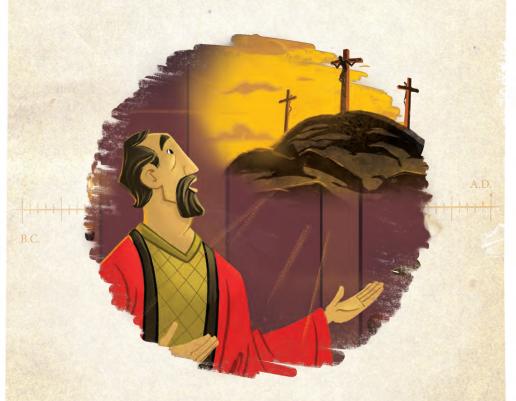


Prophets and Kings

OLDER KIDS LEADER GUIDE





The Gospel Project for Kids: Older Kids Leader Guide

Prophets and Kings

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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guidelines, please visit www.lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

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Write the dates for each session here!

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.



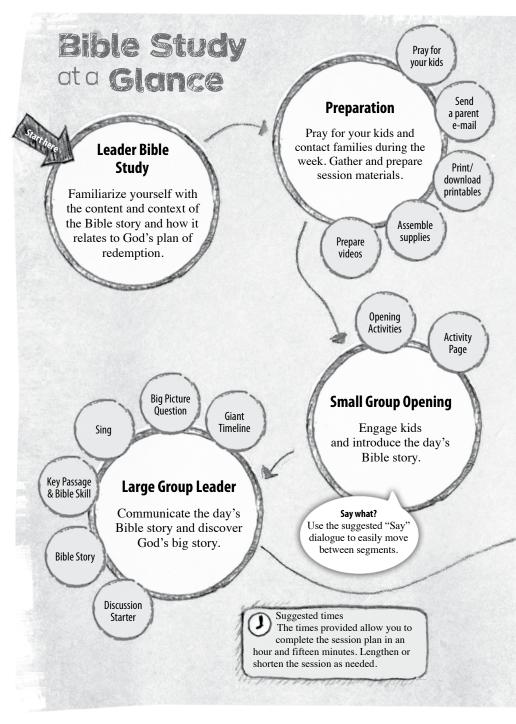
JESUS GIVES.

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.



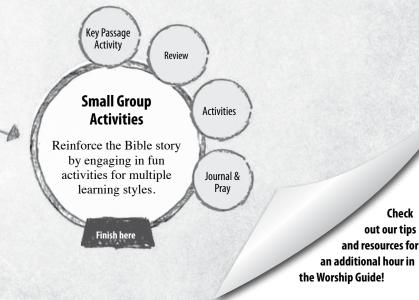
Make it fit

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

- 1) Use the Small Group Opening to welcome kids to Bible study. Kids may work the activity page and/or complete an activity together.
- 2) Transition to an area within your classroom that can be designated as the Large Group Bible story area. Watch the Bible story video or tell the Bible story. Incorporate any large group elements that fit your space and your time constraints.
- 3) Regroup to the small group area by using a countdown video, or gather around a table as you reinforce the Bible story's main point and Christ connection.

TTTT TTTT 1 or more rooms

- 1) Use the Small Group Opening to welcome kids to Bible study. Kids may work the activity page and/or complete an activity together.
- 2) Use the countdown video or other transition signal as you move your small group to join the other small groups in the large group area. Watch the Bible story video or tell the Bible story. Incorporate any large group elements that fit your space and your time constraints.
- 3) Regroup to the small group rooms where you will reinforce what the kids learned from the Large Group Leader, review the key passage, and practice Bible skills.



Check out our tips

Unit 13: God the Revealer

Unit Description:

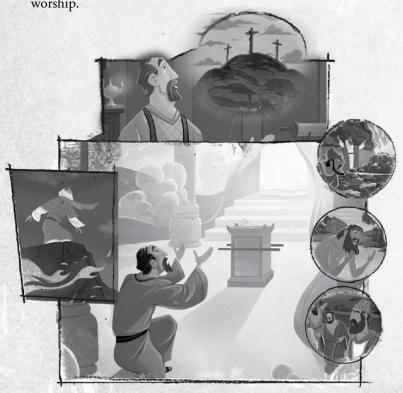
Israel and Judah, governed predominantly by evil kings, continued to disobey God. God sent prophets like Elijah and Isaiah to reveal His power, love, and faithfulness to His people. God reminded them of His plan to send a Rescuer, Jesus, to take away their sin.

Key Passage:

Hebrews 1:1-2

Big Picture Question:

How many gods are there? There is one true God who alone deserves worship.



Unit 13: God the Revealer

Session 1:

Bible Story:

Elijah Confronted Evil Ahab

Bible Passage:

1 Kings 18

Main Point:

The one true God defeated the prophets of Baal.

Session 2:

Bible Story:

Elijah Ran from Jezebel

Bible Passage:

1 Kings 19

Main Point:

God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper.

Session 3:

Bible Story:

Elisha and Naaman

Bible Passage:

2 Kings 5

Main Point:

God healed Naaman's skin disease.

Session 4:

Bible Story:

God Called Isaiah

Bible Passage:

Isaiah 6

Main Point:

Isaiah saw the holy God in His glory.

Session 5:

Bible Story:

Isaiah Preached About the

Messiah

Bible Passage:

Isaiah 53

Main Point:

God said the Messiah would be a suffering servant.

Session 6:

Bible Story:

Hezekiah, Judah's Faithful King

Bible Passage:

2 Kings 18-19

Main Point:

God answered Hezekiah's

prayer.

Elijah Confronted Evil Ahab

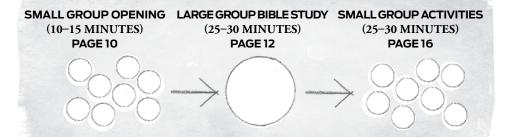
BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Kings 18

MAIN POINT: The one true God defeated the prophets of Baal.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.



Leader BIBLE STUDY

King Ahab was an evil king. In fact, "Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him" (1 Kings 16:33). The things that Ahab did made God angry. God wanted His people to be faithful to Him, but King Ahab led them away from God.

God chose Elijah to get Ahab's attention. In 1 Kings 17, Elijah told Ahab that a drought was coming. God prevented rain in the land for three years. For Ahab, a man who worshiped Baal—the false Canaanite god of rain and fertility—the drought sent a strong message about the one true God.

When God was ready to send rain on the earth, Elijah appeared to Ahab and instructed him to gather the Israelites and the prophets of the false gods at Mount Carmel. Elijah challenged the people to choose: Follow God or follow Baal. They couldn't do both.

Elijah set up a challenge to prove who is the one true God. He faced off against the prophets of Baal. Each group prepared a bull on an altar and called on its deity to send fire from heaven. The prophets of Baal called and cried and cut themselves, but Baal did not answer.

Elijah poured water on and around his altar. He called to God, and God sent fire from heaven. Everything was burned up. The prophets could not deny that the God of Elijah is the one true God, and God sent a great rain to end the drought.

The false god Baal had no power. As you teach kids this week, emphasize that only God—the one true God—has power to help His people and to save them. And He saves them through His Son, Jesus, whose name means "the Lord saves."



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

The BIBLE STORY

Elijah Confronted Evil Ahab

1 Kings 18

Ahab was the king of Israel. He was an evil king. He led the Israelites away from God, and the Israelites worshiped a false god named Baal (BAY uhl). The things King Ahab did made God angry, so God caused a drought. The drought would show King Ahab and all the people that God—not Baal—is powerful and in control of all things.

A drought made life very hard. For three years, no rain fell in the land. The lakes and rivers dried up. People could not grow crops in the fields. Finally, God was ready to send rain.

God sent a prophet named Elijah to give a message to King Ahab. "You have caused this trouble by disobeying God and worshiping false gods," Elijah told him. Then Elijah invited King Ahab, the Israelites, and the prophets who worshiped Baal to gather at Mount Carmel.

Elijah told the people, "Make up your minds! If you believe the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him."

Elijah set up a challenge to show who the one true God is. The prophets of Baal set up an altar for their false god. They prepared a bull and put it on their altar.

"You call to Baal and ask him to send fire to your altar," Elijah told the people. "I will call on the Lord. The God who answers by fire is the one true God."

From morning until noon, the prophets of Baal cried out to Baal. "Answer us!" they said. But no one answered. The prophets danced and cried and cut their bodies. Still, no one answered.

Then the people gathered around Elijah. He dug a trench around his altar, prepared a bull, and put it on a pile of wood. Elijah had four jars of water poured on the wood. Then he asked for more water. Everything was wet. The water ran down the altar and filled the trench.

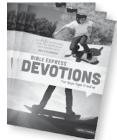
Elijah prayed to God, "Lord, answer me so that these people will know that You, Lord, are God."

God sent fire from the sky. The fire burned up the bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust! It burned up the water in the trench. There was no doubt that the Lord is the one true God.

The men who had worshiped Baal fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!" Then Elijah killed all the prophets who worshiped Baal.

The sky grew dark with clouds, and God sent a great rain. The Lord ended the drought and proved that He is the one true God.

Christ Connection: The people who worshiped the false god Baal danced and cried and cut their bodies to show that they loved Baal. But the one true God is not like the false gods. Instead, He showed His love for us by sending His Son, Jesus. Jesus bled and died to rescue us from sin when we trust in Him.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that only God had the power to send fire because only He is God the Creator, (Gen. 1:1) Jesus is God the Son, and all things were made through Him. (John 1:3) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Elijah Confronted Evil Ahab

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Kings 18

MAIN POINT: The one true God defeated the prophets of Baal.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Welcome time

Examples of God's work: creating and sustaining life, making the sun rise and set, and so forth.

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 think of things that only God is capable of doing. Allow them to share.

SAY • These are all great examples of things only God can do. He is more powerful than anyone or anything in all creation! Today we will hear about an amazing miracle God did to show that He is the one true God.

Activity page (5 minutes)

• "How Many? Quiz" activity page, 1 per kid • pencils or markers Invite kids to complete the "How Many? Quiz" on the activity page. When kids finish, review the answers together: 1. D; 2. E; 3. G; 4. N; 5. O; 6. R; 7. T; 8. U.

Guide kids to write the answer's letter in the blank that corresponds with the question number. The letters will complete the answer to the big picture question.

SAY • Today we will hear a Bible story about a man named Elijah. Elijah confronted a group of people who worshiped a false God. Elijah knew that *there is one true God who alone deserves worship*.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: True or false?

Arrange chairs in a circle and instruct the kids to sit. Explain that you will say a few statements, some true and some false. If the statement is true, kids should stand up. If it is false, they should remain seated.



chairs, 1 per kidstopwatch or timer

After each statement, guide kids to sit down. Say statements such as the following:

- 1. The human body contains 206 bones. (true)
- 2. There are 100 books in the Bible (false, 66)
- 3. Texas is the largest state in the U.S. (false, Alaska)
- 4. Applesauce was the first food eaten in space by an American astronaut. (*true*)

SAY • We know that some things in life are true and some aren't. Today we are going to learn that there is only one true God. Only He deserves worship, and it is foolish to trust in anything other than Him.

OPTION 2: Key word charades

Write the following key words on separate index cards: *king*, *fire*, *rain*, *dance*, *water*, *God*.

• index cards • marker

Form two teams and play a game of charades using key word cards. One player will act out the word for his team. If his team can guess the word in 60 seconds, award one point. Then the other team will take a turn.

SAY • Today we are going to learn that there is one true God who alone deserves worship. We will hear in our Bible story how God displayed His amazing power over the false god Baal.

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Elijah Confronted Evil Ahab

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Kings 18

MAIN POINT: The one true God defeated the prophets of Baal.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

room decorations

• Theme Background Slide (optional) **Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas:** Simulate a science lab, complete with beakers filled with different colored liquids and specimens. Position a dry erase board at the front of the room with lots of chemical equations. You may also choose to display the theme background slide.

Countdown

• countdown video

• "The Big Story" video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins. Then begin the session by showing the video "The Big Story."

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

leader attire

clipboard

pencil

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a white lab coat and carrying a clipboard and pencil.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! My name is [your name]. I am so glad you could join me today. Can anyone guess what my job is? [Allow kids to respond.] That's right, I'm a scientist!

Scientists study the world around them. We ask questions, make observations, make predictions, look for evidence, perform tests, and come to conclusions. I am able to learn so much about God's

creation by using my science skills. God has created such a vast and incredible world for us to learn about! The more I learn about the world around us, the more I see God's fingerprints on everything He has made. All of creation points to the fact that there is only one true God!

Studying God's creation is a great way to learn about God, but there is another way too. Can any of you think of another way we can learn about God? [Allow kids to respond.] Yes! We can study God's Word, the Bible. The Bible is God's Word to us and is a way that He reveals Himself to His people. In the Bible, we can read the story of who God is, how much He loves us, and what He has done to save us through Jesus.

We will spend the next few weeks using our science skills to look for evidence in the Bible that will teach us about God. It's going to be a lot of fun!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Our first story comes from a book in the Bible called 1 Kings. In this book, we read about all the different kings of Israel and Judah. We also learn about Elijah, who was a prophet. Prophets were people to whom God gave messages to share with others. The prophets had a special relationship with God, and they had a big responsibility!

 Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Before we jump into our story, we have to remember one important thing that scientists do: ask questions. Good questions are where all science

exploration begins. As we listen to the Bible story, let's ask the question, *How many gods are there?*

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

• "Elijah Confronted Evil

Bibles

- Ahab"video

 Big Picture Question
- Bible Story Picture
 Poster

Poster

Open your Bible to 1 Kings 18. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Elijah Confronted Evil Ahab."

LEADER • Wow, what a powerful story! This story reminds me of the big picture question we asked in the beginning of our time together. *How many gods are there?* What do you all think? [*Allow kids to respond.*]

Yes. *There is one true God who alone deserves worship.* God answered Elijah's prayers and showed His power so that King Ahab, the prophets of Baal, and all the Israelites would know that He is the one true God. It didn't matter how much the prophets of Baal cried out; Baal didn't answer because he wasn't God. Baal didn't have any power. Only God had the power to burn up the altar, the bull, the stones, and all the water! **The one true God defeated the prophets of Baal.**

The people who worshiped the false god Baal danced and cried and cut their bodies to show that they loved Baal. But the one true God is not like the false gods. Instead, He showed His love for us by sending His Son, Jesus. Jesus bled and died to rescue us from sin when we trust in Him.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Hebrews 1:1-2.

Key Passage Poster"Speaking to Us" song

LEADER • In Bible times, God often spoke to His people through prophets, like Elijah. A prophet told God's message to the people. Our key passage says that God speaks to us "in these last days," which means this time after the Messiah has come, in a different way. How has God spoken to us? (by His Son)

The prophets told people about God and the coming Messiah. God's Son, Jesus, is the promised Messiah. He became a human and came to earth to show us what God is like. When we know Jesus, we know God.

Encourage boys and girls to memorize the key passage. Lead them to sing "Speaking to Us."

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Have you ever done something for someone to show your love for that person? Think about that as you watch this video.

Show the "Unit 13, Session 1" discussion starter video. Guide kids to discuss what Teddy made for his mom.

LEADER • Do you think this cake will show Teddy's mom that he loves her? Why or why not? [*Allow kids to discuss.*] How do you know that someone loves you? How do you show that you love someone else? Prompt kids to talk about how we can show we love God

• "Unit 13, Session 1" discussion starter video

and others. Point out that God showed His love for us by sending His Son, Jesus, to rescue people from sin.

Sing (4 minutes)

"God's Son" song

LEADER • Wow, today's Bible story makes it so clear that *there is one true God who alone deserves worship.*Let's worship Him together by singing.
Sing together "God's Son."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • God, thank You for revealing Yourself to us through Your Word. We love uncovering evidence in the Bible that points us to the one true God, and we pray that we would worship You alone because only You are worthy! Thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior and King. We pray all this in His holy name. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Elijah Confronted Evil Ahab

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Kings 18

MAIN POINT: The one true God defeated the prophets of Baal.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

Key Passage Postersticky notes

Show the key passage poster and lead kids to read the verses aloud. Challenge kids to say the key passage a few times in different voices. Suggest they say it in a robot voice, a deep voice, and in a high voice.

As kids learn the verse, cover parts of the poster and challenge them to say the key passage from memory.

SAY • This week, work on memorizing our key passage. We will see how much you can say next week without looking at the poster.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Bibles, 1 per kidMain Point Poster

Provide Bibles and guide kids to find 1 Kings 18. Point out that 1 Kings is in the Old Testament. Invite a volunteer to share what book comes before 1 Kings (*2 Samuel*) and what comes after (*2 Kings*).

SAY • We heard a pretty incredible story today about God's amazing power. **The one true God defeated the prophets of Baal.** Let's see how much you can remember from the story.

Everyone needs to find a partner. I will ask a few review questions, and I want you to share the answer with your partner.

Assist kids in finding partners. Then ask the following review questions. Provide the Scripture reference for kids to check their answers in the Bible.

- 1. Which prophet stood up to King Ahab and the prophets of Baal? (*Elijah*, 1 Kings 18:1)
- 2. What was the name of the false god in the story? (*Baal, 1 Kings 18:18*)
- 3. What did Elijah and the prophets of Baal each build? (an altar, 1 Kings 18:23)
- 4. What did Elijah pour over the wood on his altar? (*water*, 1 Kings 18:33)
- 5. How did God show that He is the one true God? (When Elijah prayed, God sent fire from heaven to burn up the bull, altar, and water; 1 Kings 18:38)
- 6. How many gods are there? There is one true God who alone deserves worship.
- **SAY** Great job, everyone! Our God is the one true God! The one true God defeated the prophets of Baal.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Which would you choose?

Before small group, put a long tape line in the middle of the floor to divide the room in half.

SAY • In today's Bible story, Elijah told the prophets of Baal to make a choice. Elijah said, "Make up your minds! If you believe the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him."

Either God was the one true God or Baal was. The people had to choose whom they would worship; they couldn't worship both God and Baal!

Invite kids to play a game. Explain that you will give them

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



 masking tape or painter's tape

two choices. If kids choose the first, they should move to the right side of the room. If they choose the second, they should move to the left side of the room. Kids may not choose both options.

SAY • Would you rather ...

- climb a tall mountain or scuba dive to the bottom of the ocean?
- eat a whole pizza or eat a whole cake?
- be able to speak every language or be invisible?
- never have to go to school or never have to do chores?
- •go to the zoo or go to a museum?
- be able to teleport to anywhere in the world or be able to fly?

OPTION 2: Building relay

Form two teams of kids. Give each player at least one block. Make sure teams use the same number of blocks. Position a piece of tissue paper next to each team. Then explain the rules of the game:

- 1. The first player will carry a block to the other side of the room, set it down, and race back to tag the next player on his team.
- Players will take turns carrying one block to the other side of the room and stacking it on top of or next to existing blocks.
- 3. When a team has moved all of its blocks, one player should carry the tissue paper to the wooden "altar" and position it on top.
- 4. When she returns to her team, they should sit down. Signal teams to begin. Allow time for both teams to finish.
- **SAY** Who sent fire from the sky? (*the Lord, the one true*

wooden blocksred, yellow, or orange tissue paper God) The one true God defeated the prophets of Baal. When Elijah called out to God, God answered. God has done a truly amazing thing for us. In some ways, we were all like the prophets of Baal at one time, worshiping other things that had no power over the sin in our lives.

Those things may not be statues, but anything we love more than God—friends, activities, entertainment, or even ourselves—is an idol. Worshiping these things is a sin.

God has made the way for us to be free from our sin. He sent His Son, Jesus, to earth to live a perfect life in our place. When we put our faith in Jesus, God graciously forgives our sin and sees us as if we were perfectly obedient like Jesus. That is such good news!

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

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Encourage kids to write or draw a picture of at least one way they worship God (singing, praying, reading the Bible, and so forth).

SAY • *There is one true God who alone deserves worship*, and we can worship Him in many ways. Let's pray together now as a way of worshiping God!

Lead the kids in a short prayer, praising God for His power and glory. Thank Him for speaking to us through His Word. As time allows, lead kids to complete "The Order of Events" on the activity page. Challenge kids to number the events in the order in which they happened in the Bible story. (*Answers: 3, 2, 4, 1*)

pencils

- Journal Page
- "The Order of Events" activity page, 1 per kid

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

Elijah Ran from Jezebel

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Kings 19

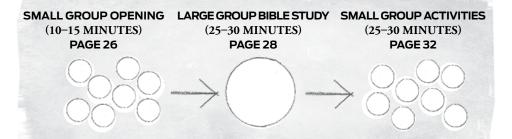
MAIN POINT: God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

2



Leader BIBLE STUDY

The prophet Elijah had just witnessed God's great display of power over the false god Baal. God had sent fire from heaven and then ended a long drought with a great rain. Elijah must have felt a sense of victory; the evil King Ahab could not deny the one true God. But trouble awaited Elijah in the form of Ahab's wife, Jezebel.

When Jezebel heard what happened at Mount Carmel, she threatened to kill Elijah. Elijah ran away and hid in the wilderness. What a change Elijah experienced! He went from a man faithfully and confidently praying for God's glory to be displayed at Mount Carmel to a man begging the Lord to take away his life. (See 1 Kings 19:4.)

God was merciful to Elijah. An angel of the Lord brought Elijah food and drink while he rested. Then Elijah traveled to Horeb for a personal encounter with God. Horeb—another name for Mount Sinai—was a familiar place in the history of Israel. It was the place where God gave the Ten Commandments to the Israelites and where Moses met with God.

After the events in 1 Kings 18, Elijah might have expected a grand display of God's presence, but what he experienced was just the opposite. The Lord was not in the wind. The Lord was not in the earthquake. The Lord was not in the fire. God revealed Himself to Elijah in a voice, a soft whisper.

Elijah's circumstances were difficult, but God didn't leave him. God gave him Elisha, a friend and successor. God assured Elijah that he was not alone; there were 7,000 people in Israel who had not turned to worship Baal.

God's prophets suffered, but their lives and messages pointed forward to the ultimate prophet, priest, and king—Jesus Christ—who suffered for the sins of the world. Jesus was hated and killed, but His death and resurrection brought victory for God's people.



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

The BIBLE STORY

Elijah Ran from Jezebel

1 Kings 19

Elijah was a prophet. He knew that God was powerful. God had shown King Ahab and all the people that He is the one true God. King Ahab told his wife Jezebel what had happened at Mount Carmel, and Jezebel was angry. She sent a message to tell Elijah that she planned to kill him.

Elijah ran far away into the wilderness where Jezebel could not find him. He prayed to God, "Lord, I've had enough. Take my life." Then Elijah lay down under a broom tree and fell asleep.

God sent an angel to help Elijah. The angel touched Elijah and said, "Get up and eat." Elijah got up and saw a loaf of baked bread and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again.

A second time, the angel came and touched Elijah. "Get up and eat," the angel said. "This journey will be hard." Elijah ate and drank. The food gave him strength to travel 40 days and 40 nights to Horeb (HOH reb), the mountain of God.

When Elijah got to the mountain, he spent the night in a cave. The word of the Lord came to Elijah. God said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

"Lord, I've done my best to obey You," Elijah replied, "but Your people have not obeyed You! They are trying to kill me!"

"Go out and stand on the mountain," God said. A strong wind rushed by the mountain, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the

earthquake, there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, there was a voice—a soft whisper.

Elijah hid his face and stood at the opening of the cave.

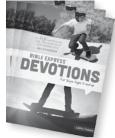
"What are you doing here, Elijah?" a voice asked again.

"Lord, I've done my best to obey You," Elijah repeated, "but Your people have not obeyed You! They are trying to kill me!"

The Lord told Elijah to anoint three men as leaders—Hazael (HAZ ay el) would be king in the land of Aram (A ruhm), Jehu (JEE hyoo) would be king in the land of Israel, and Elisha would be a prophet after Elijah.

Elijah obeyed God. He found Elisha plowing a field, and Elisha left his work to follow Elijah and serve him.

Christ Connection: As a prophet of God, Elijah faced enemies who wanted to hurt him. Elijah's life points forward to Jesus, the greatest Prophet, who was hated and killed for sharing and teaching God's Word.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that God's presence on the mountain encouraged Elijah. (1 Kings 19:12) Jesus often spent time alone in prayer to be encouraged by His Father. (Luke 6:12) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information. check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Elijah Ran from Jezebel

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Kings 19

MAIN POINT: God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

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. Invite kids to share something they are afraid of and what makes that thing scary. How do they overcome their fears?

SAY • God promises to be with us always, so we have no reason to be afraid. Even though you may face scary or difficult circumstances in your life, God will never leave you. Today we will hear a Bible story about the prophet Elijah's very scary situation!

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete the "God Was In It" on the activity page. Kids will trace the paths to discover which path is complete. Only the path leading from Elijah to the "soft whisper" is complete.

SAY • In today's Bible story, God revealed Himself to Elijah. How do you think God might appear? In Elijah's experience, God was not in an earthquake. He was not in a fire, and He was not in the wind. **God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper.**

"God Was In It" activity page, 1 per kidpencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Fear factor

Arrange chairs in a circle and instruct kids to sit down. Choose one player to stand in the middle, and remove her chair from the circle. Prompt the middle player to name something that might be scary.

Kids who agree that the thing is scary should stand up and sit in the chair of someone else who stood. The kid in the middle should also find a seat.

The player without a chair moves to the middle of the circle. Play multiple rounds as time allows.

SAY • Different people are scared of different things, but God is more powerful than any of them. Nothing is scary to God, and He can protect us from the things we are afraid of. Today we will hear how God reassured Elijah when he was afraid.

OPTION 2: Key word pictures

Write the following key words on separate index cards: angel, bread, water, cave, mountain, wind, earthquake, fire, and whisper.

Form two teams. Show a key word to one player on each team and invite the players to draw a picture of the key word. The first team to guess the key word earns a point.

Play additional rounds with new players taking turns drawing the key words.

SAY • In our Bible story today, we will hear how Elijah was afraid, but God comforted him and reminded him that God is always in control.

Transition to large group



· chairs, 1 per kid

- dry erase boards or large pieces of papers, 2
- index cards
- markers

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Elijah Ran from Jezebel

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Kings 19

MAIN POINT: God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Countdown

countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

clipboard

pencil

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a white lab coat and carrying a clipboard and pencil.]

LEADER • Welcome back, everyone! I am so excited that you've joined me for another adventure in the science lab. We had a great time exploring God's Word last week as we looked for evidence that pointed to the one true God.

Today we have another Bible story to explore together. Last week, we talked about some different things that scientists do to learn about the world around them. They observe things, ask questions, make predictions, conduct experiments, and form conclusions based on the evidence that they find. We are doing the same thing as we study God's Word because everything in the Bible teaches us something about the one true God and His plan to rescue us through His Son, Jesus!

Can you think of ways that we can learn about God? [Allow kids to respond.]

Great answers! We can observe the things God has created because God's fingerprints are on everything He has made. We can use our five senses to learn things about God. Who can tell me what our fives senses are? (tasting, seeing, hearing, touching, smelling)

We can use our five senses to explore God's creation and learn about Him. We can also use a few of those senses to explore God's Word. That's what we will be doing today!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

week, we heard the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Elijah built an altar for the one true God, and the prophet of Baal built an altar to Baal. They conducted an experiment to see who was the real God. The one true God was the one to send fire from heaven. Only the Lord, the one true God, sent fire from heaven.

The one true God defeated the prophets of Baal.

Even though Elijah had just seen an amazing display of God's power, he was still afraid of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Elijah ran away and wanted to hide because he was afraid they would kill him. That's where our story picks up today.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Remember that one thing all scientists do is ask questions. Our big picture question is, *How many gods are there?* Last week we talked about how *there*

 Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

is one true God who alone deserves worship.

As we listen to the Bible story, let's think about our question and listen for more evidence that points to the one true God.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Open your Bible to 1 Kings 19. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Elijah Ran From Jezebel."
 - that God speaks to us in different ways, and sometimes He surprises us! Elijah probably expected God to speak to him in a loud, booming voice—especially after everything that he had witnessed on Mount Carmel. Instead, God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper.

Elijah knew that God is powerful, but God showed Elijah that He would protect him and take care of him, even when Jezebel wanted to kill him.

In some ways, Elijah was like Jesus. As a prophet of God, Elijah faced enemies who wanted to hurt him. Elijah's life points forward to Jesus, the greatest Prophet and God's own Son, who was hated and killed for sharing and teaching God's Word.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

- Bibles
- "Elijah Ran From Jezebel" video
- Big Picture Question
 Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Key passage (5 minutes)

LEADER • Last week we introduced our key passage, which tells us how God speaks to us today. Can anyone remember what book of the Bible our key passage comes from? (*the Book of Hebrews*) Let's stand up and say Hebrews 1:1-2 together.

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Hebrews 1:1-2.

LEADER • In Bible times, God spoke to people through prophets. The Bible says that God sent His Son. Jesus showed us what God is like. Now we know about Jesus' teachings and life because we have God's Word, the Bible. Thank You, God, for Your Word! Let's sing.

Lead boys and girls to sing "Speaking to Us."

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Do you remember why Elijah was running away? (*Jezebel wanted to kill him.*) Elijah was a prophet of God, and God had shown His power as the one true God when He sent fire from heaven. But even though Elijah served God, life wasn't easy. He had enemies. Let's watch this video.

Show the "Unit 13, Session 2" discussion starter video. Guide kids to explain why the cupcakes did not like the fruits and vegetables.

LEADER • What might cause you to have enemies? Has anyone ever disliked you because you follow Jesus? [*Allow kids to discuss.*]

Elijah was hated for his message as a prophet. His life points to Jesus, who was hated and killed for His message. We may face enemies on earth, but Key Passage Poster"Speaking to Us" song

 "Unit 13, Session 2" discussion starter video

Jesus was hated and killed so we can be loved and accepted by the One who matters most—God—when we trust in Him.

Sing (4 minutes)

• "God's Son" song

LEADER • How many gods are there? There is one true God who alone deserves worship. We've talked a lot today about how God is the one true God. We want to worship God, who reveals Himself to us through His Word. Let's stand together and sing to our amazing God!

Sing together "God's Son."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

Word. Help us hear Your voice this week as we read the Bible. Make us aware of Your presence and give us hearts that want to worship You alone. We love You, Lord. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Elijah Ran from Jezebel

BIBLE PASSAGE: 1 Kings 19

MAIN POINT: God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster

Show the key passage poster and choose a volunteer to read it aloud. Then instruct kids to stand shoulder to shoulder.

Explain that kids will make a wave as they say the passage. The first kid will hold up his arms as he says the first word. As he puts his arms down, the second kid will raise her arms and say the second word. Continue down the line until kids complete the key passage.

Play several times to help kids memorize the verses.

SAY • You all did a great job! Keep practicing the key passage at home this week, and I bet by next week you will know it by heart.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Give each kid a Bible, a mini chalkboard, a piece of chalk, and an eraser. Guide them to open their Bibles to the Book of 1 Kings. Lead them to use the table of contents if necessary. Point out that 1 Kings is in the Old Testament, and remind them that today's story comes from chapter 19.

SAY • We heard a wonderful story that is full of evidence that points to God's great love for His people.

Let's see how much you can remember. I will ask

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- mini chalkboards,
 1 per kid
- chalk
- erasers

a question, and you write the answer on your chalkboard. When you finish writing, hold up your chalkboard for me to see.

Ask the following review questions. Encourage kids to look over 1 Kings 19 to check their answers.

- 1. Who tried to kill Elijah? (Jezebel, 1 Kings 19:2)
- 2. What did God's angel guide Elijah to do when he was discouraged? (to eat and sleep, 1 Kings 19:5-7)
- 3. What did God provide for Elijah to eat? (*bread and water, 1 Kings 19:6*)
- 4. How long did Elijah travel before reaching Mount Horeb? (40 days and 40 nights, 1 Kings 19:8)
- 5. Why was Elijah so discouraged? (*The Israelites no longer worshiped the one true God, 1 Kings 19:10*)
- 6. How did God reveal Himself to Elijah? (God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper, 1 Kings 19:12)
- **SAY** Great job, everyone! Did anything about this story surprise you? What did this story tell you about God? [Call on volunteers to respond.]

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Guess the voice

SAY • In our Bible story today, Elijah had to listen carefully for God's voice. He probably expected God to speak in a loud, booming voice through the great wind, or the earthquake, or the fire, but **God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper**. Let's play a game to listen for our friends' voices.

Form two teams of kids. Blindfold all of the players on the first team or guide them to turn toward the wall and close their eyes.

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



 Key Passage Poster or Bible

• blindfolds (optional)

Display the key passage poster or give a Bible to a player on the second team. Prompt one of the players from the second team to read aloud Hebrews 1:1-2.

If the first team can determine who read the passage, award them one point. Play again, allowing several players to take a turn reading the key passage. Then switch roles: blindfold players on the second team and allow players on the first team to take turns reading the key passage.

SAY • Just like in our game, we often have to rely on senses other than sight to learn about God. We can't see Him, but He reveals Himself and speaks to us in other ways, like through His Word.

OPTION 2: Whispered messages

Before the session, write the following sentences on separate index cards:

- God created everything.
- The Bible is God's Word.
- There is one true God.
- Jesus loves you.
- Elijah was a prophet.
- **SAY** Elijah had to listen carefully for God's voice. He probably expected God to speak in a loud, booming voice through the great wind, or the earthquake or the fire, but **God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper**.

Give each kid a piece of paper and a pencil. Choose a volunteer to stand at the front of the room, and give her a prepared sentence card.

Explain that the volunteer will whisper the sentence on the card. Kids should listen and watch her lips and then write down what they think she is saying. Allow the

- paper
- pencils
- index cards • marker

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volunteer to repeat the sentence a few times. Then call on kids to share their guesses. Reveal the correct answer and choose a new volunteer to play another round.

SAY • Elijah was running to escape King Ahab's wife, Jezebel. As a prophet of God, Elijah faced enemies who wanted to hurt him. Elijah's life points forward to Jesus, the greatest Prophet, who was hated and killed for sharing and teaching God's Word.

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

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute pencils and journal pages. Invite the kids to write in their journals something they are afraid of. Encourage them to also write what they know is true about God that could help them when they feel scared.

SAY • Because we know God, we can be comforted when we are scared. God doesn't leave us on our own to deal with our fear. God is always with us, and He is in control of everything. We can trust Him.

Lead kids in a brief prayer, thanking God for His presence. Ask Him to make His presence evident to kids, especially when they feel afraid or alone.

As time allows, lead kids to complete the "Main Point Path" on the activity page. Lead kids to begin by putting their pencil on the first letter, *G*, and then tracing a line through the rest of the letters to spell out the main point of the Bible story: **God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper.**

pencils

- Journal Page
- "Main Point Path" activity page, 1 per kid

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

Elisha and Naaman

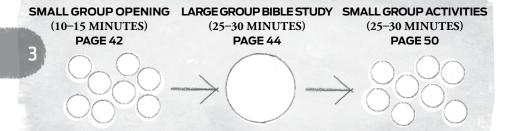
BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Kings 5

MAIN POINT: God healed Naaman's skin disease.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.



Leader BIBLE STUDY

Everyone gets sick at some point in his or her lifetime ... often many times! Illness is probably no stranger to the kids you teach. In today's Bible story, Naaman—a commander for the Syrian army—was really sick. He had leprosy, a skin disease that was likely disfiguring and isolating. Without a cure, Naaman would face great suffering. But help came from an unlikely source: a young slave girl.

The people of Israel and Syria were often at odds with one another. The Syrians sometimes attacked the cities in Israel and plundered them. They took what they wanted, including people to work as slaves. The young slave girl who served Naaman's wife had been taken from her home in Israel.

As an Israelite, the girl knew about the one true God. She was familiar with God's prophets, including Elisha, who had performed miracles to help and heal people. The girl told her mistress that Elisha the prophet could heal Naaman. So the king of Syria sent a letter to the king of Israel, asking him to cure Naaman of his leprosy. But the king of Israel had no power to heal Naaman. The power to heal comes only from God.

Elisha called for Naaman. But what happened next was not at all what Naaman expected. Naaman expected Elisha to call upon the name of God, wave his hand over Naaman, and miraculously heal him. Instead, Elisha instructed Naaman to go wash in the river.

Naaman was upset! He could have washed in a river back home! But Naaman's servants urged him to wash. He did, and God healed him.

Not all sick people will be healed on this side of heaven, but our physical maladies are symptoms of an even greater illness—sin. Jesus' death and resurrection provided healing—forgiveness and eternal life—for those who trust in Him.



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The BIBLE STORY

Elisha and Naaman

2 Kings 5

When Elisha was a prophet in Israel, the Israelites were attacked by people from the land of Aram. The enemy army took things from the cities. They even took people from Israel to be servants in Aram. Naaman (NAY muhn) was the commander of the army in Aram. He was good at his job, but Naaman was sick. He had leprosy, a serious skin disease.

One of the Israelites who was captured to be a servant was a little girl. She served Naaman's wife. The servant girl saw that Naaman was sick, and she wanted him to be healed.

"A prophet in Samaria could heal Naaman," she told Naaman's wife. Samaria was a city in Israel. Naaman heard what the little girl said, and he went to talk to the king of Aram. The king agreed to send Naaman to Israel, and he gave him a letter for the king of Israel. The letter read, "I have sent you my servant Naaman for you to cure him of his skin disease."

When **the king of Israel** read the letter, he **was upset.** "Am I God? Do I have the power to give life and take it away? Why does this man think I can cure a skin disease?" The king of Israel could not heal Naaman. The power to heal comes only from God.

Elisha the prophet heard the king was upset, and he called Naaman to his house. Naaman arrived and stood at the door. He was ready to be healed! But what happened next was not what Naaman expected. Elisha didn't come to the door. Instead, a messenger told Naaman, "Go wash seven times in the Jordan River."

Wash in the river? Naaman could have done that at home! Had he traveled all the way to Samaria for nothing? Naaman was angry. He had hoped Elisha would call on the name of the Lord, wave his hand over Naaman's skin, and heal him.

Naaman started to leave, but his servants encouraged him to do what Elisha said. So Naaman went to the Jordan River. He dipped himself in the river seven times. Then Naaman's skin was healed!

Naaman and all the people with him went to Elisha. Naaman said, "I know that the God of Israel is the one true God."

Christ Connection: Naaman was sick with a skin problem. His disease went away when he trusted God's instruction from Elisha and washed in the river. All people have a sin problem that leads to death. We all need a Healer. When we trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, God forgives our sin and heals us.



WANT TO DISCOVER GOD'S WORD? GET BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that Naaman's sickness separated him from others, but he was healed when he obeyed God. (2 Kings 5:10) Sin separates us from God. Only Jesus brings us to Him. (John 14:6) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information. check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Elisha and Naaman

BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Kings 5

MAIN POINT: God healed Naaman's skin disease.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

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 think of a time when they were completely dependent on someone else to help them or do something for them. Allow volunteers to share.

SAY • Is there anything too hard for you to do? Is there anything you weren't able to do because no one could help you? Nothing is too hard for God. In today's Bible story, we will hear about something amazing He did for someone whom no one else could help.

Activity page (5 minutes)

"Hidden Pictures" activity page, 1 per kidpencils or markers Invite kids to complete "Hidden Pictures" on the activity page. Provide pencils or markers for kids to circle the pictures hidden in the Bible story picture. Challenge kids to find a cat, pillow, Bible, snake, loaf of bread, and bowl.

SAY • Does anyone know what is happening in this picture? A man is standing in the river, and he looks pretty surprised. We will find out just what happened when we hear today's Bible story.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Elisha says

Play a variation of the game "Simon Says." Guide the kids to stand. Explain that you will give them commands (jump up and down, touch your toes, and so forth).

If you begin by saying "Elisha says," then kids should obey the command. If you do not say "Elisha says," kids should not do the command. If they do, they are out.

SAY • Was it easy or hard to follow my directions? Today we will hear a Bible story about a man who did not want to follow the prophet Elisha's directions, but he needed to follow them exactly to be healed!

OPTION 2: Play dough creations

Give each kid a lump of play dough. Invite kids to form simple animal shapes. As kids work, talk about what they are making. Discuss God's power over creation.

SAY • Creating new things using your imagination is fun, isn't it? What animals did you make? [*Allow volunteers to display their creations.*] Very cool!

Let me ask you something. Can this play dough animal tell me what to do? Does it have power over me? Of course not! I made it, so I'm the one who has power over it.

God has created all of us, and He has power over all that He has made. Today we are going to hear a story about a miracle. Miracles can't be explained by science. In today's Bible story, God showed His power by healing a man who was sick.

Transition to large group

LOW PREP

• play dough

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Elisha and Naaman

BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Kings 5

MAIN POINT: God healed Naaman's skin disease.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Countdown

countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

leader attireclipboard

pencil

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a white lab coat and carrying a clipboard and pencil.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! Welcome back to our science lab. I am so glad you have joined us today! As scientists, we have been looking for evidence that helps us learn about the one true God. We've been reading God's Word to help us find clues about His great power and glory.

You know, we can learn so much by studying the Bible and by studying God's incredible creation. But even science can't explain everything. God has power over all that He has made, and sometimes He performs miracles that defy explanation. Can you think of any stories in the Bible about a time when God performed a miracle? [Allow kids to respond.]

Today we will hear a story about a miracle that God performed to heal a man who was very sick.

Miracles are evidence of God's great power. He shows that He is the one true God who alone deserves worship. No one is greater than God!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Last week, we heard the story "Elijah Ran from Jezebel." God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper. God told Elijah to appoint a man named Elisha as the next prophet to Israel. The Book of 2 Kings is about Elisha's ministry and about many kings of Judah and Israel.

Israel had been at war with the nation of Aram. Aram defeated Israel in battle, and some of the Israelites were forced to be slaves in Aram. The top army commander in Aram was Naaman. We will learn more about Naaman in today's Bible story.

 Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Before we jump right into the story, does anyone remember what our big picture question is? [Allow kids to respond.] We've been asking, **How many gods** are there? As we hear today's Bible story, let's see if we can find any evidence to help us answer that question.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to 2 Kings 5. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Elisha and Naaman."

LEADER • Wow! What a powerful story about a powerful God! As you listened to the story, did you hear any evidence to help us find out how many gods there

- Bibles
- "Elisha and Naaman" video
 - Big Picture Question Poster
 - Bible Story Picture
 Poster

are? [Call on volunteers to answer.]

Thanks for sharing! You're right, *there is one true God who alone deserves worship*. God showed His great power to Naaman. **God healed Naaman's skin disease.** After Naaman had experienced God's healing, his heart was full of thanksgiving. Naaman even returned to Elisha's house to tell him that from that day forward, he would only worship the one true God.

When we encounter the one true God, we can't help but be changed from the inside out! When God heals us, whether it's a physical or spiritual healing, our hearts naturally pour out praise and thanksgiving to Him.

Naaman was sick with a skin problem. His disease went away when he trusted God's instruction from Elisha and washed in the river. All people have a sin problem that leads to death. We all need a Healer. When we trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, God forgives our sin and heals us.

Naaman didn't do anything to deserve God's healing. He was sinful just like every other person on earth and deserved God's wrath. But we serve a God of mercy and grace. He desires that all people know Him and have a relationship with Him.

The only way to receive God's mercy is by trusting in Jesus for our salvation. Salvation a free gift from God, just like Naaman's healing was free. When we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, God forgives our sin and gives us eternal life with Him.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families

Key passage (5 minutes)

LEADER • Over the last few weeks we've been learning our key passage from Hebrews 1:1-2. Has anyone memorized these verses? [Allow volunteers to recite the passage from memory.]

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Hebrews 1:1-2. Guide the girls to read it together, and then guide the boys to read it.

LEADER • Great job, everyone. Keep working to memorize our key passage. You'll have it down in no time. Play "Speaking to Us" and guide kids to sing along.

Key Passage Poster"Speaking to Us" song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Have you ever had a cold? What did you do?

Think about that as you watch this video.

Show the "Unit 13, Session 3" discussion starter video.

Invite kids to talk about why Carlos's mother could not do anything to heal his cold.

Explain that nothing can cure a cold; we can take medicine to treat symptoms of a cold—a stuffy nose, a sore throat, or a low fever—but we cannot make it go away.

LEADER • Do you think God still heals people today? If someone is sick and God does not heal that person, do you think that means God doesn't care?

 "Unit 13, Session 3" discussion starter video

Guide kids to discuss. Assure them that God does care when we are sick. He can heal people quickly, but sometimes He doesn't. We might not always understand why.

Remind kids that Jesus died on the cross to free us from sin. When we trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, God forgives our sin and heals us.

Sing (4 minutes)

• "God's Son" song

LEADER • God healed Naaman's skin disease. He is the one true God who alone deserves worship.

We serve a God who is powerful and good. He loves us and wants to save us from our sin so we can live with Him forever. He is the one true God who alone deserves worship. Let's stand together and worship Him by singing.

Sing together "God's Son."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • God, thank You for revealing Yourself to us through Your Word. We thank You for the miracles You have performed that give evidence of Your great power and might, and we thank You for sending Jesus to heal our hearts and save us from sin so that we can live in Your Kingdom forever. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Elisha and Naaman

BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Kings 5

MAIN POINT: God healed Naaman's skin disease.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster

Form two teams of kids and lead them to stand across from each other. Each team will stand shoulder to shoulder.

Show the key passage poster. Instruct the first team to say the first word of the passage, the second team to say the second word, the first team to say the third word, and so forth until kids say the entire passage.

Challenge the teams to see how quickly they can say the key passage. As kids master the verse, cover the poster.

SAY • Great job! Learning God's Word helps us remember the promises that He has given us. Work on memorizing Hebrews 1:1-2 this week.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Bibles, 1 per kidMain Point Poster

Distribute Bibles and instruct kids to open their Bibles to 2 Kings 5. Ask them if 2 Kings is found in the Old Testament or New Testament. (*Old Testament*)

Explain that 2 Kings tells about the history of God's people in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The people were ruled by kings. Most of the kings did not follow God, and they led the people to worship false idols.

The events in 2 Kings happened about 500 to 800 years

before Jesus was born.

SAY • We heard a lot about God's power in our Bible story today. Let's see how much you can remember. I will ask some review questions. If you think you know the answer, pop up out of your seat as fast as you can. I will call on someone to answer. Ready?

Ask the following review questions. If a kid answers incorrectly, allow another kid to answer.

- 1. Naaman was the army commander for what country? (*Aram, 2 Kings 5:1*)
- 2. Who was the prophet to Israel in the story? (*Elisha*, 2 Kings 5:8)
- 3. The power to heal Naaman could only come from whom? (*God*, 2 Kings 5: 7)
- 4. What did Elisha tell Naaman to do? (Wash in the Jordan River seven times, 2 Kings 5:10)
- 5. What happened when Naaman washed in the river? (God healed Naaman's skin disease, 2 Kings 5:14)
- 6. How many gods are there? There is one true God who alone deserves worship.
- **SAY** Great job, everyone! Naaman was not happy about washing in the river, but what happened when he did? That's right, God healed him!

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Healing tag

Invite kids to play a game of tag. Assign one player to be *It* and another player to be the *Healer*. When *It* tags a player, that player should stand with his arms out in front of him. The *Healer* can tag any player with his arms out to "heal" him and bring him back into the game.

Play for a few minutes and then choose new players to

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



be It and the Healer.

SAY • What did Naaman have to do to be healed of his skin disease? (*wash in the river seven times*) Was there something special about the river water that made Naaman better? (*no*) Who healed Naaman? (**God healed Naaman's skin disease.**)

OPTION 2: Water washing relay

buckets of water, 2washcloths, 1 per kid

Form two teams of kids and instruct them to line up at one side of the room. Position a bucket of water across from each team. Stack washcloths for each player next to each team's bucket.

Explain that kids will take turns running to the bucket, dipping a washcloth into the water seven times, and then racing back to tag the next player. Kids may leave their wet washcloths in the bucket. The first team to dip all of its washcloths seven times wins.

SAY • In today's Bible story, who had to wash in the river seven times? (*Naaman*) What happened when Naaman washed in the river? (**God healed Naaman's skin disease.**)

Naaman was sick with a skin problem. His disease went away when he trusted God's instruction from Elisha and washed in the river.

All people have a sin problem, and the Bible says we deserve to die because of our sin. We can't heal ourselves and make our sin go away. We all need a Healer. God loves us and sent His Son, Jesus, to die the death we deserve. Jesus never sinned.

When we trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, God forgives our sin and heals us.

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

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Ask the kids to think about someone they love who is sick or perhaps an unbeliever. Invite them to write in their journals a prayer for that person to be healed or to trust in Christ and rely on Him for everything he or she needs.

- **SAY** God cares about people who are sick, and He is able to work miracles to heal them! Let's pray together to thank God for the miraculous ways that He works in our lives.
- Lead the kids in a short prayer, thanking God for His miracles and evidence of His working in our lives.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Naaman's Change" on the activity page. Direct kids to use the words from the word bank to fill in the missing details of the Christ Connection. (Answer: Naaman was sick with a skin problem. His disease went away when he trusted God's instruction from Elisha and washed in the river. All people have a sin problem that leads to death. We all need a Healer. When we trust Jesus as Lord and Savior, God forgives our sin and heals us.)

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Naaman's Change"
 activity page, 1 per kid

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

God Called Isaiah

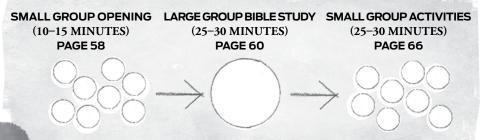
BIBLE PASSAGE: Isaiah 6

MAIN POINT: Isaiah saw the holy God in His glory.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.



Leader BIBLE STUDY

King Uzziah's death marked the end of an era. His reign had been long and prosperous. Uzziah became king when he was 16, and he reigned over Judah for 52 years.

Uzziah had listened to the prophet Zechariah; he feared God, and God made him prosper. But Uzziah's pride got the best of him. (See 2 Chron. 26:16.) God struck Uzziah with leprosy. Then Uzziah died.

Under Uzziah's leadership, God's people had turned away from the promises of God and trusted in the promises of the world around them. God had promised to bless the entire world through Abraham's family, but God's people were

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rebellious. Instead of blessing, they set themselves up to receive God's judgment.

But God's plans and promises were not thwarted. God sent the prophet Isaiah to preach a message of hope. Even though God was going to correct His people through judgment, His purpose was one of grace through which God would receive glory. God planned to send a Messiah who would bring salvation to the world.

Isaiah 6 opens with Isaiah worshiping in the temple. Then God gave Isaiah a vision. Isaiah saw God sitting on a throne. Yes, in the year that King Uzziah died, God was sitting on the throne. God was reigning over the universe. The magnitude of God's holiness made Isaiah realize the magnitude of his own sin. His response? "Woe is me!"

God extended His grace to Isaiah. He took away Isaiah's guilt. God passed over Isaiah's sins because He was going to send Jesus to pay for them. In His death on the cross, Jesus paid for the sins—past, present, and future—of those who would trust in Him. When we trust in Jesus, God says to us the words Isaiah heard: "Your guilt is taken away. Your sin is atoned for."



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

The BIBLE STORY

God Called Isaiah

Isaiah 6

After King Solomon died, the tribes of Israel split and formed two kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The people in these kingdoms looked to their kings to protect them and take care of them. At this time, the king of a land called Assyria was trying to take over the world.

When Uzziah was the king of Judah, he was mostly a good king. The people felt safe. When Uzziah died, the people of Judah were upset and afraid.

In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah was worshiping God in the temple when he had a vision. Isaiah saw God sitting on a throne. God's robe was long; its edges filled the temple. Seraphim—heavenly beings—stood above Him, and they each had six wings. They called out: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord; His glory fills the whole earth."

When the seraphim spoke, the foundations of the doorways shook, and the temple filled with smoke. Isaiah was in the presence of God! He said, "I am ruined! I am sinful. I do not deserve to be in the presence of the King, the great and holy God."

Then one of the seraphim flew to Isaiah. The seraph had a burning coal from the altar in his hand. He touched Isaiah's mouth and said, "Now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed and your sin is wiped away."

Then Isaiah heard God's voice: "Who should I send? Who will go for Us?"

Isaiah said, "Here am I! Send me."

"Go," God said.

God told Isaiah an important message for the people.

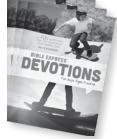
This was God's message: "You will listen, but you will not understand. You will look, but you will not really see. If your eyes and ears and minds worked, you would turn from your sin and be healed."

Isaiah asked, "How long should I preach to people who won't listen?"

God answered Isaiah, "Preach until the cities are destroyed and no one lives in them. I am going to send the people far away."

Then God explained that He would bring some of the people back to Judah. These people were part of Abraham's family. God was going to keep His promise to Abraham through them. He would send the Messiah through their family to be a blessing to all the nations.

Christ Connection: Isaiah had a vision of God's glory and realized his own sin. God forgave Isaiah's sin. Like Isaiah, when we see how holy God is, we see how sinful we are. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take away our sin. We can find salvation only in Him.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that Isaiah responded gladly to God's calling. (Isa. 6:8) We have been forgiven from our sin; we joyfully tell others about salvation only through Jesus. (2 Cor. 5:20) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information. check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: God Called Isaiah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Isaiah 6

MAIN POINT: Isaiah saw the holy God in His glory.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

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 the most amazing thing they've ever seen in nature.

SAY • We've all seen some pretty spectacular things in our lives, but nothing compares with the glory of God. Today we will learn about Isaiah's experience in God's presence. He was so overcome by God's holiness that he couldn't help but fall to the ground in worship!

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "Holy, Holy, Holy" on the activity page. Explain that the word *holy* is hidden in the puzzle three times.

SAY • The word *holy* means "set apart" and "worthy of complete devotion and trust." Whom do you think might be described as holy? [*Allow kids to respond.*]

That's right! God is holy. In today's Bible story, God is described as holy, holy, holy. He completely deserves our devotion and trust!

"Holy, Holy, Holy" activity page, 1 per kidpencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: I am ruined!

Prepare a slip of paper for each player. On one paper, draw a red circle. On the rest of the papers, draw a green circle. Fold each paper in half and distribute them to the kids.

Explain that kids should move around the room. A player should approach another player, and each player should discreetly show the other his or her paper. Then they will refold their papers and move on. If a player sees a green circle, she should count to 10 and then shout, "Hurray!" If she sees a red circle, she should count to 10 and then shout, "I am ruined!" or "Woe is me!" and then sit down.

Continue until only the player with the red circle remains. If your group is large, use more than one red circle.

SAY • In today's Bible story, the prophet Isaiah found himself in God's presence. He exclaimed, "Woe is me! I am ruined!" We will find out why.

OPTION 2: Alike and different

Give each kid a piece of paper and a pencil. Collect a variety of common household or classroom objects. (Examples: spoon, book, clock, towel, pencil, pillow, and so forth) Display three or four items at a time.

Challenge kids to list what the items have in common. Then instruct them to list what is different about the items. Allow kids to share their lists. Affirm kids' observations. Then show three or four different items and play again.

SAY • In today's Bible story, God is called "holy, holy holy." The word holy means "set apart." How is God different from us? Let's find out!

red and green markers

slips of paper

- paper
- pencils
- common household or classroom objects

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: God Called Isaiah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Isaiah 6

MAIN POINT: Isaiah saw the holy God in His glory.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Countdown

countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

leader attire
 scientific textbooks

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a white lab coat and carrying a stack of scientific textbooks. Leader plops down the books on a chair or table at the front of the room.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone! Welcome back to our science lab for another exciting adventure. We are searching God's Word for evidence that He is the one true God who alone deserves worship.

Over the last few weeks, we have learned about some of the things that all good scientists do. Can you remember some of them? [Allow kids to respond.] That's right! All good scientists observe the world around them, ask questions, conduct experiments, and draw conclusions based on what the evidence shows them.

As we study God's Word and look for evidence that teaches us about Him, we will never reach a point where we know all there is to know about God. He always has something more to teach us about who He is!

Learning new things about God always changes us in some way. Today we will hear a story about a man named Isaiah, and when he encountered a vision of God, he was changed in a big way!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • We have been hearing stories from the Books of 1 Kings and 2 Kings. We heard about the kings of Israel and Judah and the prophets whom God used to speak to the people.

A man named Uzziah was the king of Judah, and he was mostly a good king, but he wasn't perfect. Today's story picks up right after King Uzziah died. Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Remember, we've been looking for evidence in God's Word to help us answer the question, *How many gods are there?* Can anyone remember the answer to this question? That's right! *There is one true God who alone deserves worship.*

As you listen to our Bible story today, see if you can find any evidence that supports this idea. We will talk more about it in a few minutes.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Isaiah 6. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "God Called Isaiah."

LEADER • What an awesome story! Did anyone hear any evidence that God is the one true God who alone

- Bibles
- "God Called Isaiah"
 video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

deserves worship? [Allow kids to respond.]

Isaiah saw the holy God in His glory, and it changed his life forever. When he learned something new about God, his thinking was changed and he realized how sinful he was.

God forgave Isaiah's sin. Like Isaiah, when we see how holy God is, we see how sinful we are. God sent His Son, Jesus, to take away our sin. We can find salvation only in Him.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Hebrews 1:1-2. Cover the poster and challenge them to say the key passage from memory.

LEADER • Long ago, God spoke through the prophets. But now He has spoken to us through His Son, Jesus. The Bible calls Jesus *the Word*. Jesus is God's message to us. Through His Son, God showed His great love for us. Let's read Hebrews 1:1-2 again. [Guide kids to say the key passage together.]

When we memorize Scripture, it's like taking God's Word with us wherever we go! One way God blesses us is by allowing us to store up His Word in our hearts and minds.

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Key Passage Poster"Speaking to Us" song

Encourage kids to continue working on memorizing the key passage if they haven't yet mastered it. Lead them to sing "Speaking to Us."

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Isaiah knew he was not worthy to be in God's presence. Have you ever been somewhere and felt like you weren't prepared to be there? Watch this. Show the "Unit 13, Session 4" discussion starter video. Prompt kids to talk about what was wrong with Jacob. Why wasn't he ready to go to the party?

 "Unit 13, Session 4" discussion starter video

Invite kids to share similar experiences. Have they ever felt unprepared or that they didn't have what was required? How did they know what was expected of them?

LEADER • A holy God is separate from sin. Without Jesus, we cannot be with God. Jesus came to take away our sin and give us His righteousness. We recognize we are sinful, but we trust in Him. God forgives our sin and gives us eternal life. We look forward to being with Him forever.

• "God's Son" song

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • Reading God's Word and searching for evidence that teaches us about Him makes me want to sing praises to Him! God is the one true God who alone deserves worship. I am excited to worship God with all of you right now! Let's stand up together and sing. Sing together "God's Son."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups. **LEADER •** God, thank You for allowing us to know You, and

thank You for the way you change us from the inside out! Please continue to reveal Yourself to us this week and draw us into a deeper relationship with You. We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: God Called Isaiah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Isaiah 6

MAIN POINT: Isaiah saw the holy God in His glory.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards
- marker
- Before small group, write words or phrases of the key passage on separate index cards. If your group is large, make more than one set.
- **SAY** Our key passage comes from Hebrews 1:1-2. We have spent lots of time studying this passage about the way God speaks to us. We learned about the prophets Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah. God used to speak through prophets like them, but now God speaks to us through Jesus, His Son.

Mix up the key passage cards and challenge the kids to work together to put them in order. When kids finish, show the key passage poster for them to check their work. Then lead them to say Hebrews 1:1-2 together. If time allows, mix up the cards and play again.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Before small group, cut red and green construction paper into small rectangles, approximately 3 by 4 inches. Prepare one red card and one green card per kid.

Distribute Bibles and instruct kids to open them to the Book of Isaiah. Explain that Isaiah is in the Old Testament,

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- red and green construction paper
- scissors

in the Major Prophets division. If kids need help, encourage them to use the table of contents.

SAY • Isaiah 6 tells us about Isaiah's vision of God. **Isaiah** saw the holy God in His glory. Let's see how much you can remember about the Bible story.

Give each kid one red card and one green card. Explain that you will say a sentence about the Bible story. If the sentence is true, kids should hold up the green cards. If it is false, they should hold up the red cards.

For false statements, call on a kid to correct the sentence. Instruct him to read the verse from Isaiah 6 to find the correct answer.

- 1. Isaiah was the prophet who had a vision of God. (*true, Isa. 6:1*)
- 2. King Uzziah was sitting on the throne in Isaiah's vision. (*false, God was on the throne; Isa. 6:2*)
- 3. The seraphim were calling out praises to God. (*true, Isa. 6:3*)
- 4. When Isaiah saw God, he said, "I'm perfect just like God!" (false, "Woe is me for I am ruined!"; Isa. 6:5)
- 5. One of the seraphim touched a burning coal to Isaiah's lips. (*true, Isa. 6:6*)
- 6. God told Isaiah to preach to Israel about the one true God, even though the people wouldn't listen. (*true*, *Isa. 6:9*)
- 7. There are many gods. (False, there is one true God who alone deserves worship.)
- **SAY** Good job, everyone. In this story, **Isaiah saw the holy God in His glory.** Isaiah was afraid, but God took away Isaiah's sin. Our sin separates us from God, too, but God sent Jesus to take away our sin by dying on the cross and rising again.

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



Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Mirror image

SAY • In the Bible story, Isaiah realized that he was a sinful man and that he couldn't stand in God's presence. Though we will never be perfect in this life, God is always changing us to be more like His Son, Jesus. In this way, we become like mirrors that reflect God to other people.

Direct kids to each find a partner. Guide them to imagine one of them is a mirror. One person in each pair will begin by doing a silly movement. The other partner must copy him, as if she is reflecting the person in a mirror.

Call out "Switch!" after a minute or two. The first partner then becomes the "mirror" and will copy the movements of the other.

OPTION 2: Coal pass

Crumple two pieces of black construction paper to resemble two pieces of "coal." Form two teams of kids. Give each player two craft sticks or unsharpened pencils. Demonstrate how to use the sticks to hold the coal.

Instruct each team to stand in a line. Give the coal to the first player in line. Explain that teams will race to move the coal to the end of the line using only their sticks. Kids may not use their hands to pass the coal.

Prompt teams to begin. Congratulate the first team to finish. If time allows, play again.

SAY • Isaiah saw the holy God in His glory. When Isaiah saw God's perfection, he was overcome by his own sin. He knew he was not worthy to be in God's presence. God does not tolerate sin, but instead of punishing us, God made the way for us to come to

craft sticks or unsharpened pencils, 2 per kid
black construction paper Him and be forgiven.

In the story, one of the seraphim came to Isaiah and touched his lips with a hot coal saying that his sins were atoned for, or forgiven. God forgives our sins when we put our faith in Jesus. Nothing we do can earn God's forgiveness. God gives salvation to anyone who believes in Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross, He took the punishment we deserve for our sin, and when He was raised from the dead He defeated sin once and for all!

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

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute pencils and journal pages. Invite the kids to write in their journals about what God might be calling them to do or where He might be calling them to go in order to tell people about Him.

SAY • Isaiah saw the holy God in His glory. God gave Isaiah a special task. God told Isaiah to tell the people about His glory, and we can do the same thing today. God wants everyone in the world to have a chance to hear about God's love for them, and God uses people like you and me to share that wonderful message.

Lead the kids in a short prayer, thanking God for using people as part of His plan to save people from every nation.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Isaiah's Calling" on the activity page. Provide Bibles and encourage kids to find the answers in Isaiah 6. Instruct kids to compare their answers with a partner. (1. Uzziah; 2. throne; 3. six; 4. holy, holy, holy; 5. earth; 6. coal; 7. sin; 8. Who should I send? Who will go for Us?)

pencils

- Journal Page
- "Isaiah's Calling" activity page, 1 per kid
- Bibles

Isaiah Preached About the Messiah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Isaiah 53

MAIN POINT: God said the Messiah would be a suffering servant.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

SMALL GROUP OPENING LARGE GROUP BIBLE STUDY SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES (10–15 MINUTES) (25–30 MINUTES) PAGE 74 PAGE 76 PAGE 82

Leader BIBLE STUDY

The Book of Isaiah contains four Servant songs—poems about the servant of God. (See Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:12–53:13.)

In these poems, the prophet Isaiah describes God's plan of redemption. We see a vision of the promised Messiah, the innocent substitute who would suffer for the sake of sinners. Through Jesus, God brings sinners back to Himself.

The fourth and final Servant song is found in Isaiah 53. In this passage, Isaiah provides an answer to these questions: How can a just God justify the ungodly? How can He declare innocent those who are guilty? How can He treat

bad people as though they are good? How can He love people like us?

A just God can't just look the other way. He doesn't say, "Don't worry about it," or "No big deal." That's cheap grace. Sin against a big God is a big deal. God didn't just forgive our sins, He dealt with them. And this grace was costly. The price? God's own Son.

Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecies of a Suffering Servant. People assumed God had cursed the Suffering Servant for His own sins. But no; Jesus was sinless. So why did He suffer? Isaiah wrote that He was pierced because of our transgressions and crushed because of our iniquities. His punishment is what brought our peace. The Suffering Servant died the death we deserve. When we trust in Jesus, our sins are wiped away—paid for by His blood—and His righteousness is credited to us.

When Christ's work on the cross was finished, God rewarded Him. "For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).



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The BIBLE STORY

Isaiah Preached About the Messiah

Isaiah 53

Many years had passed since God made promises to Abraham. Some of the people didn't trust God's promises anymore. So the prophet Isaiah came to tell the people God's plan: a Messiah was coming, someone who would be Israel's Savior. Isaiah said the Messiah would be a servant who would suffer and be a sacrifice to rescue them from sin.

Isaiah told about the future as if it had already happened. God's plan was like nothing anyone expected. Isaiah said that God's Servant grew up in God's presence. There was nothing special about Him; no one noticed Him. People didn't even like Him. They ignored Him and stayed away. God's servant suffered. He knew what it was like to be sick and to hurt.

"We saw Him and turned away," Isaiah said. "We looked down on Him and didn't care about Him."

But the way people treated the servant didn't stop Him from doing what God sent Him to do. "He carried our sicknesses and pains. We thought God was punishing Him because He had sinned. But no—He took the punishment for our sins! It was our failures that hurt Him. He took the punishment we deserved, and He has healed us. We are the ones who disobeyed God and wandered away from God like lost sheep. But instead of punishing us, God punished Him!"

Isaiah said the Messiah was beaten and treated badly, but He did not open His mouth or say anything. He had an unfair trial and then was led away to be killed.

Some people thought He was getting what He

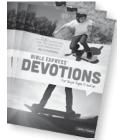
deserved, but no one realized His death was for them, to save them. He took the punishment they deserved. He had not done anything wrong. He never hurt anyone or said anything that was not true, but He was punished like a criminal.

"But this was God's plan all along!" Isaiah said. "By giving up His life as an offering for sin, the Suffering Servant gave life to many, many people. He took their guilt, and they can be righteous by His righteousness." And this is how God proved that what the Messiah did had worked—He did not stay dead. God brought Him back to life.

Isaiah said that when all this happens, the Messiah will see all the good that came from His suffering, and He will be glad He suffered.

"Then God will reward Him with great honor because He willingly died for people who were against God," Isaiah said. "He was counted guilty like a sinner. He took the punishment sinners deserve, and He asked God to welcome those who had turned away from Him."

Christ Connection: God planned all along that Jesus would die on the cross for our sin. Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote that this would happen! Jesus is the Servant who suffered so that those who trust in Him would be forgiven.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that God's people were like sheep who stray away from their Shepherd. (Isa. 53:6) Jesus is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep. (John 10:11) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information. check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Isaiah Preached About the Messiah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Isaiah 53

MAIN POINT: God said the Messiah would be a suffering servant.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

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 share about a time they cared for or served someone else.

SAY • Long before Jesus came to earth, God said through the prophet Isaiah that His Son would be a servant.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "Prophet or Not?" on the activity page. Instruct kids to cross out the names on the lamps that are not names of Old Testament prophets. If kids need help, provide Bibles and suggest they browse the Old Testament books or look at the table of contents.

Kids should cross out *Luke*, *Paul*, and *Timothy*. Challenge them to unscramble the underlined letters in the remaining names to fill in the blanks. (*Answer: God's servant Isaiah wrote about Jesus*.)

SAY • Isaiah was an Old Testament prophet. He lived hundreds of years before God sent His Son to earth. So what did Isaiah say about Jesus? We will find out in today's Bible story!

"Prophet or Not?" activity page, 1 per kidpencils or markersBibles

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Prediction game

Remind kids that in Bible times, God's prophets often told people what was going to happen in the future. Explain that sometimes prophecies hinted at what would happen.

Tell kids that you will describe an event, one hint at a time. Kids should try to guess what you are talking about.

- People sing. People give presents. People eat cake.
 (birthday party)
- People are outside. People light a fire. People sleep in tents. (*camping trip*)
- It is cold. People stay inside. Something falls from the sky. (*snowstorm*)

You may allow kids to take turns briefly describing events.

SAY • Today we are going to hear about a prophecy given by Isaiah. Isaiah talked about something that would happen hundreds of years in the future.

OPTION 2: Servant relay

Form two teams of kids. Instruct each team to line up single file. Position a chair across the room from each team. Give the first player on a team a serving tray with five empty plastic cups. Explain that when you say go, the first player should carry the tray to the other side of the room, around the chair, and back. She will hand the tray to the next player who will do the same.

Continue for each player. If the cups fall over, the player must stop and reposition them before continuing.

SAY • Today's Bible story is about God's Son, Jesus. God said He would send His Son to be a servant.

Transition to large group

LOW PREP

serving trays, 2plastic cups, 10chairs, 2

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Isaiah Preached About the Messiah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Isaiah 53

MAIN POINT: God said the Messiah would be a suffering servant.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Countdown

countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

leader attirescientific textbooks

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a white lab coat and carrying a stack of scientific textbooks. Leader plops down the books on a chair or table at the front of the room.]

LEADER • Hello, hello! Welcome back to the science lab.

I hope you are ready for another exciting time exploring God's Word as we look for evidence that teaches us about Him.

One thing good scientists do is look for evidence. Finding evidence is really important because it helps us understand the things we study. Without evidence, scientists wouldn't have anything to back up what they believe.

Over the last few weeks, we have been looking for evidence in the Bible that helps us understand more about God. The Bible is full of evidence that points to the one true God!

You know, knowing God and knowing about God

are very different. Every time we read the Bible, we can learn something about God that we didn't know before, but we shouldn't stop there! God reveals Himself to us so we can have a relationship with Him. He is a God who loves His people and wants to be near to us.

This is such great news! In today's Bible story, we will uncover lots of evidence that shows us God's great love for us and the sacrifice He made to make the way for us to be part of His eternal kingdom!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Point out the prophets on the giant timeline as you briefly review previous Bible stories. Then point to today's story.

LEADER • We have learned about some of the prophets like Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah who heard God speak and told the people what He said.

Today we will hear more about the prophet named Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet to the nation of Judah. God spoke to Isaiah and even gave him glimpses of the future. Isaiah lived about 700 years before Jesus came to earth, but we can read in the Book of Isaiah predictions about the Messiah that came true!

Today we will hear some of the things Isaiah said about the coming Messiah.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Can anyone remember our big picture question? [Allow kids to respond.] That's right! We've been studying God's Word looking for the answer to the question, **How many gods are there?**

We have seen lots of evidence that teaches us that

 Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

there is one true God who alone deserves worship.

As we hear the Bible story today, let's listen for more evidence about the one true God. Think about our big picture question, and we will talk more about it after we hear the story.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
 "Isaiah Preached About
- Isaian Preached About the Messiah"video
- Big Picture Question
 Poster
- Bible Story Picture
 Poster

Open your Bible to Isaiah 53. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Isaiah Preached About the Messiah."

LEADER • What an incredible story! Did you hear any more evidence that helps us answer our big picture question, *How many gods are there?* [Allow kids to respond.] Yes. We know there is one true God who alone deserves worship.

God gave Isaiah a vision of the future Messiah. Isaiah didn't know about Jesus yet because these prophecies were made 700 years before God's Son even came to earth! But Isaiah trusted God. He knew that God is the one true God and that what He said about the Messiah was true.

Isaiah's prophecies about Jesus are evidence that nothing surprises God. God said the Messiah would be a suffering servant. God planned all along that Jesus would die on the cross for our sin. Jesus is the Servant who suffered so that those who trust in Him would be forgiven.

Jesus had to suffer because He took the punishment for our sin. We deserve the suffering that Jesus endured, but because He loves us so much, God sent His own Son to save us.

Jesus' suffering isn't the end of the story. Jesus

suffered on the cross and died, but on the third day, He rose from the dead, defeating sin and death once and for all! His resurrection is evidence that Jesus' death paid for our sins—past, present, and future!

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Hebrews 1:1-2. Toss a foam ball to a kid and challenge him to say the first word of the key passage. He should then toss the ball back to you.

Toss the ball to another kid, who will say the second word. Continue until kids say the entire key passage.

LEADER • Our key passage is about how God speaks to us today. One way God speaks is through His Word. When we read Scripture, we are reading the very words of the one true God!

Guide kids to sing together "Speaking to Us."

- Key Passage Poster
- foam ball
- · "Speaking to Us" song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • How many of you like to plan out your day or week? Do your plans always happen? Think about that as you watch this video.

Show the "Unit 13, Session 5" discussion starter video. Guide kids to discuss whether or not they can know what is "Unit 13, Session 5" discussion starter video

going to happen in the future.

LEADER • Do you know what is going to happen in the future? If you make a plan, is it sure to happen? Whose plans always happen? Who knows the future? In the Book of Isaiah, God said the Messiah would be a suffering servant. God planned all along that Jesus would die on the cross for our sin. God is in control and working everything out for His glory and our good.

Even when we do not know or understand God's plan, we can trust Him with our future.

Sing (4 minutes)

• "God's Son" song

LEADER • We've found a lot of evidence in God's Word that teaches us more about Him and how much He loves us. We also know that He is the one true God who alone deserves worship!

Let's spend some time now singing to God and worshiping Him together!

Sing together "God's Son."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

we find evidence of Your amazing love for us. Thank You for sending Jesus to suffer in our place so we could find forgiveness for our sin. We pray that You would continue to reveal Yourself to us this week so we can know You better. We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Isaiah Preached About the Messiah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Isaiah 53

MAIN POINT: God said the Messiah would be a suffering servant.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Bibles, 1 per kidMain Point Poster

- dry erase board
- markers

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

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Position a dry erase board at the front of the room. Form two teams of kids. Give each team a dry erase marker.

Explain that you will ask a review question. Kids should decide with their team what the correct answer is and then send one player to run to the dry erase board and write the answer. Tell the first player to cover the answer until the other team answers. Then check their answers.

Award a point for each correct answer. Encourage teams to send a different player to the board for each question.

- 1. Who was the prophet from the story? (*Isaiah*, *Isa. 1:1*)
- 2. Is the Book of Isaiah in the Old Testament or New Testament? (*Old Testament*)
- 3. In what division of the Bible is the Book of Isaiah found? (*Major Prophets*)
- 4. Name the book before or after the Book of Isaiah. (Song of Songs, before; Jeremiah, after)
- 5. Isaiah said the Messiah would rescue people from their what? (*sin*, *Isa*. 53:11)
- 6. True or false: God was surprised when the Messiah suffered. (false, it was God's plan; Isa. 53:10)

- 7. Did the Messiah deserve to suffer and die? (*No, He was innocent; Isa. 53:4*)
- 8. What happened to Jesus? (*He was beaten and killed, Isa. 53:5*)
- 9. When we trust Jesus, does God punish us for our sin or forgive us? (*He forgives, Isa. 53:5*)
- 10. How many gods are there? There is one true God who alone deserves worship.

SAY • God said the Messiah would be a suffering servant.

At the time, Isaiah didn't know who the suffering servant would be, but now we know. Who came as the suffering servant? (*Jesus*)

That's right. God sent His Son to suffer in our place so we could be saved from our sin. God made the way for us to have a relationship with Him.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

SAY • Our key passage is all about how God speaks to us through Jesus. Let's say it together.

Show the key passage poster and guide kids to read it aloud together. Then form groups of three to five kids. Challenge each group to create a song with the words of Hebrews 1:1-2. Suggest they make up their own tune or try singing the words to a familiar tune.

After a few minutes, allow groups to share their songs.

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Evidence match

Print and cut apart the evidence match cards and distribute them to kids. If you have more than 14 kids in your group, allow kids to work in pairs or small groups.

Give kids Bibles and guide them to find and read their

• Key Passage Poster



 "Evidence Match Cards" printable

· Bibles, 1 per kid

assigned Scripture. Call on a kid with a verse from Isaiah to read his verse aloud.

For each Isaiah card, challenge kids to identify which New Testament passage describes Jesus fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. If a kid thinks she has the matching card, she should read her New Testament passage aloud.

SAY • Isaiah lived about 700 years before Jesus was came to earth. **God said the Messiah would be a suffering servant.** Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy in His life, death, and resurrection. God had planned all along to send a Messiah to rescue people from sin, and Jesus is God's plan to bring salvation to the world.

OPTION 2: Shadow art

Follow these steps as you lead kids to create shadow art:

- 1. Hang a large piece of paper on a wall and invite several kids to stand in front of it, a few feet away.
- 2. Dim the lights in the room and shine a lamp toward the kids so their shadows are cast onto the paper.
- 3. Demonstrate how to use a marker to outline the kids' shadows.
- 4. Invite kids to strike various poses as other kids trace their shadows. Then invite kids to trade places so everyone has a chance to make a shadow.
- 5. Allow kids' shadows to overlap. When kids finish, turn on the lights and admire their shadow art.
- **SAY** We've been reading from the Book of Isaiah, which has lots of prophecies about the Messiah. When I think of prophecies, it makes me think of how they are sort of like shadows of things to come. We might not always see clearly how a prophecy will be

- large piece of papercrayons or markers
- lamp or flashlight

fulfilled, but we can trust that God is in control. He always keeps His promises.

God said the Messiah would be a suffering servant. Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. God showed His great love for us when He sent Jesus. Anyone who trusts in Jesus will be saved!

When we believe and say that Jesus is our Lord, God forgives us of our sin so we can really know Him. The fact that Jesus had to suffer is evidence that God takes sin very seriously. Sin is a big deal! But because God is so good and full of grace and mercy, He made the way for us to be free from our sin once and for all.

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

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute pencils and journal pages. Invite the kids to write in their journals two or three ways that they can serve others this week.

SAY • When we love and serve others, we can point them to the true servant, Jesus, who gave His life for us. Pray, thanking Jesus for being the suffering servant. Ask Him to show kids ways to love and serve others this week.

Lead kids to complete "Isaiah Said It" on the activity page. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Isaiah 53. Work together to cross out the statements that Isaiah did not say about the Messiah. Circle the statements he did say.

Kids should cross out the following statements:

- 1. He fought hard for His freedom.
- 2. He cried out in His own defense.
- 3. He was not willing to die.
- 4. He bore the sin of a few.

pencils

- Journal Page
- "Isaiah Said It" activity page, 1 per kid
- Bibles

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

Hezekiah, Judah's Faithful King

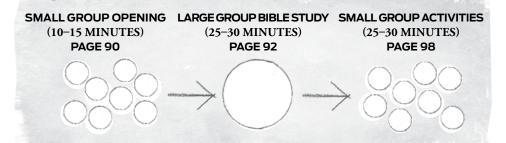
BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Kings 18–19

MAIN POINT: God answered Hezekiah's prayer.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.



Leader BIBLE STUDY

He's a chip off the old block. Like father, like son. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. These idioms exist because sons tend to look and behave like their fathers. When it came to Hezekiah and his father, Ahaz, however, the two were far from similar.

When Ahaz was king of Judah, he did not respect God, God's law, or God's prophets. He worshiped idols. Ahaz "did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord his God" (2 Kings 16:2). He led the people away from God, provoking God's wrath and anger.

Hezekiah, on the other hand, "did what was right in the Lord's sight just as his ancestor David had done." Hezekiah destroyed the places of idol worship and cleansed the temple. (See 2 Chron. 29.) The Lord was with Hezekiah, and Hezekiah prospered.

Hezekiah was a faithful king who led the people of Judah to worship God like they were supposed to, but even good kings are sinners. His wealth and success led to pride. How did Hezekiah react when God said everything in his palace would be carried off to Babylon? "Who cares? I'll be dead by then."

Jesus is our faithful King who never sinned. Check out some of these definitions for the word *faithful*: "strict or thorough in the performance of duty"; "true to one's word, promises, or vows"; "steady in allegiance or affection"; "loyal"; "constant"; "reliable, trusted, or believed"; "adhering or true to fact, a standard, or an original"; "accurate."

Jesus completed His work—the redemption of sinners. He said on the cross, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Jesus is faithful over God's house as a Son. (Heb. 3:6) His obedience is steadfast. (Isa. 50:4-10) "Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). One day Jesus will return to make all things the way they are supposed to be. (Rev. 1:1-6)



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The BIBLE STORY

Hezekiah, Judah's Faithful King

2 Kings 18-19

The Southern Kingdom of Judah had many kings. When King Ahaz died, his son Hezekiah became king. Hezekiah was not like his father. Ahaz had been a bad king, but Hezekiah did what was right. Hezekiah trusted God and obeyed His commands.

One day, the Assyrians attacked the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Assyrian army destroyed the kingdom and made the people in the capital city go to Assyria.

A few years later, the Assyrians came to Judah. Hezekiah was afraid. He did not trust God to protect His people. Instead, Hezekiah sent a message to the king of Assyria. Hezekiah said, "Please go away. I'll give you as much money as you want."

The king of Assyria demanded 11 tons of silver and 1 ton of gold. Hezekiah didn't have that much money! So he collected the silver from God's temple and from the palace. He took the gold off the doors and doorposts in the temple and gave it to the king of Assyria.

But the king of Assyria did not go away. His large army and some of his leaders went to talk to Hezekiah. "Whom are you trusting to protect you?" they asked. "Our armies are stronger than yours. You should just give up now," they said.

Hezekiah sent a message to Isaiah the prophet. "Pray for us!" Hezekiah said. "Ask God to protect us!"

Isaiah responded, "God says: Do not be afraid. The king will go back to his country, and he will be killed there."

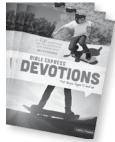
The Assyrians made fun of Hezekiah for trusting God. The king sent him a letter that said, "Do you really think that God will protect you?"

Hezekiah went to the temple. He spread out the king's letter and prayed. He said, "God, please save us from Assyria so that everyone on earth will know that You are the one true God."

Then Isaiah came to Hezekiah with a message. God had heard Hezekiah's prayer. God was not going to let Assyria attack Jerusalem. God said, "I will defend this city and rescue it for My sake and to keep the promise I made to My servant David—that his kingdom would not be destroyed."

That night, the angel of the Lord went into the camp of the Assyrian army and killed thousands of them. The next morning, the king of Assyria went home. He was killed there, just as God had said.

Christ Connection: Hezekiah prayed that God would save His people from their enemies so that everyone would know that He is the one true God. God answered Hezekiah's prayer. Jesus also prayed for His people to be saved. God answered Jesus' prayer. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus brought glory to God by rescuing people from sin and death.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that Hezekiah stood out among the kings of Judah because he trusted God. (2 Kings 18:5) No king was like him, but he pointed ahead to a greater King, Jesus. (Rev. 1:5) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information. check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Hezekiah, Judah's Faithful King

BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Kings 18–19

MAIN POINT: God answered Hezekiah's prayer.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

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 what kinds of things come to mind when they hear the word *faithful*.

SAY • The word *faithful* means "loyal" or "firm in keeping promises or fulfilling duties." Today we will hear about a king who was faithful.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "Take a Look" on the activity page. Challenge kids to spot the 10 differences.

When kids finish, allow them to share the differences: king has shorter beard, man's clothes are a different color, jewels are missing on crown, jewels are a different color, army in the background disappears, torch in the doorway is extinguished, the solid garment changes to polka-dot, man in the doorway is wearing a hat, palm tree in the window disappears, king's "cape" changes color.

SAY • The men in this picture look terrified of that army in the distance. Listen closely to the Bible story today to figure out just what was going on here.

"Take a Look" activity page, 1 per kidpencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Please go away!

Choose one player to be *It*. He should stand at one side of the room and face the wall. The rest of the kids should line up at the opposite side of the room.

Instruct the kids to say together, "Do you really think that God will protect you?" *It* should reply, "Please go away!" Kids will take one step forward and ask the question again. At any time, *It* may respond, "God, please save us!" Then he will turn around and try to tag the other kids as they race back to the start.

SAY • Today's Bible story is about King Hezekiah. He asked his enemies to go away. Then he prayed and asked God to keep His people safe. We will find out if God answered Hezekiah's prayer.

OPTION 2: Outnumbered

Form two teams; one team should have at least twice as many players as the other. Instruct the teams to kneel on opposite sides of a table. Give each player a drinking straw. Also give each player on the larger team a table tennis ball.

Explain that the team with the balls will use their straws to blow them toward the smaller team. The smaller team should try to defend themselves by blowing the balls back. If the larger team gets all the balls past the smaller team, reset the game and play again. Play multiple rounds.

SAY • The larger team won because they outnumbered the smaller team! Today we will hear about a king who trusted God to protect His people even when they were outnumbered by their enemies.

Transition to large group



drinking strawstable tennis balls,1 per kid

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Hezekiah, Judah's Faithful King

BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Kings 18–19

MAIN POINT: God answered Hezekiah's prayer.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Countdown

countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

leader attirescientific textbooks

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a white lab coat and carrying a stack of scientific textbooks. Leader plops down the books on a chair or table at the front of the room.]

LEADER • Hello, everyone, and welcome back to our science lab! I am so glad you could join me. I have a lot of fun in store for you, and we have lots to learn as well!

We have talked a lot about things that scientists do. They make observations about the world around them, they make predictions, conduct experiments, draw conclusions, and tell others about the results they get. Scientists don't learn new things and then keep all that knowledge to themselves! They want to share their findings with the whole world so other people can gain new knowledge too!

Could you imagine if scientists always kept their findings a secret? No one would ever be able to learn new things! Nope, scientific discoveries were

definitely meant to be shared. The same is true when we discover new things about God. When we experience Him and know Him better, we shouldn't keep it to ourselves. We should share our knowledge of God with others!

God wants to make His name great. We know that *there is one true God who alone deserves worship*. In our Bible story today, we will hear about how God showed His glory so that everyone would worship Him.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Point out previous stories on the giant timeline and show kids where today's Bible story, "Hezekiah, Judah's Faithful King," falls on the timeline. • Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

LEADER • We have been learning about some of the kings and prophets of Israel and Judah, and today we will hear the story of King Hezekiah. Hezekiah's father was King Ahaz, an evil king whose heart was far from God. Ahaz did not respect God, God's laws, or God's prophets. Hezekiah was very different from his father. He was faithful to God and desired to follow Him and serve Him with his whole heart.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Who can remember what our big picture question is? [*Allow kids to respond.*] That's right! We've been searching God's Word to help us answer the question, *How many gods are there?*

In today's Bible story, we will hear about God's amazing power. As you listen to the story, think about the evidence that points to the one true God.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Open your Bible to 2 Kings 18–19. Tell the Bible story in Bibles
- your own words, or show the Bible story video "Hezekiah, Faithful King"video Judah's Faithful King."
- - **LEADER** Wow! What an amazing story of God's great power. That reminds me of our big picture question, *How many gods are there?* This story really answers that question. There is one true God who alone deserves worship. Now I'll ask the big picture question, and you say the answer. How many gods are there? [Allow kids to respond.] There is one true

God who alone deserves worship. Great job!

God displayed His power to Hezekiah and to the Assyrian army. The evil king of Assyria made fun of Hezekiah for worshiping the one true God, but God put His glory on display!

Hezekiah prayed that God would save His people from their enemies so that everyone would know that He is the one true God. God answered Hezekiah's prayer.

Jesus also prayed for His people to be saved. God answered Jesus' prayer. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus brought glory to God by rescuing people from sin and death.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

- "Hezekiah, Judah's
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Hebrews 1:1-2. Cover the poster and then tape a large piece of paper to a focal wall.

Choose volunteers to come up one at a time to write one word of the key passage. Invite kids to take turns until they finish writing the whole passage. Then guide them to read Hebrews 1:1-2 aloud.

LEADER • One way we can worship God is by studying and memorizing His Word. God reveals to us who He is through Scripture, so as we read the Bible we can know God better.

Lead kids to sing "Speaking to Us."

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

situation? You might call to a friend or parent for help, but have you ever stopped to pray? Watch this. Show the "Unit 13, Session 6" discussion starter video. Guide kids to discuss prayer. Do they think praying does any good? Talk about the power of prayer and how it can be our most powerful action in difficult situations.

LEADER • God answered Hezekiah's prayer. God hears us when we pray. We can pray and ask God for help.

Sing (4 minutes)

LEADER • We know that God is the one true God who alone deserves worship. Over the last few weeks, we've explored God's Word and found evidence that shows us how great and mighty our God is!

When I think about God, I can't help but want to worship Him. Let's stand and sing together to God

Kev Passage Poster

• "Speaking to Us" song

· large piece of paper

tape

marker

 "Unit 13, Session 6" discussion starter video

"God's Son" song

and praise His name! Sing together "God's Son."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups. **LEADER •** God, thank You for revealing Yourself to us through Your Word. Thank You for Your faithfulness to us even when we sin against You, and thank You for sending Jesus to die and be raised from the dead so we could be forgiven of our sin. Help us love You and serve You with our whole heart this week. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Hezekiah, Judah's Faithful King

BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Kings 18–19

MAIN POINT: God answered Hezekiah's prayer.

KEY PASSAGE: Hebrews 1:1-2

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: How many gods are there? There is one true God

who alone deserves worship.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

Key Passage Postersticky notes

SAY • In our Bible story, we learned about faithful King Hezekiah. **God answered Hezekiah's prayer.** God spoke to Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah. Our key passage reminds us that God still speaks to us today through His Son, Jesus.

Show the key passage poster and lead kids to read it aloud together. Then cover two words with sticky notes and challenge kids to read the verse aloud, supplying the missing words from memory.

Continue covering up two words at a time, allowing kids to say the key passage in its entirety. Allow volunteers to individually recite Hebrews 1:1-2 from memory.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Bibles, 1 per kidMain Point Poster

Distribute Bibles. Instruct kids to turn to 2 Kings 18–19. Call on a volunteer to name the Bible book that comes before 2 Kings. (*I Kings*) Call on another volunteer to name the book that comes after 2 Kings. (*I Chronicles*)

SAY • Hezekiah was not like his father, Ahaz. When Ahaz was king of Judah, he did not respect God, God's law, or God's prophets. He worshiped idols. Ahaz

"did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord his God" (2 Kings 16:2). Ahaz led the people away from God. The Bible says that Hezekiah was faithful. "He did what was right in the Lord's sight, just as his ancestor David had done" (2 Kings 18:3). Let's see what you remember from today's story.

Ask the following review questions. Call on kids to answer. If kids struggle to answer, provide the Scripture reference with each question and encourage them to read it in their Bibles.

- 1. What was the name of the faithful king in the story? (*Hezekiah*, 2 Kings 18:1)
- 2. Hezekiah was king over what kingdom? (*Judah*, 2 Kings 18:1)
- 3. Which country tried to invade Judah? (*Assyria*, 2 Kings 18:17)
- 4. Where did Hezekiah get the gold and silver to give to the Assyrian army? (*God's temple*, 2 *Kings 18:15*)
- 5. What did Hezekiah ask Isaiah to do? (*Pray for him, 2 Kings 19:1-4*)
- 6. How did God answer Hezekiah's prayer? (God saved the city of Jerusalem and killed many of the Assyrian soldiers, 2 Kings 19:35)
- **SAY** Hezekiah prayed that God would save His people from their enemies so that everyone would know that He is the one true God. **God answered Hezekiah's prayer** and kept His people safe.

Jesus also prayed for His people to be saved. God answered Jesus' prayer. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus brought glory to God by rescuing people from sin and death.

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



• construction paper

- white paper
- stapler
- pencils or markers

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Prayer journals

Give each kid four sheets of white paper and one sheet of construction paper. Stack the white paper on top of the construction paper and fold all the papers in half so that the construction paper acts as the book cover. Use two or three staples along the folded edge to secure the pages in place.

Prompt kids to write *My Prayer Journal* on the front cover. Allow them to decorate the outside of the journal and list on the first page a few things they would like to pray for.

Encourage kids to take home their prayer journals to record prayer requests or to write out prayers to God. Remind them to review past prayer requests and make a note if God answers their prayers.

SAY • In today's Bible story, we heard how **God answered Hezekiah's prayer.** God might not always answer
our prayers right away or in the way we hope, but
we can trust that He knows what is best. God does
everything for His glory and our good.

 masking tape or painter's tape
 blindfolds

OPTION 2: Walking blind

Before small group, use masking tape to create a pathway around the room. Help kids form partners. Blindfold the first partner and encourage the second partner to lead him along the pathway without straying from the line.

The second partner may not touch the first; he may only give careful directions to guide his partner.

When a partner finishes the course, allow partners to switch roles and complete the course again.

SAY • Sometimes it's hard to trust God when we are scared, especially when we can't see Him. But we read in the Bible that He will take care of us because He loves

us. God showed us His love by sending Jesus!

God receives all the glory when we put our faith in Jesus. God loves us and saves us so we can have a relationship with Him.

God made the way for us to come to Him by sending Jesus to take the punishment that our sin deserves. We don't have to suffer because Jesus suffered in our place.

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

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Invite the kids to list in their journals things that might be idols in their own lives. Prompt kids to consider what they spend the most time doing, what they think about the most, and what takes priority in their lives.

SAY • Let's take a couple of minutes to pray silently, and then I will close in prayer. [Allow kids to pray briefly.]

Lord God, we confess that we are not always faithful to You. Forgive us for treasuring other things or even ourselves more than You. We see in Your Word that You are always faithful! Thank You for keeping Your people safe and for sending Your Son, Jesus, to take away our sin. We love You. Amen.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Make the Cut" on the activity page. Lead kids to follow the instructions to eliminate certain words from the puzzle.

When kids have finished crossing out the words, guide them to read the remaining words from top to bottom, left to right: *God answered Hezekiah's prayer and saved His people* from their enemies.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Make the Cut" activity page, 1 per kid

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

Unit 14: God the Pursuer

Unit Description:

Despite His people's continued sin, God continued to pursue them. God used Hosea's life to show that He still loved Israel, though she was unfaithful. God called Jonah to the capital of a godless nation, showing that no one is beyond the reach of God's compassion. God used Joel to remind Judah that judgment was inevitable but that God is merciful and was ready to welcome them back.

Key Passage:

Joel 2:13

Big Picture Question:

What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving.



Unit 14: God the Pursuer

Session 1:

Bible Story:

Hosea, Prophet to Israel

Bible Passage:

Hosea 1-14

Main Point:

God loves people when they do not deserve it.

Session 2:

Bible Story:

Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

Bible Passage:

Jonah 1-4

Main Point:

God showed mercy to the Ninevites.

Session 3:

Bible Story:

Joel, Prophet to Judah

Bible Passage:

Joel 1-3

Main Point:

God warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord.

Hosea, Prophet to Israel

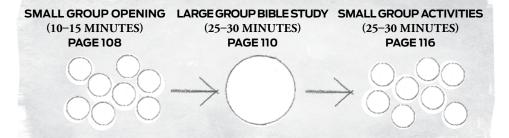
BIBLE PASSAGE: Hosea 1-14

MAIN POINT: God loves people when they do not deserve it.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.



Leader BIBLE STUDY

God sent the prophet Hosea to speak to Israel a message of God's hatred toward sin and of His coming judgment. God also sent Hosea to bring a message of love—a love that never gives up. God used Hosea's own life to show Israel what a never-gives-up kind of love looks like.

God told Hosea to marry a prostitute. He told Hosea that his wife would not be faithful to him. She would give birth to children who were conceived with other men. Still, Hosea obeyed God. He chose Gomer as his wife. Just as God said, Gomer was not faithful to Hosea. She went after other lovers. Can you imagine Hosea's grief each time he found his wife with another man?

1

It would have been easier for Hosea to throw up his hands and say, "Enough! I'm done with you!" God's people were no different than Gomer. They were spiritual adulterers. Their hearts chased after other lovers. They loved and worshiped idols, people and things that were not the one true God.

It would have been easier for God to throw up His hands and say, "Enough! I'm done with you!" But God's love never gives up. He gave Hosea a love for his wife that compelled him to buy her back from the slave market after all she had done. In the same way, God sought after His unfaithful people even after all they had done. God paid a high price—the life of His Son, Jesus—to bring them back to Himself.

Remember to present the story of Hosea in an ageappropriate way. God used Hosea's unfaithful wife to show the people of Israel that they were unfaithful to Him. God gave Hosea a deep love; Hosea was willing to buy back Gomer even after all she had done. God's love is deep, and it never gives up. He goes after His people and loves them back to Himself.



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

God the Pursuer

The BIBLE STORY

Hosea, Prophet to Israel

Hosea 1-14

God gave the prophet Hosea instructions for his life. God wanted to send a message to His people through Hosea. God said, "Marry a woman who will not be faithful to you, and be a father to her children."

God was going to use Hosea's life to show His people in Israel what God's love from them was like. Hosea's wife would love other men instead of Hosea, just like the people of Israel loved and worshiped other gods instead of the one true God.

God was asking Hosea to do something very difficult. It is hard to love someone who doesn't love you back! But **Hosea obeyed God. He married a woman named Gomer.**

Gomer had three children: Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah (LOH-roo HA muh), and Lo-ammi (lo-AM igh). Each child's name had a special meaning. *Jezreel* was the name of a city, so this name was warning to Israel that they would be defeated by their enemies.

Lo-ruhamah, which means "No Mercy," let Israel know that God was not going to show them mercy anymore. They would get the punishment their sin deserved.

Lo-ammi, which means "Not My People," told the Israelites that they were no longer God's people.

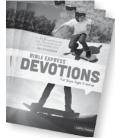
Gomer was not faithful to Hosea. She often ran away. In the same way, God's people turned away from Him. They worshiped false gods. God told Hosea to go after his wife. So Hosea found Gomer and paid to get her back.

"Stop being unfaithful," Hosea said. Even though Gomer had not loved her husband like a wife should, Hosea loved her anyway. God gave Hosea a love that would never give up. God wanted the people of Israel to hear about Hosea and his wife and understand that Israel was no different than Gomer. The Israelites did not love God like they should, but God loved Israel anyway. God loves with a love that never gives up.

Hosea warned the Israelites that God was going to judge them for their sin. Hosea pleaded with Israel to turn back to God. "Come, let us return to the Lord," he said. "Let us strive to know the Lord."

God was going to punish the people for turning away from Him, but He would keep the promise He made to Abraham. Abraham's family would be a big family, and one day Jesus would come from Abraham's family. Yes, God still loved Israel. God hated their sin but, just like Hosea paid a high price to get back his wife who did not love him, God had a plan to get His people back no matter what the cost.

Christ Connection: God used Hosea's unfaithful wife to show the people of Israel that they were unfaithful to Him. God gave Hosea a deep love; Hosea was willing to buy back Gomer even after all she had done. God's love is deep, and it never gives up. He goes after His people and loves them back to Himself.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that God's unique plan for Hosea was not easy, but God's Word promises that His plans for us are good, to bring us hope and not disaster. (Jer. 29:11) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information. check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Hosea, Prophet to Israel

BIBLE PASSAGE: Hosea 1–14

MAIN POINT: God loves people when they do not deserve it.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.

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.

Instruct kids to think of words that describe God. Invite kids to share their words. Challenge kids to think of words others have not yet mentioned.

SAY • Those were some great words to describe God. We could sit here all day and never fully describe our mighty God. Today our big picture question is, *What is God like?* Are you ready to find out?

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Hosea's Search" activity page, 1 per kidpencils or markers
- Invite kids to complete "Hosea's Search" on the activity page. Kids should circle the key words in the word search. Words are hidden horizontally, vertically, diagonally, forward, and backward.
- SAY Are there any words here that you don't recognize? Several of these words—like Hosea (hoh ZAY uh), Gomer (GOH muhr), and Jezreel (JEZ reel)—are names that we will hear later today. Listen for them when we hear the Bible story.

Session starter (10 minutes)

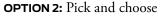
OPTION 1: Love shuffle

Instruct kids to sit in a circle with one player standing in the middle. The middle player will call out, "Shuffle if you love ... [name an object or activity]."

Any players who agree with the statement should stand and find another empty chair to sit in. The middle player should also find a seat. The player left without a chair becomes the player in the middle. Play several rounds.

SAY • You love so many different things! How do you show that you love something? You might show you love soccer by joining a soccer team.

Have you ever thought about what God loves? His love is amazing. I can't wait for you to hear today's Bible story. We will learn that **God loves people** when they do not deserve it. That's incredible!



Guide kids to line up in the middle of the room. Give them two choices. Kids should move to the left side of the room if they love the first choice more and the right side of the room if they love the second choice more.

Include these choices: ice cream or pizza, the ocean or pool, going to the movies or going to a concert, people who love you or people who do not love you.

Allow kids to explain their decisions.

SAY • Doesn't that last option seem strange? People who love us are easy to love. Today we will hear about a man named Hosea. God used Hosea to show that He loves us, even when we do not love Him back.

Transition to large group



 chairs, 1 fewer than the number of players

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Hosea, Prophet to Israel

BIBLE PASSAGE: Hosea 1–14

MAIN POINT: God loves people when they do not deserve it.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.

room decorations

• Theme Background Slide (optional) **Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas:** Decorate the room to resemble a news studio. Position a desk at the front of the room and arrange two chairs behind it. Hang maps or photos on the wall and provide microphones as props. Create a sign with *Channel 7* station graphics. You may also choose to project the theme background slide.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

leader attiremicrophone

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a blazer and dress shirt. Leader holds a microphone and adjusts his or her clothes and hair as if preparing to go live. Then leader addresses kids.]

LEADER • Well, hi there. How did you get here? We are about to go live on the air in two minutes. So you kids may get on the evening news tonight!

I am so excited that I get to break the top news story of the day. You know, in the news business, it is not every day that we have something positive to report.

Today I have the leading story. Some will call it unbelievable, but I have just discovered that there is a perfect love out there. You won't believe it. This is the story of Hosea (hoh ZAY uh) and Gomer (GOH muhr). Hosea accepted the difficult challenge of loving someone who didn't love him back. Reports are coming in that this is just like God's love for us.

[Look off to the side as if someone is getting your attention.] Oh, there is a slight delay with the newscast. Well, do you think you could help me prepare for the live report? I'll tell you all about Hosea and God's amazing love. Raise your hand if you are ready. Great!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

how far we have come. Wow, we have made it to the start of the Minor Prophet books of the Bible.

These books are in the Old Testament. The prophets brought God's message to people on earth.

Just like every Bible story we have heard, today's story points to God's great love for us and His plan to save and rescue us from our sins.

• Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • If a friend asked you what God is like, how would you answer? God is so many things, but today we are going to focus on three of His qualities. Our big picture question is, **What is God like?**

Listen closely to the story of Hosea to discover how *God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving.*

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
- "Hosea, Prophet to Israel" video
- Big Picture Question
 Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Open your Bible to the Book of Hosea. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Hosea, Prophet to Israel."

LEADER • What an unusual story! This sure doesn't sound like any love story I've ever read about in books or seen in the movies. God wanted to send a message to His people through Hosea. God used Hosea's life to show His great love for His people.

God had a message for His people in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. But God didn't want Hosea to just *tell* the people about God's message; He wanted Hosea to *show* them. Hosea showed the people what God is like. *What is God like?* That's our big picture question. Here's the answer: *God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving.* Say that with me. [Lead kids to say the big picture question and answer.] Let's see how well you remember what happened in the story of Hosea.

Ask the following review questions. Call on kids to answer.

- 1. What was the name of the woman Hosea married? (*Gomer, Hos. 1:3*)
- 2. How many children did Gomer have? (three: Jezreel, Lo-ruhamah, and Lo-ammi; Hos. 1:4,6,9)
- 3. How were the people of Israel like Gomer? (Gomer was not faithful to Hosea. In the same way, God's people turned away from Him; Hos. 3:1)
- 4. True or false? Hosea gave up on Gomer and allowed her to run away. (false, Hosea found Gomer and paid to get her back; Hos. 3:2)
- 5. What did Hosea tell the Israelites to do? (*Return to the Lord and strive to know the Lord; Hos. 6:1,3*)

LEADER • God hated His people's sin but, just like Hosea paid a high price to get back his wife who did not love him, God had a plan to get His people back at a very great cost to Himself. **God loves people when they do not deserve it.**

You know, we are just like the Israelites. We have turned away from God by sinning. Our sin separates us from God. That's the bad news. But God came after us. He sent His Son, Jesus, to pay the highest price for us. Jesus gave up His own life by dying on the cross. He took the punishment we deserve for our sin. When we trust in Him, God forgives our sin and gives us eternal life. That is very good news!

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Joel 2:13. Invite kids to make up motions for each key word or phrase of the verse. For example:

- *Return to the LORD your God*—Point both thumbs over your shoulders.
- For He is gracious and compassionate—Hug yourself and sway side to side.
- slow to anger—Move arms outward in a slow, wave-like motion.

- Key Passage Poster
- "Return"song

Tip: Adapt motions for key words based on your preferred translation.

• rich in faithful love—Hold both hands over your heart.

LEADER • Our key passage is a great description of God. It reminds me of our big picture question. Let's say the question and answer again. What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving.

Lead kids to sing "Return" together.

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

 "Unit 14, Session 1" discussion starter video Sometimes people we love might hurt us. Watch this. Show the "Unit 14, Session 1" discussion starter video. Ask kids if they have ever been hurt by a friend. Guide them to discuss if it was hard to forgive that friend.

LEADER • Do you think Hosea loved Gomer because he was just really good at loving people? No, God gave Hosea a love that would never give up. We were enemies of God, but He loved us and sent Jesus to take away our sin. Because God loves us so much, we can love others—even when they don't love us well.

Sing (4 minutes)

• "The Love of God" song

LEADER • God loves people when they do not deserve it.

Let's worship God by singing about His great love. Sing together "The Love of God."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Hosea, Prophet to Israel

BIBLE PASSAGE: Hosea 1–14

MAIN POINT: God loves people when they do not deserve it.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster

Display the key passage poster and read Joel 2:13 aloud. Form four groups and assign each group a phrase of the key passage. Point to each group to say its part of the key passage in order. Reassign phrases and repeat the activity a few times.

SAY • What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving. This is exactly what God showed His people through Hosea's life. I am so glad God gave us this story in His Word! Try to memorize Joel 2:13 this week to remember the truth about God's love!

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Bibles, 1 per kidMain Point Poster

Guide kids to open their Bibles to the Book of Hosea.

SAY • This amazing story of God's great love is found in the Book of Hosea. Hosea can be a tricky book to find. [Show kids the table of contents in your Bible.] Hosea is in the Old Testament, right between Daniel and Joel. Let's practice finding the Book of Hosea.

Allow kids to practice several times opening their Bibles to Hosea. Review the names of Hosea's children and what their names mean. Lead kids to point to and read the Scripture that states their names and meanings.

- *Jezreel* was the name of a city, so this name was warning to Israel that they would be defeated by their enemies. (Hos. 1:4)
- *Lo-ruhamah*, which means "No Mercy," let Israel know that God was not going to show them mercy anymore. They would get the punishment their sin deserved. (Hos. 1:6)
- *Lo-ammi*, which means "Not My People," told the Israelites that they were no longer God's people. (Hos. 1:9)

SAY • Hosea warned the Israelites that God would judge them for their sin. Hosea pleaded with Israel to turn back to God. God hated their sin but, just like Hosea paid a high price to get back his wife who did not love him, God had a plan to get His people back even at a great cost.

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to John 3:16.

SAY • What price did God pay to rescue people from sin? (God gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life; John 3:16)

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

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

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Reverse charades

Before small group, write several expressions of love on separate sheets of paper. Suggestions:

- encouraging someone
- helping or serving someone
- spending time with someone
- listening to someone
- warning someone of danger



paper

marker

Choose a child to be the guesser. Guide him to stand with his back to the group. Show the rest of the kids a sheet of paper that describes what they should act out.

Instruct the guesser to turn around. The rest of the kids should silently act out the expression of love. If desired, kids may work with a partner to act out the expression. The guesser should try to figure out what they are doing. Allow a minute or two for the guesser to guess.

Before playing another round, discuss these questions:

- 1. How does God show us that expression of love?
- 2. How can we show love to others in this way?
- SAY God loves people when they do not deserve it. God loved the Israelites even though they had turned away from Him. He sent Hosea to warn them to turn back to God and to show them what God's love is like. We can show God's love to others by doing some of the things we acted out, even if they have not been loving to us.

OPTION 2: God's love never gives up

Give each kid a pencil or pen and three pieces of paper.

SAY • Try to think of the worst thing you have ever done. What was the next worst? Or the third worst? Write those three things on your pieces of paper, and then crumple them up.

Lead kids to hold onto their paper wads and sit in a circle. Position a trash can in the middle of the circle.

SAY • In today's Bible story, Hosea's relationship with Gomer reminded us of God's relationship with the people of Israel and with us.

> Even though God's people were unfaithful and loved other things more than God, God still loved

- paper, 3 pieces per kid
- pencils or pens
- trash can or recycling hin

them. We have sinned and loved other things more than God, too. But God still loves us.

God sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sin and bring us back to Him. That's amazing love!

So as you hold some pretty bad things in your hand, remember nothing that we do will cause God to stop loving us. He loves us so much He wants to rescue us from our sins.

Invite kids to each toss one paper wad into the trash can. Guide them to say today's main point together: **God loves people when they do not deserve it.** Play three rounds to discard of all the paper, repeating the main point each time.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Encourage kids to write a thank-you note to God for loving them even though they are sinners. Remind kids that **God loves people when they do not deserve it.**

SAY • Let's pray. Lord God, Your love never gives up.

Thank You for loving us even when we don't deserve it. Father, help us to love others who have been unloving to us. Give us a love that never gives up.

Help us show Your love to the world by loving others well. Thank You for Jesus. We love You. Amen.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Never Give Up" on the activity page. Kids can use the key to decode the secret message about God's love. (*Answer: God loves with a love* that never gives up.) pencils

- Journal Page
- "Never Give Up" activity page, 1 per kid

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

Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jonah 1–4

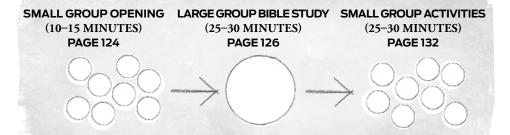
MAIN POINT: God showed mercy to the Ninevites.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.

4



Leader BIBLE STUDY

The Book of Jonah is not primarily about Jonah and a big fish. While those elements are important, Jonah's account centers around the compassion of God, not only for the people of Israel, but for people throughout the earth—even Israel's worst enemies!

God spoke to Jonah: "Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because their wickedness has confronted Me" (Jonah 1:2). God is the judge of all the earth (Gen. 18:25) and He is sovereign over all the nations. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and the rulers of Nineveh were notoriously evil and cruel. No wonder Jonah ran the other way!

No one can flee from God's presence. (Ps. 139:9-10) Through a storm and some time in the belly of a fish, God got Jonah's attention. Jonah went to Nineveh. For three days, Jonah walked around the city. His message to the Ninevites was brief: "In 40 days Nineveh will be demolished!"

The people of Nineveh immediately repented, and God withheld His judgment. He passed over their sins and did not demolish the city. How did Jonah react? "Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious" (Jonah 4:1).

God rebuked Jonah and prompted him to examine his heart. He left Jonah—and the reader—with a question to consider: "Should I not care about the great city of Nineveh?" (Jonah 4:11).

Jesus is greater than Jonah. (Matt. 12:41) Jesus came calling all sinners, Jews and Gentiles, to repentance. He didn't only bring a message, He truly loved us. He submitted to God's will with joy and laid down His own life for our sins. God shows His mercy in the gospel, forgiving those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. God sends us out, like Jonah, to share the good news of salvation.



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

The BIBLE STORY

Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

Jonah 1-4

God told the prophet Jonah, "Go to the great city of Nineveh. Tell them to stop doing evil things." Nineveh was the capital of Assyria. The people there were enemies of God's people. Jonah did not go to Nineveh. He got on a boat heading the other way!

God sent a terrible storm, and the sailors were afraid! They cast lots, like flipping coins or tossing dice, to figure out who caused this trouble. The lot fell on Jonah. They asked Jonah, "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

Jonah replied, "I am a Hebrew. I worship the one true God who made everything."

What had Jonah done to make God angry? The sailors did not know what to do, so Jonah told them to throw him into the sea. When they did, the storm stopped. From that moment on, the sailors worshiped the one true God.

God sent a big fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Jonah prayed and thanked God for sending the fish to save him. Then the fish vomited Jonah onto dry land.

God said to Jonah, "Go to Nineveh and preach My message." So Jonah went. He walked around the city shouting God's message: "In 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed!"

The people turned from their evil ways. Everyone put on sackcloth and did not eat. Even the king repented. God decided not to destroy Nineveh.

"I knew it!" Jonah said. "I know You are a gracious God. You show mercy to people. You are slow to anger, and You are loving. I knew You would decide to not destroy Nineveh. I am so mad!"

"Is it right for you to be angry?" God asked. Jonah left Nineveh and made a shelter where he could still see the city.

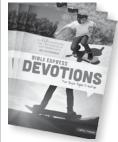
God taught Jonah a lesson. He provided a plant to shade Jonah from the sun. Jonah was glad to have the plant. But the next day, God sent a worm. The worm attacked the plant, and the plant died. Then God sent a dry east wind. Jonah was so hot, he almost fainted. "I want to die," Jonah said.

God asked Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"

"Yes!" Jonah said. "It is right. I'm so angry, I could die."

God said, "You cared about the plant, but you did not take care of it or make it grow. It only lasted one day. But Nineveh is a big city with thousands of people. I created them and care about them. Aren't they more important than a plant?"

Christ Connection: God called Jonah to go to his enemies and call them to turn away from their sin, but Jonah refused. Instead, he ran away. Later, God sent Jesus to His enemies to call us to repentance. Jesus willingly obeyed. Jesus died on the cross to rescue us from sin.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that Jonah thought he could run away from God's plan. We cannot hide from God (Heb. 4:12), who showed mercy to Jonah and the Ninevites Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jonah 1-4

MAIN POINT: God showed mercy to the Ninevites.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.

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. Encourage kids to tell about their favorite place to hide when they play hide-and-seek.

SAY • Have you ever tried to run and hide from God? Do you think you could run away to somewhere God couldn't find you? Today we are going to hear a story about someone who tried to run from God, but he discovered that no one can hide from God. Let's find out what happened.

Activity page (5 minutes)

"Jonah's Journey" activity page, 1 per kid pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "Jonah's Journey" maze on the activity page.

SAY • Do any of you know about the story of Jonah? [Allow kids to raise their hands.] You might remember that Jonah was swallowed by a big fish. Do you know why? Do you know where he was going and what God had asked him to do? That's what we are going to hear about in today's Bible story!

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Mercy, please!

Invite kids to play a variation of tag. One child will be *It*. Her job is to tag the other players. Another child will be *Mercy*. His job will be to help those who have been tagged.

When a player is tagged, he must sit. He may call out, "Mercy, please!" If *Mercy* comes and tags him, he is back in the game. *Mercy* may only tag players who call for help.

SAY • What was *Mercy*'s job? That's right, *Mercy* gave you something you did not deserve—another chance to be in the game. Our God is a God of great mercy. Today we will hear how God showed mercy to a group of people called the Ninevites.

OPTION 2: Doing things the hard way

Use furniture and other items around the room to form a simple obstacle course. Demonstrate how kids should move through the course. Allow them to complete the course individually.

Then help kids form pairs. Gently tie the partners' middle legs together to run a three-legged race. Challenge them to move through the obstacle course again. When kids finish, talk about which was easier—going through the course alone or with someone else.

SAY •Today we are going to hear a story about Jonah. God called Jonah to do an important job. Jonah could have obeyed God, but he chose to do things the hard way. He tried to run away from God and ended up in the belly of a big fish!

Transition to large group



blindfolds, 1 per 2 kids
classroom furniture

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jonah 1–4

MAIN POINT: God showed mercy to the Ninevites.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.

Countdown

countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

leader attiretowel

[Large Group Leader enters with hair and clothes noticeably damp. Leader is drying off with a towel.]

are not going to believe the story we are reporting on today. I am just getting back from assignment, and I can say for sure that this news will make national headlines. I know because I witnessed it. I saw a big fish spit out a man! I have an exclusive interview with the man. I believe his name was ... what was it? John? No, that's not right. Jim? No. Oh, I remember! His name was Jonah. He was in a hurry because he said he had to run to his enemies and tell them to turn away from their sin.

Now, where was he going? Oh, that's right! He was going to a place called Nineveh. Anyway, I have a bit of time while the video footage is being edited, so let me tell you all about this breaking news story!

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Jonah's story is on our giant timeline. Let's see ... here it is! [*Point to the story "Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh."*] Maybe you have heard this story before, but do you know how it fits into the big story of the Bible—the story of God's plan to rescue people from sin through His Son, Jesus? If you don't know, that's OK because we are going to find out!

 Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Remember, last week we learned about Hosea. Hosea was a prophet too. His story taught us what God is like. That's our big picture question: **What is God like?** Do you know the answer?

Allow kids to answer. Then guide them to say the answer together: *God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving.*

LEADER • Let's hear Jonah's story and see what it teaches us about God.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to the Book of Jonah. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh."

LEADER • Raise your hand if you have heard that story before. Maybe you have heard of Jonah being swallowed by a big fish. It sounds like a unbelievable tale, but it's true! Everything in God's Word is true.

Now, let's see how well you listened. Open your Bibles to the Book of Jonah. [Assist kids as needed. Show them how to use the table of contents.]

I am going to ask a question and we are going to see who can answer first. To answer, you have to Bibles

 "Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh" video

Big Picture Question
 Poster

Bible Story Picture
 Poster

turn in your Bible to Jonah and tell me the chapter and verse where the answer is found.

Ask the following review questions. If needed, give kids a hint by revealing which chapter of Jonah the answer is in.

- 1. Where did God tell Jonah to go? (to Nineveh, Jonah 1:2)
- 2. How did God stop Jonah from running away? (*He sent a terrible storm, Jonah 1:4*)
- 3. What did Jonah tell the sailors do with him? (*Throw him into the sea, Jonah 1:12*)
- 4. What happened to Jonah when he was thrown into the sea? (*A big fish swallowed him, Jonah 1:17*)
- 5. How long was Jonah in the fish? (three days and three nights, Jonah 1:17)
- 6. What happened after Jonah prayed to God from inside the fish? (*The fish vomited Jonah onto dry land, Jonah 2:10*)
- 7. What message did Jonah tell the people in Nineveh? (In 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed; Jonah 3:4)
- 8. What did the Ninevites do when they heard Jonah's message from God? (*They turned from their evil ways and repented, Jonah 3:5-9*)
- 9. When God saw the actions of the Ninevites, what did He do? (*God decided not to destroy Nineveh, Jonah 3:10*)
- 10. How did Jonah feel when God showed mercy to the Ninevites? (Jonah was angry, Jonah 4:1)
- 11. God used a plant to teach Jonah a lesson. What happened to the plant? (A worm attacked the plant, and the plant died; Jonah 4:7)
- 12. What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving.

the Ninevites because they were enemies of Israel.

But God taught Jonah that He made people and He cares about them. We are all sinners who need God's mercy. God loves to be merciful! He showed mercy to us by sending Jesus to call us—His enemies!—to repent. Jesus willingly obeyed the Father, and He died on the cross to rescue us from sin.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Joel 2:13.

LEADER • How does this verse describe God? (gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love)

Talk about ways God shows grace, compassion, patience, and love in our lives. Then sing "Return" together.

Key Passage Poster"Return"song

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Think about a time someone has treated you badly. How did you feel about that person? Is it easy or hard to show mercy to others? Check this out.

Show the "Unit 14, Session 2" discussion starter video.

LEADER • Have you ever ignored helping someone because that person wasn't your friend? Do you think that

 "Unit 14, Session 2" discussion starter video

person deserves your help? Should you help him or her? Why or why not? [Invite kids to discuss.]

Jonah did not want to take God's message to his enemies, and he was angry when **God showed** mercy to the Ninevites. God explained that He cares about all people. God showed mercy to sinners when He sent Jesus to die for us when we were His enemies. Because God has shown mercy to us, we can show mercy to others.

Sing (4 minutes)

• "The Love of God" song

fish, he cried out to God in prayer. He knew he had sinned against God when he chose to go his own way. God showed mercy to the Ninevites and to Jonah! What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving. As we sing, remember you are singing to our great God, who is full of mercy. Let's sing with grateful hearts.

Sing together "The Love of God."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups. **LEADER •** God, Your Word tells us that You are compassionate, slow to anger, and full of love. We see these truths in the story of Jonah and the Ninevites. Father, help us to return to You and make You first in our lives. Show us Your mercy as we give our hearts and our lives to You. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

God the Pursuer [3]

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Jonah, Prophet to Nineveh

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jonah 1–4

MAIN POINT: God showed mercy to the Ninevites.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- large sheet of paper or dry erase board
- marker
- fish-shaped cutouts
- fishing net
- Before small group, write each word of the key passage on a separate piece of colored paper cut into a fish shape. Scatter the fish on one side of the room. Display the key passage poster and guide kids to read aloud Joel 2:13.

Explain that kids should move the fish from one side of the room to the other and then work together to arrange them in the correct order.

Give a fishing net to the first player. Instruct her to pick up a fish, put it in the net, and carry it to the other side of the room. She will leave the fish there and bring the net back to the next player.

Kids will take turns until they move all the fish. Then direct them to go to the other side of the room to arrange the fish, referring to the key passage poster if necessary. Lead kids to say the verse aloud together.

SAY • Does anyone want to try to say our key passage from memory? [Allow volunteers to recite Joel 2:13.]

Let's work on memorizing this verse so we will remember what God is like. What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Display a large piece of paper on a focal wall. Label the left side of the paper *Jonah* and the right side *Ninevites*.

Distribute Bibles and guide kids to open them to the Book of Jonah. Explain that Jonah is in the Old Testament, in the division of the Minor Prophets. Show kids how to use the table of contents if they struggle to find Jonah.

SAY • In today's Bible story, we learned that **God showed** mercy to the Ninevites. The Ninevites were not just sort-of-bad people; they were very bad! Other nations were afraid of the Ninevites. God would have been right to destroy them, but He showed them mercy by sending Jonah to warn them.

Now, God did not only show mercy to the Ninevites; He showed mercy to Jonah too. Let's list ways God showed mercy to Jonah and to the people of Nineveh.

Guide kids to look through the Book of Jonah and give examples of ways God showed mercy to Jonah and to the people of Nineveh. Sample answers include the following:

Jonah

- God provided a big fish to swallow Jonah.
- God gave Jonah another chance to go to Nineveh.
- God provided shade for Jonah.

Ninevites

- God sent Jonah to warn the Ninevites to turn back to God.
- God decided not to destroy the city of Nineveh.

List the ways on the piece of paper.

SAY • God taught Jonah a lesson. God is loving and patient, and believers should show God's love to everyone.

Bibles, 1 per kidMain Point Posterlarge piece of papermarker

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

Tip: Remind kids that *mercy* means "undeserved favor."



envelopes

paper

• pencils or pens

Bibles

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Pray for missionaries

Before the session, secure a list of missionaries or missions organizations your church supports.

SAY • God gave Jonah the assignment to go to the Nineveh and tell the people to turn back to God. Jonah was a missionary.

Missionaries today share the love and mercy of God with people all over the world. Let's take time now to pray for them and write them notes of encouragement.

Distribute paper and envelopes. Encourage kids to write notes to missionaries. Suggest that they tell the missionaries something they learned from today's Bible story or prompt them to copy Joel 2:13 from the Bible.

As kids finish, lead them in a time of prayer for missionaries around the world.

SAY • Lord God, thank You for missionaries. We pray You would be with the missionaries we learned about today and bless them as they work to tell others about Jesus. Thank You for Your Word. We are so thankful to hear the story of Jonah and see that You are slow to anger, merciful, and loving.

Father, help us to be merciful and loving to others—even to our enemies. Lead us to share the good news about Jesus with others so that they too might love and trust in You. Amen.

OPTION 2: Jonah mural

Lay a long sheet of paper over the floor or a table. Provide markers for kids to draw scenes from today's Bible story. You may choose to form pairs or small groups and assign

long sheet of papermarkers

kids events from the Bible story.

When kids finish, invite them to share their scenes with the rest of the group, in the order that they happened. Guide them to explain what is happening in the scene.

SAY • This story really happened! Everything in the Bible is true. The story of Jonah tells us how **God showed** mercy to the Ninevites. The Ninevites deserved to be punished, but God forgave them when they repented and turned away from their sin.

Can you think of any other people who deserve to be punished for their sin but God forgave them? That's right, us! The Bible says that we all have sinned, and our sin separates us from God. But God loves us and sent His Son, Jesus, to die the death we deserve. He gives forgiveness and eternal life to those who trust in Jesus. Now that is very good news!

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

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Instruct the kids to write about a time they didn't receive what they deserved, but instead received mercy.

SAY • The greatest gift of mercy was given through Jesus when He gave His life for us. May we be grateful every day for such a gift from God.

Encourage kids to write one-sentence thank-you prayers to God for His mercy. As time allows, lead kids to complete "True or False?" on the activity page.

Guide kids to determine if each statement is true or false. Provide Bibles for kids to check their answers. (Answers: 1. true; 2. false, Jonah got on a boat; 3. true; 4. false, 40 days; 5. false, the people listened to Jonah; 6. true; 7. false, Jonah was angry; 8. false, God provided a plant)

pencils

• Journal Page

"True or False?" activity page, 1 per kid

Bibles

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

Joel, Prophet to Judah

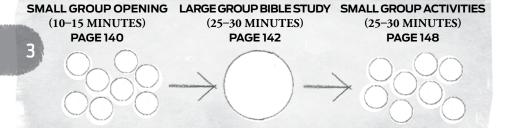
BIBLE PASSAGE: Joel 1-3

MAIN POINT: God warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.



Leader BIBLE STUDY

The prophet Joel spoke to the Southern Kingdom of Judah at a time when the nation faced a crisis. The land had been invaded by locusts; swarms of the insects had devastated the plants. Judah was also affected by a severe drought.

Joel looked back on these events and announced that these were not mere natural disasters—the Lord was judging the people for their sin.

In Deuteronomy 28, God told His people, "If you do not obey the Lord your God by carefully following all His commands and statutes I am giving you today, all these curses will come and overtake you ... You will sow much

seed in the field but harvest little, because locusts will devour it" (vv. 15,38). That is exactly what happened.

These disasters were a wake-up call. Joel told the people to repent. He told them to fast. He told them to gather and repent together, crying out to God and asking Him to show them mercy. Then Joel looked ahead to the future. In essence he said, "You think this is bad? This is only the beginning!"

God's judgment of Judah was not over. The Day of the Lord was coming, a day when God would show His strength through an invading army. For those who were not right with God, this was bad news. God's power would be against them. So Joel implored them, "Return to the LORD your God. For He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love, and He relents from sending disaster."

God had pity on His people and promised to restore them. God would rather forgive His people than punish them. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for sins so people could be right with God. An ultimate Day of the Lord is coming, and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.



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

The BIBLE STORY

Joel, Prophet to Judah

Joel 1–3

The people of Judah were in trouble! There was a drought in the land; no rain fell for a long time. The people had ignored God and did not obey His commands. God had told His people many years before what would happen if they turned away from Him, and now these things were actually happening.

The land of Judah had been attacked by a great swarm of locusts! When one swarm left, another swarm of locusts came. The locusts ate the plants in Judah. They destroyed everything in the fields. The apple trees, fig trees, and pomegranate trees died.

God gave the prophet Joel a message to tell the people in Judah. Joel said, "Listen up! Has this ever happened to you before?"

No, there had never been a swarm of locusts like this in Judah before. But God had sent locusts before somewhere else. Some of the people might have remembered hearing the stories about God's people in Egypt. When God led Moses to rescue His people, God sent locusts to punish the Egyptians for their sin. Now God was judging the people of Judah for their sin.

Joel told the people to ask God to forgive them.

"Gather all the people and cry out to God," Joel said.

"God's day of greater judgment—the Day of the Lord—is coming!" Joel said that for those who do not trust in God, the Day of the Lord will be terrible!

Next, Joel told the people what that day would be like. God was going to send a strong army to take over Judah. Everything would be burned up by fire. Everyone

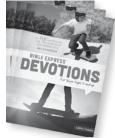
would be very afraid, and no one would be able to survive!

"Turn back to God before it is too late!" Joel said.
"God is gracious and merciful. He does not get angry easily. God would rather forgive you than punish you.
Turn from your sin. Maybe God will bless you!"

Now God's message gave them hope for the future. "I will send rain," God promised. "The plants will grow, and the animals will have water to drink. Then I will give My Spirit to everyone. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

"I will bring Judah and Jerusalem back together, but a final day of judgment is coming. I will judge those who turn away from Me. I will punish the enemies of My people. You will know that I am your God. I will forgive those who turn from their sin, and I will be with My people forever."

Christ Connection: Joel warned God's people about the Day of the Lord—a day when God will judge His enemies, free His people, and make the world right again. Those who trust in Jesus will escape God's punishment for sin. Jesus was punished in our place, and we share in His righteousness.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that God sent the locusts to show His people that He is merciful and loving. (Joel 2:13) God's goodness shows us our sin and turns our hearts to Him (Rom. 2:4) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information. check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Joel, Prophet to Judah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Joel 1–3

MAIN POINT: God warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.

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.

Invite kids to talk about their favorite and least favorite bugs. Discuss how bugs can be helpful (lady bugs help protect gardens) or harmful (mosquitoes bite and transmit diseases).

SAY • In the Bible story we will hear today, the land of Judah was attacked by swarms of locusts. This was a warning from God! We'll find out more soon.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Coming Soon!" activity page, 1 per kidpencils or markers
- Invite kids to complete "Coming Soon!" on the activity page. Guide kids to estimate future dates when they think each event will happen. Help kids calculate how old they will be on certain dates.
- SAY Did anyone have a guess for when Jesus will return?

 As we will find out in today's Bible story, no one knows when Jesus will return! A prophet named Joel warned God's people to be ready for Him. Let's get ready to hear what Joel told them to do.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Warning signs

Distribute paper, markers, and other supplies. Invite kids to design warning signs that no one could miss. Suggest kids writing *WARNING* on their papers and use colored tape and bright colors to make the sign stand out.

When kids finish, allow volunteers to share their creations. Talk about places kids might find warning signs.

SAY • A *warning* is a notice of danger before it happens. Today's Bible story is about the prophet Joel and the warning he gave to the people of Judah. Let's find out what he said.



- paper
- markers
- colored tape
- scissors

OPTION 2: Locust tag

Choose two or three volunteers to be locusts. Give each locust a length of pool noodle. Explain that each locust must hold the pool noodle to her forehead and tag players with the other end.

When a player is tagged, he must stand in place and wave his hands for help until two friends join hands around him and say, "Bug spray!" Then the player may rejoin the game.

SAY • Did the locust bring help or harm in today's game? When you were tagged, how were you helped? In today's Bible story, we will learn how swarms of locust came to Judah and destroyed everything.

The prophet Joel told the people that the locusts were a warning from God. Let's get ready to hear the Bible story and find out about God's warning.

• 3-foot lengths of pool noodle, 2 or 3

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Joel, Prophet to Judah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Joel 1–3

MAIN POINT: God warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.

Countdown

countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

leader attiretrumpet or bell

[Large Group Leader enters blowing a trumpet or ringing a bell. Leader is dressed in a blazer and dress shirt.]

LEADER • That will get your attention, won't it? I should use this at the beginning of my news reports; maybe people will really listen to what I have to say.

Well, in my news story tonight, I will share about how God used Joel as a messenger to tell the people of Judah to turn back to Him.

You wouldn't believe all the things that happened with locusts in their land! What I find so amazing about this story is that God showed them mercy. Can you believe that?

Here is even more exciting news: the Book of Joel tell us that Jesus will come back to earth someday. Amazing! We don't know the time or place, but that will be one incredible story to report.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • We have come a long way on our timeline. Today we will hear the story of "Joel, Prophet to Judah." [*Point to Joel on the giant timeline.*]

• Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

Does anyone remember the prophets we learned about the last two weeks? What people heard their messages? (*Hosea was a prophet to Israel; Jonah was a prophet to Nineveh.*)

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • The stories of Jonah and Hosea taught us a lot about what God is like. Today's story will too. Do you remember our big picture question and answer? Let's say it together.

What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving. Let's see how this was true for the people of Judah.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to the Book of Joel. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Joel, Prophet to Judah."

LEADER • When Joel spoke to the people in Judah, things were not going well. They had been attacked by swarms of locusts, and there was a drought. Joel said that God was judging the people for their sin.

God used these disasters to get the people's attention. Joel told them to stop sinning and to turn back to God. He said that if they did not repent, things were only going to get worse. Joel said that a day was coming when a strong army would take over Judah and no one would survive.

- Bibles
- "Joel, Prophet to Judah" video
- Big Picture Question
 Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

God the Pursuer 143

But it wasn't too late yet. Joel said that God would rather forgive people than punish them.

Let's see what you remember from the story. Ask the following review questions:

- 1. What insect invaded Judah? (locusts, Joel 1:4)
- 2. What other time in history did God send locusts? (When God led Moses to rescue His people, God sent locusts to punish the Egyptians for their sin; Ex. 10:12-15)
- 3. What did Joel tell the people of Judah to do? (*Joel told the people to ask God to forgive them, Joel 1:13-14*)
- 4. What day did Joel say was coming? (God's day of greater judgment—the Day of the Lord, Joel 2:1)
- 5. What did Joel say would happen on the Day of the Lord? (God was going to send a strong army to take over Judah. Everything would be burned up by fire. Everyone would be very afraid, and no one would be able to survive; Joel 2:2-11)
- 6. What is God like? (God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving; Joel 2:13)
- 7. Who will be saved? (Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, Joel 2:32)
- 8. What did Joel say would happen to the enemies of God's people? (God will judge those who turn away from Him and punish the enemies of His people; Joel 3:2,19)

LEADER • God warned His people to repent before the

Day of the Lord—a day when God will judge His enemies, free His people, and make the world right again. Those who trust in Jesus will escape God's punishment for sin. Jesus was punished in our place, and we share in His righteousness.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families

Key passage (5 minutes)

Before the session, cut raindrop shapes from blue construction paper. Write one word of the verse on each raindrop. If your group is large, prepare multiple sets.

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Joel 2:13. Mix up the raindrops and distribute them to the kids, or form smaller groups and give each group a set of raindrops.

Challenge kids to arrange the words of the key passage in the correct order. When kids finish, they should sit down. Lead the kids to sing together "Return."

LEADER • In today's Bible story, God warned His people by sending a drought—a time of no rain—and giving them a message through the prophet Joel. **God** warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord. Joel said that God would rather forgive people than punish them. This story shows us what God is like. What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful, and loving.

- Key Passage Poster
- "Return"song
- blue construction paper
- scissors
- marker

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Have you ever ignored a warning? What can happen when we ignore a warning? Think about that

 "Unit 14, Session 3" discussion starter video as we watch this video.

Show the "Unit 14, Session 3" discussion starter video. Invite kids to talk about times they put something off or ignored a warning until it was too late. How did they feel?

LEADER • Can you think of anything we all need to do before it is too late? Through the prophet Joel, **God warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord.** We know Jesus will return someday, but we don't know when. The Bible tells us to be ready.

Like Joel, we should warn others before it is too late. We can tell others the good news about Jesus and pray that they will trust in Him. When Jesus returns, those who reject Him will be punished and those who trust in Him will be rescued.

Sing (4 minutes)

• "The Love of God" song

LEADER • We deserve to be punished for our sins, but God loves us and sent Jesus to die for our sins. He is a compassionate God! Let's worship God together. Sing together "The Love of God."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups. **LEADER •** Lord God, we come before You so thankful for Your mercy toward us. Thank You for being a patient and compassionate God who wants to forgive. Thank You for Jesus, who takes away our sin. Give us a sense of urgency to share the gospel with others so they too may find forgiveness and eternal life. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

God the Pursuer

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Joel, Prophet to Judah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Joel 1–3

MAIN POINT: God warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord.

KEY PASSAGE: Joel 2:13

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is God like? God is slow to anger, merciful,

and loving.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster

Show the key passage poster and guide kids to read aloud Joel 2:13. Instruct the boys to read the verse together, and then give the girls a turn. Lead the kids to say the key passage with you several times until they are comfortable with the words.

Cover the key passage and allow any kids who have memorized Joel 2:13 to say the verse from memory.

SAY • Joel 2:13 describes God as gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in love. The Bible tells us what God is like. The stories of Hosea, Jonah, and Joel show us that God loves people and wants them to trust in Him. God would rather forgive people than punish them.

God is patient, but we know that doesn't mean we can put off telling others about Jesus. God warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord. We too should warn others that Jesus is coming back and they should trust in Him.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Before small group, label the left side of a piece of paper

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- index cards, 12
- large piece of paper
- marker
- tape

BAD NEWS and the right side *GOOD NEWS*. Write the following passages on separate index cards:

- 1. Joel 1:6-7
- 2. Joel 1:10-12
- 3. Joel 1:15-16
- 4. Joel 2:1-2
- 5. Joel 2:10-11
- 6. Joel 2:12-13
- 7. Joel 2:18-19
- 8. Joel 2:21-24
- 9. Joel 2:25-27
- 10. Joel 2:32

Instruct boys and girls to open their Bibles to the Book of Joel. Remind them that the Book of Joel is in the Minor Prophets, in the Old Testament. It follows the books of Daniel and Hosea. If kids need help, guide them to use the table of contents at the front of their Bibles.

Distribute index cards and guide kids to find the passage in the Bible. Call for kids to read the passage aloud and decide together if it describes good news or bad news. Tape each card to the paper in the appropriate column. (*Bad news: Joel 1:6–2:11; Good news: Joel 2:12-32*)

SAY • God warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord. Joel's message from God contained bad news, but it also contained promises for those who trust in the Lord.

Joel warned God's people about the Day of the Lord—a day when God will judge His enemies, free His people, and make the world right again. Those who trust in Jesus will escape God's punishment for sin. Jesus was punished in our place, and we share in His righteousness.

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

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

God the Pursuer



- construction paper
- Scissors
- tissue paper
- glue sticks
- markers
- Rible

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: A changed heart

Provide scissors and construction paper. Guide each kid to cut out a heart shape.

Open your Bible and read Joel 2:11-13 aloud. Explain that **God warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord.** God wanted the people to change their hearts and return to Him.

SAY • God wants us to have a heart for Him, to love Him more than anything else. He wants us to tear away anything that does not honor Him. God loves us and wants us to return to Him.

Tell kids to think of things they might be tempted to love more than God. (video games, sports, friends, and so on)

Provide tissue paper and instruct boys and girls to think about tearing away those things as they tear the tissue paper into small pieces. Encourage kids to glue the tissue paper pieces to their heart shapes.

When the glue dries, allow kids to use markers to write Joel 2:13 on the back of their hearts.

OPTION 2: Sackcloth relay race

Form even teams of four or five kids. Instruct teams to line up at one side of the room. Give the first player on each team a burlap sack or pillowcase.

Invite kids to participate in a relay race. Explain that the first player will hop in the sack to the other side of the room, touch the wall, and hop back. Then she will pass the sack to the next player. The first team whose players all take a turn is the winner.

SAY • Joel told the people to ask God to forgive them. Joel said, "Gather all the people and cry out to God." In

 burlap sacks or old pillowcases, 1 per team Bible times, people wore sackcloth to show that they were repentant or sorry for their sin.

As you can imagine, sackcloth was not very comfortable. People wore it as a way to humble themselves before God. When we repent and humble ourselves, we submit ourselves to God's plan and recognize that He is God and we are not. God does not owe us anything. He does not serve us; we exist to serve Him.

That is not an easy thing to do! The people in Judah had been living in sin, and God sent Joel to give them an important message. **God warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord.**

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Remind kids that the Bible says we should be ready for Jesus' return.

SAY • Write on your journal page a short message you could tell a friend who doesn't know the gospel, the good news about Jesus.

Consider using the gospel plan poster to review the gospel with kids. Then pray, thanking God for mercy and His faithful love. Ask God to show us things in our hearts we need to confess to Him so we can give Him our whole hearts.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Locust Focus" on the activity page. Instruct kids to unscramble the words and phrases on the locusts to form the main point of the story of Joel: **God warned His people to repent before the Day of the Lord.** pencils

- Journal Page
- "Locust Focus" activity page, 1 per kid
- Gospel Plan Poster download (optional)

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

God the Pursuer

Unit 15: Jeremiah and Captivity

Unit Description:

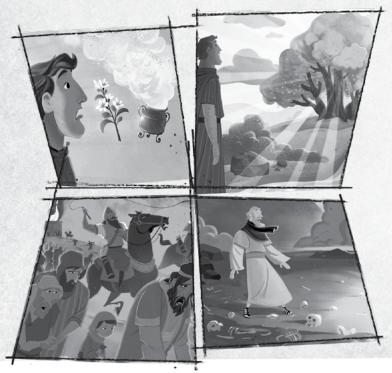
God called Jeremiah and used him to tell the people about the coming of a new covenant in which sin can be forgiven once and for all. Judah continued in sin and was removed from the land, but even during the captivity, God used Ezekiel to foretell the coming of Jesus, in whom people can find new life.

Key Passage:

Ezekiel 11:19-20

Big Picture Question:

Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.



Older Kids Leader Guide

Unit 15: Jeremiah and Captivity

Session 1:

Bible Story:

God Called Jeremiah

Bible Passage:

Jeremiah 1

Main Point:

God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.

Session 2:

Bible Story:

Jeremiah Prophesied a New

Covenant

Bible Passage:

Jeremiah 17:1-10; 31:31-34

Main Point:

God promised a new and better covenant.

Session 3:

Bible Story:

Judah Was Taken into Captivity

Bible Passage:

2 Chronicles 36:1-21

Main Point:

God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin.

Session 4:

Bible Story:

Ezekiel Told About a Future

Hope

Bible Passage:

Ezekiel 37

Main Point:

God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life.

God Called Jeremiah

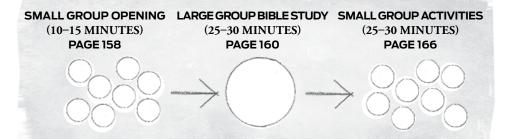
BIBLE PASSAGE: Jeremiah 1

MAIN POINT: God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.



Leader BIBLE STUDY

"I chose you before I formed you in the womb; I set you apart before you were born." These words from Jeremiah 1:5 reveal a Creator who is sovereign, working out everything in agreement with the decision of His will. (Eph. 1:11)

Jeremiah 1:5 ends with a specific call for a man named Jeremiah: "I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah the priest. He lived just north of Jerusalem. Jeremiah's ministry began when God called him. At that time, Josiah was king of Judah. Whom else did God call in the Old Testament? God called Noah to build an ark (Gen. 6); He called Abram to leave his home (Gen. 12:1-4); He called Moses to lead His people out of Egypt (Ex. 3).

Each time God calls someone, He equips him or her to do His work. Like Moses, Jeremiah was hesitant: "Oh no, Lord, God! Look, I don't know how to speak since I am only a youth" (Jer. 1:6). God assured Jeremiah: "I will be with you" (Jer. 1:8).

God called Jeremiah to be a prophet to Judah. Judah was deep in idol worship and other sins. God's judgment was coming. Jeremiah's job was to warn them. God gave Jeremiah two visions. The first—a branch of an almond tree—was a sign that God would keep His promise to send judgment, and He would do it soon. The second vision—a boiling pot—meant that God's judgment was coming from the north. God would bring the Babylonians from the north as judgment on His people. Then God sent Jeremiah out to announce God's declaration.

As you teach kids, help them connect Jeremiah's ministry to the ministry of Jesus. God called Jeremiah to warn the people of the judgment for their sin. Jesus also came to tell people to turn from their sin. He didn't just tell them about the punishment, He took the punishment on Himself.



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

The BIBLE STORY

God Called Jeremiah

Jeremiah 1

The people of Judah were afraid. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had been destroyed by the Assyrians. The people in the Southern Kingdom of Judah were not sure they would survive. God called a priest named Jeremiah to speak to His people. At this time, Josiah was the king of Judah.

God said to Jeremiah, "I knew you before I made you in your mother's womb. Before you were born, I chose you to do very special things. I chose you to be a prophet to the nations."

Being a prophet meant listening to what God said and telling the people God's message. Jeremiah said, "Oh no, God! I don't know how to speak in front of other people. I'm just a boy, only a youth."

God replied, "Don't say that. You will go where I send you and say what I tell you to say. You do not need to be afraid because I am with you. I will protect you."

Then God reached out His hand and touched Jeremiah's mouth. God said, "I am putting you over nations and kingdoms. You will give the people My message. It is a message of destruction, of bad things happening because of their sin. It is also a message of reconstruction. After I tear down the people, I will rebuild them."

God gave Jeremiah two visions. Visions are like dreams, except Jeremiah was awake. God said, "What do you see, Jeremiah?"

Jeremiah said, "I see a branch of an almond tree." "You are right," God said. The almond branch was a

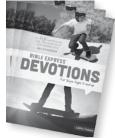
sign for Jeremiah so he would know that God would do what He said He would, and He would do it soon.

Then Jeremiah saw a second vision. He saw a boiling pot. The pot was overflowing from the north! God told Jeremiah that this vision meant trouble was coming from the north. Trouble would come for everyone in Judah.

God told Jeremiah that the rulers in the north were going to come and set up their kingdoms outside the city gates of Jerusalem. They were going to attack cities in Judah. God was going to judge the people of Judah for their sin. They had walked away from God and worshiped their own man-made gods.

Jeremiah had a big job to do, and God was ready to send him on his way. "Get ready! Tell the people everything I say. Do not be afraid. I am making you strong against the people. They will fight you, but they'll never win. I'm here to protect you and to rescue you."

Christ Connection: God had a plan for Jeremiah before Jeremiah was born. God called Jeremiah to share God's message about sin. In a similar way, God had planned all along to send His Son, Jesus, to show people what God is like and to rescue them from sin.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover God gave Jeremiah a difficult job, but He promised to be with him. Later. God promised to give us His Spirit to be with us forever. (Ezek. 11:19-20) Order in bulk. subscribe quarterly. or purchase individually. For more information. check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: God Called Jeremiah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jeremiah 1

MAIN POINT: God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves 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. Invite kids to share about a time they did not obey instructions given to them by an adult. What happened?

SAY • Today we will discover why we should obey God. Does anyone have any ideas? [Let kids respond.]

Activity page (5 minutes)

Challenge kids to complete "Called by God" on the activity page. Kids should look up each Scripture reference and match the reference to the person whom God called for a special purpose.

As you review the answers, allow kids to share details they know about each person. (1. Abraham, Gen. 12:1-4; 2. Moses, Ex. 3:4-10; 3. Gideon, Judg. 6:11-14; 4. Samuel, 1 Sam. 3:1-8; 5. Jeremiah, Jer. 1:4-5)

SAY • You might remember some of these people from Bible stories we have already learned. Today's story is about Jeremiah. We will hear how God called him and what God told Jeremiah to do.

- "Called by God" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers
- Bibles

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Silent messages

Write a variety of activities on strips of paper. Prepare one strip of paper for every two kids. (Suggestions: *ride a carousel, wash a car, build a block tower*, and so on)

Guide kids to form pairs. Allow each pair to draw one strip of paper. Explain that the kids should imagine they have important instructions for the rest of the group. The kids should try to figure out what action they should take.

Direct the pairs to take turns performing the action written on the paper. One partner will silently act it out and the other will narrate or provide sound effects. The partners may not say the words on the paper. The rest of the kids should guess what instructions the pair is performing.

SAY • Each of you had a message to communicate to the group. These were silent messages, but today we will hear a story from the Bible about a clear message that the prophet Jeremiah gave to God's people.

OPTION 2: Careful instructions

Form groups of three to five kids. Give each group a set of 20 cards and challenge them to build the tallest tower when you say "go." Tell the kids to start, being careful not to say the word *go*.

When kids finish, ask if they followed your instructions. As kids realize you never said "go," gently knock down each of their towers.

SAY • You did not completely follow my instructions. In today's Bible story, whole nations of people refused to obey God. What do you think God did?

playing cards or index

strips of paperpen or pencil

cards, 20 per group

Transition to large group

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: God Called Jeremiah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jeremiah 1

MAIN POINT: God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.

room decorations

• Theme Background Slide (optional) **Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas:** Decorate the room to resemble a children's museum. Position a desk at the front of the room and hang directional signs pointing to various exhibits, such as *Arctic Animals* or *Medieval Times*.

Cut animal footprints from construction paper and arrange them along a path across the floor. You may also choose to project the theme background slide.

Countdown

 $\bullet\, \text{countdown}\, \text{video}\,$

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

leader attire

keys

flashlight

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a security officer's uniform—black pants and a blue shirt. Leader carries a large set of keys and a flashlight, carefully scanning the room as he or she enters. Leader is surprised to see the kids.]

LEADER • Whoa! Well, hello! I was not expecting you.

What are you doing here, anyway? Don't you know that the museum closed an hour ago? I am just going around locking up.

[Stare at kids suspiciously.] Seriously, why are you

here? Did you hear something about our new Bible exhibits? You know, these exhibits aren't supposed to open until next month, but since you're here ... and since it's kind of lonely around here after closing ... [excitedly] Would you like to see them? You would?

Great! We have time to check out one exhibit. It's about a guy named Jeremiah. God had a big plan for Jeremiah, and He gave Jeremiah visions. You won't believe the things Jeremiah saw in his visions! Let's get going.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Move to the giant timeline to point out today's Bible story. **LEADER •** Here is today's Bible story. It's called "God Called Jeremiah." Jeremiah's story is found in the Bible in the Book of Jeremiah. Imagine that!

The Book of Jeremiah is in the division of the Major Prophets. Now, that doesn't mean Jeremiah was more important than the minor prophets like Hosea, Jonah, and Joel. That just means the Book of Jeremiah is longer than the books of the Minor Prophets.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • As we go through the exhibit, pay attention to see if you can figure out the answer to the big picture question. Our question is, **Why should we obey God?**

Now that is a very good question. Let's listen carefully to Jeremiah's story and see if we can find the answer.

• Giant Timeline

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

- Bibles
- "God Called Jeremiah" video
- Big Picture Question
 Poster
- Bible Story Picture
 Poster

Open your Bible to Jeremiah 1. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "God Called Jeremiah."

LEADER • This was a scary time for God's people in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had been destroyed by its enemies, the Assyrians. The people of Judah were probably afraid that they were next!

God called Jeremiah to give a message to the people. Jeremiah was a priest, and now he would be a prophet of God. **God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.**

Jeremiah wasn't sure God had made the right choice. Jeremiah was young. What if people didn't listen to him? But God promised to be with Jeremiah and to give him the words to say.

God gave Jeremiah two visions. What did Jeremiah see in the first vision? (a branch of an almond tree) The almond branch was a sign for Jeremiah so he would know that God would do what He said He would, and He would do it soon.

What did Jeremiah see in the second vision? (*a boiling pot*) The pot was overflowing from the north. God told Jeremiah that this vision meant trouble was coming from the north. Trouble would come for everyone in Judah because they had sinned.

God had a plan for Jeremiah before Jeremiah was born. God called Jeremiah to share God's message about sin. In a similar way, God had planned all along to send His Son, Jesus, to show people what God is like and to rescue them from sin. Because of their disobedience and sin, Judah faced destruction and needed God to forgive them and rescue them. We are like Judah. Our sin separates us from God, and we need to be forgiven and rescued from our sin. God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from our sin.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

• Key Passage Poster

"One Heart"song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Ezekiel 11:19-20.

Invite kids to help you make up motions for the verse so they can memorize the key passage more quickly. Practice saying the verse with motions several times. Then play the key passage song "One Heart."

LEADER • Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us. God wants us to turn from sin. He will forgive us and change our hearts.

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Did you notice in the Bible story that God said that He chose Jeremiah before Jeremiah was even born? God had a purpose for Jeremiah's life. Did you know we all have a purpose too? Think about that as you watch this video.

 "Unit 15, Session 1" discussion starter video Show the "Unit 15, Session 1" discussion starter video. Guide kids to discuss what they think their purpose in life might be. Allow them to share their thoughts.

LEADER • Have you ever thought about your purpose? Did you know that God has a plan for your life? God had a plan for Jeremiah, and He has a plan for you too.

God planned all along to send Jesus to rescue people from sin. This is great news! God created us to give Him glory. We can do this by telling others about Jesus. How might God use you to tell others about His Son?

Sing (4 minutes)

"A Way for Us" song

LEADER • God gave His people a message through the prophet Jeremiah. God has a message for each of us: the gospel, or good news about Jesus. God loves us so much He sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us from our sin. Let's worship God together by singing.

Lead boys and girls to sing "A Way for Us."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • God, we thank You for the gift of Your Son,

Jesus. Through Him we know we can have a

relationship with You. Give us ears to hear when You
call us. Give us courage to obey so that others may
hear of Your great love. We love You, Lord. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: God Called Jeremiah

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jeremiah 1

MAIN POINT: God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- index cards
- marker

Before small group, write the words or phrases of the key passage on separate index cards so each kid has one card.

Show the key passage poster where all the kids can see it. Lead the kids to say the key passage with you several times until they are comfortable with the words.

Distribute the key passage cards and challenge kids to arrange themselves in the correct order. Then collect the cards, mix them up, and play again.

SAY • Our key passage is a message that God gave to His people through the prophet Ezekiel. God sent prophets to warn His people what would happen if they disobeyed Him, but He also gave His people wonderful promises for their future.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Bibles, 1 per kidMain Point Poster

Instruct kids to open their Bibles to Jeremiah 1. Remind them that Jeremiah is in the Old Testament in the division of Major Prophets. If kids need help, encourage them to use the table of contents.

SAY • In today's Bible story, we learned that **God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.** Let's see what

you remember from the story.

Ask the following review questions. Encourage kids to look for the answers in Jeremiah 1. If needed, provide the verse number where kids can find the answer.

- 1. When did God choose Jeremiah? (before he was born, Jer. 1:5)
- 2. Why was Jeremiah hesitant to obey God's call? (Jeremiah said he did not know how to speak and he was only a youth, Jer. 1:6)
- 3. How did God reassure Jeremiah? (God told Jeremiah that he would go to everyone God sent him to and say whatever God told him, Jer. 1:7)
- 4. What did Jeremiah see in the first vision? (a branch of an almond tree, Jer. 1:11)
- 5. What did the almond branch mean? (God would do what He said He would do, Jer. 1:12)
- 6. What did Jeremiah see in the second vision? (a boiling pot overflowing from the north, Jer. 1:13)
- 7. What did the boiling pot mean? (*Disaster would come from the north*, *Jer. 1:14*)
- **SAY** Even though they had been warned over and over again, the people of Judah would not stop sinning against God. So God told Jeremiah to write His words down on a scroll. Maybe if the people heard about how God was planning to use Babylon—who would attack from the north—to punish them, they would turn back to Him.

God had a plan to bless His people. He had promised to bless the whole world through Abraham's family. God wanted His people to obey Him. Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

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



paperpencils

• timer

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: No excuses!

Form teams of three or four kids. Give each group a piece of paper and a pencil. Explain that you will call out a request. Kids will have two minutes to list as many excuses as they can think of for not doing the requested action.

Sample requests:

- 1. Please clean all the church bathrooms.
- 2. Please copy by hand the entire Book of Psalms.
- 3. Please do 100 push-ups.

Set a timer and allow kids to write. When kids finish, invite them to share their excuses. Award a point for each excuse not also used by another team. Play additional rounds as time allows.

SAY • Do you remember what excuse Jeremiah made when God called him to be a prophet? ("I am only a youth," *Jer. 1:6*) Did God accept Jeremiah's excuse? (no) God told Jeremiah that He would be with him.

God wants us to obey Him and the people He has chosen to take care of us. Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

OPTION 2: Write to missionaries

Give each kid a piece of paper and a pen or marker. Provide a list of local or international missionaries your church supports. If you have information about the missionaries or the area in which they are serving, share with the kids.

Encourage kids to write letters or draw pictures to encourage the missionaries in their work of sharing the gospel. Suggest kids tell the missionaries something they learned today about God's plan for the prophet Jeremiah.

When kids finish, collect the letters and send them to

- paper
- envelopes
- pens or markers
- list of missionaries your church supports

the appropriate addresses or organizations.

SAY • Thank you for taking the time to encourage these missionaries. We call all answer God's call to tell others the good news about Jesus, here or far away!

God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.

Jeremiah's message for the people was to stop sinning and turn back to God before it was too late. Hundreds of years later, Jesus brought the same message. God sent His Son, Jesus, to be the way for sinners to come back to Him and be forgiven. Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Instruct the kids to write about what God might be calling them to do for Him. As kids work, talk about the times in the Bible where God used children or teenagers for His purposes. (Examples: Isaac, Gen. 22; Samuel, 1 Sam. 3; Jonathan, 1 Sam. 18; Naaman's servant, 2 Kings 5; Daniel, Dan. 1)

when God calls, being young is not an excuse to disobey Him. God can use you even when you are young. Ask Him to show you His plan for you.

Let's pray. God, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to rescue us and for giving us great news to share with others. Please give us courage to do whatever You call us to do. Amen.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Jeremiah Acrostic" on the activity page. Invite kids to open their Bibles to Jeremiah 1 to review the story and list details beginning with the letters in Jeremiah's name.

(Sample responses: *J*eremiah was a youth; *E*xpected to do a big job; *R*eceived visions from God; and so forth)

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Jeremiah Acrostic" activity page, 1 per kid
- Bibles

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

Jeremiah Prophesied a New Covenant

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jeremiah 17:1-10; 31:31-34

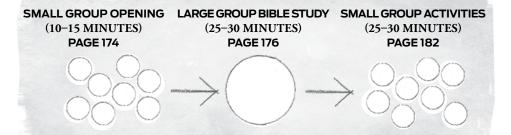
MAIN POINT: God promised a new and better covenant.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.

2



Leader BIBLE STUDY

Shortly after God had rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, He made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. The terms of the covenant are found in Exodus 19.

God said through Moses, "If you will listen to Me and carefully keep My covenant, you will be My own possession out of all the peoples, ... and you will be My kingdom of priests and My holy nation" (vv. 5-6). God's people responded, "We will do all that the Lord has spoken."

But the people did not do all that the Lord had spoken. The people had God's law, but they were not able to obey Him because of the sinfulness of their hearts. God punished His people for their unfaithfulness, eventually sending the Northern Kingdom into exile. But God was faithful; He preserved two tribes, keeping His promise to establish David's house forever.

The Israelites in Jeremiah's day broke the covenant just like their ancestors before them. The prophet Jeremiah told about a new covenant. He prophesied about a coming day when God would forgive sin and write His law on the hearts of His people. This prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus.

Jesus did not come to get rid of the law. (See Matt. 5:17.) Through His sinless life, Jesus fulfilled the demands of the old covenant.

The new covenant promised that God would forgive sin. God forgives sin through His Son, Jesus. He changes our hearts and gives us power through His Spirit to obey His commands.



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

The BIBLE STORY

Jeremiah Prophesied a New Covenant

Jeremiah 17:1-10; 31:31-34

God had called Jeremiah to speak to His people.

No matter how hard they tried, the people of Judah kept turning away from God. God spoke through Jeremiah to explain that something was terribly wrong, but God had a wonderful plan for them.

Jeremiah said that the people of Judah had a sin problem. The problem wasn't going to just go away; it was permanent, like words carved into stone. And the sin problem was spreading—parents who sinned had children who sinned. Everyone was affected.

God explained through Jeremiah that sin has consequences. God had made a covenant with His people that said if they obeyed Him, He would bless them. But the people did not obey, and God had to punish their sin. God said the people would lose their land, their wealth, and their freedom.

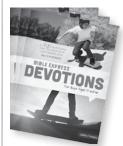
Jeremiah said that people have hearts that are deceitful, or tricky. People's hearts trick them into thinking they are better than they actually are. They trick people into wanting things or doing things that God does not want for them.

God is not tricked by people's hearts, though. Jeremiah told the people of Judah that God had a plan to change their hearts. God promised a new and better covenant so they could be saved from their sins.

God said that the new covenant would not be like the old covenant. In the old covenant, the people had God's commands in writing. They disobeyed His commands and made sacrifices every year for their sin. **In the new**

covenant, God was going to write His law on their hearts. He would give His people the power to obey His commands. God said, "I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sin."

Christ Connection: Jeremiah told about a day when God would forgive sin and change people's hearts. Jesus made these words come true. God forgives our sin through His Son, Jesus. He changes us and gives us power through His Spirit to obey His commands.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that our hearts trick us into sinning. God knows our minds and tests our hearts (Jer. 17:10) When we trust in Jesus, He changes us from the inside out Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Jeremiah Prophesied a New Covenant

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jeremiah 17:1-10; 31:31-34

MAIN POINT: God promised a new and better covenant.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves 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. Invite kids to talk about a rule they have trouble following.

SAY • Following rules can be hard. When we break God's rules, that's called sin. We all sin, and our sin separates us from God. In the Old Testament, God made a covenant, or agreement, with His people. He told them He would bless them if they obeyed Him. But they did not obey Him. Today, we will find out some good news about what God did for sinners.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Challenge kids to complete "A Future Promise" on the activity page, 1 per kid activity page. Guide kids to use the key to decode the main point of today's Bible story: God promised a new and better covenant.

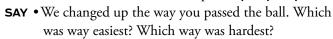
> **SAY** • Even though the people of Judah knew God's commands, they kept breaking God's rules. They needed a heart change. God promised a new and better covenant to help them follow Him.

• "A Future Promise" pencils or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Change ball

Guide the kids to sit in a circle. Challenge them to see how quickly they can pass the ball around the circle. Then call out different ways they should pass the ball (small kicks with their feet, with their left hands, behind their backs, and so forth). Then allow them to pass any way they want.



Today we are going to hear a Bible story about a change that was coming. The prophet Jeremiah said that God was going to make a new covenant with His people. Let's get ready to hear what happened.



small foam ball

OPTION 2: Old or new?

Write *OLD* on one piece of paper and *NEW* on another. Use the signs to label opposite sides of the room. Display the old and new items.

Instruct kids to work together to sort the items under the signs based on whether they are new or old. Ask kids to explain how they know if an item is old or new. Which items do they think are better—old or new? Why?

 $\textbf{SAY}~ \bullet A$ lot of times, new items are better than old items.

They might work better or taste better or look better. In today's Bible story, we will hear about something new that the prophet Jeremiah talked about. Jeremiah said God would make a new covenant with His people. Let's find out what that's all about!

Transition to large group

- paper, 2 pieces
- marker
- old and new items (fruit, electronics, books, and so forth)

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Jeremiah Prophesied a New Covenant

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jeremiah 17:1-10; 31:31-34

MAIN POINT: God promised a new and better covenant.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.

Countdown

countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

leader attire

keys

flashlight

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a security officer's uniform—black pants and a blue shirt. Leader carries a large set of keys and a flashlight, carefully scanning the room as he or she enters. Leader is again surprised to see the kids.]

LEADER • Oh! Wow, you scared me a bit, but I sure am glad to see you again. I'm just starting another closing shift here at the museum.

Seriously, how are you getting in here after hours? What kind of security guard am I if you boys and girls keep sneaking in?

OK, so I admit, some pretty amazing things happen after the museum closes. I was just back there learning about Jeremiah in the Old Testament section and I read something about a new covenant. Why don't we go check out the exhibit together and learn more about this new covenant? Jeremiah lived long ago—hundreds of years before Jesus! Wow.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

LEADER • Last time, we learned about God calling Jeremiah. [*Point to the story on the giant timeline*.]

God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations.

Here is today's Bible story: "Jeremiah Prophesied a New Covenant." Now remember, the word *prophesy* (PRAH fih sigh) means "to speak about or tell what is going to happen in the future."

Jeremiah had a message for the people of Judah. This covenant would replace the one that God made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai. **God promised a new and better covenant.**

Big picture question (1 minute)

they could not obey God perfectly. Let's review our big picture question. Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us. Today we will learn that because of God's great love, God promised a new and better covenant.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Jeremiah 17:1-10; 31:31-34. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Jeremiah Prophesied a New Covenant."

LEADER • God promised a new and better covenant. He loves us so much! Let's review what we learned today from God's Word.

Ask the following review questions:

- 1. What problem did the people of Judah have? (a sin problem, Jer. 17:1)
- 2. What did Jeremiah say the people would lose

Giant Timeline

- Bibles
- "Jeremiah Prophesied a New Covenant" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture
 Poster

- because of their sin? (their wealth, land, and freedom; Jer. 17:3-4)
- 3. How did Jeremiah describe people's hearts? (*deceitful, tricky; Jer. 17:9*)
- 4. What was God's plan to change the hearts of the people? (a new covenant, Jer. 31:31)
- 5. What is the difference between the old covenant and new covenant? (With the old covenant, God's commands were in writing and the people made sacrifices. In the new covenant, God would write the commands on their hearts; Jer. 31:32-33)
- 6. What did God promise at the end of the Bible story? (God said He would give people power to obey commands, and He would forgive their sins. Jer. 31:34)

forgive sin and change people's hearts. Jesus made these words come true. Just like the people of Judah, we need a heart change so that we can obey and follow God. Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us—not because we are trying to earn His love. We already have it!

God sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. When we trust in Jesus, God forgives our sin and changes us from the inside out.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Ezekiel 11:19-20. Form small groups of kids and assign each group a phrase of the key passage. Instruct kids to remain seated. When it is their turn to say their phrase, kids should stand and say their phrase together.

After each group says its phrase, assign the groups new phrases and practice saying the verses again. Then sing "One Heart."

LEADER • God promised a new and better covenant, and the new covenant promises a heart change for those who trust in Jesus.

Key Passage Poster"One Heart"song

 "Unit 15, Session 2" discussion starter video

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Have you ever thought about why we follow God's rules? Think about rules you follow every day, maybe at school or at home. Watch this video.

Show the "Unit 15, Session 2" discussion starter video. Lead kids to discuss how Maria should feel when her parents ask her to do something.

LEADER • When you think of everything that God has done for you—especially that He sent His Son to rescue you from sin—how should you feel when God gives you rules to obey? God gives us rules because He loves us and wants the best for us. Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

Because of sin, our hearts want to do what we want instead of what God wants. We can try to obey God perfectly, but we will sin. **God promised a new and better covenant.** He promised to save us through His Son, Jesus, and to change our hearts to help us obey Him.

Sing (4 minutes)

"A Way for Us" song

LEADER • When we trust in Jesus, God does not give us the punishment we deserve for our sin. Jesus took the punishment we deserve, so we can enjoy friendship with God. As we worship God through song today, let's remember His great love for us and how He provided a new and better covenant through Jesus. Sing together "A Way for Us."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Let's spend time praying silently to God. Let's ask Him to help us understand that we are saved not because we follow His rules but because we trust in His Son, Jesus, who obeyed God perfectly and died on the cross for our sin.

After a minute of silence, close the group by praying aloud.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Jeremiah Prophesied a New Covenant

BIBLE PASSAGE: Jeremiah 17:1-10; 31:31-34

MAIN POINT: God promised a new and better covenant.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

• Key Passage Poster

Show the key passage poster and lead kids to read aloud Ezekiel 11:19-20. Then guide kids to "popcorn" the passage. Explain that when you point to a kid, she should say the next word of the key passage.

Point to one kid to begin. Then point randomly to other kids until they say the entire passage. Assist with words as needed. Hide the key passage poster and play again.

SAY • What do you think God was talking about when He said, "I will remove their hearts of stone and give them a heart of flesh"? [Allow kids time to think and share their ideas.]

A heart of stone is what a person has before they trust in Jesus. That heart is hard and rebellious toward God. A heart of flesh is soft. This is the heart God gives us when we trust in Jesus. We receive His gift of salvation, and He gives us power to love and obey Him.

We learned today that through the new covenant, God would give His people the power to obey His commands. To obey Jesus, we need more than just a change in how we act; we need a heart change.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Write the following sentences on separate strips of paper: Jeremiah 17:1-10

- God called Jeremiah to speak to His people.
- No matter how hard they tried, the people of Judah kept turning away from God.
- Jeremiah saw that the people had a sin problem.
- Sin spread and everyone was affected.
- God used Jeremiah to explain that sin had consequences.
- Jeremiah said people have tricky hearts that fool them into thinking they are better than they are.
- God is not tricked by people's hearts.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

- God said the new covenant could save people from their sins.
- In the new covenant, God would write His commands on the people's hearts and give them the power to obey.
- God would forgive people's sin.

Invite kids to open their Bibles to Jeremiah 17:1-10 and Jeremiah 31:31-34. Distribute the paper strips and call on kids to read their sentences one at a time.

Prompt them to sort the strips into two piles: sentences from Jeremiah 17 and sentences from Jeremiah 31.

When kids finish, lead them to say the main point together: **God promised and new and better covenant.**

SAY • Jesus came to establish the new covenant. All of us have sinned and, just like the people of Judah, we need a heart change. Only a relationship with God through Jesus Christ gives us power through the Holy Spirit to obey God's commands.

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- strips of paper
- pen or marker

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

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



- Bible
- large piece of paper
- marker

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Compare and contrast

Draw a line down the middle of the paper. At the top of one side write *Old Covenant* and at the top of the other side write *New Covenant*.

Give kids Bibles and instruct them to find Exodus 19. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 19:5-6. Remind kids that God met with Moses at Mount Sinai. He established a covenant with them and gave them the Ten Commandments.

SAY • Did God's people keep the covenant by obeying God? (*no*) The people were not able to obey because of the sinfulness of their hearts.

In the Old Covenant column, list the following:

- Required complete obedience from God's people.
- God's people broke the covenant.
- God punished the people for their unfaithfulness.
- **SAY God promised a new and better covenant.** The new covenant is fulfilled in God's Son, Jesus.

In the New Covenant column, list the following:

- Jesus obeyed the old covenant for us.
- God forgives our sin when we trust in Jesus.
- God changes our hearts and gives us power to obey.

Lead kids to compare/contrast the old and new covenants.

• Bible

- bread
- jelly or jam
- plastic spoons
- heart cookie cutters
- ziplock bags
- Allergy Alert download

OPTION 2: New heart snacks

Ask for a volunteer to say the key passage from memory, or open a Bible to Ezekiel 11:19-20 and choose a kid to read the passage aloud. Remind kids that God promised to give His people new hearts.

Provide plastic spoons for kids to spread a thin layer of jelly or jam between two pieces of bread. Allow them to use

the cookie cutters to cut their sandwiches into heart shapes. Give each kid a ziplock bag to store any leftover snack.

SAY • Apart from Jesus, we are hard toward God. We love ourselves more than we love God. But when we trust in Jesus, God changes us. He gives us new hearts—hearts of flesh that are soft toward Him. He gives us the power to love and obey Him.

Remember, we do not obey God to earn something from Him. God has given us the greatest gift, salvation through His Son, Jesus. All we do is receive it. So, why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

Option: Prepare a heart snack a day or two early and let it dry out. Show kids how it is hard and stale compared to the fresh snack.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Instruct the kids to write or draw a thank-you note to God for the new covenant, which involved sending Jesus to take our punishment for sin. As kids work, talk about how Jesus is the best gift we have ever received.

SAY • We have so much to thank God for, but let us never grow tired of thanking God for the gift of Jesus.

Through Him alone we can be rescued from our sin. Pray, thanking God for Jesus and the new covenant. As time allows, lead kids to complete "Tricky Hearts" on the activity page. Kids should cross out the things that are sinful and circle the things that would please God.

Remind kids that Jeremiah explained that our hearts can trick us about what is right and wrong. Encourage them to compare their answers with a friend.

Kids should circle Forgive someone who isn't sorry; Admit that you are a sinner; Pray and ask God for help; and Tell the truth no matter what.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- "Tricky Hearts" activity page, 1 per kid

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

Judah Was Taken into Captivity

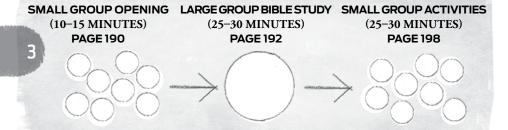
BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Chronicles 36:1-21

MAIN POINT: God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.



Leader BIBLE STUDY

Warnings had come from the prophets for decades. God patiently waited for His people to turn from their sin. The prophet Jeremiah spared few details when he warned Judah what would happen if they did not turn from their evil ways. (See Jer. 25:1-14.)

But the people of Judah did not change their ways. The kingdom had been declining for years, despite King Josiah's efforts to prompt nationwide repentance. When King Josiah died, the people went back to their old ways, worshiping idols and disobeying the Lord.

The time of judgment had come. God used

Nebuchadnezzar—the king of Babylon—to deport the people from Judah to Babylon where they would live in exile for 70 years.

Nebuchadnezzar went to Judah when Jehoiakim was king. He put Jehoiakim in chains and took him to Babylon. Jehoiachin became king, and Nebuchadnezzar came back for him too. Many of the people in Judah were taken, along with treasures from the Lord's temple. Nebuchadnezzar put Zedekiah on the throne in Jerusalem.

The people of Judah were unfaithful to God. Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and God poured out His wrath on Judah. Nebuchadnezzar showed no mercy to the people of Jerusalem. The Babylonians set fire to the Lord's temple and the king's palace. They destroyed the wall around Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar's armies carried most of the people away to Babylon as prisoners; only poor farmers were allowed to stay and work the land. The people were held captive in Babylon, serving the king for 70 years.

God did not abandon His people. The prophet Jeremiah told what would happen next: "The days are certainly coming ... when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah" (Jer. 30:3). God was going to save His people from captivity and raise up a new King—a forever King—from the line of David. (Jer. 30:9)



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

The BIBLE STORY

Judah Was Taken into Captivity

2 Chronicles 36:1-21

The last four kings of Judah came from King Josiah's family. His three sons—Jehoahaz (jih HOH uh haz), Jehoiakim (jih HOY uh kim), and Zedekiah (ZED uh KIGH uh)—and his grandson Jehoiachin (jih HOY uh kin) each had a turn as king of Judah.

Jehoahaz was not king for long. He did what was evil, and the king of Egypt came and made Jehoahaz a prisoner. The king stole silver and gold from Jehoahaz. Then he put Jehoahaz's brother Jehoiakim on the throne. The king of Egypt took Jehoahaz to Egypt.

When Jehoiakim was king of Judah, he too did what was evil. The king of Babylon attacked Jehoiakim, made him a prisoner, and took him to Babylon. The king of Babylon stole some of the things from the Lord's temple and put them in his own temple. When Jehoiakim was taken away, his son Jehoiachin became king of Judah.

Jehoiachin was king of Judah for just three months. He too did what was evil. The king of Babylon sent for Jehoiachin and brought him to Babylon. The king of Babylon made Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah king of Judah.

Like his brothers, **Zedekiah did what was evil. He led the people of Judah to do evil things too.** The prophet Jeremiah warned Zedekiah that God would punish him, but Zedekiah did not listen.

God was angry with the people of Judah. They sinned and did not obey God. But God loved His people. He wanted them to turn back to Him. God sent prophets to warn the people, but the people did not listen.

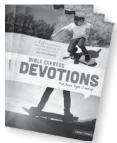
Finally, it was time to punish the people of Judah for

their sin. God allowed the king of Babylon and his army to attack Judah. Many of the people died.

The king of Babylon took everything out of the Lord's temple and carried it back to Babylon. Then the king and his army burned the temple. They tore down the wall around the city and burned the palaces. Anything they did not take with them was destroyed.

All of the people who were still alive were taken back to Babylon. The king forced them to be slaves. Everything the prophet Jeremiah had warned about happened, just like God said it would.

Christ Connection: God was right to punish His people for their sin, but He kept His promise to provide a king through David's family. Ultimately, God punished our sin through His Son, Jesus, and made Him our King forever.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover God had compassion on His people (2 Chron, 36:15) and sent many prophets to turn their hearts back to God. God also promised to send a Savior Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information. check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Judah Was Taken into Captivity

BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Chronicles 36:1-21

MAIN POINT: God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves 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. Invite kids to share what can happen when we ignore a warning we are given. (Examples: weather warnings or food expiration dates)

SAY • Warnings exist for a reason. If we ignore a warning, there can be some serious consequences. In the Old Testament, God often sent prophets to give warnings to His people. One of these prophets was Jeremiah. Jeremiah gave warnings to the people of Judah, but they did not listen. Let's find out what happened.

Activity page (5 minutes)

Challenge kids to complete the "Captivity Crossword" on the activity page. You might form groups and assign each group one or two clues to find in the Bible. Then complete the puzzle together as a class.

SAY • Have any of you ever heard of Jehoahaz (jih HOH uh haz) or Jehoiakim (jih HOY uh kim) or Zedekiah (ZED uh KIGH uh)? We will learn about these kings of Judah in today's Bible story.

- "Captivity Crossword" activity page, 1 per kid
 pencils or markers
- Bibles

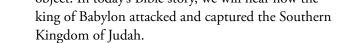
Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Capture it

Guide kids to form a circle with their chairs. Choose a volunteer to sit in a chair in the middle. The volunteer will be It. Place a small object under the middle chair.

Direct *It* to close his eyes. Point to one of the players. She should quietly capture the object and hide it with her at her seat. Invite It to open his eyes and guess who took the item. Play several rounds as time allows.

SAY • In this game, your goal was to secretly capture the object. In today's Bible story, we will hear how the Kingdom of Judah.



OPTION 2: Stranded on an island

Instruct the kids to sit in a circle. The first child will begin the game by saying, "If I were stranded on an island, I would want to have [name an object]."

The next kid will then complete the sentence, naming a new item but also repeating any items previously named. The last person in the circle will complete the sentence and then repeat in order what every other player named.

SAY • Today we are going to learn that the people of Judah were taken captive. That means they were taken from their homes and forced to live in another place.

> What do you think the people would have wanted most when they were taken away from their country? [Allow kids to respond.] Interesting thoughts!

Transition to large group



· small object such as a ball or pen

Option: For a quicker game or if your group is large, form several smaller circles.

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Judah Was Taken into Captivity

BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Chronicles 36:1-21

MAIN POINT: God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.

Countdown

countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

keys

flashlight

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a security officer's uniform—black pants and a blue shirt. Leader carries a large set of keys and a flashlight, carefully scanning the room as he or she enters. Leader is happy to see the kids.]

LEADER • Oh, good! I was hoping you all would come to the museum again. Listen, before we get started, I am supposed to go over some safety warnings with you, just in case something happens while we are checking out the exhibit.

Are you ready? OK, in the case of a fire, do not panic. Please proceed in an orderly fashion to the nearest exit. If there is severe weather, we will shelter in place at the interior of the building. Stay away from doors and windows. And if you get lost, stay where you are and yell for help. We will come find you. Any questions? No? Great!

Now, I have to warn you that today's Bible story

is a little scary. You see, the people of Judah did not listen to the prophet Jeremiah when he told them what would happen if they did not obey God. Jeremiah said that God would punish them. Well, the people did not obey God. So can you guess what happened? That's right. God punished them.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Jeremiah so far. God chose Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations. Last time, we learned that God's people failed to keep their part of the old covenant, so God promised a new and better covenant. How awesome!

Today's Bible story is called "Judah Was Taken into Captivity." Uh, oh. It sounds like God's people were in a lot of trouble.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • The people of Judah were in trouble because they did not obey God. Before we hear more, let's review our big picture question. Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to 2 Chronicles 36:1-21. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Judah Was Taken into Captivity."

LEADER • Wow, the people of Judah faced some serious consequences for their disobedience. God was right to punish them for their sin, but He kept His promise to provide a king through David's family.

Giant Timeline

- Bibles
- "Judah Was Taken into Captivity" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Let's see what you can remember about the story. Ask the following review questions:

- 1. Can you name any of the last four kings of Judah? (*Jehoahaz*, *Jehoiakim*, *Zedekiah*, *and Jehoiachin*; 2 Chron. 36:1-14)
- 2. What did all the kings have in common? (All of the kings did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; 2 Chron. 36:5,9,12)
- 3. How did the people respond to the messengers God sent? (*They disobeyed God and made fun of His messengers*, 2 Chron. 36:16)
- 4. How did God punish the people of Judah? (He allowed the king of Babylon to attack the people and many died, 2 Chron. 36:17)
- 5. What happened to the temple? (The Babylonians took everything back to Babylon and burned the temple to the ground, 2 Chron. 36:18-19)
- 6. What happened to the people who were not killed? (The people were taken back to Babylon as slaves, 2 Chron. 36:20)

LEADER • God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin. Sin is breaking God's laws. God hates sin, and
He is right to punish sin. Sin deserves punishment.
But because of His great love for us, God sent His
Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Jesus
died on the cross for our sin. On the third day, He
rose from the dead. Jesus is our King forever!

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Ezekiel 11:19-20. Then cover a word or two with a sticky note. Guide kids to read the key passage again. Then cover one or two more words.

Key Passage Poster"One Heart"songsticky notes

Continue to cover the words, pausing for kids to repeat the key passage. Challenge kids to memorize the key passage this week if they haven't already done so.

LEADER • God sent Judah into captivity because of their

sin. We all sin. Nothing we do can take away our sin. But remember, God sent His Son, Jesus, to take away our sin. Not only that, He promises to change our hearts and give us power to say no to sin!

Lead kids to sing "One Heart" together.

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • God had sent prophets to warn His people. Why are warnings important? What can happen if we don't obey a warning? Watch this video.

 "Unit 15, Session 3" discussion starter video

Show the "Unit 15, Session 3" discussion starter video. Lead kids to discuss what warning Jeremiah gave to the people of Judah. What happened when the people ignored God's warning? Then invite kids to talk about warnings God gives to us. The Bible contains warnings and instructions for how to live. God knows how life works best.

LEADER • Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

Sing (4 minutes)

"A Way for Us" song

LEADER • The people of Judah were held captive in Babylon. They longed to worship in their temple again. We are so blessed to be able to come to church and worship God. Let's sing the next song to Him with thankful hearts.

Sing together "A Way for Us."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Dear Lord, You tell us in Your Word that our sin separates us from You. Thank You for sending Jesus and for forgiving us of our sin. Help us to obey You. We are thankful for Your love for us. You have given us new hearts, and we love You. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Judah Was Taken into Captivity

BIBLE PASSAGE: 2 Chronicles 36:1-21

MAIN POINT: God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- inflated balloons
- large trash bag
- permanent marker
- Allergy Alert download
- Before small group, write the key passage in words or phrases on separate balloons. Then put the balloons in a large trash bag.

Display the key passage poster. Invite the kids to say the key passage with you several times until they are comfortable with the words. Dump the balloons out of the bag and challenge kids to arrange the words in the correct order. When kids finish, lead them to say the key passage.

SAY • Great job, everyone! In today's Bible story, we heard about how the people of Judah were punished for disobeying God. God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin.

> Our key passage shows us that God promised to bring His people back. He promised to change them by changing their hearts and giving them power to obey Him.

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster
- strips of paper
- tape
- markers

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

Distribute Bibles and instruct kids to open their Bibles to 2 Chronicles 36:1-21. Give kids strips of paper and markers. Explain that as you review today's Bible story, kids should list on the paper strips facts about the story, events that happened, names of people in the story, and so forth.

Review the Bible story. Assist kids as needed, making sure each kid prepares at least one strip. Sample strips:

- The last four kings of Judah came from King Josiah's family.
- God sent prophets to warn the people, but the people did not listen.
- God allowed the Babylonians to attack Judah.

Provide tape and prompt kids to work together to form a paper chain with their strips of paper. Begin by taping together the ends of one strip of paper. Add additional links by threading a strip of paper through an existing link and taping the ends together. When kids finish, use the paper chain as a visual to explain the gospel.

SAY • God was right to punish His people for their sin. They deserved to be punished because they refused to obey God. [Hold up the paper chain.] God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin.

Like the people of Judah, we deserve to be punished for our sin. The Bible says that the fair punishment for sin is death. That is bad news for us. But God loved us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to take the punishment we deserve. Jesus never sinned, but He died on the cross in our place. On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead, and He is still alive today!

When we trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, God forgives our sin. He frees us from sin [*Break the paper chain.*] and gives us eternal life—not because of anything we have done but because of what Jesus has done for us. That is the best news ever!

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

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



name tag
 markers

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Capture a king

Prepare a name tag for each child. Each name tag should display one of the following names: *Jehoahaz*, *Jehoiakim*, *Zedekiah*, *Jehoiachin*.

Distribute the name tags and choose one player to be *It*. Instruct the rest of the kids to stand shoulder-to-shoulder at one side of the room. *It* stands in the middle and calls out the name of one of the kings.

Pronunciation guide:

- 1. Jehoahaz (jih HOH uh haz)
- 2. Jehoiakim (jih HOY uh kim)
- 3. Zedekiah (ZED uh KIGH uh)
- 4. Jehoiachin (jih HOY uh kin)

Any kids wearing the chosen king's name tag should hurry to the other side of the room. If a player is tagged by *It*, she should sit where she is tagged. Seated players may reach out to tag other moving players moving in subsequent rounds.

After several rounds, choose a new volunteer to be *It*. All seated players may return to play as runners. Continue playing as time allows.

SAY • The kings in today's Bible story did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. God sent prophets to warn the people, but the people did not listen. So **God sent Judah into captivity because of their sin**, but He promised to gather them back together one day and give them new hearts and power to obey Him. [See Ezek. 11:14-21.]

Do you remember our big picture question and answer? Let's say it together. Why should we obey God? We obey God because He loves us.

OPTION 2: Four corners

Write the following names on separate pieces of paper: *Jehoahaz*, *Jehoiakim*, *Zedekiah*, *Jehoiachin*. Post each paper in a separate corner of the room. Write each name on a separate strip of paper.

If desired, play the song "A Way for Us." Instruct each kid to choose a corner of the room to stand in. Pause the music or call for kids to freeze. Randomly choose a strip of paper and read the name on it. Kids in the corresponding corner are out. Play several rounds until only a few kids remain. Then invite all of the kids to play again.

SAY • Were the kings in today's Bible story good kings or evil kings? (evil kings) **God sent Judah into captivity** because of their sin.

- construction paper,4 pieces
- strips of paper, 4
- marker
- tape
- "A Way for Us" song (optional)

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Instruct the kids to write about a time they faced consequences for disobedience. Explain that sin is disobeying God. Like the people of Judah, we deserve to be punished for sin.

SAY • God was right to punish His people for their sin, but He kept His promise to provide a king through David's family. Ultimately, God punished our sin through Jesus and made Him our King forever.

Pray, thanking God for His great love and for sending His

Pray, thanking God for His great love and for send Son, Jesus, to rescue us from our sins.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Scrambled Up" on the activity page. Challenge kids to unscramble the words from the Christ Connection: God was <u>right</u> to <u>punish</u> His people for their sin, but He kept His <u>promise</u> to provide a <u>king</u> through <u>David's</u> family. Ultimately, God punished our <u>sin</u> through His <u>Son</u>, <u>Jesus</u>, and made Him our King forever.

pencils

- Journal Page
- "Scrambled Up" activity page, 1 per kid

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

Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezekiel 37

MAIN POINT: God planned to bring His people back to their land and give

them new life.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.

SMALL GROUP OPENING (10–15 MINUTES) (25–30 MINUTES) (25–30 MINUTES) (25–30 MINUTES) PAGE 206 PAGE 208 PAGE 214

Leader BIBLE STUDY

Ezekiel had a tough job: ministering to people who had rejected God and suffered the consequences. The exiled people of Judah were eager to blame God for their circumstances. "It's not fair!" they argued. (See Ezek. 18:25.)

Ezekiel told the people that they were at fault for their exile; their faithlessness had provoked God's wrath. The people were getting what they deserved. "I take no pleasure in anyone's death," God said. "So repent and live!" (Ezek. 18:32).

God gave Ezekiel a vision. In this vision, God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry bones. The bones represented Israel.

Ezekiel prophesied that God would put tendons, flesh, and skin on the bones. He would put breath in them so they would come to life.

Ezekiel encouraged the exiles. Apart from God, they were dead. But God was offering them life. He would restore their future. "My dwelling place will be with them," God said. "I will be their God, and they will be My people" (Ezek. 37:27).

We too are dead in our sin. (Eph. 2:1) Sin separates us from God because He is holy. We are apart from God's presence. But God does not delight in our death. He is patient and wants us to repent and live!

Hundreds of years after Ezekiel died, God's presence came to His people through Jesus Christ, *Immanuel*—meaning, "God with us." Jesus is the source of life; He offers us living water. (John 4:10,14) If we do not drink of it, we will become like the dry bones. No life will be in us.

Christ changes that. Evangelical Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias wrote, "Jesus does not offer to make bad people good but to make dead people alive." Indeed, He does. God saves us by grace, making us alive with Christ through the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 2:4-5)

^{1.} Ravi Zacharias. "Threads of a Redeemed Heart," *Ravi Zacharias International Ministries* [online], 28 August 2013 [cited 21 September 2015]. Available from the Internet: *www.rzim.org*.



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

The BIBLE STORY

Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope

Ezekiel 37

God had allowed the Babylonians to take over Judah. God's people were taken to Babylon as slaves. Ezekiel, one of God's prophets, was in Babylon. God gave Ezekiel visions so he could tell God's people about the future. A vision is like a dream, but Ezekiel was awake.

In one vision, God led Ezekiel through a valley filled with old, dry bones. God asked Ezekiel, "Can these bones come to life?"

Ezekiel replied, "Lord God, only You know the answer to that question."

God said, "Speak to these bones for Me. Say, 'This is what God says: I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am God."

Ezekiel spoke to the bones. Suddenly, there was a noise—a rattling sound. The bones were coming together: bones to bones, tendons to bones, flesh over bones, and skin over flesh. But there was no breath in the bones.

God said, "Speak to the breath for Me. Say, 'This is what God says: Breath, come into these bones so that they may live!"

Ezekiel did what God said, and the breath entered the bones. They came to life, and a vast army stood before Ezekiel.

Then God said to Ezekiel, "These bones are like My people of Israel. I want you to speak to them for Me."

The people of Israel were sad. They had been taken from their homes. They were living in another country and serving another king. **God told Ezekiel to say, "This is**

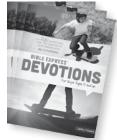
what God says: I am going to bring My people back to the land of Israel. I will put My Spirit in you, and you will live."

Another message came to Ezekiel. God told him to write on a stick: This stick belongs to Judah and his friends, the people of Israel. Then God told Ezekiel to write on a second stick: This stick belongs to Joseph and his friends, the people of Israel. The first stick represented the Southern Kingdom of Judah, and the second stick represented the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

God told Ezekiel to hold the sticks together in one hand so they would become one single stick. God explained that His people would be one nation. They would have a new king to rule over them and guide them. God said, "My people will live forever in the land I gave to their ancestors."

God would make a covenant of peace with His people forever. "I will be with them," God said. "I will be their God, and they will be My people. Then everyone will know that I am the Lord."

Christ Connection: God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry bones. The dry bones remind us what we are like when we sin. God showed Ezekiel His power to make dead people alive. We see God's power at the cross. Jesus died to save sinners. God raised Jesus from the dead, and He gives us eternal life.



WANT TO
DISCOVER
GOD'S WORD?
GET
BIBLE EXPRESS!

Invite kids to check out this week's devotionals to discover that God's people felt sad and alone in a foreign land. God's promise through Ezekiel is still true for us today. One day, we will live with God for all eternity. (Ezek. 37:27) Order in bulk, subscribe quarterly, or purchase individually. For more information, check out www.lifeway.com/ devotionals.

Small Group OPENING

SESSION TITLE: Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezekiel 37

MAIN POINT: God planned to bring His people back to their land and give

them new life.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves 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. Invite kids to share if they have ever broken a bone. How did it happen? How long did they wear a cast? What color was their cast?

SAY • Thank you for sharing your experiences! I am glad we have doctors that can help our bones heal. Today we are going to hear about a vision the prophet Ezekiel had. Ezekiel saw God bring dead bones to life!

Activity page (5 minutes)

Challenge kids to complete the "Secret Message" on the activity page. Guide kids to follow the instructions for coloring in the spaces in the picture.

When kids finish, the scattered bones colored blue should spell out the name *EZEKIEL*.

SAY • Today we are going to hear a Bible story about Ezekiel. God used a valley of bones to show Ezekiel what He was going to do. God was going to do something wonderful for His people, and He wanted Ezekiel to tell them about it.

"Secret Message" activity page, 1 per kidcrayons or markers

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Gather them up

Form groups of three or four kids. Give each group a different colored stack of paper. Instruct the kids to use the paper to form three paper wads per player.

Allow kids a minute or two to toss their paper wads around the room. Then gather the kids in their groups. Explain that when you say go, each team should race to collect its paper wads. The first group to collect all of its paper wads wins. Play again as time allows, allowing groups to toss other groups' papers.

SAY • Good job, everyone! In this game, you gathered your papers that were scattered all over the room. Today's Bible story is about a promise God made to His people through the prophet Ezekiel. God promised to gather them together. Let's get ready to hear more!



 colored paper, different color per group

OPTION 2: Balloon bones

Form two teams. Give each team a roll of tape and several small inflated balloons of various shapes and sizes. Make sure each team has the same number of balloons.

Challenge teams to use the tape to attach the balloons to one of their players. Allow several minutes for teams to work. Then call time and invite each balloon "model" to move around to bring life to the balloons.

SAY • You really made these balloons come to life! Today we are going to hear a Bible story about a time the prophet Ezekiel had a vision. God put breath in bones and brought them to life! Incredible!

Transition to large group

- masking tape or painter's tape, 2 rolls
- small inflated balloons of various shapes and sizes
- Allergy Alert download

Large Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezekiel 37

MAIN POINT: God planned to bring His people back to their land and give

them new life.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.

Countdown

countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as large group time begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

leader attire

keys

 $\bullet \, \text{flashlight} \\$

[Large Group Leader enters wearing a security officer's uniform—black pants and a blue shirt. Leader carries a large set of keys and a flashlight, carefully scanning the room as he or she enters. Leader is relieved to see the kids.]

LEADER • Boy, am I glad to see you! Whew. [Wipe forehead and glance offstage.] I wasn't sure I was going to make it out of there in one piece! I was just walking through the Old Testament wing of the Bible exhibit, and I heard this strange noise. It was a clattering sound! I carefully walked into the room about Jeremiah and the Israelites' captivity, and you won't believe what I saw! These old bones were moving around in one of the displays! I got out of there as fast as I could.

Fortunately, it turns out it's actually a new demonstration to help people learn about the story of Ezekiel. Let's get ready to see what that's about.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline, briefly reviewing previous Bible stories. Then point to today's Bible story.

Giant Timeline

LEADER • We have been learning about the prophet
Jeremiah and his message to God's people.
Remember, the people of Judah had disobeyed God,
so God sent Judah into captivity because of their
sin. Today's Bible story is called "Ezekiel Told About
a Future Hope." Ezekiel was a prophet too. God gave
Ezekiel visions that showed what would happen in
the future. Wow!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • Now, before we get to the Bible story, let's review our big picture question and answer. Remember, God's people were in captivity because they disobeyed God. We know that we can't do anything to earn God's favor. So, **why should we obey God?**Today's Bible story is a good reminder of God's promises for us. **We obey God because He loves us.**

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Ezekiel 37. Tell the Bible story in your own words, or show the Bible story video "Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope."

LEADER • Isn't it amazing the way God communicated the message He wanted Ezekiel to share with the people of Judah? God was clear in His message to Ezekiel.

God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life.

Let's review it to make sure we understand what God had to say to His people.

- Bibles
- "Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope" video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster

Ask the following review questions:

- 1. Ezekiel's vision led him through a valley. What filled the valley? (*bones, Ezek. 37:1*)
- 2. What did God ask Ezekiel about the bones? (*Can these bones live? Ezek. 37:3*)
- 3. What was Ezekiel's answer to God? (Only You know, Ezek. 37:3)
- 4. What happened to the bones when Ezekiel spoke God's words to them? (*The bones came together. Tendons and flesh came over them; Ezek. 37:7-8*)
- 5. What was missing from the bones? (*breath*, *Ezek. 37:8*)
- 6. What caused the bones to come to life? (*Ezekiel spoke God's words commanding the breath to come into the bones, Ezek. 37:9-10*)
- 7. Who were these bones like? (They were like the people of Israel, and God wanted Ezekiel to speak to them for Him; Ezek. 37:11-14)
- 8. What two things were in the next vision from God to Ezekiel? (*two sticks, Ezek. 37:16*)
- 9. Whom did each stick belong to? (Judah and his friends, Joseph and his friends; Ezek. 37:16)
- 10. When the two sticks became one, what did that represent? (*God's people would be one nation*, *Ezek. 37:21-22*)
- **LEADER** God used His power to bring dry, dead bones to life. The dry bones remind us what we are like when we sin. We aren't just sick or injured in our sin; the Bible says that apart from Jesus, we are *dead* in our sin. God showed Ezekiel His power to make dead people alive.

We see God's power at the cross. Jesus died to save

sinners. God raised Jesus from the dead, and He gives us eternal life.

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me (optional)

Use Scripture and the guide provided with this session to explain to boys and girls how to become a Christian. Assign individuals to meet with kids who have more questions.

Encourage boys and girls to ask their parents, small group leaders, or other Christian adults any questions they may have about becoming a Christian.

Tip: Provide I'm a Christian Now for new Christians to take home and complete with their families

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Ezekiel 11:19-20. Then guide kids to read the key passage again, this time in a dull, monotone voice. For an added emphasis, guide kids to also lay on their backs as they say the key passage.

Key Passage Poster"One Heart"song

LEADER • Let's put some life into that! This time, let's say our key passage with expression and enthusiasm! Guide kids to stand and recite the key passage again, this time with life and enthusiasm!

their land and give them new life. Our key passage tells us more about God's plan for His people. He promised to bring them together and change their hearts, giving them power to love and obey Him.

Invite kids to sing "One Heart" together.

Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

LEADER • Are you ready for a quiz? Don't worry; this will be fun. Check this out.

Show the "Unit 15, Session 4" discussion starter video.

 "Unit 15, Session 4" discussion starter video **LEADER** • How can you tell if something is alive? Can something that is actually dead appear to be alive? [Allow kids to discuss.] God promised to change His people. God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life.

Apart from Jesus, we are spiritually dead in our sin. When we trust in Jesus, He makes us alive—like the dry bones that came to life. Jesus gives us eternal life. We can share this good news with others!

Sing (4 minutes)

"A Way for Us" song

LEADER • No one is like God! He deserves our worship and our praise. Let's spend time worshiping Him through song today. As you sing these words, think about the power and love of our great God.

Sing together "A Way for Us."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to small groups.

LEADER • Let's gather in a circle and link arms to remind us what God's message was through the dry, dead bones.

Dear God, only You can make dry, dead bones come to life. The bones remind us what we are like when we sin. Lord, help us understand that You are the only One who can take away our sin and give us new life. Thank You for Jesus! We love You. Amen.

Dismiss to small groups

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.

Small Group LEADER

SESSION TITLE: Ezekiel Told About a Future Hope

BIBLE PASSAGE: Ezekiel 37

MAIN POINT: God planned to bring His people back to their land and give

them new life.

KEY PASSAGE: Ezekiel 11:19-20

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: Why should we obey God? We obey God because

He loves us.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

 Key Passage Poster "Key Passage Bones" printable

Print and cut apart the key passage bones in your preferred translation. If your group is large, print more than one set and form smaller groups.

Display the key passage poster. Allow kids who have memorized the key passage to recite it. Then guide everyone to read it aloud together.

Distribute the verse bones. Challenge the kids to arrange the words and phrases in the correct order.

SAY • We learned in today's Bible story that only God can give new life. He can bring dry, dead bones to life and—like our key passage says—He can remove a heart of stone, a heart that is hard and resistant to Him, and replace it with a heart of flesh, one that loves Him and wants to obey Him.

Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid Guide kids to open their Bibles to Ezekiel 37. Form groups of three or four kids—boys with boys, and girls with girls. Give each group paper large enough for a kid to lay on. markers
 - Instruct a volunteer in each group to lay on her back while the other kids carefully trace an outline of her
- Main Point Poster
- · large sheets of paper

body. Then direct the kids to draw bones in the outline. Encourage them to write words or phrases of the main point on the bones: **God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life.**

As kids work, read the following statements and ask them to determine if each is true or false:

- 1. God had allowed the Ninevites to take over Judah. (false, the Babylonians; 2 Chron. 36:20)
- 2. God led Ezekiel through a valley filled with old, dry sticks. (false, filled with bones; Ezek. 37:1)
- 3. God told Ezekiel to speak to the bones. Ezekiel did, but nothing happened. (*False, they came together; Ezek. 37:7*)
- 4. God told Ezekiel to hold the sticks together in one hand so they would become one single stick. (*true, Ezek. 37:16-17*)
- 5. God explained that His people would be one nation. (*true*, *Ezek*. *37:19*)
- 6. We obey God to make Him love us more. (False, we obey God because He loves us.)
- 7. God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life. (true, Ezek. 37:21)
- **SAY** We learned many things in today's Bible story. Even though God's people had sinned, **God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life.**

The dry bones in Ezekiel's vision remind us what we are like when we sin. Sin separates us from God, and apart from Him, we are spiritually dead. The power of God at the cross through Jesus can save people from their sin. It can bring people to new life in Jesus Christ.

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

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



craft sticks, 5 per kidmarkers

Activity choice (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Connect two

Give each kid five craft sticks and a marker. Instruct kids to label their sticks with the numbers *1* through *5*. Give the following directions:

- 1. Hold the sticks with the numbers down so they are hidden in your fist.
- 2. Find a partner. Each partner will gently draw one stick from the other player's hand.
- 3. Compare the sticks. If the numbers match, you win! If the numbers do not match, return the sticks and play again.

Encourage kids who draw matching sticks to continue playing. How many times can they draw a pair?

SAY • Does anyone remember what Ezekiel's vision of the two sticks showed? (*God explained that His people would be one nation.*) God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life.

OPTION 2: Pack it up

Form two teams of kids. Give each player a clothing item, such as a sock or T-shirt. Position a suitcase across the room for each team.

Explain that when you say go, the first player on each team should race to the suitcase, open it up, put her item inside, and close the suitcase before returning to her team. When the first player returns, the second player may begin. The last player will pack his item, close the suitcase, and carry it back to his team. The first team to finish wins.

SAY • Today we learned that **God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life.**Can you imagine how excited they were to hear that

suitcases or gym bags, 1 per teamclothing items, 1 per kid they would get to go back to their land? I wonder what they would have taken with them. Through His great love, God forgave His people and blessed them with a future hope.

We have a future hope too. Anyone who trusts in Jesus is forgiven of their sin. Our sin makes us dead, but God makes us alive! He promises that we will live with Him forever.

Journal and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Encourage kids to write about or draw a picture of what a person's heart is like before trusting in Jesus.

Remind them that before we trust in Jesus, our hearts are hard like stone. We are against God and focus on ourselves. When we trust in Jesus, God changes our hearts to be open to Him. He gives us power to love and obey Him.

SAY • God spoke to Ezekiel through some pretty amazing visions. We learned today that God planned to bring His people back to their land and give them new life. Only God has the power to do that, and only God has the power to save sinners through His Son, Jesus! He forgives their sin and gives them life!

Pray, thanking God for forgiveness and new life in Christ. As time allows, lead kids to complete "Vision Match" on the activity page. Review the visions from the Bible story, what each vision meant, and what it tells us about God.

(Answers: 1. a valley of dry bones came to life, God was going to bring His people to Israel and give them life, God has power to make dead people alive; 2. two sticks became one single stick, God was going to bring His people together as one nation, God is King over His people)

pencils

- Journal Page
- "Vision Match" activity page, 1 per kid

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

30 Really Important Seconds in Your Church

WHEN I FIRST ENTERED LOCAL
CHURCH MINISTRY, I HEARD
LEADERS DESCRIBE THE
IMPORTANCE OF THE FIRST
FEW MOMENTS OF A FIRSTTIME GUEST'S EXPERIENCE AT
A CHURCH. BECAUSE MANY
GUESTS DECIDE IN THOSE FEW
MOMENTS IF THEY WILL RETURN,
IT IS IMPORTANT FOR A CHURCH
TO EXPRESS HOSPITALITY TO
GUESTS. WE WANT TO WELCOME
OTHERS BECAUSE CHRIST
HAS WELCOMED US.

I have learned, as a father, about another very critical 30 seconds.

The 30 seconds when a parent picks up his/her child from the group/class at the end of the worship service are very important.

I have seen some churches maximize this moment and other churches ill-prepared for the sacred opportunity these 30 seconds provide. Some churches possess a sacred "relational intentionality" for these 30 seconds. They think strategically about the discipleship of the family, and they train their leaders to be relational and

hospitable.

When those 30 seconds possess relational intentionality, two things happen.

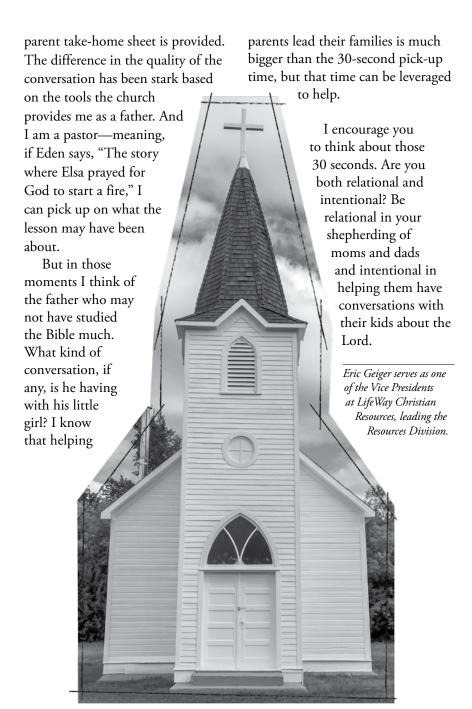
1. Parents receive a personal connection.

There is a reason that so many parents attend Open House and Parent-Teacher Conferences. A parent does not need to be a Christian to want to know who is influencing their children and how their children are handling the environments they are in. Parents are much more likely to trust a church if their children are loved and encouraged.

The 30 seconds when a father or mother picks up his/her child is a great opportunity for the parent to be encouraged and to know that their family is loved and valued.

2. Parents receive help in leading their families.

I have two little girls. I have learned that leading discussions with them about "what they learned at church" is much easier when an activity page that contains the Bible lesson or a



Jeremiah and Captivity

KidsMinistration: Teaching and Administration—Two Gifts, One Mission

WHEN PEOPLE THINK OF KIDS MINISTRY, THEY OFTEN PICTURE A SMILING TEACHER TELLING A BIBLE STORY TO A SMALL GROUP OF EAGER CHILDREN SITTING IN A CIRCLE ON COLORFUL FLOOR MATS, OTHERS MAY ENVISION A HIGH-ENERGY LEADER UNPACKING **BIBLICAL TRUTHS FROM A LIGHTED** STAGE DRESSED OUT WITH **BRIGHTLY-COLORED KID-THEMED DECORATIONS. IN BOTH CASES, THE** KIDS PASTOR IS SEEN PRIMARILY AS A TEACHER WHO IS GIFTED AT COMMUNICATING BIBLICAL CONCEPTS TO KIDS.

While most kids ministers are teachers by nature, kidmin insiders know that teaching time is only one small piece of the job. When full-time kids ministers look at where their time goes many realize that in a typical week less than 10 percent of their energy is spent in direct interaction with children. The other 90 percent of the work week is often spent alone, in an office, at a desk, on the phone or behind a computer

in activity that we might categorize as administrative. This includes things like strategic planning, budgeting, recruiting volunteers, reviewing policies, attending staff meetings, curriculum review and selection, and lesson preparation. These unglamorous tasks require a different kind of giftedness that many teachers lack. Many find these activities to be boring, draining, and unfulfilling necessities of the job.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul explains that God gives His people a variety of different gifts for the purpose of facilitating effective ministry. Within the longer list which includes healing and evangelism, Paul includes both teaching and administration.

Because God gives them both, we can conclude that both are important to the work of ministry. Still, the idea that administration and administrative tasks are a key part of ministry is something that we can easily overlook.

By definition, administration is the management of an office,

business or organization. It involves giving direction and oversight. It is leadership from an organizational point of view. You might say that ministers administer ministry through administration. So, in addition to being gifted communicators, the most effective kidmin leaders are strong administrators. This means they are able to be well-organized, strategic-minded, vision-casting, direction-oriented, equippers of teams.

Many who come to kids ministry because they enjoy engaging with kids struggle with the administrative parts of their positions. If you feel this way, you are not alone. But, before you excuse yourself from administrative duty because you believe you lack the gift of administration, remember that spiritual gifts are given as assets, not excuses. Those who possess the gift of evangelism may see incredible results when they share the gospel, but we are all called to proclaim the good news of Christ whether we have the 'gift' of evangelism or not.

Similarly, everyone in vocational ministry is responsible for some amount of administration. So what can you do if you have a hard time with administration? Here are a few words of encouragement to get you going.

Don't neglect it.

One of the biggest mistakes one can make when faced with challenging tasks that are "not fun" is to avoid them altogether.

When important things are left undone, over time they grow into bigger problems. If you have administrative tasks that you have been putting off, let me encourage you to address them right away. In the short term you may feel like you are winning by avoiding the difficulty of doing the task, but delaying the job will only cause you more stress and harm your ministry in the long run. If you have been avoiding your expense report, putting off a revision of your kids ministry policy documents, or delaying a decision on curriculum, make the choice to make progress right away and take action. The best time to get started is now.

Chip away at it.

When papers start to stack up, the thought of getting to the bottom of your inbox can seem impossible. Don't be overwhelmed by trying to do everything at once. Prioritize what needs to be done and start with one task that you can complete today.

Financial guru Dave Ramsey teaches a strategy of eliminating debt by attacking one big bill at a time. When the first is paid off, you move to the next. While you may need to do some multitasking to keep all of your plates spinning, if you function with a complete lack of focus you will have a hard time completing anything. Line up those tasks and take them on one by one. You will find wind in your administrative sails as you scratch them of your to-do list.

Work at it.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that ministry should be easy just because you are called to it. In fact, Scripture is clear that ministry is work. Ephesians 4:12 says in regard to the purpose of spiritual gifts, that they are given "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ." Second Timothy 2:15 says that you are to be "a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed."

Ministering within your giftedness can be extremely satisfying and energizing, but a lot of ministry will require strenuous effort. We must do them anyway. If the task is hard, we work harder and trust God to give us wisdom and endurance to do what needs to be done to answer the call.

Recruit for it.

Let's not forget that ministry is a team effort. You were never meant to do the work of ministry alone. Just because you do not personally have a gift does not mean you do not have access to that gift. As you build your team for ministry, it is wise to surround yourself with co-laborers who complement your own giftedness. Don't try to do it all by yourself; you will end up exhausted and burned out. Recruit trustworthy, qualified, gifted people to your team and empower them to offset your areas of weakness under your guidance.

The gifts of teaching and administration are different and distinct, but the work of both teaching and administration is absolutely essential in ministry. In a nutshell, administration is about ownership, stewardship, and leadership. When you look at it that way, you may find that you are better at it than you had thought, and with a little strategy, you'll find that administration can be a fun and fulfilling part of your ministry.

Chuck Peters is Director of Operations for LifeWay Kids. A graduate of Columbia Bible College, Chuck and his wife, Cris, have served vocationally and voluntarily in Student and Children's Ministry for many years. They have four amazing children.



Is It Philosophy or Methodology?

THE TERM PHILOSOPHY GETS THROWN AROUND A LOT, SOMETIMES NEGATIVELY. HOWEVER, BY DEFINITION, "PHILOSOPHY" IS NEUTRAL—IT'S NEITHER POSITIVE NOR NEGATIVE. MERRIAM-WEBSTER DEFINES THE TERM AS, "THE MOST BASIC BELIEFS, CONCEPTS, AND ATTITUDES OF AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP."

In kids ministry, we sometimes confuse philosophy with methodology. While methods may demonstrate our philosophy, they are more fluid. Here are some ways to distinguish the two:

- Philosophy is built on biblical convictions. Our philosophy should include the desire to introduce kids to Jesus.
- Methods are ways to teach our biblical convictions. We may choose to introduce kids to Jesus with large-group games, word searches, crafts, video clips, etc.
- Philosophy is very personal and changes very little or not at all over a long period of time.
- Methods can be flexible. They may change from decade to decade, from year to year, from week to week, and even from child to child.
- Philosophy can be stated clearly and briefly.
- The list of methods can be almost infinite.

Let me ask you a question: "Is the use of coloring pages based on philosophy or methodology?" Before you answer, take a look down your church's preschool hallways or in the elementary classrooms.

If the artwork or crafts all look alike, the teachers may value product over process. If the coloring pages look like abstract art and the crafts are misshapen, the teachers' philosophy is to place process above product.

As for me, I want to choose the latter scenario. In that way, my seldom-changing philosophy drives the various methods I employ. What will you choose?

Landry Holmes leads LifeWay's Kids Ministry Publishing Team and is a children's ministry volunteer at his church. He is a husband, dad, father-in-law, and dog person.

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