easy to be holy. Sometimes we have to make hard choices. The rest of the world may hate us because we love Jesus. But God promises that our suffering for the sake of the gospel will be worth it. He will restore, establish, strengthen, and support us. God is the One to sustain us and help us live for Him.

• “Great Is Thy
Faithfulness” song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • God wants us to worship Him with our whole hearts. He is always faithful and deserves all our praise. Let’s sing to Him together now. Sing together “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • God, we want to give our lives to You. We want to worship You and glorify You with everything we do, say, and think. Forgive us for the times when we haven’t loved You with our whole hearts. Restore us to the joy of our salvation. Remind us of Your great love for us. Please turn our hearts toward You alone. 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
- dry erase board
- marker
- sticky notes
- Bibles

Write the key passage on a dry erase board prior to the session. Place sticky notes over half of the words. Go through the key passage word by word with the kids, allowing the kids to raise their hands if they know the next word that is covered. If they need help encourage them to find the verse in their Bibles for help.

SAY • Great job memorizing our key passage. Why do you think it's important to memorize God's Word? [*Give kids an opportunity to answer.*] When we memorize Scripture, we have God's perfect Word with us at all times. We can be prepared for any spiritual battles, and fight temptation with truth.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

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

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find the Book of Malachi. Explain that Malachi is a minor prophet in the Old Testament. It is the last book of the Old Testament, and there were 400 years in between the prophecies of Malachi and the prophet John the Baptist. That means God's people did not have any prophetic messages from God for 400 years!

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. Who was the last prophet in the Old Testament?
(*Malachi*)
2. What kind of sacrifices were the people offering?
(*They brought lame or sick animals, Mal. 1:8*)
3. God promised that when the Messiah comes the righteous would jump like what kind of animal?
(*calves, Mal. 4:2*)
4. Why was God so unhappy with the people's sacrifices? *Guide the kids to see that God's people were going through the motions of worship, but their hearts were not in it. By offering sick and lame animals, they communicated that they did not believe God deserved their best. They were trying to save their best animals for themselves. God always deserves our best.*
5. When is it easy to obey God? When is it difficult to obey Him? *Guide kids to see that obedience is easier when our hearts are full of love for God and those around us love Him too. Help them see that obedience can be difficult when we are surrounded by people who do not love God. But God promises to be with us and strengthen us. He promises that the reward will be great for our obedience.*
6. What can we do when we realize that we are living in sin? *When we confess our sin to God, we can ask Him to restore us. Jesus had paid the price for our sin once and for all, so we can have forgiveness through Him.*

SAY • God's people had grown lazy. It would have been better if they locked up the temple so the people couldn't make empty sacrifices. God wants us to worship Him out of love. **Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah.**

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

LOW PREP

- crayons and markers
- stickers
- white gift bags
- school supplies

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

- carpet samples
- blindfolds

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Gift school supplies

Provide crayons, markers, and stickers for kids to decorate gift bags. When finished, ask kids to wrap new school supplies in tissue paper and place them in the gift bags. Make plans to donate the supplies to a class of kids with special needs in your church or a school in your community. If possible, contact the teacher from the class ahead of time to know which specific classroom supplies the students need most.

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 friends with them. 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: Follow the path

Make a path on the floor using carpet squares. Blindfold a kid and instruct him to follow the path you have made. He should be able to feel the difference if he steps off the path. Allow all the kids to take turns walking the path blindfolded. If kids are struggling to feel the difference between the floor and the carpet squares, allow the kids to remove their shoes and follow the path.

SAY • Was it easy to stay on the path wearing the blindfold? It's hard to know where you're going when you can't

see the road in front of you. **Malachi called God's people to repent to prepare for the Messiah.**

Malachi prophesied that another messenger would prepare the way for Jesus to come. This messenger was John the Baptist, and he would be the last prophet before Jesus.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

• pencils and crayons
• paper
• Bible Story Coloring
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 6–7*)

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*)

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*)

Coming Next Volume!



JESUS THE MESSIAH

God's plan to save people from sin came into sharper focus as Jesus was born at last. From the beginning, Jesus proved that He is the Son of God and that all that was written about Him by the prophets was true. Jesus grew up and began to prepare for His ministry. When Jesus was baptized, God confirmed His sonship. Jesus was subsequently tempted by Satan, but He did not sin. As Jesus traveled throughout Judea, His personal encounters with ordinary people changed their lives in extraordinary ways. Jesus revealed that He was God the Son in human form, living among God's people and bringing salvation in Him alone.



From Adam to Jesus
Matthew 1; Luke 3; John 1



Jesus' Temptation
Matthew 4; Mark 1; Luke 4



Jesus' Early Miracles
Mark 1

The Gospel Project® for Kids

The Gospel Project® for Kids is a Christ-centered Bible study resource that follows a chronological timeline of Bible events—from Genesis to Revelation—over the course of three years. Each week, these stories come to life through video, music, activities, and more as kids connect biblical events to God’s ultimate plan of redemption through Christ. It’s the whole Bible like kids have never seen it before! Check out these products to supplement The Gospel Project for Kids!



Classroom Bible - A one-time investment!

The Gospel Project for Kids: Classroom Bible (005803464) has been designed to align with The Gospel Project for Kids 2018-2021 study plan. Its unique features will help point kids to Jesus. The size, cover, and weight make it a great fit for any child. At an affordable price point, this Bible is great for stocking your ministry’s Bible supply. Order yours at LifeWay.com or call Customer Service (1-800-458-2772) to find out about bulk discounts.

Great resource for home!

Access *The Gospel Project for Kids: Volume 6: A People Restored* Family app inside the LifeWay Kids App, available on the iOS App Store or Google Play.



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