

The Circle Maker

C h i l d r e n ' s C u r r i c u l u m

Later Elementary

ZONDERVAN

The Circle Maker Children's Curriculum

Copyright © 2015 by Mark Batterson

Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

All Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, *New International Reader's Version*®, *NIRV*®. Copyright © 1995, 1996, 1998 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

All rights reserved. The original purchaser of this product shall have the right to make unlimited paper copies to facilitate the use of this curriculum by the original purchaser, provided such copies are not resold or distributed to the general public. Otherwise, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Cover design: Extra Credit Projects

Interior design: Dan Dingman



Week 1:

Becoming A Circle Maker

Objective: To teach each student that God wants us to pray

Bible Story: Joshua and the Wall of Jericho (Joshua 6:1 – 16)

Memory Verse: “Tell God about everything. Ask and pray.” (Philippians 4:6b, NIrV)

Circle Maker Motto: God is looking for Circle Makers who know His promises and pray His promises.

Master Supplies List

- ☐ NIrV Bible
- ☐ Family Table Talk handout (one per student)
- ☐ Family Prayer Calendar (one per student)

Optional Supplies

You will need the following supplies based on which option(s) you choose in **Step 1: Getting Started** and **Step 3: Explore More**.

- ☐ **Getting Started 1:** Duct tape or washi tape (assorted colors); scissors; Sharpie markers; optional decorating supplies: stick-on gems, stickers, colored pencils; completed sample bracelet
- ☐ **Getting Started 2:** Whiteboard, dry-erase markers
- ☐ **Getting Started 3:** Timer
- ☐ **Explore More 1:** Empty baby food jars (can be a variety of sizes) with lid (one per student); colored paper; glue sticks; markers; scissors; optional decorating supplies: stick-on gems, stickers, colored pencils; plain white paper; pencils; and a completed Prayer Jar
- ☐ **Explore More 2:** God’s Promises Bookmark template, card stock, scissors, markers, a completed sample bookmark

Step 1: Come Together

As the students arrive to class, provide activities to help prepare them for the lesson. Select one of the following activities that will work best for your group, or create a variety of stations for the students to pick from within the classroom. Play music in the background to help create a fun and welcoming environment. Welcome the students as they arrive, and share the activities available. If you choose to create stations, you may want to have volunteers on hand to help.

Option 1: Circle Maker Bracelets

Supplies: Duct tape or washi tape (assorted colors), scissors, Sharpie type markers in an assortment of colors, optional decorating supplies such as stick-on gems and stickers, one completed bracelet to use as a sample

Ahead of Time: Assemble one bracelet as a sample.

SAY, “Welcome to Circle Maker! Over the next few weeks we’re going to learn a new way to pray — circling God’s promises in prayer. Let’s get started by making a Circle Maker bracelet.”

Give each student an approximately 8” length of tape. Demonstrate for the students how to fold the strip lengthwise about halfway, so half the sticky part is covered. Then fold the rest of the sticky part inward. They should now have a non-sticky, folded strip of duct tape. Make available a variety of Sharpie type markers for the students to share. Encourage the students to write the words “Ask and Pray” on their bracelets. You may also choose to make available a variety of other decorating supplies such as stickers and stick-on gems. Instruct the students to decorate their bracelets. Once decorated, give each student a small piece of tape with which to close their bracelet. **Note:** You may need to assist students in wrapping the bracelet piece around their wrist, cutting off excess, and taping the bracelet closed.

While the students are decorating their bracelets, share your excitement for what they will learn over the next few weeks.

SAY, “Today we’re going to learn God is looking for Circle Makers. He wants us to know His promises and then pray His promises. When you wear this bracelet, you can remember God is inviting you to an adventure in prayer.”

Option 2: Talk to Me!

Supplies: Whiteboard, dry-erase markers

Give each student a dry-erase marker, or allow the students to share markers. Invite the students to write on the whiteboard as many ways as they can think of how someone could pray (i.e., when, where, and how.) (*Responses may include: standing,*

walking, kneeling, bowing, singing, quietly, lying down, in bed, with hands together, with outstretched hands, in the morning, at night, etc.)

SAY, “Today we’re going to learn about prayer. Prayer is how we talk, or communicate, with God. We may not get a phone call from God, but we can hear from Him as we read the Bible. We don’t need to send Him a text, but we can talk to Him anytime and anywhere as we pray to Him. God loves it when we talk to Him.”

Option 3: Circle Makers Human Knot

Supplies: Timer

Gather the students into circles of eight to ten students each, facing inward.

SAY, “Today we’re going to play a game of human knot. To start the game, I want you all to reach your arms toward the center of our circle and grab the right hand of another person. You may grab the hand of anyone in the circle except for the person standing next to you. Ready? Okay, grab someone’s right hand. Now, I want you to grab someone else’s left hand. You may grab anyone’s hand in the circle except for the person standing next to you. Great job! When I say GO, I want you to untangle yourselves without letting go of someone’s hand. Make sense? Don’t let go! Your goal is to get back into a perfect circle without letting go of anyone’s hand. Are you ready? Okay, GO!”

Once the group is back to a circle,

SAY, “Way to go! What an awesome circle! Today we’re going to learn how God is looking for Circle Makers to join Him on an adventure in prayer.”

If time allows, continue the game, trying to lessen the time it takes for the human knot to become a circle.

As the Getting Started time comes to a close, gather the students and instruct them to be seated for the teaching and story.

Step 2: Present the Story

Supplies Needed: Cell phone, whiteboard, dry-erase markers



Storyteller: Good Morning! It’s great to see you! Welcome to the Circle Maker! I’m so glad you are here!

(CUE: *Pull out cell phone.*) I don’t know about you, but it seems everywhere I go these days, I see people talking on the phone. I see people talking on their phones as they shop at the mall. I see people talking on the phone while driving in their cars. I was watching a football game on TV the other day and every time

the camera zoomed in on the fans, you know what they were doing? Talking on the phone!

Don't get me wrong, it's not that cell phones are a bad thing. In fact, they are pretty handy. I'll never forget the time I was in a jam (CUE: *Insert personal story here — locked my keys in my car, etc.*), but thankfully I had my cell phone and was able to get help. With our cell phone, anytime day or night, we can call for help, no matter where we are, right?

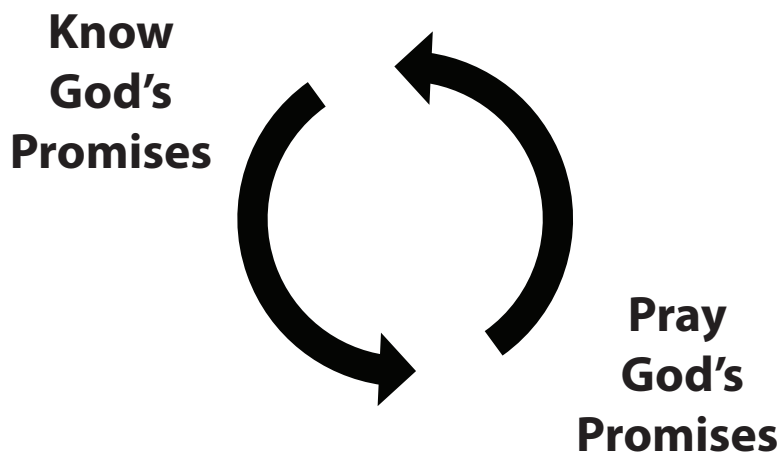
Prayer is sort of like a cell phone. No matter where you are or what you are doing, you can always communicate, or talk to God, through prayer. Whether you are at the mall, hanging out with friends, or even at a football game — God loves to hear your prayers.

Who can help me think of some ways we can pray? (*Students respond.*) That's right — we can (CUE: *leader demonstrate*) pray standing up, sitting down, with our eyes open, with our eyes closed, kneeling, face down, hands outstretched, hands folded; we can write our prayers, cry our prayers, and even shout our prayers. There are lots of ways to pray, and God loves it when we talk to Him.

For the next four weeks we are going to learn a new way to pray — praying in circles. In fact, we're going to learn how to be Circle Makers. Now when I say the words "Circle Maker," I want you to make a big circle in front of you like this (*make a big circle with your arms in front of your body*). Now be careful not to bump your neighbor, okay, Circle Makers? (*Make circle.*) Great job! Did you know God is looking for Circle Makers (*make circle*) who know His promises from the Bible and then pray His promises? Yes, God is looking for Circle Makers (*make circle*). I wonder if anyone here today would like to learn more about being a Circle Maker. (*Make circle; students respond, "Yes!"*) Great!

When we pray in circles, it kind of goes like this. We spend time getting to know God's promises — reading the Bible, going to church — and then we spend time talking to God reminding Him of His promises, and it makes a big circle. Like this . . .

(CUE: *Use the whiteboard and dry-erase markers to draw a circle as shown. As you draw, SAY, "Know God's promises . . . Pray God's promises!"*)



For example, God promises in the Bible that we do not have to be afraid because He is always with us. Over and over in the Bible God says, “Do not fear. I am with you.” So let’s say you land a part in the school play, but you become nervous that you won’t remember your lines. Rather than getting scared and just quitting, you can think about God’s promise, and then circle it, or pray God’s promise.

Anyone have some ideas of what you might pray? (*Students respond.*) Great! Or you could say, “God, You say in the Bible that I don’t have to fear because You are always with me, so please help me not to be afraid at the play.” That’s circling one of God’s promises. That’s being a Circle Maker — knowing God’s promises and praying God’s promises! And God is looking for Circle Makers to join Him on an adventure in prayer!

There’s a story in the Bible where God calls some Circle Makers and they watch Him perform a miracle right before their very eyes! Let’s take a look.

Today’s Bible story involves Joshua and the wall of Jericho [jer-i-koh]. (*Say that with me, “Jericho.”*) How many of you have heard this story? (*Students respond.*) Oh good! You can make sure I’m telling it correctly!

In today’s story, God’s chosen people, the Israelites, are finally going to make it to the place that God promised He would give to them — the Promised Land — an amazing land flowing with milk and honey, a land they’ve waited a long time to get to! Except there is a problem. Not only are there some not-so-nice people already living in the Promised Land, when they get to the first big city — Jericho — the walls surrounding the city were six feet wide (*extend arms horizontally*) and fifty feet high (*extend arms vertically while standing on your tiptoes*). Now that’s tall, wouldn’t you agree?!

Without a big army or any weapons, how were Joshua and the Israelites supposed to get the mean people currently living there to leave their Promised Land? Let’s find out.

As I read, I need you to listen for three things.

1. What promise does God give to Joshua?
2. What instructions does God give to Joshua?
3. How does Joshua respond to God’s promise and his instructions?

Are you ready to take a listen? (*Students respond.*) Great!

(CUE: *Read the story using your own NIrV Bible or the script supplied below.*)

Joshua 6:1–5, 11–16, 20 (NIrV)

¹The gates of Jericho were shut tight and guarded closely because of the people of Israel. No one went out. No one came in.

²Then the LORD spoke to Joshua. He said, “I have handed Jericho over to you. I have also handed its king and its fighting men over to you.

³“March around the city once with all of your fighting men. In fact, do it for six days. ⁴Have seven priests get trumpets that are made out of rams’ horns. They must carry them in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times. Have the priests blow the trumpets as you march.

⁵“You will hear them blow a long blast on the trumpets. When you do,

have all of the men give a loud shout. The wall of the city will fall down. Then the whole army will go up to the city. Every man will go straight in.”

¹¹So he had the ark of the LORD carried around the city once. Then the men returned to camp. They spent the night there. ¹²Joshua got up early the next morning. The priests went and got the ark of the LORD. ¹³The seven priests who were carrying the seven trumpets started out. They marched in front of the ark of the LORD. They blew the trumpets. Some of the fighting men marched ahead of them. The others followed behind the ark and guarded all of them. The priests kept blowing the trumpets. ¹⁴On the second day they marched around the city once. Then the men returned to camp. They did all of those things for six days. ¹⁵On the seventh day, they got up at sunrise. They marched around the city, just as they had done before. But on that day they went around it seven times. ¹⁶On the seventh time around, the priests blew a long blast on the trumpets. Then Joshua gave a command to the men. He said, “Shout! The LORD has given you the city!”

²⁰The priests blew the trumpets. As soon as the fighting men heard the sound, they gave a loud shout. Then the wall fell down.

Wow! So who can tell me what promise God gave to Joshua? (*Students respond.*)

That’s right. Joshua 6:2 says, “The LORD spoke to Joshua. He said, ‘I have handed Jericho over to you. I have also handed its king and its fighting men over to you.’” Isn’t that awesome? God promised Joshua that His people would win the battle, didn’t He?

But God gave Joshua some pretty unusual battle instructions. Who remembers what they were? (*Students respond.*) Yes, instead of trying to climb the walls, knock the walls down, or shoot fiery arrows over the walls to burn down the city, God told Joshua to march around the city once a day for six days, and on the seventh day, to march around the city seven times, then blow trumpets like this (*blow pretend trumpet*), and give a shout. And then what would happen? (*Students respond.*) Yes! God said the walls of Jericho would collapse and God’s people would be able to walk right in and take the city. God is always faithful to keep His promises.

How does Joshua respond to God’s promises? (*Students respond.*) Yes, Joshua obeyed God. Joshua listened to God’s promise, believed God, and then did what God told him to do. He was obedient, even though it wasn’t easy.

Did God keep His promise to Joshua? Yes! The walls of the city came tumbling down just as God promised, and the Israelites could walk right in and take over the city of Jericho.

Let’s think about the walls of Jericho for a minute. Did the walls fall down because of the trumpets and shouting? (*Students respond.*) No! Trumpets and shouting don’t make a huge wall fall down, do they? No! The walls fell down because God kept His promise! The walls fell down because Joshua and the people were obedient to do what God had instructed! Isn’t God amazing?

Since we’re talking about circles today, I’m wondering if anyone noticed a circle in this Bible story? (*Wait for a few responses.*) That’s right — the people of Israel made a circle around the city of Jericho when they marched around it.

Now was there magic in walking in a circle? No way. It was God who kept His

promise. It was God who performed the miracle. Joshua and the people took over the city of Jericho because they believed God's promise, and then obeyed His instructions — even though the instructions seemed strange — and they didn't give up on God's promise of victory.

So what are some things that we can learn from today's story? (*Students respond. Possible answers may include: God can do anything. Joshua obeyed God.*)

Yes, that's right! And there are two very important lessons I want us to remember.

1. God keeps His promises. We can trust Him no matter what. Say that with me. (*"God keeps His promises."*)

2. Just like the Israelites, we can draw a circle around the impossible situations in our lives by knowing God's promises and praying God's promises. We can invite God to help us. We can be Circle Makers!

So how do we do this? How can we be Circle Makers in our homes and our schools and our neighborhoods?

For starters, we can get to know God's promises. (*Point to circle on the whiteboard.*) And how do we know God's promises? (*Students respond.*) That's right — by spending time reading the Bible. What kinds of things does God promise us? Does God promise to provide food for us? Yes, He does. Does God want us to have clothes to wear? Sure. Does He promise us the latest video game, iPod, or sparkly sweater? Um, no.

God is not like a candy machine where we put money in and then get out whatever we want, is He? That's why it's important to read the Bible and know God's promises.

Remember there are two parts of the circle, right? Anyone remember the one part? First, we have to KNOW God's promises. And the other part is? (*Point to the whiteboard.*) That's right! Being a Circle Maker also means that we spend time PRAYING God's promises. Maybe for you that means praying to not be afraid or for love in your heart for that kid at school who is not so nice. Courage and love are both things God promises to us.

During our time together these next four weeks, we'll be learning one new memory verse each week. This week's memory verse will really help us as Circle Makers. (CUE: *Write this week's memory verse on the whiteboard. As you write on the whiteboard, say the verse and reference aloud.*) "Tell God about everything. Ask and pray" (Philippians 4:6b, NIV). Now let's all say this week's memory verse together. (CUE: *Point to the whiteboard and lead the students in saying this week's memory verse together. If time permits, repeat this activity a couple of times.*)

God is looking for Circle Makers, friends. Would anyone here like to know God's promises and pray His promises, and join Him on an amazing adventure of prayer? (*Students respond.*) Oh good! Me too!

Let's pray: "Dear God, thank You for the Bible that's filled with Your promises. Thank You that You love us so very much. Thank You for inviting us to join you as Circle Makers. Help us to tell you about everything, and to ask and pray this week. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Okay, friends, we're going to head on over to our activity time together now.



Step 3: Explore More

Choose from these activity options, depending on your available time frame, to help students explore the lesson further.

Option 1: Prayer Jars

Supplies: Prayer Jar label template; empty baby food jars with lid (one per student); 8½” x11” colored paper; glue; markers; scissors; optional decorating supplies: stick-on gems, stickers, colored pencils; plain white paper; pencils; and a completed Prayer Jar

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy onto colored paper the Prayer Jar label template (one label per student) and cut out the labels. Cut plain sheets of colored paper into quarters. Cut plain white paper into small pieces (approximately 20 per 8½” x11” sheet). Assemble one Prayer Jar to serve as an example.

SAY, “We learned today that God wants us to pray. He is looking for Circle Makers who know His promises and pray His promises. Let’s make something to remind us to ask and pray every day!”

Show the class your Prayer Jar example. Give each student an empty jar, a pencil, and a pair of scissors. Make available quarter-sheets of colored paper for the students to select from. Instruct the students to select a piece of paper, trace the baby food lid, and cut out the traced circle. Glue the circle onto the topside of the lid. Next, give each student a Prayer Jar label. Instruct the students to decorate the label with stickers, markers, etc., and then glue the label onto the jar. Students may need to cut off the ends of the label, depending on the jar size.

As the students work on the prayer jars, discuss the memory verse.

SAY, “Our memory verse says to tell God about everything. Ask and pray. What are examples of things we can tell God about?” (*Students respond. Also share examples of friends, family members, neighbors, and others who they can be praying for.*)

Give each student a few small slips of white paper and a pencil. Spend time writing down prayer requests on slips of paper for their jars.

SAY as you conclude, “As Circle Makers, our prayers are important to God. Keep this prayer jar somewhere in your room or home where you will see it every day and you can write down your requests to Him. Remember, tell God about everything; ask and pray!”

Option 2: Praying God’s Promises Bookmark

Supplies: Praying God’s Promises Bookmark template, card stock, scissors, markers

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy the God’s Promises Bookmark template onto card stock (one per student). Assemble one bookmark to use as a sample.

Note: Not all students are familiar or comfortable praying God’s promises. Although it may sound simple, students may be afraid they’re not “doing it right.” Stress that there is no right or wrong way to pray to God.

SAY, “God loves to make promises. We learned today that God is looking for Circle Makers who know the promises from the Bible and pray His promises. Let’s review some of God’s promises and then spend time praying His promises.”

Give each student a God’s Promises Bookmark.

SAY, “Let’s take turns reading each of these promises out loud. Who’d like to get us started?” (*Take volunteer readers.*)

After you’ve read each promise,

ASK, “How might this promise help us as Circle Makers? How could we pray this promise? (*Students respond.*) Now, I wonder if one of you would be willing to turn this verse into a prayer. Remember, there’s no right or wrong way to pray.” (CUE: *If no students are comfortable volunteering, try modeling the first one for the group.*)

After you’ve read and prayed through *all* of the verses,

SAY, “As Circle Makers, we want to know God’s promises! Let’s decorate our bookmarks and keep them in a special place at home. Spend time each day reviewing these promises and praying them!”

Option 3: Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down

Supplies: Two sheets of poster board, marker, masking tape

Ahead of time: Using the poster board and marker, create two signs. On one sign, write the words “THUMBS UP.” On the other sign, write the words “THUMBS DOWN.” Hang the signs on opposite sides of the room.

Gather the students in a circle.

SAY, “I’m going to read you a series of statements. Your job is to determine if the statement is true or false. Pretty easy, right? You’ll notice the signs I’ve hung up. If the statement is true, I want you to stand up and move over by the “thumbs up” sign. If the statement is false, I want you to stand up and move over by the “thumbs down” sign. Got it? Great, let’s get started.” (CUE: *After you read each statement, say “go,” and the students must decide which part of the room to move to.*)

Thumbs Up and Thumbs Down Statements:

- God will always keep His promises. (*True/thumbs up*)
- The walls of Jericho were too strong for God. (*False/thumbs down*)
- To be a Circle Maker, you need to be eighteen or older. (*False/thumbs down*)
- Joshua knew God’s promises and trusted His promises. (*True/thumbs up*)
- God is looking for Circle Makers who know His promises and will pray His promises. (*True/thumbs up*)
- God only hears prayers on Sunday. (*False/thumbs down*)
- There is a right way and a wrong way to pray. (*False/thumbs down*)
- We can tell God about anything. (*True/thumbs up*)

If time remains, continue playing of the Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down game, allowing the students to come up with various thumbs up/thumbs down statements.

Step 4: Go!

Supplies: Family Table Talk handout and Family Prayer calendar (one of each per student)

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy the Family Table Talk handout and Family Prayer Calendar (one of each per student).

As you prepare for dismissal, pray together and ask God to help each student to spend time knowing and praying His promises this week. Encourage students to spend time memorizing Philippians 4:6b at home. Make sure each student leaves with his or her take-home activities, including the Family Table Talk handout and Family Prayer Calendar.

As parents arrive, introduce them to the Family Table Talk handout and the Family Prayer Calendar. Encourage parents to spend time throughout the week praying through the verses on the prayer calendar and talking about ways to be Circle Makers!

PRAYER JAR

PRAYER JAR

PRAYER JAR

PRAYER JAR

PRAYING GOD'S PROMISES

The LORD himself will go ahead of you. He will
be with you. He will never leave you.

— Deuteronomy 31:8a

Be strong and brave. Do not be afraid. Do not
lose hope. I am the Lord your God. I will be
with you everywhere you go.

— Joshua 1:9

Call out to me. I will answer you. I will tell you
great things you do not know.

— Jeremiah 33:3a

I will always guide you.

— Isaiah 58:11

Come to me, all of you who are tired and are
carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest.

— Matthew 11:28

God so loved the world that he gave his one
and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will
not die but will have eternal life.

— John 3:16

The Spirit doesn't make us weak and fearful.
Instead, the Spirit gives us power and love.

— 2 Timothy 1:7

If any of you needs wisdom, you should ask
God for it. He will give it to you. God gives
freely to everyone.

— James 1:5a

God is faithful and fair. If we confess our sins,
he will forgive our sins.

— 1 John 1:9

We love because he loved us first.

— 1 John 4:19



Week 2:

Cloudy with a Chance of Quail

Objective: To teach each student that God wants us to trust Him

Bible Story: God Provides Meat for the People (Numbers 11)

Memory Verse: “The LORD will keep all his promises. He is faithful in everything he does.” (Psalm 145:13, NIV)

Circle Maker Motto: God is looking for Circle Makers who know His promises and pray His promises.

Master Supplies List

- ☐ NIV Bible
- ☐ Family Table Talk handout (one per student)
- ☐ Family Prayer Calendar (one per student)
- ☐ Whiteboard and dry-erase markers
- ☐ One brown grocery bag with any five random objects inside (examples include: an old CD, TV remote, barrette, piece of fruit, crayon, or bouncy ball)

Optional Supplies

You will need the following supplies based on which option(s) you choose in **Step 1: Getting Started** and **Step 3: Explore More**.

- ☐ **Getting Started 1:** Circle Maker Catcher template, markers, folding instructions, sample Circle Maker Catcher made beforehand for an example
- ☐ **Getting Started 2:** Butcher paper, marker, scissors, masking tape, old magazines
- ☐ **Getting Started 3:** Quail template
- ☐ **Explore More 1:** How Big Is Our God handout, pencils, Bibles, optional: whiteboard, dry-erase markers
- ☐ **Explore More 2:** Flat-backed glass marbles, small magnets (the same size as the marbles), clear drying glue (not school glue), card stock, fine-point markers, scissors, pencils
- ☐ **Explore More 3:** Large baskets, 17 pre-made manna flakes, whiteboard, dry-erase markers, timer

Step 1: Come Together

As the students arrive to class, provide activities to help prepare them for the lesson. Select one of the following activities that will work best for your group, or create a variety of stations for the students to pick from within the classroom. Play music in the background to help create a fun and welcoming environment. Welcome the students as they arrive, and share the activities available. If you choose to create stations, you may want to have volunteers on hand to help.

Option 1: Circle Maker Catcher

Supplies: Circle Maker Catcher template, scissors, markers, folding instructions

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy the Circle Maker Catcher template (one per student). Print and photocopy the folding instructions (several copies) for the students to share. Assemble one Circle Maker Catcher to serve as an example.

Welcome the students and let them know today they will be making a fun Circle Maker Catcher! Give each student a Circle Maker Catcher template and a pair of scissors. Make available markers and several copies of the folding instructions for the students to share. Show the students your completed sample Circle Maker Catcher. Instruct the students to cut off the excess paper, then color and decorate the squares. As students finish decorating the squares, assist them in following the folding instructions; then show them how the catcher works.

SAY, “This was a fun activity! I like all the different choices you can make with your catcher. Today we will be learning about an important choice we can make in our lives — to choose to trust God to always take care of us! Nothing is too hard for Him.”

Option 2: Got Needs?

Supplies: Butcher paper, masking tape, marker, old magazines, scissors

Ahead of Time: Hang the butcher paper on the wall and draw a line down the center to create two columns. Title one column with the word “Needs” and the other column with the word “Wants.”

SAY, “In today’s Bible story we’ll learn how God promised the Israelites that He would always take care of their needs while they were traveling to the Promised Land. He provided both manna and quail to feed them when they were hungry. God always keeps His promises! But the Israelites were confused about their needs and their wants, and they complained — a lot. Let’s look through these magazines and see if we can find at least ten wants and ten needs.”

Make available a variety of old magazines for the students to select from. Give each student a pair of scissors.

Possible needs include: food, water, clothes, medicine, school, family, etc.

Possible wants include: iPads, fancy vacations, sports cars, toys, jewelry, etc.

Note: Some items may be open for discussion. Do we *need* a phone or *want* a phone? Do we *need* a hoodie or *want* a hoodie? Be prepared to talk about these types of items.

As students find images to cut out, talk about wants versus needs. Discuss how God promises in the Bible to provide for us. Invite students to use the masking tape to adhere the images to the butcher paper chart.

SAY “Great work! Today we’re going to learn how God kept His promise and provided food for the Israelites every day for forty years. We can trust God to give us what we need — maybe not all of our wants, but all of our needs. He is faithful to keep His promises.”

Option 3: Airplane Game

Supplies: Quail template, colored paper, masking tape, optional: instructions for making a paper airplane printed from the Internet

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy the Quail template (you will need five copies). Optional: Print instructions for making a paper airplane from the Internet.

Give each student a sheet of colored paper. Ask the students to make paper airplanes out of the colored paper. Show the group the pictures of the quail on the wall.

SAY, “We’re going to fly our paper airplanes at these quail on the wall. For each quail that you hit with your paper airplane, you will earn ten points.”

(CUE: *Give each student three opportunities to fly his or her airplane and award points for each round. After everyone has taken a turn, declare the student with the most points the winner. Collect the paper airplanes until the end of class, and then redistribute them as the students are dismissed.*)

SAY, “The Israelites learned to trust God for the things they needed. They had to trust that God would send food each day. God promised to send meat, and He sent quail for them to eat. The quail helps us remember, ‘I can trust God. He keeps His promises.’”

Step 2: Present the Story

Supplies Needed: Bible, whiteboard, dry-erase markers, one brown grocery bag, five random objects (examples include: an old CD, TV remote, barrette, piece of fruit, crayon, or bouncy ball)

Ahead of Time: Before class, place the five objects in the grocery bag and fold it securely shut.

(CUE: *As the Getting Started time comes to a close, gather the students and instruct them to be seated for the teaching and story.*)



Storyteller: Good morning! It's great to see you! I'm so glad you are here for Circle Maker!

Today we continue learning a new way to talk to God, or pray — praying in circles. Remember, God is looking for Circle Makers — people just like you and me — who know His promises (*hold up Bible*) and pray His promises. We can be Circle Makers!

Today, we will learn how God sent His people, the Israelites, food when they were hungry. They named the food “manna,” because they didn’t quite know what it was, and the word “manna” means, “What is it?” Can you say that with me? (*“What is it?”*)

Before we dig into our Bible story, let’s play a game called “What Is It?”

I need a very brave volunteer. (*Students respond; pick volunteer, have him/her come forward, welcome him/her to the game.*)

I’m going to give our friendly volunteer here ten seconds to see if he/she can discover “What is it?” Let’s see if our volunteer can guess the five items in this bag just by touching them.

(*To the volunteer*) I’ll give you ten seconds to feel the items inside the bag — no peeking. I promise you there is nothing in the bag that would hurt you, bite you, or make you yelp. Promise. We’ll all be counting back from ten aloud, “10–9–8–7–6–5–4–3–2–1, and then shout “What is it?” Then time is up, and we’ll see if you can name the five items. Everyone ready?

(CUE: *When the volunteer starts to feel the items, direct students to count back from ten aloud. When time is up, ask the volunteer to name the five items. If the volunteer guesses correctly, pull the item from the bag. If the volunteer has trouble, you may want to give him/her clues. When all five items are revealed, thank him/her for volunteering.*)

Wow, our volunteer was brave. Would you want to stick your hand in a bag where you didn’t know what was in it? What if there would have been a big long snake in the bag? Or a mousetrap? Or a super-sharp pencil? Why do you think our volunteer was willing to stick his/her hand in a deep, dark bag?” (*Students respond. Possible answers may include: He/she is brave, it wasn’t that scary, etc.*)

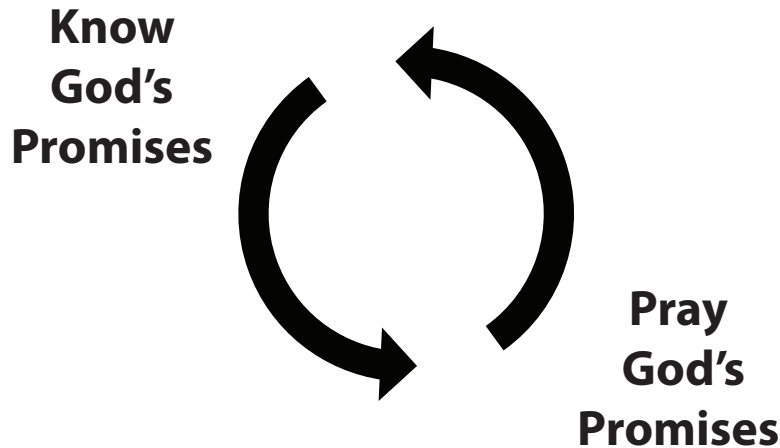
That’s right. Also, I made a promise there wouldn’t be anything bad in the bag, and hopefully you can trust that I’ll keep my promise. Now there is Someone we can always trust, who will absolutely, positively keep His promises. Always.

Can anyone guess who I am talking about? (*Students respond.*) That’s right — God!

God keeps all His promises. He is faithful in everything He does. And that's a good thing, especially for us to remember as Circle Makers.

If you were here last week, you may remember we talked about praying in circles. We spend time getting to know God's promises — by reading the Bible, going to church, or maybe having devotions at home or school — and then we spend time talking to God, reminding Him of His promises, and it makes a big circle. Like this ...

(CUE: *Use the whiteboard and dry-erase markers to draw a circle as shown. As you draw, SAY, "Know God's promises ... Pray God's promises!"*)



Can anyone give me an example? *(Let the students respond.)*

(CUE: *If none are given, share the following example or one of your own: "God promises in the Bible He will never leave us. So let's say you have a big test in science class. You study for the test, but you are really scared because you aren't sure you'll remember everything. Rather than being scared, you can think about God's promise that He is with you always, and then circle it, or pray God's promise back to Him. Make sense? Great!"*)

Awesome! And the more we know God's promises from the Bible, the more we can trust Him. God will keep all His promises. He is faithful in everything He does!

Unfortunately, in today's Bible story, some of God's people forgot this. Rather than trusting God, they grumbled and complained and whined and moaned. How do you think God liked that? *(Students respond.)* Yeah, not so much.

Are you ready to see what we can learn about being Circle Makers from today's Bible story? *(Students respond.)* Great! Me too!

Today's Bible story involves a man named Moses and God's chosen people called the Israelites. The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt, but God rescued them and had a new Promised Land He wanted them to enjoy. While the Israelites traveled in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land, God was always faithful and made them a promise: He would always provide for their needs. And God kept His promise. He gave them manna from heaven to eat every day and pure water to drink. But soon, even though God was providing for His people, they began to complain about what God gave them. In fact, they started to think that maybe it was better back in Egypt — even though they had been poor, mistreated slaves there. Can you believe it?

So as I read today's story, I need you to listen for three things.

1. How does Moses respond when the people are complaining?
2. How does God respond when the people are complaining?
3. Most importantly, did God keep His promise?

Are you ready to take a listen? (*Students respond.*) Great!

(CUE: *Read the story using your own NIV Bible or the script supplied below.*)

Numbers 11:4 – 6, 10 – 13, 18 – 21, 23 – 24, 31 – 32 (NIV)

⁴Some people who were with them began to long for other food. Again the people of Israel began to cry out. They said, “We wish we had meat to eat. ⁵We remember the fish we ate in Egypt. It didn’t cost us anything. We also remember the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. ⁶But now we’ve lost all interest in eating. We never see anything but this manna!”

¹⁰Moses heard people from every family crying. They were sobbing at the entrances to their tents. The LORD burned with hot anger. So Moses became troubled. ¹¹He asked the LORD, “Why have you brought this trouble on me? Why aren’t you pleased with me? Why have you loaded me down with the troubles of all of these people? ¹³“Where can I get meat for all of these people? They keep crying out to me. They say, ‘Give us meat to eat!’

Moses did not know what to do and was very troubled. However, Moses knew what to do when he was faced with an impossible situation. Pray! Moses took his problem to God, and then God gives Moses very specific instructions —

¹⁸“Tell the people ... ‘The LORD heard you when you cried out. You said, “We wish we had meat to eat. We were better off in Egypt.” Now the LORD will give you meat. And you will eat it. ¹⁹You will not eat it for just one or two days. You will not eat it for just five, ten or 20 days. ²⁰Instead, you will eat it for a whole month. You will eat it until it comes out of your nose.’”

Wow! But Moses is wondering how God is going to do this, so he asks God ...

²¹“Here I am among 600,000 men on the march. And you say, ‘I will give them meat to eat for a whole month!’”

In other words, that’s a lot of meat, God. Are you sure you mean meat for a whole month?

²³The LORD answered Moses, “Am I not strong enough? Now you will see whether what I say will come true for you.”

²⁴So Moses went out. He told the people what the LORD had said ...

Want to know what happened? Check this out!

³¹The LORD sent out a wind. It drove quail (*which is a wild bird, sort of like a chicken*) in from the Red Sea. It brought them down all around the camp.

They were about three feet above the ground. They could be seen in every direction as far as a person could walk in a day. ³²The people went out all day and gathered quail. They gathered them all night and all the next day. No one gathered less than 60 bushels. Then they spread the quail out all around the camp.

Wow! Did God send them meat? Absolutely!

Okay — were you listening for the three things I mentioned? What about the first one?

How does Moses respond when the people are complaining? (*Students respond. Possible answers may include: He turns around and whines and complains to God. He even questions God's ability to feed meat to that many people.*) But most importantly, Moses talked to God about his problem. Moses knew what to do when he was faced with an impossible situation. Pray!

Two, how does God respond when the people are complaining? (*Students respond. Possible answers may include: He becomes sad because the people of Israel didn't trust Him. He decides to go overboard in meeting their request — too much meat.*) God wants us to trust Him to take care of us.

Most importantly, did God keep His promise? (*Students respond. Possible answers may include: Yes, he gave them meat to eat and took care of them.*) Yes! God always keeps His promises!

When I think about this Bible story and our role as Circle Makers, there are two very important lessons I want us to remember.

First, the prayers of one person can really make a difference.

You see, even if Moses was the leader of the Israelites and the people's spokesperson before God, he was still just one person. He knew that his request for meat for that many people was truly impossible, but he asked anyway. Was there a guarantee that God would answer just the way Moses wanted? (*Let students respond.*) No, of course not. But it didn't stop Moses from asking. But God asks us to talk to Him about everything, anytime, anywhere — so that's what we should do. Right?

The second lesson is that God is bigger and more powerful than we can imagine. Say that with me. (*"God is bigger and more powerful than we can imagine."*)

Moses knew he was leading close to one million people. Where do you get enough meat in one place to feed that many people? There weren't any restaurants out in the middle of the desert, and even if there were, they couldn't feed that many people. It seemed impossible. But what did we just say? God is bigger and more powerful than we can imagine. God tells Moses the people will eat meat for a month — not just a day, a month! — and then He performs a miracle.

Do you know what a miracle is? (*Let students respond.*) A miracle is an act or event that can't be explained in human terms or natural laws. It's SUPERNatural. It's beyond our thinking.

God caused a wind to blow in from the sea (which was many miles away). Quail got caught in the wind and blown into the desert where it's hot. The birds tired out and fell to the ground. Amazingly, on the way from the sea to the desert, God increased the number of birds in the group. The Bible says that when the birds had finished falling they covered an area of about 700 square miles. But there's more! It wasn't just a bird on the ground here or there; they were three feet deep for the entire 700 square

miles! Bible scholars have estimated it might have been 105 million quail that fell that day. Wow! What a miracle!

This week's memory verse will really help us as Circle Makers. (CUE: *Write this week's memory verse on the whiteboard. As you write on the whiteboard, say the verse and reference aloud.*) "The LORD will keep all his promises. He is faithful in everything he does" (Psalm 145:13, NIV). Now let's all say this week's memory verse together. (CUE: *Point to the whiteboard and lead the students in saying this week's memory verse together. If time permits, repeat this activity a couple of times.*)

God is looking for Circle Makers, friends. Would anyone here like to know God's promises and pray His promises, and join Him on an amazing adventure of prayer? (*Students respond.*) Oh good! Me too!

Let's pray: "Dear God, Thank You for the Bible that's filled with Your promises. Thank You for inviting us to join you as Circle Makers. Help us to remember that the prayers of one person can really make a difference, and that You are bigger and more powerful than we can ever imagine. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Okay, friends, we're going to head on over to our activity time together now.



Step 3: Explore More

Choose from these activity options, depending on your available time frame, to help students explore the lesson further.

Option 1: How Big Is Our God

Supplies: How Big Is Our God handout, pencils, Bibles, optional: whiteboard and dry-erase markers

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy the How Big Is Our God handout (one per student).

SAY, "God is bigger and more powerful than we imagine! We learned today that God wants us to trust Him. It can be hard to trust Him if we don't know who He is and/or what He is capable of doing. Let's find out!"

Divide the students into groups of up to four each. Give each student a How Big Is Our God handout and a pencil. Make available a Bible for each group of students to share.

SAY, "Let's see how many words from A to Z we can list that describe the character qualities of God. I want you to work with your group to look up the Scriptures on your handout and list some character qualities of God. Remember to take turns looking up

the verses. If you get stuck, I'll be here to help you. I'll give you plenty of time to do this and then we'll think of some other qualities if we have time. Okay, ready? Let's get started."

(CUE: *Allow approximately fifteen minutes for the groups to complete their hand-outs. As time permits, allow the students to share other character qualities of God. As the students share, write their ideas on the whiteboard.*)

SAY, "As Circle Makers, God wants us to know His promises and pray His promises. The more we get to know Him, the more we can trust Him. Aren't you glad God will keep all His promises? I am! God is faithful in everything He does."

Variation: You could also break the class into teams, and set up a time limit of ten minutes. When the time is up, ask each team to select a spokesperson to share their A-to-Z list aloud with the rest of the group.

Possible answers include:

A – Advocate (Job 16:19)
B – Burden Bearer (Psalm 68:19)
C – Comforter in Sorrow (Jeremiah 8:18)
D – Deliverer (Psalm 70:5)
E – Eternal God (Deuteronomy 33:27)
F – Forgiving God (Nehemiah 9:17)
G – Guide (Psalm 48:14)
H – Healer (Exodus 15:26)
I – I AM (Exodus 3:14)
J – Just and Mighty One (Job 34:17)
K – King of Kings (Revelation 19:16)
L – Light (Psalm 27:1)
M – Most High (Genesis 14:18 – 22)
N – Name Is Great and Awesome (Psalm 99:3)
O – Our Dwelling Place (Psalm 90:1)
P – Patient God (2 Peter 3:9)
Q – Quieter with Love (Zephaniah 3:17)
R – Rock and Refuge (Psalm 62:7)
S – Strong Tower (Proverbs 18:10)
T – Truth Teller (Isaiah 45:19)
U – Understanding (Isaiah 11:2)
V – Victorious (Psalm 60:12)
W – Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6)
X – Exalted One (Psalm 99:2)
Y – Your Glory (Psalm 57:11)
Z – Zealous for Your Holy Name (Ezekiel 39:25)

Option 2: Prayer Magnets

Supplies: Flat-backed glass marbles, small magnets (the same size as the marbles), clear drying glue (not school glue), sheets of card stock, fine-point markers, scissors, pencils

Ahead of Time: Assemble one Prayer Magnet to serve as an example. Cut 8½" x 11" sheets of card stock into eight pieces each.

SAY, "Today we learned how God kept His promise and provided food for the Israelites every day for forty years. We can trust God to give us what we need — maybe not all of our wants, but all of our needs. He is faithful to keep His promises. Let's make a Circle Maker Prayer Magnet to remind us to trust God. You can put it on your refrigerator or in your school locker, and when you see it each day, it will remind you that God keeps His promises."

Give each student a marble, a fine-point marker, and a piece of card stock. Instruct the students to trace their marble onto the card stock and then write a meaningful word from Circle Maker inside of it, such as "pray," "faith," "trust," or "promise." Instruct the students to cut the shape from the card stock. Remind them that they should cut on the inside of their tracing line, so that the card stock shape is a little smaller than what they have traced so it fits evenly on the back of the marble. Give each student a magnet. Make available bottles of clear-drying glue for the students to share. Instruct them to dab a small amount of glue on the magnet and place the card stock on top of the magnet. Finally, instruct the students to place a dot of glue on top of the card stock and place the marble over the top. Hold the marble for a few minutes so it sets cleanly over the magnet. Leave it to dry until class is over.

Option 3: Circle Maker Manna Scrambler

Supplies: Large basket for manna flakes, seventeen premade manna flakes with the memory verse words and reference written on them, whiteboard, dry-erase markers, timer

Ahead of Time: Write out Psalm 145:13 on the whiteboard. Make "manna flakes" by cutting round edges on white sheets of paper. Write one word from Psalm 145:13 (including Psalm, Chapter 145, and verse 13) on each flake with a bold marker. Place the "manna flakes" in the large basket.

Note: If your group is made up of more than seventeen students, you may choose to divide into smaller groups. Be sure to have enough baskets and "manna flakes" on hand for each group to have a set. If your group is made up of less than seventeen students, you may need to pass the basket around more than once.

SAY, "Circle Makers know God's promises and pray His promises. Let's play the

Manna Scrambler to help us memorize this week’s memory verse — ‘The LORD will keep all his promises. He is faithful in everything he does,’ Psalm 145:13.”

SAY, “I’m going to pass around this basket with “manna flakes” inside. Now, we all know these aren’t real manna flakes, right? No, these are pieces of paper with one word from this week’s memory verse on each. As the basket comes your way, select one flake from the basket. When I start the timer and say “GO!” your job is to see how quickly you can spell out this week’s memory verse by putting the “manna flakes” in order on the floor.” (CUE: *Pass around the basket. When all of the “manna flakes” have been selected, start the timer for two minutes and say “GO!”*)

Continue playing, setting the timer for less time with each round, for as long as time and/or attention allow.

Step 4: Go!

Supplies: Family Table Talk handout and Family Prayer Calendar (one per student)

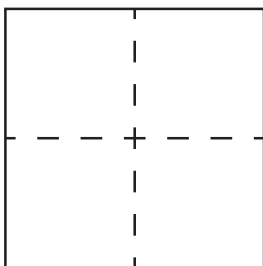
Ahead of Time: Photocopy the Family Table Talk handout and Family Prayer Calendar (one per student).

As you prepare for dismissal, pray together and ask God to help each student to spend time knowing and praying His promises this week. Encourage students to spend time memorizing Psalm 145:13 at home. Make sure each student leaves with his or her take-home activities, including the Family Table Talk handout and Family Prayer Calendar.

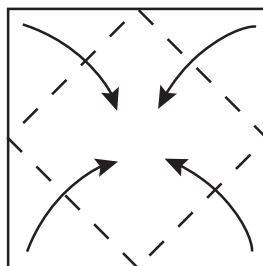
As parents arrive, introduce them to the Family Table Talk handout and the Family Prayer Calendar. Encourage parents to spend time throughout the week praying through the verses on the prayer calendar and talking about ways to be Circle Makers!

CIRCLE MAKER CATCHER FOLDING INSTRUCTIONS

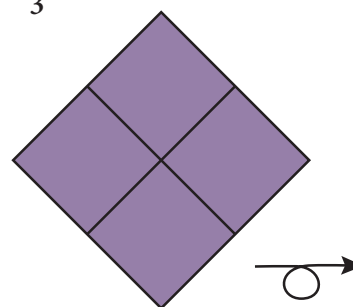
1



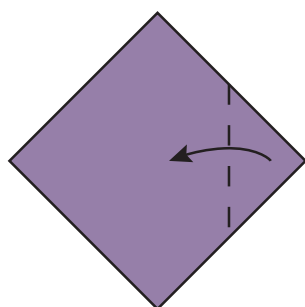
2



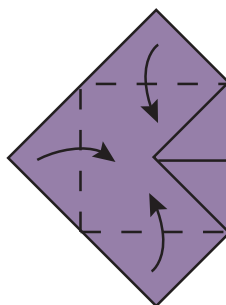
3



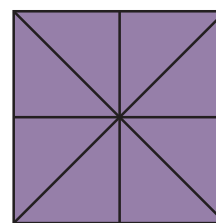
4



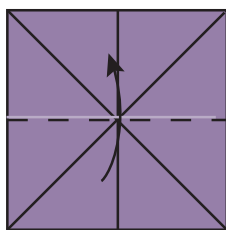
5



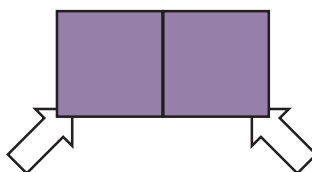
6



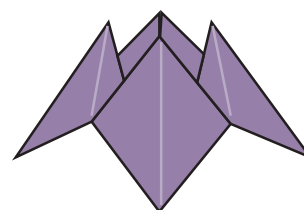
7



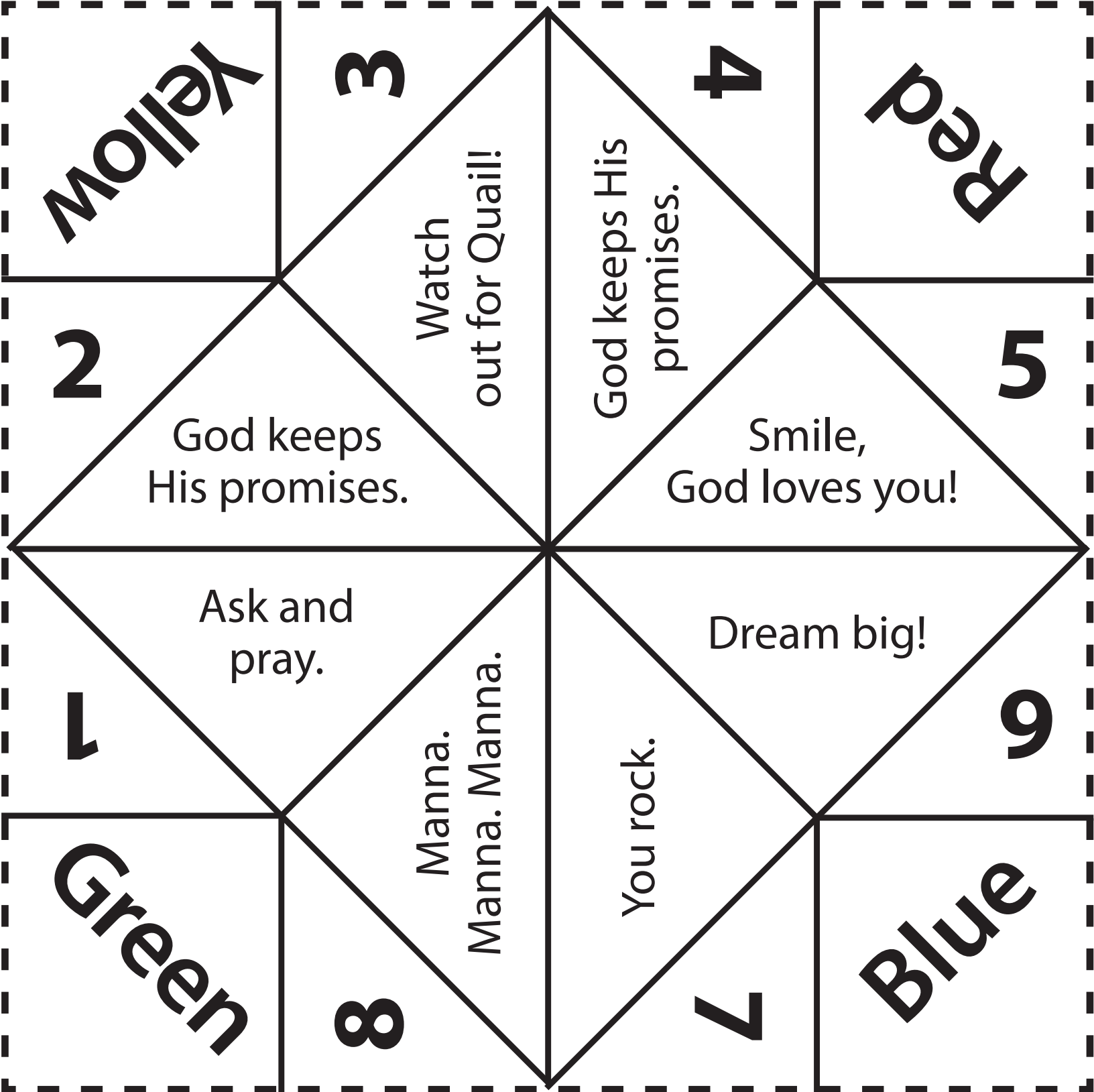
8

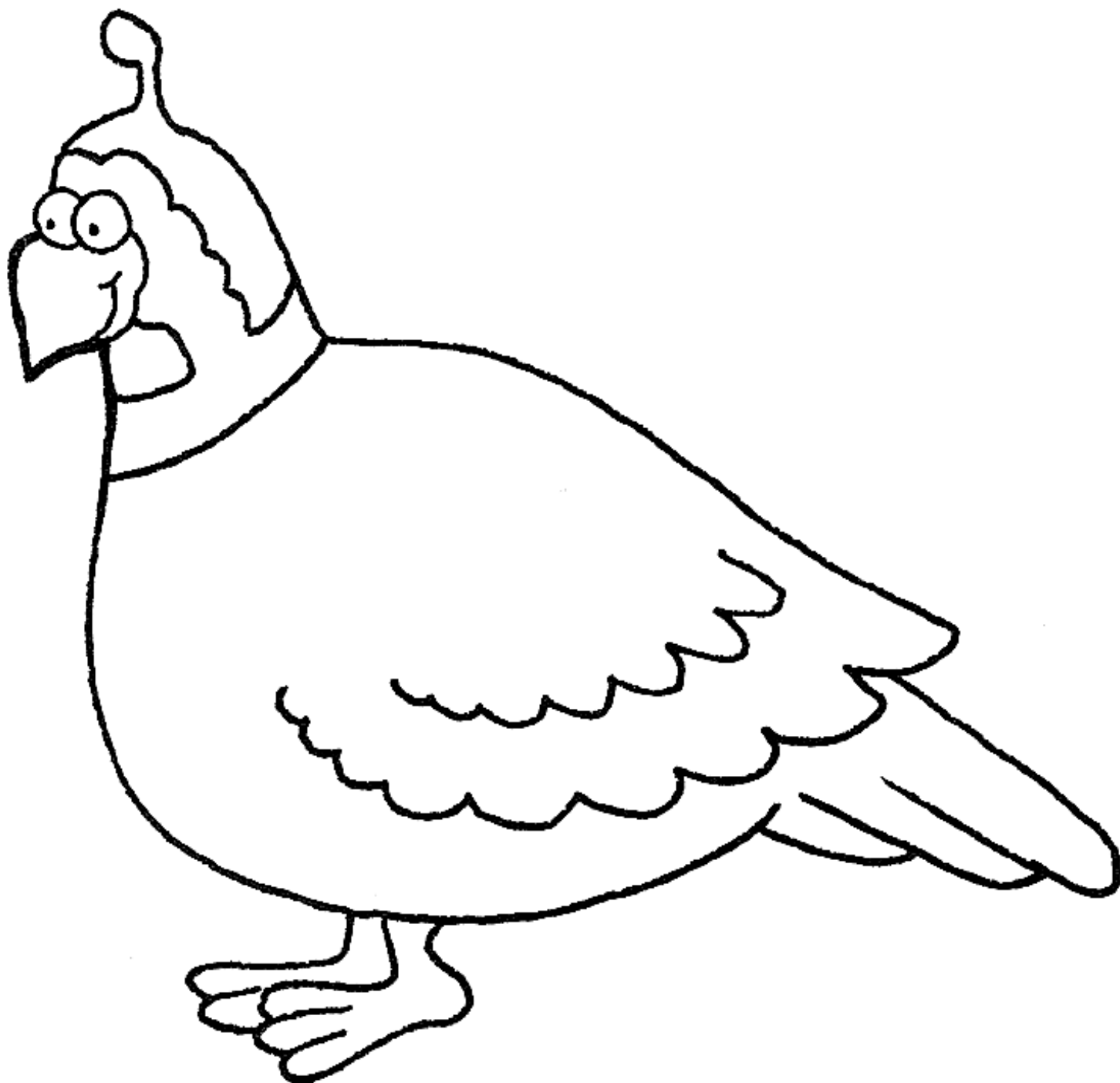


9



- 1 Cut out the template so it is in the form of a perfect square.
- 2 Fold the square across diagonally, lining up the two sides, and then open it up again.
- 3 With the printed page facing downward, fold all four corners toward the center of the page.
- 4 Turn over the resulting smaller square (you should be able to see the eight final Circle Maker sayings), and fold all four corners in a second time.
- 5 While looking at the eight different numbers, fold the catcher in half.
- 6 Fold up all four corners so that the points meet in the middle.
- 7 Slide your fingers under all four flaps using your thumbs and pointer finger.
- 8 Your Circle Maker Catcher is complete!





Name: _____

HOW BIG IS OUR GOD?

Look up the following verses as a reminder of who God is and what He is able to do.

A — (Job 16:19)

B — (Psalm 68:19)

C — (Jeremiah 8:18)

D — (Psalm 70:5)

E — (Deuteronomy 33:27)

F — (Nehemiah 9:17)

G — (Psalm 48:14)

H — (Exodus 15:26)

I — (Exodus 3:14)

J — (Job 34:17)

K — (Revelation 19:16)

L — (Psalm 27:1)

M — (Genesis 14:18 – 22)

N — (Psalm 99:3)

O — (Psalm 90:1)

P — (2 Peter 3:9)

Q — (Zephaniah 3:17)

R — (Psalm 62:7)

S — (Proverbs 18:10)

T — (Isaiah 45:19)

U — (Isaiah 11:2)

V — (Psalm 60:12)

W — (Isaiah 9:6)

X — (Psalm 99:2)

Y — (Psalm 57:11)

Z — (Ezekiel 39:25)

Week 3:

Praying Hard and Praying Through

Objective: To teach each student that God wants us to always pray and never give up.

Bible Story: The Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1 – 5)

Memory Verse: “Never stop praying. Give thanks no matter what happens.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17 – 18a)

Circle Maker Motto: God is looking for Circle Makers who know His promises and pray His promises.

Master Supplies List

- ☐ NIV Bible
- ☐ Family Table Talk handout (one per student)
- ☐ Family Prayer Calendar (one per student)
- ☐ Whiteboard and dry-erase markers
- ☐ Poster board sign with one side saying, “Persistent,” and the other side, “Never Give Up!”

Optional Supplies

You will need the following supplies based on which option(s) you choose in **Step 1: Getting Started** and **Step 3: Explore More**.

Getting Started 1: Prayer Spinner template, sheets of card stock, pencils, markers, yarn, scissors

Getting Started 3: Two hula hoops, fun music, timer

Explore More 1: Circle Maker Prayer Journal label template, small notebooks (one per student), scissors, glue sticks, optional decorating supplies (such as ribbon, colored paper, markers, stickers, and stick-on gems)

Explore More 3: What Would You Do? questions template, What Would You Do, Circle Maker? handout (one per student), basket

Step 1: Come Together

As the students arrive to class, provide activities to help prepare the students for the lesson. Select one of the following activities that will work best for your group, or create a variety of stations for the students to pick from within the classroom. Play music in the background to help create a fun and welcoming environment. Welcome the students as they arrive, and share the activities available. If you choose to create stations, you may want to have volunteers on hand to help.

Option 1: Circle Maker Prayer Spinners

Supplies: Prayer Spinner template, markers, pencils, yarn, scissors

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy onto card stock the Prayer Spinner template. Cut yarn into 12" lengths. Prepare a completed spinner to use as a sample.

Welcome the kids back to Circle Maker and let them know today they can make a Circle Maker Prayer Spinner.

Give each student a round prayer spinner template and a length of yarn. Make available markers and pencils for the students to share. Instruct the students to make colorful decorations on the front and back of the round prayer spinner template. Encourage them to write two or three things they want to pray for on one side of the prayer spinner. When the students are finished decorating their prayer spinners and writing the things they want to pray for, instruct them to punch a hole through the center of the spinner using a pencil. Instruct the students to thread the yarn through the hole, and then hold the ends of the yarn tightly and give the yarn a quick pull to make the spinner start spinning around. As the students decorate their spinners,

SAY, "Today we'll learn how not giving up and prayer go together for Circle Makers! I'm so glad you are here! Remember, God wants us to know His promises and then pray His promises."

Option 2: Unlock It!

Supplies: 2 combination locks, 2 round colored stickers, marker, 2 sheets of colored paper

Ahead of Time: Place a round colored sticker on the back of each combination lock. Print the corresponding combination numbers out of sequence on a colored sheet of paper to match the sticker on the back of each lock. Hide the locks somewhere in the classroom. Be sure to keep the correct lock combinations somewhere you can easily access them.

Divide the students into two teams. Give each team a colored paper with a scrambled combination written on it.

SAY, “Today we’re going to learn about a widow who was persistent in asking for what she needed. To test our persistence, we’re going to play a game called Unlock It! Somewhere in this room I’ve hidden two combination locks. Each has a colored sticker on the back. Your job is to first find the lock whose sticker is the same color as the paper I’ve given you. Here’s the trick . . . the numbers written on the papers I’ve given you are the correct combination numbers, but they’re out of order. Work together as a team to decipher the correct combination based on the scrambled numbers on your paper. Got it? The first team to unlock their lock wins. Ready? Okay, teams, find your locks!”

At the end of each round,

SAY, “Great job at persevering. I noticed you never gave up on figuring out the lock combinations! God loves when we pray to Him. He never gets tired of hearing from us. In fact, God wants to always pray and never give up!”

Option 3: Circle Maker Hula Hooplathon

Supplies: Two hula hoops, fun music, timer

Divide students into two equally numbered teams.

SAY, “Welcome, Circle Makers! Today we’re going to use these ‘circles’ — also known as hula hoops — to have a Circle Maker Hooplathon. Are you ready to hula hoop, friends? Okay, teams, form one single-file line each. Then each team needs to select a person to go first. I’ll start the music and the first team member should hula hoop as long as he or she can. Once that team member drops the hula hoop, he or she should pass it to the next person in line and then sit down. When a team has all members sitting down, the other team is declared the winner.”

(CUE: *After each team selects a team member to go first, start the music. While the students are hula hooping, encourage them with words such as, “keep circling,” “don’t give up,” “you can do it!”*)

If time allows, bring students who hula hooped the longest back together for a hoop off.

SAY, “Awesome work! I love how everyone kept ‘circling’ and didn’t give up — even when it was hard! You all were persistent! Today we’ll learn how not giving up and prayer go together for Circle Makers! I’m so glad you are here!”

Step 2: Present the Story

Supplies Needed: Bible, whiteboard, dry-erase markers, sheet of poster board, marker

Ahead of Time: Prepare a sign on a sheet of poster board with the word “Persistent” on one side and the words “Never Give Up!” on the other side.

(CUE: *As the Getting Started time comes to a close, gather the students and instruct them to be seated for the teaching and story.*)



Storyteller: Good morning! It’s great to see you! I’m so glad you are here for Circle Maker!

Today we continue learning a new way to talk to God, or pray — praying in circles. Remember, God is looking for Circle Makers — people just like you and me — who know His promises (*hold up Bible*) and pray His promises. We can be Circle Makers!

Today we’re going to talk about a very important characteristic of a Circle Maker — being persistent. Can anyone tell me what it means to be persistent? (*Students respond.*) If we were to look up “persistent,” in the dictionary, we’d learn it means “continuing to do something or to try to do something even though it is difficult or other people want you to stop.”

(CUE: *Insert a personal story of persistence here, or use one of the examples below.*)

Let’s say your family decides it’s time to clean out the basement. It is a total and complete disaster! It’s filled with old clothes, toys, random boxes, and who knows what else. Rather than wanting to give up after thirty minutes or so, you stick with it and at the end of the day your basement looks brand new. That’s being persistent! (CUE: *Hold up sign with the word “Persistent” showing.*)

Or maybe you decide to try out for the spelling bee at school, even though you know there are lots of older, really smart kids who are also trying out. But you don’t let that stop you. No way! That’s being persistent. (CUE: *Hold up sign saying “Persistent.”*)

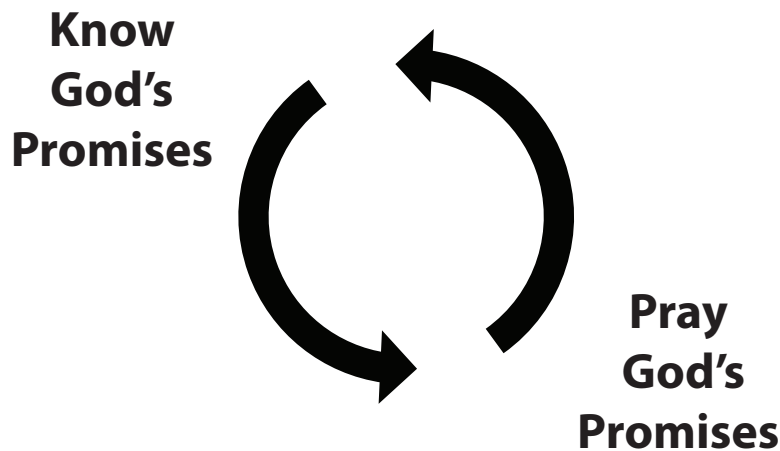
Or your little brother keeps bothering you when your friend comes over to hang out. Even though you tell him to knock it off or you are telling a grown-up, he doesn’t stop. Your brother is being ... (CUE: *Hold up sign saying “Persistent.”*)

Persistent: continuing to do something or to try to do something even though it is difficult or other people want you to stop. Another way to say it: to never give up. (CUE: *Flip sign over to “Never Give Up!” side.*)

As Circle Makers, we must be persistent (CUE: *hold up sign*) and never give up! (CUE: *hold up sign*).

If you were here before, you may remember we talked about praying in circles. We spend time getting to know God’s promises — by reading the Bible, going to church, or maybe having devotions at home or school — and then we spend time talking to God reminding Him of His promises, and it makes a big circle. Like this ...

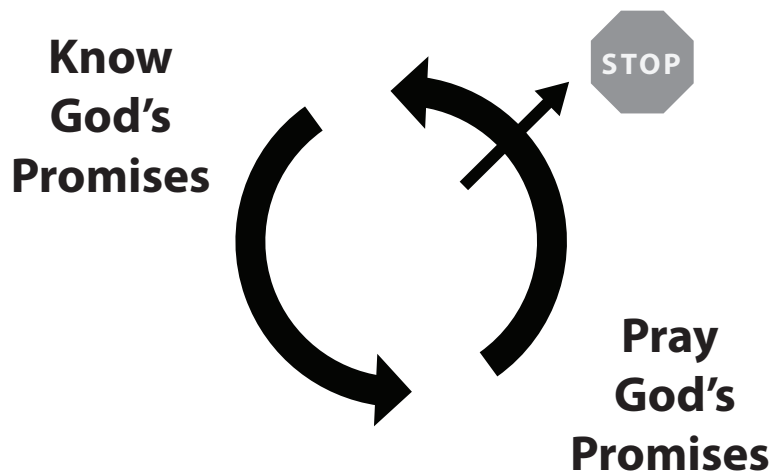
(CUE: Use the whiteboard and dry-erase markers to draw a circle as shown. As you draw, SAY, “Know God’s promises ... Pray God’s promises!”)



Can anyone give me an example? (Let students respond.)

(CUE: If none are given, share the following example or one of your own: “God promises in the Bible He will provide for us. We don’t have to worry. So let’s say you find out someone in your family is without a job. Rather than getting worried, you can think about God’s promise that He will provide for you and your family, and then circle it, or pray God’s promise back to Him. Make sense? Great!”)

But what would happen if we stopped right here? (Make stop sign on whiteboard as shown.)



Remember our story from last week? What if when God’s people were crying out for meat, Moses thought, “We’ll never have anything but manna!” and gave up praying? What if Moses would have stopped right here (CUE: point to stop sign) when there was a miracle — a flood of quail — right around the corner?

If we're going to be Circle Makers, we need to be persistent and ... (CUE: *Hold up sign; students respond*, "Never give up!") We must pray hard and pray through!

Are you ready to see what we can learn about being persistent Circle Makers from today's Bible story? (*Students respond*.) Great! Me too!

In today's Bible story, we find Jesus telling His disciples a parable about prayer that involves a widow and a judge in a small town. Do you know what a parable is? (*Let students respond*.) That's right ... a parable is a story that uses everyday things to show us a spiritual truth. Jesus used parables to teach people about God and His kingdom, and in this case it's about prayer.

As I read today's Bible story, I need you to listen for two very important things.

1. What did the widow want?
2. How did the judge respond?

(CUE: *Read the story using your own NIV Bible or the script supplied below*.)

Luke 18:1–5 (NIV)

¹Jesus told his disciples a story. He wanted to show them that they should always pray and not give up. ²He said, "In a certain town there was a judge. He didn't have any respect for God or care about people. ³A widow lived in that town. She came to the judge again and again. She kept begging him, "Make things right for me. Someone is doing me wrong."

⁴For some time the judge refused. But finally he said to himself, "I don't have any respect for God. I don't care about people. ⁵But this widow keeps bothering me. So I will see that things are made right for her. If I don't, she will wear me out by coming again and again!"

Okay—if you were listening carefully to the story, what did it say the widow wanted? (*Let students respond*.) You got it ... to make things right. Another way to translate that is ... she wanted justice. Jesus doesn't tell us what the exact problem was, does He? It seems somehow she or someone in her family had been mistreated in some way and she was going to the only person she thought could help her. And who was that again? (*Let students respond*.) Yes. The judge.

It sounds like she had come to him once before and he either didn't help her or he ignored her. So the Bible says she kept coming and coming after him. It's kind of funny to think of how this may have happened. Maybe the judge was outside walking in the town and the widow asked him to help her. Or maybe the judge was buying food at the market and the widow ran up asking him to help her ... again. Maybe the judge was eating supper at home and the widow knocked and knocked on his door begging for help. This widow was persistent. She wasn't going to give up until she got the help she wanted! Finally, the judge had enough and made sure things were made right for her.

When I think about this Bible story and our role as Circle Makers, there are three very important lessons I want us to remember. The lessons are easy for us to remember—easy as A, B, C.

A — *Always pray and never give up*. What if the widow in our story had given up just one day earlier before the judge decided to do something about her situation? (CUE: *Point to stop sign on circle*.) She would have missed out on having things made right for her. God wants us to trust Him and keep circling (CUE: *point to circle*)—praying hard and praying through. Never give up praying.

B — Believe God is faithful. Our God is NOT an angry judge. Say that with me. (“*God is NOT an angry judge.*”) We can’t get that part of the story mixed up. The point of the story is NOT that we have to beg and plead and whine for God to answer our prayers. No way. Instead, Jesus was saying if an uncaring, unfair judge eventually listens to the widow and answers her plea, how much more quickly will a loving, kind God respond to one of His dearly loved kids. God is not an angry judge, but our faithful heavenly Father who wants us to talk to Him. As Proverbs 15:8 in the Bible says, He delights in hearing our prayers.

Now, let’s be honest. Sometimes God answers prayers right away and sometimes we have to keep asking, right? And sometimes, God may not answer in ways we expect. That’s why we need to be persistent when we pray, believing that He is faithful and trusting He knows what is best for us.

C — Choose to pray God’s promises. Remember, God isn’t some kind of vending machine where all we have to do is ask for something and our request falls right out for us. What did we say the widow in the story wanted again? (*Let students respond.*) You bet ... justice ... to have things be made right. Now what if she had been asking the judge for a million dollars? Or for permission to hurt the other person back? Does that seem like something the judge would have helped her with? (*Let students respond.*) No way. But what she was asking for seems like something that would fit God’s promises. In fact, the Bible says in Isaiah 61:1, 8 that Jesus will bring justice for the oppressed — or those who have been treated unfairly. The widow knew God’s promises and was praying God’s promises — and so should we!

Let’s review!

- A — Always pray and never give up.
- B — Believe God is faithful.
- C — Choose to pray God’s promises.

Unfortunately, too many people grow tired and quit praying. But if we want to see God’s miracles come true in our lives, in the church, and in the world, we need to persist in prayer, even when we grow tired, feel foolish, or think the situation is hopeless. We need to pray hard and pray through!

This week’s memory verse will really help us as Circle Makers. (CUE: Write this week’s memory verse on the whiteboard. As you write on the whiteboard, say the verse and reference aloud.) “Never stop praying. Give thanks no matter what happens” (1 Thessalonians 5:17 – 18a). Now let’s all say this week’s memory verse together. (CUE: *Point to the whiteboard and lead the students in saying this week’s memory verse together. If time permits, repeat this activity a couple of times.*)

God is looking for Circle Makers, friends. Would anyone here like to know God’s promises and pray His promises, and join Him on an amazing adventure of prayer? (*Students respond.*) Oh good! Me too!

Let’s pray: “Dear God, thank You for being faithful, loving, and kind. Forgive us for the times we give in, give up, and stop praying. Please give us Your power so we can pray hard and pray through. We want to always keep praying and never give up. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

Okay, friends, we’re going to head on over to our activity time together now.



Step 3: Explore More

Choose from these activity options, depending on your available time frame, to help students explore the lesson further.

Option 1: Circle Maker Prayer Journal

Supplies: Circle Maker Prayer Journal label template, small notebooks (one per student), markers, glue sticks, optional decorating supplies (such as ribbon, stickers, and stick-on gems)

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy the Circle Maker Prayer Journal label template (one label per student) and cut out the labels. Assemble one Circle Maker Journal ahead of time to serve as an example.

SAY, “We learned today how important our prayers are to God. He wants us to always pray and never give up. So today, let’s make a Circle Maker Prayer Journal where we can record our prayers and tell God about everything!”

Give each student one plain notebook and a Circle Maker Prayer Journal label. Make available markers, glue sticks, and optional decorating supplies for the students to share. Instruct the students to glue the Circle Maker Prayer Journal label to the front of their notebook. Encourage the students to decorate the notebook cover using the decorating supplies and to put their name on the inside cover. As they are doing so, you may want to share a short personal story of what has helped strengthen your prayer life. Explain that a journal is a simple and easy way for them to keep track of their prayer requests. There is no right or wrong way to use this journal — they can just do whatever works for them. For instance, they might want to use their journals to ...

- Write out their personal prayer requests
- Write out their prayers for others
- Add photos/drawings of people they want to pray for
- Write out their favorite Bible promises
- Keep track of when God answers their prayers

SAY as you conclude, “Your prayers are important to God. So keep this Circle Maker Journal somewhere in your room or home where you will see it — and hopefully write in it — every day. Remember God hears your prayers. Never give up praying!”

Option 2: Circle Makers in Action

Supplies: Index cards (one per student), pencils, basket, optional: whiteboard and dry-erase markers

Note: If your group consists of more than ten students, consider breaking into smaller groups for this activity. After the students have written on their index cards, come back together as a large group to place the cards in the basket and complete the activity.

SAY, “Today we learned we should always pray and never give up! The best way to keep growing in our prayer life is to practice praying, so let’s practice praying together.”

Instruct the students to sit in a circle, and then discuss the things kids their age might worry about or need God’s help with. For example, these might include fighting with their siblings, joining a new sports team, dealing with bullying on the bus, or having a family member with health challenges. You may want to create a list on a whiteboard as a reference.

Give each student an index card and a pencil.

SAY, “I’d like for each of you to write something that worries or concerns you on this card. Be as honest as you can; we aren’t writing our names on these cards so nobody will know who wrote what.”

After everyone is finished, have the students place their cards in the basket. Mix up the cards, and ask each person to grab one. Encourage the students to keep the card in a special place and, for the next seven days, pray for the student whose card they received.

SAY, “Remember, praying is just talking to God. Let’s spend time praying for each other, that God would help us not to worry about anything, and that we would never give up praying.”

Option 3: What Would You Do?

Supplies: What Would You Do? questions template; What Would You Do, Circle Maker? handout; basket; scissors

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy the What Would You Do? questions template and cut apart the question strips. Place the strips in a basket. Print and photocopy the What Would You Do, Circle Maker? handout (one per student).

SAY, “Today we learned the Circle Maker ABCs:

- A — Always pray and never give up.
- B — Believe God is faithful.
- C — Choose to pray God’s promises.

We’re going to play a game called, ‘What Would You Do?’ We’ll read some examples of situations where kids are faced with a dilemma and don’t know what to do. I’ll select someone to read each example. After each situation is read, look at your handout and select the verse that you think best fits the situation. Quickly stand up and I’ll select someone to read the verse. Are you ready? Okay, who would like to read the first situation?” (CUE: *Allow a student to select a question strip from the basket and read it aloud to the group.*)

After the situation is read aloud and someone has read the appropriate corresponding verse,

ASK, “Based on this verse, does anyone have an idea of how a Circle Maker would respond to this situation?” (*Students respond. Examples might include: Think about God’s promise and pray His promise. Believe God is faithful and trust Him.*) **Note:** If none of the students have an idea of how a Circle Maker might respond, offer some ideas of your own.

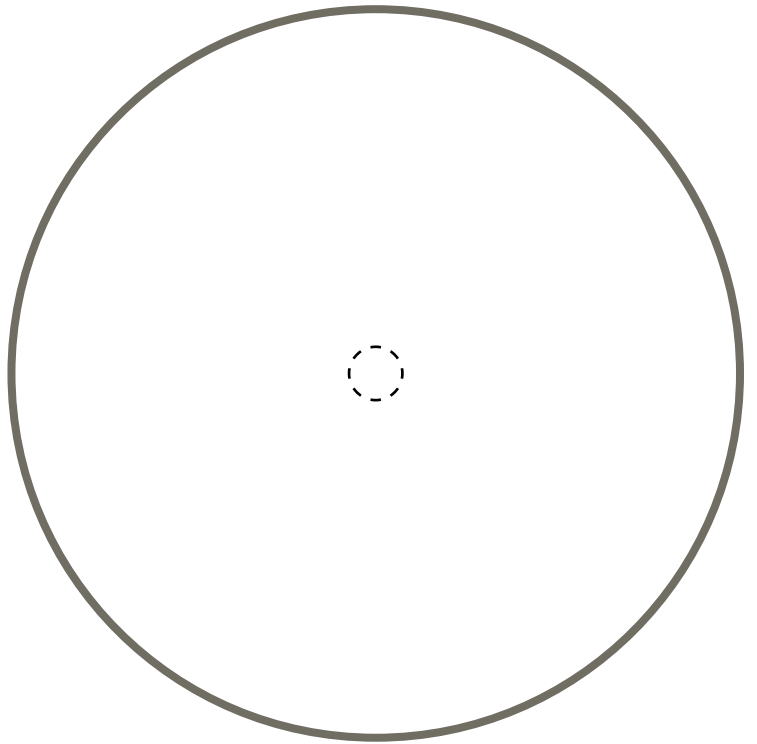
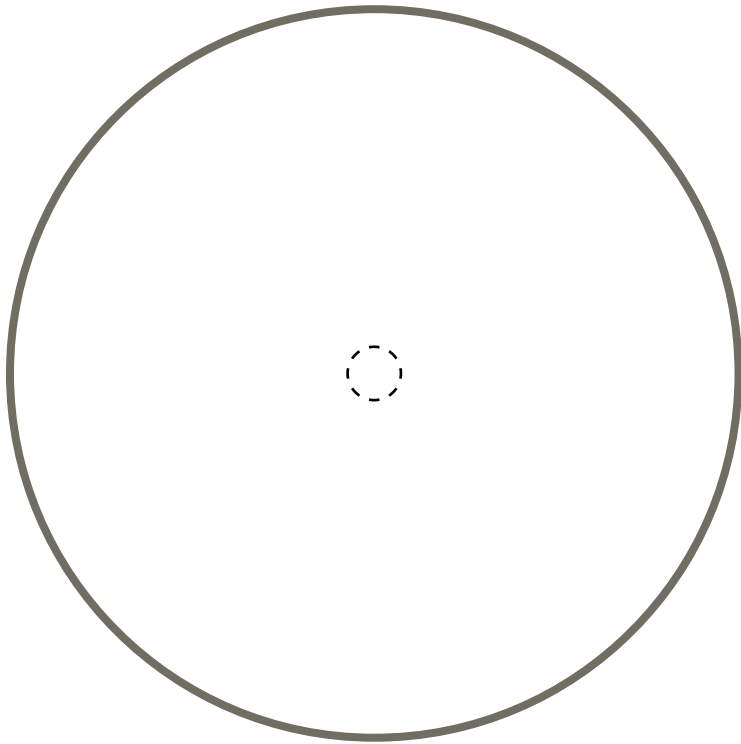
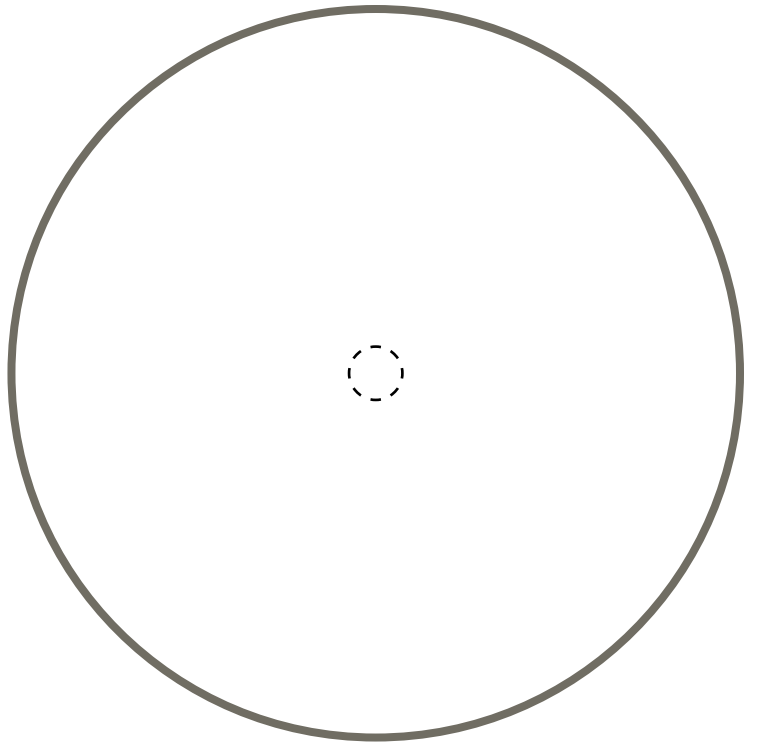
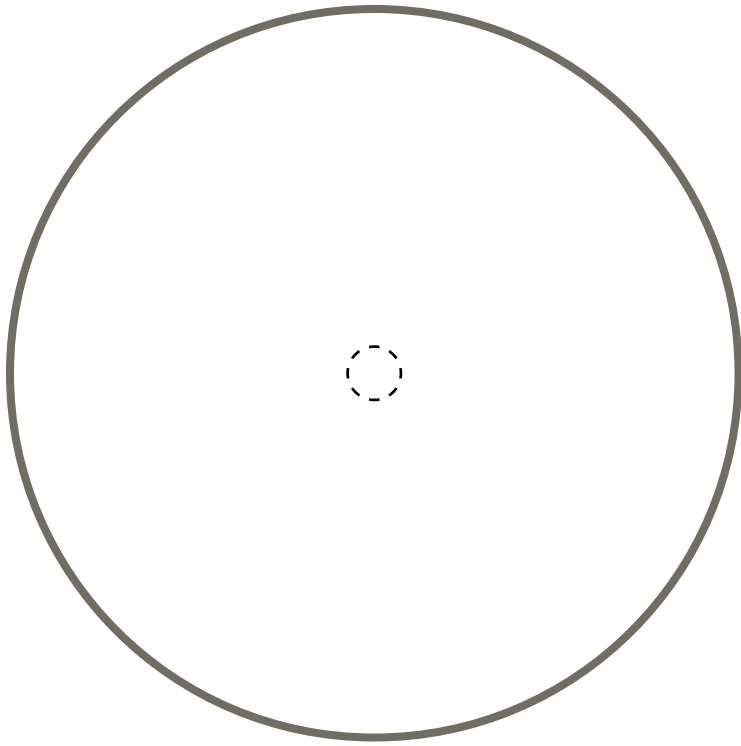
Step 4: Go!

Supplies: Family Table Talk handout and Family Prayer Calendar (one of each per student)

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy the Family Table Talk handout and Family Prayer Calendar (one of each per student).

As you prepare for dismissal, pray together and ask God to help each student to spend time knowing and praying His promises this week. Encourage students to spend time memorizing 1 Thessalonians 5:17 – 18a at home. Make sure each student leaves with his or her take-home activities, including the Family Table Talk handout and Family Prayer Calendar.

As parents arrive, introduce them to the Family Table Talk handout and the Family Prayer Calendar. Encourage parents to spend time throughout the week praying through the verses on the prayer calendar and talking about ways to be Circle Makers!



Circle Maker
Prayer Journal

Circle Maker
Prayer Journal

Circle Maker
Prayer Journal

Circle Maker
Prayer Journal

Circle Maker
Prayer Journal

Circle Maker
Prayer Journal

<p>Your dad just shared your grandpa's medical tests came back and the results were not good. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>	<p>Your friend talked to you about a problem he had. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>
<p>Your brother or sister has been mean to you. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>	<p>You have a super busy week at school — choir concert, two tests, drama club, and a class project too. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>
<p>Your teacher asks you to bring in some canned goods for the Thanksgiving food drive. You don't feel like carrying cans of food on the bus. You wonder if you can just bring something in the next time your mom drives you to school. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>	<p>Your mom just announced her hours at work were cut, and she needs to find a new job. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>
<p>Your volleyball team hasn't been winning many games. You are thinking about trying out for a new club team, but you'd miss your old friends. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>	<p>Your bus driver asks you to stop singing so loudly. You think she is the meanest bus driver ever. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>
<p>You invited your new neighbor to go to church with you, and he/she said yes. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>	<p>Your piano teacher asked you to play a solo piece in the Christmas program, but you're uncomfortable being on the big stage in front of everyone. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>
<p>A friend at school said something untrue about you on the bus. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>	<p>Your new class project involves writing a ten-page paper. Ugh! What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>
<p>Your gym teacher makes you run around the gym nearly twenty times every day. You stink at running. What would you do, Circle Maker?</p>	

WHAT WOULD YOU DO, CIRCLE MAKER?

The LORD himself will go ahead of you. He will be with you. He will never leave you.
— Deuteronomy 31:8a

Be strong and brave. Do not be afraid. Do not lose hope. I am the LORD your God. I will be with you everywhere you go.
— Joshua 1:9

Call out to me. I will answer you. I will tell you great things you do not know.
— Jeremiah 33:3a

I will always guide you.
— Isaiah 58:11

Come to me, all of you who are tired and are carrying heavy loads. I will give you rest.
— Matthew 11:28

The Spirit doesn't make us weak and fearful. Instead, the Spirit gives us power and love.
— 2 Timothy 1:7

If any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it. He will give it to you. God gives freely to everyone.
— James 1:5a

God is faithful and fair. If we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins.
— 1 John 1:9

We love because he loved us first.
— 1 John 4:19

Week 4:

Praying Is Like Planting

Objective: To teach each student that God always hears our prayers but sometimes asks us to wait for the answer

Bible Story: Daniel's Prayer Delayed (Daniel 10:12 – 13)

Memory Verse: "With all my heart I wait for the LORD to help me. I put my hope in his word." (Psalm 130:5 NIrV)

Circle Maker Motto: God is looking for Circle Makers who know His promises and pray His promises.

Master Supplies List

- ☐ Family Table Talk handout (one per student)
- ☐ Family Prayer Calendar (one per student)
- ☐ Whiteboard and dry-erase markers
- ☐ Bag of unpopped microwave popcorn
- ☐ Bag of popped microwave popcorn
- ☐ Jar of popcorn kernels
- ☐ Large garden pot filled with potting soil and a zippered plastic bag filled with seeds

Optional Supplies

You will need the following supplies based on which option(s) you choose in **Step 1: Getting Started** and **Step 3: Explore More**.

- ☐ **Getting Started 1:** Smooth, clean rocks (large enough to decorate and write on), Sharpie markers, optional supplies: glitter and glue
- ☐ **Getting Started 2:** Large roll of butcher paper, markers, and/or colored pencils
- ☐ **Getting Started 3:** Twister board game mat and spinner, whiteboard, dry-erase markers
- ☐ **Explore More 1:** Small garden pots (one per student), permanent Sharpie markers, stickers and/or glitter and glue, whiteboard, dry-erase markers, craft sticks (four per student)
- ☐ **Explore More 2:** Nine chairs, Memory Verse Card template
- ☐ **Explore More 3:** Timer, basket, Circle Maker Charades template

Step 1: Come Together

As the students arrive to class, provide activities to help prepare the students for the lesson. Select one of the following activities that will work best for your group, or create a variety of stations for the students to pick from within the classroom. Play music in the background to help create a fun and welcoming environment. Welcome the students as they arrive, and share the activities available. If you choose to create stations, you may want to have volunteers on hand to help.

Option 1: Prayer Rocks

Supplies: Smooth, clean rocks (large enough to decorate and write on), Sharpie markers, optional supplies: glitter and glue

Ahead of Time: Gather rocks and clean them. Or, purchase a bag of rocks at a craft supply store or online.

Welcome the kids back to Circle Maker.

SAY, “Today we’re going to learn how sometimes God asks us to be patient while we wait for Him to answer our prayers. Let’s make a prayer rock to remind us to keep praying and talking to God.”

Give each student a smooth, clean rock. Make available a variety of colored Sharpie markers and decorating supplies such as paint and paint brushes, glitter, and glue. Instruct the students to write “Pray Always” on the rock, and then to use the available decorating supplies to decorate the rocks.

SAY as you conclude, “Your prayers are very important to God, and He hears all your prayers — every single one. Keep this Prayer Rock somewhere in your room or home where you will see it and remember to keep praying.”

Option 2: Circle Maker Prayer Mural

Supplies: Large roll of butcher paper, markers, and/or colored pencils

SAY, “I’m so glad you are here! We’ve been learning how God is looking for Circle Makers to join Him on an adventure in prayer. Let’s make a mural to remind us of what we’ve learned together.”

Spread out the large roll of paper on the floor or across a couple of tables. Write the Circle Maker motto at the top of the mural, “God is looking for Circle Makers who know His promises and pray His promises.” Instruct the student to draw pictures of people and/or things they want to pray for. You may suggest praying for their family, their teacher, neighbors, and/or people who are sick.

As they are drawing,

ASK, “Is it easy or hard for you to pray? What’s the hardest part?” (*Let the students respond.*)

SAY, “Today we’ll learn that God always hears our prayers, but sometimes He asks us to wait for the answer. I’m so glad that you are here.”

Option 3: Circle Maker Twister

Supplies: Twister board game mat and spinner, whiteboard, dry-erase markers

SAY, “Welcome to Circle Maker! In a minute, we’re going to play Circle Maker Twister to remind us what we’ve been learning about prayer together. But first, think back over the past few weeks. Can anyone share something you’ve learned about prayer or know to be true about prayer?” (*Students respond.*)

(CUE: *Write the responses on the whiteboard.*)

SAY, “In case anyone has never played this game before, let’s go over how it works. One person swirls the spinner and follows the instructions that he or she lands on. While that person has hands and/or feet on the mat, the next person takes a turn swirling the spinner and then also follows the instructions that he or she lands on. We keep taking turns swirling the spinner until everyone has a turn. Circle Maker Twister is just like regular Twister, except before your turn, you get to share something about prayer. You can tell us something you’ve learned in the past, something from the whiteboard, or say ‘God always hears our prayers!’ After you share something about prayer, swirl the spinner, and then put your hands on the colored circles to match your spin. In order to stay in the game, your hands or feet must stay on the mat. Ready? Let’s play!”

(CUE: *Instruct one student to swirl the game spinner. After the student shares an example, he/she can then complete the action on the spinner—for example, right foot yellow. Encourage the student to share “God always hears our prayers” if he/she is unable to think of an example.*)

Note: If your group is comprised of more than eight to ten students, consider setting up multiple game stations. Just be sure to have enough Twister games on hand.

Continue playing, allowing all students an opportunity to spin and share. Remember that students who “fall” are out of the game. The winner is the one who is still “twisted” and remains upright after all others have fallen.

SAY as you conclude, “Isn’t it great to see all the important lessons we’ve been learning about prayer! God loves us so much and delights in hearing our prayers! Today we’ll learn how God always hears our prayers, but sometimes He asks us to wait for the answer.”

Step 2: Present the Story

Supplies Needed: Whiteboard, dry-erase markers, bag of unpopped microwave popcorn, bag of popped microwave popcorn, jar of popcorn kernels, large garden pot filled with potting soil, and a zippered plastic bag filled with seeds

(CUE: *As the Getting Started time comes to a close, gather the students and instruct them to be seated for the teaching and story.*)



Storyteller: Good morning! It’s great to see you! I’m so glad you are here for Circle Maker!

How many of you like popcorn? Me too! Raise your hand if you make your popcorn at home in the microwave. In a popcorn popper. On a stove.

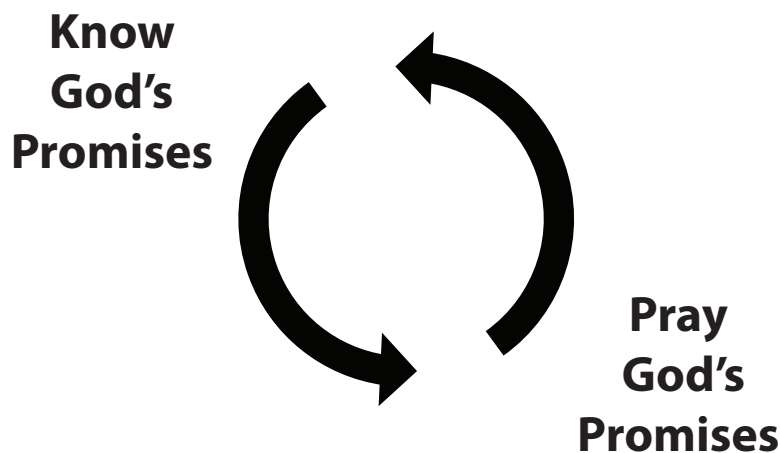
My favorite way to make popcorn is with my microwave. (*Hold up bag of unpopped microwave popcorn.*) Just plop it in the microwave, hit a few buttons, and in less than three minutes — voila! Hot, buttery, delicious popcorn! (*Hold up bag of popped microwave popcorn and eat a few pieces.*) Yum!

But when I was little, when we wanted popcorn, it seemed like it took forever! First, we had to take a pot out of the cabinet, pour some oil into it, put it on the stove, and then wait as the oil heated up. Then we would pour some popcorn kernels (*hold up jar of popcorn kernels*) into the hot oil, put a lid on the pot, and jiggle and shake the pot until we finally heard the first pop. Then we would shake the pot even harder as the rest of the kernels popped so they would not burn. Next we would pour the popcorn into a big bowl. If we wanted butter on our popcorn — and I always did — we melted it in another pan on the stove and poured it over the popcorn. Finally we would put on as much salt as we liked and we were ready to snack. Oh, and we had to clean up all the dishes when we were done and then put them away. It was delicious and fun ... but we sure had to wait a long time! And I don't always like to be patient and wait. Do you? (*Students respond.*)

We live in a world where everything comes pretty quickly, or we want it to. With microwaves and instant access to almost anything on our computers and tablets, it's not always easy to wait, is it? But God does not promise us instant results at the speed of light (*snap fingers*) or even the speed of a microwave, does He? (*Students respond, "No!"*) God always hears our prayers, but He answers in His perfect ways and in His perfect timing. And sometimes He asks us to wait for the answer.

Before we look at today's Bible story, let's get started with a quick review. Remember, God is looking for Circle Makers — like you, like me — to join Him on an adventure in prayer! And as Circle Makers we do two things. Who remembers what they are? Let's say them as I draw on the whiteboard.

(CUE: *Use the whiteboard and dry-erase markers to draw a circle as shown. As you draw, SAY, "Know God's promises ... pray God's Promises!"*)



Right! We spend time getting to know God's promises. How? (*Students respond. Examples may include reading the Bible, going to church, or maybe having devotions at home or school.*) Right! And then we spend time talking to God, or praying, reminding Him of His promises, and it makes a big circle.

Can anyone give me an example? (*Let students respond.*)

(CUE: *If none are given, share the following example or one of your own: "God promises in the Bible that He will guide us. So let's say you are trying to decide where you should play basketball next year. Rather than getting worried you might make the wrong choice and pick the wrong team, you can think about God's promise that He will guide you, and then circle it, or pray God's promise back to Him, asking Him to guide you and help you make a wise choice. Make sense? Great!"*)

And the more we know God's promises, the more we can trust Him. God will keep all His promises. He is faithful in everything He does!

But let's be honest. Sometimes even when we know God's promises and we pray God's promises, it may seem as if God doesn't hear us. Has that ever happened to you?

Maybe you learned your best friend was moving to a new school. You prayed and prayed that your friend wouldn't move, and then he/she still left, and you felt really sad. What happened? Did you pray the wrong promise? Was God asleep? Why didn't He answer your prayer? What are you supposed to do?

Those are tricky questions, aren't they? But thankfully God has not left us without answers. Let's open the Bible to see what we can learn about remaining patient when we pray and trust that God is always listening.

Today's Bible story involves a man named Daniel. How many of you have heard about Daniel before? (*Students respond.*) Daniel was definitely a Circle Maker. He knew God's promises and prayed God's promises.

Now as I read today's story, I need you to listen for three things.

1. How did Daniel respond when he needed help?
2. How did God respond when Daniel needed help?
3. Most importantly, did God keep His promise?

Are you ready to take a listen? (*Students respond.*) Great!

(CUE: *Use the script below to tell the story of Daniel and to read excerpts from Daniel 9 – 10.*)

The year was around 605 BC and Daniel was taken far, far from his home in Jerusalem to be a servant to mean King Nebuchadnezzar [Neb-uh-kuh d-nez-er] in the city of Babylon [Bab-uh-lon] because his city was destroyed and all of God's people were taken captive.

Even though Daniel was sad that his beloved city Jerusalem was devastated, he remained faithful to the teachings he learned as a young boy and continued to trust and pray to God. Daniel didn't just pray when he had a bad day or when he wanted something from God. He prayed every day. In fact, the Bible tells us Daniel prayed on his knees three times a day, often facing his much-loved city of Jerusalem — even though praying to God was against the law. Prayer was his life and his life was a prayer.

One day about sixty-seven years later, Daniel, who was still a servant in Babylon, was reading God's Word. You know what he discovered? The prophet Jeremiah had written that Jerusalem would remain an empty ruins for seventy years. Remember it

had been sixty-seven years. It was almost time for Daniel and the people to be set free! So you know what Daniel did? (*Students respond, “He prayed.”*) That’s right. The Bible tells us Daniel said, “I prayed to the LORD God. I begged him. I made many appeals to him. I didn’t eat anything. I put on the rough clothing people wear when they’re sad. And I sat down in ashes. I prayed to the LORD my God.”

Did you know you can read Daniel’s whole prayer in the Bible? You can! Read Daniel chapter 9 at home later today. It’s awesome! Since Daniel’s prayer is pretty long, I won’t read the whole thing now, but do you want to hear just a part of it?

Daniel prayed —

“LORD, you are a great and wonderful God. You keep the covenant you made with all those who love you and obey your commandments. You show them your love.” (Daniel 9:4)

Daniel knew God’s promises, didn’t He? (*Point to whiteboard.*) And then a little while later, he prayed

“LORD, you saved your people before. So turn your great anger away from Jerusalem again. After all, it is your city...” (Daniel 9:16)

And then Daniel cried out:

“LORD, please listen! LORD, please forgive us! LORD, hear our prayers! Our God, please don’t wait. Your city and your people belong to you.” (Daniel 9:19)

Wow! What a powerful prayer. Lord, please listen! Lord, please forgive us! Lord, hear our prayers! Have you ever felt that way? Daniel was desperate for God to work on his behalf.

Daniel kept praying. He kept circling. He waited a long time for God to help him, didn’t he? Daniel trusted God’s promises.

Then one day Daniel had a vision, or a dream, about a great war. Daniel was very upset, so what do you think he did? (*Students respond.*) That’s right — Daniel prayed hard. In fact, he prayed hard for twenty-one days. How long? (*Students respond, “Twenty-one days.”*) Yes! For twenty-one days Daniel prayed; he barely ate, and he cried out to God. You’ll never believe what happened! An angel showed up! Listen to what the angel said to Daniel —

Daniel 10:12 – 13

“Do not be afraid, Daniel. You decided to get more understanding. You went without food as you worshiped your God. Since the first day you did those things, your words were heard. I have come to give you an answer. But the prince of Persia (*which was kind of like a bad angel*) opposed (*or stopped*) me for 21 days.

Then Michael (*who was a good, powerful angel*) came to help me. He is one of the leaders of the angels. He helped me win the battle over the king of Persia.”

Wow! Can you imagine having a conversation with an angel? Daniel did! And the angel had an important message for Daniel. The angel told Daniel that since the first day Daniel started praying, his words were heard. God heard Daniel's prayer the moment he began to pray and had been listening the whole time. So why didn't God answer Daniel's prayers right away? There was a war going on in the heavens with good angels and bad angels, but God was listening and God was working. God always hears our prayers!

Okay — were you listening for the three things I mentioned? Let's review.

First, how did Daniel respond when he needed help? (*Students respond. Possible answers may include: he prayed, he cried.*) Daniel talked to God about everything. Daniel knew what to do when he was faced with a troubling situation. Pray!

Second, how did God respond when Daniel needed help? (*Students respond. Possible answers may include: He sent an angel to help him.*) God heard Daniel's prayers and sent an angel to help him.

Third, and most importantly, did God keep His promise? (*Students respond. Possible answers may include: Yes, He heard Daniel's prayers.*) Yes! God always keeps His promises! God answers every prayer, and He keeps every promise. That is who He is. That is what He does.

When I think about this Bible story and our role as Circle Makers, there are two very important lessons I want us to remember.

First, God always hears our prayers.

God isn't asleep. He isn't ignoring you. But since God knows everything — including the future — He knows what is best for us. And sometimes that means that God's answer is "wait" ... we have to learn to be patient and wait for God's best.

Praying is like planting. (CUE: *Hold up the garden pot filled with potting soil and the zippered plastic bag of seeds.*)

We can think of our prayers like seeds that get planted in the ground and then disappear for a season. (*Plant seeds in the soil as you say the following sample prayer.*)

God, please protect my family.

God, please help me on my upcoming math test.

God, please help my friend not to move.

Eventually the seed grows into a plant, doesn't it? But it takes time. Just as we can't see what's going on with a seed that's planted underground, we can't always see what God is doing with our prayers. But because we can't see the seed, does that mean it's not doing its job? No way! We can trust that something is happening beneath the surface. Praying is like planting seeds. God always hears our prayers; we just don't always know how or when He will answer them.

Remember our example about a best friend moving away? Maybe God has plans for your friend and her family in a new city, but He hears your prayers. And as you wait on Him and keep praying, maybe He's going to answer your prayers by bringing a fun new best friend to join you at school. So now you'll have two BFFs — one at school and one you can keep in touch with and maybe even visit in the summer.

Our job as Circle Makers is to keep praying, keep planting those seeds, and trust that God is at work and will keep His promises and answer our prayers in His perfect timing and in His perfect way.

This week's memory verse will really help us as Circle Makers. (CUE: *Write this week's memory verse on the whiteboard. As you write on the whiteboard, say the verse and reference aloud.*) "With all my heart I wait for the LORD to help me. I put my hope in his word" (Psalm 130:5, NIV). Now let's all say this week's memory verse together. (CUE: *Point to the whiteboard and lead the students in saying this week's memory verse together. If time permits, repeat this activity a couple of times.*)

God is looking for Circle Makers, friends. Would anyone here like to know God's promises and pray His promises, and join God on an amazing adventure of prayer? (*Students respond.*) Oh good! Me too!

Let's pray: "Dear God, thank You for the Bible that's filled with Your powerful promises. Thank You for Daniel's story and his patience and passion for prayer. Help us to be more like Daniel — praying, trusting, reading Your Word, and praying more. Thank You for loving us so much and for always hearing our prayers. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Okay, friends, we're going to head on over to our activity time together now.



Step 3: Explore More

Choose from these activity options, depending on your available time frame, to help students explore the lesson further.

Option 1: Prayer Pots

Supplies: Small garden pots (one per student), permanent Sharpie markers, stickers, and/or glitter and glue, whiteboard, dry-erase markers, craft sticks (four per student)

Ahead of Time: Assemble one pot to serve as an example.

SAY, "Today we'll learn how praying is like planting. Let's make a prayer pot to remind us of this important lesson."

Give each student a plain pot. Make available permanent Sharpie markers in a variety of colors as well as other decorating supplies for the students to share. Write the phrase "Praying Is Like Planting" on the whiteboard for the students to refer to. Instruct them to write the phrase somewhere on the garden pot. Be sure that each student writes his or her name on the bottom of the pot. Instruct the students to decorate the pot with the available supplies. After the prayer pots are decorated, give each student four craft sticks and encourage them to write their prayer requests on the craft sticks, and then place them in the prayer pot. Share examples of things the students could be praying for (examples include friends, family members, neighbors, etc.).

SAY as you conclude, “Your prayers are very important to God, and He hears all your prayers — every single one. Keep this Prayer Pot somewhere in your room or home where you will see it and remember to pray for the requests you’ve written out. Remember that praying is like planting seeds.”

Option 2: Tic-Tac-Circle

Supplies: Nine chairs, Memory Verse Card template, coin

Ahead of Time: Line up three rows of three chairs each in the center of the room to use as your Tic-Tac-Circle board. Print and photocopy onto card stock the Memory Verse Card template.

SAY, “Let’s play a game to help us remember our new memory verse. Who has played Tic-Tac-Toe before? Well, today we are going to play Circle Maker’s Tic-Tac-Circle!”

Hold up the Memory Verse Card and review the memory verse aloud a few times by reading it together. Divide the group into two teams and have each team form a single-file line. Flip a coin to determine which team will go first.

SAY, “Okay, teams, I want each of you to select a volunteer to come forward and say this week’s memory verse. If your team member correctly recites the memory verse, he or she can choose a space on the Tic-Tac-Circle Board and sit or stand there. If the team member does not recite the memory verse correctly, he or she stays with the team and it becomes the other team’s turn. The first team to get Tic-Tac-Circle wins.”

If time allows, encourage the students to form a circle and

ASK, “How could this verse help you the next time you’re faced with a challenging situation?” (*Let students respond. You may want to share a personal example of how this verse could/would help you.*)

SAY as you conclude, “Remember, God always keeps His promises.”

Option 3: Circle Maker Charades

Supplies: Timer, basket, Circle Maker Charades template, scissors

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy the Circle Maker Charades template. Feel free to add your own words using the blank spaces provided. Cut out the action words from the template and place the slips of paper in the basket.

SAY, “Today we are going to play a fun game to help us remember what we’ve learned from Circle Maker — Circle Maker Charades. In this basket I have a bunch of paper slips with words on them. You’ll select from these and then you’ll each get to act out the word you selected.”

Divide the group into two teams.

SAY, “Okay, team one, I’m going to ask you to pick a person to go first. Once you’ve picked someone, send that person up to select a word from the basket. When you

pick a word, you have thirty seconds to act out the word while your teammates try to guess it. Remember, you may not say anything and you may not make any sound effects. Only the actor's team may guess at this time. If they correctly guess the word, the team gets one point. If they're unable to correctly guess the word, the other team gets one opportunity to guess. If that team guesses correctly, they get one point. Either way, play goes to the other team."

The game continues until all the words have been drawn or time is up. The team with the most points at the end is the winner.

Step 4: Go!

Supplies: Family Table Talk handout and Family Prayer Calendar (one of each per student)

Ahead of Time: Print and photocopy the Family Table Talk handout and Family Prayer Calendar (one of each per student).

As you prepare for dismissal, pray together and ask God to help each student to spend time knowing God's promises and praying His promises this week. Encourage students to spend time memorizing Psalm 130:5 at home. Make sure each student leaves with his or her take-home activities, including memory verse cards and Family Table Talk handout.

As parents arrive, introduce them to the Family Table Talk handout and the Family Prayer Calendar. Encourage parents to spend time throughout the week praying through the verses on the prayer calendar and talking about ways to be Circle Makers!

With all my heart I
wait for the LORD.
I put my hope in his
word.

—Psalm 103:5

Food	Grapes	Marching	Sitting	Listening
Trumpet	Quail	Basket	Manna	Angel
Joshua	Prayer	Circles	Talking	Bible
Sandals	Crying	Begging	Judge	Widow
Moses	Jesus	Promised Land	Journal	Promise
Faithful	Seeds	Planting	Waiting	Heart
Desert	Daniel	Church	Sword	Love